



If a house is historic in any way that would have resulted in its being written about, such as having been the home of a notable person or designed by a prominent architect, we may have what was written. However, most homes do not have recorded histories.

*If you create anything yourself, we would be very happy to add that to our files.*

#### Books to Consult:

- *Survey of Historic Building Resources*, prepared by Gail Hunton
- *Plainfield, New Jersey's History and Architecture*, by John Grady and Dot Pollard
- *Plainfield and Vicinity in Pictures*

The first building permit issued by the City of Plainfield was dated January 27, 1896.

**Plainfield Public Library**  
800 Park Ave.  
Plainfield, NJ 07060  
908-757-1111 x136  
localhistory@plfdpl.info  
www.plainfieldlibrary.info

# Researching the History of a Plainfield Home

## When Was My Home Built? What Is That Style Called? Who Lived There?

Researching the history of the Plainfield home in which you live, an impressive one which has always intrigued you, or one in which your family once lived is a popular activity at Plainfield Public Library. If you are interested in the story behind a home in Plainfield, the public library is a great place to start.



### Blueprints

The collection of blueprints at Plainfield Public Library is the only one at a New Jersey public library that is known to us. Created in 1982 through the efforts of local architect Charles Detwiller, it includes over 15,000 blueprints, mostly for the city of Plainfield. These have been digitized and can be searched on the library's website:

<http://plainfieldlibrarynj.contentdm.oclc.org/>

The blueprints can be searched by address and several other categories, but the most definitive searches for a specific building are made by permit number because while the great majority of blueprints have recorded permit numbers, not all of them are identified by address. Permit numbers for each Plainfield address can be obtained from the city's Building Department (908-226-2665).

Not all blueprints are on file at the library. Newer sets of plans are still held by the Building Department and many of the older plans were never received by the library. If your search leads you to discover any blueprints in which you are interested, contact the library to learn how to see them in greater detail or to obtain copies.



Particularly during the early part of the 1900s Plainfield newspapers often ran articles covering the building and sale of local homes.

Search our newspapers here:  
[http://www.plainfieldlibrary.info/Departments/LH/LH\\_digitizednewspapers.html](http://www.plainfieldlibrary.info/Departments/LH/LH_digitizednewspapers.html)

**Please contact us to make an appointment if you would like to come in and work with us in researching your home. We would be happy to show you our resources.**

## Historic Photographs & Postcards

Plainfield Public Library has collections of both photographs and postcards that can be searched and viewed online. In many cases photographs of homes are not identified by address because that information was not available, but these images can be browsed or searches can be made using terms for distinguishing features, such as “porch” and “parlor.”

**http://**

**plainfieldlibrarynj.contentdm.oclc.org/**



## City Directories & Early Newspapers

Starting with an address or owner’s name, you can search our digitized early newspapers for articles about the owners or the construction of the home: **http://www.plainfieldlibrary.info/Departments/LH/LH\_digitizednews\_papers.html**

Vail John R., laborer, h 405 Watchung ave  
**VAIL JOSEPH T.**, real estate and insurance, 177 North ave  
**REAL ESTATE and INSURANCE BROKER.**  
 Also **DEALER** in **BLUE STONE FLAGGING**, etc., 177 North ave. Residence, 317 Franklin place.



Vail Mrs. Mary L., buttonhole maker, h 112 Church st  
 Vail Miss Mary A., dressmaker, h 112 Church st

Using city directories you can look up the previous owners of a home. If the information was initially provided to the publishers, the directory can provide the names of residents, their occupations, and, in some years, whether they had a

telephone. Plainfield city directories have been digitized and are searchable online. **http://www.digifind-it.com/plainfield/city\_directories.php**

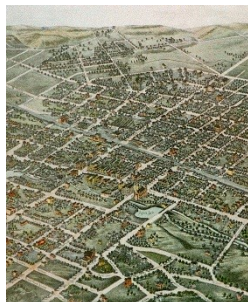
Those that cover individuals (rather than businesses alone) run from 1871 through 1982, with some gaps. The “reverse” directory feature in which you can search by address begins with the 1929 directory but the “every word” search function means that searches can now be made in the earlier years back to the point when street numbers changed or did not yet exist.

## Maps

Maps for Plainfield and North Plainfield are available for many different years. Some identify homeowners and provide a “footprint” indicating the shape of the buildings present at the time covered by the map.

Additional maps are also available online. A collection of five Plainfield Sanborn Maps for the years of 1886, 1892, 1897, 1904 and 1910 can be found at **http://library.princeton.edu/libraries/firestone/rbcs/aids/sanborn/union/plainfield.html**

Plainfield maps digitized through New Jersey Digital Highways can be found at **http://tinyurl.com/5ssh2bv**



**Bird's Eye View of Plainfield**

**O. H. Bailey  
 1874**