

Investigating a Historic Building

Created by the Montana Historical Society, 2008

Instructions

1. Select a historic building to study.
2. Examine it closely and complete the Building Analysis Worksheet (page 2) as best you can. (You can discover an amazing amount about a building just by looking at it.)
3. Try to find your building on the Sanborn maps. (Contact the Montana Historical Society Research Center, (406) 444-2681, MHSLibrary@mt.gov for the username and password.) Revise your answers based on the information you uncover.

Extensions:

Visit your local library or historical society to see what else you can discover about your building by using the Polk City Directories, community history books, census information, architectural style guides, National Register files, old newspapers, and other sources.

Have students create posters on their building or combine their information into a walking tour brochure.

Building Analysis Worksheet

What materials do you see on your building? (Brick, wood, concrete, metal?)

What decorative elements do you see? Where are they?

Compare the way the front of building looks to its back and side. How do you explain these differences?

When do you think your building was constructed (or during what range of years)? Why?

What is the building used for now? How do you know?

Do you think your building looks today as it did when it was first constructed? If not, what do you think has changed, and when and why?

What is the earliest use you found for your building? (e.g., bank, dry goods store, residence, school, etc.)

If someone were constructing a building for the same purpose today, how would it resemble this building and how would it be different? (Think about where he or she would want to locate the building as well as issues of size, style, material.)

What else intrigues you about your building that you want to share?

What else would you want to learn about this building if you had time for further research?