

Real Property Environmental Issues Research at the Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division Dallas Public Library

Dallas Public Library web site: <http://dallaslibrary.org>
Texas/Dallas History and Archives Website: <http://dallaslibrary.org/CTX>
Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division (7th floor): 214-670-1435

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Introduction

The Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division of the Dallas Public Library has several resources that may help researchers clarify the development history of a parcel of land and better assess the potential for hazardous materials liability. Our resources are most comprehensive for Dallas, but do include urban and rural areas across the state. The materials in our collections can help researchers determine

- ❖ when a tract of land was first developed,
- ❖ the type of businesses in operation on the tract through time,
- ❖ the identity of the business owners who operated at the tract, and
- ❖ the types of impact that have occurred (based on visual inspection of aerial photographs and assumed activities for business operations).

In general, researchers will need at least one of the following pieces of information to start conducting research into the development history of a tract:

- ❖ the owner's name,
- ❖ the address, or
- ❖ the legal description.

This document covers the available resources by material type, with a separate section at the beginning of those material types that include particularly early records that may be of special interest (providing information prior to about 1920). Not all investigations will need to research the early records, so this makes it easier to skip some of the discussion if needed.

This guide is a work in progress. If you have any suggestions about how to improve its utility for environmental impact research, please let a staff librarian know.

City Directories

The Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division owns city directories for many urban areas in Texas for the period between 1850 and the present (however, not all years are covered for all areas). A list of all available city directories is located in the research room and online. For the online list of directories, select “City Directories” from the left navigation menu of the Texas/Dallas History and Archives page (<http://dallaslibrary.org/CTX>), then select the letter corresponding to the beginning of the name of the city. The list includes telephone, general city, and crisscross directories, as well as other miscellaneous directories. *For preservation reasons, the hard copy directories may not be photocopied*, but photocopies of microfilm versions are allowed. Patrons may photograph the city directories provided they use a non-flash camera.

The city directories will generally provide entries by the name of the person or business, by the street and street number, and by the type of business. Note that the directories published by either R. L. Polk or Cole Publishers may include different list formats (if one does not include a name list, for example, consult the other if available). To find an approximate date of construction or use, look in the city directories going back in time until the business no longer appears in the directory. If an address appears in the 1910 but not the 1909 directory, then the construction or use period would begin approximately 1909—the data for the 1910 directory was gathered in 1909.

Be careful of the given street addresses. Dallas streets were renumbered at least twice—once in about 1891, and again in 1911. The 1911 Dallas directory provides old and new numbers. Note that prior to 1901, streets in Dallas were not listed by numerical addresses in the directories, so the history of a building must be traced by occupant in the city directories prior to that time.

Cartographic Records

Early Cartographic Records

Bird's Eye Views

Texas/Dallas History and Archives has bird's eye view maps of several Texas cities for years prior to 1920. These include Austin, Dallas, Dennison, Fort Worth, Houston, Paris, and San Antonio.

Land Grant Maps

Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division has land grant maps for most counties in Texas. These provide the boundaries of original land grants in each county, along with the name of the original grantee or patentee and the abstract number. In general, only towns and roads are depicted, so these provide little information relevant to environmental assessment. The division also has maps for land grants such as the Peter's Colony, early settlements like La Reunion, and other maps depicting initial settlement patterns and land ownership. For help with maps like these, please see the map collections subject index or talk to a staff librarian.

Early Maps

The following are examples of the types of maps may be of use to some researchers needing early building and property development histories. A list of ready-reference Mylar maps is available at reference desk, as are the complete place, subject, and title map lists.

- ❖ transportation maps of Dallas and select other cities from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s
- ❖ Post Offices in Dallas County, 1846–1946 (Map 195, Mylar)
- ❖ Plan and Survey of Building and Gardening Lots on the Ground of Reunion in Dallas County, 1858 (Map 490)
- ❖ early lot and block maps, primarily for Dallas, but some other cities and towns are available
- ❖ First Fire Insurance Map of Dallas, 1876—shows many downtown buildings (Mylar)
- ❖ John Neely Bryan Survey, 1890—shows some buildings (Mylar)
- ❖ Sam Street's Tarrant County, 1895 (Mylar) and Sam Street's Dallas County, 1900 (Mylar)—these are good for buildings in rural areas

General Cartographic Records

The Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division owns approximately 5,000 maps providing many different types of cartographic information. These include many of the early 15- and 30-minute topographic sheets for the state, as well as the later 7.5-minute sheets. The more current topographic maps are located on the sixth floor of the library, while the Texas/Dallas History and Archives division owns mainly superseded and non-current sheets. These maps show structure locations (primarily in rural areas) and may identify some uses (such as institutional, residential, or industrial). The division also owns many transportation, political, and real estate maps. The best way to locate these is by looking in the place, subject, and title finding guides or by asking a reference librarian to search the maps database.

City Plats

Early Plats

These show the divisions of real property generally into blocks and lots. Among the most comprehensive resources for urban areas are the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Another important resource is the library's Murphy and Bolanz collection. Of secondary importance to these two resources are the Surratt Plat Books (1913) and the City of Dallas Plat Books (1911, revised to 1946).

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps—The Sanborn maps include detailed information about buildings and for Dallas cover the period from 1885 to 1970 (on microfilm—online versions extend to 1952). Other time periods will be covered in different urban areas. Updated maps were not produced every year, and coverage may not include the entire city. There is a finding guide for the use of the Sanborn maps (focusing on the use of the Dallas sheets) available at the reference desk, and it includes a key to the symbols used on the maps.

Patrons may also access the Sanborn maps outside the library with a Dallas Public Library card. From the library’s home page (<http://dallaslibrary.org>), follow the “Log in to Databases” link at the bottom of the center column (Figure 1). From the Electronic Resources page, select the “Texshare” link (Figure 2). This will provide a list of Texshare resources on the right, with the “Texas Digital Sanborn Maps” link appearing near the bottom.

Murphy and Bolanz Abstract Records—The Dallas Public Library has acquired the annotated tract maps used by the firm of Murphy and Bolanz between 1880 and 1920. These include not only early plats of city blocks and residential subdivisions, but many notes about conveyance histories, including names, dates, deed volume and page references, and also include original locations of creeks and streams. To view the high-quality online images requires that patrons have the free DjVu plug-in installed. Instructions for acquiring and installing the free plug-in are provided on the Murpey and Bolanz Web page.

To get to the Murphy and Bolanz Web page, go to the library’s home page (<http://dallaslibrary.org>) and look for the “Special Features” section in the right column (see Figure 1). One special feature is the link to the Murphy and Bolanz collection. Patrons may also visit the

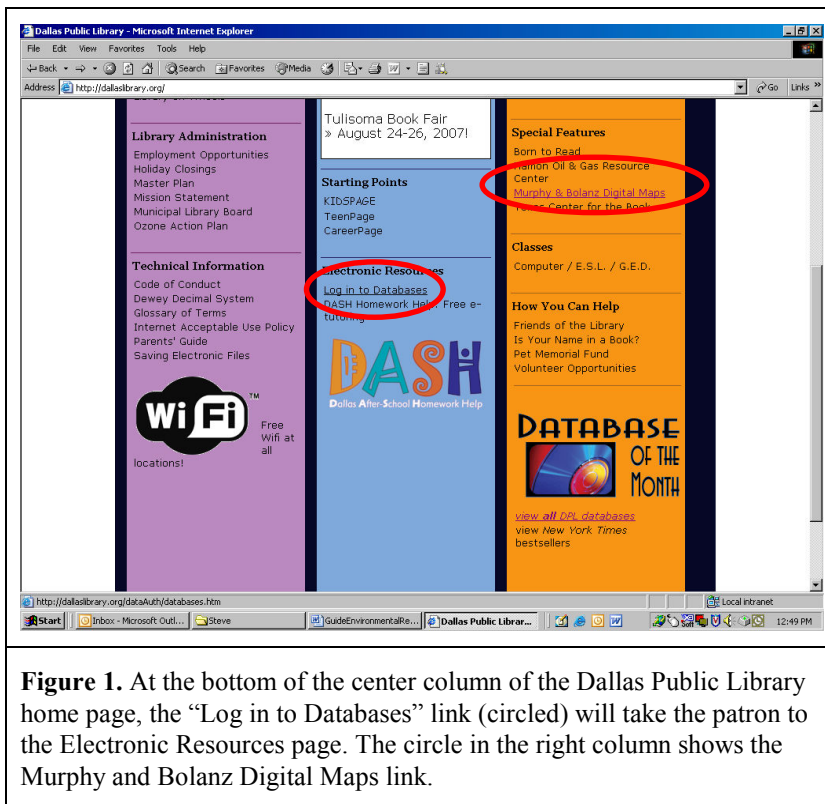


Figure 1. At the bottom of the center column of the Dallas Public Library home page, the “Log in to Databases” link (circled) will take the patron to the Electronic Resources page. The circle in the right column shows the Murphy and Bolanz Digital Maps link.

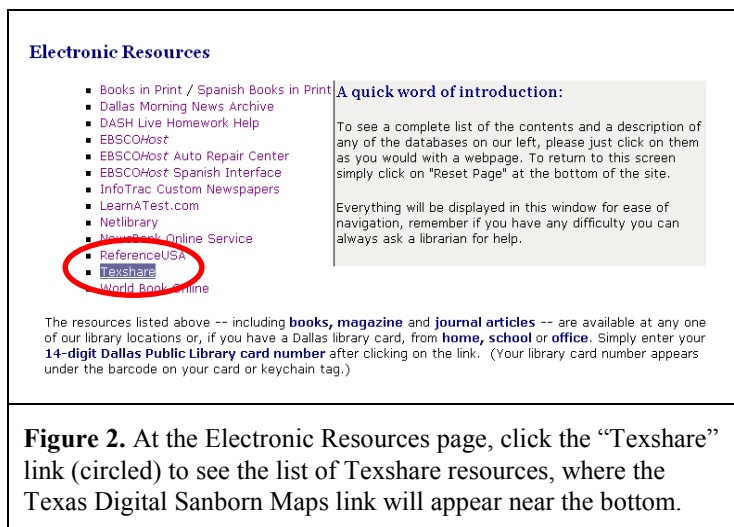


Figure 2. At the Electronic Resources page, click the “Texshare” link (circled) to see the list of Texshare resources, where the Texas Digital Sanborn Maps link will appear near the bottom.

Texas/Dallas History and Archives page (<http://dallaslibrary.org/CTX>). At that page (Figure 3), select “Maps” from the left navigation bar, then select Murphy and Bolanz Maps from the maps page navigation bar. At the Murphy and Bolanz home page, the maps may be browsed by the original index entries prepared by the firm, browsed by block number, or searched by keywords, including street names. Viewing a map will provide a display similar to that shown in Figure 4 for Shannon’s Addition to Oak Cliff. The DjVu tool allows the user to zoom, pan, and rotate the image so that even very faint notations may be read (Figure 5).

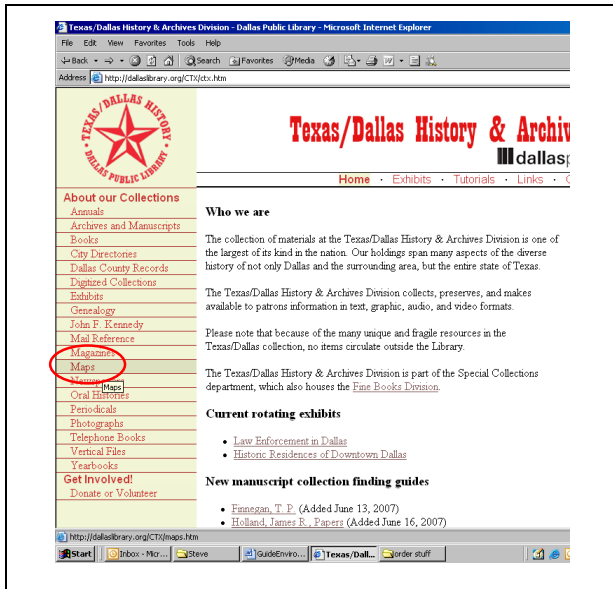


Figure 3. From the home page of the Texas/Dallas History and Archives, select “Maps” from the left navigation bar (circled). Once at the Maps page, click the Murphy and Bolanz Maps link in the left navigation bar to access these maps.

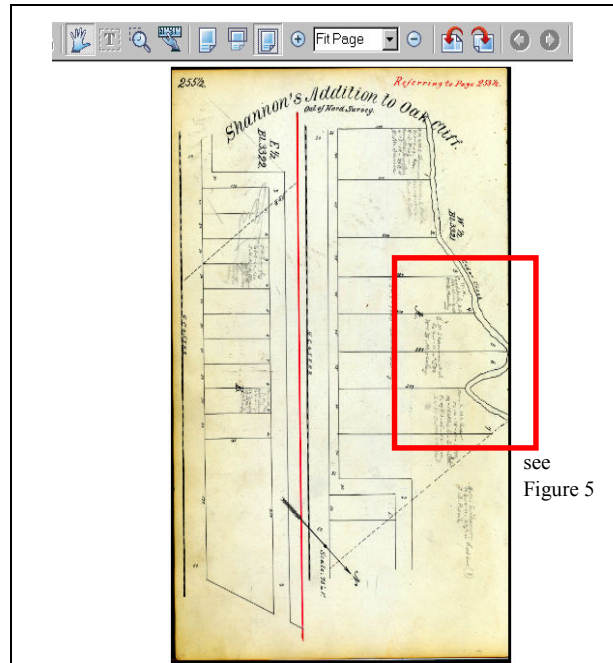


Figure 4. Murphy and Bolanz map of Shannon’s Addition to Oak Cliff.

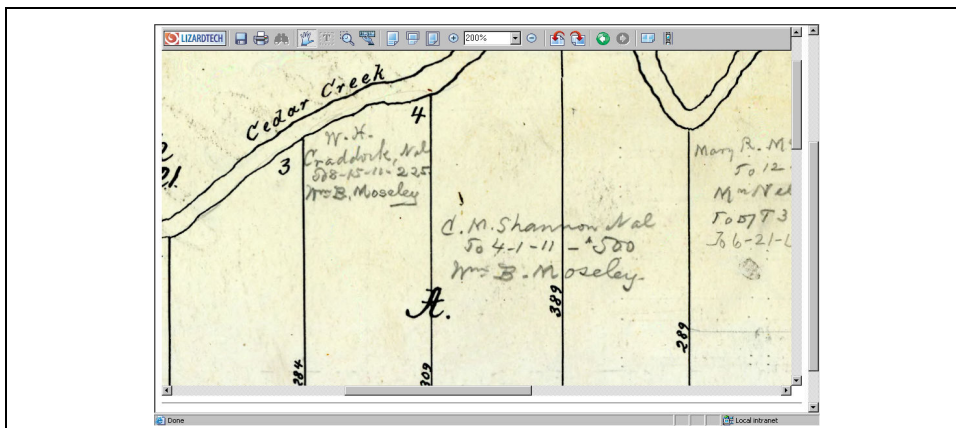


Figure 5. The viewing tool allows panning, rotating, and zooming in on images so that even very faint notations may be clearly read.

Dallas County Plat Books (1911, revised to 1946)—These cover primarily the downtown Dallas area. They are organized by block number, and many sheets have hand notations concerning city ordinances and other items affecting the tracts.

Surratt Plat Books (1913)—These cover blocks 1 through 3452 and include the notes of John E. Surratt, secretary of the Kessler Plan Association. Volume 8 of the series is missing.

Later Plat Books and Aerial Atlases

As noted above, plat books show the division of real property into tracts and plats. The following are the more useful resources owned by the library. Some of these are aerial atlases, which have aerial photographs over which property lines are superimposed.

Bracey's Block Maps, Dallas (1937, 1942, 1949, 1954, 1958)—These are available on microfilm for Dallas. The Bracey maps show tract information, but do not show building footprints or land use.

Carson Plat Books, Dallas (1964, 1965–1968, 1971, 1973–1975)—These include a street index and plats for Dallas County. The 1966, 1971, and 1973 editions include aerials with tract boundaries. These are in fair condition and may have pages or volumes missing. Some years include only the index. The 1974 edition appears to be incomplete. **Note:** Aerial atlases available for 1966, 1971, and 1973.

Real Estate Data, Inc. Plats, Dallas (1972, 1973, 1975, 1978–1980, 1984–1986, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1996)—These plat books contain approximately the same types of information that the Carson Plat Books contain. These REDI maps also include owner names, and most include owner indexes. In some cases, the indexes and plat maps are provided on microfiche. The library also owns the print indexes for some years. Some of the above years include only the indexes. In some cases, the microfiche must be used to identify the volume and page of the tract. **Note:** Aerial atlases available for 1973, 1975, 1978, and 1980.

Real Estate Data, Inc. Plats, Collin County (1985, 1986, 1988–1990)—These contain the same type of information and organization as the Dallas County REDI plat books.

Real Estate Data, Inc. Plats, Denton County (1973, 1986–1990)—These contain the same type of information and organization as the Dallas County REDI plat books. The 1973 edition includes a volume of plats for Denton, Argyle, Aubrey, Hebron, Justin, Krum, Lake Dallas, Lewisville, Little Elm, Pilot Point, Ponder, Roanoke, and Sanger.

Landis and Landiscorp aerial atlases, Dallas County (1979, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1988, 1995, 1997)—These are strictly aerial atlases. Aerial photographs have property lines superimposed. A graphical key in the front references the page number on which the aerial of that portion of the county is shown.

Aerial and Other Photographs

The Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division owns the following aerial photographs. In addition to these listed here, there are a few high altitude aerial photographs of Dallas and Fort Worth. Please ask a reference librarian for the aerials in the bottom of Map Case 1.

- ❖ City of Dallas: 1930 (generally within 1930 city limits)
- ❖ Dallas County: 1942, 1950, 1964, 1979 (mounted on rigid board)
- ❖ Tarrant County: 1963, 1

General photographs—There are some photographs of specific properties in the Texas/Dallas History and Archives holdings, but these are generally of limited use for establishing environmental impacts. Most of the photographs will be of well-known commercial and retail buildings, with fewer industrial facilities. There are about 10,000 photographs available via the library catalog (in the advanced search tool of the catalog, select “Photographs” as the Material Type to limit a search to only digital imagery in the catalog). There are also ready reference photograph cards in the Texas/Dallas History and Archives reading room. Staff may assist in additional research using a database of descriptions for approximately 90,000 images.

Manuscript Collections

City of Dallas Building Inspector Record Books—These books, also called the “permit books,” include permits for construction projects from 1905 to 1970. They provide dates and a very brief description (a few words) of the type of construction being permitted (significant additions or changes). Each volume covers several months to multiple years. These are not indexed, but entries are in chronological order. Note that permits were not required until 1925, but in some cases were provided before that time. Additional permit-related information may be available from the City of Dallas Building Inspection Division, Central Files, located in the Oak Cliff Municipal Center. The telephone number is 214-948-4318. They have microfilm of *some* residential building permits, permits for many commercial buildings, and plans for some commercial buildings.

City of Dallas Landmark Records—This collection holds reports and other information related to proposed or approved Dallas Landmarks. An index by building name is available at the reference desk.

Dallas County Historical Commission Files—This collection contains files related to the nomination of Texas Historic Markers, so it only covers historical buildings and other significant properties. An index by property name is available at the reference desk.

Dines, Kraft, and Hexter Collection—These are records of the Dines and Craft Building Company and the Hexter Title Company. The records include property abstracts, architectural drawings, and other documents, most for locations in the Lakewood area, a small part of Highland Park, and other East Dallas areas, dating from the 1920s through the 1970s. Indexes by name, street, and job number are included.

Emrich Survey Materials—The Emrich survey identified architecturally and historically significant properties constructed within the 1940 Dallas city limits. The documents in this collection are organized by areas, then by street address, and they contain some photographs and limited historical information.

Historic Research Survey Materials of Dallas—This is the second-phase continuation of the Emrich Survey.

General References

Newspapers—The Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division owns microfilm copies of most major Texas newspapers, and makes an effort to acquire these from the beginning of publication. An index of newspaper titles, arranged by city of publication, is available in the Texas/Dallas History and Archives reading room. Much of the *Dallas Morning News* is available online, and the full text of the articles may be searched—importantly, these can be searched by address to locate information for specific locations. Scanned articles are available from 1885 through 1977, and the text (no images) is available from 1984 to the present. There is a gap in online material from the end of 1977 to the latter part of 1984. To access the online resource, follow the Online Databases link from the library home page (see Figure 1), then select “Dallas Morning New Archive” from the list of available resources. Follow the “Newsbank” link that will appear to the right, then select either the *Dallas Morning New Archive* (1885–1977) or the *Dallas Morning News* (1984–present) link, depending on which time period is to be researched.

Clipping files—The Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division has been cutting noteworthy articles from Dallas newspapers since approximately 1950, and these are arranged by topic. Please ask a staff member for assistance in accessing the clipping files.

Dallas Magazine—This publication began in the 1920s and was produced by the Dallas Chamber of Commerce. It includes some information about building construction in Dallas.

Soil Conservation Service publication—The Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division has *most* of the early soil survey publications for the state. Current and many older soil survey books for both Texas and other states are available on the sixth floor.