

American Art History Research Paper Assignment

Write a research paper on a home in the historic Dennis Street/State Street neighborhood. If possible, try to imagine the home's significance when it was first built.

This assignment has been broken down into a series of steps: selection of a topic, initial research, interview, archival research, library research, draft, and final paper.

Select a topic:

1. Visit the Dennis Street/State Street neighborhood and select two homes
2. Meet with me on or before September 7 to discuss your choices. You may sign up to research the home of your preference on a first-come, first served basis. Only one student will be permitted to research each home.

Conduct initial research (worth 10% of your final grade):

1. Visit and carefully describe the exterior of the home as it appears from the street. (Do not trespass without permission.) Sketch a plan (as much as possible from the exterior) and elevations. Take photographs. Note the colors, materials, shapes and textures. Be sure to consult architectural dictionaries for proper vocabulary.
2. Investigate at least three sources of information (books, websites, etc.) that describe the origins and typical features of the style of your selected home. (I have several in my office that you can borrow long enough to photocopy the relevant pages.) Create a bibliography for these sources using the Chicago Style (<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocChiWorksCited.html>) and write a statement about whether these sources agree with each other. Summarize the style's origins and characteristic features. Write another statement analyzing whether your selected house is characteristic of the style. To what extent is it typical and to what extent is it not typical?
3. Look through Charles Lindquist's book, *Adrian: The City that Worked* (Adrian: Lenawee County Historical Society, 2004). Add this information to your bibliography and to your statement (as appropriate).
4. Meet with me to review this information on or before September 30.
5. Revise your statements based on our conversation.

Interview (should be conducted no later than mid-October.)

1. Contact the owners of the house and ask if you might speak with them about their home for a research paper you are doing for your American Art class at Siena Heights. Tell them that you would like, with their permission, to photograph the interior, sketch a floor plan of their home,

ask them some questions, and record whatever information they have about their home.

2. When you first contact the homeowners, ask them if they have an “Abstract of Title” that you could see and/or photocopy.
3. Take the home-owner a copy of this assignment and the information you have produced so far as a gift.
4. Interview the homeowner about what they know of the house—what interesting people owned it in the past, what additions or changes had been made, and when do they think these were made, what are their favorite parts of the house and favorite part about living in an historic neighborhood.
5. Ask permission to sketch the floor plan for each floor, including the basement.
6. Ask permission to take photographs of the interior, especially of characteristic architectural details. (I have a digital camera you can borrow, just ask.)
7. Ask for a copy of the Abstract of Title, if they have it. Offer to pay for the photocopy expense.
8. Ask them if they would like a copy of your paper when it is finished.

Archival research:

1. Call the Lenawee County Historical Society. Tell the person answering the phone that you are taking this class and that you would like to make an appointment to see their City Directories and County Tax Assessments, and that you would also like to speak with the Museum’s Curator. (To limit the number of appointments, you might want to do this part of the assignment in pairs or small groups of students.)
2. Keep your appointment. Wear grungy clothes (or take a studio apron) because the County Tax Assessments book might stain them. Record any relevant information.
3. Interview the historian about what he might know about the history of your selected house.
4. Be sure to see if there is any relevant information about your home or historical homeowners in:
 - a. Knapp, John I., and R. I Bonner, *Illustrated history and biographical record of Lenawee County, Mich. ...* Adrian: The Times Printing Company, 1903. <http://www.hti.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=micounty;idno=BAD0970.0001.001>
 - b. Bonner, Richard Illenden. *Memoirs of Lenawee County, Michigan, From the Earliest Historical Times Down to the Present, Including a Genealogical and Biographic Record of Representative Families in Lenawee County, Illustrated* (two volumes). Madison, Wisconsin: Western Historical Association, 1909.

Library Research

1. Follow up on any leads that this research generates.

2. Visit the Adrian Public Library. Ask one of the librarians to let you into the Heritage Room. Find some information about the home and its owners in Adrian's newspapers. These newspapers are all preserved on microfilm. Use the information on the home's Abstract of Title, from the City Directories and from the County Tax Assessments to direct your newspaper research. If no other era seems significant, focus on the home when it was built. Be prepared to order (and pay for) prints from the microfilm.

Draft (worth 20% of your course grade)

1. Update your bibliography. Be sure it is Chicago Style.
2. Organize a paper summarizing all of the information that you have collected. Your paper should include:
 - a. a statement about whether the home is a typical example of its style
 - b. information about the original owners of the home
 - c. information about Adrian when the home was built.
3. Write a draft of this paper. Your thesis should summarize a, b, and c, above.
4. Rewrite the draft at least once. Make sure there is a clear thesis. Make sure each paragraph has a topic sentence.
5. Turn in the draft and bibliography to me by **November 4**. Include a binder with all of the sketches, photographs and photocopies that you have collected. I will read your paper with an eye toward making it presentable to the current homeowners. If you have followed all of the steps above, you can expect to earn a high grade.

Final paper (worth 10% of your course grade)

1. Conduct any required additional research and rewrite your paper based on my comments to your draft. The final draft should be presented on a CD as a Word document, with a few selected digital photographs inserted within the text.
2. Turn in your draft and final paper to me by **December 4**. At the same time, deliver a copy of your final paper to the current homeowner.