

World Building for the Real World Resources

Compiled by Bill Cameron

This list is by no means comprehensive. Most of these resources have a U.S.-focus, though analogs for many places world-wide are available.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/>

University, college, and local libraries often a collection of these, some in print and many digital.

Interpreting Sanborn Maps

<http://www.historicalinfo.com/fimo-interpret-sanborn-maps/>

If you want to get really granular, this article does a deep dive into how to read Sanborn maps.

Special Collections

College and university special collections are often available to the public even if you aren't affiliated. Check with your local institutions for access.

Local and regional historical societies usually have libraries and reading rooms. Some are open to the public, some available by appointment. Check with societies and museums in areas of interest for access.

The Oregon State University Libraries Special Collections & Archives Research Center

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu>

The Oregon State University library special collections library has a large collection of maps and other sources available to view by appointment.

University of Oregon USGS TopoView

<https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/topoview/>

U.S. topographical and geologic maps (in addition to other data types), both contemporary and historical for U.S. states and territories.

Social Security Administration list of most popular names

<https://www.ssa.gov/oact/babynames/>

See lists for specific years, or by decade going back to the 1880s. Fun character naming resource.

Inflation Calculator

<https://www.officialdata.org/countries>

Provides a general indicator of the value of money over time in more than two dozen currencies. In different eras and countries, goods will have different values in relation to each other, which may or may not track with the overall value of money.

Breakfast the Year You Were Born

<https://www.thedailymeal.com/eat/breakfast-price-year-you-were-born-gallery>

This long gallery starting in 1937 is U.S.-based, but a great way to see value in context over time.

A search online will bring up a number of similar sites, some as narrowly focused as the cost of a cup of coffee over time to broad overviews of the price of consumer goods and services.

Gold Prices Over Time

<https://www.macrotrends.net/1333/historical-gold-prices-100-year-chart>

This website has a wide range of historical price data you can search.

5 Steps to Getting Rights to Lyrics

(Anne R. Allen and Michael Murphy)

<https://annerallen.com/2013/03/so-you-want-to-use-song-lyrics-in-your/>

Practical guide to getting necessary permissions.

Further Reading

Worldbuilding: Crime and Fantasy Books Have More in Common Than You Might Think

(Kelly Braffet)

<https://crimereads.com/worldbuilding-crime-and-fantasy-books-have-more-in-common-than-you-might-think/>

The Five P's of World Building

(Jaye Wells)

<https://jayewells.substack.com/p/the-five-ps-of-world-building>

Jaye offers a lot of great writing insights through her website. This link a great place to start.

Grounds for Murder: Maps and Floor Plans in Mystery Novels

(Kristel Autencio)

<https://bookriot.com/2015/09/28/grounds-for-murder-maps-and-floor-plans-in-mystery-novels/>

Using Real People, Places, and Corporations in Your Fiction: How Real Can You Get and Not Be Sued? (Matt Knight)

<https://www.sidebarsaturdays.com/2017/08/05/httpwp-mep7vddb-us/>

Practical overview of the legal issues surrounding the use of the really real.

Could I Be Liable for Libel in Fiction? (from the Rights of Writers blog by Mark Fowler)

<http://www.rightsofwriters.com/2010/12/could-i-be-liable-for-libel-in-fiction.html>

Blake Morrison on the cost of quoting lyrics

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/may/01/blake-morrison-lyrics-copyright>

Insight into what it might take to use song lyrics in your title. (You'll have to convert from British Pounds.)

The Public Domain Review: Guide to Finding Public Domain Works Online

<https://publicdomainreview.org/guide-to-finding-interesting-public-domain-works-online/>

Looking for something to quote that you won't have to pay an arm and a leg for? This is a great rabbit hole to fall into.

Sanborn Map Interpretive Key

KEY

	Tile roof		Mansard roof
	Brick 1st pyroclastic 1st		Window opening in first story.
	Adobe building.		Window openings in second and third stories.
	Stone building		Window openings in second and fourth stories.
	Concrete, lime, cinder or cement brick		Windows with wired glass.
	Hollow concrete or cement block constn		Windows with iron or tin clad shutters.
	Concrete or reinforced concrete constn		Window openings tenth to twenty-second stories.
	Tile building.		Open elevator.
	Brick building with frame cornice.		Frame enclosed elevator.
	Stone front.		with traps.
	Frame side.		self closing traps.
	Brick veneered building.		Concrete block enclosed elevator with traps.
	Frame and frame building.		Tile enclosed elevator with self closing traps.
	Frame building brick lined.		Brick enclosed elev. with wired glass door.
	Metal clad.		Iron chimney
	Frame building.		Brick chimney.
	Iron building.		Ground elevation.
	Tenant building occupied by various manufacturing or occupancies		Vertical steam boiler.
	Frame building covered with asbestos		Gasoline tank.
	Brick building with brick or metal cornice.		Open under.
	Fire wall 6 inches above roof.		Siamese fire dept. connection
	Fire wall 12 inches above roof.		Single fire dept. connection
	Fire wall 18 inches above roof.		Automatic fire alarm.
	Fire wall 36 inches above roof.		Independent electric plant.
	Wall without opening and size in inches.		Automatic sprinklers.
	Wall with openings on floors as designated.		Automatic chemical sprinklers.
	Opening with single iron or tin clad door.		Automatic sprinklers in part of building only.
	Opening with double iron doors.		Not sprinklered.
	Opening with standard fire doors.		Outside vertical pipe on fire escape.
	Openings with wired glass doors.		Fire alarm box.
	Drive or passage way.		Single hydrant.
	Stable.		Double hydrant.
	Auto. House or private garage.		Triple hydrant.
	Solid brick with interior walls of C.B. or C.B. and brick mixed.		Quadruple hydrant of the High Pressure Fire Service.
	Mixed construction of C.B. and brick with one wall of solid brick.		Fire alarm box of the High Pressure Fire Service.
	Mixed construction of C.B. and brick with one wall faced with 4" brick.		Water pipes of the High Pressure Fire Service.
	Mixed construction of C.B. and brick and brick throughout.		Water pipes and size in inches.
			Water pipes of private supply.
			House numbers shown nearest to buildings are official or actually up on buildings.
			Old house numbers shown furthest from buildings.

Deryn Collier on fudging

<https://twitter.com/deryncollier>

<http://deryncollier.com>



Deryn Collier @deryncollier · 38m

Speaking of which, there's always the fudge factor in research for historical fiction. For example:



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My WIP is set in Montreal in the spring of 1947. My research on taxis of that era tells me that taxis did not have radio dispatch until later in the summer of 1947.



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But I need my fictional taxis to have fictional dispatch in order for my story to hang together. And so, my taxis will have radios *snap* the magic of fiction.



About W.H./Bill Cameron

When not tending his chickens, *Crossroad* author W.H. Cameron shapes unruly words into captivating people caught in harrowing situations. As Bill Cameron he writes the critically-acclaimed Skin Kadash mysteries, and his YA mystery *Property of the State* was named one of *Kirkus Reviews* Best of 2016. His stories have appeared in *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, *A Beast Without a Name*, Lee Child's *First Thrills*, and more.

Bibliography

Writing as W.H. Cameron

Crossroad

“Hey Nineteen” in *A Beast Without a Name* (anthology)

“Christmas Spirit” coming in *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*

Writing as Bill Cameron

Property of the State

County Line

Day One

Chasing Smoke

Lost Dog

Puppy Love Noir (short story collection)

Diaries of Misspent Youth (short story collection)

“The Princess of Felony Flats” in *First Thrills* (anthology)

“Heat Death” in *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*

“Slice of Pie” in *Killer Year* (anthology)

“Coffee, Black” in *Portland Noir* (anthology)

“Sunlight Nocturne” in *Deadly Treats* (anthology)

“The Last Ship” in *West Coast Crime Wave* (anthology)

“A Tall House” in *Lost Children 2: Protectors* (anthology)

“Daisy and the Desperado” in *Murder at the Beach* (anthology)

Learn more at www.bill-cameron.com.

Check out the *Crossroad* map collection here:

www.bill-cameron.com/novels/crossroad/crossroad-maps/