

Ohio Deed Research

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In Ohio, land records are filed in the county recorder's office. Many counties have interactive websites with details on more recent land transactions. Watch for boundary changes because the deed will be filed in the county it was at the time of recording, which is not always the same as the current county.

Use the following resources to help find when records were created in the county you want:

- Newberry Library's Online Historic Atlas of U.S. Maps <http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/>
- Map of US <https://www.mapofus.org/ohio/>

What might I find in deeds/ land records?

- land transactions such as deeds, mortgages, liens, etc.
- indentures prior to statehood
- marriages prior to statehood

Where can I find deeds in Ohio?

The original deeds are filed in the county recorder's office for the specific county. Google search for the county to find the county recorder's website or go to the FamilySearch Wiki for the specific county in Ohio to find more information. https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ohio,_United_States_Genealogy Some counties have their later land records on their website. For most counties, records prior to the 1980's will only be available in the recorder's office. You'll either need to go there in person to do research or hire someone like the local genealogical society to research and make copies of the records for you. Also check with the local genealogical society to see if they have indexed any of these records or have links to the collection on their website.

However, many Ohio land records are online in the catalog on FamilySearch for the specific county. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog> Deeds found in the FamilySearch catalog are often un-indexed by FamilySearch and will have to be searched page by page unless there is an index in a separate book or at the beginning of the digital image collection for the specific microfilm.

Deeds bought directly from the government (patents) in Ohio can be found online at the U.S. Government Bureau of Land Management website at <http://blm.gov>

Tax records in Ohio began as early as 1800 and were filed in the auditor's office. The Ohio History Connection has duplicate copies for many years, but they are not indexed. FamilySearch has some of these in the historical records that are indexed and many others in the catalog for the specific county, which are un-indexed. Early tax records can be useful for finding the property your ancestor owned because it specifies the location they owned and paid taxes on within the township.

Also check to see if the county where your ancestor lived has a separate map room or Geographic Information System (GIS) department from the recorder's office. Map rooms are useful for finding early maps for property within the county. Sometimes they even have surveys or maps prior to statehood. Many of these maps show each owner's property in relation to others in the area along with roads, churches, and cemeteries. These can be really useful for identifying where your ancestor lived and can be used to track the property backwards. Some county auditors have websites that show more current maps for the county with ownership details. Also check with the genealogical society or one of the local libraries for county atlases. These are great resources showing property owners at the time the atlas was completed. The engineer's office or GIS might also have township plats.

Why do I want to use these records?

There could be many reasons you want to find a deed for someone in Ohio. Maybe you just want to know where someone lived, or you need proof of their residence for a lineage society application. Here are some of the most common reasons:

- to find what property they owned in a specific county
- to prove your ancestor lived in a specific area for a lineage society (First Families, Early Settlers)
- to find the final land transaction for an individual
 - deeds can help determine a time frame of when someone has died if the property is passed to the widow or heirs
 - deeds can help determine when someone moved out of the county
- to prove kinship

Ways to search for deeds

- by time frame
- by location
- by name

Residency by Time Frame

Researching property deeds by time frame should be used when you want to find proof for when an ancestor was a resident of the county. You need to know approximately when they resided in the location based on other records such as a will / estate, marriage record, court record, or tax record.

Start by checking the deed indexed based on the specific time period. Deed indexes are usually labeled by date. Choose the specific index that covers the time period that would include your ancestor. The left side of the page is the direct index that shows the grantor (seller), deed book volume, page number and grantee (purchaser). The right side of the page is the inverse or indirect index, which names the grantee first, volume and page, then grantor. Use the indirect index on the right side of the page to learn when your person purchased the property. The indexes are arranged by the first letter of the surname, then the first letter of the given name. Each purchase will be found in the various indexes and each deed recorded with reference to the original record. Once you get the references go to the specified book and page and copy the record. You can use this same method to find deeds in the online images from the catalog on FamilySearch.

Residency by Location

Searching deeds by location should be used when you want to find proof of their residency and you know exactly where they lived within the county. Exact locations are often listed in tax records or a will where the property bequeathed to the widow's or heirs is detailed. Some later probate files have copies of tax receipts for the deceased's property listing the exact township and location therein.

To search by location go to the conveyance books. For example, in Warren County these records are organized in two sets of books: one for the general index for the Virginia Military Surveys and the other index for Section, Township, and Range. Use the numbers for the location (such as section, township, range) where they resided and pull the applicable book. Search for the exact numbers that match and find the first page for that location. There should be columns for grantors and grantees. Read down the grantee column to find the buyer, then read across the same line to get the deed book volume and page number. Often a characterization and description of the property as well as cost and date are listed. Using this information, you can read back up the page to find previous landowners for that location. Reading forward from your grantee will help you identify if the land has been conveyed to others as a whole or in parts. On the right hand side of the conveyance book lists the mortgage, leasors, and liens.

Sometimes you might also find conveyance books for the settlement of individual towns. These deeds may show the platting and selling of plots for specific villages.

When looking for the last possession of land ownership by your ancestor, proceed in the same method. Only this time search for your ancestor as the grantor in the indexes and conveyance books. Also keep in mind that there could be several parcels purchased or sold at various times and locations, which means they might have different numbers. Always start with the earlier indexes and continue past the time period you want to search.

Proof of Residence tips

If you want a copy of deed records to prove residence, make sure to check the tax records along with your deeds. Make sure to get a copy of chattels and property tax records. If an individual is named in the chattels tax list then they definitely resided in the county since this tax was on items they owned at their property such as horses, windows, etc. If your ancestor is only found in the property tax list, then you'll need other sources to prove their residence since the person is responsible for paying taxes on property they owned whether or not they lived at the residence. These might be absentee landlords, land speculators, or property owners who owned land in several locations / counties but might reside in a different county or state. Think of tenant farmers or timeshare owners – this might be a similar situation.

Sometimes deeds are unrecorded. Follow the property transactions over time and see if the deed was later recorded. Keep in mind that sometimes property, especially if it was a lot sold at the creation of the town, might be a private land sale and be recorded elsewhere such as in the probate records for an estate.

Women in deeds

In Ohio's early time period, women didn't often own land in their own right. Upon their marriage, all of their property was given to their husband and by law they were given small part of his total assets called dower rights. When property was sold by the husband, if the wife was alive, she had to sign papers giving up her dower rights to the property; otherwise, she could come back and lay claim to her portion of the land. Often there is a statement in the recording of the deed where the wife signs that she was not coerced into selling the property. If the husband was married several times and his current wife was not his wife at the time he bought the property, she may not be listed in the deed sale.

Tracking land sales by the husband and wife can help distinguish people with the same name living in the same location.

Tips for deed research

If you can find the first deed for land your ancestors purchased you might find out the county and state they came from prior to settling in Ohio.

Deeds might be used prove kinship. You might need to examine partitions to find out who received inherited property especially if they aren't named in a will. Also check receipts – many times the relationships are stated on the receipts.

Terms that commonly appear in land records

- **bounty land** – land given as payment for military service
- **conveyance** – deed
- **deed** – a legal document that transfers a piece of property to someone else
- **dower right** – widow's right to 1/3 of her husband's estate during her lifetime
- **freeholder** – a person who owns his / her own property
- **grantee** – buyer of a piece of property
- **grantor** – seller of a piece of property
- **legacy** – property or money left to an individual in a will
- **legatee** – a person who inherits money or property through a will
- **lessee** – a person who lives / works on a piece of land but doesn't own it – like a renter
- **lessor** – owner of a property who allows it to be lived on or worked for money
- **moiety** – half or equal share of something – usually referenced in a deed or will
- **patent** – land transferred to an individual from the government
- **public domain** – land owned by the government
- **quitclaim deed** – property transferred without the guarantee the title is valid or clear (often this is done when transferring property between family members)
- **surety** – an individual who guarantees the truth of something by paying a bond
- **warranty deed** – deed guaranteed by the seller that the property has a clear and valid title