

RESEARCHING YOUR HOME

SEARCHING FOR OFFICIAL RECORDS

Courthouse or county recorder. At the courthouse, you typically can learn the official lot number or description of the property where your house is located. You may not find correct information using your street address, since these can change over time.

Your local or **county tax assessor** may have lot number information within the tax records for your property. The official record keeping of land and properties typically uses a different system than street addresses, this system allows you to track the history of your house from the moment it was built. If you live in a place that has been continually inhabited since the 19th century, even the property grid/lot system itself may have changed over time. In this case, you may also need to make a trip to your historical society.

Find a copy of your **property's abstract**. The abstract records all deeds or other legal transactions associated with your property. These documents typically are located at the county courthouse.

Review the history of the purchase and selling price. A dramatic increase in the selling price over a short period of time may mean a building or room was added, or that the house was substantially renovated. You can cross-reference with any building permits for additional clues.

If you live in the United States, visit your local or county courthouse to look at the deed registry, usually found in the clerk and recorder's office. This information is indexed by a lot and block number in a city, and a section, township and range for rural property.

Go to your local **municipal planning agency**. The government office that issues building permits should have public records pertaining to your house. The building permit can contain a treasure trove of information including the house's original dimensions, construction dates and costs, and the names of the people originally involved in its construction.

Keep in mind that you typically must pay a small fee to acquire these documents, including a search fee as well as a fee for your own copy.

If your house is hundreds of years old, you may need to visit the local **historical society** to find the building permit.

Check city directories and atlases. If you live in a larger city or town, directories and atlases can help you uncover details about your house throughout the past. In many areas, these city directories and maps were in use in the 19th century. Directories and atlases also can help you identify changes in street names and other geographical details that you can use to target your research and find more information about your house. These directories and atlases typically are available at the municipal planner's office. If they are not there, staff typically will be able to point you in the right direction.

Review **survey maps and field books**. Survey maps and property field books are common sources of information about the history of a property. These typically are located in either local or national archives, and were maintained for tax purposes.

Talk to someone at the **property tax assessor's office** to find out where historical records are kept and how you can assess them. Keep in mind you'll typically need to pay a fee to have them retrieved.

Vermilion County Recorder:	217-554-6040
Vermilion County Tax Assessor:	217-554-1940
Danville Planning Agency:	217-431-2321
Vermilion County Museum:	217-442-2922
Illiana Genealogical and Historical Society:	217-431-8733