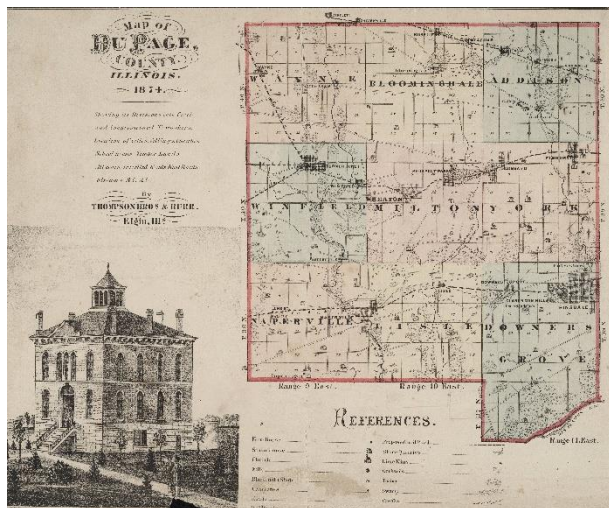


Brick by Brick: Tracing Your House History

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Getting Started:

- In what county/township/city do you live?
- What is your home's legal description or PIN number?
- What is the name of your subdivision/neighborhood?
- What is the age of the home?
- Does your home have an architectural style?

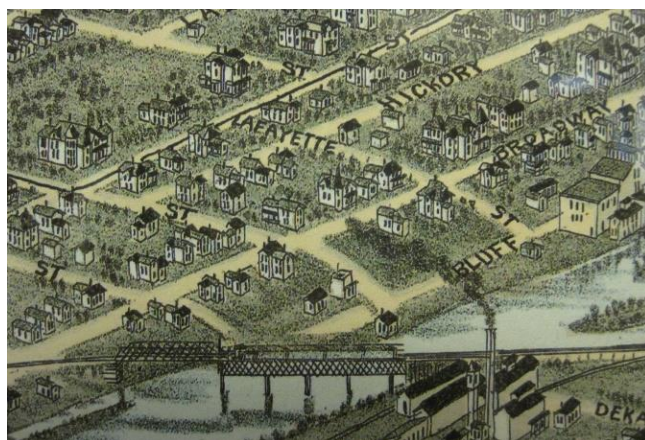


Where to Look:

- Recorder of Deeds
- Circuit Court Clerk
- Tax Assessor
- Land Use/GIS
- Historic Preservation Commission
- Library/Historical Society
- University/College

What Types of Records Exist:

- Deeds/Mortgages
- Wills/Probate
- Personal/Real Estate Taxes
- Permits/Surveys
- Newspapers
- City Directories
- Atlases/Gazetteers
- Fire Insurance Maps
- Photos



Following the Trail:

- Check with your county to see if they keep building permits on file.
- Local Land Use/GIS (Geographic Information Systems) Department will often have aerial or layered maps of each town and neighborhood within the county

- Historical Societies and Libraries may have photos and articles about your home/neighborhood. Most will have information about local architects and popular architectural styles. **Many have listings of Sears Houses
- Colleges/Universities have maps, city directories, & local business records

Property Records and County Government:

- Properties are given a PIN (*Property Identification Number*) to track transactions
- The Tax Assessor will have information online including age of the home, number of rooms, any renovations and property sales
- GIS/Land Use should have aerial maps and subdivision plat of surveys Occasionally they have old land and road surveys

Recorder of Deeds:

The Recorder is responsible for maintaining a wide array of records:

- Affidavits/Liens/Assignments
- Business Incorporations
- Land Trusts
- Property Sales/Transfers

Many of these records are accessible online back past the 1980s. You can find the legal description for your address on your current tax bill

Ask if Indexes are available by Township Section or organized by Grantor and Grantee. Trace backwards from the most recent buyer (grantee): e.g. Smith buys from Jones 1977, Jones buys from Marshall in 1963, Marshall buys from Clark 1958

Frequently Used Property Terms:

- Indenture= Mortgage (terms often set by owner)
- Deeds are property sales between two parties
- Trust Deeds are land held in trust by trustees or heirs of the owner
- Party of the First Part=Seller Party of the Second Part=Buyer
- Grantor= Seller Grantee= Buyer
- Chain of Title: a history of the ownership of a particular piece of property, telling who bought it and sold it, and when

- Abstract of title: The condensed history of the title (Deed) to a particular parcel of real estate, consisting of a summary of the original land patent and all subsequent conveyances and encumbrances affecting the property and a certification by the abstractor that the history is complete and accurate
- Legal Descriptions will include The Section/Township/ Range of the property as well as the Block and Lot of the property within a neighborhood or city

Chicagoland Recorder of Deeds Websites:

- Cook County: www.cookcountyclerk.com/recordings/search-recordings
- DuPage County: www.dupagecounty.gov/elected_officials/recorder
- Kane County: <http://lrs.kanecountyrecorder.net>
- Lake County: www.lakecountylil.gov/258/Recorder-of-Deeds
- McHenry County: <https://tapestry.fidlar.com/Tapestry2/Search.aspx>
- Will County <https://willcountyrecorder.com>

The screenshot shows the Kane County Property Tax Inquiry website. It displays property information for a parcel in Aurora, IL. The property is owned by 175 WOOD ST, AURORA, IL 60005. The tax year is 2023. The property is a 1-story residential building with a lot area of 10,000 sq. ft. The assessed value is \$1,739.35. The total tax is \$1,479.70. The website also shows a table of payments and a table of taxes.

Payment	State Due	Tax Bill	Payable	Cost Bill	Challenge	Total	Amount	Date Paid	Total
1	06/01/2024	\$1,739.35	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,739.35	\$1,739.35	06/01/2024	\$0.00
2	06/01/2024	\$1,739.35	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,739.35	\$1,739.35	06/01/2024	\$0.00
Total		\$3,478.70	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,478.70	\$3,478.70		\$0.00

Land Patents, issued by the federal government are housed at the National Archives in Washington D.C. You can search an index at the Bureau of Land Management: www.glorecords.blm.gov/default.aspx

Circuit Court Documents:

- The Circuit Clerk would have property records in:
- Wills/Probate
- Legal Descriptions of all property (personal and Real Estate)
- Heirs and purchasers
- Chancery/Small Claims Court
- Land divisions
- Claims sue (mortgages, chattel)

Tax Assessor Records County/Township:

Tax Assessors keep property tax cards by address & PIN. Each index card may contain:

- Sales
 - Construction/renovations
 - Liens and adjustments
 - The Township Assessor also collected personal property taxes, which help identify farm renters
 - DuPage County Assessor
- <https://propertylookup.dupagecounty.gov/forms/htmlframe.aspx?mode=content/home.htm>

- York Township Assessor <https://yorktwsp.com/property-record-search>

Land Use and Historic Preservation Commissions:

Storer
Fred Storer, born in Switzerland in 1825, immigrated to the United States in 1854 with his wife Anna. After more than a decade in Kendall County, in 1867 he purchased land in Section 6 of Plainfield Township (formerly belonging to F. E. Smith). The 700-acre farm was owned by Fred Storer until later passing ownership of it to his son Robert. The Agricultural Schedule from the 1870 census for the farm to have over 1,000 bushels of corn and 1,100 bushels of oats. Few of the historic agricultural structures remain on the site, but the buildings situated on the farm have been preserved.

Fred's son, Fred W. Storer, was born in 1859 in Kendall County. He obtained his education in the district schools and also attended Superior College. For several years, the younger Storer sold produce from the farm to the Chicago market. The original view of the farm from the Storer family in the mid-1900s. The Storer family retained ownership of the Fred W. Storer farm in Section 6 until the 1970s.



The Storer family lived on the farm from the 1860s until the 1970s. The original view of the farm from the Storer family in the mid-1900s. The Storer family retained ownership of the Fred W. Storer farm in Section 6 until the 1970s.



- City and County planners use GIS maps to keep detailed layers for houses, roads, utilities, cabling and other services.

- Historic Properties Surveys
- Landmark Nominations
- Subdivision Plats and Surveys
- Records for roads and bridges
- Elmhurst Heritage Foundation

<https://www.elmhurstheritagefoundation.org>

- Elmhurst Historic Preservation www.elmhurst.org/services/community_development/planning_and_zoning/historic_preservation.php

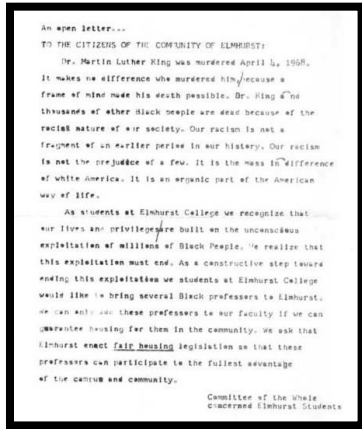
Historical Societies and Libraries:

- Newspaper Clippings
- Obituary Indexes
- Photos and Postcards
- County/Community Histories
- City Directories
- Street/Neighborhood files
- Architecture Guides
 - DuPage County Historical Museum <https://dupagemuseum.org>
 - Elmhurst History Museum www.elmhursthhistory.org
 - Lombard Historical Society www.lombardhistory.org
 - Villa Park Historical Museum www.invillapark.com/148/Historical-Museum

Newspapers:

- Sales/Foreclosures
- Farm Renters "Moving Day"
- New Construction, Renovations, Fires
- Obituaries
 - Illinois Newspaper Collections
 - Google News Archive <http://news.google.com/newspapers>
 - Illinois Digital Archives www.idaillinois.org
 - Internet Archive www.archive.org

- Elmhurst Newspaper Collections
<https://elmhurstpubliclibrary.org/247-e-library/research-reference/local-newspapers>
- Addison Public Library Newspaper Archive
<https://addisonpubliclibrary.historyarchives.online/home>



Universities and Colleges:

- City Directories/Phone Directories
- Maps
- Business Files
- Community Histories
- Photos
- Elmhurst University Special Collections
<https://library.elmhurst.edu/c.php?g=294911&p=1964873>
- Aurora University Archives
<https://aurora.edu/academics/library/library-archives/index.html>

County Atlases & Plat Books:

- Prominent citizens, businesses & buildings
- Tax lists/directories for property owners
- DuPage Co. Township and County maps:
 - www.idaillinois.org/digital/collection/npl/id/11053
 - www.idaillinois.org/digital/collection/npl/id/11734



Gazetteers:

- Historic demographic information
- Descriptions of towns and cities
- Maps
- Railroad timetables, offices
- Residential tax lists

City & Phone Directories:

- Trace organizations, churches, renters, and business owners
- Occupations may help distinguish between people with the same name
- Address and street name changes are common
- Search for variant spellings of surnames and Look for family members
- Search multiple years before and after your date

Online City Directories:

- Ancestry.com: www.ancestry.com \$
- Chicago Ancestors: www.chicagoancestors.org
- Fold3: www.fold3.com \$
- Illinois Digital Archives www.idaillinois.org
- Internet Archive: www.archive.org
- Steven Morse <http://stevemorse.org/census/changes.html>

County Histories:

- Information was not verified by the publisher. Double-check the facts!
- Provide government info, tax-lists, property owners, sketches prominent buildings & businesses
- Include photos and/or sketches of prominent residents, businesses and farms

County Histories Online:

- www.genealogybranches.com/countyhistories.html
- Google Books <http://books.google.com>
- Illinois Digital Archives www.idaillinois.org
- Internet Archive www.archive.org

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps:

- Sanborn Fire Insurance maps cover misc. years from 1867-1970
- Detailed descriptions of individual properties including size, shape, location of windows & doors; type of construction; proximity to other buildings etc...
- Street level descriptions of incorporated towns showing streets, sidewalks, trolley lines, railroad tracks, wells and more
- Elmhurst Maps www.elmhursthhistory.org/collections-and-research/historical-maps

State and Local Websites:

- Chicago Building Permits www.uic.edu/depts/lib/documents/services/building.shtml
- Chicago in Maps www.chicagoinmaps.com
- University of Illinois Historical Maps Online <http://images.library.uiuc.edu/projects/maps>
- Illinois Land Plats 1804-1891 <http://landplats.ilsos.net>
- Illinois Digital Archives www.idaillinois.org
- Illinois Regional Archives Repositories www.ilsos.gov/departments/archives/IRAD
- Illinois State Archives www.ilsos.gov/departments/archives

Helpful Books:

- Dumelle, Grace. Finding Your Chicago Ancestors: a beginner's guide. Chicago. Lake Claremont Press. 2005.
- Hatcher, Patricia Law. Locating Your Roots: Discover Your Ancestors Using Land Records. Betterway Books. Cincinnati, OH. 2003.
- Hone, Wade. Land and Property Research in the United States. Ancestry Publishers. Provo, UT. 1997.
- Larkin, Jack. Where We Lived: Discovering the places we once called home. Taunton Press. Newton, CT. 2006.
- Light, Sally, House Histories. Goldenhill Press. Spencer Hill, N.Y. 1989.
- McAlester, Virginia. Field Guide to American Houses. Alfred A. Knopf. NY. 2013

Additional Helpful Websites:

- American Aerial County History Series:
<https://archive.org/search.php?query=american%20aerial%20county%20history>
- City of Chicago Your House Has a History:
https://webapps1.chicago.gov/landmarksweb/static/pdf/Your_House_Has_A_History.pdf
- Historic American Buildings Survey: www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh