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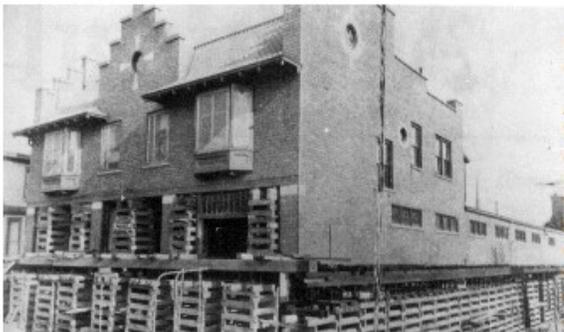
Archival Chronicle

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Real Estate Research

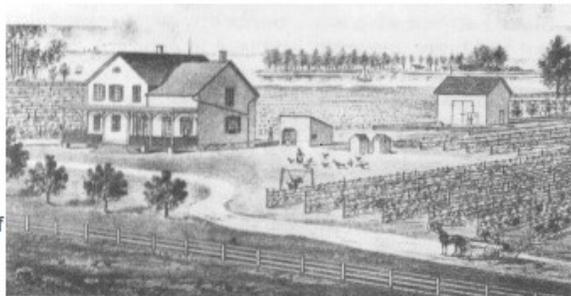


▶ *Has your building been moved? Research in a variety of records can reveal unexpected information about structures. This Tiffin, Ohio building was moved in 1914. CAC general photograph collection.*

Among the more common questions researchers have when they come to the Center for Archival Collections is, "Where can I find information about the history of my house?" A handout prepared by the Historic Preservation Office offers some research tips. You may want to begin at the auditor's office of your county courthouse, or with your local building inspector, or engineering and water departments. Other resources to consider are the Sanborn maps (developed for fire insurance use), cemetery records, and trade catalogs available through your local library or historical society. In addition to records such as these, the Center for Archival Collections holdings also include church records and photographs that may be helpful, too.

Hardesty's Atlas of Ottawa County, Ohio, shows the John Rehberg residence on Middle Bass Island as it looked in 1874. Resources such as this can provide valuable clues to the original appearance and relative location of buildings. CAC general photograph collection. ▶

The names of the first land owners or pioneer residents in a specific locality are often part of local folklore. Genealogists, home owners, and local historians usually want to locate official records that separate fact from fiction. A trip to the County Recorder's and County Auditor's offices should provide such records. It is helpful to know the legal description of the property in addition to the post office address of the house located on it. This description can be found on the *deed of the property*, the *tax bill*, or by contacting the County Recorder.



The primary responsibility of the County Recorder is to maintain and preserve a record of all land transactions within the county. These records include *deeds*, *mortgages*, and other land conveyances. The first step in the process of researching a parcel of land is to search the *Index to Deeds* by grantee (buyer) and grantor (seller) for the first and subsequent owners. Using the volume and page numbers provided by the indexes, search the individual deed volumes. Deed records are organized by the date of the transaction and usually provide the names and residences of all persons involved in the sale, the price of the property, a detailed description of the property, including buildings, and the date of transfer.



◀ The interior of the Wood County Courthouse features a stained glass arched skylight and murals depicting important places and events in county history. This structure has been an important landmark since 1896. CAC general photograph collection.

The County Auditor maintains duplicate *Lists of Taxable Property* within the county, including real estate. Arranged chronologically and by locality, the lists show the owner's name, property description and value, and the amount of tax assessed. Some lists include a separate column for house values. When using tax lists, the researcher should make a note of a dramatic change in assessed value from one year to the next. The change may indicate that a building was constructed during that time. In some instances, a note indicating that a house was built will appear on the tax list. The auditor is also responsible for reappraising property every six years. *Reappraisements* are organized by the legal description of the property, and include the name of the current owner, the age of the house or buildings, the square footage of each building located on the parcel, and the old and new values of land and buildings. Sometimes details of construction (type of foundation, siding) and utilities (gas, electric, water, and heating) are listed on this form.

--Stephen M. Charter

For more information about researching the history of a piece of property, consult the Class Research Aids on [Research Strategies](#) and [Property and Real Estate Resources](#).

Note: The Bowling Green State University branch of the Ohio Historic Preservation Office is now closed. For assistance in the nomination of eligible sites to the National Register of Historic Places or for information about the OHPO's public education programs or for technical assistance with tax incentives and the rehabilitation of older buildings, visit their WWW site at the [Ohio Historical Society](#) homepage. [June 2000.]

THE PHOTOGRAPHS IN THIS ISSUE illustrate historic structures in northwest Ohio.
