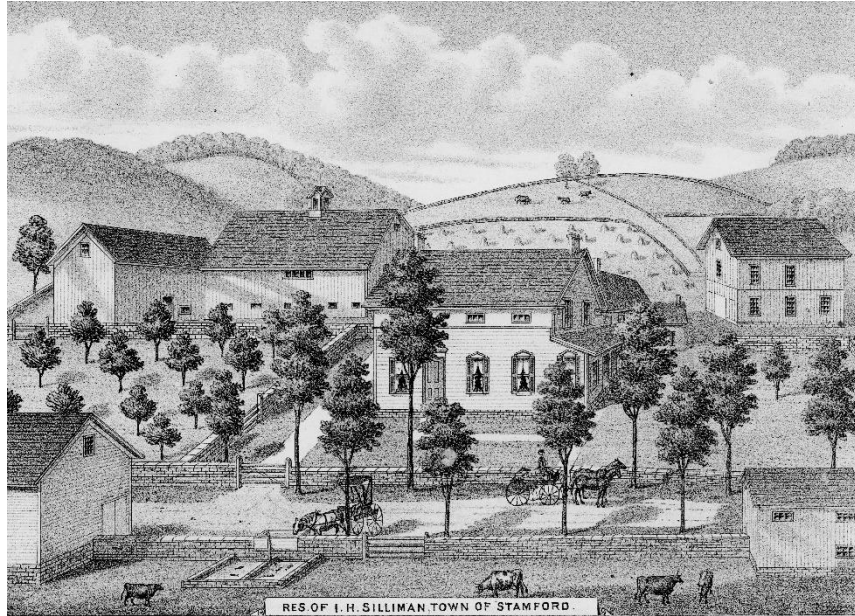


# Researching Your House in



## Delaware County

People have an understandable interest in learning more about the history of their home and/or property. Generally, the Delaware County Historical Association is not the first place to go when doing this, but with the right preliminary research, there may be information to be gleaned from our collections.

It is important to know the chain of ownership of your home or property. This can be done by researching **deeds** at the Delaware County Clerk's office and identifying who owned your home and when. Start with the current owner and work backwards. Sometimes your deed will have information on the previous owner and cite the previous deed's liber (book) and page number. If you are lucky you can just keep working back through the deeds to the earliest one available. And if the trail runs cold, you still have the index books. The deeds are indexed by Grantor (seller) and Grantee (buyer). And if the deeds fail you, it helps to check the **mortgages** to see what is there.

Unfortunately, people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in particular did not always file a deed, adding to the challenge of tracing your property back to the earliest days of the county. If you cannot trace the deeds all the way back, you might have some luck with old **tax rolls**. When you have traced the title back as far as you can with the deeds, go to the tax roll for the town in which the property is located at the period in which you found the earliest deed. By noting down acreage and, in rolls starting around 1910, the names of the bordering property owners, you might have some luck tracking the previous owner. It is a tedious process and it does not always work, but it is worth a shot. Many of these tax rolls are on microfilm at the County Clerk's office, covering 1860 to

1930. You can also contact the town clerk in the town where your house is located to see what tax rolls may be available there. For most towns, the rolls will not go back before the 1860s and availability will vary widely.

When deeds fail you, another source that might help would be **probate records** in the Surrogates Court, also located in the County Court house. Again, you need to know who the owners were, but sometimes property passed down from parent to child. This can help you re-establish the chain of owners.

*Keep in mind that deeds, mortgages, tax rolls and wills rarely, if ever, will provide you information on when a particular building was built. These documents generally do not provide information on any structures, certainly not any details.*

Another source in identifying owners is to look at the **1856 Gould map of Delaware County** and the **1869 Beers Atlas of Delaware County**. What this will not tell you, unfortunately, is the age of your home. It can help, but just because there's a dot on your property doesn't mean the house in 1856 or 1869 is the house that is there today. These are available at the County Clerk's office, but we also have a set available here at DCHA. And the entire atlas is on the Delaware County Genealogy website at <https://dcnyhistory.org/BeersAtlas1869.html>

Once you have the information on the chain of ownership it is time to look at DCHA's resources related to family histories and genealogies. The more you know about the owner of your home the better chance you have of placing the home in context. We do not have information on all families in the county, but we have a reference library of genealogies and several files of correspondence which may help you.

For some areas of Delaware County researchers will have a bit of luck with the **Delaware County Architectural Reconnaissance Survey**. Conducted by DCHA between 1989 and 1992, photographs were taken of many structures, including homes and outbuildings, and a survey form was filled out with information about the architectural details of the building and an estimate as to when it was built. Unfortunately, not all towns were covered in the survey. Those that were include: Bovina (but not the Bovina Center Hamlet), Delhi, Franklin, Hamden, Middletown, and Roxbury.

In 1998, DCHA, along with the Delaware County Cooperative Extension, the Town of Walton Historical Society and the Super Clover 4-H Club of Walton, conducted a **barn survey of Walton**. Survey forms and photographs are included.

If you are considering a visit to DCHA to find more information about your home, please call (607-746-3849) or e-mail ([dchadelhi@gmail.com](mailto:dchadelhi@gmail.com)) us first. We can discuss with you what you already know about the house and determine if a visit is the best use of your time. And if a visit is justified, we can be ready with the material you need that will help you learn more about your home. Our library and archives are open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays each week from 10am until 3pm. **Appointments are required.**