

Recorder of Deeds

Serving Kent County with Pride by using property records industry standards and best practices to make transactions faster, safer, & more convenient for everyone.



Hon. Eugenia Thornton, Recorder



Who, Why, Where, How — Research Property History

Who?

Many people research a property's history:

- Buyers to be sure the title is clear before the land is purchased;
- Folks who enjoy history;
- Owners who want to know about encumbrances.

Why?

Know about encumbrances.

It's a good idea for everyone— but especially seniors— to know about outstanding liens or mortgages to:

- Minimize damage from potential property theft,
- Be aware of legitimate property transactions,
- Avoid delays in clearing title for quick sales, such as for seniors who want to move to a 55 Plus or nursing home situation or leave property to loved ones hassle-free.

Home Historians. It's an easy jump from genealogist to home historian. This means learning about the people who once occupied your home, going back, and forming a rudimentary knowledge of historical architecture and construction.

If you want to dig into the history of your property, who lived there, and historical architecture, please refer to various websites listed on the reverse.

Convey land. We recommend professionals do this. Please see the article on the back for why.

Where?

Researching property records can be done in our office at 555 Bay Road, Dover, DE OR from the convenience of your own home OR anywhere with internet access using <https://i2g.uslandrecords.com/DE/Kent2/D/Default.aspx>.

How?

Start by locating the property's owner by using Kent County Tax records. Enter the street number and street name only into <https://pride.kentcountyde.gov/disclosure/>.

Once you know the owner's name, go to <https://i2g.uslandrecords.com/DE/Kent2/D/Default.aspx> and enter it into the search bar at the top. Display results from newest to oldest by clicking "File Date."

One person may own several properties at different addresses. You may need to refer to the legal description of the property to focus your research on one property at a time.

The "recital" part of the deed is the part that explains the purpose of the document and gives factual information.

The recital will read something like this: "Being the same lands

and premises, which were conveyed unto X by deed of X dated December 25, XXXX, in Deed Book X-13, Page 207." Take careful notes. Be sure to record the date of the deed and the "book and page number" so you can go back to it later.

Start with newer documents and work backward. When the property changes hands, by deed or will, the recital will detail that.

A property might have been land subdivided by the farmer who owned it or by a developer. In which case trace the developer back to the farmer or who or whatever once owned the property and continue going backward in time.

Our electronic records go back to 1774, and bound books in our office go back to 1646.

We use conventions in indexing. For example, a church might be indexed by its name or CH-(name). Ask the Recorder for a list of indexing conventions.

Deeds clerks are neither title searchers nor lawyers. We cannot interpret documents for you. We are happy to print copies once you tell us the book and page of what you want. There is a \$1.00 fee per page. Cash or checks only.

Other Helpful Fact-sheets:

Please refer to our Fact Sheet: *Explore Property Records from Anywhere— Free* to find out how to download/print what you discover.

Searching is free, but there is a modest fee for downloading or printing.

Currently, there is a \$2.00 charge per page, but if you are doing a lot of research, it is more economical to get a subscription for 30 days of unlimited download/printing for \$75.00

After you have searched for what we recorded in your name, it is a good idea to sign up for the **free property transaction alert software** so you will know whenever anything changes.

<https://pfa.uslandrecords.com/Default.aspx> is the link to register for this alert. Ask for our Fact Sheet: *Why Register for Property Transaction Alerts?*

For House Historians

This is a partial list of resources for those who want to research their property history.

FROM: How to Research the History of Your House <https://www.wikihow.com/Research-the-History-of-Your-House>

Method 1: Examine the House's Construction

1. Examining the House's Construction; 2. Check out some architecture books; 3. Pay attention to design details and hardware used; 4. Scrape through layers of paint; 5. Talk to your neighbors; 6. Track down previous owners; 7. Use a metal detector in your yard.

Method 2: Research Public Records

1. Visit your Kent county recorder at 555 South Bay Road or use <https://i2g.uslandrecords.com/DE/Kent2/D/Default.aspx>; 2. Look at Kent County PRIDE records on line; 3. Check city directories and atlases.

Method 3: Dig through Archives

1. Read local newspaper archives; 2. Visit your local historical society; 3. Search for information online; 4. Compile a chronological history of your house.

FROM: Genealogist to House Historian: This excellent article was published in *Family Tree Magazine* Jan/Feb 2014 edition. <https://familytreemagazine.com/house-history/free-online-resources-to-trace-house-histories>. Multiple online links to explore!

Books:

[America's Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups that Built America](#) by Dell Upton (Preservation Press)

[The Big House: A Century in the Life of an American Summer Home](#) by George Howe Colt (Scribner)

[If These Walls Had Ears: The Biography of a House](#) by James Morgan (Warner Books)

[Houses and Homes: Exploring Their History](#) by Barbara J. Howe, Dolores A. Fleming, Emory L. Kemp, and Ruth Ann Overbeck (AltaMira)

[How to Research Your House: Every Home Tells a Story](#) by Pamela Brooks (How To Books)

[A Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture](#) by Rachel Carley (Henry Holt)

Please email recorder@KentCountyDE.gov for more information about the above resources. **Don't forget! Delaware Archives, Delaware Historical Society, etc.**

Real Estate Title Search

The information contained on this fact sheet is not meant as a substitute for legal advice.

Because recorded documents concerning conveyances of land are a matter of public record, anyone *can* do a title search. However, we recommend hiring a professional when conveying real estate. According to [Deeds.com](https://www.deeds.com), A full title search of real property will answer three questions:

- Does the seller or grantor have an interest in the property being transferred?
- Are there any restrictions pertaining to the use of the land (real covenants, easements, or other servitudes)?
- Is the property encumbered (mortgages, back taxes, mechanic's liens, or other assessments)?

Performing a title search begins by accessing the county's official land records, as discussed on the front side of this fact-sheet at <https://i2g.uslandrecords.com/DE/Kent2/D/Default.aspx>. In addition, professional title searchers look for taxes, tax ditch information, assessments, sewers, mortgages, judgements, foreclosure proceedings, mechanics liens, financing statements, federal tax liens, restrictions (covenants, etc.), Chancery proceedings, civil proceedings, and other things which might crop up such as rights of way, Patriot Act, wills, etc. When combined, these records create a *chain of title*.

A full real estate title search protects the buyer because it confirms the actual ownership status of the seller and verifies the seller's statements about the quality of the title and encumbrances on the property. Even if receiving real estate as a gift, a title search is in the recipient's best interest. Real estate can carry burdens that may turn a gift into a nightmare.

For this reason, a real estate attorney can best guide you and will also know how to hire a professional title searcher. There are many legal considerations, such as:

- Delaware is a race to record state. In a Race Statute state the first person to record their deed takes precedence over any unrecorded deed.
- If two people receive a real estate deed to the same property at the same time in Delaware the first person to record their deed is the legal recipient of the grantor's rights to the real estate.

Researching the history of your home for fun, or making sure that there is nothing encumbering your property is one thing, but before a search is done to transfer real estate from one entity to another, it is best to hire an attorney.