Montgomery County is not only rich in historic figures and innovations, but in properties and homes as well. Tracing the histories of these old homes can be fun and exciting with the right tools, which can be found in this Montgomery County Home and Property Research Guide. (Tip: Click the sentences highlighted in blue to go directly to that page.)

**Where Do I Start?**

There are two common questions people typically have when they want to do property or house research: “who owned the home before me, or before/after my relatives?” And, “how old is the home?” The first step in answering both questions involves determining the **chain of ownership**.

Determining the chain of ownership can be accomplished in any of three ways: by searching the County Recorder’s Deed Records using the Alphabetical Index, which lists Grantors-Grantees (Buyers-Sellers); using the Tract Index, which is the geographical/legal description abstract; or by visiting the Montgomery County Auditor’s website and using their property search tool.

All deed records and indexes are available in the Recorder’s Office on the 5th Floor of the County Administration Building at 451 W. Third Street. The Montgomery County Records Center & Archives also has select deed indexes and records, which can be found in our [Historical Records Guide](#), and at the end of this research guide.

**Deed Record Research**

To determine the chain of ownership, it is best to start at the present owner and work backwards. Finding the present owner of a property or home, if it is not you, can be done through the County Auditor’s website using their **property search tool**. Note that you can search using the address, owner’s name (if you know who owns it), or parcel ID. Once you enter this information and have clicked ‘search,’ the current owner will appear. Clicking directly on the current owner’s name will expand the information available about the property or home, which will list a **legal description** of the property.

The legal description of the property is what you will need before you start scouring the deed records. It will include references to sections, townships, ranges, and lot numbers. Once you have the legal description of the property, you can either visit the County Recorder’s Office, the GIS documents page on the Montgomery County Auditor’s website, or the Montgomery County Records Center & Archives to document the chain of title.

The County Auditor’s **GIS document page** is the fastest and most convenient way to gather your chain of title as it provides several City Abstract Books. When you have your legal description, you can go to the document page, click on “Abstract Book City,” and find your number. For
example, the Reibold Building’s legal description is lot 205. Looking at the Abstract Book City, the abstract list for the Reibold Building is in Dayton 11, lots 155-326. Clicking on the Dayton 11 link will take you to Abstract Book 11, City of Dayton, where you will have to scroll until you find lot 205. The lot numbers are stamped in the top left-hand corner and are typically blue, although they can be hand-written. Once you find your number, you will see a list of sellers, buyers, deed books, mortgage books, and page numbers for the home or property. This list of sellers and buyers is your chain of ownership.

With your chain of ownership, you have everything you need to start searching deed books to see who the very first owner of your home or property was. As mentioned before, having the chain of ownership also helps to determine the age of the house. To find out how old your home is, you will need to search tax records called *Auditor’s Tax Duplicates*.

**Tax Record Research**

Sometimes it is easy to determine the age of a structure just by look. *Architectural evidence* can be the biggest hint of house age, possibly narrowing the age range down to 10-30 years. You can use your chain of title to compare names and see whether the name on the deed is the same name that paid the taxes for that year. However, if you are unable to determine the age of your home by looks alone, the Auditor’s Records are there to help.

*Auditor’s Tax Duplicates* provide information such as: annual value of the property, value of improvements on the property, taxes paid or delinquent for the year, and if the property exchanged hands within the tax year. Auditor’s Tax Duplicates are located in the Montgomery County Auditor’s Office at 451 W. Third Street, and at the Montgomery County Records Center & Archives.

If you have already identified the first person to own the land your home is on, and the date in which they owned it, you can start with them. The land might exchange hands a few times before a structure is actually built on it, so be aware of that. Also, be aware of fluctuations in the economy - an increase in value from one year to the next may not indicate construction of a building. The construction of a building is typically reflected in a significant increase in taxes, usually more than 50% in one year. If your land was valued at $200.00 in 1897 then jumped to $1,000.00 in 1899, a home or other significant improvement was likely erected in 1898. Make sure to look carefully at the record to see if there are any notations such as *frame house*, and take note of anything written in the Value of Improvements column.

One last thing to be aware of is that a property may have been recorded as “township, section, and range” instead of as a lot. This is especially relevant for houses outside city limits. A township, section, and range can make finding your property difficult, but not impossible!
**Additional Resources**

*Montgomery County Administration Building* – This building houses both the Auditor’s and Recorder’s Offices. Property research records that can be found in these offices are:

- Deed Records (1805-Present—Recorder)
- Tax Records (1984-Present—Auditor)
- Property Tax Maps (Auditor)

Contact information:

Montgomery County Administration Building
451 W. Third Street
Dayton, OH 45422

- **County Auditor:**
  auditor@mcohio.org
  937-225-6372

- **County Recorder:**
  mcrecorder@mcohio.org
  937-225-4725

*Dayton-Metro Public Library* – The library houses a large genealogical and historical collection related to Dayton and her people. Property research records that can be found here are:

- Will Records (1805-1910)
- County Histories, Maps, and Atlases
- City Directories

Contact information:

Dayton-Montgomery County Public Library
215 E. Third Street
Dayton, OH 45402
history@daytonmetrolibrary.org
937-463-2665
Additional Resources (cont’d)

**Wright State University Special Collections & Archives** – Wright State University’s archives, located in Dunbar library, houses a variety of historical, genealogical, and interesting records. Aside from individual collections, they also house official records for certain Ohio Townships and Counties. Property research records that can be found here are:

- Local Government Records and Manuscript Materials
- Family Histories and Genealogical Materials
- Miami Valley Genealogical Society Library

Contact information:

**Wright State University Special Collections & Archives**
3640 Colonel Glenn Highway
Dayton, OH 45435
library-archives@wright.edu
937-775-2092

**Montgomery County Records Center & Archives** – This office holds official historical county records for all of Montgomery County. Property research records that can be found here are:

- Deed Records (1805-1971)
- Deed Indexes (1805-1928)
- Auditor’s Tax Duplicate Records (1803-1983)
- Will and Estate Records (1803-1939)
- Tract Record of Original Owners (1801-1830)
- County Engineer Maps
- Common Pleas Court Records

Contact Information:

**Montgomery County Records Center & Archives**
Reibold Building, 6th Floor
117 S. Main Street
Dayton, OH 45422
genealogy@mcohio.org
937-225-6366