

# TO ESTABLISH A STRUCTURE'S BUILDING DATE

## by Don Garrold

This methodology is presented relative to Searsport, Maine and can be adapted to other municipalities.

**Be sure to keep concise and complete notes.**

### **Starting Information**

These data are usually found by the owner's name or, when the owner's name is not known, it is found by the tax map and lot.

### **Owner Name**

There are two resources that list names alphabetically. One is the Real Estate Tax Commitment book available at the Town Office. The other is on the town website located at [www.searsport.maine.gov](http://www.searsport.maine.gov)

When at the website click on "SERVICES", click on "SEARSPORT REAL ESTATE TAX INFORMATION", click on "2011 REAL ESTATE TAX COMMITMENT BOOK".

The data to be collected are located in the lower left corner of the owner named property section in the following order:

- The address number and street name
- The map and lot numbers (**M#### L#####**)
- The recorded deed book and page number (**B##### P#####**)

### **Map and Lot**

The researcher should be aware of the building's physical location relative to streets and other mapped information. This physical location is used to determine the **Map** and **Lot** number.

There are two resources that list map and lot numerically. One is the 2011 Tax Map Set with the 2011 Map & Lot and Street Index book available at the Town Office. The other is on the town website located at [www.searsport.maine.gov](http://www.searsport.maine.gov)

When at the website click on "SERVICES", click on "SEARSPORT REAL ESTATE TAX INFORMATION", click on "SEARSPORT TAX MAPS AND LOT INDEX", click on "SEARSPORT 2011 TAX MAP AND LOT INDEX".

The data to be collected are:

- The lot owner's name using the determined **Map** and **Lot** number.

## **Ownership Research at the Registry of Deeds**

The deed **B**ook and **P**age citation is then used at the Waldo County Registry of Deeds in Belfast to determine the names of the previously deeded owners and the years in which they owned the lot.

The current deed (as obtained from tax information) will list the previous owner along with their deed **B**ook and **P**age citation. This deed is then reviewed.

The process is repeated back to the anticipated time of construction or to the earliest time possible. Some deeds will state “land and buildings” or “land only”. This information is helpful and should be noted.

## **Buildings Taxation (Assessor Records)**

The original owner is checked in the Municipal Assessor Records for the period of their ownership. Searsport Assessor archives are at the Penobscot Marine Museum, Stephen Phillips Memorial Library. Check for other municipalities at their town offices.

The data reviewed are:

- The land assessment.
- The building assessment.

There should be an assessment year that does not include the building and then the next assessment year that does include the building.

If this does not resolve the build date, other ownership periods are checked.

## **Building Date**

The building date will be somewhere between the “without buildings” and the “with buildings” assessment years.

## **Note**

This method is not always successful but evaluating these data can lead to other more creative approaches. **Do not despair.**