

Establishing a Lot's Original Owner and/or a Structure's Building Date

Methodology:

Step 1

You need the property's current owner's name to move forward.

If you have the Owner's Name - look it up alphabetically in the Searsport Real Estate Tax Commitment book. A hard copy is located in the Town Office. The Real Estate Tax Commitment book is also available online at www.searsport.maine.gov. Click on "Services", click on "Searsport Real Estate Information", click on the most recent book. Or click on this link - [Real Estate Tax Commitment Book - 18.700](#) . Scroll to the name in the book, at the bottom left, find the physical address, Map and Lot number (M####, L####) and Deed Book and Page numbers (D####, P####)

If you do not have the Owner's Name you can scroll through the pages and find the physical address located at the bottom left of each entry. (It is many pages, but doable) Or, you can use Map and Lot data. See next.

Map and Lot - Know the building's location relative to streets and other buildings. This physical location is needed to determine Map and Lot number. Once you have the Map and Lot number you can use the Map and Lot Index to find the owner's name. A hard copy of the Map and Lot Map Set is available at the Town Office. The Map Set is also available online at www.searsport.maine.gov. Click on "Services", click on "Searsport Maps". Or Or click on this link - [Searsport Map](#) . Scroll down to the most recent Maps and Index.

Once you have the name you can go to the Real Estate Tax Commitment book and look up the Book #### and Page #### in the Real Estate Tax Commitment Book located in the lower left corner.

You need the recorded Deed book and Page number (B#### P####) found in the lower left corner of the Searsport Real Estate Tax Commitment book to go to Step 2.

Step 2

The Deed Book and Page number is used at the Waldo County Registry of Deeds in Belfast to determine names of previously deeded owners and the years they owned the lot. Find the deed on the available computer - if you need help to begin, the staff in the Deed Office are great! The current deed will list the previous owner and their Book and Page number.

1. Read the deed,
2. Methodically record the names and Book and Page numbers Grantor and Grantee. Also record important information related to land, structures, buildings, dwellings, etc.
3. Repeat the process using the previous deed Book and Page, to get to the earliest deed possible.

(As you go back in deed time, it helps to understand and note the type of deed: Warranty, Quit Claim, Mortgage. These distinctions may matter as you dig down. For definitions of the differences - Google)

Online Resources

Once familiar with the process of finding deed/ownership through the Deed Book and Page system, there are a variety of online resources that allow one to work from a computer.

Deed Searches

Waldo County Deeds: 1970-present

[Waldo County,ME - SearchIQS](#)

Hancock Deeds: 1789-1827 - Grantor/Grantee Indexes, Deeds for properties that were in Hancock County but became Waldo County after 1827.

[FamilySearch Catalog: Hancock records, Waldo lands, 1791-1850; index, 1789-1827](#)

Waldo County Deeds: 1827-1900 - Grantors/Grantees Indexes and Deeds

[FamilySearch Catalog: Records of deeds, 1828-1896; indexes to deeds, 1827-1900](#)

Genealogy to help determine house lineage

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/> (maintained by LDS)

Free - create an account. Available info - more or less: census info, gravestone/cemetery location, birth/death records, parent/family connections, occasional newspaper reports, photos (depending how much input there has been for an individual). Sometimes determining how people are related helps to understand ownership changes of a house.

<https://www.ancestry.com/> will give you additional information but has a subscription cost.

Historic Searsport Maps - 1845 - 1911.

<https://searsport.maine.gov/index.asp?SEC=77B4908D-C317-442F-B1BE-969A95F51C48&DE=EB8D10BD-1C63-48EB-9363-6F9B2425F912>

These maps are not always complete or accurate. Even if they are not as specific as you hoped, they can be useful to orient one to local names and family properties.

Library of Congress (LOC):

Type in "Searsport, Maine maps" - You will see maps from 1890-1911 Or click this link -

<https://www.loc.gov/maps/?q=searsport+maine>

Other Sources:

Using multiple sources is key to accurate decisions about when a house was built. Below are sources that can help verify house dates.

Penobscot Marine Museum

- Tax Valuation Books 1845 to _____. You must make an appointment to see the books. Once you have a Deed traced back to this period, be aware of when buildings or houses appeared on the property. If you can track ownership of a property from when there was not a building to when there was a building you may have found the year a house was built. However, buildings may not be houses, they may be shops, stores or barns and not be distinguished in the records.
- PMM photos - email request

11/22

- PMM online archive

Old postcards found in general Google searches as well as at PMM, LoC, Carver Library

Genealogies and newspaper clippings - Carver Library

Notes:

Dates, ages and names are not always exact due to Census years/takers, multiple same names, unavailability of images of gravestones, general errors.

Suggestions:

- When searching deeds at Waldo County Deed Office or the online resources, start with a plan of what you want to accomplish during that session - and with a plan for taking notes. TAKE GOOD NOTES. Be sure to note - Grantor, Grantee; Deed Book, Page; Year of deed; type of deed (Quit Claim, War, Mort, other) and add any notes that may be helpful. Stick to your organization. Developing an organizer that works for each deed is a priceless tool.
- When searching a deed on the Deed Office computer (1970-present) or online, less is more. If you have a Book and Page number that is all that is needed. If you don't - a last name often works better than a first and last name.
- Check all possible spellings of names- i.e. Curtis, Curtiss: Havner, Havener: Elisha, Elijah
- You can enlarge images on the familysearch.org website - it is slow. You may want to use their storage boxes (change the file name to something recognizable) for pertinent documents to read/make notes later. Always note **Book** and **Page** numbers in your notes!
- Census Data: Noting who lives around someone helps to triangulate information.
- Line vs. grand tour searches. A line search is "the best". A line search goes directly from point A to point B. A grand tour search often requires going to abutters' deeds, census' and maps over time to help you zero in on your search
- Avoid rabbit holes but plan for them - keep neat, accurate notes - i.e. when you are attempting to determine if a house changed hands within a family but the names are different and you use non-deed resources to figure it out. Or, you explore a document that contains fascinating facts that you want to know more about. Plan to keep identifying notes of what is pertinent and/or possibly important in the future.