

2025 Annual Report of Greene County Historian

Submitted by Jonathan Palmer

Introduction:

This is my fifth annual report submitted as Greene County Historian for the Period 1/1/2025 to 12/31/2025. This year was broadly defined by a continued focus on programming and the preparation of longer research guides to aid in helping members of the public dive into specific topics - namely property histories. This year also included the organizing and attendance at several meetings devoted to the organization of some form of commemorative activities for the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration.

Lectures, Public Events, and Presentations:

(total audience for programs approximately 800 attendees)

February 23 - Lecture for Greene Land Trust

March 15 - Lecture for Cairo Historical Society

March 29 - Meeting with Economic Development at Vedder Library

April 10 - Lecture for Catskill Senior Center

April 26 - Lecture for Lexington Community Patriots Day

May 9 - Lecture for D&H Canal Museum

May 17 - Association Day at Bronck House

June 7 - Two Presentations during Annual Tour of Homes in Athens

June 9 - Lecture for Greenville Local History Group

July 10 - Lecture for Catskill Senior Center

July 10 - Recital of Selections from *Miscellaneous Poetry, or, The Farmer's Muse* at Athens

July 11 - Recital of Selections from *Miscellaneous Poetry, or, The Farmer's Muse* at Catskill

July 12 - Lecture for Saugerties Local History Group

July 12 - Presentation on House History Research at Catskill Public Library

September 6 - Special Landscape Tour at Olana

September 21 - Lecture for Empire State Railway Museum

September 25 - Floating talk on board schooner Apollonia

September 29 - 30th Anniversary of the Vedder Library reception

October 3 - Radio spot on WAMC with Thomas Cole Site

October 4 - Mount Hope Cemetery tours

November 15 - Lecture for Cairo Historical Society

November 16 - MC at GCHS fundraiser

November 30 - Lecture for Thomas Cole Site

December 13 - Athens Victorian Stroll cemetery tour

Reference Activity: This year comprised inquiries predominantly similar in nature to years past, with a number of inquiries being submitted concerning research into property history, old maps, etc. Efforts to support the expansion of my ability to service all such inquiries is detailed in the next section.

In addition to regular property history and genealogical inquiries, I had the pleasure to meet with economic development to identify historic images now being used in promotions for redevelopment of the Route 9W industrial corridor through Smith's Landing/Cementon. I anticipate further opportunities to expand on the history of that area in the coming year as that project proceeds.

I also had the pleasure to partner with the Thomas Cole National Historic Site by participating as one of the content experts at a teacher's workshop in which I delivered one of the close reading/primary source activity sessions. These workshops are my best opportunity to get facetime with local educators working in local history.

Planning for the 250th resumed again in earnest, though my available time and lack of event planning skills limited the degree to which I could offer concrete event plans on my own. This was mirrored by a general lack of planning on the part of virtually all local history organizations in the area. By the end of this reporting period I had only been booked as a lecturer by one local organization. Much of the success surrounding planning for the 250th instead rests on Patty Austin of Greene County Tourism who has been a stalwart supporter of efforts and has taken the lead on event planning.

I had the pleasure to make several site visits over the course of the year to various historic locales and sites in the capacity of advisor and student. Special thanks is due Mike Barcone of Lexington for showing me the gravesite of David Angle, a German who served in the British and later American army during the Revolution who later settled and died in Lexington. Additionally, I had the pleasure to visit the Platte Clove Community Center, sited in a decommissioned church in Platte Clove, and to advise them on resources and experts to assist with grant funded initiatives to rehabilitate their building for expanded programming.

Scholarship/Research: I was pleased to complete a final draft of a “house history” research guide this year that gives step by step instructions on the use of Greene County’s online land record resources as well as various repositories, publications, and methodology members of the public can use to develop more concrete histories of private residences and land. A copy of this draft document is attached at the end of this report.

In addition, all programming presented this year required considerable research and preparation, usually totaling 25 hours a lecture outside of my other responsibilities and the actual time allocated for presenting. Several of these programs have been recorded and made freely available online, and I refuse all supplemental compensation and honorariums customarily offered by organizations to guest speakers.

Atts:

Draft research guide for property histories in Greene County



The Stewart House, Athens, New York

A GUIDE FOR RESOURCES AND TECHNIQUES TO RESEARCH
PROPERTY HISTORY IN GREENE COUNTY, NEW YORK.

*Edition for the year 2026
by Jonathan Palmer, Greene County Historian*

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On the 3rd of March, 1800, the County of Greene was formed by an act of the New York State Legislature from a partition of the Counties of Albany and Ulster. By this partitioning a new geopolitical boundary was made to encompass a region that already included within its bounds several communities that dated to the earliest days of New York's colonial period. The new County, named in honor of one of the great commanders of America's revolutionary army, manifested the new vision and identity of county residents while also creating a fresh administrative beginning by which the people of this place could gain more effective representation and access to local government. By the end of the century, Greene County was transfigured from a burgeoning agrarian district to the epicenter of the great artistic and literary traditions of the resort industry in the Catskill Mountains.

Today, Greene County is divided into fourteen townships that include five incorporated villages. The towns of New Baltimore, Coxsackie, Athens, and Catskill are bounded east by the Hudson River and include the villages of Catskill, Athens, and Coxsackie. Beneath the mountains lie Cairo, Greenville, and Durham arranged along the valley of the Catskill Creek which flows southeasterly from Albany County. West, beyond the escarpment of the Catskill Mountains, lie the "Mountain Top" towns of Hunter, Windham, Jewett, Ashland, Lexington, and Prattsville. Within the town of Hunter are the villages of Hunter and Tannersville. Separated from the rest of the County by the range that includes Bearpen Mountain, the westernmost town of Halcott can only be accessed by going around the mountains into Ulster or Delaware Counties.

The unique history of Greene County means that the chain of ownership of many of our most historic homes and neighborhoods predate the formation of the county, sometimes by over 150 years. Transformations in industry, the arrival of successive immigrant populations, and the natural growth of our communities add complexity and surprising variety to the stories of those who lived here before us.

The following pages, while devoted primarily to guiding those curious to uncover stories of their homes and residences, can also serve as a useful primer on available resources and tools of general interest to historians and researchers.

Jonathan Palmer, Greene County Historian

HOUSE HISTORY HOW-TO

Researching the history of your home can be an extremely rewarding process, but it can also prove frustrating if you don't know where to begin or how to proceed. This guide answers some basic questions and provides some explanations of resources available to help you with your research.

WHERE SHOULD I START?

There are several different places you can begin, and depending on where you start you'll find out some different but equally interesting information. Part of this research process happens by examining the house itself, and part of it happens by searching historic records series through your County Clerk and local historical societies. This guide will walk you through the basics of conducting a deed search and also provide descriptions of other resources that you can use to read clues in the structure of the home itself.

WHY START WITH A DEED SEARCH?

While studying the structure of your home can reveal much about the history of the building and its evolution, it will not reveal the lineage of previous owners nor any of the rich narrative about those previous inhabitants. This section will explain resources and tools to help you develop this aspect of your home's history using public records and archives.

Lets clear up some common questions right away:

But can't I just look the house up by its address? – The short answer is no. In many parts of Greene County street/mailling addresses and 911 numbers are a relatively recent phenomenon. Many people don't realize their houses are older than the addresses assigned them. Even after street numbers became common they were not consistent and could occasionally change.

I have a parcel ID, can I just google that? – Parcel ID Numbers, assigned by Greene County Real Property Tax Services, have only been around since the 1970s. From a historical perspective they are similar to street addresses though their functions are very different.

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Don't you have a file on my house or building plans? – The County Clerk's Office is responsible for accepting and filing deeds, mortgages, and surveys related to your land, but these records are filed by the name of the buyer and seller, owner, or mortgagor and mortgagee. You may consider at some point contacting your Town or Village Clerk to see if there may be records filed in their care concerning permitting and plans for buildings on your land, but these records are not comprehensive, nor do they likely predate the mid-20th century.

I had a title search done when I bought the house, isn't that what I need? – A title search is a great way to get started on the breadcrumb trail of deeds for your land, but title searches will only go back as far as necessary to prove clear title to a parcel of land. A title search on a 300-year-old house might only cover 50 to 75 years of relevant deeds. Nevertheless, keep that title search handy to get the ball rolling with your research!

I found the early deeds for my home, but they mention nothing about the house! – You're right! While on occasion a historic deed will mention the improvements present on a parcel of land at the time of a sale, the deed is only a conveyance of land and concerns the land itself. This is why deeds have lots of description of the boundaries of the parcel conveyed – it was the important thing the buyer and seller needed to make sure was clear. We will discuss tricks to find construction dates when it isn't necessarily clear from the deed.

My Home is already on the National Register of Historic Places, what does that mean? – Outstanding! This means you are going to be able to find information that has already been compiled and preserved by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). You can find our region's representatives through the link below, and the second link has an interactive map where you can view your property's National Register paperwork. Jump to the section on CRIS [Page 24] if you would like more detailed instructions on how to use this map tool to view National Register information. <https://parks.ny.gov/preservation/shpo>

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DEED SEARCH TOOLS

This section will cover the databases you need to use to conduct a deed search. Greene County maintains a Parcel Viewer tool and a SearchIQS deed database, but you will also want to make a free account with familysearch.org as a way to view some other early records that will be helpful later in the process.

Greene County Web Map:

Start your search by visiting County's parcel viewer tool. You can google "Greene County NY Web Map" or visit the URL linked below. You will use parcel viewer to find your plot of land and the most recent corresponding deed for it.

<https://gis.gcgovny.com/greenewebmap/>

Instructions for use:

- Open the web map in your browser and read the short instruction panel on the right side. This contains all the important information you need to use the map along with handy tips and other resources.
- On the left of the page you will see a map you can navigate across and zoom in on using your mouse or the zoom buttons at the far left. At the right edge of the map are a number of other icons that give you the ability to change and add map layers to display a variety of different information and satellite images of the county. Click through these for fun and explore!
- If you know where you need to look for your parcel of land, simply zoom in and navigate to the parcel using your mouse, and click on the parcel to open its information tab.
- If you are uncertain where your land is, click on the "search" tab in the panel on the right side of the screen beneath the green title banner. You can search by names, address, or parcel ID number from the search window.
- When you have found your parcel, click on it to open a small dialogue box. In the lower left of that small box click on the "PROS Parcel Search" link icon. This will bring you to a separate webpage summarizing the history and information on that parcel of land.

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- On the PROS property search result page take some time to browse the available information. Some of this may be of interest to you to better understand your land as it currently exists and is valued and taxed.
- On the right side of your results page you will notice that a table lists recent deed transfers for the parcel. Generally, the most recent one. That is your current deed or the deed of the immediate previous owners, and you should copy the book and page number down for reference.

Now that you've collected all this information, our next stop will be the deed and mortgage database of the Greene County Clerk's Office.

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Greene County SearchIQS:

The Greene County Clerk's Office is working to make a variety of their recorded deeds and mortgages available to view freely online through SearchIQS, a database tool used by many County Clerk's offices across New York and the Northeast. Here is the link for the Greene County portal on SearchIQS: <https://www.searchiqs.com/nygre/>

Your next step is to look up the deed for your land using the book and page number from the Greene County Web Map. You can start using your current deed, or simply start with the earliest deed listed on the ownership card you found through Image Mate. The process outlined here can also be used for Mortgages as necessary, as Deeds and Mortgages both use the same filing method.

Instructions for use:

- On the SearchIQS landing page, click the **big green button** that says "Search Records as Guest" to enter the search portal.
- On the main search page, take a moment to orient yourself to the navigation tabs in the blue bar at the top, as well as all the fillable search fields.
- Halfway down the search page you will see a drop-down menu called "Document Group" that gives you the option to search the wide array of documents filed by the Greene County Clerk. Select "Deeds" from this menu.
- At the bottom of the search page you will see a "Book" and "Page" search box second up from the bottom. Enter the book and page numbers you found using the tax map or PROS.
- Click the grey "Search" button on the upper right of the screen.
- On the results page, click the "View" function on the left to open a deed.
- Recent deeds filed by the Clerk's Office all have a cover page that will appear first in the view window. At the left you will see a summary of the document, and above the view window you will see navigation options.
- Advance between pages of the deed by clicking the blue arrows at the top right of the view window.

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- If you would like to print or download that document, click the “Print/Download” button above the view window and follow the steps to enter your credit card information. The database will only store your credit card info for the rest of your session, so don’t close the IQS window until you are ready to wrap up a research session.

Now that you have found your deed, the next step is to understand and interpret it. Read on before trying to dig further! It is imperative you understand exactly what you are reading before digging further back in time.

Interpreting Your Results:

Every deed is relatively formulaic, and you will notice as you go further back in time that much of the language has remained consistent century by century. The beginning will contain information about “Party of the first part” and “party of the second part” which you will need to keep straight in your mind as you continue reading the document. On deeds, these parties are the “**Grantor**” (seller) and the “**Grantee**” (buyer) of the land. “Grantor” and “Grantee” are terms that are vital to understand as you continue your research, because the Clerk’s Office maintains an index of deeds by Grantor and Grantee. Following that initial section you will reach a line in the text that states something like “ALL THAT PIECE OR PARCEL...” followed by a lengthy description of the metes and bounds of the land – i.e. the description of the boundaries of the parcel. This can be confusing, but often the description will remain consistent in at least some way from deed to deed, so keep your eye out for descriptions that include terms like “Bounded on the east by the highway” or “beginning at an iron pipe” – these features of the boundary are unlikely to change much over time, and will help you to confirm that earlier deeds describe the same parcel as your current one. Read the metes and bounds over so you are familiar with notable details.

At the end of some deeds, you will hopefully last encounter a phrase “Being the same as a parcel sold... and described in Deed Book ____ at page ____” – this is a reference to an earlier deed for the parcel you are examining, sometimes quite far back in the land’s history, and you should make a note of the book and page number referenced so you can search for it later!

Continuing Your Search:

Because a deed is a record of sale, finding the preceding deed for a piece of land is as simple as identifying the “Grantor” (seller) on the current deed and searching for them as a “Grantee” (buyer) in a Grantee Index Book. To discover other sales from 1992 to the present, follow these steps next:

- On the main search page for SearchIQS, (get back to it using the blue navigation bar at the top) enter the last and first name of the Seller on a current deed in the “Party 1” search bar and make sure the “Ignore Party Type” box below it is checked. Don’t use any commas.
- Select “Deeds” from the “Document Group” drop down menu, and click the gray search button again.

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- Depending on how long your list of results is, click through them to confirm which one refers to your parcel. Remember to look out for similar language in the metes and bounds section of the document. If you got lots of results, only examine deeds that are listed as pertaining to the town where your current parcel is. Sometimes you'll find the same person or entity was buying and selling not just your parcel, but countless others as a speculative venture or investment.

Did you get stumped here? If your problem is that you can't find something from prior to 1992, that is because earlier deeds hosted by the Greene County Clerk's Office must be accessed through a different tab on the IQS website. To go further back, it is time to start using the Grantor and Grantee Indexes. Navigate using the blue navigation bar at the top of the screen and click the "INDEXBOOKS" tab. Once there, orient yourself to the three sub-tabs that list "Search by Name," "Go to Section," and "Go to Document" as these will be the tabs that you utilize the most in this phase of your research.

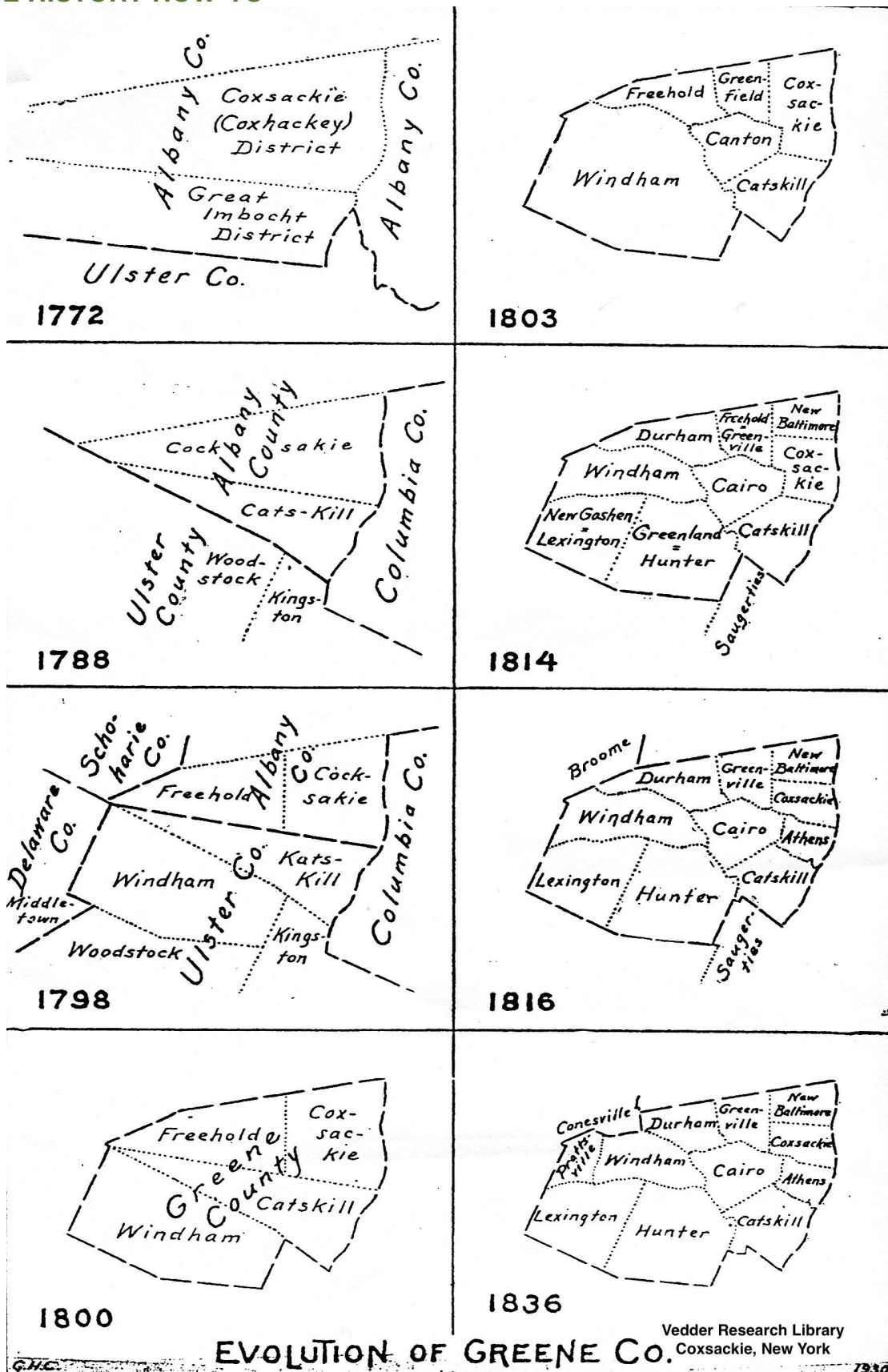
Since you have already identified the seller on the deed closest to the 1990s using the main search page, go to the "Search by Name" tab and click the drop-down menu to select the index book of your choice. You now need to find that seller as a buyer, so pick a "Grantee" index for the second half of the 20th century (1952-1972 or 1973-1991) and search using the last name of that individual in the "Find Name" field next to the drop-down menu. The index books go back to 1800 and are sorted by the first three letters of the surname, with given names listed in five alphabetical columns to speed browsing. In the far right column on the index books results window, you'll see deeds listed. All the names entered on the index book are done in chronological order of sales, so use the navigation buttons at the top left of the image window to view the index book pages looking for your person. This process can be repeated over and over again - find a deed, search for the seller as an earlier buyer, and then search for the seller from the next deed going backwards in time. Think of this as just picking up breadcrumbs to follow a path. You can also invert this method if you want to start with a piece of land owned centuries ago by following sales forward in time to discover an ancestral home's present location!

SEARCHING FOR RECORDS FROM BEFORE 1800

Since Greene County has only existed since 1800, it may be necessary to go back beyond the period when the Greene County Clerk's Office began keeping records of their own. Fortunately, Albany and Ulster Counties both have similar SearchIQS databases that you can find in a quick internet search. Albany County's search IQS shows results on their main search page going back to 1980, Ulster County's goes back to 1950. Prior to those dates you need to utilize the "INDEXBOOKS" tab in a manner similar to what was outlined previously.

How do you know what County to search in? Take a look at the handy illustration on the following page to give you a sense of where you might want to look depending on the date. You should also feel free to reach out to these adjoining counties to check what the most effective ways to research their records are.

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TAX AND PROBATE RECORDS

It is extremely likely you are going to hit a roadblock at some point in the preparation of the deed lineage for your land - because of this, it is important to understand two other resources and how they can help contribute to understanding your property and the people who once lived on it.

Tax Rolls and Assessment Records to Circa Date a House:

Most of the towns throughout Greene County prepared published annual tax rolls showing the names of individuals and the total assessed value of their real property. These published rolls can be found in the collections of the Greene County Historical Society's Vedder Research Library, which maintains scattered records going back to the 1830s. If a record is not in their care, you can consult Greene County Real Property Tax Services on the best way to view historic tax rolls for respective towns. Why look at these records at all, though?

Most of us aren't fortunate enough to have a stately dated cornerstone on our homes, and you should almost categorically ignore "construction dates" given on property listings, realty advertisements, and even assessment summaries as these are generally assigned by people who do not specialize in architectural and community history. There are many cases when an exact year of construction can be definitively identified, but a deed alone, as it is just for the land, will generally not tell you that. This is where tax rolls come in. Say three or four owners purchase a lot over the course of 15 years, and on the tax or assessment rolls that parcel is valued at the same price over that period. Now, a fifth buyer purchases the parcel, and in their second year of ownership the value of that parcel doubles - you've probably just found evidence of very serious improvements made on that lot - i.e. construction. This can be a particularly useful method to date a building when looking at early records in places like Catskill, Coxsackie, and Athens, where village lots and subdivisions were owned and traded by speculators, sometimes for decades, before the first house was built on a parcel. Sometimes this can even be corroborated by looking in newspapers for that year to see if something was mentioned in a community notes column.

Surrogate's Court Records:

Land is not exclusively transferred from buyers to sellers in a clear and linear manner. Many people spend their lives in a home and leave the sale of the house to their children and grandchildren after the owner has passed. If you've decided to start from a period back in time and work your way forward, say if you're trying to find the present location of an ancestral home for genealogy, this fact can sometimes obscure the chain of Grantor and Grantee breadcrumbs outlined in the previous section because a child may have a different last name than their parents. This is to say that when a parent passes, the children handling the sale of land may not be discoverable in the indexes by their parent's surname - making it look like the trail has gone cold. This is where probate records and wills become invaluable.

At the Greene County Historical Society all the historic records of the Greene County Surrogate's Court from 1800-1920 reside with a handy index. If you hit a brick wall with your deed lineage, search for your buyer's will or estate papers - this might give you the name of the executor or administrator responsible for selling the land who you can then search for in IQS.

If you haven't had a reason to consult Surrogate's Court records during the deed lineage part of your research, consider going back and looking for owners of your home in the index books anyway! Many probate records include estate inventories and rich narrative clues about the families that once lived in your home - you may find an inventory that is so detailed you can identify the furnishings of every room as it was a century or more ago.

USEFUL REFERENCE MAPS AND SURVEYS

It is critical throughout your research to continually visualize and verify that you are searching and tracing the correct parcel of land. This can be tricky particularly on properties that were once large farms that have been subdivided or in places that don't have consistent landmarks anchoring descriptions of your metes and bounds. Fortunately, Greene County is endowed with a variety of handy reference maps that can help you verify your research as you work backwards or forwards in time.

The Beers Maps:

F. W. Beers and Co., and J. B. Beers and Co. produced two important atlas maps in the second half of the 19th century that are remarkable in the quality of their granular detail. These are as follows:

- The 1867 Atlas of Greene County, New York. This publication can be found in hard copy at both the Greene County Historical Society and the Greene County Clerk's Office, and is a common tool of title searchers to corroborate findings as they trace parcels back in time. It is also an invaluable tool of historians, as the Atlas contains maps of the entire county broken up by town. Detailed inserts are also included of incorporated villages and some hamlets. The names of property owners, the general footprint or site of structures on parcels, and other things like road names, cemeteries, and even school districts are shown with surprising veracity. You can also find digitized copies of the 1867 Atlas here:
<https://vedderresearchlibrary.org/1867-beers-atlas>
- Beers' 1893 Atlas of the Hudson River Valley from New York City to Troy. This atlas is a fascinating journey up the Hudson River showing an eight mile wide strip centered over the channel of the Hudson River. This map is useful predominantly for property along the Hudson in Greene County's riverfront communities, and shows many of the same types of information as the 1867 Atlas. These maps can be viewed through New York Public Library through the following link, and in person at the Greene County Historical Society. [https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/2600a3f0-c5ec-012f-424e-58d385a7bc34?filters=\[subcollection=34fad1b0-c5f6-012f-c472-58d385a7bc34\]](https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/2600a3f0-c5ec-012f-424e-58d385a7bc34?filters=[subcollection=34fad1b0-c5f6-012f-c472-58d385a7bc34])

Other Biographical Maps:

There are a handful of County and community maps predating the civil war that also show similar biographical information to the 1867 Atlas, though there is no comprehensive set of maps of each town available from the antebellum period.

- The Samuel Geil Map of Greene County, 1856. This large map is not yet readily accessible online, though a copy is preserved and easily browsed at the Greene County Historical Society. This map shows the entire county, and gives only the locations of homesteads outside the most populous and dense communities in Greene County because of the map's size. It also gives interesting topographical cues in an age before accurate topographical surveys had been completed for the Catskills and neighboring communities.
- George Leefe's Map of Catskill, ca 1854. This extremely rare map is only known through one copy preserved at the Greene County Historical Society, and shows a detailed plan of the Village of Catskill and its inhabitants around 1853 or 1854. The map is difficult to read due to a layer of varnish covering it, but can be invaluable for those looking specifically at land within the corporation bounds of Catskill Village.

Other Reference Maps:

There is an ever-growing list of online resources concerning the Catskills region in the 19th and early 20th centuries, a curated list of some of the most interesting are available here:

- Historic Maps of the United States Geological Survey. USGS began mapping the United States methodically in the 1880s, and all maps prepared by this government office can be viewed and downloaded through their handy mapping tool linked here: <https://www.usgs.gov/programs/national-geospatial-program/historical-topographic-maps-preserving-past>
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. These detailed maps of communities show street-by-street projections of dense areas and include detailed descriptions of the composition and function of structures. The original intent of these maps was to allow adjusters writing policies for the Sanborn company to quickly assess contextual risks and liabilities for buildings in densely populated or heavily industrialized areas. You can view Sanborn Maps at the Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/about-this-collection/>

EXAMINING THE HOUSE

Tearing down walls and opening sections of an old home can reveal many things about the age of the building. The end of this section contains some useful links for reference guides and materials, but as you look at your house, here are some things to take note of:

- The design of a home can often tell you within a decade when the structure may have been built. Certain features, accents, and floorplans were sometimes only popular for a decade or two, meaning you can put a very healthy circa date on a home if you happen to know what to look for.
- Does the house appear to contain additions? Are there principles of symmetry present in the design? What height are the ceilings? Are rooms intended for specific functions? Make note of these things as you walk through the space.
- If you are tearing out walls or looking in the basement and attic, examine the kind of lumber used. Look at joists and framing - is the lumber milled or hand-hewn? Is all the lumber in the home similar or are some sections older/more primitive? Such things can tell you how a home may have been used and when additions and features were added/removed. Sometimes you may even find marks on lumber and lathe showing the supplier or mill the wood came from. Keep an eye out for old graffiti!
- Wiring and plumbing may be run differently in the home if it was built prior to electrification or if it was built with plumbing and electricity originally. Look for evidence of older utilities as well where gas lines might have been removed or where pipes may formerly have run - these things can tell you a lot about how different rooms functioned if you are trying to restore a space.
- Look for different paints, molding, and decorative features as you remove more recent layers of carpeting, wallpaper, molding, and even exterior trim. These sorts of things may help you identify the age of the home based on the original aesthetic, and could inform your own remodeling or restoration decisions. You might be surprised what is hiding behind the walls of an enclosed porch or beneath aluminum siding.

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With all of these aspects of the house in mind, try visiting your local public library to request some of the following books, or hop on the web to browse the following links:

- Library of Congress: <https://guides.loc.gov/house-history/architecture>
- <https://www.oldhouses.com/styleguide>
- A Field Guide to American Houses (Revised) by Virginia Savage McAlester (2013) <https://search.worldcat.org/title/859307758>
- American House Styles: A Concise Guide by John Milnes Baker (2002) <https://search.worldcat.org/title/50061509>
- Historic Places in Greene County, New York by the Greene County Historic Register Committee of the Greene Co. Historical Society (2010), <https://vedderresearchlibrary.org/book-store/p/historic-places-in-gc>
- Dutch Vernacular Architecture in North America, 1640-1830 by John R. Stevens (2005) <https://search.worldcat.org/title/63108271>

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Your deed search will ultimately result in a list of names of individuals and families who were previously connected with your home. While biographical information can occasionally appear in deed records, most often you must go elsewhere to find out more about them. This section covers some great resources to help you dig deeper.

Local Historical Societies:

Greene County is home to a number of active historical societies and associations working hard to provide research and reference access to their collections on a regular basis. Currently, the only Society with a dedicated year-round research library is the Greene County Historical Society, operating the Vedder Research Library with public hours three days per week and a collection of a rather extensive nature. In addition, the Mountain Top Historical Society maintains an archives room staffed by volunteers handling reference inquiries, and the Cairo Historical Society is soon to open a new headquarters where researchers will have access to the collections of that community. There are a number of other smaller repositories and societies, each with their own collections and associated community of local history aficionados. All are listed as follows:

Greene County Historical Society, Coxsackie, NY: gchistory.org

Mountain Top Historical Society, Haines Falls: mths.org

Cairo Historical Society: currently facebook only

Coxsackie Historical Society: newly organized, no contact info yet available.

Greenville Local History Group: <https://www.dteator.com/glhg/glhg.htm>

Durham Center Museum: unknown.

Town of Windham Historical Society: facebook only

Ashland Historical Association: <https://www.ashlandny.com/historical>

Lexington Historical Society: facebook only

Zadock Pratt Museum: <https://www.zadockprattmuseum.org/>

In addition to these, you can reach out directly to your town government through their municipal website for the contact information for your local municipal historian.

HOUSE HISTORY HOW-TO

Local Websites and Forums:

Beginning in the early 2000s, local genealogist Sylvia Hasenkopf commenced an ambitious project to make many of Greene County's most important and foundational records available online. This interesting website is an excellent resource to guide researchers on adjacent source materials, handy reference materials for towns throughout the county, and as a database of names for those beginning the process of developing biographical narratives about previous residents of their homes. That website can be viewed here:

<https://www.tracingyourrootsgcny.com/>

Other websites of use include the website of the Vedder Research Library at vedderresearchlibrary.org, and the facebook group of the Greene County Historical Society, called "Greene County History" which is a great place to crowdsource answers to local history questions.

Records available through familysearch.com:

FamilySearch is a free genealogical website with access to millions of records digitized by the Church of Latter-day Saints. You can create a free profile and use the “search records” function to browse digitized rolls of microfilm containing fascinating information related to Ulster County and its people.

The Census: The United States has been conducting censuses in one form or another every decade all the way back to the first Federal Census of 1790. Throughout most of the 19th and into the 20th century the State of New York also conducted a census on the half-decade (1825, 1835, 1845, etc.,) until 1875, and scattered others until the last one in 1925. Together, these records offer a window into communities in Greene County for most of the 19th century. The census can tell you what the profession of people living in a home were, their place of birth, family structure, and certain economic and social conditions. The census also gives historians clues about what neighborhoods were like, what the important industries in a place were, and how these communities changed over time. Think of the census as a snapshot of your home at a moment in time.

Probate Records: Believe it or not, wills and estate documents/probate records can be an important tool to help develop the story of your home’s past residents. These records, handled by the Surrogate’s Court, offer insight into family groups, the material culture of a house, details like interior furnishings, and the social and economic status of the deceased. These records can be startling and revealing, sometimes being so detailed that they include room-by-room inventories of someone’s estate. These records are also invaluable primary sources testifying to the practice of slavery in Greene County during period of Gradual Emancipation in New York State prior to 1827. View early wills and probate records through the following link:

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/image/index?owc=Q7PB-BZ9:213302601?cc=1920234&cc=1920234>

HOUSE HISTORY HOW-TO

Newspaper Databases:

Much of the narrative history of a community, neighborhoods, and individuals can be gleaned from historic newspapers. A number of Greene County's longest-running newspapers are only available in physical format through the Greene County Historical Society, but these resources are a great place to expand your search and find things necessarily carried by every local paper:

- <https://fultonhistory.com/> (read his FAQ page for handy tips on composing Boolean searches)
- <https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/>
- <https://news.hrvh.org/>
- <https://www.newspapers.com/> (a subscription service)
- <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>
- <https://www.loc.gov/research-centers/newspaper-and-current-periodical/collections/digital-collections/>

Other Databases:

You might be very surprised what you can turn up by searching for names in places like Google Books and the New York State Archives. Lots of early magazines, periodicals, reports, and journals held by universities are discoverable through databases you might not think to consult. Here's a list of some other resources to check out:

<https://books.google.com/>

<https://www.hathitrust.org/>

<https://www.gutenberg.org/>

<https://archive.org/>

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/>

<https://digitalcollections.archives.nysed.gov/>

nyheritage.org

HOUSE HISTORY HOW-TO

Using the Cultural Resource Information System:

CRIS is a tool that hosts an interactive map and digitized files for sites and structures on the National Register of Historic Places. Access it by visiting this link:

<https://cris.parks.ny.gov/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f>

Instructions for use:

- Agree to terms of service, then select “Proceed as Guest” on the landing page.
- On the homepage, click on the “Search” tab in the top navigation bar.
- Use your mouse and scroll wheel to navigate the interactive map and to zoom in on your county, community, or neighborhood.

As you zoom in, you will see lots of interactive outlines begin to appear. Green lines are archaeological survey projects, blue outlines are consultation projects, and red-shaded red outlines are historic sites and districts. Click around and look to see what types of information you can interact with!

If you own a historic register property, or are curious about a historic site, find it and click on it to open a small dialogue box, then click the “View” button at the bottom.

On the window that opens there are a number of different tabs, click on the “Atts.” (Attachments) tab to read the National Register nomination form and photos used to submit the site for National Register status. Click through the other tabs to view additional information.

Lastly, if you are curious about what having a Historic Register property means, reach out to New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation through their Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) using the contact information on this page: <https://parks.ny.gov/shpo/contact/>