

# ***Practical Tips on How to Research Your Property***

## ***Courtesy of the Chelmsford Historical Society***

1. Check the **Chelmsford Historical Commission** website to see if your house is already researched and listed on the State Inventory: <https://chelmsfordgov.com/CHCwebsite/Homes.htm>
2. Locate the town's **Property Record Card** for your house using the town website **GIS Mapping** feature: <https://chelmsfordma.mapgeo>
  - a. For each line on the Property Record Card **Ownership History** table record the following for future reference: **Owner, Book & Page, and Sale Date**
  - b. Hint: It is very helpful to put this information into a spreadsheet with column headers as you will be adding more information in the sections below.
  - c. For each deed the listed Owner is the buyer, and the previous owner below is the seller.
3. Open the **Northern Middlesex Registry of Deeds** website: <https://www.masslandrecords.com/MiddlesexNorth/>
  - a. In the **Search Criteria** dropdown menu, select the **Recorded Land Book Search** option.
  - b. Type in the oldest **Book** and **Page Numbers** you saved from the Property Record Card. Hint: You can ignore the leading zeros to reduce clutter.
  - c. Press the **Search** button.
  - d. In the window at **left**, verify you have the correct Book/Page and click on it.
  - e. In the window at **right**, click on the **View Images** button.
  - f. The new window that opens is usually small, so maximize the window and then enlarge the content by clicking the **+ magnifying glass** button at top left.
  - g. Use the **scroll bar** to move up and down and use the **left and right arrows** at top left to move from one sheet to another.
  - h. Underneath the tedious description of property boundaries, you will find information on the previous deed, including the Seller, Date, and Book & Page. Record all this information.
  - i. You may also find a **Plan** listed by Surveyor, Date, Book & Page. Record this for future reference.
  - j. Close the **View Images** window using the **X** button at top right.
  - k. Using this new information, you can repeat the steps above to drill down through time and build a history of ownership.
4. If the deed is **before 1950** there is a different procedure that must be used:
  - a. In the **Search Criteria** dropdown menu, select the **Recorded Land Unindexed Property Search** option.
  - b. Type in the pre-1950 **Book** and **Page Numbers** you saved from the previous search.
  - c. Press the **Search** button.
  - d. In the window at **left**, verify you have the correct Book/Page and click on it.

- e. In the window at **right**, click on the **View Images** button.
  - f. The new window that opens is usually small, so maximize the window and then enlarge the content by clicking the **+ magnifying glass** button at top left.
  - g. Use the scroll bar to move up and down, but there are **NO left and right arrows** at top left to move from one sheet to another.
  - h. To get to the next sheet in the deed, close the **View Images** window using the **X** button at top right then edit your **Page Number** entry to the next higher page number and press the **Search** button again.
5. If you want to find out more about who may have lived at your home during a particular year, you can open directories on the Chelmsford Historical Society / **Library** page: <https://www.chelmhist.org/library.htm>
    - a. **Lowell Suburban directories** from 1896 to 1957 have a wealth of information on people, relationships, and occupations.
    - b. Hint: **House numbers** were not assigned in Chelmsford until the early 1940s, so you will only see the street names before then.
    - c. **Chelmsford Lists of Men and Women** from 1931 to 2009 have useful information but no street numbers until 1942.
  6. To learn more about specific people and their **family connections**, the best resource (if you have access to an account) is **Ancestry.com**: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/>  
If you don't have access to Ancestry.com, the Public Library has an **in-library** account with **American Ancestors**: <http://www.americanancestors.org/search/advanced-search/>
  7. The **Town of Chelmsford Cemeteries, Search Records** feature is very useful: <https://cemeteries.townofchelmsford.us/search-records/>  
You can quickly find out the death date, age at death, and cemetery location for anyone buried in Chelmsford, and you will even see an aerial view of the specific grave site.
  8. Town of Chelmsford **Annual Reports** starting in 1875 are available on the Chelmsford Historical Commission website **People** page: <https://www.chelmsfordgov.com/CHCwebsite/People.htm>  
You can search all Annual Reports using the Google Search entry on the Historical Commission website **Home** page: <https://www.chelmsfordgov.com/CHCwebsite/index.htm>
  9. All **Chelmsford High School yearbooks** from 1925 to the present are available on the Historical Society website: <https://www.chelmhist.org/yearbooks.htm>
    - a. As found on the Alumni Association website: <https://chsalumni.org/looking-back>
    - b. As found on the Chelmsford Public Library website: <https://www.chelmsfordlibrary.org/research-it/chelmsford-history/>
  10. Don't miss the Chelmsford Historical Society's **Fun Facts** page for an unusual look at our town's history: [https://www.chelmhist.org/fun\\_facts.htm](https://www.chelmhist.org/fun_facts.htm)