

TRACING THE HISTORY OF YOUR HOME OR ANY ADDRESS IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY

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The main scope of this article is to show you how to research the history of your home, especially previous owners. I will take you on a step-by-step tutorial showing you where to look and how to do this work by showing an example of the process using the Lava Lounge located at 1307 Auburn Avenue. My grandmother, Paulina Liebert was an early female business owner on Cleveland's Southside, today known as Tremont. She owned and operated the Eagle Printing Company out of the building at 1307 Auburn Avenue in the early 1920's.

THINGS TO REMEMBER BEFORE YOU BEGIN

DEED TERMS:

GRANTOR is the seller

GRANTEE is the buyer

YOU NEED TO WORK FROM THE PRESENT BACK THROUGH TIME

ADDRESS AND STREET NAME CHANGES: Be aware that street names were changed in 1868 and again in 1906. The larger, massive change took place in 1906. This is when the numbered streets such as West 30th or East 30th or West 55th or East 55th, for instance, came into being. Prior to 1906, the numbered streets that ran north and south had names made up of words. For instance, before 1906, West 30th Street south of Clark Avenue was called Brighton Street. Before 1906, East 55th was called Willson Avenue. Streets that ran West and East had word names before 1906. After 1906, they kept those word names, however, some word names were changed in 1906. House addresses also changed in 1906. Generally, the addresses were lower before 1906, and changed to a higher number in 1906. There are a few sources to determine what the old addresses and corresponding new addresses were.

This site offers a brief introduction to street name changes:

<https://usgenwebsites.org/OHCuyahoga/Street%20Names/index.html>

This site offers a good explanation of the street name changes:

<https://sites.google.com/site/faqcuyahogactyresearch/cleveland-1868-and-1906-street-name-changes?authuser=0>

Most importantly, this Cleveland Public Library site contains a document that shows most of the old and corresponding new addresses:

<https://cplorg.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p128201coll0/id/942/>

The last site is a map collection where you can toggle between various years covering the old and new addresses:

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=ddb0ee6134d64de4adaaa3660308abfd>

For purposes of this 1307 Auburn Avenue illustration, we are starting with the post-1906 address.

STEP ONE
THE OLD CUYAHOGA COUNTY AUDITOR'S WEBSITE
TODAY KNOWN AS THE FISCAL OFFICE

The first stop in your research is the Cuyahoga County Auditor's Website located at:
<https://myplace.cuyahogacounty.gov/>

1. At the above website, click on "Address" (the blue tab.)
2. To the right, enter your address. In our case, we are looking for 1307 Auburn. Hit the search button. (NOTE: If you are searching for a numbered street, such as 3302 West 30th, you would type "3302 W 30" – not West, no period after the W, and no th or rd or nd after the number.)
3. A page comes up showing you the current owner of the property, Jack Lounge Inc. Click on that entry.
4. A map appears showing the property with a dot, as well as other parcels around it.
5. Click on "Transfers" on the left, and the transfer history for this property back to 1975 appears.
6. Click the most recent transfer, in this case 1999.
7. In this case, Richard A. Sosenko (Grantor) sold the property to Jack Lounge (Grantee) on 8/18/1999. Write this down at the bottom of a piece of paper.
8. Click the next oldest transfer date and keep going backwards. In our case, we see that on 2/12/1991, Helen Sosenko sold the property to Richard A. Sosenko. We also see that in 1975 Helen Sosenko was the owner. Write this down on your paper above the previous entry.
9. This website only goes back to 1975. So, now it is time to move on to the Recorder's Office website to search earlier deeds.

STEP TWO
THE OLD CUYAHOGA COUNTY RECORDER'S OFFICE
TODAY KNOWN AS THE FISCAL OFFICE

Having completed your work at the Auditor's website, we now move to the Cuyahoga County Recorder's website which has deeds from 1810-present. It is located here:
<https://cuyahoga.oh.publicsearch.us/>

REMEMBER, WE ARE WORKING BACKWARDS IN TIME

A.

1. On this page, you will type the name you are looking for in the search field. Note that you can change the dates being searched on the right. However, I always leave it as is, unless I am

working on a very common name. In this case, I type "Sosenko, Helen" and hit "enter." A list of all deeds that Helen Sosenko appears in is shown, but they are in a scattered order.

2. At the top of the columns, click on "Recorded Date" to sort them into chronological order.

3. From our previous work on the Auditor's website, we know that Helen Sosenko owned the house in 1975, indicating that she purchased it prior to 1975. So, we need to look through the list of deeds on the Recorder's website for a date prior to 1975. In the "DOC. TYPE" column look for either the word "DEED" or "DEED QUIT CLAIM." We are not interested in mortgages. You can also watch the "PROPERTY ADDRESS" column for the street name of AUBURN, though the street name will not always appear.

4. In this case I noticed AUBURN in the property address column and noticed that Julius Hollowacz (Grantor) sold the property to Helen Sosenko (Grantee) on November 5, 1965. This looks like the most promising entry, so I click on it.

5. The actual deed appears. You can zoom in and use the arrows to see subsequent pages of that deed. You can also download it for FREE! You must read the property description in the deed, noting the Sublot Number, Allotment Name, and any other information, so that as you continue onward, you know you are looking at the correct piece of property. There will be multiple entries for each name, and the only way to know that you have the right property is to compare the property description.

6. Write this sale down on your piece of paper above the previous one.

B. Now that we know that Julius Hollowacz sold the property to Helen Sosenko, we need to start this entire search again for Julius Hollowacz to see who he bought it from. Go back to #1 directly above and repeat the entire process, looking for Julius in the "Grantee" column with a sale date before November 5, 1965 (when he sold it to Helen Sosenko). You see that on October 24, 1957, Alex and Viola Marko sold the property to Julius Hollowacz. Write it down.

C. Now that we know that Alex and Viola Marko sold the property to Julius Hollowacz, we need to start this entire search again for Alex and Viola Marko to determine who they bought it from. Alex Marko appears as grantee in six different deeds before 1957. We will have to click on each of them and read the property description to find the correct deed. Doing that, we see that on November 29, 1954, Paul and Laverne Maximuk sold the property to Alex and Viola Marko. Write it down.

D. Now that we know that Paul and Laverne Maximuk sold the property to the Markos in 1954, we have to start the search again for Paul Maximuk. I see that Susan Maximuk DEC (deceased) transferred the property to Paul Maximuk (and others) on December 4, 1954. Clicking on the entry, we see that this was a transfer of real estate through the Probate Court. The document shows Susan's date of death, the executor of her will (Alex Marko is the executor), and other information. I note that Susan's first name is spelled many different ways, which will make the search for her more difficult. The property description matches the property we have been searching. Write this sale down.

E. Now we have to find who Susan Maximuk purchased the property from, so we start the search all over again. I type in "Maximuk, Susan" but she does not appear as a grantee. It's time to get creative. I go back to the original search screen and search on the last name ONLY. Doing this gives you all entries for a given surname. I see the word "Auburn" under the column

"Property Address" and see that on September 27, 1939, Isador Maximuk sold the property to Zuzana Maximuk. Write it down.

F. Let's find out who Isador Maximuk purchased the property from. We start the search again, and on April 4, 1924, George and Anastasyz Kociszewski sold the property to Isador and Zuzana Makimuk. Write it down. So, the finding in "E" above was Isador selling his half to Zuzana, with her becoming the sole owner of the property.

G. Continuing on, we start a new search for George Kociszewski. There were no entries before 1924. So, I try Anastasyz Kociszewski. There were no entries before 1924. I then try just Kociszewski. Sure enough, "Auburn" appears in the "Property Address" column, with Charles McCoombs selling to Anastasya Kociszewski (misspelling of Anastasyz) on February 5, 1923. Write it down. You really have to get creative with the spelling sometimes. You can also use the asterisk as a wildcard. For instance, if I had searched for Kociszewski, Anas*, the deed above appears. Sometimes, you may have to try multiple avenues, such as just last name Kocis*.

H. I began a new search to see who Charles McCoombs purchased the property from and came up empty. I try McCoo* and Mcoo* with no luck. I went back to the deed in G above and read it again to see if there are any clues that would help, since I appear to be stuck. I notice that his name is spelled as McCombs in one instance on the previous deed, so I searched for McCombs, Charles, and that worked! Auburn appears in the "Property Address" column, and on May 16, 1905, Doreas Soc sold to Charles E. McCombs. However, I was aware of the existence of the DORCAS SOCIETY, and keep in the back of my mind that DOREAS SOCIETY is probably really DORCAS SOCIETY. Write it down.

J. Now we have to find who the Doreas or Dorcas Society bought the property from. I begin a new search using Doreas Soc, just as it appeared in the index. Nothing. I try Dorcas Soc, and sure enough, Auburn appears in the "Property Address" column, with Martha McCombs selling the property to the Dorcas Society on July 11, 1902. Write it down.

K. Now to see who Martha McCombs purchased it from. Again, I did a new search for McCombs, Martha, and see that Henry and Philippina Senne sold it to Martha McCombs on April 23, 1888. Write it down.

L. Searching again, Adolph and Sophia Grabner sold it to Henry Senne on March 8, 1873. Write it down.

M. Searching again, Brewster Pelton and John G. Jennings sold it to Adolph Grabner on 8/11/1853. Write it down.

N. I did a new search for Jennings, John purchasing property before August of 1853. The results showed what I already happened to know, which was that in 1851 and 1852, Brewster Pelton and John G. Jennings purchased huge amounts of land in what is Tremont today from the original farm owners: Martin Kellogg, Epaphras Barber, Nicholas Meyer, and Major Smith. The results on the Recorder's website had taken me back to the original landowners in that area. So, the search for the ownership history of the 1307 Auburn Avenue property is complete.

This example search shows that you can trace your property all the way back to 1810 in Cuyahoga County. Sometimes searches are simple, and other times they can be time consuming. But it can be done!

**DID YOU GET STUCK AND HIT A BRICKWALL?
TRY THE CUYAHOGA COUNTY ARCHIVE
3951 Perkins Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio**

The Cuyahoga County Archive has a treasure trove of information to help you research your property in Cuyahoga County. You will need to make an appointment to do property research. Though I was able to successfully trace the deeds for 1307 Auburn Avenue, I wanted to see what else the archive had. You will tell the archive assistant that you wish to trace the ownership of your property and give them the earliest owner that you found from your Recorder's site research and the date of transfer. They will also ask for the address and can also search just using that address if you didn't actually do the research yourself on the Recorder's website ahead of time.

The archive has different sets of plat maps for different timeframes. By tracking the series of plat maps backwards, you'll see who owned the property to its earliest date. The archive also has tax duplicates that may have an early picture of the home/building. Be sure to ask for these. Be aware, though, that some of the pictures have become separated from their tax duplicate through the years.

On my visit to the archive, I asked to see the plat maps for 1307 Auburn Avenue. The staff pulled them and brought them to me. They will even make copies for you.

In my case above, the list of owners from the plat maps were:

6/26/1902 - Dorcas Society

5/2/1905 - Charles E. McCombe

2/3/1923 - Anastazy Kociszewski

4/3/1924 - Isidor & Zyzana Maximulk

4/21/1989 - Julius Hollowacz

(I was only interested in going back to 1902 in this example, but could have gone back further using the plat maps.)

So, we see that Charles McCoombs' name was indeed misspelled TWICE on the Recorder's website as McCoombs or McCombs, and should have been MCCOMBE. Again, be creative with your searches.

So, to recap the owners of this property:

8/11/1853 - Brewster Pelton and John G. Jennings sold it to Adolph Grabner.

3/8/1873 - Adolph and Sophia Grabner sold it to Henry Senne.

4/23/1888 - Henry and Philippina Senne sold it to Martha McCombs.

7/11/1902 - Martha McCombs sold it to The Dorcas Society.

5/16/1905 - The Dorcas Society sold it to Charles McCoombs.

2/5/1923 - Charles McCoombs sold it to Anastazy Kociszewski.

4/4/1924 – George and Anastazy Kociszewski sold it to Isador & Zuzana Maximuk.
9/27/1939 – Isador Maximuk sold his half to Zuzana Maximuk.
12/4/1954 – Susan Maximuk sold it to Paul Maximuk.
11/29/1954 - Paul and Laverne Maximuk sold it to Alex and Viola Marko.
10/24/1957 – Alex and Viola Marko sold it to Julius Hollowacz.
11/5/1965 – Julius Hollowacz sold to Helen Sosenko.
2/12/1991 - Helen Sosenko sold to Richard Sosenko.
8/18/1999 - Richard Sosenko sold to Jack Lounge Inc., the present owner in 2026.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CENSUS - You can also use census records to learn more about the various families that owned your house throughout the ages. Census records are available from 1790 to 1950. So, if you know who was living in your home in 1920, for instance, you can look them up in the census records and see how many people were in their family, as well as their ages and occupations. You can access census records for free at FamilySearch, the website of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, who have collected numerous vital records all over the world at <https://www.familysearch.org/en/united-states/> The Cuyahoga County Public Library system and the Cleveland Public Library system both have subscriptions to Ancestry.com where these census records can be searched for free as well.

In the above example, we could search for the following in the census records:

1880 Census – Henry and Philippina Senne
1900 Census - Martha McCombs
1910 Census - Charles McCoombs
1920 Census - Charles McCoombs
1930 - 1950 Census - Isador & Zuzana Maximuk

OBITUARIES AND NEWSPAPER ARTICLES – Once you have the names of those who lived at a particular property, search for obituaries and newspaper articles on those individuals. Sometimes you’ll find some very interesting stories about them!

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF ZONING PHOTOS – At the main Cleveland Public Library in downtown Cleveland, there is a collection of photos taken of homes/buildings that were scheduled to be torn down. If you want to see what a house/building looked like that is no longer standing, check this collection to see if there is a picture of an address you are interested in, especially if the Cuyahoga County Archive photo is missing from the tax duplicate.

GOOGLE STREET VIEW – Want to see if a home that you are interested in is still standing? Go to Google and type in the address. If the home is still standing, you can view Google Street View and see it.

CLEVELAND AND ITS NEIGHBORHOODS WEBSITE – Want to learn more about the neighborhood surrounding the home you researched? Check out this website filled with useful

information about neighborhoods in Cleveland:

<https://sites.google.com/site/clevelandanditsneighborhoods/>

SANBORN MAPS – These are available through the Cleveland Public Library or Cuyahoga County Public Library websites with a valid library card. The Sanborn maps are found under research databases. They will show you the businesses and churches near the house, and also the type of house that it was. Pink indicates brick, and yellow indicates wood.

GOOD LUCK!