

**BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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The following is another article submitted to us by Tim Bennett. As many of our readers/members enjoy researching, we will periodically publish tips/articles on how to research different topics. Tim Bennett is the sixth generation owner of the Warner Homestead farm, located on Buno Road.

**RESEARCH TIPS -- DEEDS — Part 1**

Similar to land patents, deeds can also provide a wealth of information on the intentions and movement of ancestors. Deeds provide not only the names of the seller (grantor) and buyer (grantee) but also their residence at the time. These documents have a transaction date as well as a recorded date with differences sometimes months, years, or in rare cases decades apart. One extreme example included the deeding of property by Richard Lyons and wife Martha to School Dist No 8. The transaction took place on December 9, 1842 but wasn't recorded until September 14, 1881, nearly 40 years later!

Copies of deeds are held at the Livingston County Register of Deeds office in Howell. Fortunately, transactions from 1834 - 1886 are available online from scanned microfilm through free genealogical services such as FamilySearch.org. The online service provides a scanned index to the deeds and the organization method varies by county. For Livingston County, the index is grouped alphabetically and then sorted by *recorded* date order, not *transaction* date within each letter of the alphabet. The left page lists by sellers while the right lists by purchasers.

A series of deeds over time may show changes in the residences of an ancestor. Not all properties purchased were settled at the time the deed was made, though. In fact, some deeds were transacted from afar with the purchaser apparently buying property sight unseen using justices of the peace as witnesses in separate locations. The residence recorded at the top of the

deed of the buyer and seller is a better indication of where an ancestor lived rather than the location of the property transacted.

Wives had rights to property that was brought to the marriage as well as purchased afterwards. The husband could not sell or mortgage property unless she gave her free consent and her name was listed on deeds including a notation that "on a private examination separate and apart from her husband acknowledged she had executed the same freely and without fear or compulsion of her said husband." Inclusion or exclusion of a known wife on deeds could provide guidance on rough timeframes of marriages or deaths.

Deeds are genealogical gold mines loaded with tidbits of important data. Unraveling the information within, however, can be a bit perplexing without a basic understanding of how plots of land are defined and described.

*(To be continued in September issue.)*

A handy reference for quickly finding the properties owned by an ancestor was compiled by Milton Charboneau in his *Early Land Owners & Settlers of Livingston County, Michigan*. This book is available for reference at the Livingston County Register of Deeds and a number of libraries.