

How to search land records

Gather as many owners' names and approximate dates as possible.

Use the following resources:

- 1) Current assessor records or Vision Appraisal information. These usually have current and a previous owners' names, dates of purchase, and volume and deed numbers.
- 2) The assessor's office might have older records- check these.
- 3) maps in the Town Clerk's vault, perhaps there has been a survey of the property.
- 4) City Directories. For Branford these started in 1895 and are housed at the Blackstone Library. An index by street was started in 1928 in the back of the directory. Work your way back chronologically and take notes. One of the difficulties, especially along the shoreline, is that house numbers were not used until the 1960s or houses were not included in the directories if they were summer only. Another is that the person living at an address may be renting.

for older homes

Style of architecture.

Oral/family history, house plaques, census, and probate records.

older maps

Once you have a few names in hand- search the deeds at the Branford Town Clerk's vault. This takes time and patience. Don't try to do too much at once, take good notes, draw diagrams of the property bounds including boundary owners. Be sure you note the address, street, or if mentioned whether the property refers to "buildings thereon." This helps to date the construction of a house as opposed to vacant land. In the 1950s many street names in Branford were changed, so don't automatically think you have the wrong property. Sometimes you get lucky, and a newer deed may refer to the volume and page of an older deed. Starting in the 20th century, many pieces of land with buildings have mortgages. These can be confusing as the loaner of the money is the grantee and the person borrowing is the grantor. The reverse is true when the mortgage is paid off. Early in the 20th century the deed may not say mortgage, but a clue is that the deed is recorded very soon after but separately from the initial purchase.

The grantor (seller) and grantee (buyer) index books are together on lower shelves in the back left of the vault. The books have different designations depending on the time frame. More recent index books are separated by grantor and grantee with specific date ranges. For older deeds, the grantor and grantees are in one book. The books are divided alphabetically by surname with subdivisions within each letter, for example "Bu" surnames.

If you are looking for a buyer named Burns- scan all the "Bu" entries in the grantee book. The names are not alphabetical within the letter subdivisions. Surnames with many entries, in Branford such as "B" surnames, sometimes the entries are carried over to other pages, like "Z" which has few entries, so room for spillover.

Enjoy learning about the history of your home.