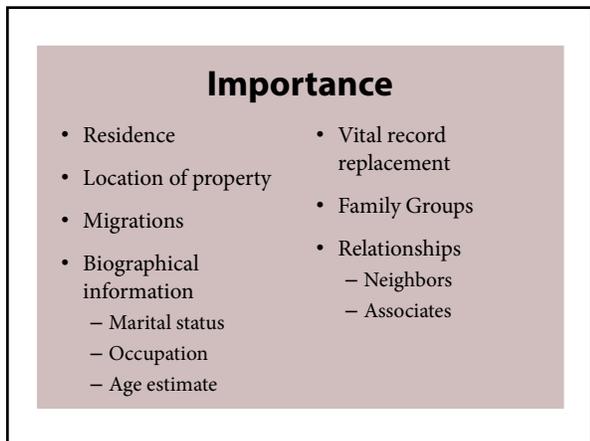




1



2



3

Deeds

- Legal document that transfers the ownership of property from one party to another party
 - Also referred to as Warranty Deed
- Generally recorded on the county level
 - Town level: Connecticut, Vermont, Rhode Island

7

Process

1. Seller agrees to sell land to the buyer
2. Buyer pays the seller agreed upon amount
3. Deed is written
4. Seller takes deed to courthouse
5. Dower release (if necessary)
6. Clerk records deed
7. Deed given to buyer

8

Format

- Seller and Buyer
- Payment
- Property description
- Legal language
- Dates
- Witnesses



9

Witnesses

- Always note the witnesses
- Can be a member of your ancestor's cluster
 - Family
 - Associates
 - Neighbors
- Always confirm identity

13

Mortgages

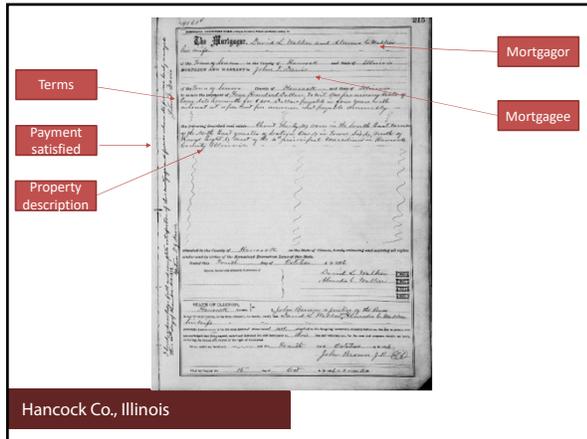
- Money borrowed using land as security
- Mortgagor = Person who mortgages property
 - Borrower
 - Owner of property
- Mortgagee = Person who holds mortgage
 - Lender
- Generally recorded on county level

14

How can I tell if it's a mortgage?

- Indicated in index
- Repayment information included within the deed
- Can be recorded in separate deed books
- Clerk often confirmed repayment in the left-hand column of deed

15



16

Sheriff's Deed or Sale

- Forced sale of property
 - Likely due to failure to pay taxes
 - Satisfy judgement against landowner
- Sheriff auctions off property
- Can be recorded under "Sheriff" in grantor index
- Deeds can sometimes be recorded in separate volumes
- Can also be recorded in court records

17

- Roger Ashton purchased property for \$101
- Former owner John Mecus was in arrears for \$166
- Land located in Martin's Ferry

Belmont County, Ohio

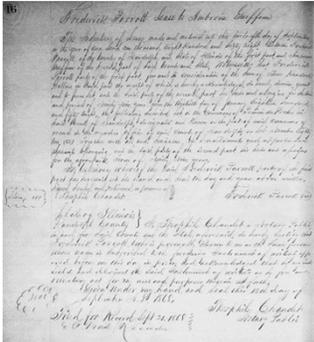
18

Lease

- Transfer of use and possession of property
 - Not title or ownership
- Specific time period and fee
- Leases varied in length

19

- Frederick Parrott granted 99 year lease to Ambrose Greffeme
- Lease began 30 January 1858
- \$300 fee



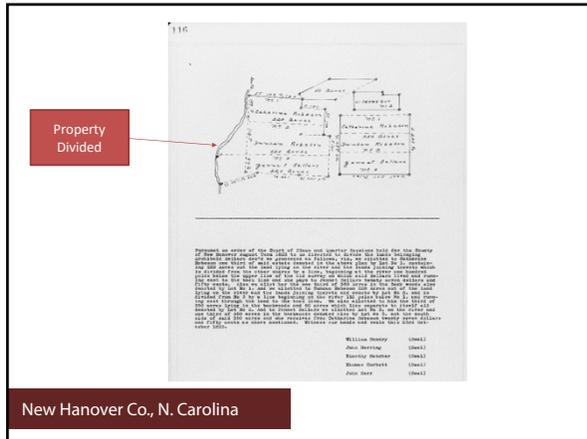
Randolph County, Illinois

20

Assignments

- Transfer of interest or rights belonging to a document
 - Warrant or bounty land
 - Lease
- Mortgage can be transferred along with interest

21



28

Power of Attorney

- Legal document authorizing an individual to act on behalf of another individual
- Did not require grantor or seller to be physically present
- Can give clues to origins and prior residences

29

- Benjamin Kelley appoints Joel Bassetts as Power of Attorney
- 112 acre parcel in Montpelier
- Grants power to sell land as he sees fit

Montpelier, Vermont

30



31

Dower Right

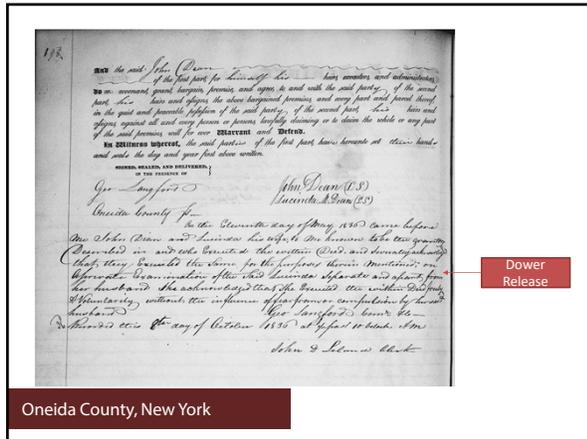
- Lifetime interest in property allowed by law
- Allowed the widow to retain her rights in the property of deceased husband
- Also referred to as Widow's Thirds

32

Dower Release

- Wife agrees to the sale of land that included her dower rights
- Generally recorded following deed
- May be recorded as a separate transaction
- Can be recorded in separate volume
 - Sometimes with court records
- Not all states required Dower Release
 - Investigate inheritance laws of state to confirm

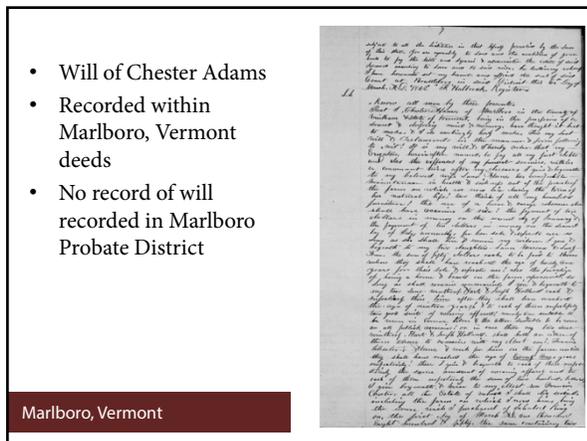
33



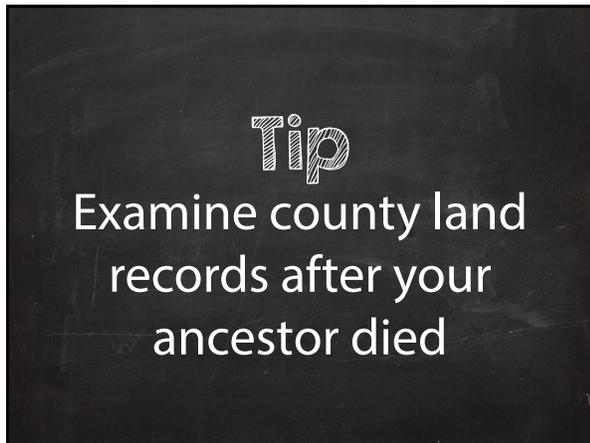
34



35



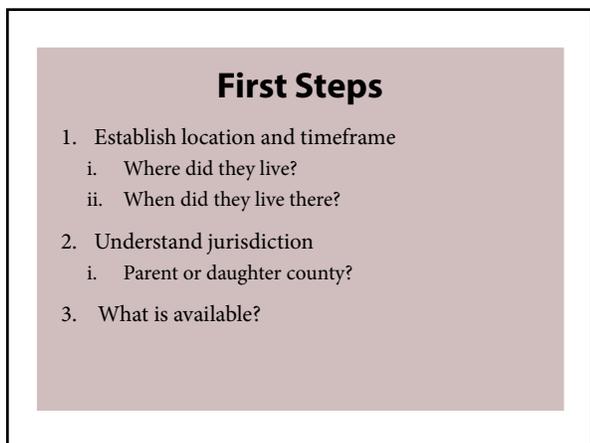
36



37



38



39

Where and When

- Use census, tax, vital records, and maps to place your ancestor in a particular **place** at a particular **time**



40

Construct a Timeline

Residences of Lewis Smith		
Year	Source	Residence
1828	Birth Record of son, Manley Smith	East Thomaston, Maine
1833	Birth record of son, Elliott Smith	Thomaston, Maine
1840	US Federal Census	Thomaston, Maine
1850	US Federal Census	Worcester, Massachusetts
1860	US Federal Census	Worcester, Massachusetts

41

Jurisdiction

- Use guides and gazetteers to identify correct jurisdiction
- When was the county created?
 - FamilySearch Wiki
 - Atlas of Historical County Boundaries
 - <https://digital.newberry.org/ahcb/>

42



49

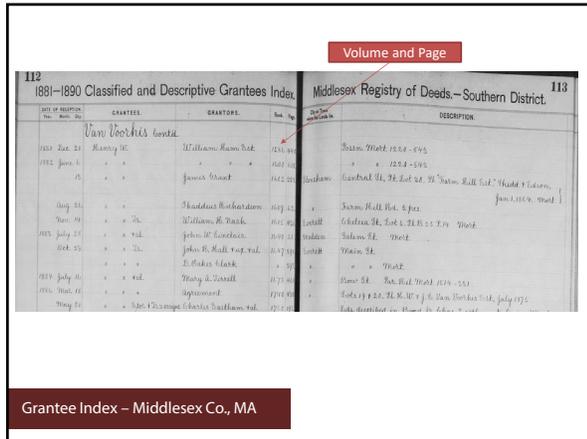
Understand the Index

- Different index systems utilized throughout the country
- Important to understand differences
- Examine first pages of index for clues
- United States Index Systems
 - https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Index_Systems

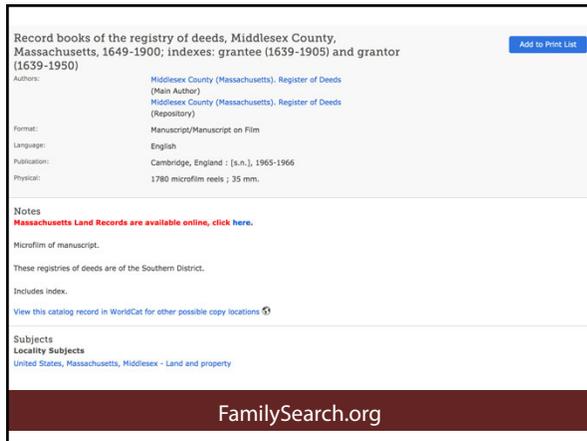
50

 A scan of a "GENERAL INDEX" table from a historical document. The table has multiple columns with headers including names and dates. The text is small and dense, typical of a microfilm or old printed index.

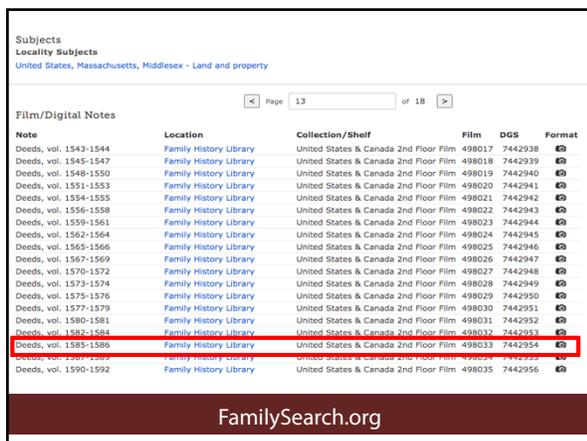
51



52



53



54

Why is this important?

- Important biographical information
- Witnesses and abutters could be family members or associates
- Places ancestor in time and place
- Understand how much property a person owned
- Efficient and accurate research

58

Grantor	Grantee	Volume and Page	Abstract
Emma J. Feyler and Warren W. Feyler of Thomaston	Frederick B. Doe of Thomaston	Volume 59, Page 22	Parcel located in Thomaston abutting the property of Ezekiel Doe, Mrs. Coles, and Emma J. Feyler. The property totals 2 and a half acres. Deed written 31 August 1880 and recorded 19 January 1881. Witnessed by Ezekiel Doe.
G.F. Burgess of Camden	Eliza A. Jones of Camden	Volume 61, Page 290	Parcel located in Camden abutting the land formerly of Mrs. Frost now owned by Messrs. Carleton Norwood and Co. The property totaled 28 square rods. Deed was written 20 February 1882 and recorded 18 April 1882. Witnessed by G.L. Burgess

Knox County, Maine

59

Glossary

- *Black's Law Dictionary*
– <https://thelawdictionary.org/>
- Genealogical Dictionary of Legal Terms
– https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Genealogical_Dictionary_of_Legal_Terms
- Patricia Law Hatcher, *Locating Your Roots: Discovering Your Ancestor in Land Records*, (Cincinnati: Betterway Books, 2003)

60

Locating Historic Parcels

61

Challenges

- Antiquated language
 - Metes, bounds, rods, arpents, etc.
- Confusing language
- Property description does not reveal modern day landmarks



62

Strategies

- Trace historic ownership of property
- What geographic features are mentioned in the deed?
- Examine deeds of abutters
 - What is mentioned in their property descriptions?
- Use historic maps, atlases, and local histories

63

Strategies

- Work with local historical societies
- Embrace technology
 - Geographic Information System (GIS)
- Stay organized
 - Research log
 - Abstract deeds

64

Tip

Always check probate records

65

Probate

- Property can pass generation to generation through probate
- Examine wills, administrations, and inventories for real estate holdings

66

Maps

- Library of Congress
– www.loc.gov/maps
- Norman P. Levanthal Map and Education Center
– <https://collections.leventhalmap.org>
- David Rumsey Map Collection
– www.davidrumsey.com
- American Geographical Society
– <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agdm/search/>

67

Maps

- Harvard University Scanned Maps
– <https://curiosity.lib.harvard.edu/scanned-maps>
- HistoryGeo.com
– Historygeo.com
- University of California Berkeley Geodata
– <https://geodata.lib.berkeley.edu/?utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=>

68

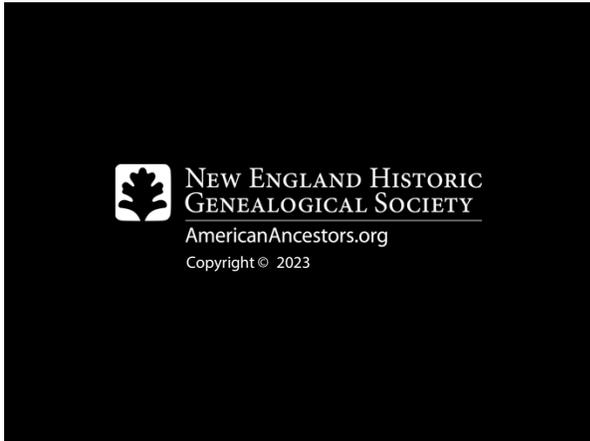
Conclusion

- Always examine county land records
- Understand different index systems
- Fully abstract deeds to ensure efficient and accurate research
- Stay organized!

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70



71
