

## **TRACING THE HISTORY OF YOUR HOME**

Unlike most towns, the residents of Ridgefield are fortunate to have land records dating back to 1709. Most homeowners are interested in the history of their home, and it is interesting and possible to search back and reveal this information. We have an instruction guide as how to do such a search, but the research involves a great deal of time.

I suggest that you read the instructions carefully before starting. In addition, I can provide contact information for professionals that would complete the research for you.

Wendy Gannon Lionetti CCTC  
Ridgefield Town Clerk

### **Historical Land Records & Genealogy**

The land record indexes in the Town Clerk's Office are searchable by the grantor and grantee. The grantor is always the giver or the seller and the grantee is the receiver or the buyer.

There are two ways of searching the grantor/grantee Indexes. You may search using the index books or the electronic database, ( [Ridgefield Town Clerk - SearchIQS](#) ). However, the electronic database currently only holds index information back to 1960. Prior to 1960, you will have to use the index books.

Your title search will begin with the grantee index from the date you purchased your property. Here you will also find the name of the grantor/seller. The index will refer you to a volume and page, type of deed, date of recording and location of property. It is very important to note the location of property as some people owned many parcels of land. You will be looking for a Quit Claim Deed, Warranty Deed, Executor Deed or Fiduciary Deed. If the property was transferred by a Will, it will then read Probate Certificate.

Once you have found this information you will search the name of the Grantor/seller in the grantee Index. This will again give you the name of the person who the property was purchased from. You will continue to do this process until you find a deed that reads "land" and not "land and buildings".

Make notes of volumes and pages as you go and be sure to read the document. It is very important to read each document and not simply make assumptions from the index.

Many documents refer to a Town Clerk's map number and name of a street. Maps are also filed in the Town Clerk's Office. You may view and print maps through the electronic database.

The purchase price is also indicated in the deed. Some deeds do not show a dollar amount, but the amount of conveyance tax paid will appear. Before March 15, 2003, the local conveyance tax paid was \$1.10 per thousand dollars of the full purchase price. After March 15, 2003, the local conveyance tax paid changed to \$2.50 per thousand dollars of the full purchase price.

**Please Note: Some of the following information has been updated from the original presentation due to the implementation of new technologies and tools used in the record keeping process.**

Topic: TRACING THE HISTORY OF YOUR HOME  
Ridgefield Public Library  
January 28, 1981  
Speaker: Jeremy G. Wilmot  
381 Wilton Road West

General Comments:

The general theme of any work of research in land records is bound to impress the searcher with the dislocation and impermanence of the family under investigation. The collision of myth and reality stimulates a thoughtfulness about all recorded history and the bias reflected by the author.

And so I sound a cautionary note: BE SPECIFIC and EXACT. Do not jump to conclusions that suit your own mind set. I have made far too many errors because of need to confirm a romantic notion of a simpler time. You will find, if you refer to as many sources as are available, that the social system fit the “means of production” very well. Where surplus did not allow for all family members, they left Ridgefield. This happened quite early – after the Revolution. Until the railroad branch in 1870, the opportunities shrunk even further, because we were never able to develop a sustained industrial base.

Data to record as you move through the land records

Place names: ie Sharp Hill, Toilsome, The Branch etc.

Names: Because each generation used the same names, be certain to list them with wives (frequent second marriages), and children. Frequently the deeds will name spouses and children. DO NOT FORGET TO RECORD THE DATES.

Measure and make floor plan. This is an aid to understanding building methods and style.

Be prepared for inconsistencies and errors.

Put your house in historic perspective and in social context.

Note stonewalls. Each mason had his own signature. For mason, read “farmer”.

Assessor’s Office (Please Note: Current field cards can be found online on the Tax Assessor’s page of the Ridgefield Town website at [PropertyRecordCards.Com](http://PropertyRecordCards.Com))

1. Ask to see the Assessor’s Field Card. From this card take the Volume and Page numbers of the deed, the Map number(s) (if any) and list them in your notes. Also, make note of the Assessor’s Field Card *Map & Lot* number. The field card will show a sketch of the

house, square footage and generally helpful information. The Field Card is on file by the *Map & Lot* number, (ie F10-0080).

#### Town Clerk's Office:

1. Starting with the Volume and Page number of the deed from the Field Card, go directly to the same. Start with either Grantee, (the buyer) or Grantor, (the seller). The deed will give you the other name in the transaction. More recently, the deeds will most often show a property address. However, as you work your way back through time, those niceties are seldom observed and intuition takes over. Furthermore, roads are not identified by name but merely as 'the highway'. At this point the complexities mount. Be patient. Record all abutting property owners. Include middle initials (the same names appear again and again in succeeding generations). When a spouse is identified, underline same in your notebook. DATE YOUR NOTES AND PUT THEM IN ORDER AT THE END OF EACH RESEARCH SESSION. Otherwise you'll be awash with little scraps of paper and hard put to arrange them in any coherent order. Incidentally, coherence is long in coming. When you begin to run into confusion with names and locations, it is time to start genealogy. See RESEARCH SOURCES.
2. Maps. *The maps on file in the Town Clerk's Office have all been digitized and are filed by Map Title and Map Number. There are various types of maps recorded in the Town Clerk's Office, subdivision maps, plot plans, easements. Copies can be made from the online index in various sizes.*
3. Early tax records. The amounts are recorded as pounds, shillings, pence. This practice continued until well after the Revolution. You will find most transfers in early times financed by the owner and when the obligation has been satisfied, the property is Quit Claimed over to the Grantee by a transfer of a title or claim to another.

How do I find facts?

Where do I start?

#### Research Sources

##### I. Property/Structure

###### A. Documentary Evidence

1. Deeds and Conveyances (Ridgefield Land Records), Town Clerk's Office
2. Tax Records
  - a. Tax Lists, Tax Collector's Office
  - b. Field Cards, Tax Assessor's Office
3. Probate Records
  - a. Fairfield until 1728
  - b. Stamford until 1746
  - c. Danbury until 1840
  - d. Ridgefield to 2010
  - e. Bethel (Northern Fairfield County Probate Court) to present

4. Maps
  - a. 1854 Map of Ridgefield, (formerly in Pub Room at the Elms Inn)
  - b. 1867 Beer Atlas Map of Ridgefield – Town Clerk’s Office
  - c. 1900 Sewer Map of Ridgefield – Town Clerk’s Office. This map concerns itself ONLY with the center of town.
5. Electors – Oath of Fidelity or Freeman’s Oath
  - a. Town Records (see 2. A.) to 1860
6. Cemetery Book
  - a. Town Clerk’s Office
7. Book of Attachment
  - a. Town Clerk’s Office – Part of Book 2 ‘Births, Marriages, Deaths’
8. Church Records at Conn. State Library – Hartford
  - a. Congregational 1761-1931
  - b. Ridgebury Congregational Church – 1761-1916
  - c. St. Stephens Episcopal Church – 1784-1918 (Book published and part of Ridgefield Library Collection)
  - d. Jesse Lee Methodist records are at the church office

### **Research Sources Online**

Connecticut Society of Genealogists [Connecticut Society of Genealogists - Connecticut Society of Genealogists \(csginc.org\)](http://csginc.org)

Ridgefield Historical Society [Home • Ridgefield Historical Society](#)

Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council Inc [Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council, Inc. \(ctprofgenc.org\)](http://ctprofgenc.org)

Connecticut State Library [Connecticut State Library – Preserving the past. Informing the Future. \(ctstatelibrary.org\)](http://ctstatelibrary.org)

CT House Histories, LLC [CT House Histories, LLC – Custom Research for Historic Homes and More](#)