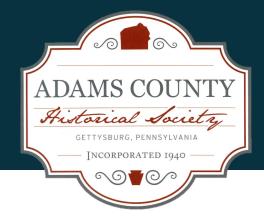# ADAMS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PROPERTY RESEARCH GUIDE

Locating the Property

Before beginning your research, it is important to locate the property you are researching on both modern and historic maps. If you do not already know the property's current address, you will need to find it. You can consult the following resources:

1. https://mapping.adamscounty.us/apps/Public_Parcel_Viewer/ (for determining current address and locating the most modern deed reference).
2. The 1858 Adams County Wall Map (available at ACHS).
3. The 1872 Adams County Atlas (available at ACHS).
4. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps (https://libraries.psu.edu/about/collections/sanborn-fire-insurance-maps), Gettysburg, Littlestown, McSherrystown, and New Oxford only.
5. Gettysburg Battlefield Maps (hard copies available at ACHS, also at www.loc.gov)

NOTE: If you are researching a structure, using the 1858 and 1872 maps is a good way to determine whether there was anything at the site when these maps were created.

Creating a Chain of Title

The next and most important step in property research is establishing a chain of title. There are many ways to do this. We recommend beginning with the most modern deed (see step one above), and moving backwards through time, from deed to deed. You will eventually hit a dead end. To begin searching land deeds, you can use the Adams County Courthouse's online public records search, available on all ACHS computers. Once you have reached a dead end in your deed search, you can turn to a host of other records at ACHS that can fill in the gaps. These records include, but are not limited to:

1. Tax Records: Each town and township generated an annual tax book. ACHS holds the originals from 1800 through the 1950s, and also photocopies of pre-1800 York County tax lists.
2. Estate Files: Check the estate files for the property's owners to see if a description of real estate is listed.
3. Newspaper references: Check our card file for any references to property owners, and search area papers on www.newspapers.com (available on all ACHS computers).
4. Look for Federal Census records (available via ancestry.com on all ACHS computers), and also local Septennial census records (ACHS research room). This will help you determine who was living at the property you are researching.
5. Search our PastPerfect museum database for any relevant documents, artifacts, or photographs.
6. Search for Civil War Damage Claims to see if the property suffered any losses during the Civil War. These records are available on microfilm at the ACHS and online via ancestry.com.
7. Look through our family files to find more information about the owners and residents of your property.