

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

Carroll's Yesteryears
19 May 1991

Old houses each have a story
by Joe Getty

One of the most frequent questions we are asked at the Historical Society is: "How can I research the history of my old Carroll County house?"

Local homeowners call or stop by to learn about the documentary source materials available about their house, the date range from when it was built, and information about the families who previously lived in the house.

Old house research generally follows two different approaches. First, one can investigate primary and secondary source materials for written documentation that decries the ownership of the property and its history.

Second, one can interpret the physical evidence of the house, such as its architectural style, construction technology and other details, to determine a date range based on known local traditions in this region's architecture.

Generally speaking, the research in documentary sources is going to provide a more detailed and accurate account of the history of a house. The place to begin documenting a house is by preparing chain-of-title in the land records of Carroll County.

An example of this part of the research can be provided by the work we accomplished in response to a question by Raymond L. Young. Young, who was 90 years old this month, stopped by last Monday to learn more about the farm near Hyde's Quarry where he was raised. Specifically, he wanted to know when his parents purchased the property.

We went to the Carroll County land records office (located in the Court House Annex at 55 N. Court St. in Westminster) and located the current deed on the property. In most deeds, a prior reference in the land records is given. Following these references provides the chain-of-title, which is a listing of all legal owners of the property.

As we proceeded back through the references, the deeds confirmed some of Young's brother, Harry, has sold the property out of the family in 1949 (Carroll County Land Records Liber 201, Folio 218).

Harry Young had purchased the property in 1936 from his mother, Laura (Carroll County Land Records Liber 164, Folio 181). The property was known as parts of "Resurvey on Good Fellowship," "Resurvey on Spring Hill" and "Unwilling." These are references to the early land identification system in the state through patents and certificates.

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The date we were looking for was March 31, 1885. The deed from that date indicated that Lewis and Elizabeth Formwalt sold the property of 140 acres to J. Daniel Young (Carroll County Land Records Liber 62, Folio 297).

Young filled in some of the family history. J. Daniel Young had married Laura Formwalt, Lewis’ daughter, in 1879. He worked at Roop’s Mill near Jasontown until 1883 when he started working the farm. Thus in 1885, his father-in-law sold the farm to him.

Young also knew that his mother, Laura Formwalt, was born in the farmhouse in 1860, so we looked at the Formwalt’s acquisition of the property.

A deed from November 9, 1857, shows the transfer of the property from George and Rachel Lantz to Lewis Formwalt (Carroll Land Records Liber 23, Folio 201). The deed records that Formwalt paid \$3000 down and mortgaged five notes to Lantz for \$2000 each. One note was due to Lantz each year for the succeeding five years.

A reference in the mid-19th century deeds also provided information about the early history of the property. The property had been in the Lantz family since 1793, when George Havener deeded a 230-acre parcel to George Lantz, the grandfather of the man who sold it to Lewis Formwalt.

In the research library at the historical society we have the Tracey Collection of patent records for central Maryland. The documents indicate that George Havener was the original owner of this property through a patent of “Spring Hill” surveyed in 1758.

This provides the basic chain-of-title in the land record for the Young farm. This is the first step for preparing any history of an old Carroll County house. The next step is to undertake genealogical research for the families who owned the property.

If you would like to learn more about the research of old houses in Carroll County, the book *Carroll’s Heritage* provides essays about local architecture including case studies on selected Carroll County buildings.

Due to popular demand, the historical society will be sponsoring an additional workshop on “How to Research Your Old Carroll County House.” It will be Thursday, June 20 at the Shriver-Weybright Auditorium, 210 E. Main St., Westminster. For information, call 848-6494.

Photo credit: Times photo

Photo caption: Land record research helped document the history of the Young farm located near Jasontown.