

Key Terms

Grantee: person who bought or was given property

Grantor: person who gave or sold title to the property to someone else

Abstract of title: a history of who has owned the property as well as information on liens, judgments, taxes or other items affecting the property.

Title search: research of all records related to the title of a property

Mechanics lien: a claim made on a property by someone who has performed work on that property until payments is rendered

Legal property description: lot number, block number, and the name of the addition or sub-division

Example:

Lot 15, Block 3

Old Town

HISTORIC WAXAHACHIE, INC

Striving to educate the public to the cultural, historic, and economic benefits of protecting Waxahachie's unique social and architectural history

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Researching Your Historic Property



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STEP 1

THE PROPERTY LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Research on the property should be done by using the legal description, which can be found through these avenues:

- Tax records
- Closing papers you received when the property was purchased
- Title Search
- Abstract of Title
- Ellis County Appraisal District at www.elliscad.org

Verify dates with more than one source

STEP 2

TRANSACTIONS FROM GRANTOR (SELLERS) TO GRANTEES (BUYERS)

- Start with the earliest date and seller's name (grantor) on the title search done at the time of your purchase.
- Visit the Ellis County Clerk's Office to search the Grantee - Grantor Indexes. Volumes are organized by date. Entries are chronological.
- Look through the Grantee-Grantor Index until you see the name of the person(s) receiving the property. Make a note of the individual from whom they obtained the property.
- Then move to the Grantor-Grantee Indexes looking for this name, and you will discover the previous owner.
- Continue to 'zigzag' between the two types of Indexes. Example below

Grantee (buyer)	Bought from	Grantee (seller)	Year
You		Jones	1985
Jones		Smith	1962
Smith		Miller	1920

STEP 3

ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

- Check the Mechanics' and Material-men's Liens in the County Clerk's Office
 - Volumes are organized by date
 - Look for the name of either the owner or the contractor
 - This can provide a description of the original structure, dates, the list of building materials, sources, etc.
- Sanborn Insurance Maps give an outline of the structure, specify the exterior material (wood, brick, etc.), and even list the type of roof (metal, shingle, etc.).



- Can be found online through the Sims Library
- Hard copies are available for viewing at the Ellis County Museum
- Bird's Eye View
 - Available for select years between 1876 to 1886
 - These show an aerial view including street layouts, structures, etc.
 - Copies are located at the Ellis County Museum and Sims Library

*Please note that not all properties may have lien information available.

STEP 4

THE PEOPLE

- In the reference section of Sims Library, researchers can find local directories in which listings are given by address. Look up the street address and find the name and occupation of the occupant. (Not all listed are owners, some may be renters, etc.)

HARBIN	
	Fifth w of Brown from Marvin n to Sycamore
112	C P Burnett—O
201	John C Kennedy—O
202	J H Henson—O
209	G M Goddard—O
300	Ozro Cheatham—O
302	G O Balch—O

- Search the exact death date of deceased owners, builders, architects, etc. www.familysearch.org
- Once you know the date of death, visit the Sims Library to look up the newspaper obituary on microfilm. The obit may list major accomplishments, surviving relatives, and give other clues.
 - At the County Clerk's Office, access death records and wills by the name of the individual.
 - For notable figures, try the Handbook of Texas Online at www.tshaonline.org

