

## **GUIDE TO OLD HOUSE RESEARCH**

Compiled by the Survey & Research Committee of the Hudson Heritage Association

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### **OBTAINING A HUDSON HERITAGE ASSOCIATION MARKER**

The Architectural Survey & Research Committee of Hudson Heritage Association has established a program to document the history of all structures built in Hudson Village and Hudson Township prior to the year 1910. The goal is to establish the dates of construction and additions, record important interior and exterior architectural details, and compile biographical information about persons who lived in or worked in the buildings. This project is a continuation of the pilot program begun in 1973 by Rebecca Rogers as part of the recommendations contained in her book, Hudson, An Architectural and Historical Study. Structures that have been researched and for which a comprehensive research report has been completed will be eligible to receive one of HHA’s markers, which can be found on buildings located throughout Hudson.

Qualifying research reports should include the following information for each structure:

- A. A transcript of the Tax Auditor’s Duplicate entries pertaining to the property for the years 1910 back to 1808, as available.
- B. Copies of all deed transactions to the earliest traceable date.
- C. A summary of findings from the above, i.e., date of construction, additions, alterations, etc., progression of ownership—a re-cap of information.
- D. Biographical sketches of the primary occupants of the structure. How much material is included is at the discretion of the researcher. Naturally, the more information included, the more interesting and colorful the report will be. All sources of information should be footnoted or listed separately.

E. An architectural inspection commentary on interior and exterior details.

F. Photographs illustrating important interior and exterior architectural details.

When compiled as suggested above, each report will tell a comprehensive, authenticated story. As a completed project, the research program will serve a variety of purposes:

1. To identify structures that are representative of Hudson's heritage, which should be protected from destruction or uncharacteristic change.
2. To provide the community with as much documented information as possible to increase appreciation for, and preservation of, historic structures.
3. To correlate the preservation of the historic aspects of Hudson with the present and future progress of the Community.

## **METHODS OF RESEARCH**

### A. DEEDS RESEARCH

Researching the history of deeds connected with a property provides a clear timeline of who owned a property and for how long. In Hudson's early days, it was not unusual for prominent individuals to own multiple properties or to sequentially own different properties in town.

Deeds dating from 1795 may be found in Akron at the Summit County Recorder's Office on the fourth floor of the Ohio Building on South High Street.

1795-1840 Grantee (buyer) index is in one volume only

1795-1840 Grantor (seller) index is in one volume only

1840-1914 Grantee and Grantor indices are in separate alphabetical volumes

To locate the Grantee (buyer) of a deed between the years 1840 and 1914, locate the volume<sub>2</sub> which corresponds to the last name of the Grantee (Adams, for example, would be in Volume A). Within each volume, the names for Grantees are found by turning to the division page at the front of each letter. Specific names are listed according to the first letter of the first (given) name. When the correct pages are found, skim to find the names of the Grantee and check the year to be sure it is close to the last year in which the name was listed in the tax records. Also be sure that the property is located in the correct town and lot. The volume and page numbers to the right of the page will indicate the deed book in

which the written deed may be found. The above instructions apply when using the Grantor volume also.

When the deed has been located, read it carefully, noting the names of the buyer, the seller, the date and property dimensions and description to make sure it applies to your property. Copy the deed for your report. Copies may be made on the premises by Xerox for \$.10 per page. Thrifty researchers may prefer to copy the deeds by hand!

With the name of the previous owner, return to the tax records and continue the research back to 1808.

## B. TAX AUDITOR'S DUPLICATE RECORDS

The first step toward determining a construction date for a structure is to analyze tax records. The Hudson Library and Historical Society maintains a collection of tax records in its archives.

Village properties are recognized in the tax records by Village lot and Village block numbers. Each village block is bounded by Village streets or the incorporation limit. Each block is divided into lots. There are also block and lot numbers for platted subdivisions in the Village. These blocks are noted by a Roman numeral (i.e. I, II, etc.). In addition, Village land is described by its location in the Township. The Township is divided into one hundred "great lots" of a half mile on a side. The principal lots in the Village are Great Lots 35, 36, 45, 46, 55, 56, 65, 66.

Township properties are not divided into blocks and lots. Only the Great Lot number is used. In most cases, Township properties are easier to research because less subdividing took place and the parcels of land were undisturbed.

All of Hudson is designated by its location in the Western Reserve as Township Four in Range 10.

Beginning with the year 1910 and working backward, insert the microfiche viewer card for that year's tax records in the viewer located at the Hudson Library. Be sure to follow directions posted on the machine. Until about 1850, the Township is listed separately from the Village, referred to as "Hudson Corporation." There is also a section listing personal property assessments.

Once the correct section has been located, find the piece of property either alphabetically according to the owner's name or by skimming the "Lot" column for your Great Lot number (for Township properties) or Block and Village Lot number (for Village properties). Sometimes more than one person will own the lot, so it is helpful to skim the entire Village or Township section, at least for the first few years. It usually happens that one person owns the majority of the lot while the other owns merely a fraction or a right-of-way.

Record the tax record information for each year in which there is any change in value or acreage. Remember that the VALUE of the property is what should be recorded in the "Value of Land" and "Total Amount of Value" sections, not the total amount of taxes paid.

When the ownership appears to have changed (the name disappears from the records or the block and lot numbers are different), it is necessary to check the deeds to determine the previous owner. Remember: you are working BACKWARDS in time.

### C. ANALYSIS OF TAX RECORDS AND DEED TRANSACTIONS

Once you have completed the tax record transcripts and have copies of all deed transactions, you can analyze the changes in value and arrive at the accurate date when the structure now on the property was built. An example of a value progression might be:

1808-1813 one acre valued at \$10

1823-1825 one acre valued at \$10

1826-1840 one acre valued at \$50

1841-1870 one acre valued at \$400

1871-1910 one acre valued at \$475

Because of the low valuation from 1808 to 1825, (\$10), it is reasonable to assume that no significant structure was on the property. However, when the value increases to \$50 in 1826, it indicates that a structure was erected (small house, barn, lean-to, etc.). The large increase occurs in 1841, and if your structure reflects the architectural style of approximately that period, it is a safe assumption that it was constructed in that year. The further increase in 1870 could be Victorianization of the 1841 structure as was often the case.

### D. ARCHITECTURAL INSPECTION

The conclusions drawn from the deeds and tax records must be verified through an inspection by a member of the HHA Research and Survey Committee or a preservationist. Their findings should be recorded in the form of photographs and a written commentary for inclusion in the house report. The inspections should confirm the date determined by research.

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## E. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

To give more depth to the study of a building and to instill the house with sense of the stories associated with those who lived in it over time, it is worthwhile to explore the many sources available for biographical data. The following is a partial list of sources:

### Hudson Library and Historical Society Archives

HLHSA has a very complete collection of local histories, as well as an extensive clipping file, a photograph file, etc. Also in the archives are maps from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, old diaries and account books, sidewalk assessment records, obituary notices, scrapbooks, etc.

Occasionally, books on Ohio architecture also mention notable houses in the Hudson area. Contact the library's archivist for assistance.

### Summit County Probate Records-Portage County Probate Records

These records provide information on births, deaths, marriages, and wills. The Probate records are on the first floor of the Summit County Court House, South High Street, Akron. There are indices for the years after 1840. Pre-1840 records may be found on the second floor of the Portage County Court House, Chestnut Street, in Ravenna. (Until 1840, Hudson was part of Portage County. Summit County was created that year.)

### Western Reserve Academy Archives

If your property was in any way associated with the College, these archives may be a source of information.

### Lists of Merchants and Physicians

### Lists of Licenses & Permits Granted

These documents are on microfilm and are available at the Hudson Library and Historical Society Archives.

### A History of Summit County, Ohio—1881, by Wm. Perrin

## F. ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF RESEARCH INFORMATION

### 1. Tax Maps

The originals of these maps are located in small volumes in the Tax Map Department of the Ohio Building in Akron. The Hudson Library and Historical Society Archives has microfilmed those pertaining to Hudson as follows:

1846-Township only

1852-Township only

1859-Township and Village

1870-Township and Village

1880-Township only

1890-Township only

1900-Township only

## 2. Architectural Publications

Hudson-A Survey of Historical Buildings in an Ohio Town, 1989, Hudson Heritage Association, edited by Lois Newkirk

Early Homes of Ohio, I.T. Frary, (1971) New York; Dover Publications; also available is the original print version – Garrett and Massie, Publisher: 1936

Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, May, 1953, Vol. XII, Number 2, “Hudson: Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Domestic Architecture,” by Patricia Ingram

McAlester, V., McAlester, L., Rodriguez-Arnaiz, J., & Jarrett, L. (Illustrator)(1984). [\*A field guide to American houses\*](#). Westminster: Knopf.

## 3. Tax Assessor’s Card File

The Summit County Tax Assessor’s Office, third floor, Ohio Bldg, has on file a card for all structures on which taxes are paid. We have examined these cards and have noted that it appears the system went into effect circa 1853. This means that in 1853, all structures that were standing at that time were given an erection date of 1853 to inaugurate the system. The dates recorded after 1853 may be accurate; dates of 1853 may not. Accordingly, this information should be used only in conjunction with the other research sources outlined in this guide.

## **APPLYING FOR AN HISTORIC MARKER**

A homeowner may apply for an HHA historic marker by completing a research report substantiating the construction date for his/her structure. The application will be reviewed and considered based on the completeness of the report and the amount of information provided.

Homeowners who do not wish to complete their own research, but wish to apply for a historic marker, can arrange to have the research conducted by HHA’s Survey & Research Committee.

For further information, contact Hudson Heritage Association via email at [info@hudsonheritage.org](mailto:info@hudsonheritage.org).