

Historic Building Research

What the Building Can Tell

- What "Type" or "Style" is it? Are there other similar buildings nearby or does it stand out?
- Are any alterations obvious, such as artificial siding, enclosed porches, or additions?
 - Look for changes in foundation materials or changes in siding width. They often mark an addition.
- What are the building materials? What clues to the age of the building do they give?
 - Wood frame - heavy timber braced vs. balloon framed
 - Nominal vs. actual dimension lumber
 - Species--pine and cedar/cypress more common after 1900
 - Square headed nails generally pre-1890 in Indiana

 - Brick--soft brick vs. machine-made face brick
 - Flemish bond (diamond pattern of headers) common before 1850
 - Concrete block "stone pattern" or "split-faced"
 - look for date stamps
 - common material by about 1915

 - Windows: multi-paned 6-over-6 common in early buildings
1-over-1 is standard by 1900
Look for "wavy" glass, but it can be imitated

 - Other Clues
 - Ghost Markings
 - Writing or Inscriptions
 - Manufacturer's Marks on Fixtures or Hardware

After you research written (primary) source materials, look at your building again. Do the dates you've uncovered correspond to the physical clues?

Terms Frequently Used in Land Records

Foreclosure: The act to deprive a mortgagor of the right to redeem his/her property, especially on failure to make payment of a mortgage when due. Ownership of the property then passes to the mortgagee.

Grantee: The person to whom land ownership is transferred; the buyer.

Grantor: The person who transfers property ownership; the seller.

Lease: Contract conveying property to another for only a specified period of time

Mortgage deed: A deed conveying property to a creditor as a security.

Quitclaim deed: A deed that conveys to the buyer only the seller's interest. The buyer assumes responsibility for any claims brought against the property.

Warranty deed: A deed that includes a clause assuring the buyer that he/she owns the property free from interference by anyone making claim under a superior title.