



Wissahickon Valley
historical society

WVHS: How to Search a Plot's Genealogy (from the Oct 2021 Newsletter)

Jeanne Sorg, Montgomery County's Register of Deeds and Mayor of Ambler, on "Researching Historic Deeds," offers the following information:

- Deeds, legal descriptions of land, are available in Norristown, starting from 1784 when Montgomery County was formed out of Philadelphia.
- Sorg's office has records helpful for genealogists.
- Sorg's office is responsible for more than just deeds: It covers road plans, water plans, farm-preservation documents, military discharge records since the Civil War, and a register (in progress) of veterans' grave sites.
- Deeds show how a plot of land (not a structure) is bought and sold.
- Old deeds sometimes contain unusual facts, such as how a deed-holder died. They may mention debts, bankruptcy, and tax claims.
- Sorg's staff offers individual attention to help researchers who come to her office in person, such as deciphering old-style cursive handwriting or enlarging microfiche (but much work can be done online).
- All deeds are public. An index supplies information for no fee, but there is a charge for the actual data except for researchers who appear in person. (This policy prevents businesses from collecting landowners' addresses for marketing purposes.)
- The index, online, is difficult to use as a search-by-address, so researchers should use a person's name to find a needed "plot number."
- With a "plot number," researchers in most cases can follow the "genealogy" of a plot of land, tracing back in time to discover each previous owner. This process is time-consuming because interesting facts for further investigation immerge during the search. (Also, another source states that the *plot number* appears on the real estate bill.)

Here is the website to get started:

<https://www.courthousedirect.com/PropertySearch/Pennsylvania/Montgomery>