Durham Property Records Search: A How-To Guide

This working document is a collaboration between local historians – including Jennifer Melton and Nicholas Levy – and staff at the Durham County Library's North Carolina Collection. Since the nature and location of available sources is constantly evolving, it is necessarily a work in progress. If you have any feedback or suggestions for updates, please email them to ncc@dconc.gov

Want to know the history of your house? Helping a friend or family member reconstruct the story of their community? Trying to figure out who lived or what stood on a property that's been recently developed? There are lots of reasons you could be doing property records research. And while the best approach will vary somewhat based on exactly what you want to find out, this guide is meant as an overview with suggestions for handling the most commonly encountered questions.

The Basics

- Work backwards from the present day or work forwards from the earliest known document. Or do both! This can be a helpful way to move through dead ends.
- Save your work! Download deeds or plats, jot references on a notepad, or type them up as you go along. You never know what detail will prove pivotal…until it does!
- Keep an eye out for changes and inconsistencies, particularly variations in the description of property, changes in the spelling or abbreviation of names, alterations to the numbering system for records, and – of course – typos.
- Think creatively to get around apparent dead ends. We'll include some tips along the way.
- Ask for help! Even the most experienced researchers get stuck, and sometimes just having a second set of eyes on the same documents can lead to a breakthrough.

Durham County Tax Administration – Real Property Records Search

(https://property.spatialest.com/nc/durham)

- Search by Owner, Address, Parcel, or PIN to find information on the present owner and most recent sale. Remember this is a useful starting point *even if you are the current owner*.
- **Note**: This search is very fickle. If your search results do not meet your expectations, try again! When searching by address, use abbreviations such as N for North, RD for Road, etc. Names should be formatted as LastName FirstName.
- **Important**: The search function ONLY searches the name of the first person listed on the deed.

- On the page for the property, what you need most for your search will be under the "Key Information" section: the "Deed Book & Page" and "Plat Book & Page" entries (see highlighted portions of the screenshot for 201 E Main St). Record both of these numbers; leading zeros are not necessary.
- **Note**: The numbers to the right of "Deed Book & Page" are actually an active link! Clicking here will take you to the next vital resource in your journey.

Durham County Register of Deeds – Self Service Web
(https://rodweb.dconc.gov/web/)

- If you got here by clicking on the active link from a specific property on the Real Property Search system described above, you're probably looking at the most recent deed from that specific property. If you're looking for something different, you can always click the "Back to Search" button in the bottom left of the window.
- If you clicked either the Self Service Web homepage link above or the "Back to Search" button from a specific deed you landed on, you should see the following options in your browser window:
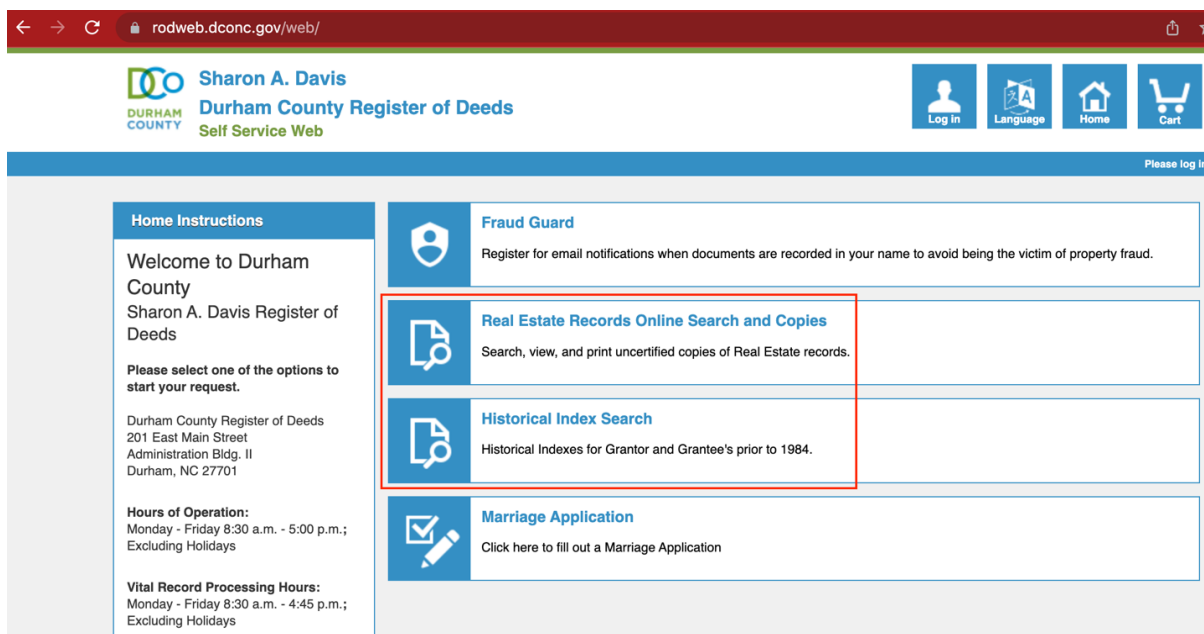
- (It's also possible that you see a Disclaimer page. If that is the case, scroll down to click on the "I Accept" button.)
- The two options highlighted in red above, "Real Estate Records Online Search and Copies" and "Historical Index Search," are the resources you're most likely to use in this endeavor.

Durham County Register of Deeds - Real Estate Records Online Search
(https://rodweb.dconc.gov/web/search/DOCSEARCH5S1)

- You have now arrived at the search page for real estate records. Hurrah! This is what you should see:

- From here, you have multiple options for searching, including:

    - Book / Page
        - *Recommended*. To find the most recent deed book & page number, use the Durham County Tax Administration – Real Property Search. (See above.)
    - Grantor
        - Person or organization conveying the property. Often, the seller.
    - Grantee
        - Person or organization receiving the property. Often, the buyer.
    - Both Names
        - This will search the Grantor *and* Grantee for the name you provide.

    - *Note*: Searching by Book & Page is typically the most streamlined way to trace ownership of a particular piece of property. However, searching by name (Grantor, Grantee, Both Names) can be a great way to learn more about the person. This might be a worthwhile adventure, depending on your research goals. However, in this guide, we focus on the former.

- Enter the Deed Book & Page numbers into the corresponding fields. No need to specify the Book Type. That's it. Go ahead and hit the Search button.

- Search results will display below the search form. You may need to scroll down to find them. Most often, there will be just one result. But sometimes there will be more, especially if you search by name of the Grantor and/or Grantee. Pay attention to the Document Type and look for DEED.

- To view the deed, you have two options:
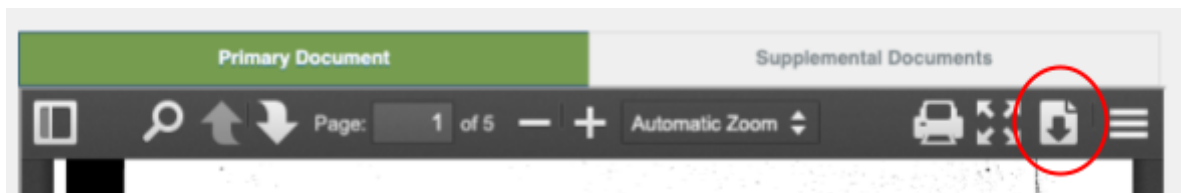
Click on the tiny document icon on the far right.

OR

Click just about anywhere on the search results. For instance, on Document Type or Grantor/Party 1, etc. This will expand the result; on the lower right, click on "View."

- *Recommended.* Save a copy of the deed. To download a copy, click on the download icon on the far right of the menu bar of the PDF viewer.

By default, the filename will match the Document Number for the deed. Perhaps this suits you. Perhaps a different naming convention would better serve your needs!
  - (Any recommendations?)

- **Read the deed!** In particular, note details related to the deed and plat books for the previous deed. We also recommend that you jot down any relevant names.

- With new deed book information and grantor/grantee names in hand, **repeat these steps** to go further back (or forward) in time! Alternatively, you can return to the search results to explore other deeds.

- Or you might choose to **search for the plat** at this point, using the book and page number gathered from the deed.
  - To search for plats in the following books, append A or B to the book number, as indicated below:

    1: Book 1A starts with page 1 and ends with page 130; 1B starts with page 131 and ends with page 261
    3: Book 3A starts with page 1 and ends with page 95; 3B starts with page 96 and ends with page 195
    5: 5A starts with page 1 and ends with page 100; 5B starts with page 101 and ends with page 195
    6: Book 6A starts with page 1 and ends with page 106; 6B starts with page 107, ends with page 208
    18: All entries for this book are under 18A, there is no Book 18B
    28: Book 28A starts with page 1 and ends with page 56; 28B starts with page 57, ends with page 111
    31: Book 31A starts with page 1 and ends with page 56; 31B starts with page 57, ends with page 112

Durham County Register of Deeds - Historical Index Search
(https://rodweb.dconc.gov/web/historicalIndex/HISTORICAL_INDEX8S1)

The following indexes are available as PDFs at the link above.

Grantee Index
- Before Jan 1 1962
- Jan 1 1962 to Dec 31 1974
- Jan 1 1975 to Dec 31 1977
- Jan 1 1978 to Dec 31 1983

Grantor Index
- Before Jan 1 1962
- Jan 1 1962 to Dec 31 1974
- Jan 1 1975 to Dec 31 1977
- Jan 1 1978 to Dec 31 1983

Index to Corporations A
- 1884-1968

Index to Corporations B
- 1884-1968

Index to Deed
- Grantee (alphabetical)

Index to Deeds
- Grantee (1881-1961)
- Grantor (1881-1961)

Index to Homesteads
- 1881-1939

Index to Mortgages
- Grantee (1881-1961)
- Grantor (1881-1961)

Index to Plats
- 1881-1968
- After 1968

Record of Partnerships and Assumed Names
- (alphabetical)