

Is My House Haunted?



Surprisingly, this is not an uncommon question in the Genealogy Department.

To determine who died in your house, first you will need to figure out who lived there, then when they died.

- Start with the year of your house's construction, or take a guess if it is not known. It is possible that there has been more than one house at the location, but for now assume that it is the current house.
 - Check the Register of Deeds
 - For Ottawa County, head to: <https://www.miottawa.org/Departments/CountyClerk/Records> before 1940 are at the Ottawa County Courthouse/Public Resource Center/ 414 Washington/Grand Haven 616-846-8109
 - For Allegan County, head to: <http://cms.allegancounty.org/sites/Office/SitePages/ROD.aspx#.XUxiOuhKiUk>
 - Check City Directories – available in the Genealogy Department beginning in 1894. Beginning in 1921, the directories list homes not only by name, but by address as well.
 - Assessor's Office - <https://bsaonline.com>
 - May provide construction date, legal description, sketches of lot and plan, recent photographs, recent sales, and building permits. Construction dates are not always accurate but provide a good starting point.
- Figure out who lived in your house
 - City Directories from 1921 and after can be checked by address to see who the head of the household and spouse were. Minor children are not listed.
 - Historical Plat Maps are available in the Genealogy Department for both Ottawa and Allegan Counties.
 - When you have located the parents' names, you can check the Federal Census records to see which minor children lived in the home. Children are listed beginning in the 1850 census. The census is available every 10 years from 1790-1940.
- Figure out which of these people are deceased and when they died.
 - Check the obituary files located outside of the genealogy room or the Holland Sentinel Indexes to Obituaries (*Vital Records 977.4145 Holland*), located in the Genealogy Department. When you find a name in the index you can look up the obituary on microfilm. The amount of information available on each obituary varies greatly.
 - Social Security Death Index – lists deaths beginning in the 1960s – available on the [Ancestry Library Edition](#) database.
 - For death records try www.michiganology.org. The website has digitized Death Certificates for Michigan for this time frame. The death certificate also lists the cause of death. You can also check our Holland City Deaths file from 1905-1955, our obituary file or the Holland Sentinel Obituary Indexes.

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- If you have heard that there was a tragic death in your house, you may want to try to figure out the cause of death (not always easy to do). Here are a few places to try:
 - Once you have the person and the date of death you can check the Holland City News (1872-1977) or the Holland Sentinel (1912-present) on microfilm. Also, the Holland City News is available online through Hope College Digital Commons on the following website: <https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/hcn/>.
 - If there was a tragic story behind the death, it may or may not be reported in the newspaper. To find the cause of death if it is not available in the newspaper you can check the death certificate at the County Clerk's Office.
 - The Vertical File located in the Genealogy Department has a file called Murders – Unsolved, which lists a small amount of local murders. You can also check the Van Reken Newspaper Index, which is located in the Genealogy Department under the subject Crime and Criminals and is also online through Hope College Digital Commons at https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/news_index/3/. This will not turn up most of the homicides in the Holland area, only a few, but it may be worth a try. If you are looking for information for 1997 and later, you can use the website for the Holland Sentinel (www.hollandsentinel.com) and check the archives section.
 - www.diedinhouse.com This website was launched in June, 2013. It claims to answer whether someone died at a certain home or apartment, who died, when they died, and the cause of death. (\$, not endorsed by Herrick District Library)
 - www.cyndislist.com Scroll down to the 'H', choose House & Building Histories.
- Check out Herrick's EMF ELF Meter Detector, available in the Library of Things. EMF meters are used for diagnosis of problems with electrical wiring, power lines, and electrical shielding effectiveness, but professional ghost hunters swear by the inclusion of an EMF meter in their toolkits.

Other Books on the Subject:

- Ghostly Tales of Michigan / Ryan Jacobson, 133.1 Jac
- Ghosts and Legends of Michigan's West Coast / Amberrose Hammond, 133.1 Ham
- Disease and Death Among the Early Settlers in Holland, Michigan / Jan Peter Verhave, Gen 977.415 Ver
- Michigan's Most Haunted: A Ghostly Guide to the Great Lakes State / Sandy Arno Lyons, 133.1 Lyo
- Spooky Michigan: Tales of Hauntings, Strange Happenings and Other Local Lore / S.E. Schlosse, 398.2097 Sch
- Haunted Michigan: Recent Encounters with Active Spirits / Gerald S. Hunter, 133.1 Hun
- Wicked Ottawa County / Amberrose Hammond, 977.415 Ham



Why ghosts are haunting your house and how to stop it is another question....

