Getting Property Info, using the County Assessor's website and the free Landshark account

County Assessor's Site
Government sites are periodically updated into new orders, so know what you're looking for. In all these instructions, it is a good idea to **open each link in a new tab** because the sites are like mazes and it can be frustratingly difficult to get back to where you want to be.

1. Go to the main site: https://www.racinecounty.com/home
2. **Bookmark** this: it is your starting point if the site is ever reorganized
3. Look for **Departments**, and then **Register of Deeds**
4. Now look for **My Tax Bill**, or **Tax Inquiry**, or something of that kind (currently it is "my tax bill").
5. My Tax Bill takes you to a page with a map:
   https://racinecounty.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=5a61b0036456422097ca86f12464f6c2
6. Click on OK to accept the terms
7. Find the approximate area of interest on that map, and enlarge it until the **property lots are shown**
8. Click on the **property of interest** – a little popup info box arrives. If you clicked on the wrong one by mistake, close it and try again.
9. **Highlight** the entire **property id number** at the top of that info box, and **Ctrl/Cmd + C** (to copy it)
10. Optional – click on that number and go to the page of info, OR go straight to the **Landshark** site

To Get the Only Useful Entrance to the Landshark Site

1. **While still on the County site**, go back to **Register of Deeds** page.
2. Find the link to **Online Records Search (Landshark)** and click on it
3. That takes you to a register or log-in page. ***Registration is free*** – give yourself an easy username and password, and **log in** (the page will seem to hardly change at all, but will give you a search box). https://landshark.racinecounty.com/LandShark/searchparcelid.jsp
4. **Bookmark this page**!

Trimmin Landshark Site

1. Look in the **overhead menu** and find **Parcel ID**, click on that to go to the right starting point. OR (if you came in some other way: click on down arrow to left of search box, choose "search by parcel id#")
2. Now **Ctrl/Cmd + V** to paste in the property number from the **county** assessor's site that you highlit and copied in the County Assessor's site, #9, above.
3. This will create a **results page**, which is a list of all the documents on that property: **highlight it all** and then **Ctrl/Cmd + C** to copy the entire list (***note: it may run to more than one page – if so, do steps 3 and 4 as many times as needed to get the whole list***).
4. Open your writing application of choice, e.g. MS Word or Google Docs, and **Ctrl/Cmd + V** to paste in the landshark list of documents. *Return to Landshark and make sure you have copied all the possible pages of documents*.
5. **Save your Word document!**

See next page for working with these documents

To create a useful timeline of ownership

1. Still in **landshark** and still on the **results page**, you need to **open the documents in a new tab** or you will go mad loading and reloading the page. So, one by one, **right-click** or **click-and-hold** on each **document number**, and choose **open in new tab**
2. That will take you – *at last!* – to a **document summary** page (if you want to see a reproduction of the actual document, you can click on "image" to the right, and then "download" for $2 once, then $1 per following page – *but for research purposes you don't need this*)
3. OK, so you are in the **document summary** page. Time to decode it:
   a. The document has a *number* (**note this** – it is the only way to get back to it in a hurry). Pre-digital documents also had a *volume* number and a *page* number noted near the bottom of the document summary – these are worth recording in case you go to the physical Register of Deeds and need to find the document, as the people at the counter are not there to help you!)
   b. The document is called an *instrument* (something to use)
   c. It has an *instrument date* (when it was drawn up – often not recorded here)
   d. It also has a *date recorded* (when it got into the official records – often there is a lag of days, week, or months. More than this is rare and one has to wonder about that kind of delay – for example, I just found a document whose *date recorded* was nine years after the *instrument date*!)
   e. The summary shows an *instrument code* (what kind of document it is). Common ones include:
      - WD (warranty deed – certifying ownership, usually new ownership)
      - LC (land contract – similar to "lease-to-buy", original owner retains ownership and ultimate responsibility for the property until the buyer has *satisfied* the contract – the buyer will then get a *satisfaction* document, and a *warranty deed*)
      - MTG (mortgage)
      - SAT (satisfaction – certifying that the buyer has paid off the obligations)
      - LP (lis pendens, meaning "lawsuit pending" – no details given but often signals ownership disputes; City of Racine also seems to use it to signal the near completion of financial obligations, when it is usually followed by a *satisfaction* and a *warranty deed*)
   f. The summary lists the *Grantor* (seller, possibly several, each listed individually)
   g. The summary also lists the *Grantee* (buyer, possibly several, each listed individually)
   h. The summary sometimes also lists the *reference* (the relevant previous or future document, which is useful to follow up on) and the *reference instrument* (the *instrument code* explained in (e) above.
4. Copy all this into your notes, and **close the tab** (to prevent muddle as you work)
5. When done, return to the **results page** and right-click/click-and-hold on the next number.
6. Work down the list repeating steps 1–4 for each document listed (now you know why you open them in a new tab!)
7. **Save often!**
8. When done, scan through for date order. If needed copy and paste the documents & their info into date order, starting at the earliest. Save again. Now you can add new information in the correct order as it arrives, and your research will build itself!