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Circular No. 16 – Rural Property Inventories

The Depression period found many surveyors, engineers, land appraisers, and other trained Michigan citizens out of work. At the same time, it became clear to tax administrators and government officials that there was a dearth of basic data, particularly in the state's non-urban areas, upon which to establish uniform assessment rates. In an effort to employ this unused skilled labor force, and to create a comprehensive source of information about real and personal estates, the Rural Property Inventory was established. This undertaking, sponsored by the State Tax Commission in cooperation with the Works Progress Administration (WPA Project S-110), was started late in 1935. Employing about 2,000 "white collar" workers throughout the state, the Inventory was designed to prepare detailed descriptions of all 1,500,000 distinct parcels of land in the rural parts of Michigan (excluding Wayne County). Cards (about 8x10 inches) were created for each piece of property, providing such facts as description, ownership, utilization, and improvements. This massive undertaking—the first of its kind in the nation—continued until 1942, when the last of the 1,249 townships involved in the project were surveyed. Though the data entered on these records is now obsolete, the details they reveal serve to provide a remarkably sharp picture of the character of Michigan country life a half-century ago. The collected data describes lands; buildings; fences; crops; woodlands; means of communication; sources of heat and light; number of school district; legal description of the land; name of village, township and county wherein located; name and post office address of individual assessed; together with amount of acreage within certain classifications. Classifications are: "A" agricultural; "B" special agriculture; "C" swamp; "D" commercial orchard, vineyards and berries; "E" forest and timber areas, farm woodlot and cutover; and "Other" sugar bush, road, marsh, lake, waste and recreational.

Sketches of house and general land area are included. Building description includes type; year built or remodeled; dimensions in linear and cubic feet; condition and type of foundation; kind of exterior and roof; type of floor; and nature of utilities. Buildings of lesser importance—such as cribs, poultry houses, garages, fruit storage, and the like—are described by brief narrative. Farm fences are described by kind and condition of fence and posts. The "woodlot and forest timber tally" offers type, board feet, cord, stem cut and density. Valuations placed by board of review are occasionally included.

In the listings on the back of this sheet, the holdings for any given county may be incomplete. Most are arranged alphabetically by name of township, then numerically by section number. The maps that are associated with these records can be found in RG 94-438.

County	Dates	Record Group	Location
Alcona	1938-1939	84-33	Archives of MI
Alger (Limestone Township)	1938-1954	98-47	Archives of MI
Antrim	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Arenac	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Barry	1939	89-25	Archives of MI



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County	Dates	Record Group	Location
Bay	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Calhoun	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Cass (Pokagon Township)	Circa 1938	2003-44	Archives of MI
Charlevoix	1937-1939	75-70	Archives of MI
Cheboygan	1937-1939	94-380	Archives of MI
Chippewa (Raber Township)	1938	94-381	Archives of MI
Clinton (Ovid Township, Village of Shepardsville, Rochester Colony)	c. 1935-1942	95-139	Archives of MI
Crawford	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Dickinson	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Eaton	1939	94-303	Archives of MI
Emmet	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Genesee	1936	81-52	Archives of MI
Gladwin	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Gogebic	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Grand Traverse	1936-1939	84-55	Archives of MI
Hillsdale	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Houghton	1936-1942	77-105	*MTU Archives
Huron	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Ingham	1936-1942	72-76, 83-88, 88-25	Archives of MI
Ionia	1937-1938	54-10, 66-73	Archives of MI
Iosco	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Iron	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Isabella	1935-1942	72-65, 72-76	Archives of MI
Jackson	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Kalkaska (Clearwater Township)	c. 1937	2000-70	Archives of MI
Kalamazoo	1937	70-117	Archives of MI
Keweenaw	1936-1942	84-71	Archives of MI
Lake	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Lapeer	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Lenawee (Ogden Township)	1938-1939	94-307	Archives of MI
Luce	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Mackinac	1936-1942	72-76, 84-70	Archives of MI
Mason	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Mecosta (Austin Township)	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Menominee	1938	70-118	Archives of MI
Midland	1936-1939	76-88	Archives of MI
Monroe	1936-1942	72-76, 84-27	Archives of MI
Montcalm	1938-1939	94-339	Archives of MI
Montmorency	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Newaygo	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Oakland	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Oceana	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Ogemaw	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Ontonagon	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI

* Michigan Technological University



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Oscoda	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Osceola	1936-1942	70-112	Archives of MI
Ottawa	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Otsego	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Presque Isle (Bearinger and Metz Township)	1940	69-46	Archives of MI
Saginaw	1937-1938	70-89, 71-146	Archives of MI
Sanilac	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
Schoolcraft (Germfask Township)	1938	94-394	Archives of MI
Shiawassee	1936-1942	72-76	Archives of MI
St. Clair (East China Township)	1938	64-13	Archives of MI
St. Joseph	1938	72-76	Archives of MI
Tuscola	1935-1938	70-113	Archives of MI
Van Buren	1935-1938	72-76	Archives of MI
Washtenaw (Lyndon Township)	1938	90-283	Archives of MI
Washtenaw (Ann Arbor Township)	1939	2003-69	Archives of MI
Washtenaw (Northfield Township)	1937-1938	2000-69	Archives of MI
Washtenaw (Pittsfield Township)	1938	70-87	Archives of MI
Washtenaw (Superior Township)	1940	2005-23	Archives of MI
Washtenaw (York Township)	1936-1938	71-139	Archives of MI