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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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|---|--------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 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 |

