

Lawrence County Historical Society

Oldest House Documentation & Recognition Program

(Aligned with Pennsylvania SHPO & National Register of Historic Places Standards)

I. Alignment with Pennsylvania & NRHP Standards

Pennsylvania historic documentation follows:

- **Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO)**
- **National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)**
(36 CFR Part 60)

Core NRHP Requirements Applied to This Program

A house must:

1. Be **50 years or older**
2. Retain **sufficient historic integrity**
3. Have a **documented or well-supported construction date**
4. Be evaluated using **NRHP Criteria C (Architecture)** and/or **Criterion A (History)**

Important clarification (to include in public materials):

Recognition by the Lawrence County Historical Society does **not automatically place a property on the National Register**; however, documentation created through this program may be used for a future PA SHPO or NRHP nomination.

II. Determining “Oldest House” – Official Criteria

Definition (Program Use)

*The “Oldest House” is defined as the **earliest verifiable surviving residential structure** that retains sufficient historic integrity to convey its period of construction.*

Age Alone Is Not Enough. A house that is older but **heavily altered** may lose eligibility to a slightly younger but more intact property.

III. Required Documentation (NRHP-Level)

A. Proof of Construction Date (Hierarchy of Evidence)

Applicants must submit **at least one primary source** or **two secondary sources**.

Primary Sources

- Deed or land patent indicating dwelling
- Tax assessment identifying improved property
- Estate inventory listing a house
- Dated builder's contract
- Dendrochronology report

Secondary Sources

- Federal or state census records
 - Historic atlases or plat maps
 - Sanborn maps (if applicable)
 - Early photographs or sketches
 - Newspaper references
 - Church or probate records
-

B. Architectural & Physical Evidence (Required)

Evaluated consistent with **NRHP Integrity Guidelines**:

- Foundation materials
 - Framing system (log, timber frame, balloon frame)
 - Nail types (hand-wrought, cut, wire)
 - Saw marks (pit-sawn, sash, circular)
 - Chimney construction
 - Original floor plan elements
 - Roofing structure
-

IV. Integrity Evaluation (NRHP Standard)

Each submission is evaluated across the **seven aspects of integrity**:

Integrity Aspect Required		Notes
Location	✓	Must remain on original site
Design	✓	Overall form recognizable
Setting	●	Some change acceptable
Materials	✓	Key historic materials intact
Workmanship	✓	Evidence of period craft
Feeling	✓	House reads as historic
Association	●	Historical link demonstrated

V. Required Descriptive Narrative (Mandatory)

Purpose

The narrative is **essential** and mirrors NRHP Section 7 descriptions.

Length

1–3 pages, double-spaced

Required Narrative Topics

1. Construction history
2. Architectural description
3. Alterations and additions
4. Historical context
5. Integrity analysis
6. Justification for oldest-house claim

No narrative = incomplete application

VI. Submission Fee Policy

Standard Fee

- **\$10 per submission**

Fee Supports

- Archival review
- Volunteer or staff research
- Scoring & evaluation
- Certificate and plaque preparation
- Permanent archival record

Fee Waivers

Available for:

- Seniors (65+)
 - Fixed-income households
 - Nonprofit or educational owners
-

VII. Recognition & Awards Policy

Official Recognition Levels

1. **Oldest Documented House in Lawrence County**
 - Wall certificate
 - Exterior plaque or marker
 - Feature article on the LCHS website or publication
2. **Early Settlement House (Pre-1850)**
 - Certificate of recognition
3. **NRHP-Eligible (Documentation Level)**
 - Letter stating documentation meets NRHP standards (non-binding)

Recommendation:

If multiple houses tie, award **shared recognition** rather than ranking.

VIII. Scoring Rubric

Maximum Score: 100 Points

1. Age Documentation (30 points)

- Primary documentation: 25–30
- Secondary documentation: 15–24
- Oral history only: max 10

2. Architectural Integrity (30 points)

- Minimal alterations: 25–30
- Moderate alterations: 15–24
- Major alterations: <15

3. Physical Evidence (20 points)

- Clear period construction features: 15–20
- Partial evidence: 8–14
- Minimal evidence: <8

4. Historical Context & Narrative Quality (20 points)

- Well-researched, clear: 15–20
- Adequate: 8–14
- Poor or incomplete: <8

IX. Homeowner Submission Form (PA-Aligned)

(Abbreviated here — ready for print)

SECTION 1: PROPERTY INFORMATION

- Address:
 - Municipality:
 - Parcel ID:
 - Owner(s):
-

SECTION 2: ESTIMATED DATE OF CONSTRUCTION

- Claimed Year Built:
 - Documentation Attached (list):
-

SECTION 3: DESCRIPTIVE NARRATIVE

- 1–3 page narrative attached
 - Meets NRHP Section 7 description format
-

SECTION 4: ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

- Structural system:
 - Foundation:
 - Roof type:
 - Chimneys:
 - Known alterations (dates):
-

SECTION 5: PHOTO DOCUMENTATION

- Exterior elevations
 - Interior rooms
 - Basement/foundation
 - Attic/roof framing
 - Significant details
-

SECTION 6: CERTIFICATION

I certify the information is accurate and grant permission for review.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

X. Board Policy Language

The Lawrence County Historical Society shall evaluate submissions according to National Register of Historic Places criteria and Pennsylvania SHPO documentation standards. Recognition through this program does not constitute official listing on the National Register, nor does it impose restrictions on private property owners.