

Finding and Using Land Records to Answer Genealogical Questions

Land and property records have helped solve more difficult problems than any other record. (See Norman E. Wright, *Building an American Pedigree*.)

Terms:

Grantor - Seller

Grantee - Buyer

Warranty Deed - One which contains a covenant from the grantor to warrant and defend title to the grantee and his heirs

Quit Claim Deed - A deed that is intended to pass any title, interest, or claim which the grantor may have in the premises, but not professing that such title is valid, nor containing any warranty or covenants for title.

Indenture - A deed to which two or more persons are parties, and in which these enter into reciprocal and corresponding grants or obligations towards each other.

Dower - The provision which the law makes for a widow out of the lands or tenements of her husband, for her support and the nurture of her children. Often one third of value of the real estate.

Fee Simple - one in which the owner is entitled to the entire property, with unconditional power of disposition during his life, and descending to his heirs upon his death.

Grantor's Index - Seller's Index - Direct Index

Grantee's Index - Buyer's Index - Indirect Index

Important Things to Look for in a Deed

Consideration: What is paid for the land

Names of Grantor: Seller

Names of Grantee: Buyer

Date Drawn: When the deed was created

Legal Description:

Signature or mark of Grantor(s)

Witnesses: Person who represents the Grantee is who he claims to be and that he created the deed

Dower Release: Wife may be interviewed by a court official

Where Land Records Are Kept

- Deeds are normally recorded at the County Level

What You Should Locate

- The preferred record is an image from the court deed book
- If that is not immediately available you may use a printed abstract, **but then you still must locate a copy of the original court deed book**

To Find Deeds: Look in the Family History Library Catalog at FamilySearch.org

1. Click "Search" at top center of the home page (above the picture)
2. Click "Catalog" to the right of the word "Records" (shaded in green, near top of page)
3. Type in the "Place Name" box the county and state where the ancestor lived (don't include the word county and don't abbreviate the state)
4. Click the blue "Search" button
5. Choose the category " Land and Property" (usually skip the category "Land and Property Indexes")
6. Look for the desired time period and choose a county (government) office as the author
7. Read the notes on the catalog page (you prefer microfilm of original records)
8. Choose the microfilm associated with the index
9. Using the Mesa Family Search Library website determine if the microfilm is here
10. Retrieve the microfilm
11. Scroll to the surname (usually alphabetical by first letter only)
12. Carefully read all given names looking for the desired name(s)
13. Record the volume and page numbers (frequently found in the right columns)
14. Return to the same page in the Family History Library Catalog from which you chose the index
15. Scroll down and locate the volume
16. See the microfilm number to the right
17. Retrieve or order the microfilm (Use the Mesa Family Search Library Catalog)
18. Scroll to the required volume and page number

Federal Land States (Hone, p. 101)

Rectangular Survey System (Hone, p.106-107)

State Land States (Hone, p. 59)

Metes and Bounds (Hone, p. 61-62)

Find a land patent the Bureau of Land Management at the General Land Office

- **<http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/>**
- Click "Search Documents"
- Choose a state using the drop down arrow
- It is optional if you choose a county
- Type the last and then the first name of your ancestor (If the surname is not common you may elect to omit the first name)
- Click "Search Patent"
- Click "Image" or the tab Patent Image
- Print the image of the patent
- Click the tab "Patent Details"
- Click "Printer Friendly" in the upper right corner
- Print the Land Patent Details (You need this information to order a case file)

Order a Land Entry Case File from the National Archives at Washington, D.C.

- **<http://www.archives.gov/>**
- Type "Hire a Researcher"
- Find a Researcher by "Region and Facility Location"
- Review the list and make a contact by email (remember you need someone that does regular research at Washington, D.C. (Mid-Atlantic))
- **Or** Order directly from the National Archives
- Click "Shop Online" (upper right)
- Click "Order Reproductions" (on the right)
- Click the blue button "Order Reproductions"
- Choose "Land Files" lower left
- Click "Land Entry File (NATF 84)"
- Select a Delivery Format (Paper or CD)
- Add to Cart
- If you are new, select "New User" and register
- After you have signed in complete the form using information you printed from the Bureau of Land Management
- Click "Continue to Pay & Ship"

Bibliography (See Reference Wall at Mesa Family Search Library)

Hatcher, Patricia Law. *Locating Your Roots: Discover Your Ancestors Using Land Records*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Betterway Books, 2003. (929.3 D27)

Hone, E. Wade. *Land and Property Research in the United States*. Salt Lake City: Ancestry Incorporated, 1997. (973 R27h)