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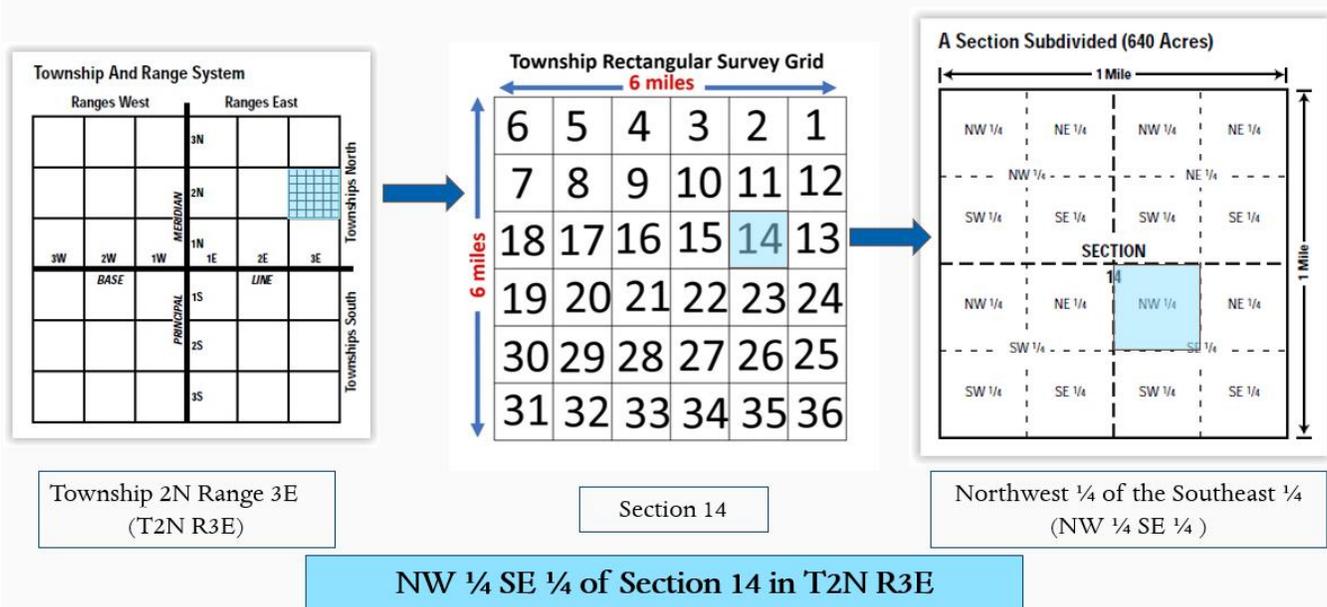
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Federal Public Lands			Colonial/State Public Lands	
Alabama	Iowa	New Mexico	Connecticut	New York
Alaska	Kansas	North Dakota	Delaware	North Carolina
Arizona	Louisiana	Ohio*	Georgia	Pennsylvania
Arkansas	Michigan	Oklahoma	Hawaii	Rhode Island
California	Minnesota	Oregon	Kentucky	South Carolina
Colorado	Mississippi	South Dakota	Maine	Tennessee
Florida	Missouri	Utah	Maryland	Texas
Idaho	Montana	Washington	Massachusetts	Vermont
Illinois	Nebraska	Wisconsin	New Hampshire	Virginia
Indiana	Nevada	Wyoming	New Jersey	West Virginia

* Knepper, George W. *The Official Ohio Lands Book*. Auditor of the State of Ohio, 2002. URL: <https://ohioauditor.gov/publications/docs/OhioLandsBook.pdf>

Rectangular Survey System



References:

1. "Rectangular Surveys," *FamilySearch Wiki* (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Rectangular_Surveys : updated 13 Jun 2025, accessed 28 Nov 2025).
2. "Rectangular Survey System," *Bureau of Land Management General Land Office Records* (https://gloreCORDS.blm.gov/reference/default.aspx?id=05_Appendices|03_Rectangular_Survey_System : accessed 29 Nov 2025).
3. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, *A History of the Rectangular Survey System*, PDF version (<https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/histrect.pdf> : accessed 28 Nov 2025).

Federal Land Acquisition (in 1800s)

1. The purchaser or "entryman" would file a claim for land at the local land office. Land offices were operated by two officials: a registrar who recorded the land claim entries, and a receiver who managed any required payments.
2. After completion of the application, all supporting documentation and payments was forwarded to the General Land Office in Washington, D.C., and a "certificate" was issued.
3. After paperwork confirmation was completed by the General Land Office a patent was issued for the land and sent to the originating local land office. The purchaser would have to retrieve the patent from that location. Any unretrieved patent documents were eventually returned to the General Land Office for filing with the original land entry files.

Types of Federal Land Entry Case Files

1. **Credit Sales** (1800-1820): 640 acres minimum at \$2.00/acre; allowed 5 years to pay
2. **Cash Sales** (1820-1891): Minimum price \$1.25/acre for 80 acres (later decreased to only 40 acres required)
3. **Preemption** [Squatters] (Preemption Act of 1841): First right to purchase land if you were already living on the land. Entries were filed with cash entries. Proof of residency and improvements to the land were required.
4. **Donation Lands**: Provided for settlers in specific areas in return for settlement, cultivation and fortification commitments. The individual could "occupy" 160 acres but would eventually have to purchase the land at \$1.25/acre. Donation lands were available in Florida in 1842, the Oregon & Washington Territories in 1850, and New Mexico in 1853.
5. **Homesteads** (1862-1986): Up to 160 acres free land to U.S. born or naturalized citizens. Nearly 4 million claims filed located within all 30 federal public land states. Files contain valuable information about the homesteader. See, "Homestead Act (1862)," Milestone Documents, *National Archives* (<https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/homestead-act> : accessed 29 Nov 2025).

Ancestry® has digitized copies of the Homestead Records for the following 10 states: Alaska, Arizona, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Nebraska, Ohio, Utah, and Wyoming. See, "U.S., Homestead Records, 1863-1908," *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/60593/> : accessed 29 Nov 2025).

6. **Timber Culture Lands** (1873-1891): Claimant was granted 160 acres of free land with the requirement that 40 acres must be planted with trees. This requirement decreased over the short life of this program.
7. **Surrendered Military Bounty Land Warrants** (1788-1855): Bounty land was awarded for military service in the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and other conflicts prior to the Civil War. Most veterans (the warrantees) never redeemed their warrants. They sold them to other individuals who became the land patentee. Therefore, the case files primarily contain information about the patentee.

References:

- Other Land Acts: See, *National Archives* (<https://www.archives.gov/files/calendar/genealogy-fair/2014/handouts/session-11-handout-5of5-martinez-land-other-land-acts.pdf> : accessed 29 Nov 2025).

Federal Land Records

1. Bureau of Land Management Government Records Office (BLM/GLO): <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/>

- Select "Search Documents"
- Select "Search Documents By Type" and entry your search parameters/filters. Click the "Search Patents" button.

2. National Archives (Land Entry Case Files)

To order land entry files by mail, use the National Archives Order for Copies of Land Entry Files, NATF Form 84 (expires 08-31-2026) (<https://www.archives.gov/files/forms/pdf/natf-84.pdf> : accessed 29 Nov 2025).

To order Bounty Land Warrant applications, use the National Archives (NARA) order for copies of Federal Pension or Bounty Land Warrant Applications, NATF Form 85 (rev. 08-2020, expires 08-31-2026) (<https://www.archives.gov/files/forms/pdf/natf-85.pdf> : accessed 29 Nov 2025).

To order land entry files online:

- Go to: <https://eservices.archives.gov/orderonline/start.swe>
- Create a user Account and login - or - login to your previously created account.
- Click the "Order Reproductions" button
- Under the heading "Record Reproductions" click "Land Files"
- Click the type of file you are requesting: "Land Entry File (NATF 84)" or "Military Bounty-Land Warrant Application File (NATF 85C)"
- Select your delivery format and then click the "Add to Cart" button
- Provide all the required (*) information for the file you are requesting. All of that information can be retrieved from the BLM/GLO Records website (above). Then click the "Continue to Pay and Ship" button if you're done or the "Save & Finish Later" button if you wish to add another file to the order.

3. Tract Books

Tract books can be searched using the FamilySearch index or by locating the correct book volume to examine all the entries for a specific Township, Range and Section.

- To use the name index, go to: "United States, Bureau of Land Management Tract Books, 1800-c.1955, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/collection/2074276> : accessed 29 Nov 2025)
- To locate a specific township/range/section volume, use a Tract Books coverage inventory/index. See, "United States Bureau of Land Management Tract Books - Inventory," *FamilySearch Wiki* (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/United_States_Bureau_of_Land_Management_Tract_Books_-_Inventory : accessed 28 Nov 2025). Or, "Tract books," *FamilySearch Catalog* (<https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/catalog/607931> : accessed 28 Nov 2025).

Federal Land Records References:

- Kenneth Hawkins, compiler, *Research in the Land Entry Files of the General Land Office: Record Group 49*, Reference Information Paper, 114 (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 2007, revised 2009); PDF version, *National Archives* (<https://www.archives.gov/files/publications/ref-info-papers/rip114.pdf> : accessed 28 Nov 2025).

State Land Grants

Metes and Bounds Survey System, see "Metes and Bounds, Tennessee's old time survey system," *TNGenWeb Project* (<https://www.tngenweb.org/tnland/metes-b.htm> : posted 5 Mar 1998, accessed 29 Nov 2025). Also available as a downloadable PDF, <https://architecture2ndyearlsu.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/metes-and-bounds-system-of-survey.pdf>.

Where to look:

1. "State Land," *FamilySearch Wiki* ([familysearch.org/en/wiki/State_Land](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/State_Land) : accessed 30 Nov 2025).
2. State Archives and Libraries
3. Google Search: [state] plus keywords like "land grants" or "land patents" or "plats"

Local Land Records - Deeds

Types of Deeds

1. Warranty Deed: The seller (grantor) guarantees clear title to the property and promises to defend against any future claims. Deed usually includes specific language such as "warrant and defend."
2. Quitclaim Deed: The seller (grantor) releases all rights to a piece of property but does not guarantee a clear, full title to the land. This was a way to quickly and simply relinquish someone's interest in a property.
3. Sheriff's Deed/Sheriff's Sale: A court-ordered sale of a property to pay the land owner's debts.
4. Deed of Gift: Transfers property ownership (real or personal) without the traditional payment. "Consideration" is usually based on sentiment ("for love and affection") or symbolic (in consideration of \$1.00).

Mortgages can be difficult to distinguish from the standard warranty deeds and are often recorded in the Deed Book. Look for **a reversionary clause** in the document, typically near the end of the deed, stating the title will revert to the borrower once the mortgage is satisfied. There is oftentimes a statement written on the margins of the document indicating the mortgage was satisfied.

- Borrower appears to be the seller/grantor/first party of the contract and is referred to as the mortgagor
- Lender appears to be the buyer/grantee/second party of the contract and is referred to as the mortgagee

Where to look:

1. Deeds are recorded at the county level in each state, EXCEPT
 - CT, RI and VT (kept by individual towns)
 - AK (maintained by 34 recording districts throughout the state)
 - LA (recorded in the parish)
2. Always start your search in the FamilySearch catalog: <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/catalog/>
 - Enter the "Place" i.e. location (county/parish, state) in which you want to look for land records
 - Open the "Land and Property" section to see what collections/sources are available. You do NOT want a source that was authored by an individual. Look for government agency authors such as county clerk, register of deeds, etc.

HINT: Remember, jurisdictional boundaries changed so you may need to look in parent counties.

3. Search county records: County Recorder, Register of Deeds, Court Clerk, Recorder of Deeds, Clerk of the Circuit Court, County Auditor, County Clerk, etc. You can do a Google Search to identify which county office maintains the deed books: [county name] + [state] + "recorder of deeds" or "land deeds"
4. Check the State Archives
5. Remember, you can often find help at the FamilySearch Wiki - search [county name], [State] and the word "Genealogy" (no quotation marks or brackets)

Finding the record/deed:

1. Start with the indexes - READ the index instructions carefully (when provided). There are many types of indexes so you need to spend a little time figuring out how to use them.
 - Internal volume indexes
 - Combined indexes
 - Cottco Universal Index (commonly used in MD, NC, GA, OH)
 - Russell Key Index (commonly used in PA, MD, DE)

Indexes are often divided into two categories which may have different names:

- Grantor (Seller) / Direct / Forward indexes
- Grantee (Buyer) / Indirect / Reverse / Inverse or Inverted indexes

The index usually provides the volume/book number and page number on which the deed is recorded.

2. Locate the deed with the information found in the index. Always examine the records before and after the desired deed for related transactions.

Understanding Legalese

Reference: Black's Law Dictionary

- Henry Campbell Black, *A Dictionary of Law*, 1st ed. (St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing Co., 1891); PDF, *Internet Archive* (https://archive.org/details/dictionaryof_blac_1891_00_20160211/page/n1/mode/2up).
- Henry Campbell Black, *A Law Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing Co., 1910); PDF, *Internet Archive* (<https://archive.org/details/BlacksLaw2dEd/page/n5/mode/2up>).

Land Record Research: Land-in/Land-out

Location	Description	Date-in	Grantor (From)	Reference	Date-out	Grantee (To)	Reference

For Practice

1. Find one of your ancestors who owned property.
2. Locate the deeds showing his purchase of the land and the subsequent sale of that same property. Find answers for questions like: How much did he pay for the land? Who did he buy it from? How much did he sell the property for? Who did he sell it to? Was he married when he sold the land? How much land (acres) did he own?
3. Try to find that property on a map using:
 - A land survey map (e.g. BLM/GLO original survey map)
 - Newberry Library: Atlas of Historical County Boundaries (<https://publications.newberry.org/ahcb/>)
 - RandyMajors.org: Historical U.S. County Boundaries (<https://www.randymajors.org/maps>)