

V20. Tracking Early Family Footprints in U.S. Land Records

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U.S. Bureau of Land Management website:

www.glorerecords.blm.gov/

Searches information on federal/public land states. The federal government sold land in these states to generate cash, pay off war debt and encourage migration/growth westward. BLM has a good overview/timeline of events as they relate to land sales including key pieces of federal legislation. (click on “GLO Records” then “Public Lands History”)

To Search:

- Click on “**Land Patents**” Currently, only 3 states’ US Land Management Tract Books are available for viewing on the BLM website (not Ohio). You’ll need to use familysearch.org to view Ohio and other state tract books.
- Search Documents by Type tab (default)
 - Search by name, location (state and county), land description, “misc.” – land office, etc.
 - Remember “Less information sometimes yields better results”
 - Click on “**accession number**” in results list
 - Review patent information on “**Patent Details**” tab, “**Patent Image**” tab, and “**Related Documents**” tab
- Search Documents by Location
- Search Documents by Land Identifier
- Use the Land Office as a “clue” to determine which US Land Management Tract Book in FamilySearch to select
- Print off a copy (or save to your computer) the image of the patent. Make note of section township and range and Land Office to determine which Tract Book Land Office Volume(s) to review on FamilySearch.org

FamilySearch website:

www.familysearch.org

**Make sure you are logged into the site so you can view images (set up a free user account, if necessary)

To find/access US BLM Tract Books:

- Select “Search” at the top then “**Records**” in the drop-down menu
- To the right at the bottom, select “**Browse all published collections**”
- Click on the United States to the left, then “**All United States of America**”
- Select “**Probate & Court**”
- At the upper right click “**Next**” for page 2. Near the middle of the list you should see “**United States Bureau of Land Management Tract Books 1800-c1955**”
- From the US Bureau of Land Management Tract Book page, first click on “**How to Use This Collection**” which will take you to the FS Wiki for US BLM Tract Books
 - You’ll need the state, county, township, range, and section along with the name of the land office from BLM website above
- Scroll down BLM Tract Books Wiki page until you see “For a list of the townships (described with both a township number and a range number) and land offices included in this collection, see the [Tract Books Coverage Table](#).”
- Click on “**Tract Books Coverage Table**”
- Scroll to the **state and land office** you need. *Pay close attention* to the “Description” column **until you see the township, range and section listed you wish to find** (refer to your printout from the BLM website). Make note of which Tract Book volume(s) you wish to look at that may contain information about your ancestor’s land
- Return to main page of “**United States Bureau of Land Management Tract Books 1800-c1955**” and select “**browse through images**”
- Select the **state** you wish to access land transaction records
- Then select the tract book **volume number** based upon land office indicated on the BLM patent details tab for your ancestor’s land AND from FamilySearch Wiki page Tract Book Coverage Table for that range, township and section
- Scroll through page by page. Look through all records until you find one that references your ancestor. Often the entry will include “Of _____ County, _____” after the purchaser’s name at the top of the entry. This gives you another opportunity to look for additional land or tax records elsewhere if they were from a different county or state before appearing in the entry.

Ancestry.com website:

www.ancestry.com

Search maps in catalog collection "[U.S., Indexed Early Land Ownership and Township Plats, 1785-1898](#)"

- After logging into your account, click on "**Search**" in the top row
- Then select "**Catalog**" from the drop-down menu
- In the **key words** box type "*early plat maps*" and "**Search**"
- You can search via surname or, to the right, use the drop downs to search by state and/or meridian

Other Avenues to Explore for Ohio Land Records or Those in Nearby States:

- Local Genealogical or Historical Societies (they know local records best!)
- Ohio History Connection - <http://ohiohistory.libguides.com/home/general>
Use the online collection catalog and search for "**land**"
- County archives/offices for land sales *after initial patent* - Deeds (sometimes patents were recorded in county deed books, but often many years after the fact)
- To learn more about land records: [Land and Property Research in the United States](#) by E. Wade Hone, 1997

Other Websites*:

- National Archives - <https://www.archives.gov/research/land>
- National Archives and Records Service – *National Archives Microfilm Publications Pamphlet Describing M804, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files.*
<https://www.archives.gov/files/research/microfilm/m804.pdf>
- Ancestry.com has some early maps along with the database titled "U.S. Census Reconstructed Records, 1660-1820" (use the catalog search method noted above)
- Archives of Michigan - https://www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan/0,9327,7-381-88854_89996_90000-467497--,00.html
- Kentucky Secretary of State - <https://www.sos.ky.gov/admin/land/non-military/Pages/default.aspx>
- Indiana Archives and Records Administration - <https://www.in.gov/iara/>
- Office of the Illinois Secretary of State -
http://cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/databases/data_lan.html
- Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission - <http://www.phmc.pa.gov/Archives/Research-Online/Pages/Land-Records-Indices.aspx>
- Google Books - <https://books.google.com/>
- Internet Archive – <https://archive.org>
- HathiTrust - <https://www.hathitrust.org/>
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*All website links effective as of 10 February 2021