

Public Land Outline

Before Public Land could be sold, it had to be surveyed and legal descriptions had to be provided. In California, squatters were living on Public Land before it was surveyed and parcels were being bought and sold with titles recorded at the county recorder's offices. Most of these people had preemptive rights to purchase their land when it was put up for sale by the General Land Office.

There are four major document groups associated with public land purchases.

1. Tract Books
2. Township Survey Maps
3. Patents
4. Land Entry Files

Four elements needed to find Land Entry Files are: Name of State where located, Land Office name, Type of Entry, Final Certificate Number.

Where they are found

Two copies of **Tract Books** were produced. One copy was kept by the General Land Office and one was sent to Washington DC. The Washington copies are now at the National Archives there. The second set is at the National Archives branch in San Bruno, California. Both were supposed to be identical, but those in Washington have details that are not in those at San Bruno.

Images from 3907 Tract books with 942,374 images are at:
<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2074276?collectionNameFilter=true>

Patents can be obtained from the Bureau of Land Management in Sacramento, CA. They can also be printed off the [Bureau of Land Management \(BLM\)](#), [General Land Office \(GLO\) Records Automation web site](#) at: <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx>

Land Entry Files are at the National Archives in Washington DC. They can be searched in person at that facility or ordered by mail. However, they are VERY expensive if ordered. If you have a lot of files to find, it may be cheaper and more fun to take a trip to Washington DC and do your own research.

Township survey maps are at the National Archives in San Bruno. Some are also available from the BLM Sacramento office, but I have found them to be different from those at San Bruno.

They are can also be printed off the BLM web site at:
<http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx>

James and Mary (Dickinson) Cummins, the former of whom was born in Greenbrier county, Va., in 1814 and the latter born the same year in Licking county, Ohio. They settled first in Illinois, then removed to Bates county, MO., where Mary died in 1847 . . . From Bates county, the family removed to Henry county, but later settled in Ray county. Rumors of gold reaching the quiet agricultural region of Bates county, James Cummins crossed the plains in 1850, and in 1851 returned to his family of children with several thousand dollars made in the mines around Hangtown. In 1852 he returned to the coast with a part of his family, he having married a second time. **He bought and conducted the Eagle hotel on the old Nevada road above Sacramento, until 1855, but that year sold it, and with a daughter and Thomas J., returned to Missouri. In 1857 he purchased five hundred head of cattle to drive across the plains to Calaveras county, Ca., settling near the little town of Jenny Lind, where he followed stock-raising for several years. He then returned to Greenbrier county, Va., in hope of regaining health lost through over-exertion in the west. A year later he went to Hillsdale, Kans., where his death occurred in 1878.**

Description Legal variations

The south half of the south west quarter of Section 6, Township 3 North, Range 5 East, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian.

S1/2, SW1/4, Sec. 6 T3N, R5E, Mt.D B&M

S; SW, Sec. 6, T3N, R5E, MDB&M

Clue found in deeds that will indicate land was purchased from federal government:

The south half of the South West quarter of Section twenty eight, and the North half of the North west quarter of Section thirty three in Township three North of Range ten East **"in the district of lands subject to sale at Stockton, California containing 160 acres."**

References:

The Source, A guidebook of American genealogy, edited by Loretto Dennis Szucs and Sandra Hargreaves Luebbing. Ancestry Incorporated, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1997

Research in the Land Entry Files of the General Land Office, Reference Information Paper 114, Kenneth Hawkins. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC, 2009.

This paper can be ordered free at:

<http://www.archives.gov/publications/ordering/index.html#free>

LAND RECORDS-Introduction and Links to Resources on Land Entry Case Files and Related Records.

<http://www.archives.gov/research/land/index.html>

This web site has helpful information regarding public land.

Public Land Purchases, Ken Tessoroff This is an article I wrote several years ago. Most of it has been updated and explains the process of finding all the records associated with a public land purchase in northern California.

<http://www.sfgenealogy.com/norcal/resourcecenter/publand.htm>

U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES & RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

Land Entry Records

The National Archives is the official repository for the records of the United States (U.S.) Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) General Land Office (GLO) that document the transfer of public lands from the United States to private ownership. The case files generated by over ten million such individual land transactions, known as land entries, and the tract books and various name indexes used to access them, are located in the National Archives Building in Washington, DC.

The National Archives has custody of the land entry case files for the thirty Federal public land states. There are case files for all states in the U.S. **except** the thirteen original states, Vermont, Kentucky, Tennessee, Maine, West Virginia, Texas, and Hawaii. These states were never part of the original public domain.

Land entry case files can contain a wealth of genealogical and legal information. Depending upon the type and time period of land entry, the case file may yield only a few facts already known to the researcher or it may present new insights about ancestors, family history, title, and land use issues. Case files for land entries made before the 1840s may contain only the name of the entryman; the land's location, acreage, and price; and the date and place of the land entry. Or they may, in cases of military bounty-land warrants and private land claims, establish a record of U.S. military service or reveal that the claimant settled in a location before it was annexed by the U.S. Case files for land entries made after about 1840 under the Cash Act (1820), Preemption acts (1830s – 1840s), Donation Act (1850), Homestead Act (1862), Mineral Acts (1860s – 1870s), Timber Culture Act (1873), Desert Land Act (1877), and several military bounty-land warrant acts (1840s – 1850s) generally include more information. The records can attest to the entryman's age, place of birth, citizenship, military service, literacy, and economic status, among other vital information, and sometimes include similar information about family members. They also provide evidence of first title, and occasionally of land use, rights-of-ways, survey lines, crops and improvements, archeological imprints, and conflicting claims.

Such information is not guaranteed to be in every land entry case file. Over 40 separate legislative acts were used by Americans to make a land entry on the public lands, and each act required different information from the entryman. Thus the information available in the land entry case file depends largely upon the legal requirements of the act under which the land entry was made. Used imaginatively, however, even the smallest case files can establish locations of land ownership or settlement and dates essential to find other resources at the National Archives, such as census, court, and military service and pension records.

Ordering Land Entry Records from the National Archives

Before July 1908, the BLM-GLO kept the case files for all general land entries according to state, land office, type of entry (such as credit, cash, homestead, timber, and mineral), and final certificate number (sometimes called the file or document number). Large portions of the pre-July 1908 land entry case files are not indexed by name, therefore, each request for a land entry case file dated before July 1908 must include the following:

- } State
- } Land office
- } Type of land entry
- } Final certificate number

After July 1908, the BLM-GLO filed all general land entries regardless of state or type in one large series by serial patent number, therefore, each request for land entry case files dated after July 1908, must include the following:

- } Name of entryman
- } Serial patent number

When ordering a Bounty Land Warrant, you must provide:

- } The year of the Congressional act authorizing the warrant
- } Acreage
- } Warrant number

To obtain the legal description of the land, final certificate number, or serial patent number, you should begin by searching the BLM-GLO records at <http://glorerecords.blm.gov>. Otherwise, you should contact the registrar of deeds in the relevant county where the land was located. You may need to consult family members, personal family papers, and records maintained by town or city halls, county court houses, state and local archives, and historical societies. Your research at the National Archives, especially related to military pension records and bounty-land applications, may reveal some information about land that your ancestor acquired. Once you have determined that your ancestor probably acquired land directly from the Federal Government in a public land state, you can request a copy of the land entry case file using the NATF Form 84 or online.

General Land Office (GLO) Automated Records

Since 1989, BLM-Eastern States has been protecting and automating the historic land patent documents for the Secretary of the Interior. As the successor agency to the original General Land Office (GLO), we maintain more than nine million historic land documents— survey plats and field notes, homestead patents, military warrants, and railroad grants. These historic documents were among the very first land records to result from the Land Ordinance of 1785, which authorized the transfer of public lands to private individuals. Even today, these records are valuable resources for natural resource agencies, historians, title companies and genealogists.

Many of the documents are now computerized and are accessible via the Internet through the GLO Records Web site located at <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/>. Over 4.2 million land patent records from across the United States are now online, and 3 million have been imaged for the 30 public land states. The remaining 2 million records should be automated within about 5 years. Through this valuable Web site, field employees can easily check land ownership status from their desks and genealogists can trace family histories through land ownership. With about 7 million hits, glorecords is one of the most popular Web sites in the Department of the Interior.

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