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Circular No. 2 – Land Records

One approach in locating ancestors is to find the land they purchased or lived on. In this regard, the following records held by the Archives of Michigan may prove to be of interest to genealogists.

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

- RG 57-31 Tract books of swamp lands which show for each parcel a land description, rate per acre, amount paid, date of sale, number of certificate, and name of purchaser (series 10).
- RG 62-16 Register of certificates, 1843-1883; 1879-1882; 1888-1900. Shows the date, number of certificate, class of land, name and post office address of purchaser, description, number of acres, county where land situated, and date application was filed (series 22).
- Record of homestead lands administered by Lands Division, 1930-1939. Shows case number, date application was received, name of applicant, description of land, date and number of issued homestead certificate, and dates of sale. There is no name index (series 35).
- RG 64-52 Records relating to state tax homestead lands distributed by the state, 1933-1938. They consist of the applications, reports of field examiners, oath of homesteader or final proof, certificate of conveyance, and proof of settlement. The reports on outstanding homestead certificates offer name of homesteader, certificate number, date issued, description of land, improvements and cultivation, condition of occupancy, and source of income to homesteader. There is no name index (series 4).

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

- RG 81-9 Original maps prepared by federal surveyors subdividing the state into townships, ranges, and sections. Many of these sheets show cultural and physical features as they existed between about 1815 and 1855. Microfilm reels 255-260.
- RG 85-50 Abstracts of land grants, ca. 1837-1900. They identify all land grants bestowed by or received and sold by the state. Information shown includes description of land, name and residence of purchaser, date and number of certificate, name of patentee, and date of patent (series 1).
- Tax homestead lands, 1895-1975. Shows deed number, name of grantee, certificate number, plus date of deed volume and page number. Includes name indexes (series 13).
- RG 87-153 Surveys of private claims by Aaron Greely, 1809-1810. They include the claim number, the metes and bounds of the tract, and the name of claimant (series 1).
- Resurveys of private claims and concessions, 1807-1877. They provide information on name, date, coordinates, bearings, distances, acreage, and claim numbers (series 2).



RG 87-153 Private claim surveys in northern Michigan, 1823-1855. Facts contained in these records include distances, bearings, land descriptions, witness posts, names of claimants, number of tracts, some plats, metes and bounds notes, and dates (series 3).

RG 89-74 Field notes transcripts of original surveys, 1815-1880. Microfilmed on reels 6528-6615.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

RG 94-304 Land patents and Certificates, 1847-1943. These records document the first transfer of land from public to private ownership. Provides name of buyer, date of transaction, and legal description of the property.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT

RG 72-76 Rural property inventories, ca. 1936-1942. Contains descriptions of the land, buildings, fences, crops, and timber. Gives details on structures like type, year built or remolded, dimensions, condition, nature of foundation and roof, kind of floor, and utility service (water, electricity, heating, etc.). Arranged alphabetically by name of township, then numerically by section number. No name index. Not complete for all counties included.

RG 80-116 Land Tract books from 1818-1962. These volumes record the initial transfer of property in Michigan from public to private hands. Included is the name and residence of the first person or firm to acquire each tract, date of transaction, and a legal description of the property. Arranged by county, then township and range coordinates. Microfilm on reels 6456-6476.