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Circular No. 5 – Land Area Records

The following records held by the Archives of Michigan may prove to be of interest to those who wish to obtain cadastral information (form, extent, measurements) about the land area of Michigan.

Department of Conservation

RG 60-8

Surveys and field notes of private claims, military and Indian reservations, and other lands, 1818-1855 (series 1) reel 4924.

Field notes of the public surveys in Michigan Territory, 1817. This indexed volume contains a copy of field notes of surveys of townships north of the baseline and east of the principal meridian (series 2).

Surveys and field notes of township subdivisions, 1837-1838. This series consists of observations on the state of the land, the certificate of survey, and the names of surveyors, chainmen, and axe men (series 3).

Surveys and field notes of swampland state roads, 1864-1894. These seven volumes contain plats and minutes of survey of swampland state roads, ditches, drains, and river improvements (series 8).

Plats and field notes of territorial and state roads, bridges, and ditches, 1806-ca. 1917. Cartographic records arranged numerically 02000-02067. Other records arranged chronologically (series 10).

Survey Notes, 1817-1851. Contains field notes on land surveys, meanders of lakes, resurveys, and correction lines made in the Lower Peninsula to determine accuracy of prior surveys, especially around Houghton Lake. Arranged numerically by township and then chronologically (series 18).

Survey notes of boundary lines, 1810-1847. Field notes of the north boundary of Indiana and the Wisconsin boundary. Arranged numerically 02096-02101 (series 64).

Plats furnished to surveyors, ca. 1840-1857. Includes meanders of rivers, islands, and lakes. Also copies of island surveys by Thomas Whelpley, 1856-1857 (series 79).

RG 64-52

Field notes of a survey of St. Clair Flats, 1887-1901. These notes contain specific readings and narrative descriptions of land and channels. Arranged by volume number (series 1).

Index to survey of St. Clair Flats, ca. 1899-1901. Offers name of channel and the number of card and sheet (series 2).

Survey and field notes of township subdivisions, 1817-1913. These 405 volumes include observations on state land in T.33-34 N., R.2-8 E; T.24 N., R.2-4 E; T.49 N., R.8-11 W. Nearly all of these notebooks document rejected surveys and they were later redone. Arranged by volume number (series 3).

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RG 67-27

Original descriptive plats of townships resurveyed, 1839-1840. These surveys were erroneous and had to be redone. Arranged numerically. Not indexed (series 1).

Department of Natural Resources

RG 81-69

Field notebooks, 1885-1950. Contains observations on the character of the terrain, type of vegetation, magnetic declination, rock or mineral types, and cultural features. All entries in the northern peninsula have been indexed. Arranged chronologically, then alphabetically by author (series 1).

RG 85-50

St. Clair flats records, 1899-1979. The data in these records include information on the situation, extent, improvements made, name of owner, and his or her address and occupation. The record of leases lists the history of each tract since the state first put it on the market. Included are such facts as lot number, lease number, and duration, frontage data, name of lessor or assignor, name of lessee or assignee, date of issue, amount charged and easements. Arrangement is roughly alphabetical (series 11).

RG 87-155

Surveyors' field notebooks, 1815-1918. This series contains the original handwritten survey notes that divided the remaining public domain of the state into individual township parcels, each averaging approximately 36 square miles. There were over 1,400 townships surveyed requiring over 2,000 field note books. Arranged by volume number (series 1).

Islands, 1880-1912. This series contains some island surveys that were left out of the original surveys. Arranged alphabetically (series 2).

Meridian and base line surveys, 1816-1885. This series contains some surveys that were not included in the original numbered note books. Arranged as received (series 4).

Government land office plats, 1816-1860. This series contains the maps drawn up depicting Michigan's 1,400 individual townships – each divided into sections. Arranged by drawer and map number (series 5). Microfilms 255-260.

RG 88-33

St. Clair Flats survey maps, ca. 1907. Arranged numerically (series 1).

RG 89-74

Field note transcripts of original surveys, 1815-1880. Microfilmed on reels 6528-6615 (series 1).

Treasury Department

RG 67-97

Record of county plats, 1836-1965. These records contain plats of land approved by county plat boards and submitted to the Auditor General. Information conveyed may include the survey of subdivision, narrative description of the land, name of municipality, legal description, and geographic features. Arranged numerically 1-48787 in 786 bound volumes. The index to the plats can be found on microfilm reels 96-100 (series 1).

