



Jesse White • Secretary of State and State Archivist  
ILLINOIS STATE ARCHIVES

# *Land Sales Records*

Genealogical Research Series Pamphlet No. 1

THIS PAMPHLET IS THE FIRST IN A SERIES DESIGNED TO ASSIST THE GENEALOGICAL researcher in using the most pertinent related federal, state, and local governmental records in the possession of the Illinois State Archives and its Illinois Regional Archives Depositories (IRAD). The topic of this pamphlet is the sale and transfer of land.

## **HAMMES COLLECTION 1678–1814**

### ***Historical Background***

The sale of Illinois land began in the late 17th century, nearly 100 years before the establishment of the United States. While under the control of three separate and distinct governmental authorities: France (1678–1763), England (1763–1778), and the state of Virginia (1778–1784), individuals residing in what was to become the state of Illinois received and conveyed title to land there. Throughout these periods respective government agents registered land transactions. After the United States established its control over Illinois in 1784, the federal government eventually began a review process to determine the legitimacy of preexisting land claims. When examinations were completed in 1814, federal authorities had confirmed title to less than half of the claims presented to them.

### ***Record Contents***

The Raymond H. Hammes Collection at the State Archives chronicles Illinois land transfers during 1678–1814. The collection consists of 157 microfilm reels and includes selected governmental records and private papers. Federal records consist of documents and volumes of the U.S. General Land Office. Records of Madison, Randolph and St. Clair counties primarily include deeds, mortgages, and probate and county court papers. The collection's private manuscripts are from French settlements in Kaskaskia and Cahokia and with them are included available translations.

In 12 years of independent research, Raymond Hammes abstracted these records and recorded more than 10,000 ancient land grants, transfers, and other contract transactions. Together, they make up an unpublished 20-volume set. The first two microfilm reels of the Hammes Collection contain the 20 volumes of abstracts along with a cumulative index. These abstracts usually detail the names and relationships of sellers and purchasers, a description and location of the real estate and/or personal property in question, the selling price, and sale and filing dates. Often provided are the names and relationships of prior owners, ancestors and neighbors. The collection's remaining 155 microfilm reels contain copies of the original records from which the abstracts and the cumulative index were prepared.

### ***Finding Your Ancestors***

#### **RESEARCHING ON YOUR OWN**

The collection includes a comprehensive alphabetical surname index of the principal individuals involved in land transfers as well as cited individuals who were neighbors or witnesses to transactions. Occasional contract transactions other than land transfers also are provided. Entries refer to the unpublished 20 volumes of abstracts. Original transaction recordings can in turn be traced back from the abstracts.

#### **MAIL, TELEPHONE AND INTERNET REQUESTS**

The researcher must furnish an individual's complete name to allow for an effective search. The Archives will provide, if located, an uncertified and unofficial photocopy of the abstract. As a result of limitations on staff research time, the Archives can research no more than two names per inquiry. Send inquires to: Illinois State Archives, Reference Unit, Norton Building, Springfield, IL 62756. Telephone: (217) 782-4682. Fax: (217) 524-3930. Email: isareference@ilsos.net.

# **PUBLIC DOMAIN LAND SALE LISTING 1814–1876**

## ***Historical Background***

The U.S. government started selling off the vast amount of public land remaining in Illinois beginning in 1814. Ten U.S. General Land Offices located across the state conducted land sales up to 1876 when the last remaining Illinois federal land office was closed. The large bulk of sales had taken place by the mid-1850s.

State and county governments as well as the Illinois Central Railroad conducted a portion of the sales as a result of federal grants made to them. The state sold school, saline, seminary, canal, and internal improvement lands. After 1850 some counties sold undesirable swamp and overflowed lands. The Illinois Central financed its construction by selling those railroad lands allotted to it by the U.S. government. Federal authorities turned over Illinois U.S. Land Office records of original sales to the state in 1879.

## ***Record Contents***

Today, these records of Illinois land sales are located at the Illinois State Archives. With the assistance of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, archivists indexed the first purchasers of the Illinois public domain. The resulting database contains information on nearly 550,000 land sales from the 54,740 square miles of public domain sold within Illinois. Each entry gives the name, sex, county or state residence of purchasers; sale type; legal description of the land; the number of acres; price per acre; and total cost of the purchase. If the buyer's residence was another state, one should consult the original record because a county residence may be listed as well. If "warrant" appears under the column "total price," additional information is also available in the original record. For 1817–1819 warrants, the register includes warrant number and military corps or regiment in which the veteran served. For 1847–1877 warrants, the register provides warrant certificate number and date, and the name of the original recipient of the warrant, possibly someone other than the purchaser. The Archives cannot provide copies of land patent documents. To obtain copies of such documents, please contact the Bureau of Land Management (Eastern States Office), 20 M Street, Suite 950, Washington, DC 20003.

## ***Finding Your Ancestors***

### **RESEARCHING ON YOUR OWN**

The index to Illinois public domain land sales can be consulted two ways: 1) alphabetically by purchasers' surnames in a single sequence for the entire state, and 2) alphabetically by county and within counties alphabetically by purchasers' surnames.

The public domain land tract sales database may also be searched via the Internet. Researchers may access the database under the Department of Archives at the Secretary of State's website at [www.cyberdriveillinois.com](http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com).

### **MAIL, TELEPHONE AND INTERNET REQUESTS**

For a name search, please provide the Archives with the purchaser's name and, if possible, the name of the county where the land was located. If found, the Archives will provide an uncertified and unofficial copy of the individual's entry from the microfiche index. As a result of limitations on staff research time, the Archives can research no more than two names per inquiry.

If the purchaser used a warrant or resided in another state, the researcher may wish to request a copy of the original register as it may provide additional information. The charge for photocopies of original land records is \$2 per page. The Archives does not bill for photocopies. Prepaid \$5 vouchers, each containing 10, 50-cent credits, must be purchased when requesting an original land sale record. If you are interested in obtaining a photocopy, send your request and check or money order for the voucher by mail. The voucher, valid for two years after purchase, can be used for subsequent requests. The Archives also accepts Visa, Mastercard, and Discover/Novus credit cards by mail, telephone or fax in payment for the voucher. Send your request to: Illinois State Archives, Reference Unit, Norton Bldg., Springfield, IL 62756. Telephone: (217) 782-4682. Fax: (217) 524-3930. Email: [isareference@ilsos.net](mailto:isareference@ilsos.net).

# COUNTY DEED RECORDS 1768–1978

## *Historical Background*

The Illinois General Assembly established the Office of County Recorder in 1819. The original legislation required recorders to record and file all real estate deeds submitted to them. Although each county maintained records of real estate transactions, state legislation periodically shifted this responsibility among the circuit clerk, county clerk and recorder. Currently, the office of recorder exists in all counties with populations of 60,000 or more. The county clerk serves as ex officio recorder for counties with lesser populations.

## *Record Contents*

Deed records generally show names of the grantee and grantor, legal description of the property, date and type of instrument, amount of consideration, and the date filed.

**Illinois Regional Archives:** The IRAD system, consisting of seven regional depositories, maintains deed records for the following counties:

Adams	1817–1927	Hancock	1817–1934	Piatt	1840–1931
Alexander	1818–1944	Hardin	1863–1942	Pike	1818–1891
Boone	1837–1964	Jackson	1843–1936	Pulaski	1842–1945
Carroll	1839–1968	Jefferson	1822–1922	Randolph	1768–1851
Champaign	1833–1902	Jo Daviess	1828–1902	Richland	1841–1975
Christian	1839–1965	Johnson	1809–1892	Saline	1821–1845; 1926–1941
Clay	1825–1911	Knox	1818–1863	Sangamon	1822–1902
Clinton	1825–1915	Lawrence	1821–1960	Schuyler	1884–1918
Crawford	1817–1958	Macon	1829–1901	Scott	1839–1874
DeKalb	1838–1930	Macoupin	1829–1918	Shelby	1827–1926
DeWitt	1839–1875	Madison	1814–1879	St. Clair	1790–1875
Edgar	1823–1894	Massac	1843–1911	Stark	1882–1891
Edwards	1815–1978	McDonough	1817–1962	Stephenson	1837–1962
Effingham	1833–1936	McHenry	1845–1945	Union	1818–1968
Fayette	1821–1972	Mercer	1834–1901	White	1816–1928
Ford	1885–1890	Monroe	1816–1963	Williamson	1823–1909
Fulton	1817–1860	Montgomery	1821–1958	Winnebago	1836–1891
Gallatin	1813–1911	Ogle	1837–1940	Woodford	1833–1928
Greene	1824–1887	Peoria	1817–1862		

IRAD holdings of separate deed record indexes are as follows:

Adams	1825–1892	Jackson	1838–1889	Perry	1827–1863
Alexander	1818–1943	Jefferson	1822–1927	Piatt	1841–1918
Boone	1837–1977	Jersey	1822–1855	Pulaski	1873–1945
Bureau	1816–1900	Jo Daviess	1825–1901	Richland	1829–1974
Champaign	1833–1927	Johnson	1809–1907	Rock Island	1835–1895
Christian	1839–1968	Lawrence	1821–1950	Saline	1848–1872
Clay	1825–1892	Macon	1829–1893	Sangamon	1823–1910
Clinton	1818–1920	Macoupin	1829–1888	Shelby	1828–1892
Crawford	1817–1958	Madison	1814–1910	St. Clair	1786–1927
Edgar	1823–1919	Massac	1843–1900	Stephenson	1837–1938
Edwards	1888–1899	McDonough	1831–1986	Union	1818–1968
Effingham	1833–1889	McHenry	1841–1945	Wayne	1851–1898
Fayette	1821–1970	Mercer	1834–1901	White	1814–1970
Gallatin	1813–1900	Monroe	1816–1963	Williamson	1823–1928
Hancock	1817–1901	Montgomery	1821–1958	Woodford	1841–1928
Hardin	1863–1904	Ogle	1837–1942		

If the genealogist is interested in a comprehensive listing of all county recorders' records maintained in the IRAD system, please consult the Local Governmental Records Database under the State Archives/IRAD webpage at **[www.cyberdriveillinois.com](http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com)**.

The most current listing of records, including recent accessions, for a particular county in the regional system's possession can be obtained free from the Illinois State Archives, IRAD Unit, Norton Bldg., Springfield, IL 62756.

In addition to the county deed records held by the Archives' regional depositories, some deed records are also available on microfilm at the main Archives building in Springfield. In-person users are invited to consult an in-house listing of these holdings.

## **Finding Your Ancestors**

### **RESEARCHING ON YOUR OWN**

Deed records usually are indexed by names of both grantee (purchaser) and grantor (seller) and may be found within the deed records themselves or as separate volumes. Indexes contained within the deed records themselves pertain only to entries within those record volumes. When separate deed record indexes are available, they should be consulted to find volume and page numbers of the desired entries within the entire series of deed records. For in-person searches of deed records and indexes stored at one of the regional depositories, the researcher must visit the appropriate depository.

To use the deed records available at the Illinois State Archives, please ask reference staff for the listing of county records available on microfilm at the State Archives Building.

Deed records not located at one of the IRAD centers or at the State Archives generally are still maintained at the respective courthouses in the counties where they originated. In these instances the appropriate recorder's office should be contacted.

### **MAIL, TELEPHONE AND INTERNET REQUESTS**

The Illinois Regional Archives Depository System welcomes mail and telephone inquiries. See the IRAD brochure *Discovering Family and Local History* or consult the Archives' page under the Secretary of State website for the addresses and phone numbers of the regional depositories. It also includes a map that shows the counties covered by each depository. In requesting a search of a particular county's deed record, contact the appropriate regional depository. Provide the names of the grantee or grantor and the county where the property is situated as well as the approximate date of the land transaction. (Indexes are not available for some IRAD deed records, making searches very difficult without a precise deed date.) A photocopy of the deed requested will be provided by the appropriate regional depository if it can be located.

State Archives reference staff does not search its holdings of county deed records on microfilm. These must be consulted in person at the State Archives.