



## *Early Land Records of Indiana*

*A gateway into your ancestors lives.*

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Indiana officially became a Territory of the United States on 7 May 1800 and the 19th State on December 11, 1816. Previous to that, the area north and west of the Ohio River officially became the possession of the United States after the Treaty of Greenville in 1783. It legally became an incorporated territory when the Congress of the Confederation enacted the Northwest Ordinance on July 13, 1787. Encompassing all of the land West of Pennsylvania, North of the Ohio River, and East of the Mississippi River, this covered an area in excess of 260,000 square miles of what would become Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and that portion of Minnesota east of the Mississippi River. This legacy provides the Indiana Researcher with an insurmountable amount of land records dating back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

Original Land Records of the Northwest Territory, Indiana Territory, and later the State of Indiana, hold a vast amount of information that has the potential of reconstructing, not only our ancestors history in the way of migration and associated timelines, but many unknown family members who were participants in that history. While scattered across numerous National, State, County, and various genealogy repositories, this record set is the largest and most complete source available to family researchers.

Land records refer to those record series that may involve real estate. These include documents traditionally recorded in Deed Books and Plat Cabinets including but not limited to; Deeds, Mortgages, and Survey Plats. As a government document, they are not subject to copy write restrictions ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copyright\\_status\\_of\\_work\\_by\\_the\\_U.S.\\_government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copyright_status_of_work_by_the_U.S._government)) and are reasonably available to all researchers.

### **A variety of records are available for real property research:**

·Land Entry Case Files – Compiled records that document the transfer of public lands to private ownership. They may be military land warrants, pre-1908 general land entry files, or post-1908 land entry files. They may include entry applications, payment records, personal information, as well as, family information in some later cases.

·Tract Books – These books are related to the Land Entry File. They are arranged by Land Office and legal description i.e. Range, Township, Section, etc. They include: Entryman name; residence; legal description; amount of land; cost per acre; entry date; payment/credit dates, descriptions, and amounts; final certificate number; and patent number. They may also name assignees as well as entries forfeited by entrymen. Indiana Land Offices were: Cincinnati (1801), Vincennes (1804), Jeffersonville (1807), Brookville (1819 - transferred to Indianapolis in 1825), Terre Haute (1819 - transferred to Crawfordsville in 1828), Fort Wayne (1822) and LaPorte (1833 - transferred to Winamac in 1839).

·Federal Land Patents - The legal document transferring ownership from the federal government to an individual in public land states.

·State Land Patents - The legal document transferring ownership from the State Government to an individual in State Land States. These parcels were surveyed and described using Metes and Bounds.

·Survey Plats - A part of the official record of a cadastral survey, which creates, marks, defines, retraces, or re-establishes the boundaries and subdivisions of Federal Lands of the United States.

·Survey Notes - The narrative record of a survey. They are written in tabular format and contain the detailed descriptions of entire survey process including the instrumentation and procedures utilized, calling all physical evidence evaluated in the survey process, and listing all of the individuals who participated in the work.

·Grantor/Grantee Indexes - Indexes to deeds divided into a direct index (grantor) or an indirect or reverse index (grantee). Indexes list the parties, brief description of the property, date (sale or recording), and the deed book and page number where the deed can be found.

·Deeds - Instrument transferring ownership of land and appurtenances between private individuals.

*County recorders and auditors often hold many other resources such as range books and lot reference books to aid local research.*

### ·**Understanding legal descriptions common to Land Records**

·Range - A measure of the distance east or west from a referenced principal meridian, in units of six miles

·Township - a square parcel of land of 36 square miles

·Section – An approximately one-square-mile block of land. There are 36 sections in a survey township.

·Base Line - A parallel of latitude, referenced to and established from a designated initial point, upon which all rectangular surveys in a defined area are based. Also spelled baseline

·Principal meridian (PM) - A true meridian running through an initial point, which together with the baseline, form the highest level framework for all rectangular surveys in a given area.

### **Breaking down the deed. Inclusions, exclusions and things that don't make sense**

A deed follows a certain format. Knowing the basic parts of a deed helps to interpret what is being said in the deed. The parts of a deed include: The *type of legal instrument*; the *date of the sale*; the *date of recording*; *Names* of the grantee and grantor and their county and state of *residence*; the *amount* of money for the sale; the *property description*; the *nature, conditions, and considerations*; a *dower release*; *Signatures*; *Names of witnesses*.

Although a deed will not generally give age, it would not have been issued to an individual under the age of maturity based on the relevant laws of the time and location. A deed may or may not list relationships between named parties, but generally not the relationship to witnesses. With the exception of rights-of-way and easements, a deed will not generally list individual appurtenances.

### **Transcribing Land Records**

It is always a good idea to transcribe land records. This practice forces you to read and study every word ensuring you don't overlook an important phrase or different name spelling. It also gives you the opportunity to highlight information of particular importance to your research.

### **Measurements to remember**

Numerous measuring techniques may be found in Land Records. These are the most common and their equivalents.

Township = 36 Square Miles (There are 25 Square Mile Townships in some parts of Ohio.)

Section = 1 Square Mile; 640 Acres.

Mile = 5280 Feet; 80 Chains; 320 rods

Chain = 66 Feet; 4 Rods; 100 Links

Link = 7 7/8 Inches

Rod, Pole, Perch = 16 ½ Feet

### **Obscure terms sometimes found and what they mean**

A large part of any legal document is “boilerplate.” Deeds and Patents for real property are no exception. Familiarize yourself with some standard legal terms. There will likely be some other terms that still make no sense. Consult the internet or find a law dictionary in your local library to further unravel the endless string of boiler plate terms. These terms are there for a reason!

·Husbandman – A farmer; originally a tenant who cultivates leased ground.

·Replevin – An action brought to recover property unlawfully taken.

·Remainderman - A remainderman is a person who inherits or is entitled to inherit property upon the termination of the estate of the former owner

·Life Estate - A life estate deed is a transfer of the ownership of the real property that is the subject of the deed to one or more persons (the "remainderman").

·Et Ux or Et Uxor– And Wife or Et Vir – And Husband

### **Using different types of indexes to locate deeds and patents**

Indexes to deeds are often divided into a direct index (grantor) or an indirect or reverse index (grantee). Indexes list the parties, brief description of the property, date (sale or recording), and the deed book and page number where the deed can be found. It is important to search both the grantee and grantor index, as much can be learned by looking at both the purchases and the sales.

If more than one person was associated as the grantor or grantee, et al (and others) may have been used as an abbreviation by the clerk where recording space was an issue. It may be necessary to look for all family members (parents, siblings, spouses) in land record indexes in order to find all the land records of an ancestor. Often in deed indexes, surnames are grouped together by the first letter of the last name and ordered chronologically. Property may also be indexed by legal description, i.e. baseline, meridian, range, township, section.

### **The benefits of finding all land records that name your ancestor.**

The obvious benefit to researching land records is tracing the catalog of places your ancestor lived and being able to pinpoint those locations. Finding that GGF Geoffrey was a resident of Franklin Co Tennessee when he signed the deed in Lawrence County, Ohio, may open up a whole other realm of research possibilities.

Finding a land record that list a forefather as a trustee on a property gives insight to community or religious involvement as well as perceived trust.

Finding or confirming relationships through deed research can mean the difference between a complete family tree and one that is “maybe right.”

When you find a land record with an ancestor's name on it, always examine the complete providence of the land in question, forwards and backwards. There is always a chance you will find family members about which you never knew. You may be able to confirm connections that are not documented anywhere else.

In examining the providence of land, even if you don't find a long - lost cousin, you will find history and relevant insight on how your ancestors and their neighbors lived in bygone times.

## **Repositories that hold Indiana Land Records:**

### **Federal and State Land Records**

Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office

<https://glorecords.blm.gov/default.aspx>

National Archives Records Administration

<https://www.archives.gov/>

Division of Land Titles and Records (Indian Lands)

<https://www.bia.gov/bia/ots/dltr>

Indiana State Archives Land Records Collection

<https://www.in.gov/iaara/2595.htm>

Library of Virginia

<http://www.lva.virginia.gov/>

Indiana State Library

<https://www.in.gov/library/>

### **County Land Records**

County Recorder's Office of County **at time of issue**. **Always be aware of county boundary changes.**

### **Additional Links:**

Indiana County Creation Dates and Parent Counties (FamilySearch)

[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Indiana\\_County\\_Creation\\_Dates\\_and\\_Parent\\_Counties](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Indiana_County_Creation_Dates_and_Parent_Counties)

Indiana Land and Property (FamilySearch)

[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Indiana\\_Land\\_and\\_Property](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Indiana_Land_and_Property)

United States, Bureau of Land Management Tract Books Coverage Table (FamilySearch Historical Records)

[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United\\_States,\\_Bureau\\_of\\_Land\\_Management\\_Tract\\_Books\\_Coverage\\_Table\\_\(FamilySearch\\_Historical\\_Records\)](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States,_Bureau_of_Land_Management_Tract_Books_Coverage_Table_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records))

United States Bureau of Land Management Tract Books, 1800-c. 1955 (FamilySearch)

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-99W3-M4M?owc=waypoints&wc=M7W3-63D%3A356162201%2C356256401&cc=2074276>

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