

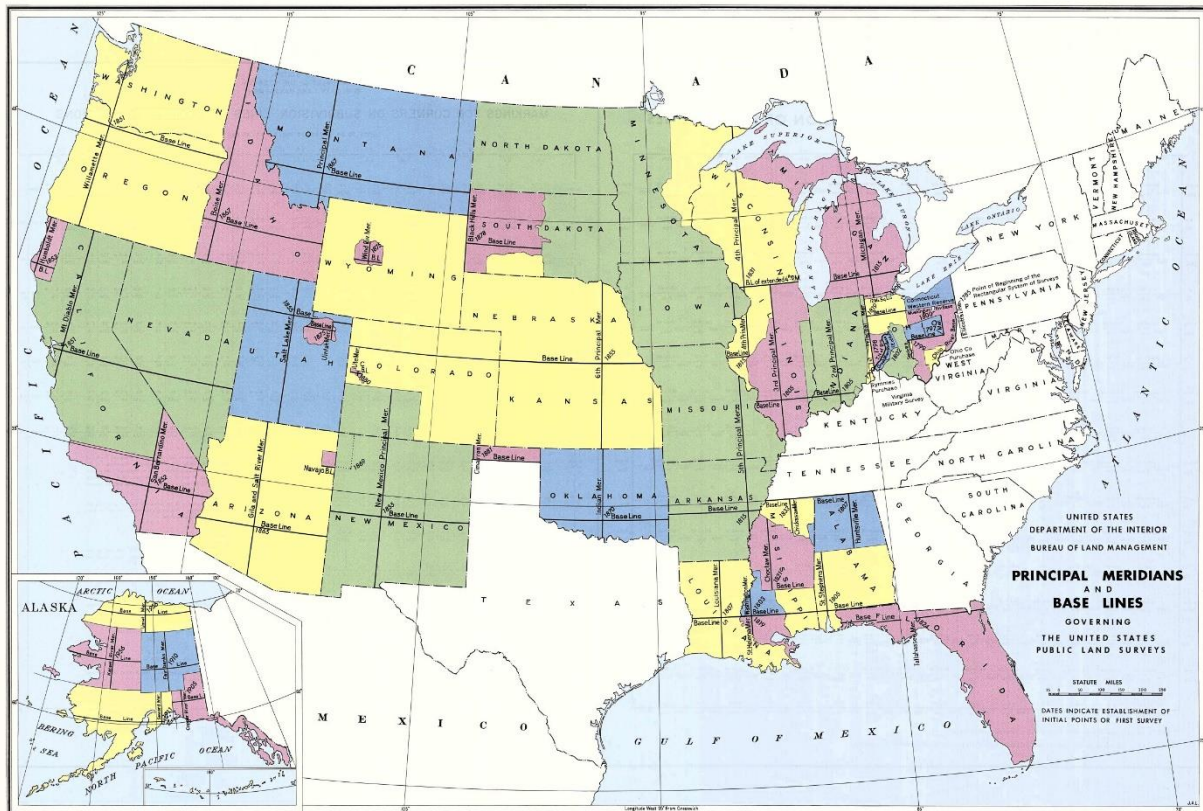
General Land Office: Get the Most Out of the BLM-GLO Website

Lisa S. Gorrell, CG

Introduction

There were two ways that land in the United States was first distributed. The Colonial governments distributed land by way of land grants. This land is described by what is termed “metes and bounds,” the lengths and angles of the boundary of the property. Once the Federal Government was in charge of distributing land to settlers, the system of conveying land and its description changed to a rectangular system of “township, range, and section.”

The General Land Office records on the Bureau of Land Management website have these first transactions of the federal land to private parties. This is an index of those who received a land patent, i.e., completed the whole process to obtain their patent, or title to the land. The map below shows the states that are part of the Rectangular Survey System. The states in white distributed their land. This includes all the colonial states plus Texas and Hawaii.



After a settler received their land from the Federal government, all following transactions of that land were done at the county level and the records are found in deed books.

BLM Website. <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx>

On the home page, search records using the “Search Records” tab. Check out the “Reference Tab” to learn what federal records are, how to search the website, and for a glossary of terms.

Most of your search will be done on the Patents view.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR *PRIVATE CLAIMS*
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT General Land Office Records

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Search Documents

Search Documents By Type Search Documents By Location Search Documents By Identifier

Patents Surveys LSR CDI Tract Books

Search [Clear Form](#)

Location
 State: ALABAMA
 County: Any County

Names
 Last Name: _____
 First Name: _____
 Middle Name: _____
 search patentees search warrantees

Land Description
 Township: ___ / ___
 Range: ___ / ___
 Meridian: Any Meridian
 Section #: _____

Miscellaneous
 Land Office: Any Land Office
 Document #: _____
 Indian Allot. #: _____
 Survey #: _____
 Authority: Any Authority

Issue Date: -- / -- to -- / --
 Militia: _____
 Tribe: Any Tribe
 Geo. Name/
 Mining Claim: _____

To search for land patents:
 1. Start by selecting the State.
 2. You do not have to fill in all fields, but provide at least one additional field.
 3. Click the Search Patents button.

Search Tips:

- Hover your mouse over a field to get a brief description.
- Get detailed information by checking the [Glossary](#) in the Reference Center.
- For more tips and help, check out our [Patent Search Overview](#).

Search Patents

Note: This site does not cover every state, but we do have [resource links](#) for most states.

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By Location & Name. On this page, you can search by location, specifically down to the county, and by name. You do not need to fill in all the fields. If the surname is not common, then search by last name only. Most of the time you will be using the location and names section only.

By Land Description. Sometimes though, you want to know who received the land by the land description. There you only fill in the township, range, meridian, and section number. This will bring up the people who purchased or received land through homesteading or bounty land.

Using Miscellaneous. Perhaps you are doing a study of an area and want to know who got land by homesteading or by some other authority. This section would be considered advanced and this presentation will not be covering it.

Searching for land patents.

The search box allows for first and last names and location. You can fill in as much as you want.

Image	Accession	Names	Date	Doc #	State	Meridian	Twp - Rng	Aliquots	Sec. #	County
	MO0870 .262	PFOTENHAUER, ANDREAS	11/5/1850	17541	MO	5th PM	045N - 004W	NW¼NE¼	18	Gasconade
	MO0880 .251	PFOTENHAUER, HERMAN	11/1/1851	18164	MO	5th PM	045N - 004W	SE¼SE¼	7	Gasconade

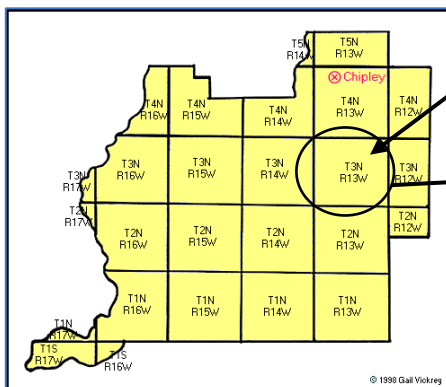
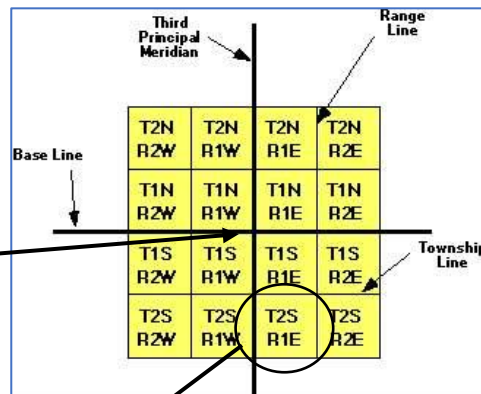
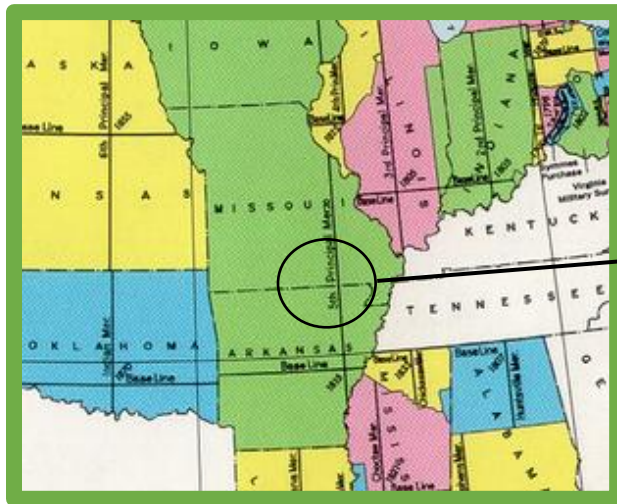
Click on the Accession number to bring up their record.

Accession Nr: MO0880__251	Document Type: State Volume Patent	State: Missouri	Issue Date: 11/1/1851	Cancelled: No
Patent Details		Patent Image		Related Documents
Printer Friendly				
Names On Document <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PFOTENHAUER, HERMAN		Miscellaneous Information Land Office: St. Louis US Reservations: No Mineral Reservations: No Tribe: --- Militia: --- State In Favor Of: --- Authority: April 24, 1820: Sale-Cash Entry (3 Stat. 566) General Remarks: ---		
Document Numbers Document Nr: 18164 Misc. Doc. Nr: --- BLM Serial Nr: MO NO S/N Indian Allot. Nr: --- Coal Entry. Nr: ---		Survey Information Total Acres: 40.00 Survey Date: --- Geographic Name: --- Metes/Bounds: No		

This record gives the name of the land office, the law under which the land is conveyed, the total number of acres and the document number. This information is needed if you want to order the land records from the National Archives.

Land Descriptions

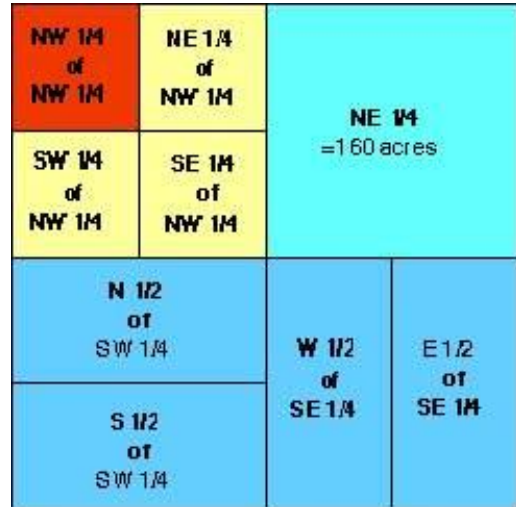
The land is divided into townships and ranges. These are measured off meridian and base lines.



35	36	31	32	33	34	35	36	31	32
2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1	6	5
11	12	7	8	9	10	11	12	7	8
14	15	18	17	16	15	14	13	18	17
23	24	19	20	21	22	23	24	19	20
26	25	30	29	28	27	26	25	30	29
35	36	31	32	33	34	35	36	31	32
2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1	6	5

The township has 36 sections. These can be divided up in many ways. Typical measurement is a quarter section of 160 acres. However, these quarter sections can be further divided. Here are some samples of the way the measurement can be written in a patent or a deed.

- ▶ Northeast quarter = NE4 = NE ¼
- ▶ West half of the southeast quarter = W ½ SE ¼ = W2 SE4
- ▶ Southwest quarter of southeast quarter = SW ¼ SE ¼ = SW4 SE4



Patent Image Tab

The patent is under the Patent Image tab. This can be downloaded.

Related Documents Tab

Under the related tab, all landowners are listed in the same section. Be sure to check this tab to see if any of the other owners might be kin. They are part of their FAN club.

Surveys

The surveys tab lists maps of the surveys if available. These maps can help you see what the land was like when it was first surveyed. The maps are the whole township, not just the section. You might see where the closest creek or river is.

Tract Books

If a tract book page is linked to this township, you will see those pages. Tract books are arranged by Township, Range, and Section. It shows all transactions for a particular section, whether they received the patent or not. This is the only way you might discover an ancestor tried to purchase land but gave it up.

27th Sept. 1842 - to be offered.
 Proclaimed for Sale 16 February 1843.
 with drawn from market May 21. 1856.
 Restored Feby. 15. 1858.

PART OF SECTION	SECTION	TOWNSHIP	RANGE	ACRES	100ths	Dollars	Cents	Dollars	Cents	NAME OF ENTRYMAN
North East ¼	1	T1 N.	10 W	162	87	1	25	203	58 ¾	John Gilbert, John Gordon John M ^r Whiter & Joseph Gordon
North West ¼				167	62	1	25	209	52 ½	Rolly Taylor
E ½ of SE ¼				80		1	25	100		Alexander Ramsay
W ½ of SE ¼				80		1	25	100		James Caldwell

Resources for Further Study

Land Records at NARA.

To order copies of land records from the National Archives, check out this link:

<https://www.archives.gov/research/land/accessing-land-entry-files>

There are some homestead files at Ancestry and Fold3 (both subscription)

For Black homesteaders, see the National Park Service: <https://www.nps.gov/home/black-homesteading-in-america.htm>.

Tract Books at *FamilySearch*, use this link: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2074276>

FamilySearch Wiki

- US Land & Property. https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/United_States_Land_and_Property
- Specifically Federal Land:
[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Grants_from_the_Federal_Government_\(Public_Domain\)](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Grants_from_the_Federal_Government_(Public_Domain))

Hone, Wade E, *Land and Property Research in the United States* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Ancestry, 1997.)

Luebking, Sandra Hargreaves, "Land Records," *The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy*.

https://wiki.rootsweb.com/wiki/index.php/Overview_of_Land_Records.