



Digging for Ancestors at the Bureau of Land Management Website

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Bureau of Land Management Website

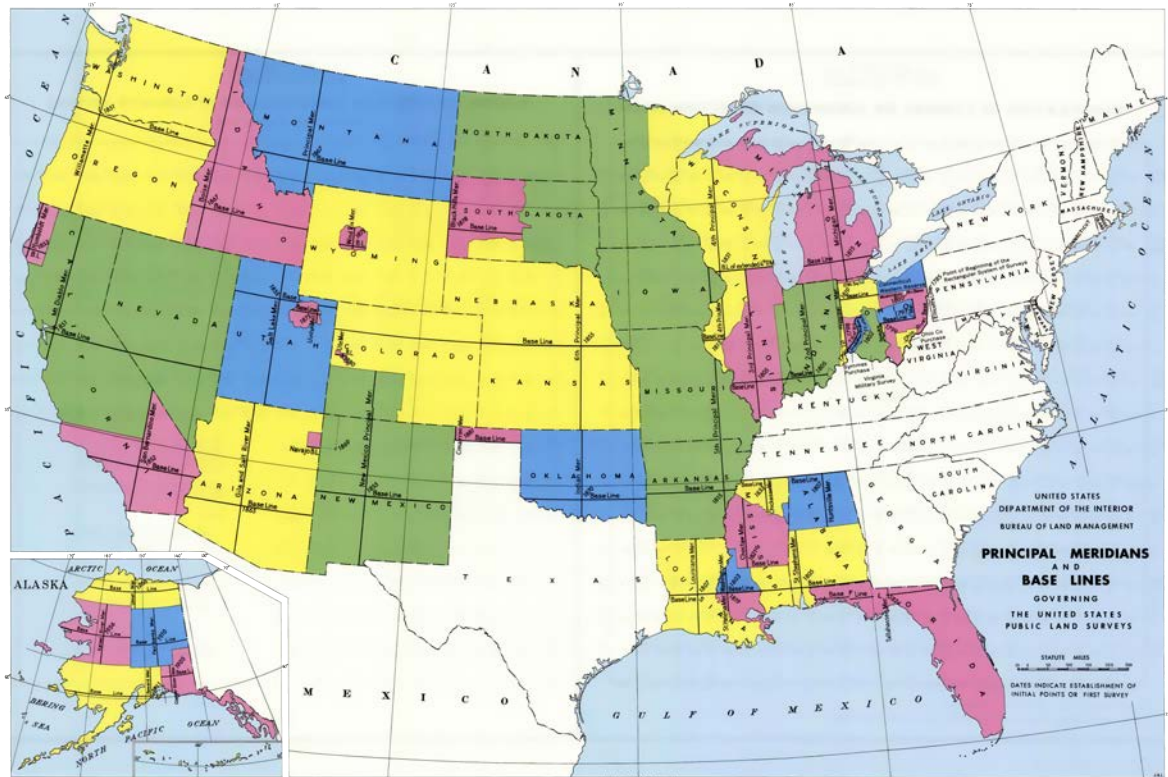
<http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx>

- Land conveyance records for the Public Land states.
- First transfer of land from U.S. government to private individuals only.

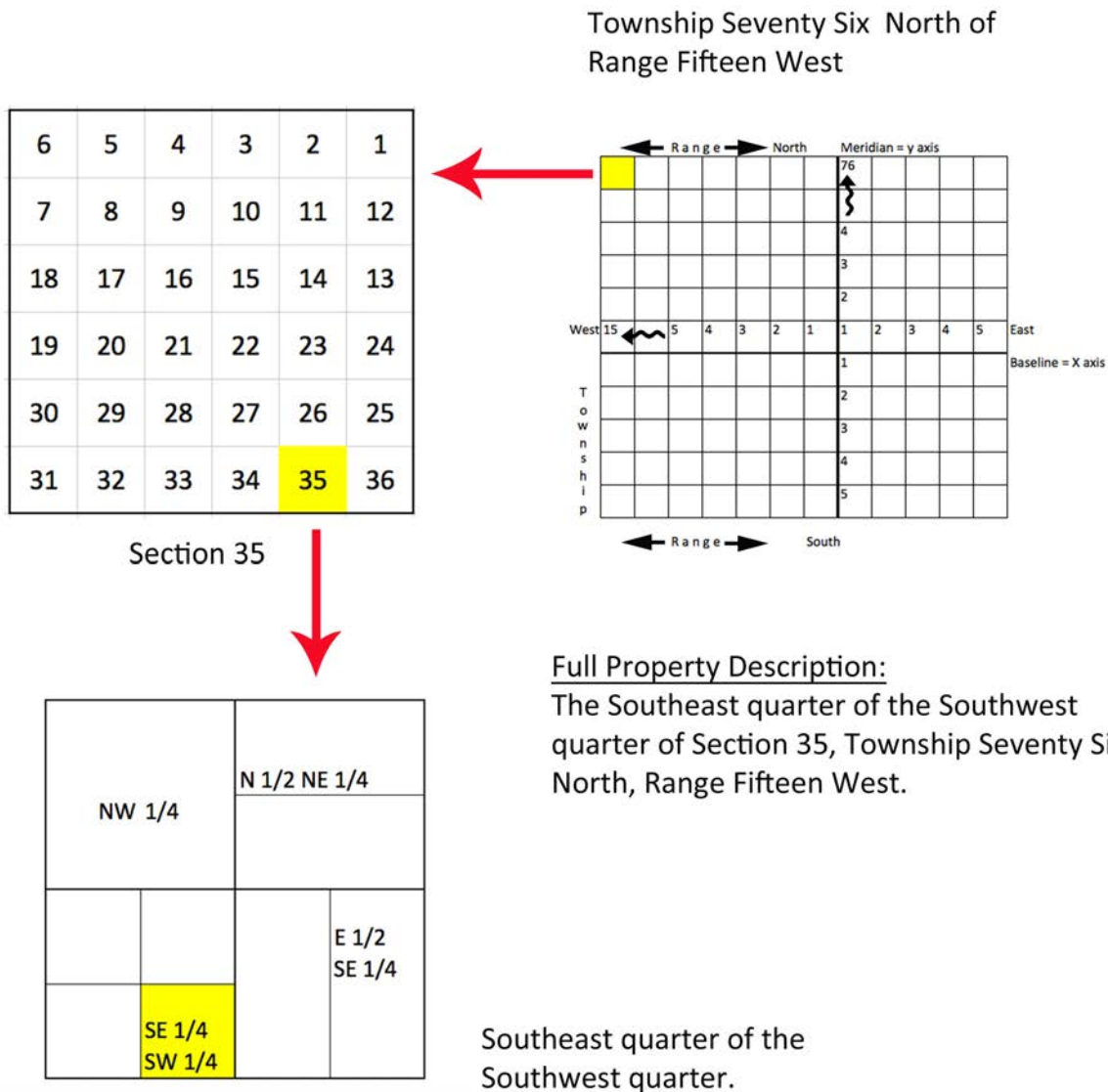
Rectangular Survey System

- Aka the Public Land Survey System
- Includes 30 states. Everything but the 13 original colonies, Hawaii, Kentucky, Maine, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, West Virginia.
- Designed to uniquely identify land managed by the United States.
- As states and territories came under the public domain, a baseline (running east-west) and a meridian (running north-south) were established.
- Numbered townships laid out north and south of the baseline.
- Numbered ranges laid out east and west of the meridian.
- 37 principal meridians in the U.S. Each has a name that is used to identify the various surveys.

<http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov> > Reference Center > Principal Meridians & Baselines (under Appendices on left sidebar)



Property Description Example



Strategies

- Use the BLM website to identify properties your ancestor obtained from the federal government.
- Consider expanding search to include the FAN Club (friends/family, associates, neighbors).
- Locate property on a map *and* identify neighbors.
- Use tract books to identify cancelled, revoked and relinquished claims.
- Search with wildcards
 - % - matches any sequence of letters in the search field. For example, "BALL%" will return any surnames beginning with BALL such as BALLARD, BALLENGER, BALLOU, etc.
 - _ - matches one single letter in the search field. For example, "B_LL" will return BALL, BELL, BULL, etc.

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Ordering a Land Entry Case File from the National Archives

Use the BLM website at <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/> to gather the necessary information to order:

Pre-1908 files are arranged by state, land office, granting authority or law (i.e. Homestead Entry), certificate number. It's also a good idea to include the applicant's name and property description to verify the correct file has been pulled.

Post-1908 files are arranged by serial patent number. Also include applicant's name and property description to verify the correct file has been pulled.

The screenshot displays the 'General Land Office Records' page for a 'State Volume Patent'. The header includes the U.S. Department of the Interior and Bureau of Land Management. Navigation tabs include Search Documents, Reference Center, Support, and Shopping Cart. The main content area shows the following details:

- Accession Nr: CO0520__482
- Document Type: State Volume Patent
- State: Colorado
- Issue Date: 9/13/1876
- Cancelled: No

Below these details are three tabs: Patent Details, Patent Image, and Related Documents. The 'Patent Details' tab is active, showing the following sections:

- Names On Document:** BALLENGER, WILLIAM H.
- Miscellaneous Information:**
 - Land Office: Denver
 - US Reservations: No
 - Mineral Reservations: No
 - Tribe: ---
 - Militia: ---
 - State In Favor Of: ---
 - Authority: May 20, 1862: Homestead EntryOriginal (12 Stat. 392)
 - General Remarks: ---
- Document Numbers:**
 - Document Nr: 770
 - Misc. Doc. Nr: 970
 - BLM Serial Nr: ---
 - Indian Allot. Nr: ---
 - Coal Entry. Nr: ---
- Survey Information:**
 - Total Acres: 80.00
 - Survey Date: ---
 - Geographic Name: ---
 - Metes/Bounds: No

At the bottom, there is a 'Land Descriptions' table with the following data:

Map	State	Meridian	Twp - Rng	Aliquots	Section	Survey #	County
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CO	6th PM	001N - 070W	NE¼NW¼	20		Boulder
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CO	6th PM	001N - 070W	NW¼NE¼	20		Boulder

- **Order online** from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA): eservices.archives.gov/orderonline
 - Cost is \$50 which includes shipping and handling. You have the option of paper copies or on a CD.
- Hire a researcher: Association of Professional Genealogists <http://www.apgen.org/index.html>
- Locate one on the National Archives website at <http://www.archives.gov/research/hire-help/>

Tract Books

Federal tract books are the official record of each piece of surveyed public land. They show transactions and status of land until its transfer to private ownership. They include completed, cancelled, revoked and relinquished claims. Physical tract books are with Bureau of Land Management and National Archives.

Family Search has images of the tract books (with the exception of Alaska and Missouri) digitized at <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2074276>.

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Resources in Print

- Eales, Anne Bruner & Robert M. Kvasnicka, editors. *Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives of the United States*. Third Edition. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2000. Web version available at: <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/index.html>
- Eichholz, Alice. *Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources*. Third Edition. Provo, Utah: Ancestry, 2004.
- Gates, Paul W. *History of Public Land Law Development*. Washington, D.C.: Public Land Law Review Commission, 1968.
- Greenwood, Val D. *The Researchers Guide to American Genealogy*. Third Edition. Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2000.
- The Handybook for Genealogists*. Eleventh Edition. Logan, Utah: Everton Publishers, 2006.
- General Land Office. *General Land Office Primer*. Compiled by I.P. Berthrong. Washington D.C.: General Land Office, 1921. Downloadable pdf: http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/reference/manuals/GLO_primer.pdf
- Goodrum, Michelle Roos. *Digging for Ancestors: An In-Depth Guide to Land Records*. Utica, Ohio: The In-Depth Genealogist, 2013. Available electronically at: <http://theindepthgenealogist.com/shop-idg/idg-products/>
- Hatcher, Patricia Law. *Locating Your Roots: Discover Your Ancestors Using Land Records*. Cincinnati, OH: Betterway Books, 2003.
- Hawkins, Kenneth, compiler. *Research in the Land Entry Files of the General Land Office*. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C., 2009. Downloadable pdf: <http://www.archives.gov/publications/ref-info-papers/rip114.pdf>.
- Hone, E. Wade. *Land & Property Research in the United States*. Salt Lake City, UT: Ancestry, 1997.
- Keener, John W., compiler. *Public Land Statutes of the United States*. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office: 1916.
- Knepper, George W. *The Official Ohio Lands Book*. Columbus, Ohio: Auditor of State, 2002. Downloadable pdf: <https://ohioauditor.gov/publications/OhioLandsBook.pdf>
- United States, Bureau of Land Management. *The Homestead Law: A Brief Sketch in United States History*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962. Downloadable at: <http://archive.org/details/homesteadlawb00unit>
- White, C. Albert. *A History of the Rectangular Survey System*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983. Downloadable pdf: <http://www.blm.gov/cadastral/Manual/pdffiles/histrect.pdf>

Websites

- Arphax Publishing <http://www.arphax.com/>
- Bureau of Land Management General Land Office Records <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/>
- Cyndi's List. "Land Records, Deeds, Homesteads, Etc." <http://www.cyndislist.com/land/>
- FamilySearch <https://familysearch.org/>
- History Geo <http://www.historygeo.com/index.php>
- Public Land Survey System http://www.nationalatlas.gov/articles/boundaries/a_plss.html

Federal Statutes can be viewed on Google Books.

For a copy of a blank township grid go to <http://bit.ly/111LGsB>