“Land records can be the building blocks needed to reconstruct identities, the stones to pave migration trails. But success requires a methodical use of this resource to re-create ancestral circumstances, neighborhoods, and associate patterns.”

Ge Lee Cortey Hendrix, NGSQ, Vol 79, page 268-292

**Language of Land Deeds**

- **Assignee** – Individual to whom a title, claim, property, interest, or right has been transferred.
- **Dower** - Provision made by right of law or by will for the wife to receive one third of an estate.
- **Dower right** – The right of a wife to one third of all assets. A deed often required the wife to give up or relinquish freely any claim or title she might have . . release her dower right.
- **Grantor** – person selling land
- **Grantee** – person buying land
- **Direct Index** – index to sellers (grantors)
- **Mortgagor** – person who obtains a loan using his property as security.
- **Mortgagee** – the person or bank loaning money and receiving title to property as security for the loan.
- **Relict** – a surviving widow
- **Consort** – deceased wife of a surviving husband
- **Liber** – book or volume
- **Et ns** – and wife
- **Et al** – and others

Consider how land is acquired – consider the time period

- Government to the individual
• Individual to another individual

State Land States  (13 original colonies plus others)

• Metes and bounds
• Each state is unique and has their own system of organizing
• Will need to learn to plat land
• Surveying was required
• Steps for acquisition
  o Entry
  o Warrant
  o Survey
  o Fees
  o Patent

Final Thoughts on State Lands

• Legal age of State
• Tax exemptions may have been given for state land (therefore not included in tax listings for first 2 – 5 years)
• Signatures
• FAN (Friends, associates and neighbors)
• Military Bounty Lands = service
• Date of patent is not date of application; look for more paperwork
  o Meanwhile a warrant does not automatically mean that it was acquired by your ancestor

Texas Land Records

• General Land Office
  • Created in 1836
  • One of the oldest state agencies
  • Determine what was granted to colonists
  • Early grants dating back to 1700’s for land grants by Republic and State of Texas
  • Texas in 1845 offered 175 million acres of public land to federal government – refused the offer
  • Texas instead preceded to issue the land grants
• First Class Headrights – issued those who arrived before 2 March 1836; heads were eligible for 4428 acres; single 1/3rd of that amount.
• Second Class Headrights – issued who arrived between 2 March 1836 and 1 October 1837; heads of families eligible for 1280 acres; single 640 acres
• Third Class headrights – issued between 1 October 1837 and 1 January 1840; heads of families eligible for 640 acres; single men 320 acres
• Fourth Class Headrights – issued between 1 January 1840 and 1 January 1842

Federal Land States
• Federal government not the state would dispose of land
• Occurred during westward expansion
• Surveyed rectangular townships in six-mile squares
• Land offices in the area would dispose of the land
• Legally registered land claims and military bounty land could be sold before patent
• Land was surveyed

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) General Land Office (GLO)
• Broke land into Townships, Sections, Ranges
• A tract is 24 miles square
• Each tract divided into a 16 townships (6 miles square)
• Each township into 32 sections (1 mile square or 640 miles)
  • Could purchase part of a section (1/4 of the NW section 12)

HistoryGeo
• Early Landowners Project
• Antique Maps
• Good support
  • www.historygeo.com/v2/support/help/php

Genealogical Purposes
• Addition to Vital Records
• “Recitals” in the deeds
• Records mentioning maiden name
• Records mentioning relationships of ancestors or siblings
• Miscellaneous information in the packet or record
• Land descriptions = FAN (friends, associates, neighbors)

Resources

Book: *Land & Property Research* in the United States by E. Wade Hone
Bureau of Land Management (https://glorecords.blm.gov)
FamilySearch (https://familysearch.org)
HistoryGeo (https://www.historygeo.com)
Texas Land Records (https://www.glo.texas.gov/)