

# Accessing Land Records Online

## 1. What questions can land records answer?

- Did your ancestors own property?
- Was the transaction between family members? Did relatives witness the signatures?
- Did a wife renounce her dower rights or a husband his curtesy rights?
- Who are the heirs?

## 2. What new terms will I need to know?

- **Deeds** – Written Documents that transfer ownership of real property from one entity to another.
- **Grantors** – the owners of a property who will transfer , convey or sell their rights to a new entity (the sellers)
- **Grantees** – the people who receive the property (the buyers)
- **Registry of Deeds, County Records Office, Hall of Records, County Clerk’s Office** – names of repositories where land records are kept

## 3. What are the functions of a Registry or Land Records Office or website?

	On a Basic Website	On a Better Website	On the Best Websites
Contact Info	X	X	x
Times Open	X	X	x
Index – All Types of Docs		Deeds only	x
Index –All Years		Some years beginning with the present	All years since founding of county
View Original Document		X	x
Print Original Doc for Money		X	
Print Original Document Free			x

- Any repository of land records should allow the public to search all of its records, view the records and then get copies; in short, search, view and print.

#### 4. What site/s meets most of the criteria?

One of the land record websites that meets almost all of the criteria for the “Best Sites” is the Bureau of Land Management Site, [www.glorerecords.blm.gov](http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov) . It lets you search, view and print free copies of the first patent between the U.S. government and a private owner. About two-thirds of the patents issued are available on the site now. Here is some background originally published on my blog, S.well Genealogy at [www.susansgeni.blogspot.com](http://www.susansgeni.blogspot.com):

A land patent is the first deed granting federal land to a private person, company or local government. The federal government received land in 1783 after the Revolution when Britain ceded all lands south of the Great Lakes and east of the Mississippi River to the fledgling country. In 1785, a land ordinance passed authorizing the sale of public lands and establishing the Public Land Survey System to measure and identify the property.

The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 almost doubled the size of the country, all of this land owned by the federal government. In 1812, the General Land Office (GLO) was created to oversee the disposition of ceded and acquired land, first as part of the Treasury and since 1849, as part of the Department of the Interior.

You can find details of the land patents at [www.glorerecords.blm.gov](http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov). Four types of documents are described on the home page. The first two are of most interest to genealogists – land patents, and survey plats and field notes. There were about 7,500,000 land patents issued and about 5,000,000 are now searchable at this site. Like all land records, they put people in a specific place at a specific time.

Click the “Search Documents” button on top of the home page. Select a state from the drop down menu. You must add one more criteria. Most likely a surname or a county name are the two most commonly used ones. Then click the “Search Patents” button. For example, I chose the State of Ohio and the surname, “Starr.” The first page of the results is below:

Image	Accession	Names †	Date	Doc #	State	Meridian	Twp - Rng	Aliquots	Sec. #	County
	<a href="#">CV-0055-238</a>	 BECK, JOHN,  STARR, MOSES	5/23/1822	0	OH	Ohio River Survey	006N - 005W	NW¼	27	Belmont
	<a href="#">CV-0017-245</a>	 EIKMAN, JOHN,  JOHNSON, HENRY,  STARR, BARNET	12/16/1812	0	OH	West of the Greater Miami	007N - 003E	SW¼	23	Preble
	<a href="#">MW-0783-036</a>	 MCFARLAND, JAMES E,  STARR, DAVID	5/10/1854	47291	OH	1st PM	005S - 005E	SW¼SE¼	17	Auglaize
	<a href="#">CV-0034-211</a>	 STARR, ADAM	6/2/1817	0	OH	West of the Greater Miami	008N - 001E	NW¼	23	Preble
	<a href="#">OH1260_439</a>	 STARR, ADAM	6/25/1841	9475	OH	Ohio River Survey	008N - 018W	NW¼SW¼	30	Jackson
	<a href="#">OH1170_205</a>	 STARR, ANDREW	8/1/1837	4815	OH	Ohio River Survey	008N - 018W	SW¼SW¼	29	Jackson
	<a href="#">OH1180_257</a>	 STARR, ANDREW	8/5/1837	5375	OH	Ohio River Survey	008N - 019W	SW¼SE¼	24	Jackson
	<a href="#">OH1210_244</a>	 STARR, ANDREW	7/28/1838	6872	OH	Ohio River Survey	008N - 018W	NW¼SE¼	30	Jackson
	<a href="#">OH1240_227</a>	 STARR, ANDREW	8/1/1839	8359	OH	Ohio River Survey	008N - 018W	NW¼NW¼	32	Jackson

To see the original document, click on the blue items in column two. The third from the top is a Military Warrant for David Starr, a veteran of the War of 1812, who transfers his rights to the forty acres to James McFarland.

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## 5. How do I find sites for regular deeds?

- Go directly to the county where your ancestors lived, if you know that information. You certainly can Google “Hamilton County Ohio land records” first.
- You might want to look for a ‘directory’ site. Here all the counties of a state are listed and you can click the link to go directly to the county and you have the added feature of a map of the state that you can click to go to the county of your choice. The map will give you the name of the abutting counties and possibly the date the county was founded. I recommend using this type of site the first time you research in a state.

Google: \_\_\_\_\_ land records or deeds – put the state’s name in the blank.

For example: “Ohio land records” or “Ohio deeds”

From the list of results, choose either:

[www.ohiorecorders.com](http://www.ohiorecorders.com) or [www.publicrecords.onlinesearches.com/Ohio-Land-Records-and-Deeds.htm](http://www.publicrecords.onlinesearches.com/Ohio-Land-Records-and-Deeds.htm)

[www.ohiorecorders.com](http://www.ohiorecorders.com)

- a. Scroll to map of state or click on ‘ large map’ in left column

- i. Color coded with some basic information about each Recorder's Office
- ii. Click on 'Hamilton County'
  - a. On 'Hamilton County' home page click on top right red button 'Click here to search for documents'
  - b. It may take you a few minutes to discover that only documents recorded after 1988 are indexed here, so far.
  - c. Return to Home Page and in the left column click on 'Directory for Series Books.' Here is the information on ownership from 1789 onwards.

[www.publicrecords.onlinesearches.com/Ohio-Land-Records-and-Deeds.htm](http://www.publicrecords.onlinesearches.com/Ohio-Land-Records-and-Deeds.htm)

- a. commercial site
- b. gives land resources other than Recorder's Offices
- c. Check 'Home Page' for all states and other types of documents

[www.landaccess.com](http://www.landaccess.com) – commercial site serving many Ohio counties with its software

## 6. What are the differences between a commercial and a government site?

Example of commercial v. government

- [www.i2a.uslandrecords.com/ME](http://www.i2a.uslandrecords.com/ME) – Commercial website
- [www.maineregistryofdeeds.com](http://www.maineregistryofdeeds.com) - Website of the Maine Registers of Deeds Association

## 7. Other state directory sites?

- [www.masslandrecords.com](http://www.masslandrecords.com) – Massachusetts
  - Click on a county name or on the map
- [www.sclandrecords.com](http://www.sclandrecords.com) – South Carolina

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