

Land and Property: Somerset County & PA

There are volumes of records relating to land and property transactions in Pennsylvania. The state land office was established by William Penn in 1682. Original deeds and patents were recorded by this office. The state land office is now called the Bureau of Land Records. Most of these records are located in the State Archives.

Somerset County Recorder of Deeds
111 E. Union Street
Somerset, PA 15501-1416
Tel. (814) 445-1547

Pennsylvania's Land settlements:

Before William Penn, (pre 1682)
William Penn and his heirs, (1682-1776)
The Commonwealth, (1776-)

Before William Penn (pre 1682)

In the period before the grant to William Penn, Sweden, the Netherlands, and England established settlements along the Delaware River in what is now Chester County, PA. Land records during this period will be kept in the State Archives of New York and Delaware.

William Penn and His Heirs (1682-1776)

In 1681, William Penn received a charter from King Charles II declaring him absolute owner of the land of what is now Pennsylvania. As such, he had the authority to dispose of the land with little restriction. He recognized claims to the land held by the Native Americans and maintained a policy of purchasing land from them before selling land for settlement. This same policy was mostly adhered to by his descendants. William Penn also purchased the land of what is now Delaware and distributed this with his sons during this same period.

This proprietorship lasted nearly 100 years and produced volumes of paperwork. However, many settlers settled on the land without proper title and this cause disputes with the Indians. The proprietor attempted to solve much of these concerns and tried to obtain rights to the land. The Revolutionary War brought an end to the proprietorship.

The Commonwealth (1776-)

With the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, Pennsylvania found itself owner of all the unsold land. The proprietorship process of land distribution continued for many years after the war.

The Title Application Process and Distribution of the Land:

APPLICATION: Under William Penn, oral requests to purchase land were made. Under his heirs, written requests were required.

WARRANT: This is a written order, based on application, to survey the requested tract of land.

SURVEY: A surveyor physically measured and marked the land on it's premises.

RETURN OF SURVEY: A statement verifying that the survey is complete. It included a diagram of the land and a written description of the property.

PATENT: A written first title to the property conveying ownership to the individual named on the application.

Military Bounty Lands

The state awarded some lands for military service. Certificates of depreciation were issued to Revolutionary war soldiers to supplement the money they received. These certificates were sold or redeemed for land in the Last Purchase treaty area in western Pennsylvania in 1784.

Eligible veterans drew lots for a piece of land and then paid a fee to receive their certificate. Most soldiers sold their certificates rather than settling on the land.

Land Records: Family Search

Warrantees of land in the several counties of the state of Pennsylvania, 1730-1898

William H Engle : Three Books, [Please use this Link: FS Catalog](#) [Log into your Account first] [Film # [824436] There are also records in the PA Archive Series, use the same film #.

A search for Somerset Land records in the FS Catalog produces a nice list of Resources. [Use this Link](#)

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