

Kentucky Land Patents

Land Records	Patent Series	Background
Virginia	Pre-1792	Before Kentucky statehood, the region was part of Virginia and land was distributed through warrants issued by the Virginia General Assembly. The Proclamation of 1763 granted land to soldiers for service in the French and Indian War and Lord Dunmore's War, and pioneers also began settling the area. In 1779, the Virginia General Assembly allowed settlers already on the land to obtain warrants and opened additional land to future settlers. After the Revolutionary War, soldiers received land warrants for their
Old Kentucky	1775-1881	
South of Green River	1795-1866	
Tellico	1803-1853	
KY Land Warrant	1815-1873	
South of Walker's Line	1829-1924	
West of TN River Military	1821-1828	
West of TN River Non-Military	1822-1900	
Warrant for Headrights Grants	1827-1849	
County Court Order	1835-Present	

service. Military grants from these three conflicts were the only ones officially honored, though most warrants were purchased.

Each step of the land patenting process had to be completed, as **warrants alone did not convey title**—only the **grant**, issued by the governor, did. Common types of warrants included:

- **Military Warrant:** For service in the French & Indian War, Lord Dunmore's War, or Revolutionary War.
- **Preemption Warrant (1000 acres):** For settlers in Kentucky County, VA, before Jan. 1, 1778, to purchase land adjoining settlement claims.
- **Preemption Warrant (400 acres):** Land Law of 1779; for settlers in Kentucky County, VA, Jan. 1, 1778 – May 1779.
- **Certificate of Settlement:** Allowed pre-1778 settlers to purchase 400 acres if land had improvements or crops.
- **Commissioner's Certificate:** Issued by local commissioners for age/residency; does not convey title; used in South of Green River Series.
- **Treasury/State Warrant:** Purchased from Virginia/Kentucky Land Offices; no service or residency required.
- **Headright Claims:** Warrants/certificates for age/residency-qualified individuals in South of Green River Series.

Access

To begin research, a researcher should first consult available indexes:

- **Kentucky Land Grants** by Jillson, a print resource available in the research room.
- **Microfilmed indexes**, organized by patent series or part of the patenting process.
- The **Kentucky Secretary of State Land Office Services Index:** <https://web.sos.ky.gov/land/>, provides digitized copies for most patent series.

The Kentucky land patent collection is organized into series based on warrant type, location, and date of the Governor's grant. Most patents were authorized by warrants purchased from the Virginia or Kentucky Land Offices or County Courts:

- **Virginia Series (pre-1792)** – 9,441 surveys
- **Old Kentucky Series (1792–1815)** – 7,668 surveys
 - Patents authorized by military, treasury, preemption, settlement, and other special warrants.
- **South of Green River Series (1795+)** – 16,664 surveys
 - Opened the Military District to non-veterans; applicants required age, residency, and improvements.
- **Tellico Series (southeast KY, 1805+)** – 590 surveys
 - Land purchased from the Cherokee; settlers could patent up to 200 acres after six months' residency.
- **Kentucky Land Warrant Series (1815+)** – 26,080 surveys
 - Warrants purchased or issued by the Kentucky Land Office; proceeds often funded infrastructure.
- **South of Walker's Line Series (1820+)** – 4,327 surveys
 - Located in northern Tennessee; records maintained by KY Land Office.
- **West of Tennessee River Military & Series (1821–1900)** – 9,550 surveys combined
 - Includes Jackson Purchase lands; auctions and veteran claims documented.
- **Headrights Grants Series (1827–1849)** – small subset of South of Green River Series.
- **County Court Order Series (1835–present)** – 70,238 surveys
 - County courts issued warrants for up to 200 acres annually; fees and procedures codified in state law.

Researchers can identify the series and access records through KDLA's **microfilm collections** or the **Secretary of State: Early Land Records binder** in the Research Room. For more information about records held at KDLA visit our website here: <https://kdla.ky.gov/> or call us at (502) 564-1770. For unavailable records, deed books, tax lists, or the Kentucky Secretary of State Land Office may provide additional information.

Other Sources

Consider any of the following institutions for more information when researching Land Records in Kentucky.

- **Kentucky Historical Society:** resources include printed biographies and family histories, access to unique genealogical materials including Bible records, surname collections, and cemetery and church records. *Contact: (502) 564-1792*
- **Regional Historical and Genealogical Groups:** valuable organizations for their familiarity with local history. Can find collections or records of local families, churches, or other institutions that can facilitate discovery of genealogical information.
- **Local Library:** often include a reference or special collection of local history or interest. Knowledgeable staff can direct research inquiries or lead to discoveries in local newspapers or records preserved as part of their collections.
- **Kentucky Secretary of State Land Office:** their website provides more in-depth information on Kentucky land records as well as digital scans of some Kentucky land records, searchable databases, and a glossary of terms related to the land patenting processes.