

Land records in Kentucky can offer invaluable insight into the mobility, location, welfare, and familial relationships of our state's past residents. This guide provides an overview of the methods land in Kentucky has been distributed and the records created documenting these transactions.

Kentucky Land Records

Land Patents / Grants, Deeds,
Tax Lists, and Wills

Created by Brynne Stevens (KDLA) / 2023

Contents

Kentucky Land Records.....	2
Introduction.....	2
Value:.....	4
Getting Started:.....	5
Land Patent Records	6
Virginia Series and Old Kentucky Series	7
South of Green River Series	8
Tellico Series	8
Kentucky Land Warrant Series.....	9
South of Walker's Line Series.....	9
West of Tennessee River Military Series.....	9
West of Tennessee River Series.....	9
Warrants for Headrights Grants Series	10
County Court Order Series.....	10
Land Patent Records Access:.....	12
Deeds:	13
Tax Lists.....	14
Wills.....	14
Additional Resources	15
Resources Used for the Guide.....	15
Resources for Further Research	15

Kentucky Land Records

The following guide provides an overview of the researching process for Kentucky land records. While not comprehensive, researchers can use this guide to better understand land records and how to research them.

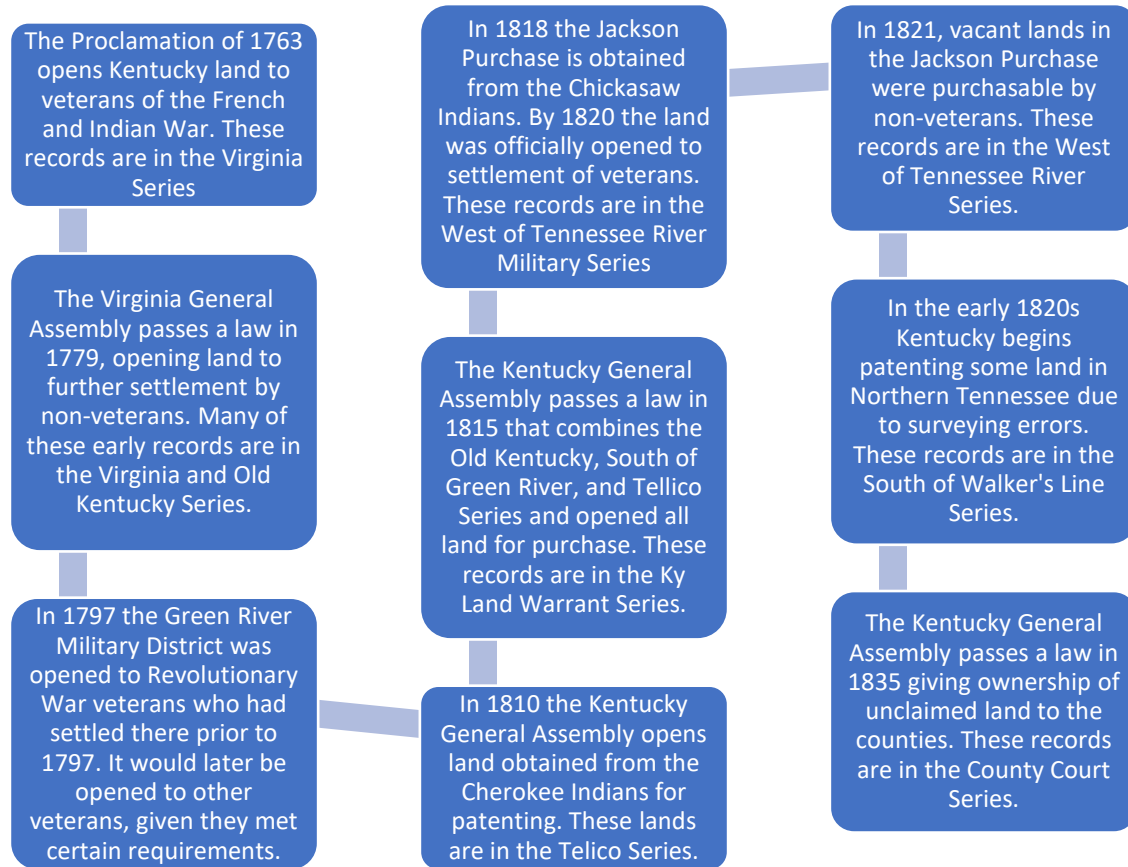
Introduction

Despite the residence of native peoples on Kentucky land before the arrival of Europeans, Kentucky land documents were not kept until Europeans began to move into the region. Prior to Kentucky statehood, Kentucky land was part of Virginia and was distributed through warrants given from the Virginia General Assembly. In the proclamation of 1763, King George III declared that soldiers of the French and Indian War would be paid in land. The Proclamation Line of 1763 was established with the intent that land on the east side of the line was for payment, while the left side was reserved for native peoples. However, this line was largely ignored, and many settlers went further west to claim land, including non-military settlers who did not have warrants (Adkinson, p. 1-4). When conflicts arose due to disputes over land, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation in 1779 that allowed those already on Kentucky land to claim it (Jillson, p. 3).

The land law of 1779 allowed those already settled in Kentucky prior to January 1, 1778, to obtain 400 acres of land. Settlers had to prove they had planted a crop of corn or lived on the land for at least a year. In addition to the 400 acres, settlers could purchase a preemption warrant for an additional 1,000 acres adjoining their settlement. Settlers could also purchase a 1000-acre preemption warrant if they had built a house or made other improvements to their settlement prior to January 1, 1778. Anyone who had settled in Kentucky after January 1, 1778, was allowed a 400-acre preemption warrant that included their settlement (Adkinson, p. 23).

Due to the large number of land disputes, four commissioners were appointed to a court to oversee the disputes and determine who rightfully owned a given piece of property. These commissioners were in Harrodsburg, Louisville, Bryant's Station, and Boonesborough (Jillson, p. 5).

Once Kentucky became a state, they continued to patent land in a process like Virginia's. Over the years, the Kentucky General Assembly passed legislation opening various areas of Kentucky for patenting. Certain areas of the state were set aside for a particular purpose. For instance, there was a military district set aside to pay veterans, though this district was later opened to non-veterans. Some of the land patented was land in Ohio and Tennessee. Below is a timeline depicting some important events for Kentucky land records.



(Hogan, p. 97, 104-106).

Early inheritance laws in Kentucky followed that of Virginia. Virginia inheritance law included that of entail and primogeniture. Entail occurred when an individual decided the line of inheritance for their estate. The entailing of an estate occurred prior to 1776. Following the practice of entailing an estate came the practice of primogenitor. This practice stipulated that an estate be divided into thirds, with the widow receiving one-third, her dower, and the eldest son receiving two-thirds. If an individual died intestate the eldest son received everything. A childless married woman would receive the full estate. (Hogan, p. 88)

Primogenitor was no longer required by law in any of the former colonies by 1811. In Kentucky, inheritance practices generally followed that of Virginia. Wives were typically left a dower of one-third of the estate with the rest given to the children or eldest son. In 1898 a statute passed allowing for either husband or wife to inherit half of the surplus of the deceased spouse's estate (Hogan, p. 88).

Deeds could be filed in any court in Kentucky, though many deeds were filed in the county court. A deed was not needed for land that was patented or for land left to a wife or children. Sometimes a will was the only documentation of property passing to another. Additionally, deeds leaving property to family members other than a spouse or children were not always recorded (Hogan, p. 110).

Tax records and how they were recorded changed several times during Kentucky's history. Each Kentucky county was divided into districts. Tax commissioners appointed to a given district were responsible for obtaining lists of taxables from the individuals within their assigned district.

- Prior to 1828: Taxes were recorded during military company musters, with tax commissioners assigned to a certain military company. The commissioners recorded taxes during musters in April and June. Anyone not attending the muster would have to turn in their tax records themselves.
- 1828: A tax commissioner would visit the homes of those in his district to record taxes.
- 1837: Individuals were required to submit a fixed sum of total worth under oath.
- 1863: Slaves were no longer included on the tax lists with all men over 21 being taxable after the abolition of slavery. Prior to the abolition of slavery, free blacks were included in their own column.
- 1874: The taxing district was changed to match the voting district. Everyone in the district was given a tax form for taxable estate real, personal, or mixed. Until this point, white records and those of blacks, mulattos, and Indians were recorded in separate books.
- 1892: Taxpayers in each district were given tax schedules created by the auditor of public accounts. Both the taxpayers and the commissioner assigned value to each item on the tax schedules with the taxpayer being notified of any higher value assigned by the tax commissioner. The districts, cities, and towns now had their own books in which tax records were recorded.

(Hogan, p. 111-112).

Using these records, one can research many different aspects of Kentucky and its residents. The following sections provide information on the value of these records and how to research them.

Value:

Kentucky Land Records are of value to the researcher interested in the following:

- **Genealogy:** Using Kentucky land records to track family histories is a common use of these records. Land records help researchers follow the settlement and movement of ancestors. They can also be used to trace family lines and provide general information about family.
- **History:** Kentucky land records can also be used to study the history of the state or individuals. Studying these records allows researchers to follow the development of settlement and residency in Kentucky through time. Additionally, they can be used to understand the history of individuals, families, or larger populations.
- **Law:** Kentucky land records are valuable for legal reasons as well. They can provide information on the transaction and ownership of land. There are many court cases in Kentucky's history, especially in the late 1700s and early 1800s, involving property disputes. Using these records, a researcher can track the ownership of land in

Kentucky, and they can also be used to understand legal property disputes of the past and present.

Getting Started:

Researching Kentucky land records can be complicated or simple depending on the amount of information a researcher has.

A basic piece of information needed is the name of the person whose land is being researched. Conducting research with only a name is possible depending on the record type, but it can be very difficult to find records. A general date range is often also required. Additional helpful information to begin research includes the warrant and/or survey number for the land, the county in which the land was/is located, and/or the dates of ownership. When it comes to county location, it is important to note that for counties which later split from a parent county, the land records will be kept in the county the land records were filed in originally, not a county that was later formed. What information a researcher has will determine the research methods used.

1. Determine the location, approximate dates, and type of records to be consulted:
 - To research Kentucky land records, a researcher needs the name of the owner and, typically, approximate dates of ownership. Secondly, a researcher needs to determine what type of land record they want to search for.
 - If a researcher wants to search for the earliest documents on a piece of land, they should focus on the land patent records (though in certain instances a researcher will need to work backwards from modern records to locate a land patent).
 - If a researcher is interested in later records on a piece of land they can consult deeds, wills, and tax records.
2. Consult any existing indexes:
 - There are indexes available for land patent records in the research room as well as online on the Secretary of State Land Office website. A researcher can search for only a name, but this will be time consuming as a researcher will have to search through multiple indexes. If a researcher has a date range, region, and/or warrant type, this will allow a researcher to narrow down which index to search in.
 - Deeds and wills have general indexes available or indexes available in individual books. To search through these indexes, a researcher should have a name and general time frame in which to search.
 - Tax lists do not have indexes and are instead organized into districts with names arranged alphabetically by name of the landowner.

3. Use the applicable indexes to find the correct record and page number:
 - Once a researcher determines in which book the record they are looking for is located, they should search in the Microfilm Guide in the Research Room to determine what microfilm roll the record can be located on. The Microfilm Guide is available in the research room in print and on computers. The computer guide includes patents, deeds, wills, and tax records. In print form the patents are in the *Early Land Records* binder while the deeds, wills, and tax records are in the county guides.

The records and methods of research specific to each record type are discussed in greater detail below.

Land Patent Records

In early Kentucky, a settler had to obtain land through a patent. The land patenting process in Kentucky was comprised of four parts. The following information was taken from the *Kentucky Land Records* presentation by Kandie Adkinson:

1. **Warrant:** These records authorized entries. Warrants typically include the type of warrant, warrant number, the date, name of the person receiving or purchasing the warrant, the amount of land the warrant is for, and assignees of the warrant if any. They could be assigned, used in whole or part, and did not convey title of the land. Warrants were issued as payment for military service in the French and Indian War or the Revolutionary War; purchased for settlement; or were purchased from the Land Office or County Courts. They were also issued for other purposes such as for seminaries/academies, poor persons, finding salt etc.
2. **Entries:** These records reserved land for surveying. Early entries for Kentucky, Fayette, Jefferson, Lincoln, are included in the land office records. Later entries were filed in the County Courts. Entries include the name of the person for whom the survey is being done, the location of land to be surveyed, filing date, and type(s) and number(s) of warrants being used. Entries could be withdrawn or amended.
3. **Surveys:** These records depict and describe the tract being patented. Surveys could be assigned. Surveys include the plat drawing, list of warrant(s) being used, name of person(s) for whom the survey is being made, county, closest watercourse, metes and bounds description, surveyor, deputy surveyor, chain carriers, housekeeper/pilot/director, marker, magnetic variation, and date of survey. It may also include the chain of ownership for the warrant if the warrant was sold or given away.
4. **Grants:** These records finalized the patenting process. The grant conveyed title of the land. The grant includes the name of the person(s) patenting the land, the name and signature of the Governor or Lt. Governor, warrant(s) and survey numbers, type of warrant(s) being used, county, nearest watercourse, metes and bounds description, date of issuance and the year of the Commonwealth (Virginia or Kentucky).

(Adkinson, p. 9-10, 13, 15).

Patenting land required all four parts to be completed. The warrant began the process and the grant completed it. The following are some of the common types of warrants issued and for what they were conveyed. These definitions were taken from the *Land Office Glossary* on the Secretary of State Land Office website:

1. Military warrant: Issued for service in the French and Indian War, Lord Dunmore's War, and the Revolutionary War.
2. Preemption Warrant (1000 acres): document allowing settlers in Kentucky County, VA, prior to January 1, 1778, to purchase 1000 acres adjoining certificate of settlement claims. Authorized many of the patents in the Virginia & Old Kentucky Series.
3. Preemption Warrant (400 acres): authorized by Land Law of 1779. May be purchased by settlers proving residency in Kentucky Co., VA between January 1, 1778, and May 1779. Authorized many of the patents in the Virginia & Old Kentucky Series.
4. Certificate of Settlement: document allowing settlers in Kentucky County, VA, prior to January 1, 1778, to purchase 400 acres if they had made improvements or planted a crop on the land they intended to patent. Authorized many of the patents in the Virginia & Old Kentucky Series.
5. Commissioner's Certificate: warrant issued by local commissioners to individuals meeting age & residency requirements. Does not convey title. Patents in the South of Green River Series are authorized by commissioners' certificates.
6. Treasury Warrant: syn: State Warrant. Purchased from Virginia or Kentucky Land Office; no military service or residency requirement necessary to purchase treasury warrants.
7. Headright Claims: term for warrants/certificates issued to persons meeting age & residency requirements under South of Green River Patent Series.

(Land Office Glossary. <https://web.sos.ky.gov/land/glossary.aspx>).

There are multiple patent series for Kentucky land records. The land patent records available at KDLA span from approximately 1774-1956. Listed below are descriptions of each series as well as what records in the patenting process are available for each. For more information, access the Microfilm Guide on the computers or the *Early Land Records* binder in the Research Room. KDLA does not have the warrants for most of the series listed. We also do not have complete records for other types of patent records. If some records for a given series are not available, contact the Kentucky Secretary of State Land Office at (502)-564-3490 or the Kentucky Historical Society at (502)-564-1792 for copies. Additionally, entries may be listed in the Microfilm Guide under the land warrants section or within a given county and in the *Early Land Records* binder.

Virginia Series and Old Kentucky Series

Virginia Series: (Grants issued prior to 1792) -- 9,441 surveys

Old Kentucky Series: (Grants issued from 1792-1815) -- 7,668 surveys

Patents in the Virginia and Old Kentucky Series were authorized by French and Indian War Warrants, Treasury Warrants, Importation Warrants, Acts for the Relief of Certain Poor Persons, Acts for the Establishment of Academies and Seminaries, Warrants for

Finding Salt, Warrants for Clearing Roads, Certificates of Settlement, and Preemption Warrants.

Records available at KDLA:

- Preemption Certificates 1-2738, dated 1779-1785
- Military Warrants, Volumes 1-4, 1782-1793
- Military Entries, Volume 1, 1784-1797
- May's Entries-Kentucky County, Volume 1-2 (pg. 1-75), 1779-1783
- May's Entries-Jefferson Entries, 1783-1784
- Jefferson Entries Books A, C, and D, 1779-1881 (Index available. Book B is at the Jefferson County Archives.)
- Fayette County Entry Book, 1783-1784
- Virginia Surveys 1-9441, dated 1774-1791 (Note: these rolls are organized numerically by survey number. Some of the surveys have the original warrant attached, however, the warrants are not in order.)
- Virginia Land Grants, Volumes 1-16, dated 1782-1792
- Old Kentucky Entries and Deeds-Lincoln County Entries, Volumes 1-2, dated 1779-1792
- Old Kentucky Entries and Deeds-Fayette County Entries Volumes 1-4, dated 1782-1817
- Old Kentucky Surveys 1-7668, Volumes 1-11, 1781-1841 (Note: these rolls are organized numerically by survey number. Some of the surveys have the original warrant attached, however, the warrants are not in order.)
- Old Kentucky Land Grants, Volumes 1-20, 1793-1856

South of Green River Series (Grants from 1795 forward) -- 16,664 surveys

This series opened the Military District to settlement by non-veterans. County commissioners approved the issuance of warrants/certificates to residents purchasing no more than 400 acres of unappropriated land. Applicants had to meet age and residency requirements and they had to have occupied the land one year prior to application. An improvement, such as a cabin or a crop, was also required. The original 1795 Act of the General Assembly required the applicants to be 21 years of age or older. The minimum age was lowered in 1798 to 18. Due to errors in patent series assignments, a number of patents in the South of Green River Series are located outside the region. Some are as far north as Pendleton County

Records available at KDLA:

- Surveys 1-16661, Volumes 1-18, undated
- Grants, Volumes 1-29, 1797-1866

Tellico Series (Grants in southeast Kentucky) -- 590 surveys

This area was purchased from the Cherokee Indians in 1805. Under the Act of 1810, settlers meeting the six-month residency requirement could patent up to 200 acres of land by paying \$40 per 100 acres. Due to errors in patent series assignments, a number of patents in the Tellico Series fall out of the Tellico Region.

Records available at KDLA:

- Warrants, 1801-1814
- Surveys, Volumes 1 and 2, undated
- Surveys, 1802-1817
- Grants, Volumes 1-2, 1803-1853

Kentucky Land Warrant Series (Grants from 1815 forward) -- 26,080 surveys

These warrants were purchased or issued by the Kentucky Land Office. Many were authorized by the General Assembly for the development of Kentucky's infrastructure, i.e., proceeds from warrant sales were used to build roads.

Records available at KDLA:

- Surveys Volumes A-R, 1-24872 (There are gaps in the numbers.), undated
- Grants Volumes A-R2, 1816-1873

South of Walker's Line Series (Grants from 1820 forward) -- 4,327 surveys

These patents are located in northern Tennessee. They generally run to the 36 degrees 30 minute parallel or the baseline of the Jackson Purchase. The Kentucky Land Office has patent records for the following Tennessee counties: Sumner, Smith, Robertson, Macon, Montgomery, Stewart, Jackson, Claiborne, Clay, Fentress, Pickett, Scott and Campbell.

Records available at KDLA:

- Surveys, Volume 1, 1-904, undated
- Grants, Volumes 1-8, 1825-1924

West of Tennessee River Military Series (Grants from 1821 to 1828) -- 242 surveys

This area was purchased from the Chickasaw Indians in 1818. A number of Revolutionary War soldiers occupied the land, known later as the Jackson Purchase, without having clear title. In 1820, the Kentucky General Assembly advised the veterans to immediately file for patents.

Kentucky Secretary of State Land Office has online database that can be searched by name, watercourse, warrant number, or patent number.

Records available at KDLA:

- Military Warrants, Volumes 1-4, 1782-1793
- Surveys 1-242, 1821-1826 (Includes warrants with some of the surveys)

West of Tennessee River Series (Grants from 1822 to 1900) -- 9,308 surveys

While the Revolutionary War veterans were patenting their land, the Jackson Purchase was being mapped in ranges, townships and sections by William Henderson. In 1821, the General Assembly authorized the auctioning of "odd sections" in the West of Tennessee River area. Sales would be held in Princeton. Upon presentation of a receipt, the Register issued a certificate authorizing the grant. In 1825, public sales were authorized in

Waidborough in Calloway County. The state set a minimum price per acre for the land sales. By 1835, that price had been reduced to 12.5 cents per acre.

Records available at KDLA:

- Original Receiver's Office Certificates Volumes 1-8, 1-9,308
- Land Grants Volume 1-11, dated 1822-1900

Warrants for Headrights Grants Series (Grants from 1827-1849)

These are a small group of warrants thought to be a part of the South of Green River Series.

Records available at KDLA:

- Grants, Volume 1, 1827-1849
- Surveys 1-4, Volume 1, undated

County Court Order Series (Grants from 1835 to present date) -- 70,238 surveys.

In 1835, the General Assembly granted county courts the right to issue warrants authorizing surveys. Fees are set locally, however, the law requires a minimum of \$5 per 100 acres of unappropriated land. An individual may apply for a maximum of 200 acres per year. The County Court Order Patent Series is codified in Chapter 56 of the Kentucky Revised Statutes.

Records available at KDLA:

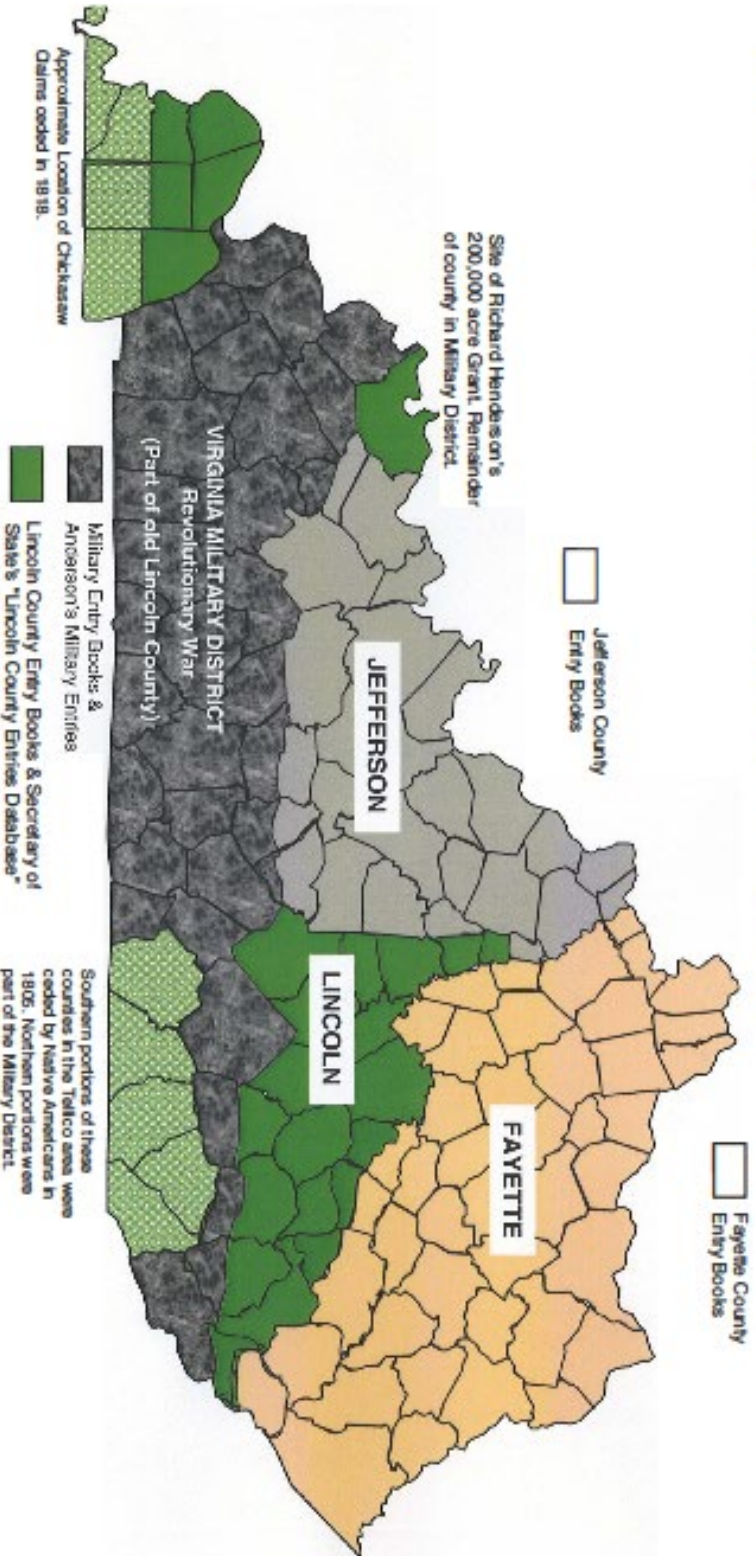
- Surveys 1-702, 3323-5468, 4327-5605, Volumes 1, 4, 5, undated
- Grants, Volumes 1-126, dated 1836-1956

Other Records:

Land Commissioners Book dated 1779-1780: This book was created by the commissioners appointed to oversee land disputes. The records document disputes brought before them and include information on the land disputed, the validity of the claim, and whether the individual was granted a warrant for the land and/or a certificate.

On the next page is a map displaying the original three counties in Kentucky as well as some of the important regions for Kentucky land patents. This map was taken from page 12 of a presentation given by Kandie Adkinson in July 2022.

APPROXIMATE LOCATIONS OF KENTUCKY'S ORIGINAL COUNTIES: 1780 and Resources for Researching Early Kentucky Surveyors' Entry Books



- Filing an Entry with the County Surveyor was the second step in the land patenting process. The Entry description reserved land for the Field Survey. Entries could be surveyed, amended, or withdrawn.
- Due to formation & boundary lines, some counties originated from a combination of the original 3 counties. Access county formation dates for further information.
- Entries for Jefferson, Lincoln, Fayette, & the Military District (excluding Anderson's Entries) are listed in "Old Kentucky Entries & Deeds" by W. Ward R. Jeter.
- Many Kentucky County, Virginia, Entries are included in the front pages of the Jefferson County Entry Books. To research Fincastle County Entries & Surveys and Kentucky County Entries & Surveys, access "Early Kentucky Land Records" by Neal O. Harmon

Land Patent Records Access:

To access these records, a researcher can use multiple methods. Each of the series listed above have an alphabetical index by grantee name that includes the number of acres granted, the survey number, the grant book and page number, the date of the survey, the county, and the watercourse. These indexes can be found in volumes one and two of *Kentucky Land Grants* by Jillson in the Research Room. There are other print indexes available in the Research Room that are listed in the resources list at the end of this guide. Some of the series have indexes on microfilm as well. Additionally, the Kentucky Secretary of State Land Office website has searchable databases for the following:

- Virginia and Old Kentucky Patent Series
- West of Tennessee River Non-Military Patents Series
- West of Tennessee River Military Patents Series
- County Court Orders Series
- Revolutionary War Warrants
- Early Certificates of Settlement and Preemption Warrants
- Virginia Treasury Warrants
- Lincoln County entries
- Jackson Purchase.

If a researcher has a name and/or patent information, they can use these indexes and databases to search for an individual's property. Some of the databases have digital scans of the patent records.

Once a researcher finds the individual they are looking for in the indexes, they can use the grant book and page number given to locate the grant. Using the grant, they should be able to find the other records. Each subsequent record in the patenting process, except for the entry, lists the number of the document that preceded it. Meaning that the grant will provide the survey number and the survey will provide the warrant number. Some grants will list both the warrant and survey numbers. The survey number can be listed within the text of the grant or the margins. Sometimes the grant number matches the survey number. If there are entry books for the county the land is in, a researcher can search for the entry as well. The *Early Kentucky Land Records* binder is divided up into sections for each series. Within each series, the grant books and surveys are listed along with the microfilm roll numbers on which to find them. There are limited warrants available at KDLA. Most warrants will be at the Kentucky Land Office.

The warrant does not mention the location of the actual land patented, and a warrant could be sold or left to someone other than the original owner of the warrant. Assignees were individuals to whom a warrant was sold or given. As a result, the warrant is usually not a fruitful starting point for researching land records. It can, however, give clues on where to search for the entry, survey, and grant. For instance, the type of warrant and date may allow a researcher to narrow down which series index to look in. Additionally, any assignees of the warrant should be written on the warrant. This will inform the researcher that they need to look in the indexes for the final assignee name rather than the original owner of the warrant. The grant and survey usually mention any assignees, allowing a researcher to have further context for the warrant if they do not have it.

In instances where a researcher does not want to look through all the series indexes or they were unable to locate information in the indexes, another option is tracing the chain of ownership for land through deeds, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Deeds:

Deed records are another record type that can be used to search for Kentucky land records. Deeds conveyed ownership either through purchase or inheritance. These records typically include dates, the names of the grantor and grantee, a description of the assets being deeded, signatures, and the certification of the county clerk.

Deeds can provide information on property, location, spouses, descendants, and estates. In addition, deeds can provide information on slaves. Deeds could be filed in various courts including County Courts, Circuit Courts, District Courts, and Courts of Quarter Sessions, though they were primarily filed in the County Courts. In addition to general deeds there are also commissioner's or sheriff's deeds and proccessioner's deeds. Commissioners and sheriffs created and enacted deeds by order of the court when there were issues with an estate, there was no one to create a deed, or there were delinquent taxes, mortgage forfeitures, etc. Proccessioner's deeds typically involved an estate settlement or property dispute (Hogan, p. 90, 110-111). Kentucky deed records at KDLA are available from approximately 1781-2018.

To begin researching deed records, a researcher needs to know the county, year or general time frame, and the name(s) of the grantor and/or grantee. Deeds are organized by county or city, type, and year. Commissioner's and sheriff's deeds may be in their own books or interfiled with regular deeds. Most counties have grantor and grantee indexes for their deed books either independent of the books or included within individual books. Researchers should check both grantor and grantee indexes when searching for a deed. While searching for the surnames of the grantor and grantee is the first step, a researcher might also try searching in "H" for heirs, "C" for commissioner, and "S" for sheriff (Hogan, p. 110). The index will provide the deed book and page number for the deed.

While most deed records will be on the county level, there are also Court of Appeals deed records. In these cases, disputes over property went all the way to the Court of Appeals to be settled and most often had to do with estate settlements and out-of-state residents (Land Office Glossary. <https://web.sos.ky.gov/land/glossary.aspx>). These records are available from 1796-1835 and are also indexed. The Court of Appeals deeds and microfilm roll numbers can be found in the *Early Land Records* binder.

Deeds can provide information about the chain of ownership of a piece of property. In instances where a researcher does not know the names of the grantor or grantee, specific dates, or cannot begin researching land from the original patent records, another method of research is to work in reverse order from modern deeds. Starting in 1890 it was common for land deeds to reference the previous deed in the chain of ownership. This allows for researchers to follow deeds in reverse order. For deeds prior to 1890, researchers can use the names of the seller and search for the name in grantee indexes in applicable counties for the deed in which the property was previously

sold. Once a researcher finds the earliest deed in the chain of ownership, the deed will typically provide the patent information for the property and allow a researcher to locate those original records. Additionally, tax records can also be consulted to help in searching for deeds.

Tax Lists

Tax records can provide valuable information for the land researching process. These records provide information on the property owned by individuals within a given county. Using these records, a researcher can determine the amount of land a person owned; the value of the property; close waterways; who the land was entered, surveyed, and patented for; and other information (Hogan, p. 114). Tax records for Kentucky are available at KDLA from approximately the 1780s-2000s.

To find tax records for an individual, a researcher will need to know the county where the land was located and an approximate date for when they owned the property. Additionally, it is helpful to know what district the land was in, as tax lists are often organized into districts within a county. Within a county or district, individuals are typically listed alphabetically.

When researching land records, a researcher can use tax lists to determine who owned a piece of property at a given time. For example, if a researcher tracking property back through deeds finds they cannot find the previous deed in the chain of ownership, they can use tax records to determine at what time the person purchased the land and narrow down the search. Clerks began referencing previous deeds related to a given piece of property starting approximately in the 1890s. Prior to those years, tax records can be used to fill in gaps between deeds.

Wills

Another potential resource when researching land records are wills. Land could be passed to family or others through a will rather than a deed. Looking at an individual's will can provide information about what happened to their property if no deed was filed. Wills include the date, description of property and assets, names of the individuals receiving the property and assets, name of executor or administrator of the estate, signatures, and the certification of the county clerk.

To find a will, one needs to know the county where the individual died and the approximate date of death. Most counties will have indexes either independent of will books or within individual will books that can be searched for the name of the deceased. These indexes will provide the book and page number where the will can be found. Will records in Kentucky are available from approximately the 1780s-early 2000s.

When researching Kentucky land records wills, like deeds, can be used to track the ownership of a given piece of land. If a researcher cannot find the next deed in a chain of ownership, they can look for the will of the person who owned the property in the deed they have. If the will provides

information on who was given the property, the researcher can then use the name of the receiver and continue to track the property through deeds or wills. Additionally, wills will sometimes provide information on who previously owned property and can help in the reverse order search for land records, though it does not happen often.

Additional Resources

Resources Used for the Guide

- Adkinson, Kandie. *Kentucky Land Records: A Valuable Resource for Tracing Family History and the History of the Commonwealth*. Presented at the Annual Kentucky Archives Institute, July 15, 2022.
- Hogan, Roseann Reinemuth Hogan. *Kentucky Ancestry: A Guide to Genealogical and Historical Research*. Ancestry, 1992.
- Jillson, Willard Rose. *The Kentucky Land Grants: A Systematic Index to All of the Land Grants Recorded in the State Land Office at Frankfort, Kentucky, 1782-1924*. Genealogical Publishing Co. Inc., Baltimore, 1971.
- Kentucky Secretary of State Land Office. *Land Office Glossary*. <https://web.sos.ky.gov/land/glossary.aspx>, undated.

Resources for Further Research

- **Kentucky Historical Society:** resources include some of the Kentucky Land Office patent records, including indexes. Other 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*
- **Kentucky Secretary of State Land Office:** has original land patent records of which copies can be requested. Patent records that KDLA does not have are likely to be at the Land Office. Additionally, 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.
- **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.

- ***Early Kentucky Land Records, 1773-1780* by Neal O. Hammon:** This book, available in the Research Room, provides indexes for Fincastle County entries and surveys; Kentucky County entries; commissioners' records; and military surveys.
- ***The Kentucky Land Grants: A Systematic Index to All of the Land Grants Recorded in the State Land Office at Frankfort, Kentucky, 1782-1924* by Willard Rouse Jillson:** This index, available in the Research Room, provides indexes to all the land patent series.
- ***Old Kentucky Entries and Deeds* by Willard Rouse Jillson:** This book, available in the Research Room, provides indexes to Lincoln, Fayette, and Jefferson County entries, military warrants, and Court of Appeals grantor and grantee deeds.
- **U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records website:** This website provides scanned images of land records for warrants issued by the federal government. The United States passed various laws allowing for public domain lands to be given to veterans through warrants. Some Kentucky residents were given warrants for these lands, however, they could not be used in Kentucky, as Kentucky was not a public domain state. As result, many of these warrants were sold.