

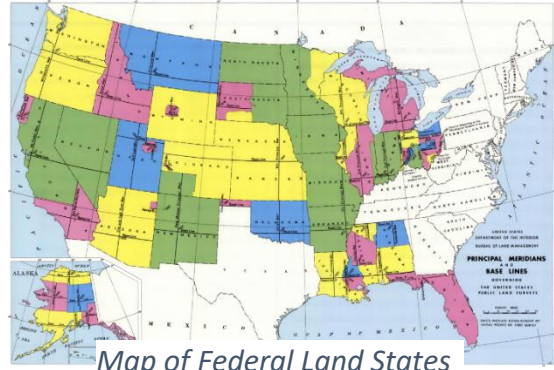
First Landowners: Using Federal Land Records, Family Maps, and Historygeo.com

Presenter: Jacob Eubanks, MLS
Assistant Manager

History & Genealogy, St. Louis County Library

WWW.SLCL.ORG/GENEALOGY

Jeubanks@SLCL.org



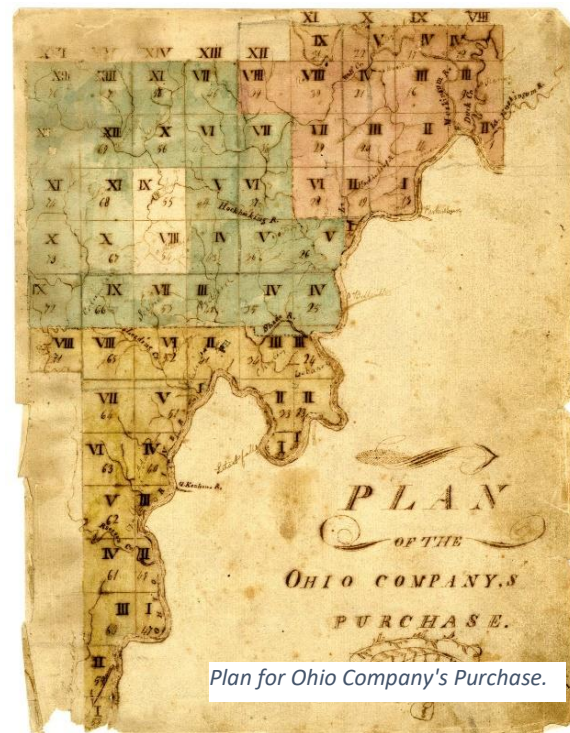
Land Transactions are a key source when conducting genealogical research. The desire to own land directly fed westward migration and was the key reason many individuals moved west onto the American frontier. The process of first land patent (or warrant) generated unique records, which often reveals significant evidence of those who patented or warranted their lands. For the purposes of this talk, we will look at the 30 federal public land states – also referred to as Public Land States or Public Domain States (see map). States not covered include those formed from the 13 colonies, Texas, and Hawaii. Some areas of Federal Public Land States do not adhere to this system – such as French and Spanish Land Grants in Missouri or the Virginia Military Tract in Ohio. In some states, such as Tennessee, a version of this survey system was used in the western portion of the state.

Federal Land System

The Land Ordinance of 1785 established rules for the orderly survey, sale, and settlement of Public Domain Lands. These rules divided land into 6-mile square townships, which were divided into 36 square townships, arranged in north – south rows – called ranges. Each township and range were numbered in consecutive sequence and based on an east-west base line. Section numbering would begin in the southeast corner of the township and move up each range (see right).

The first use of this system corresponded with the Ohio Company Purchase of 1787 in Southeast Ohio. The first base-line began where the North bank of the Ohio River touched Pennsylvania.

In 1796, the section numbering sequence was changed, beginning in the northeast corner and



moving west across each range – the last number being in the southwest corner of each township. In 1804, it was determined how to achieve accurate 6-mile squares despite a curved earth. A principal meridian became the north-south line for initiating a survey. The first meridian divided Indiana from Ohio. In 1812, Congress established the General Land Office (in 1946, it became the Bureau of Land Management) which was responsible for managing the sell and distribution of Land Patents and Bounty Warrants.

Warrants and Patents

Under the Federal Land System, two types of land title were issued: the Land Patent and the Bounty Warrant.

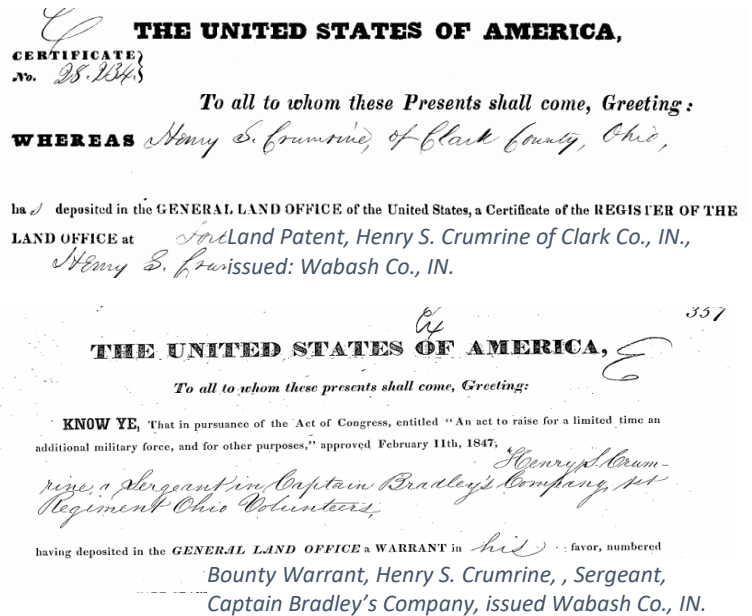
- Land Patents – were purchased direct from the General Land Office.
- Bounty Warrants – were issued as an enticement for service during the Revolution, War of 1812, various Indian Wars, and the Mexican-American War.



Records of both the Land Patents and the Bounty Warrants are available online from <https://gloreCORDS.blm.gov/>.

Key Evidence:

- Bounty Warrants and Land Patents give us potential dates of settlement.
- Bounty Warrants provide us with information regarding service of individual.
- Land Patents often provide evidence of previous location of settlement.



Family Maps and HistoryGeo.Com

Arphax Publishing has produced a FamilyMap Book series covering counties in 29 of the 30 federal public land states (excludes Alaska). The Arphax website (www.arphax.com) has a detailed listing of which counties are currently available in book format.

Historygeo.com is also a product of Arphax Publishing - the "First Landowner Project" includes first landowner information in the same 29 federal public land states. All data exists here, whether a published print book exists.



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First Landowners Project
Displays original landowners of the continental United States according to state and federal records. At present it covers 21 states and contains over 9 million records.



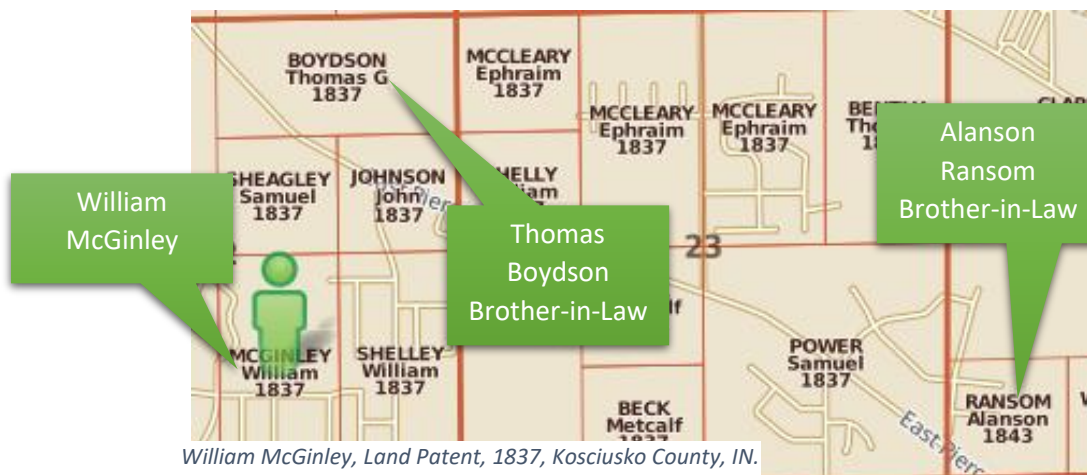
Antique Maps Collection
Our ever-expanding collection of antique maps and atlases.

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Cluster Research with FamilyMaps and HistoryGeo

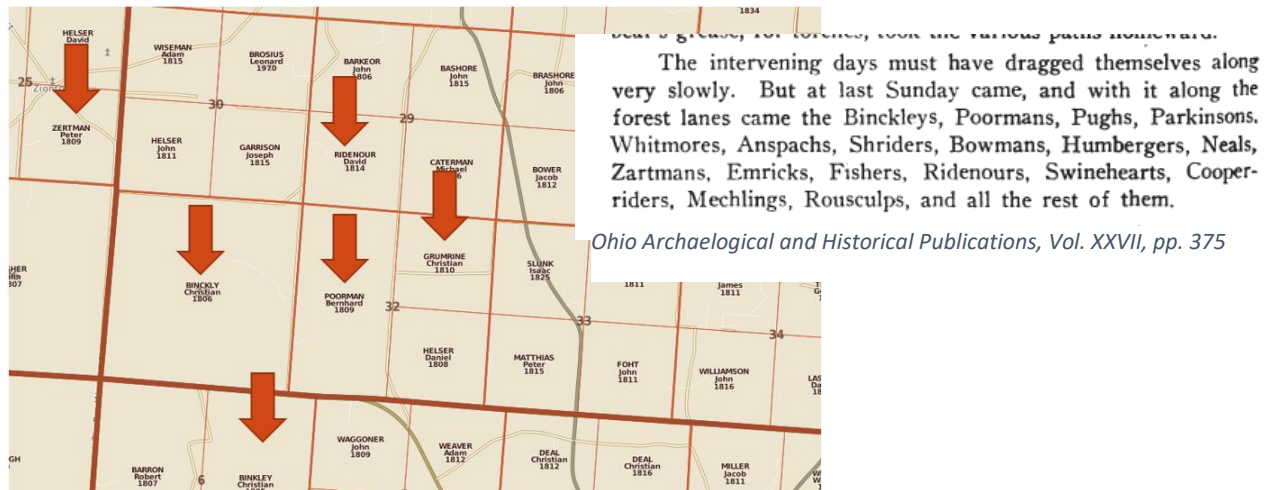
The FamilyMaps and HistoryGeo present a unique opportunity for the researcher. Like plat maps and Atlases, these First Landowners Maps display the neighboring community in a way no other sources presently can. Seeing these names (and dates of ownership) mapped out can have significant value for Cluster or Collateral Research.

What is Cluster Research? A "cluster" is all pertinent individuals who could have some relationship with the individual you are researching. The FamilyMaps not only help us to identify family or neighbors, but the dates of settlement can be used to identify potential associates.



Historygeo and the Familymap Books can help you to resolve very complicated queries – such as identifying a female ancestor's family or resolving a common surname. Pay close attention to proximity – use the eight-mile rule. Individuals living within eight miles of one another are more likely to interact with one-another than those beyond.

Pair your use of the maps with other resources like Local Histories or Regional Periodicals. Lists of Early Settlers or Congregants of a particular church are all potential members of a cluster. Tax Lists or Voters Registrations are also wonderful lists of names that can be consulted against the Family Maps or History Geo.



Land Terms

Land patent — first deed for private ownership of property. A land patent records the first sale or transfer of land ownership from a government to a private owner.

Patentee — original or first private owner of land

Warrantee – original or first private owner of land received through military bounty

Rectangular Survey System — a survey system which describes parcels of land with the terms section, township, and range.

For Further Study:

Gates, Paul W. *History of Public Land Law Development*. 1968. Reprint. Holmes Beach, Florida: Wm. W. Gaunt & Sons, Inc. 1987.

Dyer, Albion Morris. *First Ownership of Ohio Lands*. 1911. Reprint. Baltimore, Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc. 1982.

Hatcher, Patricia Law. *Locating Your Roots: Discover Your Ancestors Using Land Records*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Betterway Books, 2003.

Hone, E. Wade. *Land & Property Research in the United States*. Salt Lake City, Utah. Ancestry Publishing Co., 1997.

Kvasnicka, Robert M. *The Trans-Mississippi West 1804-1912, Part IV: Records of the General Land Office*. National Archives and Records Administration, 2007.