

Land Records for Genealogical Research in South Dakota

Virginia Hanson, Archivist
South Dakota State Archives
SD State Historical Society
900 Governors Drive
Pierre SD 57501-2217

NARA - National Archives and Records Administration
has only records for the “public land” states:

- The 30 public land states are all those excluding: 13 original colonies plus Maine, Vermont, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Texas and Hawaii.
- Records for those 20 “state land” states (never part of the public domain) are not at NARA. You have to check state level records.

BLM Bureau of Land Management
GLO General Land Office

Rectangular Survey System Some of the original surveys in Eastern Dakota Territory, occurred about 1855 thru 1860. Resurveys continue thru today.

East-West line	six miles apart
North-South line	six miles apart

Plat Maps

Townships (six miles square)

Named by location relative to the initial point, in this area an example is

T117N R79W Black Hills Meridian

Sections (one square mile; 640 acres) each section numbered in order snaking thru from NE corner

Legal land description

The “name” of the land parcel, including all of its subdivisions, from the smallest to the largest.

Example: Northwest quarter of Section 7, Township 3 North,
Range 4 West, 2nd Principal Meridian

Applications/Registrations for Homesteads District Land Office

Run by a register (who recorded entries)

A receiver (who handled the money)

They hired surveyors

Sold land

Recorded transactions,

Issued ‘final certificates’ when all requirements were met and patent could be issued

Sent records to GLO headquarters (General Land Office)

General Land Entry Case Files

Credit sales, 1800-1820

Section of land available for a 5 year period before it needs to be paid in full

Cash sales, 1820

Preemptions, early 1800s-1841 (recorded as cash sales)

Donation, 1842, 1850

Mineral, Timber culture, Desert Land Sales 1860s-70s

Homesteads, 1862 Homestead Act (commuted homesteads are records as cash sales)

Bounty Land Warrants

Revolutionary War, War of 1912, Mexican War of 1847, Indian Wars,
Indian Removal and other conflicts 1850's

Commutation to cash (to preemption)

Canceled homestead

60% never patented, land resold for homestead.

Southern homestead

Implementation

5 years or 7 years with extension, \$10 initial filing fee, \$4 application
\$4 proving up or final proof fee (circa 1880's)

Case files

Typical records to be found of genealogical value

Application and Final Proof Documents, Testimonies of witnesses,,
Naturalization papers, Marriage papers, Affidavits, Depositions, Plats,
Surveys, description of buildings, amounts paid, location of patent, age,
post office address, residency dates, members of family, citizenship proof,
port of arrival affidavit, land use ie crops

All case files do not contain all of the above. Information depends on the time
period, laws, and local custom.

Sources:

Web page for homestead land location index

<http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/PatentSearch/>

For more on surveys and legal land description, see

<http://www.lsi.blm.gov/>

Research in the Land Entry Files of the General Land Office, Record Group 49

<http://www.archives.gov/publications/general-info-leaflets/67.html>

Pierre Daily Capitol Journal, February 18, 1899, Film no 8067, SD State Archives

Forests City Press, July 9, 1887, Film no 614, SD State Archives

Dakota Index, Forest City, June 17, 1885, Film no 614

Familytree.com / Ancestry Library Edition

A Short Treatise on Titles and Transfers by J. M. Miles, 1913

Researching A Historic Property, National Register Bulletin, Eleanor O'Donnell, 1998

Centennial Atlas, Misc Counties, Sentinel Fund, PO Box 1452, Watertown, SD 57201

Thanks to Claire Mire Bettag of the National Archives for the NARA source facts.

Research sources for land records

Maps and Plats

Sanborn Fire Insurance

Fire Underwriters Insurance Maps

Wills, Probate Records

Estate Records

Personal Family Papers

State Census Records

Federal Census Records

Agricultural Census

County Histories

Church Histories

WPA Cemetery Records

Grantor / Grantee indexes and deeds

Directories and Gazetteers

Business Records, intent to purchase

Homestead Records

Insurance Records

Land Records

Military Records

Newspapers

Photographs and Postcards

Tax Records

Local Genealogical Society Collections

Statewide Historical Preservation Office

National Archive and Branch Offices

College and University collections

National Register Bulletins, var

Land Allotment Books,

Native American

State Tract Books

County Land Owners Records