

OSL Document Definitions

HISTORICAL RECORD DEFINITIONS

General Land Office (GLO) – the U.S. office which handled Federal land matters. These are now handled by the BLM.

Surveyor General's Office – the U.S. office which conducted official U.S. government surveys.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) – the current U.S. office within the U.S. Dept of Interior which handles Federal land matters.

State Land Office (SLO) – the Louisiana state office, created in 1844, which handles State land matters.

Meridian – The State of Louisiana is divided into two meridians; generally, the “St. Helena Meridian” is located east of the Mississippi River and the “Louisiana Meridian” is located west of the Mississippi River.

Land Districts – Louisiana was sub-divided into districts to handle the administration of U.S. public lands. The districts are: the Northwestern District (also known as Natchitoches District), the District North of Red River (also known as Monroe District and Ouachita District), the Southwestern District (also known as Opelousas District), the Southeastern District-West of the Mississippi River, the Southeastern District-East of the Mississippi River (also known as New Orleans District), and the Greensburg District.

Township & Range – The State is divided into a grid pattern of townships and ranges, which is a rectangular unit for the survey of public lands generally being a square measuring six miles per side. Townships run north and south while Ranges run east and west. Both the township and range are necessary to locate land in the public land survey system, but the general reference is simply “township”. The Principal Meridian line is a line extending in a true north-south direction passing through the initial point along which townships were established. There are two Principal Meridian Lines in Louisiana. The Base Line is a line extending in an east-west direction along a line of true latitude passing through the initial point along which ranges were established. The intersection of the Principal Meridian line and the Base line is called the Initial Point. This is the point of origin for the survey of public lands within a given area. There are two Initial Points in Louisiana.

Section – Each Township (six mile by six mile square) is sub-divided into sections. There are generally 36 sections per township, square in shape, measuring one mile on each side, and being 640 acres in size – but in Louisiana it is not unusual to have upwards of over 100 sections in some townships, with the sections having various shapes, sizes, and acreages.

U.S. Tract Books – An index, in the format of a ledger book, arranged by meridian, land district, township and range, and section showing Federal land severance.

Index to U.S. Tract Books – A listing, by land district, of names of persons to whom land was severed from the United States.

State Tract Books – An index, in the format of a ledger book, arranged by meridian, land district, township and range, and section showing State land severance.

Index to State Tract Books – A listing, by land district, of names of persons to whom land was severed from the State.

Official Township Plats (Maps) – Copies of official U.S. surveys plats (maps) establishing and defining the townships and ranges and sections. These drawings were made from the official field notes and show the details of a particular survey. The plat shows the dimensions and area of all private land claims and public lands sections located within the township. A public land survey is not official until the governing authority has reviewed and approved the field notes and plat. Typically, there is one plat per township – although there could be several supplemental surveys for a township (or portion of a township).

Field Notes – The official field notes of the U.S. Deputy Surveyor who performed the official township survey, showing the details of the particular survey.

Bearing Trees – Listing of the bearing trees used by the U.S. Deputy Surveyors. These trees were used as an accessory to mark and locate section corners and survey monuments. A description of the tree and a direction and distance from the monument to the tree was recorded in the official field notes.

U.S. Surveyor General Survey Instructions – The general instructions given to the Deputy Surveyors informing them of policy and procedures to be followed in performing public land surveys.

U.S. Deputy Surveyor Contracts – The contracts entered into between the U.S. Surveyor General and the Deputy Surveyors.

U.S. Check Plats (Maps) – Unofficial plats marked upon by GLO and/or SLO staff to show areas of land severed by the U.S. government.

State Check Plats (Maps) – Unofficial plats marked upon by SLO staff to show areas of land severed by the State of Louisiana.

Surveyor General Plats (Maps) – Original plats of the U.S. Township surveys.

Old Survey Plats (Maps) – Original plats of previous township surveys which have been replaced by later survey plats.

Exhibit of Private Land Claims – A listing, by land district, of names of people who filed a claim with the U.S. government, requesting that the U.S. government recognize their claim to the title of land based upon land grants issued prior to 1803 by the governments of Spain, France, or England.

Claim Papers – A file compiled by the GLO based upon a collection of papers submitted by a person making a claim to land based upon an earlier Spanish, French, or British land grant or pursuant to the Settlement & Cultivation Law.

American State Papers – Acts of the U.S. Congress recognizing a person's claim to land based upon an earlier Spanish, French, or British land grant. They were gathered, selected and published by the U.S. Congress due to their importance to "the legislative and documentary history of the United States". There is a Gales & Seaton Edition and a Duff/Green Edition. Since these editions are still in print, they are not a part of our scanned image system.

Pintado Papers – A typed transcript dated 1941 of a collection of papers, notes, and surveys of Charles Laveau Trudeau Vicente Sebastian Pintado, Spanish surveyors, relative to Spanish Land Grants.

Rio Hondo Claims – A group of land claims situated between the Rio Hondo (now Calcasieu River) and the Sabine River, known as neutral territory. The U.S. Congress confirmed these claims based upon evidence of habitation and cultivation.

Letters – Various letters relative to various land matters. We have letters from and to the U.S. GLO Commissioner, the U.S. Surveyor General, the U.S. Register & Receiver, etc.

U.S. Homesteads – Documents relative to the U.S. severance of land title pursuant to the U.S. Homestead laws, whereby an individual over the age of 21 who was a U.S. citizen (or who had filed papers to become a U.S. citizen) could acquire up to 160 acres

of U.S. land after A) submitting an application, receiving approval of the entry, clearing, improving and living upon said land for five years, and B) then receiving the final certificate.

Soldiers Proofs – Documents relative to the severance of public lands granted to an individual (or his widow) pursuant to his military service.

Certificates, Receipts, Warrants – Various documents issued by the U.S. or State relative to the severance of public lands.

U.S. Orders to Refund – Documents authorizing the refund of money paid for a land purchase due to the cancellation of said sale.

U.S. Patents to State – The official document issued by the U.S. government transferring land title to the State.

U.S. Patents to Individuals (issued between 1950 & 1972) – The official document issued by the U.S. government conveying title of public lands to an individual. It is typically the final document issued in a chain of title from the U.S. to the individual.

Railroad Land – Documents relative to the lands selected by various railroads from the U.S. government.

Section 16 School Lands – Documents relative to the lands set aside by the U.S. government for school purposes. The State holds title to these lands and holds them in trust for public school purposes.

School Indemnity Lands – When a Section 16 School land was lacking full acreage (640 acres) in a township, the U.S. government set aside other lands in the State for the benefit of the lacking township. See Section 16 School Lands.

U.S. Pre-emptions – A sale of public lands pursuant to a granting of a preferential right of “first purchase”, usually issued to an adjacent landowner or to an individual who had already occupied said land.

Seminary of Learning Selections & Approvals – A list of 50,000 acres of land transferred by the U.S. government to the State. The revenue generated by the sale of these lands was to be used by the State for higher education.

Internal Improvements – A list of 500,000 acres of land transferred by the U.S. government to the State. The revenue generated by the sale of these lands was to be

used by the State for the construction of roads, bridges, levees, etc. to encourage settlement.

Swampland Selections – A listing of the lands selected and requested to be transferred from the U.S. government to the State pursuant to the U.S. Swampland Acts of 1849 and 1850. These un-severed, vacant U.S. lands were determined to be swampy in character and nature.

Swampland Approvals – A listing of the un-severed, vacant U.S. lands which were approved and transferred from the U.S. government to the State pursuant to the provisions of the U.S. Swampland Acts of 1849 and 1850.

Swampland Rejections – A listing of the un-severed, vacant U.S. lands which were not approved to be transferred from the U.S. government to the State pursuant to the provisions of the U.S. Swampland Acts of 1849 and 1850.

State Homesteads - Documents relative to the State severance of land title pursuant to the State Homestead laws, whereby an individual over the age of 21 who was a U.S. citizen (or who had filed papers to become a U.S. citizen) could acquire up to 160 acres of State land after A) submitting an application, receiving approval of entry, clearing, improving and living upon said land for five years, and B) then receiving a final certificate. State Homesteads were suspended in 1962.

State Patents - The official document issued by the State conveying title of State lands to an individual. It is typically the final document issued in a chain of title from the State to the individual. The individual must request a patent be issued by the State after a sale. The lack of a State patent does not invalidate the individual's title.

Levee Board Transfers – Documents listing State lands which were transferred by the State to various levee boards.

State Surveys – Official township surveys requested and performed by the State and approved by the Register of the State Land Office.

TAX RECORD DEFINITIONS

Adjudication – The transfer of title to the State by the parish Sheriff. The Sheriff first seized the property from the tax debtor (landowner) for the non-payment of property taxes and offered the property for sale at an advertised public auction. Those properties that did not sell were adjudicated by the Sheriff to the State.

Redemption – A certificate issued by the State transferring title from the State back to the tax debtor after the tax debtor has paid all back taxes owed, plus interest and penalty.

Cancellation – A certificate issued by the State declaring the original adjudication to be null and void pursuant to a Proces Verbal from the parish Sheriff and Assessor, requesting the cancellation and stating the reason for cancellation.

Sale – A sale of adjudicated property by the State to a third party. The State advertises a public notice of sale and authorizes the parish Sheriff to conduct the sale. The property sells to the highest bidder. Since 1921, the State reserves mineral rights in perpetuity.

Tax Homestead – A transfer of title from the State to a third party after that person had filed a Homestead Certificate with the State and after he had met the requirements of the homestead laws. Once this was done, the State issued a Final Certificate (F.C.) recognizing the fulfillment of the homestead requirements and transferring title to the person. The State reserved mineral rights in perpetuity.