

DISCOVERIES IN COURTHOUSE DEEDS

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<https://familyrecord.vpweb.com/Website-List.html>



This topic includes many document types recorded at the local level, often involving multiple parties.

A. What are 'Courthouse Deeds'?

1. Deed or Indenture - transfer of property, usually land
 - a. One party to another
 - b. Multiple parties
 - o sometimes fractional portions or percentages
2. Mortgage or Deed of Trust - money owed for property
3. Easement, Right of Way - e.g. roadway
4. Patent, Homestead - transfer from government agency
5. Affidavits - e.g. joint tenant, heirship
6. Estate Distribution - court document with distribution to heirs, must be recorded !
7. Eminent Domain - e.g. public projects such as dams, freeways

B. When were deeds filed? Examples

1. Records start with the establishment of a local entity, such as county or town
2. If boundary lines changed:
 - a. Check records in parent county and/or transcribed records in newly formed county
3. Check sources for general information
 - a. Ancestry's *Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources* Book at Family History Center, US GEN 124
 - o California counties: formation dates
 - b. *FamilySearch Wiki*
 - o Georgia: https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Georgia,_United_States_Genealogy
 - o boundary changes
 - o clickable map to county info
 - c. *Google* search for area of interest, e.g. "deeds williamson county texas"
 - d. Research guides or books specific to area of research
 - o For New York: *New York Family History Research Guide and Gazetteer*¹¹

C. Where can you research deeds? Examples:

1. Onsite, in person
 - a. Office where the records were originally filed, e.g. Monterey Recorder, Salinas
 - b. Local archives with microfilm records, e.g. King County Archives, WA > link to 'Indexes...'
 - o <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/records-licensing/archives/research-guides/recordings.aspx>
2. Online, search catalogs to find books, Family History Centers and local libraries
 - a. Abstracted records, e.g. 'Anson County, North Carolina : deed abstracts, 1749-1766, abstracts of wills & estates, 1749-1795' - available at Family History Center NC 83
3. Online, government sites, indexes and some images
 - a. Maricopa County, Arizona: database/images, 2 sections: '1947-present' and '1871-1946'
<https://recorder.maricopa.gov/recdocdata/>
 - b. Shelby County, Tennessee: database/images from 1812 <http://register.shelby.tn.us/index.php>
4. Online, search *FamilySearch.org* <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/search>
 - a. Check catalog for collections with deeds 'Land and Property'
 - b. Browse the online images of the handwritten indexes and deed books

¹ Book available at Santa Cruz Public Library, downtown: N.Y. 142

Search method with online computer index/database and images:

1. Deed, Maricopa County, Arizona: online index & images @ official's site (example 'Granilla')
First, search database for name, year 1872 <https://recorder.maricopa.gov/recdocdata/>
- then select document from list & view
 - a. wife's name
 - b. date
 - c. where they were living at the time
 - d. amount of sale
 - e. property description
 - f. other
2. Affidavit of Heirship, Shelby County, Tennessee: online index and images @ official's site
First, search database for name <http://register.shelby.tn.us/index.php> (example 'Alice Smith')
- then select name from list
- then select document from list & view
 - a. husband's name
 - b. date of death
 - c. names of children
 - d. where they were living at the time
 - e. property description

The following do not have online databases, however a handwritten index is browseable online

3. Deed, Irwin County, Georgia: online @ *FamilySearch.org* (example 'A. R. Chandler')
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/search>
First, locate index in Card Catalog i.e. 'Georgia, Irwin' > 'Land and Property'
- search the *Grantor* index by alpha section (in this case 'C')
- note the book and page numbers of interest (see numbers in the crease of book)
- find the book and page and view document
 - a. relationship
 - b. type of property (hint: not real property)
 - c. where the property was located
 - d. date of document
 - e. date of recording (different/later)
 - f. other (name not as indexed)
4. Deed, Rutland County, Vermont, index online @ *FamilySearch.org* (example 'Ezra Mead')
First, locate index in Card Catalog i.e. 'Vermont, Rutland' > 'Land and Property'
- search the *Grantor* index by the alpha section (in this case 'M')
- locate book and page
- order document and view (received from Vermont states archives)
 - a. relationship
 - b. where grantors were living at the time
 - c. where the property was located
 - d. date of document (later)

E. How do we know to look for deeds? - Always check!

1. Common misconception: "My ancestors did not own land."
 - a. May have received it from an estate, sold it the same day and headed west
 - b. May have lost property due to non-payment of taxes, i.e. Sheriff's sale
 - c. May have been a lawsuit re. land claims, e.g. Ohio land ownership problems
 - d. May have been personal property e.g. stock animals

F. Upcoming tours of local courthouses and records repositories

Monterey, Santa Cruz and other Bay Area locations