

Family History

Land records

From 1787, the Governor could grant free settlers land in New South Wales. A single male was entitled to 30 acres, while a married man received 50 acres. A married man received an additional 10 acres for each child if his wife and children were with him at the time of the issuing of the land grant. In 1825, the sale of land by private tender began and the maximum size of freely granted land was restricted. At the same time, the Colony undertook a survey that divided settled areas into Counties, Hundreds and Parishes.

Museums of History NSW State Archives Collection holds the documents relating to original land grants and purchases. State archives or records offices hold relevant documents from the beginning of each State's creation. The relevant State's Titles Office holds records of further dealings on a particular piece of land after the original land grant.

How can I find out if my ancestor owned any land?

Several surname indexes to land records are available in State Library of Queensland collections and/or online. Most of these are organised by State:

Queensland

State Library holds not only records of land ownership and development but also related maps, photographs, artifacts, family and local history documents and books.

Note: For records relating to Queensland prior to Separation in 1859 check land records for New South Wales but the following are particularly important for the Moreton Bay period:

- Queensland and New South Wales newspapers plus the *NSW Government Gazette* on Trove <https://trove.nla.gov.au/search/advanced/category/newspapers>. These sources advertise land for sale, name buyers and detail allocation of land for various purposes.
- **Colonial Secretary's letters relating to land 1826-1856** <https://mhns.wa.gov.au/indexes/land/colonial-secretarys-letters-re-land/>. State Library holds the documents indexed.
- **Colonial Secretary's letters received relating to Moreton Bay and Queensland 1822-1860** <https://bit.ly/ColSecIndexes> This descriptive index is an accessible point to lists of those granted land and buyers as well as decisions about land. The indexed records are available on microfilm (A2 Series, open access level 3) and have been digitised. The digitised material is gradually becoming available online through our catalogue. Check the Collection Guide for more information, <https://bit.ly/ColSecCollectionGuide>.

Use One Search, <https://onesearch.slq.qld.gov.au/>, to find a range of over 500 station records with diverse content searching by owner's and property name.

Other records of interest include:

- **Crown land sales in Queensland 24 Sep 1842 - 21 Jan 1861** [microfiche] / compiled by Eileen B. Johnson (MFC 333.3309943 2000). In 2 parts: Pt 1. Alphabetical index of tenants; Pt 2. Index of joint tenants. See also **Crown land sales in Queensland** [CD-ROM] (QCFS 333.3309943)
- **Queensland early pioneers indexes 1824 - 1859** [CD-ROM] (QCFS 929.3943 2004) Previously published as 'Pre-separation population index of the Moreton Bay Region, 1824-1859' [microfiche] (MFCB 929.3943 1990). The index includes references to early Queensland land records.
- **Index to Queensland land records 1856-1859** [microfiche] / compiled by Marianne Eastgate and Pearl Whatling (FICHE 333.3232 eas). A supplement to land records indexed in the Queensland early pioneers index 1824-1849 (above). Covers land titles for the period 1856-1859 that were not previously indexed.

- **Register of land & town purchases for Morton [sic] Bay 1842-43** [microfilm] (MFL 929.3943 200-) SR/AO reel numbers 1397, 2701. These lists give name of purchaser and city or town of residence. Includes a full description of the land purchased and the name of the county and parish. Covers Moreton Bay and New South Wales.
- **Transmission of real estate by death 1878-1940** compiled by Merle D. Grinly and Margaret A. Belcher [CD-ROM] (QCFS 929.3943 2012) indexes notices of land transferred to others following a death. It is possible to see in the published notices what happens to the land as it is passed down and to identify other family members.

Lands Mapping and Surveying, <https://www.nrmmrrd.qld.gov.au/about-us/museum>, provides valuable guides and much digitised material reflecting the use of land over time.

Brisbane City Council Archives, <https://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/libraries-venues-and-facilities/libraries/brisbane-city-archives>, is mainly concerned with the built environment which includes building registers and cards as well as photographs. It has some historical land documents and detail plans of home and buildings in the Brisbane suburbs which reveal the footprint of those buildings at the time.

Queensland State Archives, <https://www.qld.gov.au/recreation/arts/heritage/archives/collection/lands>, holds an extensive range of early Queensland pastoral maps showing the names of the original land owners. An index for land selection files for the period 1868-1884 can be located with a surname search of their catalogue. Several online **Lands Indexes** are also available.

The indexes include:

- *Land orders 1865-1866*
- *Mineral leases 1871-1940*
- *Miners rights 1874-1880*
- *Register of Pastoral Holdings 1863-1880*
- *Applications by Selectors 1868-1885*
- *Gympie Mining Claims 1868-1901*
- *Rents payable on pastoral runs 1860-1911*
- *Transfer of runs 1848-1874*
- *Lands sold 1842-1868*
- *Land selections 1885-1981*
- *Registers of Lessees of Agricultural and Grazing Farms 1885-1908 [LAN/P518 Index]*

See also the following guides available at Queensland State Archives:

- **Brief Guide - Land Tenure** <https://publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/brief-guides-at-qlsa/resource/1c920236-52f8-4b1a-8ac2-3a89c79fd210>
- **Brief Guide - Land Agents' Records** <https://publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/brief-guides-at-qlsa/resource/4d904121-6a8b-4c4c-8563-d6c4bcb7868d>

New South Wales

Museums of History (MH) NSW State Archives collection provides online indexes to various land records at their website. Check under the subjects: Land, Soldier settlement, Squatters & graziers, and Surveyor General. <https://mhsw.au/archive/subjects/>

Some of the indexes available are:

- *Court of Claims (Land) index 1833-1834*
- *Soldier (Closer) Settlement / Returned Soldier's transfer files, 1907-1951*
- *Soldier (Closer) Settlement Promotion Files, 1913-1958*
- *Soldier (Closer) Settlement Transfer Registers, 1919-1925*
- *Depasturing Licenses 1837-1851*
- *Land Grants and leases, 1792-1856*
- *Soldier Settlement Loan Files index 1906-1960*
- *Soldier Settlement Purchases index 1905-1937*
- *Soldier Settlement Miscellaneous Files, 1916*
- *Squatters & Graziers index, 1837-1849*
- *Surveyor General's Crown Maps & Plans*
- *Surveyors' field books 1794-1860*
- *Surveyors' letters, 1822-55*

Also try Colonial Secretary Records such as *Colonial Secretary's letters relating to land 1826-1856* <https://mhsw.au/indexes/land/colonial-secretarys-letters-re-land/>

See also some of the guides to land records available:

- **Land records available at NSW State Archives** <https://mhsw.au/guides/land-records-available/>
- **Land grants guide, 1788-1856** <https://mhsw.au/guides/land-grants-guide-1788-1856/>
- **Crown Lands Occupation Guide** <https://mhsw.au/guides/crown-lands-occupation-guide/>

State Library holds:

- **Australasian Genealogical Computer Index vol. 2: NSW Government Gazettes 1832-1863** [CD-ROM] / Society of Australian Genealogists (QCFS 929.394 2004). Includes references to government notices about land transactions. Access NSW government gazette digitally through Trove.
- **Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1825** [microfiche] (MFC 994.02 1989) SR/AO microfiche nos. 3001-3312 ; (MFL 994.02 1989) Microfilm SR/AO reels 6001-6072. Microform to be used in conjunction with user's guide *The Colonial Secretary's papers 1788-1825* (MFA 994.02 1989).
- **General muster and land and stock muster of New South Wales, 1822** / edited by Carol J. Baxter (FAMHIS944 1988)
- **Half a thousand acres: Balmain: a history of the land grant** / Peter L. Reynolds & Paul V. Flottmann (G 333.16099441 1976)
- **Index to conditional purchase registers of New South Wales: primary sources A.O.N.S.W.** [microfiche] / compiled by Jennifer Commons and Alice Jansen. (PAM 929.3944 1989). Library holds vol. 1: 1862; 1863; 1864/65.
- **Index to the historical records of Australia, 1788-1848** [CD-ROM] (QCFS 994.02 2004). Includes references to early land records.
- **Index to itineraries and returns of the Commissioners of Crown Lands 1837-1849, and itineraries of Foster Fyans returns of population and livestock 1844-1846** [CD-ROM] (QCFS 929.3944 2008)
- **Indexes and registers of land grants and leases 1792-1865** [microform] / Colonial Secretary (MFL 929.3944 1986). SR/AO reels 2548-2550; 2560-2562
- **Land grants, 1788-1809** / edited by R.J. Ryan (G 333.1609944 1981). A record of registered grants and leases in New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land and Norfolk Island
- **[Land grants New South Wales and Tasmania 1810-1862]** [microfilm] (FILM 0709) CY reel 2212
- **[Letters from individuals re land, 1826-56]** [microfilm] / Colonial Secretary's Office (MFL 929.3944 199-). SR/AO reels 1081-1200. These include letters from individuals as well as memoranda, reports, applications and petitions relating to a land grant, purchase, rent or lease of land in the colony.
- **Letters received and copies of letters sent by Allan Cunningham to New South Wales government officials, 8 January 1817 - 1 January 1831** [microfilm] / Colonial Secretary. (MFL 929.3944 198-) SR/AO reel 2654.
- **List of runs assessed, 1844-1845** [microfilm] / Commissioner of Crown Lands, Portland Bay (MFL 929.3944 1816-1856) SR/AO reel 2756. Indexed on the CD-ROM "*Index to itineraries and returns of the Commissioners of Crown Lands 1837-1849, and itineraries of Foster Fyans returns of population and livestock 1844-1846*"
- **The New South Wales military volunteer land grants** / Laurel Burge for the Council of the New South Wales Military Historical Society (G 333.1609944 1976). Compiled from lists originally published in *NSW Votes and Proceedings*. Lists grants made 1867-1878 to NSW military volunteers who had completed 5 years' service.
- **The original colonial landholders of Sydney from 1792: featuring a broad section of colonial grants, and the acreages held by those pioneers** / Bryan Thomas (GSB 333.16099441 1982). Reproduction of map 'City of Sydney & Environs 1892' in back shows original grantees of land.
- **Register of notices of the intention to issue deeds of grant for lands, 10 February 1840 - 1 February 1856** [microform], **Register of notices of the intention to issue deeds of grant for town allotments, 4 May 1939- 31 December 1845** AND **Returns of free settlers and other free persons to receive land grants 1810-1828** / Colonial Secretary (MFL 929.3944 198-) SR/AO reel 2654.
- **Yewen's Directory of the Landowners of New South Wales (1900)** [CD-ROM] (QCFS 919.944 2004). Provides information on over 70, 00 NSW landholders. Organised by district and postal address.
- **The first title holders of land in the Counties of Camden, Cook, Hunter, Durham, Gloucester** [CD-ROM] (QCFS 333.309944 1997) AND **The first title holders of land in the counties of Cumberland & Northumberland** [CD-ROM] (QCFS 333.3099441 2004) compiled by Geoff Cannon.

Check our One Search online catalogue for further titles. <https://onesearch.slq.qld.gov.au/>

Victoria

PRO Victoria

- **Lands guide** <https://prov.vic.gov.au/lands-guide>
- Index to **Pastoral Runs** <https://www.prov.vic.gov.au/explore-collection/explore-topic/researching-land-and-property/pastoral-runs>
- **Researching Land and Property** <https://www.prov.vic.gov.au/explore-collection/explore-topic/researching-land-and-property>

State Library holds:

- **Crown Lands pre-emptive right applications Victoria 1850-1854** / Marjorie Morgan. (PAM 333.332 1987)
- **Land tax register and valuation for Victoria, 1888** [CD-ROM] (QCFS 336.2209 2005)
Provides name of owner, address, nature of interest, situation of land, section, allotment, area, class of land, valuation and sums payable.
- **Victorian Crown grantees index. Part 2 1838 to the present day** [CD-ROM] (QCFS 929.3945 2008)
- **Lands guide : a guide to finding records of crown land at Public Record Office Victoria** [CD-ROM] (QCFS 333.109945 2009)

Tasmania

Tasmanian Archives and Heritage has an info guide, *Tasmanian Land Grants* <https://libraries.tas.gov.au/slat/guides-to-records/land-grants/introduction/>

State Library holds the following:

- **Hobart Town land and stock 1827: returns of produce, stock and cultivation in the district of Hobart Town with names of landholders** / [compiled by Irene Schaffer]. (FAMHIS 994.602 1996)
- **Muster rolls and land grants, 1816-1818: Convict lists, 1826; Convict lists, 1826-1830** [microfilm] / Convict Dept. (MFL 929.3946 200-). Reel CY 957
- **Index to early land grants, VDL, 1804-1823** / Thelma McKay (FAMHIS 333.1609946 1991)
- **[Land grants New South Wales and Tasmania 1810-1862]** [microfilm] (FILM 0709) CY reel 2212
- **Register of land grants : VDL 1824-1832** / compiled by Thelma McKay (G 929.3946 1994)

Northern Territory

- **Northern Territory pastoral permits from 17/11/1902 to 14/04/1924** [microfiche] (MFC 929.39429 1988)

How can I find out about land owned by an ancestor in a particular area?

Parish maps record original land grants and are a very useful family history resource. State Library of Queensland holds some early parish maps and related material for both Queensland and New South Wales.

Examples include:

- **This map of the Colony of New South Wales: exhibiting the situation and extent of the appropriated lands, including the countries, towns, village, reserves &c ...** [map] / Robert Dixon. (MAPS 811 00500 r 1837). Shows property boundaries with landowners' names [1837]
- **The Parish map in family history research** / Crown Lands Office, Department of Local Government and Lands [Sydney]. (PAM 912.944 1982)
- **Along the line: Theebine to Kilkivan, Gympie to Croydon Junction, Maryborough: extracted names from maps** / compiled by Eileen B. Johnson. (P 929.3943 alo)

Check our One Search online catalogue for further titles. <https://onesearch.slq.qld.gov.au>

Post Office and pastoral directories can assist in determining the period that an individual held land in a particular district. See our **Research guide - Directories, almanacs and gazetteers**.

Need further information?

(07) 3840 7810 | slq.qld.gov.au/ask

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