



North Carolina Land Records



Acknowledgements

- Many thanks to NC Historical Records Online, a 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to providing public access to high quality images of original records and other related information useful to researching North Carolina history and genealogy.
 - See their main web site at <http://nchistoricalrecords.org/>
 - There is much discussion of land grants in this presentation based on the generous work of David McCorkle. See his web site at <https://nclandgrants.com/>.
- Sy Robbins, Chairman, Preservation Committee, Chatham County Historical Association (CCHA)
- Many examples in this presentation are drawn from Chatham County records, as well as the State of NC.



What land records exist?

- Maps
- Deeds
- Land grants
- Surveys and processioning reports.
 - Processioning verifies the boundaries of a tract by physically walking the borders and updating metes and bounds. Example: is the big pile of rocks still there? Has the creek changed its watercourse? Did the big red oak fall down?
- Estate files to apportion land among heirs
- Mortgages, where land is leased, bought and sold.
- Court records: disputes, failure to pay taxes, condemnations, petitions.
- Tax lists. Sometimes by payer, sometimes in order of property (contiguity).
- Homestead exemptions to be relieved of paying taxes.
- Dower land examinations, where a wife was questioned to be sure she didn't object to selling land that would become her place to live after her husband died.



Genealogical info in land records

- Time and place a person was present.
 - Generally, people lived on the land, did not travel far to marry, go to church or be buried.
 - Legal documents over a period of time with dates.
- Who else is in the neighborhood? Clue to FAN club (Friends, Associates, Neighbors).
 - Family groups stayed together.
- Evidence of the age of people, named relatives, inferred relationships.
- Deeds may have descriptive information, especially familial relationships.

"FAN club" is an abbreviation coined by Elizabeth Shown Mills, CGSM to help genealogists remember this important concept.



Land Grants



What are land grants?

- In general, a patent or “land grant” is a government giving “vacant” land to someone, compared to a deed being the sale or transfer by one owner to another.
- Land might not really be vacant, because there might already be someone living there, or in many cases, Native Americans.
- Example: the eight land lotteries in Georgia between 1805 and 1833 distributed land forcibly taken from the Creek Indians and Cherokee Nation.



Sequence of a land grant in NC

- Entry: ask for the land.
 - Three-month review period to see if anyone objects.
 - Caveat or warrant recorded.
- Warrant: go survey the land. Surveys contain relative location, relationship to existing properties, metes and bounds to circumscribe the area.
 - Abbreviations: CC=chain carrier, CB=chain bearer, and these were probably folks local to the land being surveyed. More FAN club info.
- Patent. Conveyance of the land, with a paper copy sent to the grantee.



Example of metes and bounds

3rd. tract Beginning at a stake in the middle of the old Fayetteville road, J. C. Cheek corner in J. R. Cheek line, and running with J. R. Cheek line south 84 deg. west 47 poles to a stone, R. A. Jones now S. J. A. White's corner; thence with White's line north 84 deg. west 108 poles to a stake on west side of the Henry Branch; thence south 15 deg. east, 15 poles to stake on the east side of said branch; thence south 85 deg. east, 6 poles and 18 links to a small willow oak; thence south 15 deg. east, 68 poles to an iron stake; thence south 84 deg. east, 84 poles and 17 links to a stake in Jas. C. Cheek line; thence North 2 deg. west 44 poles and 8 links to a small black Jack; thence north, 88 deg. east, 44 poles and 11 links to a persimmon tree on the west side of the said Fayetteville road, J. C. Cheek beginning corner; thence with said road north, 5 deg. west, 37 3/4 poles to the beginning. Containing 61 acres, more or less.

- Taken from a 1936 deed from grantors “Alma Cheek and husband Troy M. Cheek.”
- Note these things:
 - Use of “poles and links” as a measurement.
 - Reference to the land of others in neighborhood.
 - Impermanent markers: small willow oak, persimmon tree.
 - Documentation of the marriage relationship.



Before the Revolution



Pre-revolutionary war land grants

- Before our Revolutionary War, the King of England owned all vacant land in NC.
- Provincial or Proprietary Era (1663–1729). In 1663 King Charles II of England granted land in the Carolinas to eight men who had helped him regain the throne (the Carolina Charter).
- These men were called the Lords Proprietors of Carolina, and they had the right to grant land to others. During the time when they controlled the land, North Carolina was a proprietary colony.



The Lords Proprietor

- The original grant included all the territory between 31° and 36° north latitude from the Atlantic Coast to the Pacific Ocean, or in effect from about 70 miles south of the border of present-day Florida to about 40 miles south of the present northern boundary of North Carolina.
- A further grant to the Lords Proprietor in 1665 extended the northern boundary 30 minutes, to the present border of North Carolina and Virginia.
- Most of the Lords Proprietors began granting land in the Carolinas in 1669, but unfortunately all of the entries, warrants, plats, and patents for 1669 through 1678 are lost.
- By 1729 seven of the eight proprietors sold their shares to King George II for political and economic reasons, making North Carolina a royal colony. Most of the land belonging to the Crown was in the southern half of the state.



Granville

- The eighth Lord Proprietor, the Earl of Granville, kept his land. The Granville District covered roughly the northern half of NC.
- From 1748 to 1763, agents of the Earl of Granville made grants of vacant lands and collected rents. When the second Earl of Granville died in 1763, the Granville District office was closed.
- In 1737, before the boundaries of the Granville District were established, Henry McCulloh received a royal patent for 1.2 million acres in western North Carolina. Five of his 12 tracts were within the Granville District in Orange and Rowan counties.
- Lands granted by McCulloh and by the Granville office were technically deeds and not grants.



Headright patents

- During the Proprietary Era and ending in 1754, emigrants to North Carolina could obtain entitlement to land patents, usually 50 acres for each family member, friend, or stranger for whom they paid passage.
- The same rules also applied to those who brought settlers into North Carolina from other American colonies. These requirements changed over time.
- The number of acres was determined by the number of people or "heads" brought into the colony.
- Lands obtained in this fashion are often described as headrights, and no fees were paid by those entitled to these patents. Many people sold their entitlement to a buyer known as an assignee.



After the Revolution



Revolutionary War and after

- In November 1777, while the Revolutionary War was in progress, the new General Assembly of North Carolina created a land office in every county, with each county having its own appointed entry-taker and surveyor.
- The entry-taker was authorized to issue a warrant for vacant lands that once belonged to either the British Crown or the Granville District.
- Beginning in 1777 limitations were imposed on the size of the grants. In addition, the state required the person receiving the grant to have it recorded, usually within 12 months, at the Register of Deeds office in the county where the land lay.
- Because many patent owners did not live on their new land or near it, there was time allowed by the secretary of state for the patentee to have his land recorded in the county where he was presently living. Failure to have the patent recorded could void the grant.



Revolutionary War bounty grants

- NC granted land to RevWar veterans, known as bounty grants.
- NC Revolutionary war bounty land grants were made exclusively in Tennessee, since that area was originally part of North Carolina. No land within the present boundaries of North Carolina was ever offered as military bounty land.
- In 1790 the federal government annexed that area of North Carolina and renamed it the Territory South of the Ohio River. This area was first the Washington District of North Carolina, then became Washington County, Tennessee. This same area was first under the control of Virginia, then North Carolina, and finally Tennessee.
 - Records of these three states may have to be searched to find the land records of an ancestor who lived in that area.
 - The earliest records are in Bristol or Washington County, Virginia, and in Washington County, North Carolina.

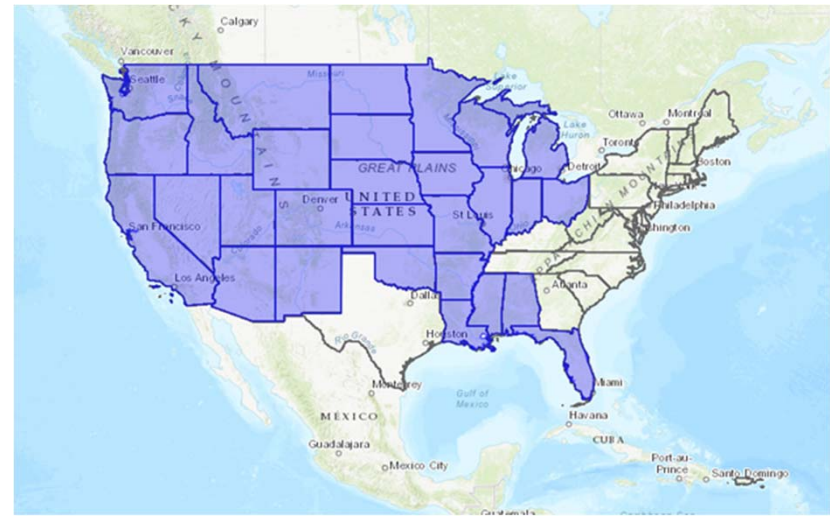


Even later ...



Public land states

- Public land states were created from public lands, and basically are all States except the original colonies and Texas.
- Those States formed by the federal government from federal land, use the township and range survey system for land grants.



Purple States are public land States

Map captured 7/6/2021 at <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx>.



State land States

- The States formed from the colonies and Texas are known as state land States, using the metes and bounds survey system. Towns, especially those mapped and planned, sometimes had lot numbers.
- NC was a state land State, taking control of its lands from the British Crown in 1777.
- State land States surveyed the land only after issuing the entry and warrant for it.
 - State land States were a free-for-all, grants were all shapes, left holes ungranted, and there are no government maps of all the grants.
 - Private individuals have conglomerated grant info into maps.



Recap

- We've covered:
 - What kinds of land records exist?
 - What genealogical info can be found in land records?
 - What are land grants?
 - What is the history of land grants in NC?
 - NC is a state lands State, using metes and bounds to describe plats, deeds and grants.
- Now, we'll look at online repositories through a series of land record examples.



NC Archives Discover Online Catalog

- Strongly suggest searching NC Archives Discover Online Catalog at <https://archives.ncdcr.gov/doc> for land records. A visit to the Archives may be required since images are not necessarily online.
 - Genealogy example: The Dowd family
https://axaem.archives.ncdcr.gov//solrDetailPages/series/NC/A/Series_detail.html?fq=seriesRid:667495.
 - John Allen papers show parental and marriage relationships.
https://axaem.archives.ncdcr.gov//solrDetailPages/series/NC/A/Series_detail.html?fq=seriesRid:757981.
 - Cain and Hinton Family papers
https://axaem.archives.ncdcr.gov//solrDetailPages/series/NC/A/Series_detail.html?fq=seriesRid:25168.



Federal Bureau of Land Management

- <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx> for public land states.
- Survey plats and field notes dating back to 1810.
- Federal land title records issued since 1820.
- Land catalog search tool has no records for NC.



NCLandGrants.com

- Web site contains:
 - Searchable data from all land grant files, includes the name of the person(s) receiving the grant, the county, the number of acres, various dates, and a brief description of the property.
 - Images from Land Patent Book, volumes 1-198.
 - Deeds and documents for Granville District grants. About 1/3 of Granville grants are indexed.
 - About 5000 miscellaneous grants.
 - Images of the state copies of the county Land Entry Books from 1779 to 1795. Book and Page refer here.
 - All NC Bounty Land Grants made in Tennessee before Tennessee became a state in 1796 will be in the NC land grants database. You will also find grants where the bounty was awarded but the grant itself wasn't issued until well into the 1800s.



NCLandGrants.com

- Web site contains:
 - “Shucks” (long, thin envelope) containing loose documents pertaining a grant, like warrants, surveys, receipts. Only about 20% of grants have shucks, with an ongoing project to digitize more.
 - The File Number was assigned when the shucks were created from the Land Patent Books and is generally a unique sequential number within each county. File numbers starting with “0”, e.g., 0148, are used when loose documents exist but no grant was recorded in the Patent Books.
 - Images of missing shucks are on FamilySearch but are not indexed and use different numbering scheme.



Examples

- Grants for Chatham County, surname Alston.
- Lords Proprietor grant for Solomon Alston, file # 1934.
- Multiple documents in database shown at file # 974.
- Settlement area search for “12 mile creek.”
- “No county given.”



Registers of Deeds

- Land and marriage records since 1771, whereas birth and death from 1913.
- The Chatham County web site is <http://chathamncrod.org/> .
- CCRoD has three different image systems:
 - Full indexing and imaging.
 - Imaging system only.
 - Land records only.
- Letter books, deeds, plats, index data, highway rights of way.



RoD examples

- Alton Alston deed.
- Lillie Mae Burnette.
- Letter deed P/0058/0059.
- Grantor Alston.
 - V 340
 - W 218
 - Y 151



County GIS records

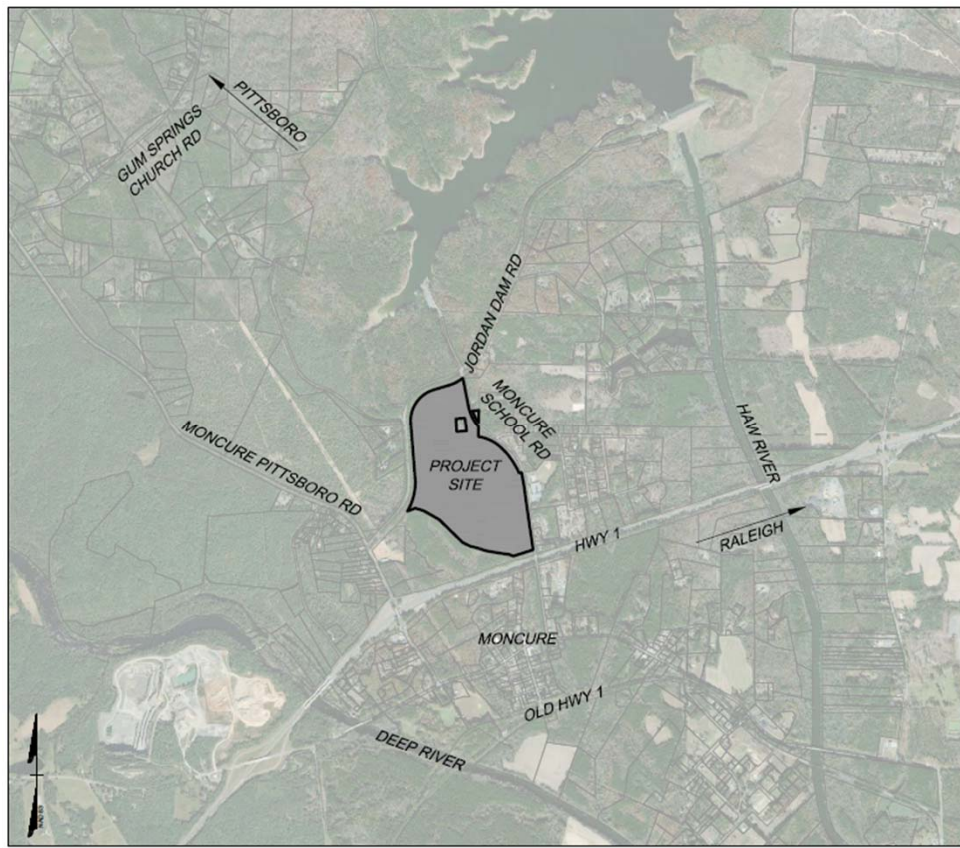
- County GIS records permit the search of land records from today backward, whereas land grants start in the “then” and progress to “now.”
- If you know the area where your family lived (or your research interest), you might be able to backtrack and combine other genealogy research with the land records.
- Our examples start at the Chatham County GIS page:

<https://chathamncgis.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html>



Example of working backwards

- The CCHA did a full search of an area near Moncure back almost 250 years!



Savannah Ridge is a coming development in southeastern Chatham County.

Map Source: Timmons Group Savannah Ridge preliminary plat, dated 6/10/2021, accessed at <https://www.chathamcountync.gov/government/departments-programs/planning/rezonings-subdivision-cases/2021-items/savannah-ridge-first-plat> on 7/15/2021 by the presenter.



Partial deed history of Savannah Ridge

11229 (1052 Moncure School Road) (151.61 acres) (Plats 1-1(A), 4-45, 6-65, 2020-121)

2020	TC&I Timber Co. LLC to Esplanade Communities of Florida LLC (151.61ac)	2141/174
	C & M Rowe 2 Tract, U-3, Tract 7 (2141/174)	
2006	U.S. Steel & Carnegie Pension Fund to TC&I Timber Company LLC (163.0ac)	1293/483
1970	U.S. Steel & Carnegie Pension Fund to Riegel Paper Corp. (40' ROW)	357/1
1961	U.S. Steel & Carnegie Pension Fund to NC State Highway Commission (ROW)	276/385
	30' ROW for U.S. Hwy 1 (project 8.26128); <u>N</u> -A.C. Garner & Jokins Thomas, <u>E</u> -Lura Payne, <u>S</u> -U.S. Hwy 1, <u>W</u> -blank (276/385)	

Many rows skipped ...

1828	John Farrar (Ex. of Joseph Minter) to Charles J. Williams (1,005ac)	A-B1/401
	land on n/s of Deep River, adjoining Robert K. Smith, William Ragland (A-B1/401)	
1823	Joseph Oliver Minter (d. Feb 1823) to wife Fanny (all land*)	Will B-108
	except graveyard where father John O. & mother Elizabeth Morgan Minter are buried	
1797	John Oliver Minter Sr. (d.)	Will-?
1772	Jeremiah Minter to John Minter (700ac on n/s Deep River)	A/67
	* same as Lord Granville to John Brantly, then John Brantly to William Riddle, then William Riddle to Jeremiah Minter (A/67)*	



Maps

- There are many very good NC maps available that cover all its time periods.
 - For your personal research, start at <https://www.ncgenealogy.org/researchguides/historicmapguide/> (no need to sign in). Read the detail on the various types of information available.
- County boundaries changed over time, so see the interactive map at <https://digital.newberry.org/ahcb/map/map.html#NC>.
 - Example: Chatham County
- Sanborn fire insurance maps were very detailed and available at <https://web.lib.unc.edu/nc-maps/sanborn.php>.
 - Example: no maps for Chatham County or its two cities, so see Trinity College in Randolph County.



More maps

- NC Maps for Chatham County:
https://web.lib.unc.edu/nc-maps/browse_location.php.
 - Example: Chatham County Deep River District of 1858.
- Google maps to find features like mountains, creeks and rivers.
 - Example: “long branch chatham county NC.”



Maps we will not explore today

- DavidRumsey.com: historical maps of the entire world.
- Library of Congress maps at <https://www.loc.gov/maps/>.
- NY Public Library maps at <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/lan/maps-atlases>.
- USGS topographical maps showing creeks and rivers.
- Gazetteers that list historical and geographic names.



Reiterating ...

- Land records have information of interest to genealogists.
 - Time and place a person was present.
 - Who else is in the neighborhood? Clues about the FAN club.
 - Evidence of the age of people.
 - Named relatives.
 - Inferred and explicit relationships.
 - Pictures of signatures.



Questions on this presentation?

Contact Jim at genealogy@creeksidefarm.org.