**History of Land Records in Pennsylvania**

1. The origins of PA Land Records can be traced to **1682.**
2. The Surveyor General worked in harmony with the Secretary of Proprietary Affairs, the Master of Rolls, the Receiver General, and the Commissioners of Property in conducting the sale of Pennsylvania lands.
3. These various officers comprised the Land Office and they were responsible for accepting applications, issuing warrants, surveying tracts, verifying returns of survey and granting patents for tracts of land in Pennsylvania.
4. By **1699** the Land Office was operating from a private residence in Philadelphia.
5. In **1704** the Land Office was moved to Clark's Hall when Deputy Governor John Evans arrived in Philadelphia.
6. From **1733 to 1741**, Thomas and John Penn, heirs of William Penn's acted as Commissioners of Property where they conducted Land Office business from their home.
7. In the **1740’s** the Penn brothers abolished the positions of Commissioners of Property and delegated responsibility for signing warrants and patents to the Deputy Governor. Also, the Secretary of Provincial Affairs began conducting land office business from rooms in the west wing of the new State House, the present day Independence Hall.

1. After the outbreak of the Revolutionary War the proprietary Land Office ceased to function.
2. In **1779** the Divesting Act transferred ownership of most of the remaining 22 million acres of proprietary lands to the Commonwealth.
3. In **1781** the Revolutionary Era State Assembly created a new State Land Office consisting of a Secretary, a Receiver General, and a Surveyor General who were assigned the records and responsibilities of their proprietary predecessors of the same titles.
4. In **1782** a Board of Property, similar to Commissioners of Property under the Penn government, was created to hear and determine cases of disputes arising from the transaction of Land Office business.
5. In **1809**, the offices of Receiver General and Master of Rolls were abolished and the responsibilities of collecting purchase money and enrolling state laws were assigned to the Secretary of the Land Office and the Secretary of the Commonwealth. At this time, the patent books and land-title papers of the Master of Rolls were transferred to the Secretary of the Land Office.
6. In **1843**, the functions of the Secretary of the Land Office were inherited by the Surveyor General.
7. The Constitution of **1873** transferred the duties of the Surveyor General and the Land Office to the Secretary of Internal Affairs.
8. The Land Office Bureau, or as it was later designated, the Bureau of Land Records, remained in the Department of Internal Affairs until **1968**, when it was assigned to the Department of Community Affairs.
9. In **1981**, the Bureau of Land Records and its functions were transferred to the Historical and Museum Commission where it became the Division of Land Records in **1986**.
10. In **1989** the Division of Land Records was merged into the Division of Archives and Manuscripts within the Bureau of Archives and History and no longer existed as an independent entity.
11. In **2000**, the patenting functions of the Land Office were placed into the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources DCNR. The Division of Archives and Manuscripts in the Bureau of Archives and History of the Historical and Museum Commission remains the depository of original titles and conveyances and the custodian of deeds and instruments relating to real estate owned by the Commonwealth.

All of this information was taken from this state web-site: www.phmc.state.**pa**.us/.../rg17.htm

**Maps, Survey Records, Reports and all Land Records can be found at: RG-17 Records of the LAND OFFICE**

**Contact information for:**

[**The Pennsylvania State Archives**](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/state_archives/2887)

**In *Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission***

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**Business Hours:**

* Wednesday-Friday: 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (no original records pulled from 12.00-1.00pm)
* Saturday (microfilm use only), 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon and 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
* Closed on Mondays, Tuesdays and [State Holidays](http://www.officeholidays.com/countries/usa/regional.php?list_year=2016&list_region=Pennsylvania)

**Some records pertaining to some County and Municipal Boundary Descriptions can also be found at County Courthouses, normally indexed within the Road Docket Books. Most township boundary surveys can be found in the County Courthouse.**

The boundaries of the three original counties of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, i.e., Bucks, Chester and Philadelphia, were established in 1685 by the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania. However, these counties were created in 1682 by William Penn. The boundaries of sixty-three of the remaining sixty-four counties were established by Legislative Acts specifically focused on the issue of their creation. An 1874 amendment to the Constitution prohibited the legislature from passing special laws erecting new counties. However, in 1878 a general law was passed for the creation of new counties but this law was later repealed in 1895. Lackawanna County, the sixty-seventh (67) and the last county to be erected in Pennsylvania, was formed under this law before it was repealed.