

**Land and Tax Records
Impact on Genealogical Research
Manatee Genealogical Society
March 5, 2013**

Research Profile:

1. Legal in nature and intimidating.
2. Genealogical dictionaries and old law dictionaries are a must for success.
3. Usually located in courthouses or the county property appraisers office.
4. Some pre-1900 records may be in historical society repositories or the state archives.
5. Land records have a proven track record for accuracy and availability.
7. Tax records identified most white males over age 16.
8. Both record types are often exempt from the growing number of restrictions on access.

Research Benefits of Using Land Records:

1. Crucial to local finances (tax revenue).
2. First record type recreated after a fire or natural disaster within a given jurisdiction.
3. May be the only surviving civil records for certain time periods.
4. Tend to have the most accurate genealogical information.
5. Land records often reveal the name of a man's wife.
6. Probate records help locate land parcels and assets.
7. Probate/Land records may identify business or occupational clues.
8. Probate/Land records may provide clues on relationships and issues that impacted life decisions.

Categories of Land Records:

1. Records of transfer: buyer purchases the property for some form of payment or consideration.
2. Records of transfer: seller transfers ownership a buyer for some form of payment or consideration.
3. Sale transaction process (recording deeds, stamps, title searches, etc.).
4. Records of possession (ownership).

Brickwall Breakers:

1. Establish specific dates and places of residence, present and past.
2. Provide clues to establish age estimates.
3. Identify our ancestors' occupations.
4. Identify maiden names of females.
5. May identify the parents.
6. Identify the siblings and children.
7. Identify friends, relatives, neighbors, and associates of our ancestors.
8. Money often brings out elusive ancestors.

9. Provide details about the community and social life.

Tax Records – Research Benefits:

1. Identify an ancestor in a particular place/time before federal census records.
2. Tracking ancestors between federal population censuses .
3. Tax rolls should be examined over a period of years to locate relevant family information.
4. Taxes (land) may provide descriptive information about the building, parcels, etc.
5. Taxes (personal property) may provide information on occupations/economic status.

Where to Locate Surviving Land and Tax Records:

1. Usually kept at the county level under jurisdiction of an office that may go by various names:
 - a. Property Appraiser (most Common)
 - b. County Recorder
 - c. Recorder of Deeds
 - d. Clerk of Court
 - e. Registrar of Deeds
 - f. County Clerk
2. Family History Library/Family Search Database.
3. Contact the courthouse or records depository of the specific county.
4. Make sure you are looking in the correct county for correct time period..
5. Two good sources for determining the origin of a given county are Everton's Handybook For Genealogists, and Ancestry's Red Book.

Closing Comments:

1. Recent legal opinions have made access to certain public records more difficult.
2. Land/property/tax records are exempt from many of these barriers.
3. Land/tax records often go back further in time than most other public records because they have always played major roles in generating tax dollars for communities.
4. Surname indexes exist in most county courthouses for every landowner and go back to the beginning of recorded county and/or territorial records.
5. Indexes of this nature for taxed citizens also exist although they may not be as detailed.
6. Some historical and genealogical societies have generated or been given copies of these indexes to help assist patrons in their searches.