The Holland Land Purchase and Holland Land Company Records

Genealogical Research in
Western New York State
Holland Land Company Timeline

- 1792-1793  • Holland Land Purchase
- 1798-1800  • Survey of Holland Land Purchase
- 1801       • Land sales begin
- 1812       • War disrupts land sales
- 1837       • HLC withdraws from HLP
- 1984       • All HLC records microfilmed
- 1991, 1996 • Land records extracted (2 vol.)
Theophilius Cazenove

• 1740-1811
• Born Amsterdam, Holland, died Paris, France.
• General agent for HLC 1788-1799.
• Based in Philadelphia
• Bought land in PA, NJ, CN and NY.

Courtesy Holland Land Company Museum, Batavia, NY
Holland Land Purchase

- 3.3 million acres west of Genesee River.
- Purchased from Robert Morris.
- Five deeds 1792-1793.
Paul Busti

- 1749-1824
- Born Italy, died Philadelphia.
- Succeeded Cazenove as general agent in 1799.
- Appointed Joseph Ellicott as local agent in Batavia, NY.
Joseph Ellicott

- 1760-1826
- Born Bucks Co., PA died NYC.
- Trained as surveyor by brother Andrew who surveyed Wash. DC.
Survey of Holland Land Purchase

- March 1798 - October 1800; worked continuously, living out of doors.
- Joseph Ellicott and crew of 150 men.
- Total cost about $17,000.
- Used transit method which requires line-of-sight measurements (clear cut swaths).
- Slow, labor intensive, but ACCURATE.
Ideal Townships and Ranges

- A grid of north-south and east-west lines.
- Range = strip of land 6 miles wide running north-south.
- Township = strip of land 6 miles wide running east-west.
- Each resulting town is a 6-mile square or 36 square miles.
Real Townships and Ranges

- Straight lines were not always practical.
- Purchase also contained Indian Reservations, other reserved lands.
- Sometimes rivers were used as boundaries.
- Not all towns were a six-mile square.
- Range 1 on eastern border, Range 15 on western border.
- Township 1 at PA border. Township 16 along Lake Ontario.
- Township/range location used by HLC, not necessarily a political boundary of NYS.
Connection between twp/range (HLC) and towns (NYS) in Orleans Co.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twp/Range</th>
<th>Town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14/1&amp;2</td>
<td>Barre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/3&amp;4</td>
<td>Shelby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/1</td>
<td>Barre, Gaines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/2</td>
<td>Barre, Ridgeway, Gaines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/3&amp;4</td>
<td>Ridgeway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/1&amp;2</td>
<td>Carleton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/3&amp;4</td>
<td>Yates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creation of HLC Records

• Correspondence between general agent in Philadelphia and directors in Amsterdam.
• Surveyors’ reports, legal papers, maps.
• Annual reports of all local agents detailing name, location of land relative to grid of ranges and townships, amount of payment, etc.
• All local records returned to bankers in Amsterdam in 1859; transferred to Amsterdam Municipal Archives in 1964; microfilmed in 1984 (202 rolls of microfilm).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Not Useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land records</td>
<td>Minutes of meetings of the directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps showing location of lots</td>
<td>Powers of attorney to Paul Busti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts and reports of the agent in Batavia</td>
<td>Legal advice relating to responsibilities of trustees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps of towns and villages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Access to HLC Records

• Entire microfilm collection is available at
  – Reed Library at SUNY Fredonia,
  – NYS library Albany,
  – Family History Library Salt Lake City,
  – The Family History Center nearest to you.

• Land Tables (of interest to genealogists) take up 3 full reels and 2 partial reels.

• Extracted by Karen Livsey.
How to Use This Book

• Look up the surname in the index.
• Look up the entry/entries in the book.
• Entry lists **township** and **range** number; use table to locate current town.
• Entry lists **inventory number** and **page**; use table to locate microfilm number
Example: Nehemiah Sayer  
Lot 2, STR = 060501

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Transaction</th>
<th>Inv.#-page</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 Jun 03</td>
<td>o [original contract issues]</td>
<td>484-0016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Sep 04</td>
<td>s [subsequent transactions]</td>
<td>484-0002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Jun 06</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>484-0038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Feb 13</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>490-0033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 May 13</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>491-0032</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where is Nehemiah’s land?

• From the entries
  – STR = 060501
  – Township 5
  – Range 1

• From table in book
  – twp.5, range 1 is
town of Caneadea,
  Allegany County
Where are the transactions?
Use Inventory Numbers 484, 490, 491

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reel</th>
<th>Inventory Number</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>FHL Film</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>#484</td>
<td>1804-06</td>
<td>1,414,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>#490</td>
<td>1812</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>#491</td>
<td>1814</td>
<td>1,414,984</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Second Example
Seth and Samuel Abbott

- Seth and Samuel Abbott listed in township 9, range 7.
- Today this contains towns of Boston and Hamburg in Erie County, formerly Niagara County (until 1821).
## Seth Abbott  Lots 69, 70

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Transaction</th>
<th>Ref-page</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 Aug 07</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>485-0046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01 Dec 09</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>487-0054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Feb 13</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>490-0054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Mar 13</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>491-0052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Mar 14</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>492-0063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Jan 15</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>493-0120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Dec 16</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>494-0082</td>
</tr>
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</table>
# Samuel Abbott Lot 62

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Transaction</th>
<th>Ref-page</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 Aug 07</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>485-0046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Oct 08</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>486-0026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 Aug 12</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>490-0056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 Feb 13</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>490-0056</td>
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</table>
### 1820 Federal Census, Niagara Co., NY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>State</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seth Abbott</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samuel Abbott</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Company Difficulties

- War of 1812
- Delinquent payments
- Depression of 1819
- Slow sales
- Unfavorable tax laws passed 1833
- Bad press
Company Response

• 1827: Refinance contracts rather than foreclose.
• 1828: Sell land in Chautauqua Co. to U.S. speculators.
• 1834: Sell some mortgages to U.S. insurance companies.
• 1835: Sell lands in Genesee, Chautauqua, Erie Co.
End Game

• 6 Feb 1836: Land office in Mayville, Chautauqua Co. destroyed.
• 1837 company business in western NY ceased.
• 1859 papers in general office in Philadelphia returned to bank office in Amsterdam.