

Spotlight

Genealogical Materials in Federal Land Resources in the Forum Library

Gerry Lenzen



"Oregon Trail (Campfire)," by Albert Bierstadt (1830 – 1902), public domain image via Wikimedia Commons.

Editor's Note: This article, together with a subsequent article in the Bulletin will be turned into a research guide for visitors to the GFO Library.

Early settlers to the Oregon Territory received land under a variety of provisions and land acts. Over seven thousand claims were filed in Oregon under the Oregon Donation Land Law. Indexes and books of abstracts of these claims have been published by the Genealogical Forum of Oregon (GFO). In addition, the GFO has copies of the original donation land entry files on microfilm. The originals are located in the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

These documents cover settlements from roughly the early 1840s through 1855, although papers may have been filed after that period. The applications often contain an abundance of genealogical detail. They may include dates and places of births and marriages, names of spouses, dates of arrival in Oregon, and names of those who signed affidavits (often family and friends). Anyone

with early Oregon settlers should check this resource.

Viewing these documents will require multiple steps. This first *Bulletin* article will explore where the indexes are located in the library as well as the claim applications and what type of information may be found on them. It will be important to know the difference between microfilm and microfiche as well as their location in the library. Our Research Assistants (RA) are available to help. If you are unable to get the images you seek during your visit, leave a message for our research team to locate them when a team member is available.

MICROFILM

The microfilm for all the various record types may be read on either of our two readers. One is in front near the whiteboard; the other is in the multi-purpose room in the back of the library. Once the images are located on the film, mark its location with one of the sticky tabs located near the readers, and then move the film to one of the reader/printers. There is one in the front and one in the back of the library.

MICROFICHE

The microfiche can be read and copied only on the reader/printer in the multi-purpose area. It can be found in a cabinet nearby.

FINDING YOUR EARLY SETTLER OR PERSON OF INTEREST (POI) IN AN INDEX

If your POI filed a claim, they will most likely be found in one of the land claim indexes on the GFO website: provisional claims (<http://www.gfo.org/provisional/index.htm>) or donation land claims (<http://www.gfo.org/donation/index.htm>). The index gives the settler's name, Donation Land Claim number, and the page in

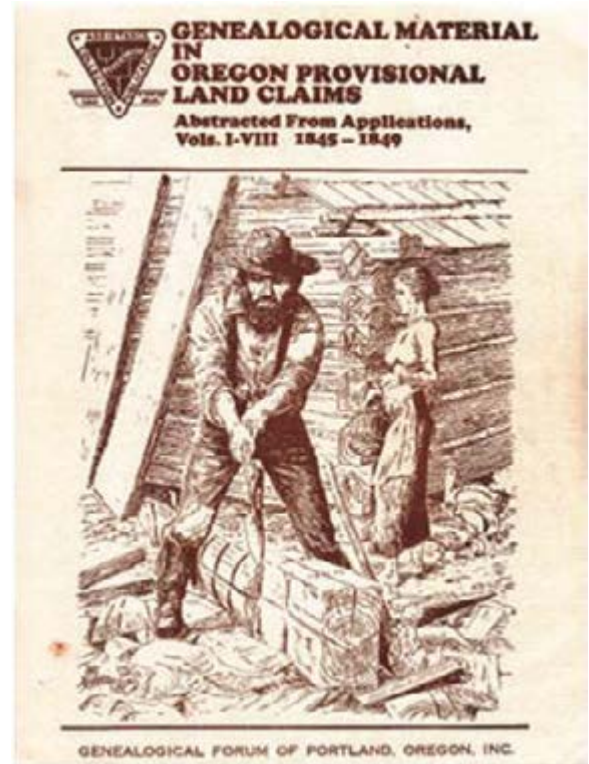
the respective land office book. To look at the actual application, you must come to the GFO, or for a fee our research team will look it up and send you hard copies or digital images of the claim (research@gfo.org).



Names may also be searched at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) website (General Land Office [GLO] division) (<http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/search/>). In addition, the GFO has published multiple indexes located in the library, call number 979.5, A000, Land. (See the *Bulletin* March 2015 edition for a complete description.) This set of books includes provisional and donation land claims, rejected claim applications, and railroad lands (which were treated differently).

OREGON PROVISIONAL LAND CLAIMS

In 1843, settlers in the Willamette Valley organized a provisional government, and in August 1848, Congress created the Oregon Territorial Government. If your POI might have been in the Oregon Country during this time and might have applied for an Oregon Provisional Land Claim between 1843 and 1850, use the *Genealogical Material in Oregon Provisional Land Claims* (979.5, A000, Land, 1845-1849). This volume is more than an index and contains a complete transcription of all the material found in the original records, including but not limited to the general locality and names of neighbors. There are over 3,700 entries; however some people may have multiple claims. The GFO does not have these records on microfilm.

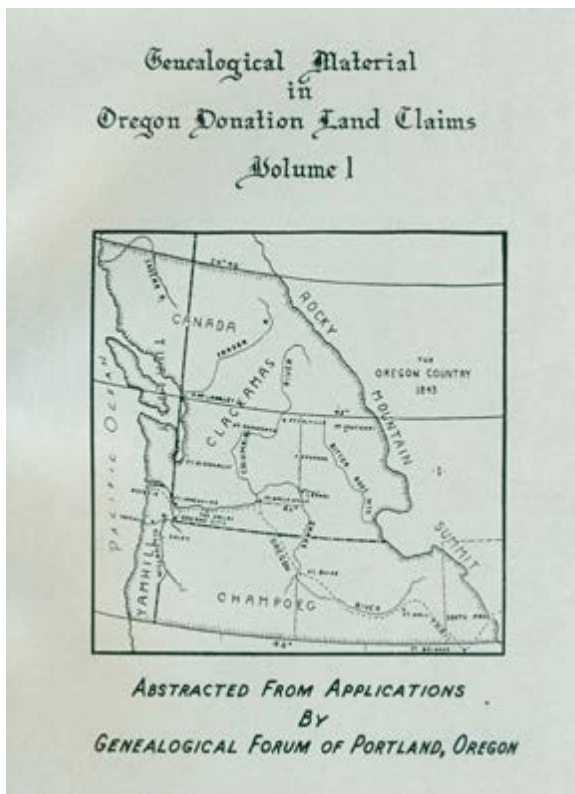


OREGON DONATION LAND CLAIMS INDEXES

Congress passed the Donation Land Act in 1850 which included a provision for settlers who were residents of the Oregon Territory before December 1, 1850. Settlers were required to re-register their Provisional Land Claims to secure them under the Donation Land Act. In other localities, under different federal land laws, this was known as exercising pre-emption rights. It applied to settlers who were already on the land when the new land law passed; therefore, they could claim the same land under the new law. If your POI was suspected of having an Oregon Donation Land Claim (ODLC), use the *Index to Oregon Donation Land Claims, Second Edition* (979.5, A000, Land). This volume is an index of the abstracts found in Volumes 1 through 3, which cover claims based upon the land office where the applications were filed.

If you do not find your POI and you know the correct land office, you can look at the volume specific to that land office. The Oregon City Land Office abstracts are found in *Volume 1, Genealogical Material in Oregon Donation Land Claims*, and its supplement, *Volume 5, Genealogical Material in Oregon Donation Land Claims, Supplement to Volume 1*. The abstracts for the Roseburg, The Dalles, and La Grande offices, are found in *Volume 3, Genealogical Material in Oregon Donation Land Claims*.

Author's note: I have found several errors in this index. The errors are usually in transcribing the actual certificate number. If the POI is not found in the film as indicated by the index, be creative in looking for another certificate number similar to the one indexed.



OREGON DONATION LAND CLAIM MICROFILM RECORDS

Once you have located your POI in one of the indexes, the next step is to locate the application on microfilm. You will need all of the information you find for the claimant, including:

- Claim number
- Date filed
- Land claim office where the claim was filed
- Name of claimant and anyone else listed (as in deceased spouse, children, or others)
- How many acres claimed and where they are located. The “where” will be listed probably as something like “Sections 15 and 16 of Township 2 South, Range 3 East” or abbreviated as “2S 3E 15,16.”



With this information in hand, you will need to get the correct microfilm to see images of the actual land entry file. The land office and the certificate numbers are listed on the green boxes in the microfilm drawer. First, using the land office code from the index, locate the boxes for the correct land office:

LG: La Grande
OC: Oregon City
RB: Roseburg
TD: The Dalles



Next, within that land office group, locate the reel with the correct claim number. The microfilm reels are arranged numerically by ODLC Certificate number and display beginning and ending numbers on the reel.

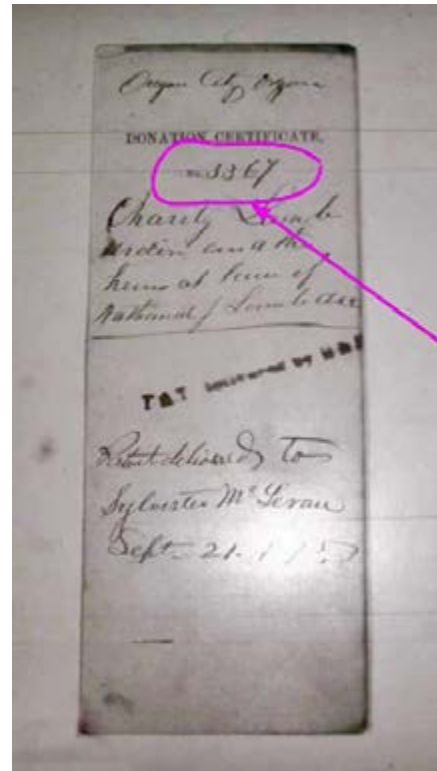
After you find the microfilm reel, take it to one of the readers. Instructions for threading the film appear on the back wall of the reader, or ask an RA for help.



Scroll through the film looking for the claim or certificate number which appears on the image of each jacket cover. The pages that follow each jacket cover are the records included in that file. Claim applications may be as short as two pages (basically just the jacket), and as long as 50 pages.

So what might you expect to find in the claim application? These application records have been described as containing the most comprehensive and detailed records ever produced by any government land record system and are also called Land-Entry Case Files. Most of the files are from the Oregon City Land Office (5,289 files). Next largest was Roseburg with 2,141 files. The Dalles has five entries and La Grande has two entries.

Originally, all the pages in each claim were folded and tucked into a pocket. That pocket was labelled and is called a jacket cover. There you may find notes that pertain to recording and entry dates. There may also be notes that bear a date of 1940-1941 with the name J. Nielson Barry who did much research on early Oregon settlers around that time. If Barry's name appears on the jacket for your poi's claim, his material may be of interest. Much of his research was published in the *Oregon Journal* and has been reprinted in books, magazines, and other reference materials.



Each file usually contains records that indicate the applicant's name, age, birthplace, marriage date and place, given name of wife, and date of arrival in the territory. They may also contain date and court of naturalization, date of settlement, record of land improvements, description of donation claim, depositions of acquaintances, purchase agreements (deeds) from the next owners of the land, and other items such as maps and drawings of the donation land claim. The original naturalization records for the applicant were included in each ODLC file; however, at the time the files were filmed, it was not legal to make copies of original naturalization records. Therefore, they still reside in the original file, but are not included on the microfilm.

The microfilm does contain an affidavit from the applicant that includes name, residence at the time of application, deposition that applicant was 18 years of age on a specific date, reference to an annexed naturalization record, court and county in which naturalization was registered, place of birth (country or county and state), date of birth, dates of continuous occupation and cultivation of selected land, given name of wife, date of marriage, place of marriage, and date of court deposition.

WHAT IF I AM UNABLE TO FIND MY PERSON OF INTEREST?

If your POI is not found in any of the indexes for the Oregon Land Claims, there are additional places you can look; the *Genealogical Material in Oregon Provisional Land Claims* (979.5, Aooo, Land, 1845-1849) or in *Vol. 4, Abstracted from Rejected Applications* (979.5, Aooo, Land, v4).

If your POI is found in the Provisional Land Claims, you may want to investigate the neighbors who were identified in the transcription. Try to locate an ODLIC for each of them. This may give some indication of where your POI was living at the earlier date.

Many French Canadian settlers left the Willamette Valley to live with the families of their native wives. They may have gone anywhere in the Pacific Northwest, or east of the Rocky Mountains, or to the Canadian country north of the 49th parallel. However, their names may be represented in the Provisional and Donation Land Claims. If they patented their land through the federal government, the land sale will appear in the county deed books and you will have a better idea when they may have left the area.

Do not overlook *Vol. 4, Genealogical Material in Oregon Donation Land Claims: Abstracted from Rejected Applications* (979.5, Aooo, Land, v4) which includes claims not included in the *Index to Oregon Donation Land Claims*. These are rejected, cancelled, or otherwise ineligible claims under the various ODLIC rules for obtaining claims. There is a detailed index in the back of this volume. The index is by claimant's name followed

by the cancelled claim number. This volume may contain individuals who had qualified under the original ODLIC opportunities, but waited too long to file. If they waited until after 1862, individuals who had obtained land under the Homestead Act may have preceded the late-claiming ODLIC applicant for a specific parcel. Details of these conflicts are usually included in the rejected abstracts. This may be the only place an early settler's name is found in the original land records, and this index does not yet appear on the GFO website.



The microfilm boxes in the Oregon collection of land records that have details for rejected ODLIC claims/applications have the title “Cancellations” on the boxes. The word “Rejected” does not appear on these boxes. The rejected/cancelled claims for any land office can be found at the back end of each set of land claims by land office. There are several boxes for Oregon City.

In the September *Bulletin* “Spotlight” column we will discuss in more detail the land itself, how you can find where the land is located on a map, how to read legal descriptions of land, and some of the history of creating these maps.

Spotlight

Additional Genealogical Information Related to Oregon Donation Land Claims

Gerry Lenzen

A complete collection of Oregon Donation Land Claims (ODLC) files for Oregon and Washington is available on microfilm at the Genealogical Forum of Oregon (GFO). The ODLC date to the 1850s, and came about through a series of Congressional Acts enacted to patent certain federal lands to private citizens.

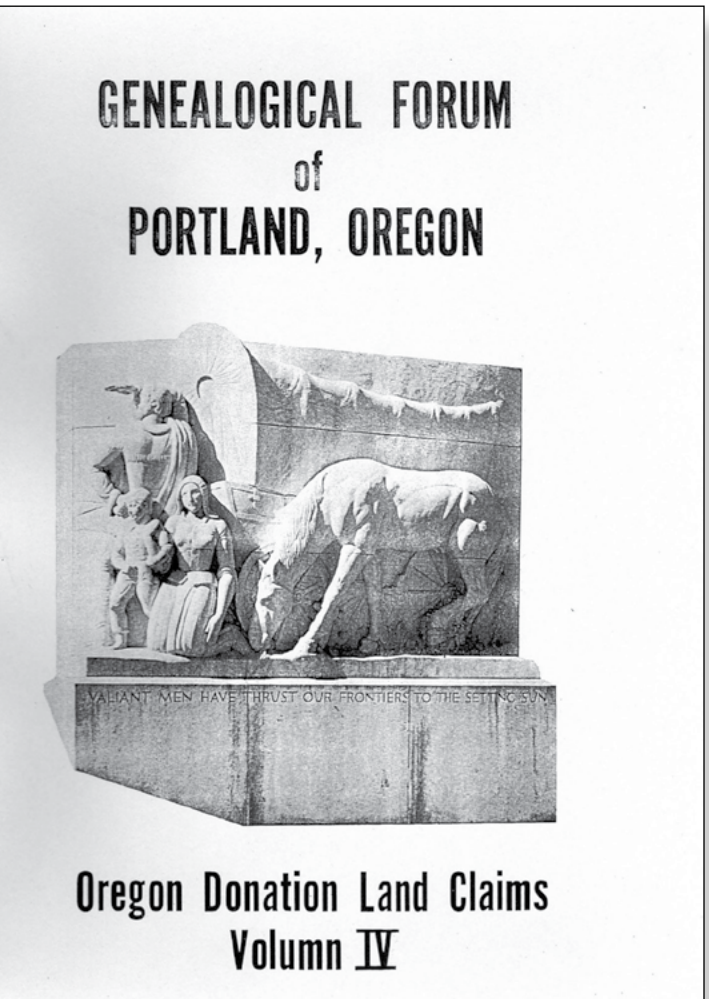
The microfilm records have been abstracted by the GFO, appearing in several volumes under the general title of *Genealogical Material in the Oregon Donation Land Claims*. These abstracts, under various subtitles, were started in 1957 and accumulated in 1959, 1962, 1967, 1975, and 1987. Several volumes were reprinted during that time, and each volume contains an index for all the names in the abstracts. Each volume also includes a detailed description of the records abstracted from the original microfilm.

There also are microfilm records for individuals who applied for an ODLC, but whose claims were rejected, cancelled, or found to be incomplete. These records are in Volume 4 and discussed next, and this is followed by a summary of all of the ODLC volumes published by the GFO.

REJECTED (CANCELLED) APPLICATIONS:

Volume 4, Abstracts of Rejected Applications, Filed in Oregon City, Roseburg, and The Dalles Land Offices contains detailed abstracts, genealogies, and supplemental information for claims rejected, cancelled, or considered incomplete by the federal government through specific land offices. The index is by claimant's name followed by the cancelled claim number. Several pages cross-reference the rejected claims to other later land entries. The first page begins with "The following list includes homestead, land warrant, pre-emption and cash entries which covered all or a part of land originally described in a cancelled donation land claim."

These abstracts can be much more interesting than the regular ODLC files because they also include the conflicts, comments, and court references regarding why the claim was denied or cancelled. The names of



Cover of Volume IV with rejected and cancelled ODLC applications

the conflicted owners are listed with the type of land they eventually obtained. This volume may contain individuals who had qualified under the original ODLC opportunities but waited too long to file. If they waited until after 1862, individuals who had obtained land under the Homestead Act may have preceded the late-claiming ODLC applicant for a specific parcel. Details of these conflicts are usually included in the rejected abstracts.

Published in 1967, this volume is not currently indexed on the GFO website. However, images of these rejected applications may be found in the GFO micro-

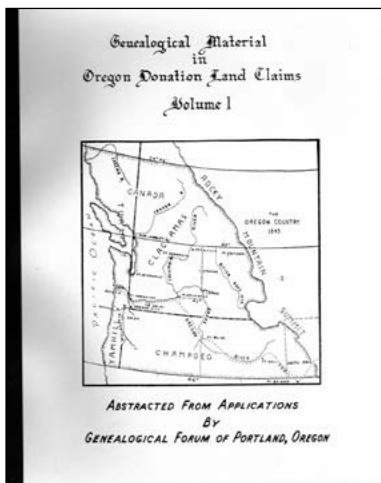
**GENEALOGICAL MATERIAL
IN
OREGON PROVISIONAL
LAND CLAIMS**

Abstracted From Applications,
Vols. I-VIII 1845-1849

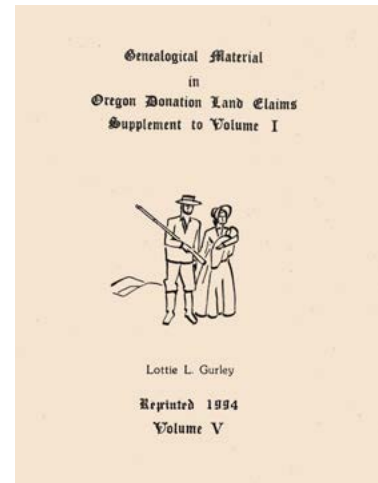
OREGON PIONEER ASSOCIATION

GENEALOGICAL FORUM OF PORTLAND, OREGON, INC.

Oregon City Land Office

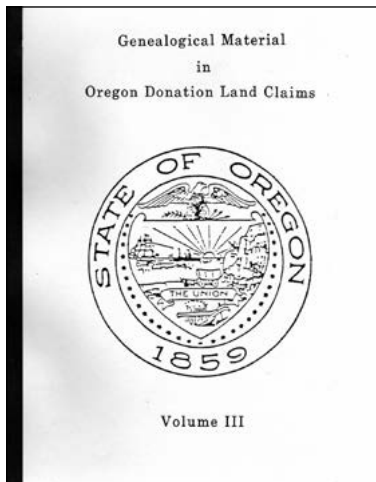


in the original land files for the Oregon City Land Office's records. It became the main title for subsequent volumes with subtitles for the other land offices. Data in Volume 1, which covers ODLC Claims number 1 through 2500, was published in 1957.



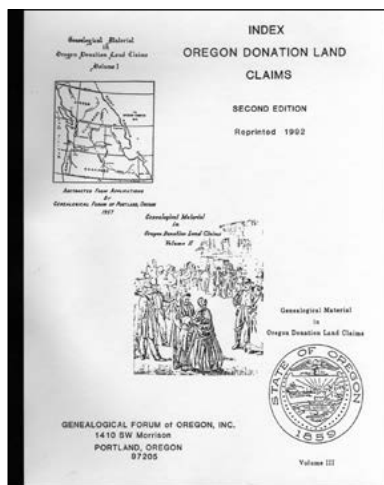
March, 2015

Roseburg, The Dalles, and La Grande Land Offices



Volume 3, *Genealogical Material in Oregon Donation Land Claims* contains abstracts similar to the Oregon City abstracts for Roseburg, The Dalles, and the La Grande Land Offices. The land offices are listed separately and use separate claim number systems. Included is a geographical index for claimants' place of origin. This volume was published in 1962.

Composite Index



Oregon Donation Land Claims, Second Edition exists for all four land offices (Oregon City, Roseburg, The Dalles, and La Grande). It was published in 1987 and reprinted in 1992. A small "Volume III" is printed on the cover of this volume; however, it is not the same as Volume 3 discussed above. This volume is a truncated transcription of the indexes in Volumes 1 through 3. This composite index compresses the abstracted information in the individual volumes for each land office. Occasionally, errors occurred in the transcription from the individual indexes for each land office to the composite

index, so it is recommended that after the researcher finds the claimant in the composite index, they verify the information in the individual land office index. Neither this composite index nor the individual indexes contain rejected land claims. Those are contained only in Volume 4.

Indexes on the GFO Website

ODLC Volumes 1, 2, 3, 5, Provisional Land Claims, plus the Composite Index for Donation Land Claims are reflected in the indexes found on the GFO website.



To search all of GFO's indexes from the GFO home page, click on "Indexes" in the blue Research box. The direct link is: <http://www.gfo.org/search.htm>, or there are separate search lists for claimants in both Provisional Land Claims <http://www.gfo.org/provisional/index.htm> and Donation Land Claims <http://www.gfo.org/donation/index.htm>.

NO INDEX FOR VOLUME 4, ABSTRACTED FROM REJECTED APPLICATIONS ON THE GFO WEBSITE

Please note that neither list on the website includes the names of rejected claimants who are in Volume 4. The Volume 4 material is available only in the microfilm collection and is arranged alphabetically by claimant. An index for Volume 4 regarding the Rejected/Cancelled Land Claims will be added to the GFO website in the future.

So remember that early arrivals in the Willamette Valley may not have applied for an ODLC when they were eligible. If they waited until a later date, they may appear only in this volume of rejections and cancellations (*Volume 4*) (and the associated microfilm, of course).

Spotlight

Using Land Records at the Genealogical Forum of Oregon

Gerry Lenzen

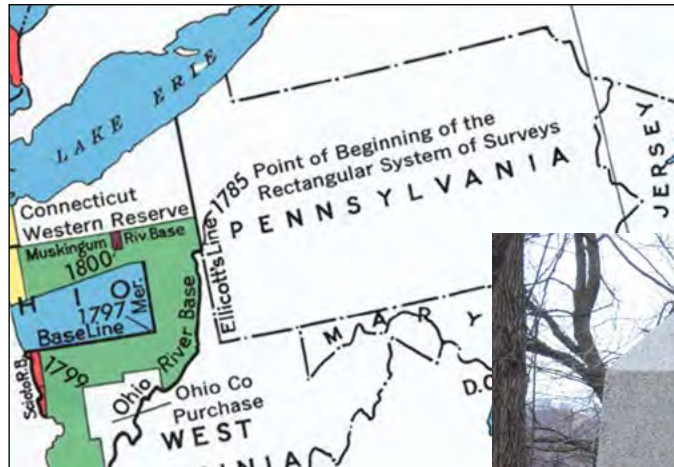
When researching an ancestor or a person of interest (POI), many researchers examine land records in depth. Doing so can help put the POI in context, reveal the names of neighbors, and provide perspective about the land the person walked.

Editor's note: For the reader with no Oregon ancestors or persons of interest, this article may still be relevant if you have an interest in the early Oregon land records for the property where you live.

For the person who wishes to do land research in the Pacific Northwest, the most important thing to determine is the Township (T) and Range (R) of the land parcel. This information may be obtained in several ways. If you have a deed, the property description will provide the Township, Range, and Section (S), i.e., T2S R2E S19. Oregon Donation Land Claims, and possibly Rejected Claims, will also give this data. This information may be found in GFO resources discussed in the March and June 2015 issues of the *Bulletin*. Additionally, the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management website allows a search of General Land Office Records by locality and a person's name for public lands first purchased from the federal government.¹ This will yield Township, Range, and Section for either warranted or patented lands in the Public Domain. Another possibility, if the geographic location is known, is to use the GFO's locator map (discussed later.) However the Township and Range are discovered, it is important to understand this system to use it efficiently.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PUBLIC LAND SURVEY SYSTEM (PLSS)

Under the Federal Northwest Ordinance (Act of July 13, 1787) and several subsequent acts, all of the public lands west of the Ohio River were surveyed by the rectangular grid, or cadastral², survey of measurement. This was done as a means of subdividing and describing public



Map showing the Public Land Survey System "Point of Beginning"



Public Land Survey System "Point of Beginning" monument

domain land in the United States. At this link,³ you can view images of the Northwest Ordinance.

The key survey lines running north and south are called "meridians" and they were numbered or named starting at the Ohio River and going west⁴. The "point of beginning" of the U.S. Public Land Survey System was where the Ohio River leaves Pennsylvania at the northern tip of West Virginia on the Ohio side of the river. This is now designated as a U.S. Historic Landmark.

A site in the west hills of Portland, Oregon, called the Willamette Stone, is the point from which all of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho (west of the Rocky Mountains) were surveyed. This location was established with measurements from the original site on the bank of the Ohio River. The Willamette Stone is now an Oregon State Heritage Site.



The Willamette Stone in Portland's west hills.

From the Willamette Stone, a vertical (or longitudinal) line running north and south was established. This principal meridian was named the Willamette Meridian. Working from this meridian, additional vertical lines were surveyed east and west, and these were called Township (T) lines.

Again, using the Willamette Stone, a horizontal (or latitudinal) line was surveyed. This first line is called the Base Line. More horizontal lines were surveyed to the north and south of the Base Line creating Range (R) Lines.



The Willamette Stone is located at the intersection of the Willamette Meridian and the Base Line.

All of the lines (both Township and Range) are approximately six miles apart. This means it is approx-

imately six miles from one Township line to the next Township line and about six miles from each Range line to the next Range line. Each Township and Range is further subdivided into one-mile squares called Sections. There are 36 Sections, or 36 square miles, in each Township and Range. These units may be further subdivided into half, quarter, or eighth sections, or further subdivided into even smaller lots or parcels. The Township and Range designations are included in the description for any parcel of land owned by an individual.

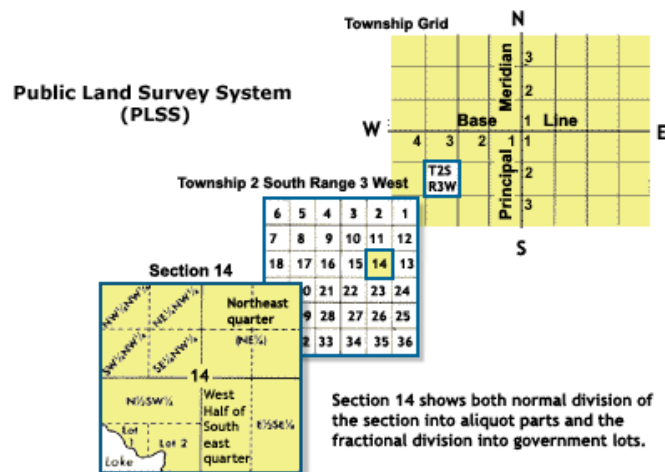
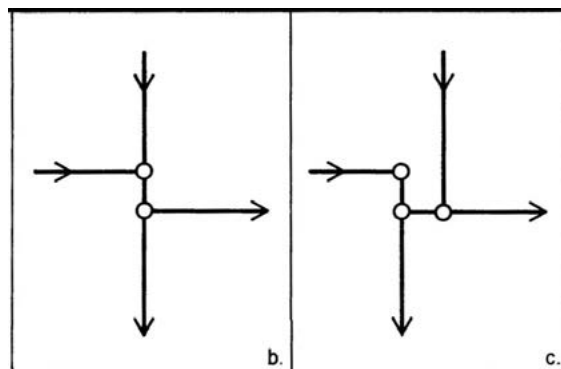


Illustration of the PLSS system from the National Atlas

Because this system is a flat overlay on something that is not flat, there are a few exceptions to this "rule." Due to the curvature of the earth, the survey lines need to be adjusted every few Sections. This is shown on maps by the use of an elongated "S" curve to the next Section on a roadway. It can also be shown as a square corner adjustment to the next Section on a map. This adjustment may occur on both left and right corners of a given Section. Also, remember that if land is on a slope, even though it may only show it to be in one section (or 36 square miles) the actual acreage may be much more if walking the surface of the ground, especially in mountainous areas.



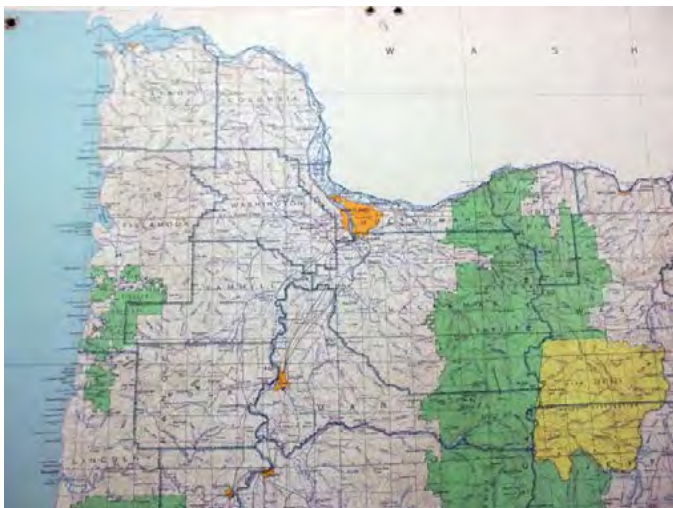
Two possible adjustments to Section corners.

other information. The Oregon State Archives holds many of the oldest land records originally filed at the county level. Newer records will be among the counties' holdings—usually at the county courthouse. Regular readers of the *Bulletin* may remember an article in the December 2014 issue (page 17) that featured information about the Newberry Library's online interactive map resource.

This tool allows the user to view the county boundary changes in each of the states at any specified time.

USING THE GFO LOCATOR MAP

If the researcher is unable to find the description of the land in existing records, but knows the geographic location of the parcel, the GFO has a large map of the state of Oregon on the west side of the red brick pillar in the center of the library that will help to determine Township and Range. Find the Willamette Meridian and Base Line, then locate the property of interest and count the Township and Range lines from the Willamette Meridian and the Base Line to the property location on the map.

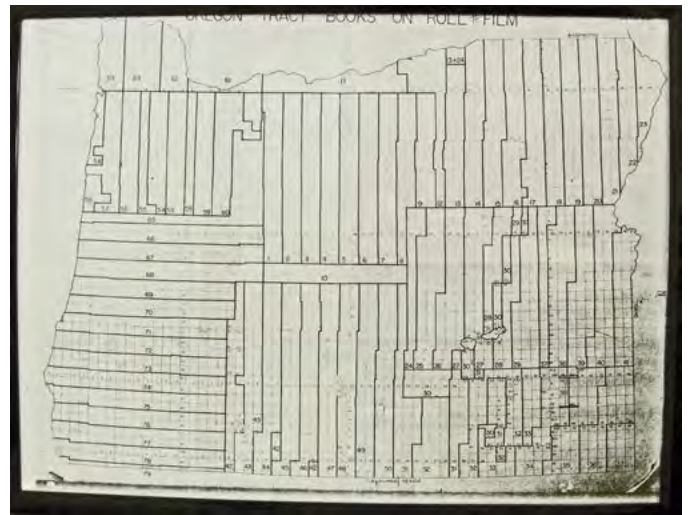


GFO map showing Township and Range Lines in Oregon

Once the Township and Range are known, there are several other GFO resources that may be of value. Begin with the three locator maps hanging in the hallway just off the multi-purpose area. These maps will help to identify specific microfilm reels that may provide additional information about the property.

OREGON TRACT (REGISTER) BOOKS

These records will provide the name of the first purchaser and the date of the sale as well as the name of the patentee and additional information about the patent.



Use the Township and Range information and this map to determine the specific box number for the microfilm. For example, if the property is Township 2 South (T2S) and Range 2 West (R2W) it will be found in reel number 53. Begin at the Willamette Stone and count two spaces south or down, then count two spaces west or left. Likewise, if the site is T10E R2N, the record will be in reel number 11.

Retrieve the tract books microfilm from the drawers in the Oregon collection. It will be in a plain white box as are many others, so be careful to retrieve the correct film. Read the box cover very carefully to avoid lost research time due to retrieving the incorrect box. We recommend using a brown wooden block, located on the top of the cabinet, to mark the place where the film was removed so the microfilm can be put back in the correct location.

The actual Tract Books from which the images were taken are large two-page registers. This type of book was used in most states to record original entries from the federal government under land grant laws. The entry information is organized numerically by Section, regardless of the overall assembly of the books. The information on any individual film can be organized in two different ways. Usually the information is arranged by Township within a Range. Occasionally they are compiled by Range within Township. The first few frames of the film should be carefully reviewed to determine which system is used on a specific reel.

The left page of each tract book entry provides a description of the tract by Township, Range, and Section. It also gives the name of the purchaser and sometimes the number of acres. The information may be listed sequentially by the specific claim number in the specific Township/Range.

UNDERSTANDING NUMBERS

CLAIM NUMBER

- Not the same as ODLN certificate number
- Specific to each Township/Range
- May indicate parcels in more than one section in the same Township

NOTIFICATION NUMBER

- On the Oregon Plat Map
- Used on all forms relating to the claim prior to the time the ODLN number was issued

CERTIFICATE/ODLN NUMBER

- Also shown as the receipt or certificate of purchase number from Washington, D.C.

Please note that this claim number is a different number from the ODLN certificate number, and may indicate parcels in more than one Section in the same Township. Other times the information may be entered strictly in Section number sequence, so the same claim number may appear in more than one Section. Because the claim number applies to the order in which claims within a Township/Range were made, there may be similar numbers in adjacent Townships/Ranges. Within any Township/Range, the numbers usually ranged from 1 to less than 100.

The right page of each tract book entry specifies the date of sale, the receipt/certificate number (which is also the ODLN number), the name of patentee, date of the patent, the volume and page in the Federal land register book in which the patent is recorded, and the federal act under which the patent was issued (i.e., ODLN, Homestead, 1820, etc.) Sometimes the patent was issued to someone other than the original warrant holder. The land warrant could be sold for whatever value the holder could receive. In turn, the new warrant owner would receive the patent in their name, in which case the patent may have an annotation providing the original warrantee's name.

PROCESS FOR OBTAINING A LAND PATENT

WARRANT

- Issued as private application or for military service
- Gives the holder the right to claim land
- Restricts the right of others to claim the land
- Could be sold to another person or entity

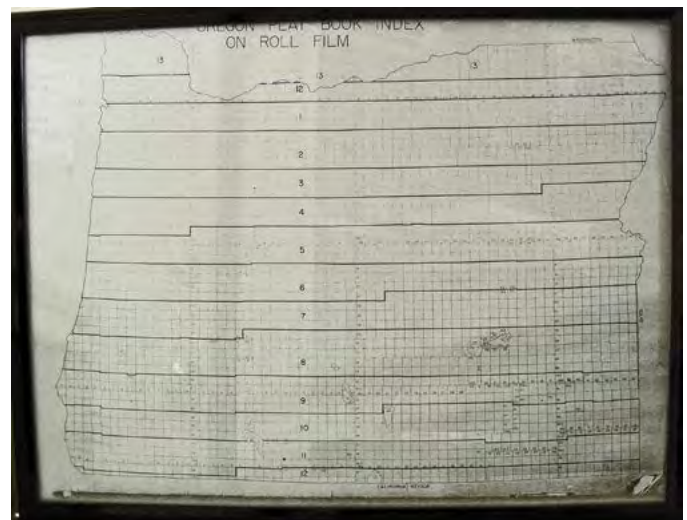
The warrant holder (whether the original recipient or someone who had purchased it from the original holder) could file a claim at a land office. This claim would be surveyed to confirm the details and was sent to Washington, D.C. where a patent would be issued in the warrant holder's name.

PATENT

A land patent is the initial transfer of a parcel of land from the federal government to an individual or private entity. These transfers of title may be the result of a Donation Land Claim, Military Warrant, Homestead, or Cash Entry.

OREGON PLAT (MAP) BOOKS

Researchers use these records to "see" the land being researched.



Use this map in the same manner as the Tract Book map. The locations in the previous example, T2S R2W, will be found on microfilm reel number 12, and T10E R2N will be found on the same reel. The plat books are also in plain white boxes, so care must be exercised to retrieve the correct microfilm.

On the microfilm, each Township is described by at least two maps. Typically, the first map shown was created in the 1860s after government-approved survey-

ors mapped the claims being made for all individuals under the Donation Land Act of 1850. Claims were given a number in the specific Township where the claim was located. This claim number applied only to that Township; not to any others.

This first map gives the number of each Section. It shows the outside boundaries of each claim in the Township. It details the length (in feet) of each survey run and the angles made at each turning point. Major geographic features such as rivers may be included, as well as the name of the claimant, number of acres claimed, claim number, and notification number. The notification number was taken to the U.S. Surveyor General's Office by the field surveyor. The Office then issued a certificate number to the claimant. This certificate number is what we know as the Oregon Donation Land Claim number. (The notification number was used on all forms, such as affidavits and depositions from the claimant and his neighbors. These were included in the application prior to the time the ODLCL number was issued).

The image of the surveyed ODLCL on the first map may not conform to the grid survey lines because the claim was made before the lines were constructed. The outline resembles a metes and bounds type of survey as was done in the colonial states.

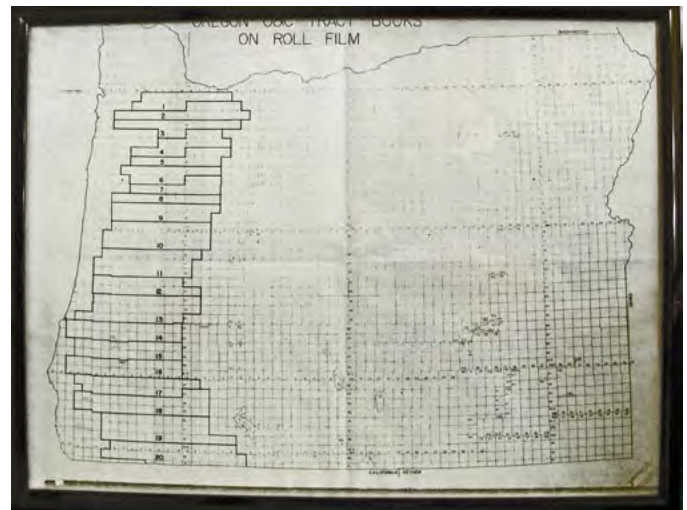
The second map for the Township on the plat book microfilm was drawn from the field notes made by the surveyors as they detailed each of the Oregon Donation Land Claims in any Township. It contains the original measurements on each line established for the Township grid according to the Willamette Meridian and Base Line. These numbers are usually of little interest to researchers as they were created to specifically locate the north/south and east/west boundary lines and the corners of each Section. The important items on this map are the physiographic and man-made features. Rivers and streams are named. Cross-hatching and dimpling was used to convey elevations and depressions. These in turn were named if they were major features. Roads, trails, farm plots, and orchards were sketched. Of most importance to researchers, individual houses were identified with the Oregon Donation Land claimant's name if the house was in existence when the survey was made.

The microfilm may show additional maps for any given Township. Most of them describe details not otherwise shown on the first two maps. This may occur when an individual makes a claim that crosses into two separate Townships. There may be a small explanatory map in both Townships that show the relationship to the whole claim. However, there will be a separate claim

number for the parcel in each Township. The notification number will apply to all parcels in all Townships, as will the certificate number that is issued as the ODLCL number.

OREGON & CALIFORNIA (O&C) RAILROAD PLAT BOOKS

If your POI's land claim has not been located in any other record, it is possible it may be located within the O&C Railroad microfilms. Purchases of land from the O&C are not found in either county or "special" federal records; however, there may be a notation in the Federal Tract Book regarding a registration in the O&C tract book records.



Use the O&C Plat Books locator map to determine the specific microfilm. Carefully retrieve the O&C Plat Books microfilm from the drawers in the Oregon collection. It is very easy to confuse the tract and plat boxes. There are several numbered Townships on each roll of microfilm.

These records provide an abbreviated survey record of the included lands; the Townships located only within the Willamette Valley and adjacent foothills or mountains to the east and west. Therefore, they begin at the Willamette Stone (T1) and go south to the California border (T41), and they include information only from Range 13 West to Range 7 East.

The O&C Plat Books are "special" federal records that are much smaller and contain very little information. The title of this series of records implies that they are maps, but they are not. They are forms that contain spaces for entering the following information: Meridian, Township, Range, Section, part of section, number of acres, kind of land entry, number of entry, date of entry, name of patentee, and date of patent. Similar to other patents, the patent for some of the O&C lands may have

OREGON & CALIFORNIA RAILROAD LANDS



Construction began on the first railroad to connect Oregon to California in 1868. As an incentive to develop the region, the Oregon and California (O&C) Railroad was granted 3.7 million acres of land, laid out in a checkerboard plan and stretching in a 60 mile-wide swath from Portland to the California border. The grant required the O&C to sell the land to settlers for no more than \$2.50 an acre. These lands were available for individual purchase in the 1860s and 1870s through the Homestead Act of 1862.

The O&C attempted to retain the property as long as possible for their own economic benefit. In Oregon, the obvious asset was the value of the timberland that fringed the valley on the east to the Cascade Mountains and covered the coast mountain range to the west. An announcement by the O&C in 1903, that they had no plans to sell any additional land brought about an appeal to the federal government by affected Oregon counties. In 1916 Congress terminated the grant rights and reclaimed over two million acres.

Before the termination, many individuals did purchase private patents to the O&C lands. As with purchases directly from the federal government, these transactions were not recorded in county records until such time as the individuals who purchased from the O&C then sold the property to someone else, at which time that transaction was (and subsequent transactions were) entered in the land records for the county in which the parcel was located. The lands purchased from the O&C are not found in the Federal records either. They can be found in the microfilm of the O&C Tract Books at the GFO library. The grants from the federal government gave the railroad the right and the responsibility to sell the land, although all of Sections 16 and 36 in each township were reserved to the local government, usually the county, for the use of public schools.

been issued to someone other than the original warrant holder. As with the regular ODLIC patents, frequently a person would sell the warrant to someone else, who in turn received the property's patent in the warrant.

OREGON LAND SURVEYS

For a more in-depth look at a land parcel of interest, the Oregon Land Survey microfiche may be of value. The GFO microfiche collections are in a cabinet adjacent to the microfilm viewer in the multipurpose room at the back of the library.

Several of the drawers contain records organized by Range from 1 East to 49 East from the Willamette Meridian. Other drawers contain records organized by Range from 1 West to 15 West from the Willamette Meridian. Within each range, the microfiche are organized from 1 South to 41 South from the Willamette Base Line, and from 1 North to 9 North from the Willamette Base Line.

Using a known Township and Range, locate the correct packet. The packet will contain two "sets" of film. The first set will be labeled 1 of (n) in the upper right corner. The last one will be labeled (n) of (n). This set will show the specific field notes for the government surveys of each Township. Somewhere on the images the name of your POI will probably be listed. No index to the names in these records exists. Further, each Township was surveyed in a different manner so there is no way to estimate where the surveyors may have started or finished. They did not start with Section 1 and proceed through Section 36, but instead wandered all over, tying in certain specific landmarks and man-made improvements as best they could.

The last microfiche in the Township packet, the second "set" will be labeled 1 of 1, contains images of maps that are either identical or very similar to the ones contained in the Oregon Plat Books. One map image will outline the boundaries of the Oregon Donation Land Claims, and the other will detail the landforms and man-made improvements. Often there are additional maps that describe obscure relationships and features of the landscape or for the Oregon Donation Land Claims.

Note: Usually, this last microfiche is easier and quicker to view before attempting to load the microfilm for the plat books. However, there may be more maps on the Plat Books microfilm than appear on the Land Survey microfiche. Therefore, both should be investigated.

INDIVIDUAL ODLIC SURVEYS

The microfiche cabinet also holds a small collection of ODLIC surveys, each identified with the term “DLIC” followed by a number in the upper left corner. This is the claim number that was issued to each applicant within a Township. Remember, the claim number was unique to each Township, so it is necessary to know the Township before attempting to locate a claim number in this collection. The claim number is usually abbreviated as a capital “C” or as “CL” on the notes and maps. The Township and Range are also listed on each microfiche label. The records contain the complete survey for each of the

claims and the name of the claimant; however, it does not appear that all claims are included in this record set.

MINING CLAIMS

The microfiche cabinet also contains records for the Oregon mining claims on file with the Bureau of Land Management. The GFO has no index for these files. They are organized by the name of the mining claim so it is necessary to know the specific name of a claim to be able to use this record set.

Author's note: I would like to offer my thanks to Nanci Remington and all the Bulletin editors and proofreaders for their help with this article.

ENDNOTES

1. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx>
2. From the French, “cadastre,” which means “register.”
3. http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc_large_image.php?doc=8
4. Meridians were numbered until the sixth Principal Meridian (Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma). From there they were named for a feature or place, i.e. “Willamette Meridian,” which, for example, might have been about the 14th Principal Meridian.
5. http://sos.oregon.gov/archives/Pages/records/provisional_territorial.aspx
6. <http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/> As of 13 August 2015 the interactive map portion of this site is temporarily unavailable, but other elements are still functional.
7. The federal tract books in the GFO collection contain entries to about 1900 under the various federal land acts.