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Guide to the Land Grants Collection circa 1870



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.LANDGRANTS
Title	Land Grants. Collection
Date	1837-1844
Size	2 linear feet (1 box)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract The Land Grant Collection contains official documents from the General Land Office of the United States government from 1837-1844. These land grants were provided through the Land Act of 1820, enabling individuals to purchase public domain land from the government through credit or installment systems.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Land Grants. Collection, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Historical Note

Land grants are official gifts of land made from some governing authority to an individual, often for services rendered to the authority (e.g. military service). In the United States, the practice of awarding land grants extends back to the 16th century when Spain, Portugal, and Britain, among others, would distribute the grants for the purposes of encouraging settlement of the new land in the form of farms, missions, and towns. Initially, these grants stipulated by law that the patentee improve the land; otherwise, the land would revert to the government.

The Land Act of 1820, enacted on April 24, 1820, was an act of Congress in the United States to make public domain lands available for purchase on a credit system. The lands available were generally located in the unsettled "frontier," the lands of Ohio, the Northwest Territory and the Missouri Territory. The law was established to combat the financial difficulties faced by farmers due to the Panic of 1819, the first financial crisis experienced by the sovereign United States. Farmers were having difficulty paying off loans and prices had become too high for the average family moving west.

While the Land Act of 1820 was a positive change for Americans looking to settle in the West and for investors looking to expand their holdings, it did lead to increased confiscation of land from Native Americans. Additionally, although they were aided by credit extensions and payment plans, ongoing financial struggles experienced by those who had purchased land prior to the Act of 1820 led to the passing of the Relief Act of 1821 which adjusted repayment methods for those individuals.

The General Land Office (1812-1946) was an independent agency of the United States government which was responsible for the surveying, platting, and sale of public domain lands in the Western United States. The GLO administered the Homestead Acts (1862, 1866, 1909) and the Preemption Act of 1841. As a matter of policy, they also administered all purchases of public domain land through the government.

Scope Note

The Land Grant Collection contains official documents relating to purchases of public domain land from the government by individuals. All documents cite the Land Act of 1820 and are administered by the General Land Office. Documents are dated 1837-1844. As such, documents from 1837 are signed by President Martin Van Buren (1837-1841), and those dated 1841-1844 are signed by President John Tyler (1841-1845). President William Henry Harrison's (1841) signature does not appear on any documents, due in part to his short tenure (32 days) as President. The largest purchase in the collection is the first, conveyed to Charles Ely. As there are numerous documents associated with his purchase, they have been placed into the first folder. The remaining documents are in the second. All documents are arranged chronologically.

The collection was previously part of the Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection.

Subject Headings

- Baker, Joshua, fl. 1842-1844
- Brownson, John, fl. 1844
- Castagner, Joseph, fl. 1844
- Day, Hannah, fl. 1841
- Day, Lucinda, fl. 1844
- Dean, Daniel W., fl. 1844
- Ely, Charles, fl. 1837
- Huff, Jacob, fl. 1844
- Nash, John, fl. 1841
- Vines, Thomas C., fl. 1842
- Tyler, John, 1790-1862
- Van Buren, Martin, 1782-1862
-
- Land grants

INVENTORY

Box 1

Folder 1-5

Land grants, 19 pg., Charles Ely, 1837 Apr. 18.

Box 1

Folder 6

Land Grants, 1841-1842

- Land grant: manuscript, 1 pg., Hannah Smith and John Nash, Oct. 6, 1841
- Land grant: manuscript, 1 pg., Thomas C. Vines, Sept. 20, 1842
- Land grant: manuscript, 1 pg., Joshua Baker (Thomas C. Vines), Sept. 20, 1842

Box 1

Folder 7

Land grants, 5 pg., John Brownson, June 13, 1844

Box 1

Folder 8

Land Grants, 1844

- Land grants, 1 pg., Joseph Castagnier, June 13, 1844
- Land grants, 1 pg., Daniel W. Dean, June 13, 1844
- Land grants, 1 pg., Jacob Huff and Lucinda Day, June 13, 1844
- Land grants, 1 pg., John Brownson, Sept. 25, 1844
- Land grants, 1 pg. Joshua Baker, Oct. 25, 1844