

## What You Can Learn from Deed Books

— George G. Morgan

I've been fascinated with deeds, indentures, and other documents recorded in deed books. Land and property records are among the most plentiful documents in existence in the United States but, unfortunately, they are some of the least used resources. I believe that this is due to the fear of having to deal with drawing plat maps and working with measurements associated with "metes and bounds" and "townships and ranges." Yes, these are necessary if you want to physically locate and visit the piece of property on which your ancestors lived. However, beyond locating the property, there is a wealth of information to be found in the deed books themselves kept in county courthouses and archives.

In "Along Those Lines . . ." this week, I want to share how to use a deed index and a few of the major items that can be found in these records.

### The Deed Index

Usually, anything listed in a deed book is indexed when it entails the sale of property. Other items may also be indexed, either in the grantor/grantee index or in a separate index of miscellaneous documents that are different from property transactions. The seller is referred to as the "grantor," and the purchaser is referred to as the "grantee."

There may be several deed indexes in a courthouse and these are to be found with the recorder of deeds or a similar official. One index is created alphabetically by grantor and the grantee and a reference to the piece of property is listed, along with the volume and page of the deed book in which the transcript of the deed or other transaction is recorded. Another index may exist that is organized alphabetically by grantor, and then by grantee, and will include a reference to the specific piece of property. In many places there also are indexes of the property description itself and the name(s) or the owner(s). Plat maps are good examples of physical images of townships that depict a piece of property and the name(s) of the current owners, and many courthouses retain these records for many years.

### Contents of a Deed Book

Don't make the assumption that a deed book contains only deeds. There may be other documents included there too. However, recognize that not all of the materials you find in a deed book are primary sources, (the original documents created at or near the time of the event). The contents of the deed books are, in fact, transcriptions of the original documents and therefore qualify as secondary sources. Transcription errors by the recording clerk may exist. The original documents were signed by and given to the grantor

and grantee.

A deed book may contain, among other things, the following types of records.

**Indentures.** These are documents that state the terms under which a security (or bond) is issued or secured. Consider the fact that an indenture may relate to land, as in a mortgage, to a term of servitude, to the purchase of slaves, to the purchase of livestock, or to some other commodity or produce. The property is described, priced, and the term of the arrangement is stated. Think of an indenture much the same as an "agreement of sale" that is used in the sale of real estate or other property today.

**Deeds.** A deed is a signed and usually sealed instrument containing some legal transfer, bargain, or contract. If the grantee pays cash for property, the grantee releases the property via the use of a legal deed and the transaction is recorded in the deed book. If the buyer purchases the property on credit or some other type of bond, an indenture may be created, signed, and filed with the recorder of deeds (or other land official) until such time as the debt is paid. At that time, a deed is issued and usually recorded at the courthouse.

You should note that, in earlier times, it may not have been convenient to travel to a courthouse to record a transaction. Some property transfers occurred pri-

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**Irene Johnson**

**From Berlin to Bavaria to Yemen to Italy to Australia to Salt Lake City, UT, Irene Johnson** has had a remarkable journey by anyone's standards,

but the journey she finds herself taking most often is into the past as she ferrets out the dates, places, stories, and faces that make up the history of a life. Genealogy--Family History--call it what you will, it's always an adventure when Irene is along for the journey.

She's the host of "Relatively Speaking," the new Genealogy call-in show you can hear every Sunday 4-6 PM Mountain Time from Salt Lake City. Give a listen!

To hear Irene's new show Sunday afternoon from 4:00 to 6:00 PM go to-- <http://www.kutr820.com/> Then click on-- "Listen Live to AM820 Online



## Learn From Deeds

—George G. Morgan

vately between individuals and were not recorded. Others were recorded at a later date when it was convenient to travel to the nearest courthouse. Taxes were still due on the property but the tax bill may have simply been passed along.

Deeds may be excellent indicators of the death date of the owner, as well as the name(s) of children and daughters' married names. I have seen cases in which a parcel of property was passed through several generations without new ownerships having been recorded. When the property was to be sold or otherwise recorded, a deed had to be created that showed the proper chain of inheritance down through the county. A friend in Alachua County, Florida, noted that one will he has indexed actually showed five generations of owners listed. What a bonanza!

**Births.** In some places, the birth of a child was entered in the deed book by the recorder or deeds. This could be a slave or a white child. Therefore, be sure to look at deed books for all possible names in the family.

**Slave Sales or Trades.** The sale or trade of slaves, as abhorrent a practice as it was, may also be recorded in deed books. These records are among the more important clues for African American researchers to locate family members and groups.

**Cemetery Lot Sales.** The purchase of a cemetery lot (or plot) from a municipal government or from an individual may also be recorded in a deed book. However, many private cemeteries, cemetery associations, religious groups, corporations, morticians, and others purchased a larger lot and then sold the lots or plots themselves. Crematory firms may have purchased a lot, built a columbarium (a structure of vaults lined with recesses for cinerary urns), and sold perpetual storage niches.

This list cannot possibly cover all the types of records found in deed books but it will give you an idea of what types of records—and alternative record types—may be found in these volumes.

### Summary

There are many people who can train you in working with surveys and in drawing the configuration of your ancestors' property. E. Wade Hone's book, *Land and Property Research in the United States*, is a definitive guide to the types of lands, the measurement schemes used in the United States and describes many types of land records that can be of use to you.

I hope you will start using the deed books in the counties in which your ancestors lived. They certainly can tell you about your ancestors' movements and about their financial status. The

physical deed copies they provide may give you clues that you otherwise might miss.

Happy Hunting!  
George

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## DAR DATABASE

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country began creating statewide indexes for each state's set of GRC reports. The work began in Virginia, and then in Maryland and West Virginia, with members using SkyIndex software to create these extremely valuable finding aids.

The president general of DAR, Linda Tinker Watkins, felt this project was so important that she incorporated the indexing of the GRC reports into her larger "President General's Project" to create databases, indexes, and finding aids for many DAR materials. It resulted in the first version of the DAR Library's "National Index to the Genealogical Records Committee Reports" and it is now available free online for any researcher to use at [www.dar.org](http://www.dar.org). For more information you can also write to National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, 1776 D Street, NW, Washington D.C. 2003-5303

### September 7-10, 2005 Salt Lake City, Utah FGS National Conference, "Reminders of the Past, Visions of the Future."

Federation of Genealogy Societies (FGS) and the Utah Genealogical Society (UGA) over 130 lectures and workshops to serve all levels of genealogists.

Visit [www.fgs.org](http://www.fgs.org) or [www.infouga.org](http://www.infouga.org) to learn more.



## Important Irish Database Online

A significant new collection has been added to the online databases at NewEnglandAncestors.org, the website for the New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS). The Search for Missing Friends: Irish Immigrant Advertisements Placed in The Boston Pilot 1831-1920, previously offered only in book and CD-ROM form, is now available to members of NEHGS online.

Starting in 1831 and continuing for nine decades, the nationally distributed, Boston Pilot newspaper printed over 45,000 "Missing Friends" advertisements placed by friends and relatives looking for loved ones with whom they had lost touch. No one knows how many of these families found each other as a result of the ads, but these nineteenth- and early twentieth-century notices continue to help families today find their ancestors.

The Missing Friends collection is an exceptional resource for anyone researching immigrant Irish families. In the following example of an advertisement published under "Information Wanted" on July 21, 1866, a number of family details are provided: OF MICHAEL DOLAN and wife (maiden name Mary Grady), both natives of Boughane, parish of Ballantobber, county Mayo. They emigrated from Ireland about 23 years ago, and when last heard of he was talking to Thomas Horan, at the High Falls, State of New York; it is supposed he went to Wisconsin, or some other Western State, about eighteen years ago. Any information of his whereabouts will be thankfully received by his brother-in-law, James Grady, care of John McCann, Hyde Park Post-office, Luzerne county, Pennsylvania.

Unlike the Boston College online database (<http://infowanted.bc.edu>), where details are selected from the advertisements, the NEHGS database provides the entire ad as originally published, and later republished in the popular multi-volume book series. In addition to family and location information, many of the listings provide poignant insights of family members in search of one another. This database adds over 100,000 names to the NEHGS online offerings. The flexibility of searching the Missing Friends database makes it particularly useful to genealogists and historians. The names of all of the subjects of the ads have been indexed, and are searchable by first and last name. The names of other individuals can be found by using the keyword search. This same type of

### Mae Elizabeth Mustee March 18, 1925-April 21, 2005



Long time resident Mae Elizabeth (Cheek) Mustee passed away April 21, 2005 at the age of 80. She was born in Canon, GA to Lyman W. Cheek and Winona Cheek, March 18, 1925 and spent her childhood in Kansas and graduated from High School in Topeka, Kansas. Liz received her B.S. Degree from St. Mary's College in Xavier, Kansas and her Master's degree from Boston University. Liz was a member of DAR, UDC, Delta Kappa Gamma, Sigma Theta Tan Society of Nursing, two local Art Groups and local and national Genealogical Societies, and received awards of Merit, The Distinguished Award Performance for Mesa State College, School of Nursing. Following high school she joined Sisters of Charity in Leavenworth, Kansas as Sister Mary Mathew, and served the community for over 20 years.

She met Glenn F. Mustee and was married June 30, 1977 and was a member of the St. Joseph's Church in Grand Junction. She had many interests which included oil and watercolor painting, genealogy, gardening, traveling and was involved in the design and construction of the stained glass windows at St. Joseph's Catholic Church. Survived by Liz is her husband, Glenn of Grand Junction, CO; brothers, Claude W. Cheek and wife Myrna of Denton, TX, Robert D. Cheek and wife Alice of Simpsonville, SC. along with 14 nieces and nephews, 27 great-nieces and nephews and eight great-great-nieces and nephews. Preceding her in death is her brother Darwin Cheek, sisters, Norene Harper and Patsy Winge.

Memorial Service was held on April 29, 2005, at 10:00 am at St. Joseph's Catholic Church.

search can also be used for finding place names, occupations, and for checking the entire text of the entries.

The Search for Missing Friends: Irish Immigrant Advertisements Placed in The Boston Pilot 1831-1920, edited by Ruth-Ann M. Harris and B. Emer O'Keefe, was originally published by NEHGS as an eight-volume series beginning in 1989. A CD-ROM followed in 2002. By making the database available to researchers on the NEHGS website, [www.NewEnglandAncestors.org](http://www.NewEnglandAncestors.org), many more people will be able to access the valuable information contained in these advertisements. The database is available for NEHGS Research Members and above at [www.newenglandancestors.org/research/database/MissingFriends\\_VOL1-8/default.asp](http://www.newenglandancestors.org/research/database/MissingFriends_VOL1-8/default.asp).



## Ancestry.com Census Collections

— Anastasia Sutherland Tyler

My father spent twenty years tracking one family line across the United States. You know the story: Twenty years of backtracking this family from California to Montana to Missouri to Texas. Twenty years of traveling to libraries and spinning microfilmed census enumerations through a reader! Twenty years of not knowing or working with others on the same family lines.

We now have Internet sites that allow us to search for our families' census records from the comfort of our home or office. With online indexes, we can insert information about an individual and the computer searches for our ancestors in obscure places and with strange name spellings. The most complete online census collection resides at Ancestry.com. This collection offers indexes for U.S. and UK censuses, the ability to submit alternate spellings and insert comments, and a chance to connect with others researching the same individuals.

Below is an overview of the census offerings available on Ancestry.com and how you'll find much more in these offerings than names and images.

### U.S. Censuses from 1790 to 1930

Ancestry.com has recently completed and posted the every-name index for the 1900 U.S. Federal Census. With this addition, the U.S. census collection now houses images and indexes of censuses spanning 140 years.

The following chart shows who was enumerated in each census and what type of index Ancestry.com currently has available. (Be on the lookout for continued upgrades to the census indexes.)

Census Year	People Enumerated	Index Type
1790	Head of Household	Head of Household
1800	Head of Household	Head of Household
1810	Head of Household	Head of Household
1820	Head of Household	Head of Household
1830	Head of Household	Head of Household
1840	Head of Household	Head of Household
1850	Everyone at Residence	Every Name
1860	Everyone at Residence	Every Name
1870	Everyone at Residence	Every Name
1880	Everyone at Residence	Every Name
1890*	Everyone at Residence	Every Name
1900	Everyone at Residence	Every Name
1910	Everyone at Residence	Head of Household
1920	Everyone at Residence	Head of Household
1930	Everyone at Residence	Every Name

- Only a small fragment of the 1890 census remains, as

the majority was destroyed. As the name suggests, every-name indexes include the name of every individual listed in a census, rather than only the name of the head of household. Every-name indexes are easier to search because you can search for children, whose names you probably know, and then discover their parents, whose names you may not know.

The U.S. censuses from 1790 through 1840 list only the names of heads of households. In 1850, censuses began including the names of every individual residing in the household.

### Five Decades of UK Censuses and Counting

Those of us with lines that lead back to the British Isles will find help from the recently launched every-name indexes for the 1861, 1871, and 1901 England and Wales censuses. With these additions, the Ancestry.com UK and Ireland Records Collection now has every-name indexes and images for each England and Wales census from 1861 through 1901—five decades of enumerations.

Indexed information varies by census year, but often includes first names, surname, residence (town, parish, and county), birth location, family relations within the household, and age at census. These indexed items are searchable and linked to images of the census pages.

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### "The Ohio Repository" (Canton, Ohio), 12 July 1833, page 3:

Moravians.--The latest statement of the Moravian brethren make the whole number of their sect, dispersed over the globe, to consist of not more than 16,000 members. Notwithstanding this, they maintain 127 missions for the conversion of the brethren, at an annual expense of 60,000 dollars.

During the last sixty years, Russia has acquired by force or fraud, an extent of territory embracing nearly 25,000,000 of inhabitants.

United States Military Lands.--All the lots and fractional lots of the United States Military lands not located, and within the Zanesville Military District, may be entered at the land office in that place, on the 4th Monday in July, at the usual price of Congress lands. A large proportion of these lands are in the counties of Tuscarawas, Coshocton, and Holmes. Such of our farmers as want military land, should now, if possible, rake up the money and purchase it, and thus prevent the best land from falling into the hands of speculators, who buy to sell, and often fleece the honest laborers of the soil out of one or two hundred per cent. in advance on the first cost.--Tuscarawas Chronicle.



## Census Collections

(Continued from page 10)

For the 1881 census, you can use the new search-by-address feature, which can help you determine who lived in your ancestors' home in 1881, find neighboring families that may have had a connection to your ancestor, or discover unknown relatives that may have lived in a house

## Now Online

### FAST FACT: SEARCHING MESSAGE BOARDS CAN BRING BIG REWARDS

Looking for a brick wall ancestor? There maybe someone out there who has the information you need. Check out the message boards at Ancestry.com. With the boards consistently receiving over 1 million page views a day, you may be missing out on a great opportunity to connect with a cousin.

And while you're checking the message boards, don't forget to post your own messages. You may find a fellow researcher that can help you break through that brick wall you've been up against.

Bob Cress of our local genealogy society sent this; it looks like a really neat site, chock full of info. Animated Atlas: Growth of a Nation  
<http://www.animatedatlas.com/movie2.html>

Jo Culberson

passed down through generations. Every-name indexes and images for the 1841 and 1851 census are in this collection's future.

### • Correct and Connect

When my father searched in the library, he was limited to the microfilms and the staff. While library staff members are very knowledgeable about family history and certain regions or topics, my father never found help with the intricacies of the specific lines he was researching. Today all census entries on Ancestry.com (and many other databases not associated with the censuses) offer you the chance add alternate names, report image problems, or make a comment about a record or individual.

- Look for a "Comments and Corrections" link as you search through various records. This link is your gateway to correcting errors and connecting with other researchers through the Alternate Names, Comments, and Image Errors links

**Alternate Names:** No index is perfect. Errors creep in through misspellings in original documents and the indexing process. The alternate names function allows you to correct a misspelled name, add a woman's maiden name, or even add nicknames. The alternate name becomes immediately viewable for other members who visit the comments and corrections link for that record and will become searchable the next time the database is updated. This means that you or anyone else can search for the record using the alternate name you submitted. In the future, you'll be able to add alternate information on locations, dates, and more.

**Comments:** You can add comments that help you connect and communicate with other researchers. A submitted comment becomes a message board associated only with that record. Other researchers who view the record (and click on Comments and Corrections) can read and respond to your comment. You can post questions, data corrections, leads to other records, and so on.

**Image Errors:** If you run into an error

with an image (an image won't load, the shown image is does not match the index entry, etc.), you can report the error to our online quality assurance team. This team will review the error and make corrections as needed. A message will be sent to you when the error is fixed. Image error reporting is only available on records with images associated with them (i.e., censuses, passenger lists, etc.).

### Summing Up

The census collection on Ancestry.com goes way beyond finding names. You're given the ability to trace your ancestors across the United States and your ancestors in the United Kingdom. You can correct errors and connect with other family historians in a new and exciting way. Thus the census enumerations can be, for you, more than just names, dates, and a few interesting facts. The census records can be your doorway to connecting with relatives and enriching your family history.

Anastasia Tyler is the technical editor for the *Ancestry Daily News* and *Ancestry Weekly Digest* and the editor of the *Ancestry Monthly Update*, *MyFamily Weekly Update*, and *Genealogy.com Member Update*.

### CUSTOM FAMILY GROUP SHEETS FOR EACH BRANCH

We recently had three reunions within a week. Having pulled printed copies of family group sheets from my files to take to each, I found I had a mess at the end of the week. We have several sets of double cousins in the family so sheets from one branch got mixed with sheets from another. It dawned on me that if I would put each branch of my ancestors on a family group sheet with a slightly different format it would make the job of sorting and returning all these sheets to the files much easier. Family group sheets are easy to find on genealogy websites, and can be printed on various colors of paper to help even further in the sorting process. It's a little late for me to do this now, but maybe it will help new researchers to keep their files in better order.

Deanna from Wyoming



"New York Times" (New York, New York), 06 July 1885, page 3:

#### STATISTICS OF THE WAR

#### NEW YORK LEADS IN THE LIST OF DEATHS--DISEASE MORE FATAL THAN REBEL BULLETS

Washington, July 5.--Figures are not generally interesting to the mass of readers, but there are very few persons who will not become interested in the statistics of the war of the rebellions presented with this letter. Very few persons have stopped to notice that the States and Territories contributed to the army of the Union nearly 3,500,000 men, and fewer persons have had the opportunity to learn the losses by death in the field, in hospitals of wounds received in action, or from disease contracted during service....

The part borne in the war of the rebellion by the colored troops is interesting in the light of the statistics of losses. Nearly 100,000 colored men were enlisted. Out

of this great number the deaths in action were not many, but the casualty of all kinds amounted to the extraordinary ratio of more than 40 per cent. Disease preyed upon them frightfully, claiming for its victims nearly one out of three of the whole number furnished to the army....

... The average percentage of loss, according to the statistics of the War Department was 15.49 or about 15 1/2 men to each 100 who took the field. The colored troops lost, by all casualties 40.18 per cent. That is uncomfortably near one-half of the whole number of volunteers of the class named. Next to the colored men, the Indians, who volunteered to the number of upward of 3,500, were the greatest sufferers, losing 28 out of every 100.

Tennessee's aggregate loss was more than a fourth of the number of enlistments credited to the State. The loss of Arkansas was almost as high; Alabama was not far behind Arkansas, and the loss of Louisiana, standing seventh, was more than 20 per cent. In 14 States the aggregate losses exceeded the average aggregate loss. Among these States are Florida, Illinois,

Indiana, Maine, Michigan, New Hampshire, Vermont and Wisconsin. The smallest aggregate loss was that of Washington Territory, which was 2.28 per cent. The loss of the District of Columbia was but 2.52 per cent and that of Dakota 2.91. In the whole army, during the term covered by the War Department statistics, there were 4,114 deaths from other accidents except drowning. By drowning, 4,944 soldiers lost their lives. Murder deprived 524 of their lives, and 100 were killed after capture. There were 891 deaths by suicide. Upon the decision of the court martial, 267 men were executed and 61 Union officers and men were executed by the Confederates, 13 of whom were Arkansans, 16 North Carolinians, 9 from Ohio and 8 from Vermont. Sunstroke causes 818 deaths. From other known causes there were 2,034 deaths and from unknown causes 12,121. ...

[Article includes a table, broken down by state, ethnic group and service branch with the number of troops furnished, losses, and percent of losses.]