

Introduction

How to Use this Book

One of the things that really frustrates me is “How-To” articles (or books) that assume I have knowledge I do not have. With that in mind, this book is written as if you, the reader, has never seen or heard of land records.

Another thing I kept in mind as I updated and revised this edition is the genealogy rule that tells us to: *Understand why a record group was compiled, what it was intended to be used for, where the data came from or how the data was gathered, and what the different items within the records mean. Without this knowledge we may miss valuable information, or misunderstand what the record is telling us, or come away empty-handed.*

This book is meant to be not only a source of information and knowledge, but also a reference—something to be referred to each time you begin researching land records in a new state.

The layout of the book is made up of three parts—Information and knowledge chapters, How-To chapters and the Appendix. You really do need to know the history of land records, what makes up land records, how they differ from state to state, and why they differ. It will be very tempting to skip over the “boring stuff” and jump straight into the How-To chapters. If you do, I can almost guarantee that you will be only partially successful and most likely frustrated trying to use land records.

Read the book straight through the first time. Then when you are ready to research a state’s land records consult the Appendix and the How-To chapter that match your type of state to refresh your memory. Speaking of the Appendix—don’t neglect to look through it the first time you read the book. It is there you will find information by state along with helpful sources and resources and websites.

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The information and examples I use throughout the book are the ones that are most common and although the information will most likely apply to your state of interest, there are always going to be differences.