

Research Activity Four: Reading the Land Sales Records

Objectives:

Students will:

- Know how to search the Public Land Sales Database by name and description.
- Locate on an interactive plat map that parcels of land that their research subject or his family bought in the 1800s.
- Incorporate this knowledge into the Web album/site of their research subject.

Materials:

Computer with Web access, printer
Colored pencils, ruler

Opening:

The main idea of this lesson is to learn how land is laid out in Illinois from the original surveys as well as how to find parcels of land using these survey maps. This system was started when the state was surveyed and continues today. The property on which your house stands has a legal description based on this system.

Here is an image of a handwritten journal page of one of Illinois' original surveyors and the legal descriptions of parcels reprinted in text. Notice the comment at the end about the quality of the land. <http://webdev.museum.state.il.us/exhibits/midewin/surveypage1.html>

Procedure:

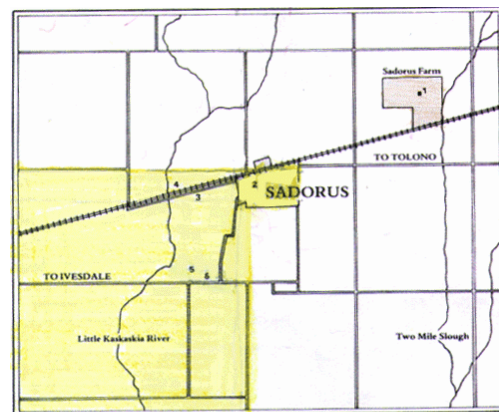
The Public Domain Land Sales Database is a record of all sales of federal lands in Illinois. It is online at

http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/data_lan.html

presented by the Illinois State Archives. You can search it by owner's name or by legal description. Once you have found the land sales record for your farmer or his family, you can then locate it on the plat maps of Illinois.

You can learn what type of land your subjects bought (prairie, timber, swamp) by locating the parcel on the hand-drawn and tinted maps. By studying this map carefully, you can infer what the farmers had to work with, and what work he did to ready the land for agriculture and homesteading.

For example, Henry Sadorus, Sr. was the first of his family to buy land in Illinois. He settled the town of Sadorus, Illinois (being the first resident, he chose to name the town after himself).



The Sadorus, Illinois Area
Approximate locations where Frank Sadorus most commonly photographed:
1. Sadorus family home
2. Phoebe Sadorus' home
3. Frank Sadorus' house
4. Water tank on Wabash railroad line
5. Rock in Sadorus Grove
6. Sugar house in Sadorus Grove

If we search the land sales records for Sadorus, Henry, this is what we get:

Legal								
Name of Purchaser	Description	Section	Township	Range	Meridian	Date Purchased	County	
SADORUS HENRY	E2SW	01	17N	07E	3	12/02/1835	CHAMPAIGN	
SADORUS HENRY	E2LOT1NW	01	17N	07E	3	12/02/1835	CHAMPAIGN	
SADORUS HENRY	NENE	12	17N	07E	3	12/02/1835	CHAMPAIGN	
SADORUS HENRY	W2NE	12	17N	07E	3	02/27/1836	CHAMPAIGN	
SADORUS HENRY	E2LOT2NE	01	17N	07E	3	03/07/1836	CHAMPAIGN	
SADORUS HENRY	E2NE	35	17N	07E	3	02/27/1836	CHAMPAIGN	
SADORUS HENRY	NWNE	35	17N	07E	3	02/27/1836	CHAMPAIGN	
SADORUS HENRY	W2NW	07	17N	08E	3	02/01/1837	CHAMPAIGN	

By clicking on the last entry (or any live link entry), the individual sales record appears.

Detailed Information

Purchaser: SADORUS HENRY
Residence of Purchaser: CHAMPAIGN
Social Status:

Legal Description:

Aliquot Parts or Lot: W2NW
Section Number: 07
Township: 17N
Range: 08E
Meridan: 3
County of Purchase: CHAMPAIGN

Details of Sale:

Acres: 69.07
Price per Acre: 1.25
Total Price: 86.33
Type of Sale: FD
Date of Purchase: 02/01/1837
Volume: 236
Page: 225

The individual record is easier to read than the list because the legal labels (township, section, etc.) are right next to the data. The record also gives the price paid for the land and the number of acres. At the bottom, the volume and page refer to the original book in which it was recorded.

The next lesson will give you the skill and knowledge to search for parcels of land on the original plat maps made by the surveyors. These maps will give you even more information about the land that each person bought.