



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Minnesota State Archives

U.S. GENERAL LAND OFFICE: Alexandria Land District (Minn.)

An Inventory of Its Records

OVERVIEW OF THE RECORDS

- Agency:** United States. Alexandria Land District (Minn.).
- Series Title:** Alexandria Land District records,
- Dates:** 1863-1889.
- Abstract:** Correspondence; registers of homestead, military bounty land, and timber culture entries; patent records; land contest records; and related materials covering land transfers in northwestern Minnesota.
- Quantity:** 7.0 cu. ft.
- Location:** See Detailed Description section for box locations.

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY OF THE ALEXANDRIA LAND DISTRICT

The Alexandria Land District was created out of the western part of the St. Cloud Land District by an act of Congress of July 25, 1868. The first land office was located in Alexandria and opened for business in November, 1868. The boundaries of the Alexandria Land District changed several times. All ranges are west of the 5th principal meridian.

By the act of 1868 the Alexandria district encompassed townships 121-164 in ranges 36-51.

An executive order of August 28, 1871, removed townships 121-124 in ranges 36-49 from the Alexandria district and added them to the Minneapolis district.

An act of March 12, 1872, created the Oak Lake (Crookston) land district out of the northern part of the Alexandria district. The reduced Alexandria district consisted of townships 125-136 in ranges 36-49.

On February 28, 1889, the Fergus Falls land office was closed and the Alexandria district was merged into the St. Cloud district.

Land offices of the Alexandria Land District: Alexandria (November 1868 to November 24, 1876; Fergus Falls (December 11, 1876 to February 28, 1889).

Registers of the Alexandria Land District: L. Lewiston (to May 1869), L. K. Aaker (June 1869-September 13, 1875), and Soren Listoe (September 25, 1875-February 1889).

Receivers of the Alexandria Land District: J. H. VanDyke (1869-December? 1874), Warren Adley (January 1875-August 1876), and John H. Allen (September 1876-February 1889).

ORGANIZATION OF THE RECORDS

These records are organized into the following sections:

Abstract of Preemption Declaratory Statements, 1869-1872. partial volume.
Contest Docket, 1879-1883. 1 volume.
Correspondence: Letters Received from GLO, 1868-1889. 4 cubic feet (4 boxes).
Correspondence: Receiver's Letters Sent, 1869-1880. 2 volumes.
Correspondence: Register's Letters Sent, 1869-1881. 4 volumes.
Miscellaneous Records, 1878-1885. 1 folder.
Record of Patents Delivered, 1884-1889. 1 volume.
Register of Certificates to Purchasers, 1869-1889. 1 volume.
Register of Final Homestead Certificates, 1869-1889. 1 volume.
Register of Homestead Entries, 1863-1889. 2 volumes.
Register of Military Bounty Land Warrant Entries, 1869-1888. 3 volumes.
Register of Timber Culture Entries, 1873 – February 1889. partial volume.

OTHER FINDING AIDS

Some of the volumes include indexes.

INDEX TERMS

These records are indexed under the following headings in the catalog of the Minnesota Historical Society. Researchers desiring materials about related topics, persons or places should search the catalog using these headings.

Topics:

Afforestation—Minnesota.
Betterments—Minnesota.
Bounties, Military—United States.
Cities and towns—Minnesota.
Dakota Indians—Land tenure.
Deeds—Minnesota.
Homestead law—Minnesota.
Indian land transfers—Minnesota.
Land grants—Minnesota.
Land titles—Registration and transfer—Minnesota.
Land titles—Registration and transfer—Minnesota—Accounting.
Land titles—Registration and transfer—Minnesota—Cases.
Pioneers—Minnesota—Biography.
Pre-emption rights (United States).
Public land sales—Minnesota.
Public lands—Minnesota.

Railroad land grants—Minnesota.
Sioux half-breed scrip.
Veterans—Minnesota.

Organizations:

United States. General Land Office.
United States. Saint Cloud Land District (Minn.).

Types of Documents:

Naturalization records.

Titles:

United States. Preemption Act of 1841.
United States. Timber Culture Act.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Preferred Citation:

[Indicate the cited section and the volume and page or item and folder title here]. U.S.
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Archives.

See the Chicago Manual of Style for additional examples.

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MNHV2469-A; MNHV2470-A; MNHV2471-A

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE RECORDS

Note to Researchers: To request materials, please note both the location and box numbers shown below.

Abstract of Preemption Declaratory Statements, 1869-1872. 0.2 cu. ft. (partial volume).

Abstracts of preemption declaratory statements filed in the Alexandria land district under provisions of the General Preemption Act of 1841. The abstract for the Alexandria land district is recorded in volume 1 of the Crookston Abstract of Preemption Declaratory Statements. See Crookston Land District: Abstract of Preemption Declaratory Statements (cataloged separately) for details.

Location	Box	
114.I.1.4F-1	----	Abstract of Preemption Declaratory Statements, 1869-1872. partial volume.

Contest Docket, 1879-1883. 1 volume.

A summary record of official proceedings in contests brought against land entries in the Alexandria land district.

The docket entry for each contest case includes the following information: names of plaintiff (contestant) and defendant (entryman), number of the entry contested, legal description of the parcel covered by the contested entry, summary of actions taken on the case, and citations to decisions of the register and receiver or the commissioner of the General Land Office.

Many of the contests involve contested homestead entries on land claimed by various railroads as part of their land grants.

Arrangement: Chronological by the date the contest was filed.

Indexing-Note: There are indexes in each volume.

Location	Box	
115.L.7.8F	---	Contest Docket, 1879-1883. 1 volume.

Correspondence: Letters Received from GLO, 1868-1889. 4.0 cu. ft. (4 boxes).

Letters received by the register and receiver of the Alexandria land district from the commissioner of the General Land Office. They include letters of transmission and acknowledgment, instructions to the register and receiver, decisions of the land commissioner and secretary of the interior in contested cases, and notices of approval or rejection of land entries.

The letters forwarding decisions of the commissioner and the secretary of the interior contain the most significant information. They generally include a summary of the facts in the case, giving information on the date of settlement and entry, improvements made on the claim, and biographical information on the contestants and witnesses. Some of these letters include transcripts of testimony and affidavits relating to the case.

Among the subjects discussed in the other letters are preemption, homestead, timber culture, military bounty land warrant, and cash entries; railroad land grants; public land sales; and the general operation of the land office.

Arrangement: Arranged chronologically.

Related materials: The General Land Office's Original Entry Tract Books (cataloged separately) include citations, by date sent, to letters received from the commissioner of the GLO regarding specific parcels of land.

Location	Box	
107.C.12.7B	1	November 1868 - 1877, Alexandria.
107.C.12.8F	2	December 1876 - 1880, Fergus Falls.
107.C.12.9B	3	1881-1884, Fergus Falls.
107.C.12.10F	4	1885 - May 1889, Fergus Falls.

Correspondence: Receiver's Letters Sent, 1869-1880. 2 volumes.

Handwritten copies of letters sent by the receiver of the Alexandria land district in his capacities as receiver of public money and government disbursing agent. Arranged chronologically.

Principal correspondents are the commissioner of the General Land Office, secretary of the treasury, and comptroller of the Treasury Department. The letters include transmittals of monthly and quarterly reports of accounts current and estimated office expenditures; inventories of office supplies and records; requests for information in procedural matters; responses to inquiries from the General Land Office or the Treasury Department about office receipts and expenditures; and reports on public auctions and the general operation of the land office. Occasional letters relate to contested entries. There is considerable overlapping of subject matter between the Receiver's Letters Sent and the Register's Letters Sent.

Location	Volume	
115.L.7.8F	1	March 4, 1869 - June 5, 1878.
115.L.7.8F	2	June 7, 1878 - March 30, 1880.

Correspondence: Register's Letters Sent, 1869-1881. 0.6 cu. ft. (4 volumes).

An incomplete set of handwritten and letterpress copies of outgoing letters of the register of the Alexandria land district, arranged chronologically. They are written primarily to the commissioner of the General Land Office, with some additional letters to federal and state officials and private citizens. Some letters of the receivers are included.

Letters to the GLO fall into two broad categories: routine interoffice communications and letters relating to imperfect or contested entries. The routine administrative correspondence includes letters of transmittal and acknowledgment, monthly and quarterly reports of entries made, record of patents delivered, requests for record books and forms, inquiries on procedural matters, and general commentary on the operation of the land office.

The letters relating to contested entries include reports of the decisions of the register and receiver, accompanied by summaries of the facts and witnesses' testimony for those cases that

were appealed to the commissioner of the GLO. In addition to naming the rival claimants and giving the legal description of the contested parcel, these letters often cite the date of settlement and entry, describe the improvements made—sometimes in great detail—and give biographical information on the contestants and witnesses in the case.

The letters concerning imperfect entries are usually responses to requests from the commissioner for additional information needed to approve an entry. This most often relates to the entryman's naturalization, change in name, witnesses' testimony, or procedural matters.

The series includes occasional letters to registers of other land offices and to the U.S. Surveyor General, and a few letters to the Minnesota governor or state land commissioner relating to state land grants.

Letters to private individuals consist primarily of notices of hearings set, appeals forwarded, or decisions rendered in contested cases; requests for additional information or testimony; and procedural instructions necessary to perfect an entry.

Among the topics covered in the letters sent are: homestead and preemption claims, military bounty land warrant entries, railroad land grants, Sioux half-breed scrip entries, townsite locations, public land sales, and state land grants.

Location	Volume	
115.L.7.8F	1	February 1869 - July 24, 1872.
114.H.3.2F-1	2	July 31, 1872 - May 22, 1876.
115.L.7.8F	3	May 27, 1876 - November 10, 1880.
115.L.7.8F	4	October 1879 - January 1881 (letterpress).

Miscellaneous Records, 1878-1885. 1 folder.

Miscellaneous documents filed in support of land entries, arranged chronologically. They include several copies of naturalization records, proofs of military service, and a proof of right to preempt land.

Location	Box	
115.L.7.8F	---	Miscellaneous Records, 1878-1885. 1 folder.

Record of Patents Delivered, 1884-1889. 1 volume.

A record of patents delivered to patentees or their agents for land entered in the Alexandria land district.

The record gives the type and number of entry, person to whom the patent was issued, date the patent was issued, volume and page where the patent is recorded in GLO records, and name and address of the person to whom the patent was delivered.

Arrangement: Roughly chronological by date delivered.

Indexing-Note: Indexed by name of patentee.

Location	Box	
114.H.3.3B-1	---	Record of Patents Delivered, 1884-1889. 1 volume.

Register of Certificates to Purchasers, 1869-1889. 1 volume.

An abstract of certificates issued by the register of the Alexandria land district for land entries made by cash purchase, scrip, or warrant. The certificate established the buyer's legal claim to a parcel of land pending issuance by the GLO of a patent that formally transferred title.

The abstract for each certificate includes the following information: certificate number, date issued, name of purchaser and county of residence, legal description of the parcel purchased, total acreage of the parcel, price per acre, and total purchase price. Most abstracts are annotated with the date the patent was issued and the volume and page in which it is recorded in GLO patent records. A few include citations to letters from the commissioner of the General Land Office.

Arrangement: By chronologically assigned certificate number.

Location	Box
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114.H.3.2F-1	---	Register of Certificates to Purchasers, Nos. 1-3239, February 1869 - February 1889. 1 volume.
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Register of Final Homestead Certificates, 1869-1889. 1 volume.

An abstract of all final certificates issued for homesteaded land in the Alexandria land district.

The abstract for each final certificate includes the following information: final certificate number; date the certificate was filed; legal description of the tract homesteaded; name of the applicant and county of residence; number of the original homestead application (recorded in the separately cataloged Register of Homestead Entries); commissions and fees paid; price per acre (commissions were based on the appraised price per acre); and various remarks relative to delivery of patents, citations to letters from the commissioner of the General Land Office, and citations to the Register of Certificates to Purchasers (separately cataloged) if the acreage of the parcel originally entered was in excess of the applicant's homestead eligibility.

The Alexandria register records some final certificates for homestead entries made in the St. Cloud land district (1863-1868). Homestead entries made in the Alexandria district and proved up after February 29, 1889, are recorded in the St. Cloud register.

Arrangement: Chronological by date the final certificate was issued.

Location	Box
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114.H.3.3B-1	---	Register of Final Homestead Certificates, Nos. 1-6031, April 1869 - February 1889. 1 volume.
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Register of Homestead Entries, 1863-1889. 2 volumes.

An abstract of all applications to acquire land under the provisions of the Homestead Act of 1862 that were filed in the Alexandria land district.

Individuals seeking to acquire land under the Homestead Act first filed an application or "declaratory statement" with the local land office, thereby establishing their claim to a particular tract of land. They were then required to live on and improve the land for five years, after which time they presented the local land office a "final proof" of their compliance with the provision of the Homestead Act. If the land office accepted the proof, it issued a "final

certificate." The final certificate was then turned in to the General Land Office, which issued a patent formally transferring title to the homesteader.

The abstract for each homestead entry includes the following information: number of the application or declaratory statement; date of application; name of the applicant; legal description of the parcel entered; and remarks on the issuance of a patent, cancellation, or other disposition of the entry, with citations to relevant letters from the commissioner of the General Land Office.

Arrangement: By chronologically assigned application (entry) number.

Location	Volume	
114.H.3.2F-2	1	Nos. 285 - 5798, April 1863 - December 1868. These entries were made in the offices of the St. Cloud land district on land that later became part of the Alexandria land district. They were transcribed from the St. Cloud register of homestead entries. Nos. 1 - 2201, February 1869 - June 1872.
	[2	<i>missing</i>]
114.H.3.2F-2	3	Nos. 5792 - 8915, February 1880 - February 1889.

Register of Military Bounty Land Warrant Entries, 1869-1888. 0.4 cu. ft. (3 volumes).

Registers or abstracts of public land entries made with military bounty land warrants in the Alexandria land district.

Under acts of 1842, 1847, 1850, 1852, and 1855, Congress authorized the issuance of land warrants as a bounty for military service. The warrants entitled the holder to enter or "locate" a specified amount of public land. The warrants were transferable and most were entered by someone other than the person to whom they were originally issued.

The abstract for each warrant entry includes the land office entry number, warrant number, date the warrant was issued, person in whose favor the warrant was issued, legal description of the tract located with the warrant, date located, and by whom located.

Some entries are annotated with citations to decisions of the commissioner of the General Land Office.

Arrangement: By warrant type, thereunder chronological by date of land office entry.

Location	Volume	
114.H.3.2F-2	A	Act of 1842, Nos. 1-2, 1870.
	B	Act of 1847, Nos. 1-6, 1869-1870.
	B	Act of 1850, Nos. 1-14, 1869-1873.
	A	Act of 1852, Nos. 1-5, 1869-1873.
	C	Act of 1855, Nos. 1-514, 1869-1888.

Register of Timber Culture Entries, 1873-1889 Feb. partial volume.

An abstract of land entries (nos. 1-1887) made in the Alexandria and St. Cloud land districts under provisions of the Timber Culture Act of March 3, 1873.

The intent of the Timber Culture Act was to encourage the planting of trees on the western prairies. The law enabled qualified individuals to acquire title to 160 acres of land on the condition that forty acres be planted to trees. Residence on the tract was not required. In the original act the entryman was required to plant the entire 40 acres to trees in the first year after making entry. The time period was later extended to four years, and in 1878 the acreage was reduced to ten acres with a minimum of 2700 trees per acre at the time of planting and "675 living, thrifty trees" at the time of patenting. Timber culture entries could be "proved up" and patented after eight years. They could be made in addition to homestead or preemption entries. The Timber Culture Act was repealed in 1891.

The abstract for each timber culture entry includes the following information: application or entry number, date of application, legal description of the tract entered, acreage, name of the applicant and county of residence, and fees and commissions paid. Some entries include information on the date of final proof and the eventual disposition of the entry, with citations to letters from the commissioner of the General Land Office, to the Contest Docket, and to final certificate numbers.

Entries made after March 1, 1889, are from the St. Cloud land district, into which the Alexandria district was merged in February, 1889.

Arrangement: Chronological by date of application.

Location	Box	
114.H.3.2F-1	---	Register of Timber Culture Entries, 1873 – February 1889. partial volume.