



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Minnesota State Archives

STATE LAND OFFICE

An Inventory of Its Swamp Land Records

OVERVIEW OF THE RECORDS

- Agency:** Minnesota. State Land Office.
- Series Title:** Swamp land records,
- Dates:** [1860]-1960.
- Abstract:** Records documenting Minnesota's acquisition, management, and disposition of swamp lands.
- Quantity:** Microfilm: 17 v. on 5 microfilm reels.
- Quantity:** Originals: 2 boxes, 4 partial boxes, and 1 oversize folder.
- Location:** See Detailed Description section for box locations.

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY OF THE SWAMP LAND GRANTS

By congressional acts of September 28, 1850, and March 12, 1860 (12 Stat. 3), Minnesota (as well as 14 other states) was entitled to select from the federal public domain all swamp land, and land subject to overflow, in the state. After the state surveyor general had identified tracts of swamp land, they were patented from the federal government to the state, based on the surveyor's notes.

The Swamp Land Acts specifically provided that proceeds from the sale of these lands be used "so far as might be necessary" to recover the expenses of constructing levees and drains to reclaim the land for agriculture. However, Minnesota regranted about one-third of the swamplands to railroad companies to aid in the construction of their lines. Smaller grants were made for other public purposes, primarily to help support construction of the state's public institutions (state schools, insane asylum, and prison). In 1881, an amendment to the state constitution provided that the remaining swamplands be sold in the same manner as school lands, and the proceeds placed in a permanent trust fund for the support of educational institutions. These departures from the terms of the swampland grant were apparently never questioned or challenged by Congress.

Bibliography: For additional information, see Samuel Trask Dana, et al., *Minnesota Lands* (American Forestry Association, 1960).

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE RECORDS

These records document Minnesota's acquisition, management, and disposition of the state's swamp land grant. They include lists of swamp lands selected by the state under the terms of the Swamp Land Act of March 12, 1860; patents transferring title in the lands to the state from the federal government; record books noting disposition of each parcel of swamp or overflowed land; maps showing the location of swamp lands; and correspondence and lists pertaining to transfers, claims, and related matters. The patents and record books are available on microfilm.

The patents and record books are indexed.

ORGANIZATION OF THE RECORDS

These records are organized into five sections:

Swamp Land Selection Lists, 1875-1915.

Swamp Land Patents: United States to Minnesota, 1865-1960.

Swamp Land Record, [ca. 1860]-1931.

Swamp Land Maps, [undated], 1861, 1870.

Swamp Land Miscellaneous Lists and Correspondence, [undated] and 1862-1923.

RELATED MATERIALS

For additional information on the selection and disposition of swamp lands, see State Land Office: Railroad swamp lands selection lists; Approved lists; and Record of land examinations on Ojibwe Indian reservations. See also U.S. Surveyor General: Swamp land lists.

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:

Land grants--Minnesota.

Land titles--Registration and transfer--Minnesota.

Public lands--Minnesota.

Railroad land grants--Minnesota.

Swamp lands--Minnesota.

Trust fund lands--Minnesota.

Persons:

Hill, A. J. (Alfred James), 1823-1895.

Types of Documents:

Maps--Minnesota.
Microforms.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Preferred Citation:

Minnesota State Land Office. Swamp land records. *[Indicate the pertinent section, then the cited volume and page or item and folder title here. Include frame numbers for microfilm].* Minnesota State Land Office. Swamp land records. *For microfilm, add SAM 45, [Roll number].* Minnesota Historical Society. State Archives.
See the Chicago Manual of Style for additional examples.

Accession Information:

Accession number(s): none (miscellany, part); 984-41 (microfilmed patents and record books); 985-143 (selection lists and miscellany); 987-52 (plat book); 991-14 (2 maps)

Processing Information:

In part, processed and microfilmed by: Gregory Kinney, 1983.

Microform producer: Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1983.

The microfilm is available for sale or interlibrary loan from the Minnesota Historical Society.

The originals of the microfilmed records are in the Minnesota Historical Society (closed to general use).

PALS ID No.: 0900320589

RLIN ID No.: MNHV1293-A

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE RECORDS

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

Swamp Land Selection Lists, 1875-1915. 1.75 cu. ft. (11 v. and 4 folders).

Lists of all swamp lands selected by the state under terms of the Swamp Land Act of March 12, 1860, as compiled from the records of the U. S. Surveyor General's Office. Volumes 1-5 were compiled in 1875 and encompass all swamp selections of land that had been surveyed prior to 1875. Later volumes were compiled periodically as the surveys of portions of the state were completed and selection lists were filed by the state.

Annotations made by the registers and receivers of local land offices indicate any claims against the parcels that existed at the time the selections were filed. Further notes by the State Land Office give the eventual disposition of the selected tracts.

Arrangement: Arranged by land district office through which the original selection lists were filed.

Indexes: Volumes and/or individual lists are indexed by range and township.

Location	Box	
106.K.9.1B	1	Volume I. Winnebago City, Jackson, St. Peter, Redwood Falls, Henderson, Forest City, Litchfield. Volume II. Taylor's Falls. Volume III. Duluth (Northeastern). Volume IV. St. Cloud. Volume V. Alexandria, Oak Lake, Detroit. Volume VI. Duluth (1877), St. Cloud (1877), Detroit (1877-1878). [unnumbered]. St. Cloud (1879-1900; includes lists filed in Taylor's Falls office). Volume VII. St. Cloud, Duluth (1879-1884), Crookston (1884).
106.K.9.2F	2	Volume [9]. Crookston (1885-1906, mainly swamp land on the White Earth Reservation). Volume 10. Duluth (1877-1897). Volume [11]. Duluth (1898-1905). Folder 1. Duluth (1906-1915). Folder 2. Crookston (1907-1910, White Earth nos. 163 and 169). Folder 3. Cass Lake (1905, nos. 153 and 154). Folder 4. Cass Lake (1907-1911).

Swamp Land Patents: United States to Minnesota, 1865-1960. 4 volumes (3 cubic feet) on 2 microfilm reels.

These patents record the transfer of title to designated swamp lands from the federal government to the state of Minnesota under the congressional acts of September 28, 1850, and March 12, 1860. A single patent may include from one to more than 100 individual parcels in several townships. Each patent gives the patent or list number; land office through which the patent was issued; legal description of each parcel patented, citing principal meridian, range, township, section, and fractional section; total acreage patented within each township; aggregate acreage in the entire patent; date the governor of Minnesota made application for the patent; and date the patent was executed.

The patents were at some point compiled into four volumes corresponding approximately to the four federal land districts existing in Minnesota in 1900: Duluth, St. Cloud, Crookston, and Marshall. Records of predecessor offices that had merged into these are included with the records of the successor office. Patents for the Cass Lake land district, which was established in 1903, are intermingled with the others. Within each volume the patents are arranged for the most part by land office, and thereunder by chronologically assigned patent number (list number after 1914). The patent numbers, especially in later years, are not necessarily consecutive.

Since these volumes were compiled from various land offices, there is no original pagination. At some point the agency with custody of the records penciled in consecutive page numbers. In a few instances the page numbers disrupt the numerical and chronological sequence of the patents. However, the pagination has been maintained in order to facilitate the use of those indexes that are keyed to page numbers.

Indexes: There are three types of indexes to the swamp land patents. (1) A consolidated index to the entire series, arranged by principal meridian, range, and township, refers to volume and page numbers. This index is contained in pages 114-171 of the United States Land Grant Index (part of the separately cataloged Indexes to State Land Records); as an aid to researchers, it has been filmed prior to volume 1. (2) Each volume contains its own index, arranged by location and keyed to patent numbers. (3) The St. Cloud and Crookston volumes also have indexes that are keyed to page numbers. The indexes to individual volumes seem to be incomplete; they appear on the microfilm at the beginning of the respective volume.

Typed transcriptions were prepared for 185 pages that were abraded, faint, or otherwise unable to produce a sharp image when microfilmed. Each transcription is filmed immediately after the page that it transcribes.

Location	Reel	
SAM 45	35	Index to Swamp Land Patents. Volume 1. Duluth Land District, 1865-1945. Duluth Land Office, 1865-1928. Patent numbers: 1-24, 29-31, 37, 39, 40, 44, 50, 54, 57, 60, 68, 74, 78, 81, 87-91, 93, 96-99, 102-104, 109, 113, 117, 119-122, 124, 128-130, 132, 131, 133, 136-138, 140-142, 144-151, 154, 153, 152, 155-157, 164, 160, 162, 165, 172, 175, 178-182, 184, 185, 188-190, 193, 200, 208. List number: 73. Cass Lake Land Office, 1929-1931. List numbers: 225, 227, 194, 226, 229-232, 224, 233-237. General Land Office, 1945. List number: 248 (Cook County)
SAM 45	35	Volume 2. St. Cloud Land District, 1869-1904. St. Cloud Land Office, 1869-1904. Patent numbers: 1-24, 27, 32, 35, 42, 48, 51, 52, 53, 56, 58, 61, 63, 71, 76, 80, 83, 85, 100, 105, 111, 118, 125, 134, 135, 143, 158. Taylors Falls Land Office, 1871-1891. Patent numbers: 1-7, 24.
SAM 45	36	Volume 3. Crookston Land District, 1880-1939. Crookston Land Office, 1880-1891. Patent numbers: 2-7, 28, 41, 49, 58, 65, 72, 73, 77, 82, 84, 86, 92, 95, 106, 110, 112, 126, 127, 139, 163, 167, 169, 170, 174, 176, 197. Cass Lake Land Office, 1932-1939. List numbers: 239, 238, 240-244, 74 supplement to patent #74, vol. 1, pages 308-359, 245, 246, supplementary 247. St. Peter Land Office. List numbers: 1-supplement to patent #1, vol. 4, pages 212- 221.

Location	Reel	
SAM 45	36	Volume 4. Marshall Land District, 1865-1960. Cass Lake Land Office, 1904-1913. Patent numbers: 204, 207, 206, 205, 203, 201, 189 supplementary, 199, 198, 195, 194, 192, 189, 187, 186, 183, 177, 173, 171, 168, 166, 161, 159. [List numbers: See Cass Lake Land Office following Marshall Land Office, below.] Alexandria Land Office, 1873-1874. Patent numbers: 1-3. Oak Park Land Office, 1877. Patent number: 1. Winnebago City Land Office, 1869-1886. Patent numbers: 1-4. Also includes Jackson and Worthington. Forest City Land Office, 1865-1877. Patent numbers: 1-3. Also includes Litchfield and Benson. Redwood Falls Land Office, 1865-1880. Patent numbers: 1-4. Also includes Henderson and St. Peter. St. Peter Land Office, 1865-1886. Patent numbers: 1-4. Also includes New Ulm and Tracy. Marshall Land Office, 1891-1901. Patent numbers: 1, 2, 26, 33, 34, 38, 45, 46, 47, 55, 62, 64, 67, 69, 70, 75, 79, 94, 101, 107, 108, 123. Cass Lake Land Office, 1914-1960. List numbers: 207-223, 198, 249-254.

Swamp Land Record, ca. 1860-1931. 13 volumes (4.5 cubic feet) on 3 microfilm reels.

An administrative record of the state of Minnesota's acquisition and disposition of swamp and overflowed lands. The volumes were apparently compiled and current entries begun in 1876, at which time prior transactions were recorded retrospectively.

Each volume contains records, by county, for individual counties or groups of contiguous counties; in several instances, land in a given county appears in more than one volume. Within each volume the swamp land tracts are listed by legal description (range, town, section, and fractional section).

The entry for each parcel gives legal description, acreage, date selected by the surveyor general (apparently all tracts selected prior to 1876 were recorded simply as having been selected as of March 31, 1876), date patented from the United States to Minnesota, by whom selected for the state, to whom deeded by the state, other disposition (such as selection rejected or contested), and occasional explanatory remarks.

Names of private parties to whom swamp lands were sold are not recorded; only the sale date appears in the "Remarks" column. Grantee railroads are indicated by stamped corporate initials in the "to whom deeded" column. In the many instances where the original stamps are very faint, the railroad's initials have been repeated in the "Remarks" column. The initials and the corresponding full name of railroad are:

- St.P & C. = St. Paul and Chicago.
- S.M. R.R. = Southern Minnesota Railroad.
- L.S. & M. = Lake Superior and Minnesota.
- L.F. & D. = Little Falls and Dakota.
- St.P. & D. = St. Paul and Duluth.
- M. & St.C. = Minneapolis and St. Cloud.
- W.M. & P. = Wisconsin, Minnesota and Pacific.
- G.N. Ry. = Great Northern Railway.
- D.& I.R. R.R. = Duluth and Iron Range Railroad.
- D.W. & P. = Duluth, Winnipeg, and Pacific.
- D.R.L. & W. = Duluth, Rainy Lake, and Winnipeg.
- M.C. R.R. = Minnesota Central Railroad.
- C.R. Mf. A. = Cannon River Manufacturing Association.
- T.F. & L.S. = Taylors Falls and Lake Superior.

Indexes: Each volume includes an index by range and township. There is also a consolidated index, located on pages 42 to 113 of the "U.S. Land Grant Index," also organized by range and township and citing the volume(s) and page(s) on which entries in each township are found. As an aid to researchers, this index appears on the microfilm prior to volume 1.

Related materials: Records of the Northern Pacific Railway Company Land Department, particularly "Swamp land lists" and "Maps and plats of Minnesota townships" (each cataloged separately).

Location	Reel	
SAM 45	37	Index to Swamp Land Record. Volume 1. Southern Part of State. Includes townships to 122 in ranges 3-44 and townships to 124 in ranges 45-48. Volume 2. Pine, Chisago, Washington, Ramsey, Anoka, Sherburne, Isanti, Benton, Mille Lacs, Kanabec. Volume 3. Aitkin. Volume 4. Itasca.
SAM 45	38	Volume 5. Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Hubbard, Wadena, Beltrami. Volume 6. Stearns, Todd, Pope, Douglas, Stevens, Grant, Traverse, Wilkin, Otter Tail, Becker, Clay. Volume 7. Norman, Polk, Marshall, Kittson. Volume 8. Cook, Lake, and eastern parts of St. Louis and Carlton. Volume 9. Western parts of St. Louis and Carlton.
SAM 45	39	Volume 10. Itasca, Roseau, Koochiching. Volume 11. Cook, Lake, St. Louis. Volume 12. Cass and portions of Itasca, Beltrami, and Hubbard. Volume 13. Indian Reservations.

Swamp Land Maps, undated and. 1 volume and 2 items.

Location

- 106.K.16.3 (do) Swamp Land Plat Book, undated. 1 volume.
Plats for townships in north central Minnesota, depicting lands within each section as dry, swamp, or patented. They cover mainly townships 141-146 in ranges 25-41.
- A3/ov4,Drawer 4 Maps of Swamp Lands. 1861, 1870. 2 items in oversize folder.
Two maps drawn by A. J. Hill showing locations and relative quantities, by township, of swamp lands granted to the state of Minnesota. One (1861) shows relative amounts of swamp land per township; the other (1871) shows when swamp lands in each township were deeded to railroad companies. Neither map details the individual parcels that were considered swamp land.
- (1) "Map of Swamp Lands in Minnesota arranged according to townships," compiled and drawn by A. J. Hill, 1861. 15" x 34". Printed map with manuscript annotations. Annotated "Property of the Executive Chamber.
 - (2) "[State of Minnesota] Map Illustrating Disposition of Swamp Lands Granted by Acts of Congress, Sept. 28, 1858 & Mar. 12, 1860," drawn by A. J. Hill, ex-Clerk, State Land Office. Undated, with annotations to 1870. 26" x 31". Manuscript map on linen.

Location

- 106.K.10.7B Correspondence, 1862-1923. 5 folders.
Miscellaneous correspondence relating to selection and patenting of swamp land, and to and contests brought against the state's claims.
- 106.K.10.7B Contest Case Files, ca. 1875 - ca. 1917. 7 folders.
Correspondence and documents relating to contests against the state's claim to parcels of swamp land. All documentation pertaining to a particular case has been brought together in a single file. Files may include correspondence, decisions of the commissioner of the U.S. General Land Office or the secretary of the interior, notes outlining the grounds for appeal by the state, and a variety of affidavits.
- 106.K.10.6F Lists of Swamp Lands in Duluth and Taylors Falls Land Districts Inuring to the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad. 1 folder.
Two lists (compiled circa 1870?) of lands selected by the registers of the United States land offices in Duluth and Taylors Falls as inuring to the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad under its congressional grant of May 5, 1864, and to which the state of Minnesota also had a claim under its swamp land grant of March 12, 1860. The lists have been annotated to indicate the eventual disposition of each parcel.
- 106.K.10.6F Lists of Swamp Lands Preempted or Reserved to Other Purposes. 2 lists.
Lists of land which the state claimed as swamp land but on which conflicting claims existed. The records are arranged by land district and cite the range, town, section, and fractional section of each tract claimed by the state. The lists also indicate the nature of the conflicting claim, e.g., preemption, homestead, railroad, or Sioux half-breed scrip. The lists were apparently compiled about 1877.

Location

106.F.19.2F

Swamp Land Register, ca. 1883. 1 oversize volume.

A list of conflicting claims to lands selected as state swamp lands, apparently compiled in 1882 or 1883 and covering claims dating from 1860 to 1882; a few later annotations run to 1885. The volume records those tracts to which an individual had established a prior claim by right of preemption, homestead, or purchase. The entries are arranged by land district and include the following information: land district; description of each parcel on which conflicting claims exist, citing range, town, section, and fractional section; acreage of the parcel; date sold to or located by the claimant; number of original receipt or certificate; and number and date of final certificate [patent?] or number of purchase warrant, half breed scrip, military bounty scrip, etc.

The volume is also titled: State of Minnesota Swamp Land Lists for Relinquishment. It bears a label with a catalog number: BAZ/A60-85.

106.F.19.2F

Original Selection of Eliminated Tracts of Swamp Land, undated. 1 oversize folder.

This is a list, arranged by land district, of the selection lists (identified by date of filing) from which tracts were eliminated because of conflicting claims by right of preemption, homestead, or other reservation. For those districts in which tracts were eliminated from more than one selection list, the eliminated parcels are cited by range and town, and the date of original selection is given.