



*New York State Archives*

**New York State Department of State Bureau of Miscellaneous  
Records Letters Patent 12943**

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## Overview of the Records

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<b>Repository:</b>	New York State Archives
<b>Summary:</b>	Letters patent (commonly called a "patent") convey a grant of real property from a government to a person or persons. This series contains patents granted since 1664 by either the governor of the province of New York in the name of the king of England or the state of New York. Patents are arranged in chronological order by book and page number. They are indexed by name of grantee and by location.
<b>Creator:</b>	New York (State). Department of State. Bureau of Miscellaneous Records
<b>Title:</b>	Letters patent
<b>Quantity:</b>	43.22 cubic feet
<b>Quantity:</b>	105 volume(s)
<b>Quantity:</b>	24 35mm microfilm roll(s)
<b>Inclusive Date:</b>	1664-2018, 2020-2022
<b>Series:</b>	12943

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## Arrangement

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Chronological (numerical by book and page number).

12943-18: Unarranged.

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## Administrative History

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Letters patent (commonly called a "patent") convey a grant of real property from a government to a person or persons. In the colonial period the instrument was also used to grant some authority to an individual or corporation. From 1664 to 1775 patents were issued by the governor of the province of New York in the name of the king of England. The earliest books of

patents include numerous confirmations of land conveyances made under the Dutch regime; this confirmation was required by the "Duke's Laws." Patents were issued by the governor as the representative of the Duke of York, under the royal grants of 1664 and 1674 and later as representative of the king. Patents issued after 1786 include grants of land under water, which were authorized by Chapter 67 of the Laws of 1786. A great increase in the number of such grants occurred in the mid-19th century, when piers were being extended into New York harbor (see "History of Water Grants," Appendix XIII in Anson Getman, *Principles and Sources of Title to Real Property*, Albany, 1921).

The Board of Commissioners of the Land Office was established by Chapter 60 of the Laws of 1784 and Chapter 66 of the Laws of 1785. The form of the letters patent was specified by Chapter 67 of the Laws of 1786. Further statutes governing issuance of letters patent are found in Chapter 69 of the Laws of 1801; Revised Statutes of 1829, Part I, Chapter 9, Title 5, Sections 27, 29; Chapter 317 of the Laws of 1894; and Chapter 50 of the Laws of 1909 (the "Public Lands Law"). A major change occurred when the Board of Commissioners of the Land Office was abolished by Chapter 462 of the Laws of 1960. The new Office of General Services continues to authorize issuance of letters patent for lands sold by the State of New York, pursuant to Chapter 643 of the Laws of 1962.

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## Scope and Content Note

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Each colonial patent gives the name of the grantee and a description of the lands granted; it reserves all gold and silver mines to the king and requires payment of quit rents. There are no commissions or incorporations in the books of patents from the statehood period.

Many of the patents issued immediately after the English conquest of 1664 confirmed grants made under Dutch rule prior to 1664. Many of the colonial patents granted lands that were then part of New York, but later became parts of other colonies and states (particularly New Jersey and Vermont). Some of the patents issued in the years around 1700 were later revoked. The earliest patent books also contain records of a few naturalizations and denizations of non-British subjects and Indian deeds.

Book 1 of this series includes copies of the grant from Charles II to the Duke of York, 1664; the duke's commission to Governor Richard Nicolls; and a few commissions, both civil and military, issued by Governor Nicolls. The colonial patents, Books 1-16, also contain incorporations of towns and churches, generally as part of a grant of land. Copies of the incorporation of New York City and Albany are in Book 5.

Books 1-7, 11-12, and 17 are certified copies of the engrossed originals, made pursuant to Chapter 13 of the Laws of 1786, which states that the volumes were "by various accidents so injured that a frequent Recourse to them may render them illegible." The original books were rebound and now comprise Series A0487, Letters patent transcribed pursuant to an Act of 1786. Patents after 1785 take the form of a grant of land from the People of the State of New

York, as authorized by a resolution of the Commissioners of the Land Office. Books 1-54 of this series are available on microfilm. The reels containing books 7 and 8 are incomplete; both lack the index, and pages 516-531 in book 8 are also missing.

Later patent books include grants of land under water, the earliest dated 1717, mostly in New York harbor and in the Hudson River. These so-called "water grants" become numerous after ca. 1800 (they were recorded in separate books within this series starting 1832). The patent books also contain State Comptroller's deeds for lands of non-resident owners sold for unpaid taxes (recorded in separate books in this series starting 1878) and patents for abandoned canal lands (starting ca. 1849).

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## Related Information

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### Related Material

B1371 Charter of the proprietary colony from Charles II to the Duke of York is a copy of the original transcription of the patent located in accretion 12943-78.

A0476 Register of military bounty land grants contains related records.

A3124 Abstracts of patents for lands in the military tract contains related records.

B1892 Abstracts of letters patent [approximately 1850] contains abstracts prepared from the original patents.

A4005 Surveyor General Abstracts of letters patent, 1665-1767, contains abstracts prepared from the original patents.

A0487 Letters patent transcribed pursuant to an Act of 1786 contains original engrossed (or final) letters patent and military patents, which were transcribed pursuant to Chapter 13 of the Laws of 1786.

A0447 Military patents, 1764-1797, contains earlier records of grants of land by letters patent for military service.

### Related Publications

Patents for lands within the present five boroughs of New York City are published in Seymann, comp., *Colonial Charters, Patents and Grants to the Communities Comprising the City of New York*.

Patents for lands lying within present-day Vermont are published in Mary Greene Nye, ed., *State Papers of Vermont*, Vol. 7: "New York Land Patents 1688-1786 Covering Land Now Included in the State of Vermont (Not Including Military Patents)" (n.p.: 1947).

Records of denizations and naturalizations found in the colonial patent books are abstracted in Kenneth Scott, *Denizations, Naturalizations, and Oaths of Allegiance in Colonial New York* (Baltimore: 1975).

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## Other Finding Aids

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### Available at Repository

Each book of patents has its own index to grantees, which is available on microfilm, and includes land grants in other states (Vermont, New Jersey, Delaware), and also the special series of Dutch Patents (Series A0480) and Military Patents (Series A0447).

12943-92, 12943-96, 12943-99: An alphabetical index gives name of patentee and page number.

Series A4684 indexes 12943-78, Letters patent, 1638-1775 (Colonial Patents) by name of grantee.

Series A4685 indexes 12943-78, Letters patent, 1784-1973 (State Patents) by name of grantee.

Series A4686 indexes 12943-78, Letters patent, 1638-1775 (Colonial Patents) by location.

Series A4687 indexes 12943-78, Letters patent, 1784-1973 (State Patents) by location.

Series A4696 indexes 12943-78, Letters patent, 1717-1973 (bulk 1807-1973) for lands under water by location.

Series A3121 indexes 12943-78, Letters patent, ca. 1786-1899 by location.

Series A3124-78 indexes 12943-78, Letters patent, 1790-1869 by location in the Military Tract.

12943-92: Folder list is available at the repository.

12943-94: Item list is available at the repository.

12943-18: Container list is available at the repository.

12943-19: Volume list is available at the repository.

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## Use of Records

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### Access Restrictions

Microfilm produced by the Genealogical Society of Utah is not available for duplication or inter-library loan.

### Alternate Formats AvailableAlternate Formats Available

A portion of this series was microfilmed on 24 rolls, available for use at the New York State Archives. Microfilmed in 1973 at the Department of State by the Genealogical Society of Utah, microfilm reels 945288-945289, 945296-945303, 946115-946128 (volumes 1-54). Cataloged by the GSU as part of a collection called "Patents of the State of New York, 1649-1912." GSU microfilm has been digitized by FamilySearch. Images can be viewed online at FamilySearch Affiliate Libraries (including the New York State Archives and the New York State Library).

### Alternate Formats Available

### Items Online

High resolution images of selected original documents in this series are available in State Archives Digital Collections.

[Letters patent, 1664-2018, 2020 in Digital Collections](#)

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## Administrative Information

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### Custodial History

12943-08: These patents were interfiled with accretion 12945-08, Miscellaneous deeds and title papers, and were not accessioned until March 2009.

### Acquisition Information

This series was transferred under RDA 12943.

12943-19: This accretion was transferred under RDA 20202.

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## Access Terms

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- Women--Legal status, laws, etc.
- New York (Colony)--Politics and government
- Land titles
- New York (State)--History--Colonial period, ca. 1600-1775
- Letters patent
- New York (State)
- Recording letters patent
- New York (Colony)
- Letters patent
- Land settlement
- New York (State). Office of General Services. Bureau of Land Management