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Overview of the Records

Repository: New York State Archives

Summary: This series consists of releases of right and claim to property by individuals to the State of New York. Almost all of the releases convey real property to the state. Releases are for lands erroneously granted by letters patent; purchased by the state for public buildings; seized during the Revolutionary War; and or redeemed for delinquent taxes. Each release lists the name of the releasor, date of release, and date of filing in the Secretary of State's Office.

Creator: New York (State). Department of State

Title: Original releases to the state

Quantity: 9 cubic feet

Quantity: 15 volumes; 8 microfilm rolls 35mm

Inclusive Date: 1782-1929

Series: A0451

Administrative History

Laws of 1798, Chap. 38 required that "all deeds and conveyances other than mortgages belonging to the people of this state shall be deposited in the office of the Secretary of State." Provisions for conveyance of such properties by the Comptroller to the State are found in the Revised Statutes of 1829, Part I, Chap. 13, Title 3, Art. 3, Section 82; Laws of 1855, Chap. 427; Laws of 1893, Chap. 711; Laws of 1896, Chap. 908; and Laws of 1909, Chap. 62, Section 126.

In 1926 the function of collection of unpaid real property taxes and the sale and redemption of lands on which taxes were due was transferred from the Comptroller to the new Department of Taxation and Finance (L. 1926, Ch. 553). Tax deeds were now issued by the State Tax Commission, but the form of the conveyance remained substantially the same.
Scope and Content Note

This series contains original releases of right and claim to property, given by individuals to the State of New York. Almost all of the releases convey real property to the state. A few early releases transfer rights in personal property (usually claims against the state). Most of the releases prior to ca. 1845 convey land in the Adirondack Mountains (particularly the Old Military Tract and the Canada and Nova Scotia Refugee Tract), the Onondaga Salt Springs Reservation, the former Indian Reservations (particularly the Cayuga and St. Regis Reservations), the New Military Tract, and the Gore between the Old and New Preemption Lines in western New York.

While, in many cases, the reason for the release is neither stated nor implied, certain types of releases are easily identified: releases for lands erroneously granted by letters patent (usually because of an inaccurate description of the parcel); releases for lands purchased by the state for public buildings (such as the old and new Capitols, the State Hall, prisons, arsenals, normal schools, asylums, and offices of the Supreme Court); releases of claims to lands seized by the Commissioners of Forfeitures in the Southern, Middle, and Western Districts during the Revolutionary War, ca. 1782-1789; and releases of dower claims (L. 1793, Ch. 6) to those lands by widows of Loyalists whose land was forfeited. These releases date as late as the 1820s, and were made upon the state's satisfaction of the claims. Also included are powers of attorney for the release of the dower claims.

Other documents in the first three books are a few releases of claims against the state by state officials; a few cessions of state land to the United States; numerous Comptroller's tax deeds to the state conveying lands which were neither sold at a tax sale nor were subsequently redeemed for delinquent taxes; few conditional conveyances (mortgages and a lease), ca. 1767 and 1768, of lands subsequently conveyed by the Commissioners of Forfeitures; and a list of deeds, mortgages, bonds, and other obligations to the state which had been acquired by the Treasurer (entitled "A List of Deeds and Conveyances deposited in the office of the Secretary. . . . by Gerard Bancker, Esquire Late Treasurer of the State," pursuant to Laws of 1798, Chap. 38). Some of the entries on the list are receipts "on parchment" from the Oneida, Onondaga, and Cayuga nations and the "Seven Nations of Canada" to New York State, acknowledging payment of monies due them by treaties made at various times between 1788 and 1796.

The Comptroller's tax deeds comprise the overwhelming majority of the documents in books 4-15. Books 4-6, covering the years 1845-1883, continue to include releases to the state for public buildings, particularly normal schools, arsenals, and the new Capitol. In books 5-6 there are also occasional deeds or releases to the state from county treasurers who were empowered to conduct special tax sales. All releases contain exact descriptions of the property conveyed or transferred to the State. Only a very few releases include maps. Releases were bound roughly in the order of filing date. Some of the later books overlap in dates, a few numbered pages are missing, and many pages are not numbered, apparently because they were inserted into the books later. The unnumbered pages include releases of real property for construction of the new Capitol, in book 6, and Comptroller's certificates, in books 5-6-7.
Each release bears on its dorso the name of the releasor, date of release, and date of filing in the Secretary of State's Office. In books 1-4 the releases also bear a consecutive number, date of filing in the Comptroller's Office (if a tax deed), and a date of recording in Series A0478, Record of Releases to the State, or Series A0453, Record of Deeds (books 31-42).

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Use of Records

Access Restrictions
Microfilm is not available for duplication or inter-library loan.

Alternate Formats Available
Microfilmed in part (volumes 1-11 only) in 1973 at the Department of State by the Genealogical Society of Utah, microfilm reels 946429-946432, 947097-947100. Cataloged by the GSU as "Releases and Conveyances, 1787-1900."

Administrative Information

Processing Information
Boxes 12 and 13 of the series (four volumes which postdate 1900) were integrated from former series A0462 by Archives staff at an unknown date.

In 2014, an 1845 architectural plan of Clinton Prison submitted by prison agent Ransom Cook to the office of Deputy Secretary of State, was reintegrated with the records in book 1 of this series. This plan had been removed for exhibit purposes at one point and was mistakenly accessioned as series B1910.

Access Terms

- Registering conveyances
- American loyalists
- Real property, Exchange of
- Public lands
- New York (State)
- Conveyances
- Land settlement
• New York (State). Comptroller's Office