



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Minnesota State Archives

## AUDITOR Land Department

# An Inventory of Its Letters Received from the General Land Office

### OVERVIEW

- Agency:** Minnesota. State Auditor. Land Department.
- Series Title:** Letters received from the General Land Office.
- Dates:** 1870-1939.
- Abstract:** Letters and land lists relating to the selection, status, and transfer from the federal government to the state of various grant and trust fund lands.
- Quantity:** 2.5 cu. ft. (2 boxes and 1 partial box).
- Location:** See Detailed Description Section for box locations.

### ORGANIZATION

These records are organized into the following sections:

- Letters Received from the General Land Office, 1870, 1874-1939.
- Letters from the District Land Offices, 1894-1933.
- Notices and Findings of Contested Claims, 1899-1902.

### SCOPE AND CONTENTS

The **Letters Received from the General Land Office** consist of letters and land lists sent to the State Auditor as state land commissioner by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and the commissioner of the U.S. General Land Office, relating to the selection, status, and transfer from the federal government to the state of various grant and trust fund lands. Most pertain to the state's claim to swamp and railroad lands, especially with regard to the designation and status of swamp lands, and to conflicting or contested claims stemming from prior sale or homestead entry. Other land categories are also represented, especially indemnity school lands and Indian reservations

The letters also deal with discrepancies between various selection lists and the land survey records, especially with regard to the location of swamp lands; corrections to selection lists, approved lists, and patents; transmittal of decisions by the Secretary of the Interior regarding various aspects of land entitlement and status; overlapping grants or conflicting claims between railroad companies; and appeals (usually by homesteaders) of GLO decisions on land status. There is some explication of Interior Department/GLO rules and policies governing land selection, titles, and purchase. A number of letters allude to errors or fraud in the designation of dry or timber lands as swamp lands.

From the 1890s through the 1910s, a large percentage of the letters and lists concern adjustment of Minnesota's swamp land grant: final determination or clarification of the status of lands claimed by the state, transfer of title to those parcels for which the state's claim was upheld, and issuance or correction of patents. Some letters concern the simultaneous adjudication of indemnity school land selections. A number of other letters during the early 1890s reject the state's attempts to re-claim under various trust fund grants lands to which it had previously accepted title for railroad purposes. In 1912 are found letters and lists regarding a swamp land resurvey of Chippewa (Ojibwe) Indian reservation lands; and about half of the letters from then until 1939 relate to Ojibwe reservations and allotments.

Enclosed with many of the letters are handwritten copies of GLO correspondence with (mainly letters to) officials of railroads and of other government agencies, the U.S. Surveyor General in St. Paul, and registers and receivers of Minnesota land districts. Some, and perhaps many, enclosures are filed under their own dates rather than with their letters of transmittal. There are also some letters to the auditor from the district land offices, railroad company land officials, land agents, and others.

A number of letters, especially of notification or transmittal, are addressed to the governor of Minnesota. Through 1880, some of these bear citations to entries in the governor's Executive Journals (q.v.), where they are transcribed. (Many other Interior Department and GLO letters to the governor that appear in the Executive Journals are not found with this series.) Many items from the 1870s also bear a citation to a volume and page number inked in red on the face of the letter; the identification of these citations has not been determined.

Specific items noted:

1874-1879. Several certified lists of Minnesota public lands for which surveys have been completed.

Sept. 5, 1890: List of all[?] lands certified to Minnesota for the Southern Minnesota Railroad Company.

June 2, 1899. Interior Dept. decision denying Minnesota's claim to the school land sections (16 and 36 of each township) in the Red Lake Indian Reservation.

March 18, 1931. GLO to Governor Floyd B. Olson regarding proposed final adjustment of the land grant to Minnesota in aid of the Winona and St. Peter Railroad Company.

The **Letters from the District Land Offices** to the auditor (and governor) supplement those from the Interior Dept./GLO, and consist almost entirely of letters and lists containing notifications and decisions on swamp land claims, land contest cases (primarily homestead vs. swamp lands), and other contested or questioned claims. Many are tissue carbon or letterpress

copies of letters from the GLO to the district registers. They include transcripts of depositions, findings, and an occasional hearing in swamp land contest cases, and some letters of transmittal from the governor to the auditor.

The **Notices and Findings of Contested Claims** consist of contest notices presented to, and findings and rulings of, the GLO concerning claims of individuals to lands that were also claimed by the state. After 1902 such documents were interfiled with the letters received, above.

## **INDEX TERMS**

*This collection is 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:**

- Homestead law--Minnesota.
- Indian reservations--Minnesota.
- Land grants--Minnesota.
- Land titles--Registration and transfer--Minnesota.
- Ojibwa Indians--Land transfers.
- Pre-emption rights (United States).
- Public lands--Minnesota.
- Railroad land grants--Minnesota.
- School lands--Minnesota.
- Swamp lands--Minnesota.
- Trust fund lands--Minnesota.

### **Places:**

- Minnesota--Surveys.

### **Organizations:**

- Southern Minnesota Railroad Company.
- United States. Dept. of the Interior. Office of the Secretary.
- United States. General Land Office.

## ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

### Preferred Citation:

*[Indicate the cited item and folder title here].* Minnesota. State Auditor: Land Department. Letters Received from the General Land Office. Minnesota Historical Society. State Archives.

*See the Chicago Manual of Style for additional examples.*

### Accession Information:

Accession number(s): 982-3; 985-139

### Processing Information:

Catalog ID No.: 1736041

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

*Note to Researchers: To request materials, please note the location shown below.*

### Location

116.F.12.12F	1	Letters Received from the General Land Office, Washington, D.C.: 1870, 1874-1916.
116.F.12.13B	2	1917-1939. 1 folder.  Letters Received from District Offices of the General Land Office: Cass Lake, 1904-1933. 7 folders. Crookston, 1895-1914, 1923, 1925. 3 folders. Duluth, 1895-1923. 6 folders.
116.F.12.14F	3	Marshall, 1894-1900. 2 folders. St. Cloud, 1894-1906. 4 folders.  Notices and Findings of Contested Claims, 1899-1902. 2 folders. <i>[partial box]</i>