



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Minnesota State Archives

## U.S. GENERAL LAND OFFICE

# An Inventory of the Calendar of General Land Office Letters

### OVERVIEW OF THE RECORDS

- Series Title:** Calendar of General Land Office letters, 1794-1926.
- Compiler:** University of Illinois : Illinois Historical Survey, 1909-1937.
- Abstract:** Calendars of correspondence relating to the survey and sale of public land in Minnesota and the "Old Northwest Territory."
- Quantity:** 3.0 cu. ft. (10 drawers of 3 in. x 5 in. cards).
- Location:** See Detailed Description section for drawer locations.

### SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE RECORDS

Calendars of letters sent and received by the commissioner of the General Land Office relating to the survey and sale of public land in Minnesota specifically and in the "Old Northwest Territory" in general. They cover the period 1794-1926, but are concentrated in the 1840s-1890s.

This calendar of GLO letters is a portion of the "Mereness Calendar" of federal records relating to the states of the "Old Northwest Territory." The Mereness calendar was created between 1909 and 1937 under the auspices of the Conference of State Historical Agencies of the Upper Mississippi Valley. This calendar represents that portion of the Mereness calendar of GLO correspondence that relates to Minnesota in a specific or general way.

Each card calendars one letter and includes the following information: date of letter, person by whom sent, person to whom sent, summary of subject of letter, and a citation to the location of the letter in the records of the GLO giving the GLO record series, volume, and page number. Each card also includes a "Mereness card number" and an alphabetic code indicating the state(s) to which the letter is relevant (a-Indiana, b-Michigan, c-Wisconsin, d-Illinois, e-Iowa, f-Minnesota).

## ORGANIZATION OF THE CALENDAR

The calendar is organized into the following sections, based on the arrangement of the GLO records in Washington, D.C.; within each section, the cards are arranged chronologically:

- Letters sent to surveyors general, 1796-1901.
- Letters received from surveyors general, 1794-1879.
- Miscellaneous letters, 1796-1868.
- Letters Relating to Townsite Entries, 1856-1913.
- Letters to members of Congress, 1868-1887.
- Letters relating to abandoned military reservations, ca. 1846-1925.
- Miscellaneous letters received, 1805-1832.
- Private land claims, 1833-1895.
- Letters to secretary of the treasury, 1802-1807.
- Swamp lands, 1852-1889.
- Maps, 1803-1854.
- Letters relating to railroad lands, 1856-1890.

## RELATED MATERIALS

See also calendars of several series of Interior Department correspondence relating to public land and railroad grants, 1849-1880 (drawers 29-40).

Files of the Conference of State Historical Agencies, consisting of correspondence, financial statements, reports on Mereness' work, and a few minutes, are also in the Minnesota Historical Society (cataloged separately).

## OTHER FINDING AIDS

The entire calendar has been published in 12 volumes from the set of cards held by the University of Illinois: *The Mereness Calendar: Federal Documents on the Upper Mississippi Valley 1780-1890* (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co., 1971).

## 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:

Public lands--Minnesota.  
Public lands--Middle West.  
Public land sales--Minnesota.  
Public lands--Surveying--Northwest, Old.  
Military reservations--Northwest, Old.  
Railroad land grants--Minnesota.  
Maps--Minnesota--Indexes.  
Townsites--Minnesota.  
Swamp lands--Minnesota.

### Places:

Middle West—History—Sources—Catalogs.  
Minnesota--Surveying.  
Northwestern States—History—Sources—Catalogs.

### Persons:

Mereness, Newton Dennison.

### Organizations:

Conference of State Historical Agencies of the Upper Mississippi Valley.  
United States. General Land Office.

### Types of Documents:

Archival calendars.

### Titles:

The Mereness calendar.

## ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

### Preferred Citation:

*[Indicate the cited section and item here].* Mereness calendar of U.S. General Land Office letters. Minnesota Historical Society.

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

### Accession Information:

Accession number(s): none

### Processing Information:

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## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

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

<b>Location</b>	<b>Drawer</b>	
155/ov8	41-44	<b>Letters Sent to Surveyors General, 1796-1901.</b> A calendar of letters sent by the commissioner of the General Land Office to the surveyors general of Michigan and Indiana, Iowa and Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The calendar also includes a few letters to registers and receivers of local land offices, deputy surveyors, and private individuals. Letters from 1796 to the 1830s were sent primarily by the U.S. Surveyor General and the U.S. Treasury Department. Drawers 41 (part) – 44 (part).  Prior to May, 1857, the survey of Minnesota was conducted under the Surveyor General of Iowa and Wisconsin headquartered at Dubuque, Iowa. On May 23, 1857, the Surveyor General of Minnesota assumed responsibility for the survey of the territory/state. Most of the calendared letters addressed to the Surveyor General of Minnesota can be found in the record series: U.S. Surveyor General of Minnesota: Letters Received and Sent (cataloged separately).  Surveyors General of Minnesota were C. L. Emerson, W. D. Washburn, Levi Nutting, C. T. Brown, D. E. King, J. H. Baker, J. H. Stewart, Martin Chandler, John F. Norrish, James Compton, P. H. Kirwan, and Eli S. Warner.
155/ov8	49	<b>Letters Received from Surveyors General, 1794-1879.</b> A calendar of letters received by the commissioner of the GLO from surveyors general relating to the survey of public land in Minnesota and other parts of the “Old Northwest.” Calendared letters from the Surveyor General of Minnesota, 1857-1879, can be found in the record series: U.S. Surveyor General of Minnesota: Letters Received and Sent (cataloged separately).
155/ov8	44-46	<b>Miscellaneous Letters Sent, 1796-1868.</b> A calendar of letters sent by the commissioner of the GLO covering a wide range of topics relating to the survey and sale of public land. Calendared letters are addressed to registers and receivers of local land offices, Treasury Department officials, members of Congress, and private citizens. Subject matter ranges from general principles of operation of the GLO to discussions of the details of particular land entries. Drawers 44(part) – 46 (part).

Calendared letters addressed to registers and receivers of land offices in Minnesota can be found in the separately cataloged series: Letters Received for the various land districts. Letters subsequent to 1868 were not calendared due to the increasing amount of routine data in relation to substantive administrative data.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Drawer</b>	
155/ov8	46(part)	<b>Letters Relating to Townsite Entries, 1856-1913.</b> A calendar of letters sent and letters received by the commissioner of the GLO relating to disputed townsite entries in Minnesota. The calendar includes correspondence relating to the following townsite entries: Mankato, Tepeotah, Richards, Spooner, White Earth, and Wabun.
155/ov8	46-47/48	<b>Letters to Members of Congress, 1868-1887.</b> A calendar of letters sent by the commissioner of the GLO to members of Congress. Most were in response to inquiries from the congressman as to the status of a constituent's land entry. Drawers 46(part) – 47/48 (part).
155/ov8	47/48	<b>Letters Relating to Abandoned Military Reservations, ca. 1846-1925.</b> A calendar of letters and documents relating to the sale of abandoned military reservations in Minnesota, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. The calendar includes letters relating to forts Ripley, Ridgely, and Snelling in Minnesota; forts Kearney and Abercrombie in Nebraska; and forts Seward, Sisseton, Sully, Lincoln, Buford, Pembina, Rice, Ransom, and Stevenson in the Dakotas. The calendar cards are not in chronological order.
155/ov8	47/48	<b>Miscellaneous Letters Received, 1805-1832.</b> The calendar cites 10 letters, including several relating to the claims of Jonathan Carver and Peter Stoupher on land near St. Anthony Falls.
155/ov8	47/48-49	<b>Private Land Claims, 1833-1895.</b> A calendar of letters sent by the commissioner of the GLO regarding entries made with Surveyor General, Supreme Court, or Sioux half-breed scrip. Also includes several letters relating to railroad grants. Many of the calendared letters addressed to registers and receivers of local land offices can be found in the series: Letters Received for the various land districts. Drawers 47/48(part) – 49(part).

<b>Location</b>	<b>Box</b>	
155/ov8	49(part)	<b>Letters to Secretary of the Treasury, et al., 1802-1807.</b> A calendar of 12 letters sent to the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury from the surveyor general at Marietta (subsequently Cincinnati), Ohio, regarding various administrative aspects of the survey of the public lands in Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan.
<b>Location</b>	<b>Drawer</b>	
155/ov8	49(part)	<b>Swamp Lands, 1852-1889.</b> A calendar of letters sent by the commissioner of the GLO relating to the selection and patenting of swamp and overflowed lands to Minnesota and other states under the Swamp Land Act of 1850. The calendared letters are addressed to registers and receivers of local land offices, the surveyor general of Minnesota, and the governor of Minnesota.  Many of the calendared letters can be found in the record series: Letters Received for the various land districts; in U.S. Surveyor General of Minnesota: Letters Received; and in the Minnesota governor's records.
<b>Location</b>	<b>Drawer</b>	
155/ov8	49-50	<b>Letters Relating to Railroad Lands, 1856-1890.</b> A calendar of letters sent by the commissioner of the GLO relating to the selection and patenting of lands granted to aid in the construction of railroads in Minnesota and other states. The calendar includes letters addressed to registers and receivers of local land offices and the governor of Minnesota. Drawers 49(part) - 50(part).  Many of the calendared letters can be found in the record series: Letters Received for the various land districts, and in the Minnesota governor's records.
<b>Location</b>	<b>Drawer</b>	
155/ov8	49(part)	<b>Maps, ca. 1803-1910.</b> A calendar of maps relating to Minnesota and Wisconsin in the records of the General Land Office, the Indian Office, and the War Department. The calendar cards are not in chronological order.