



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Minnesota State Archives

U.S. SURVEYOR GENERAL OF MINNESOTA An Inventory of Its Contracts for Surveys

OVERVIEW OF THE RECORDS

- Agency:** United States. Office of Surveyor General of Minnesota.
- Series Title:** Contracts for surveys,
- Dates:** 1857-1907.
- Abstract:** Contracts between the surveyor general and deputy surveyors for the survey of specified tracts of public land in Minnesota.
- Quantity:** 1.4 cu. ft. (10 folders and 2 v. in 1 box and 1 partial box).
- Location:** See Contents List for box locations.

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY OF THE SURVEYOR GENERAL OF MINNESOTA

The Office of Surveyor General of Minnesota, established by Act of Congress of March 3, 1857, was responsible for conducting the original government survey of the public domain in the territory and state of Minnesota.

The earliest surveys of land in Minnesota were conducted under the jurisdiction of the Surveyor General of Iowa and Wisconsin, headquartered at Dubuque, Iowa. These surveys, completed between 1848 and May, 1857, were primarily on land located between the St. Croix and Mississippi rivers or in the southeastern corner of Minnesota. After the establishment of the Office of Surveyor General of Minnesota, copies of the field notes, plats, and other records relevant to these surveys were transferred from Dubuque to St. Paul.

The Office of Surveyor General of Minnesota continued in operation until December, 1907, when the survey of Minnesota was essentially complete. After 1907 the commissioner of the U.S. General Land Office served, *ex officio*, as Surveyor General of Minnesota, and handled any requisite surveying activities and questions. A congressional act of 1940 provided that the records of the Office of Surveyor General of Minnesota be turned over to the Minnesota secretary of state.

(An expanded administrative history is available in the Minnesota Historical Society.)

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE RECORDS

Contracts between the surveyor general and deputy surveyors for the survey of specified tracts of public land in Minnesota (1881-1907, 10 folders), and a record of contracts awarded and special instructions issued (1857-1907, 2 volumes). They include contracts awarded at bid and "special instructions" from the General Land Office (GLO) and surveyor general to deputy surveyors for the survey of islands or other designated parcels.

Information contained in the contracts includes name of the contracting surveyor; date the contract was issued; date the survey was to be completed; description of the survey work to be done, citing range and township and the type of lines to be run; rate of pay; and estimated cost of the survey. Beginning in 1896, the contract and surveyor's bond were combined on a single printed sheet. The bond lists the person or company acting as surety for the deputy surveyor.

Some contracts are accompanied by additional documents relating to the execution of the survey, which may include petitions from settlers to the surveyor general requesting that a particular tract be surveyed, correspondence between deputy surveyors and the surveyor general, supplemental instructions, oath of the deputy surveyor, and diagrams of the area to be surveyed.

The two-volume record of contracts and special instructions cites the name of the deputy surveyor, date the contract or instructions were issued, tract to be surveyed, date the survey notes were returned to the surveyor general's office, and dates the plats and transcripts were transmitted to the GLO and the local land office.

ARRANGEMENT OF THE RECORDS

Each subseries is chronological by the date the contract or special instructions were issued.

RELATED MATERIALS

The type of supplementary material that accompanies some of the contracts also exists for most of the other contracts but is disbursed in several other separately cataloged series: Accounting Records, Letters Received and Sent, and Miscellaneous Records: Petitions for Surveys.

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:

Islands--Minnesota--Surveying.
Public lands--Minnesota--Surveying.
Surveying--Minnesota.
Surveyors.

Organizations:

United States. General Land Office.

Types of Documents:

Contracts.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Preferred Citation:

[Indicate the cited volume and page or item and folder title here]. U.S. Office of Surveyor General of Minnesota. Contracts for Surveys. Minnesota Historical Society. State Archives.

See the Chicago Manual of Style for additional examples.

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CONTENTS LIST

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

Location	Box	
111.E.10.1B	---	Contracts for Surveys, 1881-1907. 10 folders.
111.E.10.1B	---	Record of Contracts and Instructions for Surveys, 1857-1865. 1 volume.
112.D.2.8F(ov)	---	Record of Contracts and Instructions for Surveys, 1874-1907. 1 volume.