

# Records of the Holland Land Company

By Marian S. Henry

A previous article discussed the role of the Holland Land Company in the settlement of western New York State. This consortium of Dutch bankers in Amsterdam had purchased 3.3 million acres west of the Genesee River in 1792. When the company ceased operations in America in 1859, its records were transferred to the offices of Van Eeghen, one of the original members of the company. Each volume or folder was given an inventory item number. In 1964 the records were transferred to the Municipal Archives in Amsterdam. The entire collection was microfilmed in 1984.[1] This collection constitutes a local history of the area written by the participants – settlers, local land agents, bankers, and lawyers. In this article we explore information contained in this archive, access to the microfilms, and how to use the records.

The Holland Land Company was involved in many enterprises in America. Most of the 202 microfilm reels are filled with details of the stuff of everyday lives, but as they are not indexed, they are of little use to genealogists. The bulk of the records are made up of correspondence between the general agent in Philadelphia and the directors in Amsterdam, annual reports from local agents to the general agent, surveyors' reports, legal papers, maps, etc. Records may be written in Dutch, French, or English.

When local agents sold land, the location of the land was specified relative to the grid of townships and ranges laid down by the original Ellicott survey described in the preceding article. A range is a strip of land six miles wide running north-south. Ranges are numbered from one at the eastern border and run to the western border, reaching as high as fifteen in the southern part of the state. Ranges are subdivided into six-mile squares termed townships. Townships are numbered one at the Pennsylvania border and go north, reaching as high as sixteen along Lake Ontario. Each square is identified by a township and range number.[2] In reality, many of the townships were not six miles square. Surveyors had to work around the several Indian reservations not in the Holland Land Purchase as well as waterways and other natural features.

The microfilmed collection of the company's records is available at the [Reed Library at SUNY Fredonia](#), the New York State Library in Albany, and at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. The microfilm reels are available through interlibrary loan and local Family History Centers. The [Holland Land Company resource page](#) gives further details and a bibliography.

Although there is no overall index to the collection, bound volumes often have some summary of the contents either at the beginning or the end. The most useful items for a family historian are the land tables. The land tables take up only three full reels and two partial reels out of a total of 202 reels. They allow a researcher to connect a name with a location and a date. The general agent of the company compiled this information from annual reports of local agents. Each agent was required to send a list of all land transactions to the general agent. Each entry names the person, the location, the date, and the details of the transaction. Karen Livsey extracted these microfilmed records [3] for her two-volume work titled *Western New York Land Transactions*.

The following example shows how to use this finding aid. In outline, one looks for a name in the index of the book, locates the appropriate extracts in the body of the book, uses the first table appended to this article to determine which microfilm reel contains the transaction information, and uses the second appended table to "translate" the township/range designation to a present-day county/town location.

Nehemiah Sayer is the first name in Volume I, so I chose that for our example. In the index to Volume I the name occurs five times, each time at the same location. The five corresponding extracts are as follows.

Name	Date	Lot	S	T	R	D	Ref-page
Nehemiah Sayer	21 Sep 04	2	060501	s			484-0002
Nehemiah Sayer	21 Jun 03	2	060501	o			484-0016
Nehemiah Sayer	26 Jun 06	2	060501	s			484-00#8

Nehemiah Sayer	1 Feb 13	2	060501s	490-0033
Nehemiah Sayer	4 May 13	2	060501s	491-0032

Column “STR” lists section, township, and range, which specifies the location. Column “D” indicates the type of transaction. In this case, “o” means original contract issued, and “s” indicates subsequent transactions. The column “Ref-page” lists the inventory item number of the land table folder or volume and the page number within the volume. From this table of extracted entries we already know that Nehemiah Sayer originally contracted for lot 2 in section 6 of township 5, range 1 on June 21, 1803. The details of this transaction are to be found on page 16 of item #484. We do not know from this entry when he actually occupied the site. However, he had additional dealings with the local agent concerning this lot on September 21, 1804, June 26, 1806, February 1, 1813, and May 4, 1813. It is likely that these transactions involved additional payments. Deeds to the land were not issued until final payment was made.

From Table I below we find that item #484 is on reel 109 (FHL film number 1,414,983) and items 490 and 491 are both on reel 110 (FHL film number 1,414,984). From Table II we find that township 5, range 1 is in the town of Caneadea in Allegany County. This gives a fairly precise location to begin searching tax lists, church records, census records, and other sources. The table also indicates that the first contract in T5R1 was written in 1803, making Nehemiah Sayer one of the earliest settlers in the region. Allegany County was created in 1806 from Genesee County. We would therefore look for the Nehemiah Sayer household in Genesee County in the 1800 federal census and in Allegany County in the 1810 census.

**Table I. Relationship between inventory number and reel number and FHL film number**

Reel Num.	Inventory Num.	Year	FHL film Num.	Reel Num.	Inventory Num.	Year	FHL film Num.
109	484	1804-06	1,414,983	111	499	1821	1,414,985
109	485	1807	1,414,983	111	500	1822	1,414,985
109	486	1808	1,414,983	111	501	1823	1,414,985
109	487	1809	1,414,983	111	502	1824	1,414,985
110	488	1810	1,414,984	111	503	1825	1,414,985
110	489	1811	1,414,984	111	504	1826	1,414,985
110	490	1812	1,414,984	111	505	1827	1,414,985
110	491	1813	1,414,984	111	506	1828	1,414,985
110	492	1814	1,414,984	112	507	1829	1,414,986
110	493	1815	1,414,984	112	508	1830	1,414,986
110	494	1816	1,414,984	112	509	1831	1,414,986
110	495	1817	1,414,984	112	510	1832	1,414,986
110	496	1818	1,414,984	112	511	1833	1,414,986
110	497	1819	1,414,984	113	512	1834	1,414,487
111	498	1820	1,414,985	113	513	1835	1,414,487

**Table II. Relationship of Townships of the Holland Purchase and Towns and Counties**

County (year formed)	Township	Range	Present Town	1 <sup>st</sup> Contract

Allegany (1806)	1	1	Bolivar	1821
Allegany (1806)	1	2	Genesee	1806
Cattaraugus (1808)	1	3	Portville	1806
Cattaraugus (1808)	1	4	Olean	
Cattaraugus (1808)	1	5	Burton	1823
Cattaraugus (1808)	1	6	Carrolton	1806
Cattaraugus (1808)	1	7	Little Valley	
Cattaraugus (1808)	1	8	South Valley	
Cattaraugus (1808)	1	9	South Valley	1809
Chautauqua (1808)	1	10	Carrol	
Chautauqua (1808)	1	11	Ellicott, Carrol, Busti	1808
Chautauqua (1808)	1	12	Busti, Harmony	1810
Chautauqua (1808)	1	13	Harmony	1811
Chautauqua (1808)	1	14	Clymer	
Chautauqua (1808)	1	15	French Creek	1812
Allegany (1806)	2	1	Wirt	1810
Allegany (1806)	2	2	Clarksville	1821
Cattaraugus (1808)	2	3	Portville, Hinsdale	1813
Cattaraugus (1808)	2	4	Hinsdale, Olean	1806
Cattaraugus (1808)	2	5	Burton	1820
Cattaraugus (1808)	2	6	Carrolton, Great Valley	
Cattaraugus (1808)	2	7	Little Valley	
Cattaraugus (1808)	2	8	Cold Spring	1819
Cattaraugus (1808)	2	9	Randolph	1821
Chautauqua (1808)	2	10	Poland	1807
Chautauqua (1808)	2	11	Ellicott	1807
Chautauqua (1808)	2	12	Busti, Harmony, Ellery	1804
Chautauqua (1808)	2	13	Harmony	1807
Chautauqua (1808)	2	14	Sherman	
Chautauqua (1808)	2	15	Mina	1811
Allegany (1806)	3	1	Friendship	1806
Allegany (1806)	3	2	Cuba	1806
Cattaraugus (1808)	3	3	Hinsdale, Rice	1807
Cattaraugus (1808)	3	4	Hinsdale, Rice	1813
Cattaraugus (1808)	3	5	Humphrey	1805

Cattaraugus (1808)	3	6	Great Valley	1811
Cattaraugus (1808)	3	7	Little Valley	1805
Cattaraugus (1808)	3	8	Napoli	1819
Cattaraugus (1808)	3	9	Connewango	1815
Chautauqua (1808)	3	10	Ellington	1815
Chautauqua (1808)	3	11	Gerry	1809
Chautauqua (1808)	3	12	Stockton, Ellery	1805
Chautauqua (1808)	3	13	Stockton, Ellery, Chautauqua	1805
Chautauqua (1808)	3	14	Chautauqua, Westfield	1810
Chautauqua (1808)	3	15	Ripley	1804
Allegany (1806)	4	1	Belfast	1804
Allegany (1806)	4	2	Belfast, New Hudson	1806
Cattaraugus (1808)	4	3	Lyndon	1806
Cattaraugus (1808)	4	4	Lyndon, Franklinville	1805
Cattaraugus (1808)	4	5	Franklinville	1805
Cattaraugus (1808)	4	6	Ellicottville	1813
Cattaraugus (1808)	4	7	Mansfield	1816
Cattaraugus (1808)	4	8	New Albion	1816
Cattaraugus (1808)	4	9	Leon	1818
Chautauqua (1808)	4	10	Cherry Creek	1815
Chautauqua (1808)	4	11	Charlotte	1809
Chautauqua (1808)	4	12	Stockton	1809
Chautauqua (1808)	4	13	Stockton, Portland, Chautauqua	1809
Chautauqua (1808)	4	14	Chautauqua, Westfield	1810
Allegany (1806)	5	1	Caneadea	1803
Allegany (1806)	5	2	Rushford	1808
Cattaraugus (1808)	5	3	Farmersville	1811
Cattaraugus (1808)	5	4	Farmersville	1805
Cattaraugus (1808)	5	5	Machias	1806
Cattaraugus (1808)	5	6	Ellicottville, Ashford	1816
Cattaraugus (1808)	5	7	Otto	
Cattaraugus (1808)	5	8	Otto, Persia	1820
Cattaraugus (1808)	5	9	Dayton	1810
Chautauqua (1808)	5	10	Villanovia	1809
Chautauqua (1808)	5	11	Arkwright	1805

Chautauqua (1808)	5	12	Pomfret	1805
Chautauqua (1808)	5	13	Portland	1804
Allegany (1806)	6	1	Hume	1806
Allegany (1806)	6	2	Centreville	1808
Cattaraugus (1808)	6	3	Freedom	1810
Cattaraugus (1808)	6	4	Machias, Freedom	1809
Cattaraugus (1808)	6	5	Machias, Yorkshire	1810
Erie (1821)	6	5	Sardinia	1810
Cattaraugus (1808)	6	6	Ashford	1807
Erie (1821)	6	6	Sardinia, Concord	1807
Cattaraugus (1808)	6	7	Otto, Ashford	1809
Erie (1821)	6	7	Concord, Collins	1809
Cattaraugus (1808)	6	8	Otto, Persia	1816
Erie (1821)	6	8	Collins	1816
Cattaraugus (1808)	6	9	Perrysburg	1815
Chautauqua (1808)	6	10	Hanover	1805
Chautauqua (1808)	6	11	Hanover, Sheridan	1804
Chautauqua (1808)	6	12	Pomfret	1804
Wyoming (1841)	7	1	Pike	1805
Wyoming (1841)	7	2	Eagle	1808
Wyoming (1841)	7	3	China	1808
Wyoming (1841)	7	4	China	1809
Cattaraugus (1808)	7	5	Yorkshire	1809
Erie (1821)	7	5	Sardinia	1809
Erie (1821)	7	6	Sardinia, Concord	1808
Erie (1821)	7	7	Concord, Collins	1809
Erie (1821)	7	8	Collins	1809
Wyoming (1841)	8	1	Gainesville	1805
Wyoming (1841)	8	2	Weathersfield	1809
Wyoming (1841)	8	3	Java	1809
Wyoming (1841)	8	4	Java	1811
Erie (1821)	8	5	Holland	1807
Erie (1821)	8	6	Coldon	1819
Erie (1821)	8	7	Eden	1803
Erie (1821)	8	8	Eden	1806

Erie (1821)	8	9	Brandt, Evans	1805
Wyoming (1841)	9	1	Warsaw	1803
Wyoming (1841)	9	2	Orangeville	1803
Wyoming (1841)	9	3	Sheldon	
Wyoming (1841)	9	4	Sheldon	
Erie (1821)	9	5	Wales	1804
Erie (1821)	9	6	Aurora	1804
Erie (1821)	9	7	Boston, Hamburg	1804
Erie (1821)	9	8	Evans, Hamburg	1804
Wyoming (1841)	10	1	Middlebury	1802
Wyoming (1841)	10	2	Attica	1802
Wyoming (1841)	10	3	Bennington	1803
Wyoming (1841)	10	4	Bennington	1804
Genesee (1802)	11	1	Bethany	1803
Genesee (1802)	11	2	Alexander	1802
Genesee (1802)	11	3	Darien	1805
Genesee (1802)	11	4	Darien	1807
Erie (1821)	11	5	Alden	1808
Erie (1821)	11	6	Lancaster	1803
Erie (1821)	11	7	Black Rock, Amherst, Cheektowaga	1804
Erie (1821)	11	8	Buffalo City, Black Rock	1803
Genesee (1802)	12	1	Stafford, Batavia	1801
Genesee (1802)	12	2	Batavia	1801
Genesee (1802)	12	3	Pembroke	1803
Genesee (1802)	12	4	Pembroke	1804
Erie (1821)	12	5	Newstead	1801
Niagara (1808)	12	5	Royalton	1801
Erie (1821)	12	6	Clarence	1801
Erie (1821)	12	7	Tonawanda, Amherst	1804
Erie (1821)	12	8	Tonawanda	1805
Genesee (1802)	13	1	Elba	1803
Genesee (1802)	13	2	Elba, Oakfield	1801
Genesee (1802)	13	3	Alabama	1810
Genesee (1802)	13	4	Alabama	1804

Erie (1821)	13	5	Newstead	1805
Erie (1821)	13	6	Clarence	1810
Niagara (1808)	13	6	Royalton, Lockport	1810
Erie (1821)	13	7	Amherst	1806
Niagara (1808)	13	7	Pendleton	1806
Niagara (1808)	13	8	Wheatfield	1805
Niagara (1808)	13	9	Niagara	1804
Orleans (1824)	14	1	Barre	1812
Orleans (1824)	14	2	Barre	1805
Orleans (1824)	14	3	Shelby	1810
Orleans (1824)	14	4	Shelby	1803
Niagara (1808)	14	5	Royalton	
Niagara (1808)	14	6	Royalton, Lockport	1802
Niagara (1808)	14	7	Lockport, Cambria	1803
Niagara (1808)	14	8	Lewiston, Cambria	1803
Niagara (1808)	14	9	Lewiston	1803
Orleans (1824)	15	1	Barre, Gaines	1808
Orleans (1824)	15	2	Barre, Ridgeway, Gaines	1809
Orleans (1824)	15	3	Ridgeway	1810
Orleans (1824)	15	4	Ridgeway	1810
Niagara (1808)	15	5	Hartland	1803
Niagara (1808)	15	6	Hartland, Newfane	1804
Niagara (1808)	15	7	Wilson, Newfane	1805
Niagara (1808)	15	8	Wilson, Porter	1810
Niagara (1808)	15	9	Porter	1803
Orleans (1824)	16	1	Carlton	1804
Orleans (1824)	16	2	Carlton	1803
Orleans (1824)	16	3	Yates	1810
Orleans (1824)	16	4	Yates	1815
Niagara (1808)	16	5	Somerset	1809
Niagara (1808)	16	6	Somerset, Newfane	

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[1] For more information of the microfilming project see Franciska Safran's "The Preservation of the Holland Land Company Records," *New York History*, April, 1988.

[2] Thus township 1 range 1 is in the southeast corner, currently in Allegany County. Township 1, range 15 is the southwest corner, bordering on Lake Erie and Pennsylvania. Township 16, range 1 is the northeast corner of the Holland Purchase.

[3] *Western New York Land Transactions*; Karen E. Livsey; Genealogical Publishing Co, Vol. I, 1804-1824, 1991; Vol. II, 1825-1835, 1996.