

MARION COUNTY RECORDER

Kate Sweeney Bell

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For Immediate Release

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Marion County Recorder's Office Begins Process to Digitize County's Oldest Land Records *Records from 1822 through 1964 will be searchable online.*

Indianapolis, IN – The Marion County Recorder's Office began the process of converting its oldest records to digital format this week. Records from 1822-1964 are currently only stored on microfilm and are only accessible to the public in the Recorder's Office. They will be scanned to make digital copies. Records after 1964 are already available electronically.

It is estimated that 20% or more of the microfilm containing these records, which are to be kept in perpetuity, is deteriorating and nearing the end of its useful life. In addition to scanning the images, microfilm will be replaced as necessary.

The Recorder's Office located over 3,000 volumes of the original Marion County record books at the Indiana State Archives. New scans of the record books will also be made to ensure the highest quality image is captured.

Recorder Kate Sweeney Bell noted, "As Recorder, it is my responsibility to ensure these records are maintained in perpetuity. Rescanning the records to a digital format will provide greater access for the public and help preserve our county's oldest land records for generations."

The microfilm and books are scanned to create image files. Those files are enhanced to provide the highest quality image possible. When the images are finalized, the staff in the Recorder's Office will begin the process of indexing the estimated 1.5M records, allowing them to be searched online.

The contract portion of the project, which involves scanning and enhancing the images, is expected to take one year and cost up to \$1.8M, all of which is paid through dedicated funds generated by recording fees within the office. No tax dollars are used for this effort.

The microfilm and record books primarily contain real estate transactions between two parties, the date and description of the property.

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Digitization Project Numbers

- The project scope is comprised of an estimated 1.5M documents on 3.2M images.
- Records for this project are stored in 3,100 volumes of the original land record books held at the Indiana State Archives. Scans of these records are maintained on 3,200 rolls of microfilm by the Recorder's Office.
- An estimated 20% of the microfilm is deteriorating from a process known as vinegar syndrome which is the result of inadequate storage of substandard microfilm.
- Damaged microfilm will be replaced on polyester film; which can last up to 500 years if properly stored. The Recorder's Office is required by state law to maintain archive copies of all of its records on microfilm.
- An estimated 42,000 staff hours will be needed to complete the indexing of the records before they can be searched electronically. Records will be prioritized for indexing starting with the most recent first and moving backwards (1964-1822).
- Data files from the scanned images will require 2 TB of storage; bringing the total amount of data storage for the office to 5.5 TB. (One terabyte (TB) equals about 1,000 gigabytes).

About the Recorder's Office

The primary function of the Recorder's Office is to maintain permanent public records of the transactions that convey property between owners, preserving a clear and precise record of property ownership. The Recorder is charged with maintaining these records in perpetuity and making them available to the public. Elected to a four-year term, the Recorder is a Constitutional office and limited to two terms.

Recorder's Office Statistics

- Approximately 7 million records are currently available to search online dating back to 1964. Records prior to 1964 are currently only available to the public on microfilm.
- The office recorded an average of 550 documents daily and over 137,000 documents in total in 2015. 50% of those were received electronically.
- Deeds, mortgages and mortgage releases comprise nearly 70% of all documents recorded in 2015.
- The office received over \$3.8M in recording fees in 2015, contributing \$1.8M to the County's General Fund and over \$800K to the City and State's Housing Trust Fund.

About the Recorder, Kate Sweeney Bell

Elected in 2014, this is Kate's first publicly elected office. As Recorder, she served on a 2015 advisory committee with the *Public Records Industry Association* to review changes in the mortgage industry and was elected to serve on the 2016 *National Association of County Recorders, Elected Officials and Clerks* board of directors. A graduate of IUPUI, Kate previously worked as a financial supervisor in the Washington Township Small Claims Court and served in Governor's Bayh and O'Bannon administrations. She and her father owned a small business for over 10 years. Kate lives in the historic Herron-Morton neighborhood with her husband Jason Bell and their two children.

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