

MARION COUNTY RECORDER

Kate Sweeney Bell

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Media Release

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April 10, 2017

Marion County Recorder's Office Completes Digitization of Records

Records dating back to 1821 now available online

Indianapolis, IN – The Marion County Recorder's Office completed the digitization of its oldest records to make them more accessible to the public. Over 2.5 million newly digitized records are now available to search electronically.

Recorder Kate Sweeney Bell noted, "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 Marion County Recorder's Office began the process of converting its oldest records to digital format in January 2016. Records from 1821-1964 were stored on microfilm and only accessible to the public in the Recorder's Office. They were scanned to make digital copies. Records after 1964 were already available electronically.

In addition to scanning the images, 1,286 rolls of deteriorating microfilm were replaced to preserve for archival storage.

The Recorder's Office located 2,913 volumes of original Marion County record books at the Indiana State Archives. New scans of the record books were made to ensure the highest quality image was captured.

The microfilm and books were scanned to create image files. Those files were enhanced to provide the highest quality image possible. Newly digitized records are available to search by original Book and Page number and/or instrument number. A guide for searching these records is available on the Recorder's website: www.indy.gov/recorder.

Digitized records include deeds, mortgages, liens and other miscellaneous documents.

Digitization Project Numbers

- The project scope is comprised of over 2.5 million documents on nearly 4 million images.
- The \$1.8M contract portion of the project was paid through dedicated funds generated by recording fees within the office. No tax dollars were used for this effort.
- Records for this project are stored in 2,913 volumes of the original land record books held at the Indiana State Archives. Scans of these records are maintained on 3,846 rolls of microfilm by the Recorder's Office.
- 1,286 rolls of microfilm were deteriorating from a condition called 'vinegar syndrome' that degrades and warps the film.

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- Damaged microfilm was replaced with polyester film; which has a longer storage life and not prone to deterioration. The Recorder's Office is required by state law to maintain archive copies of all of its records on microfilm.
- Over 21,000 staff hours were spent scanning the microfilm and land record books to prepare them for image enhancement.
- An estimated 42,000 staff hours will be needed to complete the indexing of the records before they can be easily searched electronically.

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

- Over 7 million records are fully indexed and available to search online dating back to 1964.
An additional 2.5 million newly digitized records are searchable by Book and Page and/or instrument number.
- The office recorded an average of 586 documents daily and over 145,000 documents in total in 2016. 56% of those were received electronically.
- Deeds, mortgages and mortgage releases comprise nearly 70% of all documents recorded in 2016.
- The office received over \$4 million in recording fees in 2016, contributing \$1.9 million to the County's General Fund and over \$800 thousand to support programs to end homelessness.

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. Also in 2016, Kate was appointed to the Indianapolis City Market board and elected by her peers as District Vice President of the *Indiana Recorder's Association*.

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