

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
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Registered Land explained

Massachusetts has two separate systems of recording documents related to the ownership of land. These two systems are known as RECORDED LAND and REGISTERED LAND (also known as LAND COURT).

Most property is RECORDED LAND. With recorded land, documents are reproduced in numbered record books in the sequence we receive them, so within a book, one document will probably have nothing to do with the documents that come before it or after it. You must use the Index to find the relevant documents and interpret them for yourself - the registry of deeds does not become involved in the legal effect of these documents. RECORDED LAND documents are usually referred to by their book and page number (meaning the book number of the page within the book where the document is recorded).

REGISTERED LAND is quite different. With registered land the registry of deeds (operating as an office of the Massachusetts Land Court) issues a CERTIFICATE OF TITLE to the current owner of the property. Registered Land is usually referred to by the Certificate of Title number.

Any document that affects ownership of a parcel of registered land is annotated on the back of the current certificate of title for that parcel. Each document is issued a document number which is how individual documents are identified.

Certificates of title to registered land are placed within numbered books and each certificate is assigned a page within that book. Consequently, registered land does have book and page numbers but they do not operate the same way as RECORDED LAND books and pages.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts guarantees title to REGISTERED LAND property and so the standard set by the registry of deeds is much higher for registered land than it is for recorded land. This often causes registered land documents to be rejected when presented for recording due to this higher standard.

For more information, contact the registry's Customer Service counter at 978/322-9000 or at lowelldeeds@comcast.net