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Crown Purchase Deeds

Introduction

Crown Purchase Deeds [[Series 8102](#)] document land purchased by the Crown from Māori. Called 'a hundred little treaties' by one scholar, they are important both historically and for what information they contain – from the names of tūpuna to the location of wāhi tapu.

More than 6,000 of these records exist, covering agreements from all over Aotearoa New Zealand. They mostly date from 1841-1905, but also include some earlier records, as well as Deeds up to 1976. Some cover huge areas – sometimes thousands of square kilometres – while others were for small blocks of just a few hectares. Our Auckland office holds copies of the Auckland Deeds on aperture cards, but all of the original Deeds are held in the Wellington Office.

However there are gaps in the collection, as Deeds were transferred between government offices or added to other files before coming into our care. The movement of Deeds can often be found in the indexes to the collection, [Series 8104](#).

What they contain

Generally each Deed includes legal and physical descriptions of the land, maps or plans (on or separate to the actual Deed), conditions of sale, the purchase price, names and tohu of tūpuna (sometimes with hapū affiliation noted), and records of payment. Where the original Deed was written in te reo Māori there is often a translation into English. Many Deeds contain related papers, such as Crown Grants or Māori Land Court Orders.

The format of the Deeds changed over time. As land-deals became more frequent a typeset, pre-printed form prepared by the Native Department was often used. But most early Deeds are documented on large pieces of paper or parchment and written by hand. Often these were folded, creating a cover page with the inner being the main text of the Deed. Here the boundaries are described, and names of tūpuna are recorded (or in later Deeds, personally signed). Sometimes these

names spill over to the reverse side or fill additional pages. Some include detailed maps that name wāhi tapu, reserves, awa and maunga, either as a separate item or drawn onto the Deed itself. However not all Deeds contain detailed maps, and some have no boundary drawings at all.

How to find them

All of the Deeds are listed individually on our online finding aid Archway, mostly by the block name and/or place (such as Castle Point - Wairarapa or Pakanae No.1 – Hokianga). Otherwise they are listed by lot or section and place (such as Sec 28 - Whanganui Townbelt or Part of Lot 97 - Sumner Borough). All have their own Archives reference.

There are a number of ways to find a Deed. One option is to go to the [Series page for 8102](#) on Archway, click on the *Records* tab, and browse the listings. To make it easier to browse, the full list is organised into regions. However you can show the whole list and then arrange it by name, record number, or date.

You can also search the series with keywords. For example, if you want to see all the Deeds with the word 'Wairarapa' in the title, go to the [Advanced Search – Records page](#), put **8102** in the *Series* field and 'Wairarapa' in the *Keyword* field. Your results will only show records using that term, so be aware that more Deeds for Wairarapa may exist that do not have the word 'Wairarapa' in the title (for example, if they are listed by block name only).

Turton's Deeds online

Thanks to Victoria University's New Zealand Electronic Text Collection, a number of North Island Deeds from 1840-1877 are online and searchable by keyword. These are known as [Turton's Deeds](#). You can find them at: www.nzetc.victoria.ac.nz.

Also available at NZETC is Alexander Mackay's *A Compendium of Official Documents Relative to Native Affairs in the South Island* (1873), two volumes that cover a number of [early South Island purchases](#).

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