



ARAPAHOE COUNTY  
COLORADO'S FIRST

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# News Release

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## **Clerk and Recorder's Office begins effort to preserve historic record books from 1800's**

*Project to preserve and digitize records is first-of-its-kind in Arapahoe County*

**LITTLETON, CO** – Important relics of Colorado history have been preserved for future generations, thanks to a project underway in the Arapahoe County Clerk and Recorder's Office.

Clerk and Recorder Matt Crane led efforts to preserve the County's 73 oldest land record books, dating 1865-1900, as well as to digitize the pages and make the records searchable online. These books contain handwritten accounts of property transactions, which are still critical for real estate sales today.

The Clerk and Recorder's Office maintains more than 2,000 record and index books, which date back to the formation of Arapahoe County as Colorado's first county. During that era, records were handwritten in iron gall ink on acid-bleached paper made from wood pulp. Glue was used to bind the pages in leather-bound books.

After more than 150 years in Colorado's arid climate, many of these record books are in extremely poor condition. The fragile pages have turned brown and are tearing loose or cracking. The ink is fading and the records are at risk of being indecipherable.

"Our record books have a rich story to tell about the changing landscape and property rights in Arapahoe County," said Crane. "It is the responsibility of the Clerk and Recorder's Office to maintain and provide public access to these books. We saw a critical need to begin preserving the deteriorating volumes from our County's earliest days in order to protect the integrity of these records."

The County solicited bids and contracted with Kofile a renowned preservation company for government agencies nationwide. The preservation process includes cleaning each page of dust, sediment, stains and mineral and biological contaminants. The pages are flattened and humidified, and then deacidified. Each page is encapsulated in a Mylar protective sleeve and secured in an archival binder, which is consistent with best practices from the U.S. National Archives and Library of Congress. Each binder is bound in an elegant red metal cover that is fire and water-resistant and embossed with gold text.

Each page also is scanned and enhanced, and then linked to a digital index. These records will be added to the County's digital collection of public documents, which can be searched and viewed at [www.arapahoegov.com/documentsearch](http://www.arapahoegov.com/documentsearch).

As part of the project, Arapahoe will be the first county in Colorado to provide a direct link between the historical Index Book and the land records. This means that a citizen can view the digital Index Book,

and simply click on the name of a Grantor/Grantee to view the associated land record, such as a deed. This will dramatically expedite the search process for citizens, who will not have to comb through pages of digital books for a relevant record.

Funding has been allocated from the County's General Fund to preserve only the 73 oldest volumes in the library. Crane will finish his term as Clerk and Recorder in January 2019, and any further funding to preserve record books dating from the 1900's will be at the discretion of the Clerk-elect and Board of County Commissioners.

Arapahoe County's record books are available for public review in the Records and Copies Room at the Administration Building, 5334 S. Prince Street, Littleton. Employees from the Recording Division are available to assist the public with locating materials, but cannot provide research, legal advice or forms for real estate transactions.

For more information about land and marriage records, please call the Recording Division at 303-795-4520 or visit [www.arapahoe.gov/clerk](http://www.arapahoe.gov/clerk).

Please note that Arapahoe County does not provide court or vital statistics records. For birth or death records, please contact [Tri-County Health Department](http://www.tri-county.org/health) at 303-220-9200. For divorce or court records, please contact the [Colorado Judicial Branch](http://www.courts.state.co.us) at 303-649-6355.

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**View and download photos of the preserved record books at:**

<ftp://ftp.arapahoe.gov/Pub/Communication%20Services/Photos/Clerk/Preservation/>