

Public Lands. The greatest portion of the unoccupied lands of the United States constitute the national domain, and is the property of the United States. The property of these lands has been acquired by the United States by cession of the individual States, by acknowledged territorial jurisdiction, by purchase or cession from foreign states, and by the extinction of the Indian title to them. The officers of the Land Office are a Register, and Receiver of public monies.

The lands are surveyed before they are offered for sale, and are divided into townships six miles square, which are subdivided into 36 sections, each a mile square, and containing 640 acres. These are again subdivided into half, quarter, and half-quarter sections, the smallest tracts sold by the government. The credit system is abolished, and the terms of sale are cash previous to the entry, or government deed. The lands are first exposed to sale at auction, by proclamation of the President. The highest bidder at this sale failing to pay, the tract is offered again, and the failing bidder is declared incapable of purchasing at the sales. The minimum price of land is one dollar and twenty-five cents an acre. Lands forfeited for non-payment must be offered first at public sale. Choice tracts and favorite positions command good prices at the public sales. But the greater portion of the lands remain unsold, after the public sales, and are entered at private sale. Those lands for which \$1 25 are not offered, remain unsold, and the property of the United States. Salt springs and lead mines are reserved from this sale; but may be leased by the President. One section of 640 acres is reserved in every township for literary purposes. In cases of different applications, at private sale, for the same tract, the highest bidder is to have the preference. By this admirable system all the townships and subdivisions are in regular mathematical forms, precluding the fruitful source of litigation, arising from the uncertainty of butts and bounds, in forms with curve, meandering, or zigzag lines. Those forms so universal in the farms of the old settlements, are not only difficult matters of adjustment between contiguous owners, and exceedingly inconvenient for fencing, but are unsightly and offensive to the eye. It is inconceivable that the beautiful square forms of the present land system should not have been suggested to the first settlers of the United States.

The land sales unite three essential objects, the right of selection by the highest bidder at the public sales, extreme cheapness at the private sales, and a title of a clearness and unquestionable surety commensurate with the stability of the government. The convenience and excellence of this system constitute an essential element in the rapid population of the new states.