Synopsis:

THE IRISH LAND REGISTRY

While the Irish Land Commission and the Irish Land Registry were both involved in the dissolution and redistribution of the former Cromwellian Plantations, mainly in the west of Ireland, they had different, yet complimentary roles. Cromwell's seizure of the western lands from the Irish in 1644 as a result of his warfare carried against the Irish nobility, and susequent awarding his lieutenants with large plantations left the Irish as tenant farmers on what had been their land. Some migrated while others continued to eke out a living from the land under onerous conditions despite many handicamps. This resulted in a series of famines, while food was exported. The Great Famine of 1847-49 was exacerbated by a fungus that killed the potato plant - the primary food of the peasant farmers. Over a million died due to starvation, and over 1-½ million migrated. The English gentry who had inherited the estates, for the most part, did little to alleviate the situation.

The **Irish Land Commission** was charged with breaking the plantations into smaller, owner-workable farms, not just selling them off *en masse*. They provided long term loans to allow the farmer to purchase the land over time - an unheard of practice in banking of the time. This was funded by revenue stamps. The Land Commission closed in 2000 with almost all land redistributed, and all loans repaid. The **Land Registry** implemented a system to create appropriate deeds for the land since there were none. Separate but unique tasks. This article explains the task and the *modus operandi* of the latter. It is seen not only as a separate set of revenue stamps but also on official mail, and continues to the present as land is bought or sold, or restrictive clauses are added or removed from deeds.

This article addresses the purpose of the Land Registry stamps, why they were important in preventing fraud and errors, and shows examples of the design changes occuring over the years to include the 1922 conversion to the Free State of Ireland *(Saorstát Éireann)*, the 1939 Independence (government name change to *Éire*), and the decimalization of the currency.