



**RECORDER OF DEEDS/REGISTER OF WILLS/
CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT**

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY

EXAMINATION REPORT

FOR THE PERIOD

JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE - AUDITOR GENERAL

DEPARTMENT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL





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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Independent Auditor's Report

The Honorable Daniel P. Meuser
Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue
Harrisburg, PA 17128

We have examined the accompanying statements of receipts and disbursements (Statements) of the Recorder of Deeds/Register of Wills/Clerk of Orphans' Court, Northumberland County, Pennsylvania (County Officer), for the period January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2012, pursuant to the requirements of Sections 401(b) and 401(d) of *The Fiscal Code*, 72 P.S. § 401(b) and § 401(d). These Statements are the responsibility of the county office's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these Statements based on our examination.

Our examination was conducted in accordance with attestation standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the standards applicable to attestation engagements contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. An examination includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the Statements and performing such other procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances. We believe that our examination provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

We are mandated by Sections 401(b) and 401(d) of *The Fiscal Code* to audit the accounts of each county officer to determine whether all moneys collected on behalf of the Commonwealth have been correctly assessed, reported and promptly remitted. *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States include attestation engagements as a separate type of audit. An attestation engagement performed pursuant to *Government Auditing Standards* involves additional standards that exceed the standards provided by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Accordingly, this attestation engagement complies with both *Government Auditing Standards* and Sections 401(b) and 401(d) of *The Fiscal Code*.

Independent Auditor's Report (Continued)

In our opinion, the Statements referred to above present, in all material respects, the operations of the County Officer as it pertains to receipts made on behalf of the Commonwealth for the period January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2012, in conformity with the criteria set forth in Note 1.

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we are required to report findings of significant deficiencies in internal control, violations of provisions of contracts or grant agreements, and abuse that are material to the Statements and any fraud and illegal acts that are more than inconsequential that come to our attention during our examination. We are also required to obtain the views of management on those matters. We performed our examination to express an opinion on whether the Statements are presented in accordance with the criteria described above and not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the internal control over reporting on the Statements or on compliance and other matters; accordingly, we express no such opinions.

A control deficiency exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent or detect misstatements on a timely basis. A significant deficiency is a control deficiency, or combination of control deficiencies, that adversely affects the County Officer's ability to initiate, authorize, record, process, or report data reliably in accordance with the applicable criteria such that there is more than a remote likelihood that a misstatement of the County Officer's Statements that is more than inconsequential will not be prevented or detected by the County Officer's internal control. We consider the deficiency described in the finding below to be a significant deficiency in internal control over the reporting on the Statements:

- Bank Deposit Slips Were Not Validated.

Independent Auditor's Report (Continued)

A material weakness is a significant deficiency or combination of significant deficiencies that results in more than a remote likelihood that a material misstatement of the Statements will not be prevented or detected by the County Officer's internal control. Our consideration of the internal control over reporting on the Statements would not necessarily disclose all matters in the internal control that might be significant deficiencies and, accordingly, would not necessarily disclose all significant deficiencies that are also considered to be material weaknesses. We consider the significant deficiency described above to be a material weakness.

The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, and the County Officer and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.



November 22, 2013

EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE
Auditor General

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RECORDER OF DEEDS
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY
REALTY TRANSFER TAXES
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

Receipts:

Realty Transfer Taxes (Note 2)	\$ 4,975,714
Disbursements to Commonwealth (Note 4)	<u>(4,975,920)</u>
Balance due Commonwealth (County) per settled reports (Note 5)	(206)
Examination adjustments (Note 6)	<u>206</u>
Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (County) for the period January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2012	<u><u>\$ -</u></u>

Notes to the Statements of Receipts and Disbursements are an integral part of this report.

RECORDER OF DEEDS
 NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY
 WRIT TAXES AND JUDICIAL COMPUTER SYSTEM/ACCESS TO JUSTICE FEES
 STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
 FOR THE PERIOD
 JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

Receipts:

Writ Taxes	\$	26,919
Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees		<u>838,928</u>
Total Receipts (Note 2)		865,847
Commissions (Note 3)		<u>(808)</u>
Net Receipts		865,039
Disbursements to Commonwealth (Note 4)		<u>(865,039)</u>
Balance due Commonwealth (County) per settled reports (Note 5)		-
Examination adjustments		<u>-</u>
Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (County) for the period January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2012	\$	<u><u>-</u></u>

Notes to the Statements of Receipts and Disbursements are an integral part of this report.

REGISTER OF WILLS
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

Receipts:

Inheritance Taxes	\$ 18,093,202
Disbursements and credits to Commonwealth (Note 4)	<u>(18,094,705)</u>
Balance due Commonwealth (County) per settled reports (Note 5)	(1,503)
Examination adjustments (Note 7)	<u>1,503</u>
Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (County) for the period January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2012	<u><u>\$ -</u></u>

Notes to the Statements of Receipts and Disbursements are an integral part of this report.

CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
 NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY
 STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
 FOR THE PERIOD
 JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

Receipts:

Marriage License Taxes	\$	830
Marriage License Application Surcharges		16,590
Marriage License Declaration Fees		16,590
Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees		<u>52,646</u>
Total Receipts (Note 2)		86,656
Disbursements to Commonwealth (Note 4)		<u>(86,656)</u>
Balance due Commonwealth (County) per settled reports (Note 5)		-
Examination adjustments		<u>-</u>
Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (County) for the period January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2012	\$	<u><u>-</u></u>

Notes to the Statements of Receipts and Disbursements are an integral part of this report.

RECORDER OF DEEDS/REGISTER OF WILLS/
CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY
NOTES TO THE STATEMENTS OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

1. Criteria

The Statements of Receipts and Disbursements provide a summary of receipts and disbursements by category. The categories and the amounts of taxes, fees, and surcharges assessed are based on Pennsylvania laws and regulations.

The Statements were prepared in accordance with reporting requirements prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue. Under this method, only the Commonwealth portion of cash receipts and disbursements are presented, revenues are recognized when received, and expenditures are recognized when paid.

2. Receipts

Recorder Of Deeds

Receipts consist of monies collected on behalf of the Commonwealth. These include monies collected for the following taxes and fees:

- The Pennsylvania Realty Transfer Tax is a documentary stamp tax of 1 percent on the value of the interest in real property transferred by deed.
- Writ Taxes represent a \$.50 tax imposed on various types of documents and a \$10 tax on notary public commissions processed through the office.
- Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees represent a \$10 fee imposed for each filing of deeds in any form, mortgages, mortgage assignments, mortgage releases, mortgage satisfaction pieces, installment sales agreements, leases for a term of 30 years or longer, and easements. These fees were increased to \$23.50 for the period December 8, 2009 to December 31, 2014.

RECORDER OF DEEDS/REGISTER OF WILLS/
CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY
NOTES TO THE STATEMENTS OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

2. Receipts (Continued)

Register Of Wills

Receipts consist of monies collected on behalf of the Commonwealth less commissions on these monies. These include monies collected for the following taxes and fees:

- Inheritance Taxes represent inheritance taxes filed with the Register of Wills.
- Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees represent a \$10 fee imposed for the initiation of any civil action or legal proceeding, including the filing of petitions for grants of letters, and first filing in petitions concerning adoptions, incompetents' estates, minors' estates, and inter vivos trusts. These fees were increased to \$23.50 for the period December 8, 2009 to December 31, 2014.

For the purpose of reporting the collection of Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees to the Department of Revenue, the office combined the Register of Wills and Clerk of Orphans' Court collections and reported them on the Clerk of Orphans' Court's monthly report. Therefore, the amount reported on the Clerk of Orphans' Court's statement of receipts and disbursements includes the fees collected for the office of the Register of Wills.

Clerk Of Orphans' Court

Receipts consist of monies collected on behalf of the Commonwealth. These include monies collected for the following taxes, surcharges, and fees:

- The Marriage License Tax is a \$.50 tax on all marriage licenses filed with the Clerk of Orphans' Court.
- The Marriage License Application Surcharge is a \$10 surcharge imposed on all marriage license applications.

RECORDER OF DEEDS/REGISTER OF WILLS/
 CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
 NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY
 NOTES TO THE STATEMENTS OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
 FOR THE PERIOD
 JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

2. Receipts (Continued)

Clerk Of Orphans' Court (Continued)

- The Marriage License Declaration Fees is a \$13 fee imposed for the issuance of a marriage license or declaration and for returns thereof to the Department of Health, \$2.50 of which shall be for the use of the county where the license is issued, and \$.50 for the use of the Commonwealth (Marriage License Tax), plus \$10 (Marriage License/Declaration Fees). The statement of receipts and disbursements only reflects the portion collected on behalf of the Commonwealth.
- Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees represent a \$10 fee imposed on all petitions for grant of letters, and first filings in petitions concerning adoptions, incompetents' estates, minors' estates, and inter vivos trusts. These fees were increased to \$23.50 for the period December 8, 2009 to December 31, 2014.

3. Commissions

Acting in the capacity of an agent for the Commonwealth, the Recorder of Deeds/Register of Wills is authorized to collect a commission on the Commonwealth portion of taxes as follows:

<u>Tax</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Realty Transfer	1%
Writ	3%
Inheritance	4.25% \$1.00 to \$200,000.00
	1.75% next \$800,000.00
	.50% thereafter

Recorder of Deeds commissions of \$49,757 for Realty Transfer Taxes and Register of Wills commissions of \$160,468 for Inheritance Taxes were paid to the County by the Department of Revenue, which are not reflected in the Statements.

RECORDER OF DEEDS/REGISTER OF WILLS/
CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY
NOTES TO THE STATEMENTS OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

4. Disbursements And Credits

Recorder Of Deeds

Realty Transfer Taxes

The Recorder of Deeds participates in the Department of Revenue's cash management system for Realty Transfer Taxes. Under this system, the "Agent" deposits Realty Transfer Tax collections to a local account approved and established in the name of the Department of Revenue, thereby eliminating the need for the agent to issue a check to disburse these taxes.

Total disbursements are comprised as follows:

Deposits into the Department of Revenue's cash management account	\$ 4,975,920
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Writ Taxes And Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees

Total disbursements are comprised as follows:

Recorder of Deeds checks issued to:

Department of Revenue	\$ 865,039
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RECORDER OF DEEDS/REGISTER OF WILLS/
 CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
 NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY
 NOTES TO THE STATEMENTS OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
 FOR THE PERIOD
 JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

4. Disbursements And Credits (Continued)

Register Of Wills

Inheritance Taxes

The Register of Wills participates in the Department of Revenue's cash management system for Inheritance Taxes. Under this system, the "Agent" deposits Inheritance Tax collections to a local account approved and established in the name of the Department of Revenue, thereby eliminating the need for the agent to issue a check to disburse these taxes.

Total disbursements and credits are comprised as follows:

Deposits into the Department of Revenue's cash management account	\$ 18,061,088
Credits issued by the Department of Revenue	<u>33,617</u>
Total	<u><u>\$ 18,094,705</u></u>

Clerk Of Orphans' Court

Total disbursements are comprised as follows:

Clerk of Orphans' Court checks issued to:

Department of Revenue	<u><u>\$ 86,656</u></u>
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5. Balance Due Commonwealth (County) For The Period January 1, 2009 To December 31, 2012

This balance reflects a summary of monthly transmittal reports as settled by the Department of Revenue. The balance does not reflect adjustments disclosed by our examination. Refer to note 6 and note 7 for adjustments.

6. Examination Adjustment - Recorder of Deeds – Realty Transfer Taxes

The examination adjustment of \$206 was the result of a bank error on May 23, 2012. The error was corrected by the bank on June 1, 2012.

RECORDER OF DEEDS/REGISTER OF WILLS/
CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY
NOTES TO THE STATEMENTS OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

7. Examination Adjustment - Register of Wills - Inheritance Taxes

The examination adjustment of \$1,503 was the result of a deposit made in October 2009 that was \$1,495 more than what was actually collected. This error was corrected on November 2, 2009. It also included a deposit made in December 2009 that was \$8 more than what was actually collected. This error was corrected on January 5, 2010.

8. County Officer Serving During Examination Period

Mary Zimmerman served as Recorder of Deeds/Register of Wills/Clerk of Orphans' Court during the period January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2012.

RECORDER OF DEEDS/REGISTER OF WILLS/
CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

Finding - Bank Deposit Slips Were Not Validated

Our review of the office's accounting records disclosed that the office copy of the bank deposit slip was not validated by the bank for 132 of the 160 deposits tested. Although the office received a validated receipt from the bank for the 132 deposit slips, this only confirmed the total amount deposited and not the actual make up of the deposit (i.e. cash and check mix).

Good internal accounting controls require that the amount of each check and the total amount of cash deposited are identified on the deposit slip. The office copy of each deposit should be brought to the bank to be validated. If the bank cannot validate the deposit slip, the office should obtain a deposit ticket from the bank that validates total cash and the total deposit. After the office receives the validation from the bank, it should be reconciled to the receipts by someone other than the person preparing or making the deposit.

Without a good system of internal control over funds received by the office, the possibility of funds being lost or misappropriated increases significantly.

The office was not aware of the potential internal control weaknesses caused by not having a validated deposit slip or deposit ticket from the bank.

Recommendation

We recommend that the office obtain a validation from the bank as to the mix of cash and checks deposited. We further recommend that the validation is reconciled to receipts by someone other than the person preparing or making the deposit.

Management's Response

The office responded as follows:

We currently do separate cash from checks on our deposit slips. However, with the new bank system we just receive a paper validation with the total. We will talk to the bank to see if they could give us something showing cash and checks. We are currently reminding tellers to validate our deposit slips.

RECORDER OF DEEDS/REGISTER OF WILLS/
CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY
REPORT DISTRIBUTION
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

This report was initially distributed to:

The Honorable Daniel P. Meuser
Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue

The Honorable Zygmunt Pines
Court Administrator of Pennsylvania
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Courts
Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

The Honorable Mary Zimmerman

Recorder of Deeds/Register of Wills/
Clerk of Orphans' Court

The Honorable Anthony Phillips

Controller

The Honorable Vinny Clausi

Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at <http://www.auditorgen.state.pa.us>. Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 231 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: news@auditorgen.state.pa.us.