

DOWER AND CURTESY

At common law, dower was the right of a widow to an interest for life in one-third of all real estate owned by her husband during their marriage. Curtesy was the right of a widower to an interest for life in all (i.e., not one-third) real estate owned by his wife during their marriage. The Massachusetts legislature has abolished the distinction between dower and curtesy (now all rights are called dower) and has abolished rights of dower except as to those lands owned at the time of death. Therefore, it is no longer necessary to obtain a release of dower or curtesy rights in a deed. See Mass. Gen. L. c. 189, §1 (effective January 1, 1966).