

CHAPTER 891

PRESUMPTIONS AND JUDICIAL NOTICES

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891.03 Lists of state lands. All statements or lists of lands which shall have been certified by the president of the United States, or by any other officer of the government thereof, as conveyed to the state under or by any act of congress, being produced by the proper custodians thereof, shall be received in all cases as presumptive evidence that the title of the lands therein described became thereby vested in the state.

891.04 Certificate as to public lands. The certificate of the chief clerk appointed under s. 23.05 by the board of commissioners of public lands under the official seal, that any specified piece or tract of land belongs to or is mortgaged to the state, or that the state has any interest, legal or equitable, therein shall be presumptive evidence of the facts so stated. The certificate of the secretary of natural resources under the official seal of the department that authority has been given to any person, naming him, to seize timber or other materials specified in ch. 26 shall be presumptive evidence of the fact so stated.

History: 1971 c 164

891.05 Land patents by state officers. Every patent which shall have been executed and delivered by the commissioners of school and university lands or by the commissioners of public lands, purporting to convey any land, and every deed or patent which shall have been executed and delivered by the governor, purporting to convey any lands granted to the state by

the United States, shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts therein stated and that the grantee named therein became vested thereby at the date thereof with an absolute title in fee to the lands therein described.

891.06 Deed on judicial sale. Every conveyance of land or any estate or interest therein executed by any sheriff, referee, receiver or other person, in pursuance of a sale made by virtue of any judgment, order, license or execution of any court of record in this state, and which shall have been recorded in the proper county, as well as such record, shall be received, as presumptive evidence of the facts therein stated and that the title, estate or interest in the land therein described, which such conveyance purports to convey, of every person whom it purports to affect passed to and vested in the grantee therein at the date thereof or at such previous date as such conveyance purports to fix for that purpose.

891.07 Certificate of judicial sale. Every certificate of sale of land or any estate or interest therein executed by any sheriff, referee, receiver or other person, in pursuance of a sale made by virtue of any judgment, order, license or execution of any court of record in this state, and the record thereof, shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts therein stated.

891.08 Records showing revenue stamps. Whenever the record, in the office of a register of deeds, of any conveyance or of any instrument

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whatever, upon which revenue stamps may have been at any time required to be affixed by any act of congress, shall show such stamps or any of them, more or less, to have been affixed, it shall be presumptive evidence that such conveyance or instrument had properly affixed to it the number and denomination of stamps required by law.

891.09 Record of births, stillbirths, fetal deaths, deaths and marriages. (1) **RECORDS AS EVIDENCE.** The record of any marriage, birth, stillbirth, fetal death or death kept in the office of any register of deeds or city health officer or in the state bureau of vital statistics shall be received as presumptive evidence of the marriage, birth, stillbirth, fetal death or death so recorded.

(2) **CHURCH AND DOCTOR'S RECORDS.** Any church, parish or baptismal record, and any record of a physician or a person authorized to solemnize marriages, in which record are preserved the facts relating to any birth, stillbirth, fetal death, marriage or death, including the names of the persons, dates, places and other material facts, may be admitted as prima facie evidence of any fact aforesaid. But such record must be produced by its proper custodian and be supported by his oath that it is such a record as it purports to be and is genuine to the best of his knowledge and belief.

(3) **CERTIFICATES OF FOREIGN BIRTHS, ETC.** Official certificates of births, marriages or deaths, issued in foreign countries in which such births, marriages or deaths have occurred, purporting to be founded on books of record, properly authenticated, shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts in such certificates stated.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 59 W (2d) R6

891.10 Village records. The papers, documents and orders relating to the organization and incorporation or the alteration of the boundaries of any village, being recorded in the office of the proper register of deeds pursuant to law, and such record and also the record thereof in the office of the village clerk shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts therein stated.

891.11 County records as to taxation. (1) All books and files in the office of any county treasurer or county clerk, all assessments and tax rolls and certificates and warrants thereto attached, all notices required to be published or posted by the county treasurer or county clerk, and the proofs of publication or posting filed in the office of either, pursuant to any law relating to the assessment or collection of taxes or to lands

sold for taxes, shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts therein stated.

(2) A transcript of so much of said books, files and records, as relates to the assessment or sale for taxes of any parcel of land in any specified year or years shall be received in evidence with the same effect as the originals and as presumptive evidence of the facts stated in such certificate, when certified in substantially the following form:

I hereby certify that the annexed and foregoing is a true and correct transcript of all books, records, papers, files and proceedings of every name and nature on file or of record in my office relating in any wise to the assessment of taxes upon or to the sale for taxes of the following described lands ... situated in the county of ..., state of Wisconsin, for the year (or years) A.D. ..., and of the whole thereof. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand this ... day of ..., A.D.

County Clerk (or Treasurer) of ... county.

891.12 Land office receipt. The receiver's receipt or certificate of purchase of public lands, signed by the receiver, and the official certificate of any register or receiver of the entry or purchase of any land or the location of any land by any land warrant shall be received, when held by the original claimant, his heirs or assigns, as presumptive evidence that the title to the lands therein described passed to and is vested in the person therein named, his heirs or assigns, except when, at the time of such entry or purchase, the land was owned or occupied by any person as mineral ground on which discoveries of mineral ores had been made.

891.14 State land office certification of title. A certificate of the chief clerk of the board of commissioners of public lands, or any one of the commissioners of the public lands shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts stated, and that the person named became vested at the date stated with an absolute title in fee to the lands described when it is substantially in the following form:

Office of the Commissioners of the Public Lands, Madison, Wis., ..., A.D.

I hereby certify that from the books, files and records of the office of the commissioners of public lands it appears that on the ... day of ..., A.D. ..., the following described real estate, situate in the state of Wisconsin, ... was duly transferred by the United States to the state of Wisconsin, and that on the ... day of ..., A.D. ..., the above described real estate was duly transferred by the state of Wisconsin to

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the official seal of the

commissioners of the public lands this ____ day of _____, A.D. _____

History: 1971 c. 164; 1975 c. 41 s. 51

891.16 Certificate of land transfers. A certificate by the secretary of state, under the great (or lesser) seal, to any facts which appear from the books, files and records in his office or the office of the commissioners of public lands in regard to the grant, conveyance or transfer of any land by the United States to the territory or state of Wisconsin, and also in regard to the sale, conveyance or transfer of any such land by said territory or state shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts so certified.

891.17 Certificate of adjutant general. A certificate by the adjutant general to any facts which appear from the books, files and records in his office shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts so certified.

891.18 Affidavits of service. Whenever any notice or other writing is by law authorized or required to be served the affidavit of the person serving it, setting forth the facts necessary to show that it was duly served, shall be presumptive proof that such notice or writing was duly served. But this section shall not apply to any service where another way of proving such service is expressly prescribed by law.

891.20 Articles of Incorporation, presumptions. Any charter or patent of incorporation which shall have been issued by the governor or secretary of state, or both, to any corporation under any law of the state; any certificate of organization or association of any corporation or joint stock company; the articles of association or organization of any corporation, or a certified copy thereof, which shall have been filed or recorded in the office of the secretary of state, or of any register of deeds or clerk of the circuit court under any law of the state; any certificate or resolution for the purpose of amendment, and every amendment in any form, of the charter, patent, certificate or articles of association or organization or of the name, corporate powers or purposes of any corporation, filed or recorded in either of said offices and a duly certified copy of any such document so filed or recorded shall be received as conclusive evidence of the existence of the corporation or joint stock company mentioned therein, or of the due amendment of the charter, patent, certificate or articles of association or organization thereof in all cases where such facts

are only collaterally involved; and as presumptive evidence thereof and of the facts therein stated in all other cases.

891.21 Affidavit of notice of corporate meeting. Whenever any corporation notice is given, posted or served, an affidavit of the person who gave, posted or served the same, specifying the manner and time of doing so, annexed to a copy of such notice, may be filed with the clerk or secretary of the corporation, and when so filed, the original or certified copies thereof, shall be presumptive evidence in all cases of the facts contained in such affidavit.

891.22 Certificate of insurance assessment. Whenever an action is brought by any mutual insurance company to collect any assessment, the certificate of the secretary of said company, specifying such assessment, the amount due said company by means thereof, and that notice thereof was given the person liable therefor, shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts so certified.

891.23 Copies of insurance books. Copies of the entries in the books of any life or mutual benefit insurance corporation or association engaged in doing business on the level premium or assessment plan, together with statements verified by the custodian of such books, showing the number of members insured in or belonging to such corporation or association, and the number of members in each class or grade thereof, and the aggregate amount which would be due from them upon a single assessment, and that such copies are true and are taken from the regular books of the corporation or association used and kept for the transaction of its business, and that such books are now in his custody or under his control, shall be received in all proceedings as prima facie evidence of such entries or statements. No officer of any such corporation or association shall be compelled (unless by special order of the court or officer before whom the action or proceeding is pending) to produce any books or records thereof; provided, such verified copies and statements shall be furnished to the attorney who reasonably requires them, at least 6 days before the term of court or time set for the trial or hearing of the action or proceeding, and that such books and records shall be subject to the inspection of any interested party or his attorney to the extent prescribed by such court or officer.

891.24 Evidence from bank books. Whenever any bank or any of its officers shall be subpoenaed to produce its books containing a specified account or other specified entries, such

bank may, if it so elects, produce a copy of the specified account or other entries, verified under oath by one of its officers, stating that the books called for are the ordinary books of the bank used in the transaction of its business, that the entries copied were made therein at the dates thereof and in the usual course of business, that there are no interlineations or erasures in or among the items copied, that the books are in the custody or control of the bank, and that he has carefully compared the copy with the books and found it to be a correct copy of the specified account or entries. Such verified copy shall be prima facie evidence of such entries, and, when presented, no officer of the bank shall be compelled to produce the books demanded or attend the trial or hearing, unless specially ordered so to do by the court or officer before whom it is pending; provided, that such books shall be open to the inspection of all parties to the action or proceeding.

891.25 Presumptions as to signatures.

When any written instrument constitutes the subject of the action or proceeding or when the signing of such instrument is put in issue and the instrument purports to have been signed, the instrument itself is proof that it was signed until denied by the oath or affidavit of the person by whom it purports to have been signed or by a pleading. This section does not extend to an instrument purporting to have been signed by a person who died before proof is required.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 67 W (2d) 769

891.27 Effect of seal. A seal upon an executory instrument shall be received as only presumptive evidence of a sufficient consideration.

891.28 Area of towns and counties. Whenever the total area of towns or counties shall be in question, townships not returned as fractional by the surveys under which the public lands were sold by the United States, shall be held to be 6 miles square; and townships returned as fractional shall be held to contain the areas shown by such surveys or the plats thereof.

891.29 Allegations of copartnership.

Whenever in any action or proceeding a party shall allege in pleadings that named persons were partners at any particular time, or that as such partners they used any particular partnership name or style under which business was done, such averments shall be taken to be true unless expressly denied by the affidavit of the opposite party or someone in the opposite party's behalf or

by the opposite party's pleading, within the usual time of pleading.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 67 W (2d) 769; 1975 c. 218.

891.30 Joint liability. In actions or proceedings upon written contracts alleged to have been executed by the defendants, proof of the joint liability of the defendants shall not be required to entitle the plaintiff to judgment unless such execution is denied by an answer.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 67 W (2d) 769.

891.31 Corporate existence. In an action or proceeding by or against any corporation, it shall not be necessary to prove the existence of such corporation unless its existence is specially denied by an answer.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 67 W (2d) 769.

891.32 Allegation as to executor, guardian, etc.

Whenever a plaintiff shall sue as an executor, administrator, guardian or trustee and shall allege in the complaint appointment as such, and, if appointed in another state or foreign country, the filing or recording of the authenticated copy of the appointment, as required by the laws of this state, such allegations shall be taken as true unless specifically denied by the defendant by the answer.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 67 W (2d) 769; 1975 c. 218

891.33 Proof of malice in slander and libel. If the defendant in any action for slander or libel shall set up in his answer that the words spoken or published were true, such answer shall not be proof of the malice alleged in the complaint.

891.34 Presumption as to citizenship.

Whenever in any proceeding to test the qualifications of any person to hold office the question of the citizenship of said person is raised, the burden of proof as to such citizenship shall be upon the person whose qualifications are contested.

891.345 Establishment of citizenship.

Upon petition and proper showing made, that naturalization papers, or written records thereof, have been lost or destroyed, the circuit court of the county in which the petitioner resides may make an order that the petitioner is a citizen of the United States. Any such order or certified copy thereof shall be prima facie evidence of such citizenship.

891.35 Execution of official bond. In every action upon any official bond the original bond or a certified copy thereof shall be presumptive

evidence of the due execution thereof by the officer and his sureties.

891.36 Evidence of title to realty. In all criminal proceedings in which it is necessary for the state to prove that any person owns or has an interest in any real estate, a conveyance to such person of such real estate or an interest therein, so executed and acknowledged or proved as to be entitled to record, or the record of such conveyance or a certified copy of such record or such proof of possession as would entitle a plaintiff to recover in an action for trespass shall be received as presumptive evidence that such person owned or had an interest in the real estate in question.

891.37 Presumption as to officer's return. The return of a sheriff or constable to any writ shall be presumptive evidence that such return is correct and that the service has been rendered or disbursement made.

891.38 Officer's certificate as evidence. The certificate of the sheriff or other proper officer indorsed upon the summons, stating the time when he received the same for service, shall be presumptive evidence that he did receive the summons for service on the day in such certificate named.

891.39 Presumption of legitimacy; self-crimination; birth certificates. (1) (a) Whenever it is established in an action or proceeding that a child was born to a woman while she was the lawful wife of a specified man, any party asserting in such action or proceeding that the husband was not the father of the child shall have the burden of proving that assertion by a clear and satisfactory preponderance of the evidence. In all such actions or proceedings the husband and the wife are competent to testify as witnesses to the facts. The court or judge shall in such cases order the child made a party and shall appoint a guardian ad litem to appear for and represent the child whose paternity is questioned.

(b) In actions affecting marriage, in which the question of paternity is raised, and in paternity proceedings, the court upon being satisfied that the parties to the action are unable to adequately compensate any such guardian ad litem for his services and expenses, shall then make an order specifying the guardian's fee and expenses, which fee and expenses shall be paid as provided in s. 967.06.

(2) The mother of the child shall not be excused or privileged from testifying fully in any action or proceeding mentioned in sub. (1) in which the legitimacy of such child is involved or

in issue, when ordered to testify by a court of record or any judge thereof; but she shall not be prosecuted or subjected to any penalty or forfeiture for or on account of any transaction, matter or thing concerning which she so testifies or produces evidence, except for perjury committed in giving such testimony.

(3) Whenever any court pursuant to this section shall adjudge a child to have been born out of wedlock, the clerk of court shall report the facts to the state registrar, who shall issue a new birth certificate showing the correct facts as found by the court, and shall dispose of the original, with the court's report attached, as provided in s. 69.33 (5). He shall notify local registrars as provided in s. 69.33 (6). If the husband is a party to the action and the court makes a finding as to whether or not the husband is the father of the child, such finding shall be conclusive in all other courts of this state.

History: 1971 c. 298.

891.395 Presumption as to time of conception. In any paternity proceeding, where the child whose paternity is at issue weighed 5 1/2 pounds or more at the time of its birth, the testimony of the mother as to such weight shall be presumptive evidence that the child was a full term child, unless competent evidence to the contrary is presented to the court. The conception of such child shall be presumed to have occurred within a span of time extending from 240 days to 300 days before the date of its birth, unless competent evidence to the contrary is presented to the court.

891.43 Public records, relief from destruction of. [Not printed; 1927 c. 523 s. 115; see 1925 Stats. s. 328.43. Renumbered by c. 66, Laws of 1965.]

891.44 Presumption of lack of contributory negligence for infant minor. It shall be conclusively presumed that an infant minor who has not reached the age of 7 shall be incapable of being guilty of contributory negligence or of any negligence whatsoever.

Refusal to instruct under 891.44 was not error where no issue of plaintiff's negligence was presented by the pleadings or by evidence. *Wagner v. American Family Mut. Ins. Co.* 65 W (2d) 243, 222 NW (2d) 652.

891.45 Presumption of employment connected disease. In any proceeding involving the application by a municipal fireman or his beneficiary for disability or death benefits under s. 66.191 or any pension or retirement system applicable to firemen, where at the time of death or filing of application for disability benefits the deceased or disabled fireman had served a total of 5 years as a fireman and a qualifying medical

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examination given prior to the time of his joining the department showed no evidence of heart or respiratory defect or disease, and where the disability or death is found to be caused by heart or respiratory defect or disease, such finding

shall be presumptive evidence that such defect or disease was caused by such employment.

See note to 66.191, citing *Sperbeck v ILHR Dept. 46 W (2d) 282, 174NW (2d) 546*