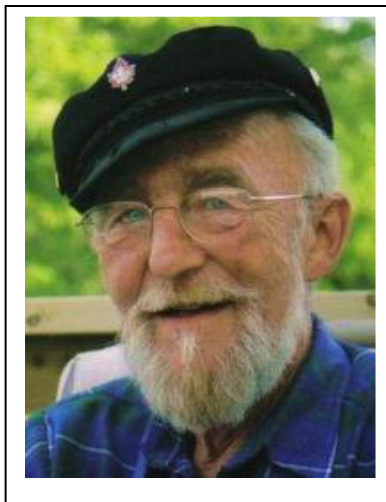


The Family Historian

Patrick Wohler

Column #6

Land Records



The process of obtaining a grant of Crown Land varied somewhat from time to time and between Upper and Lower Canada but it always involved the submission of a petition. These petitions often included information about the petitioner and his family that is very useful to the family historian: antecedents, country of origin, military service, etc.

The National Archives holds land petitions for Quebec and Lower Canada, 1764-1841 (RG 1 L 3L) and for Upper Canada and the United Province of Canada, 1791-1867 (RG 1 L 3). Both these series and their indexes are on microfilm and can be borrowed by your local library. The index will give you the number of the reel you need.

The record of the actual grant, patent, or deed to the crown land is maintained by the appropriate provincial government. It has less information and only describes the location of the land. The Archives of Ontario has produced an index to crown land grants by surname and location. It is available on microfiche in many

repositories. In Quebec, a list of Crown grants, 1763-1890, arranged by townships within counties and indexed by grantees, was published in 1891. The Quebec Family History Society has republished the material in alphabetical order by grantee in a series of booklets that are available for sale.

Subsequent transfers of land were usually registered in county or judicial district record offices. Some of the material has found its way to provincial archives and some of it has been lost through fires, other disasters, and carelessness. Some of it has just been thrown out.

When a land transfer was made, the legal document was hand copied into a "Copy Book" in the order in which it was received by the Registry. Most of these Copy Books are in the Provincial Archives.

An abstract was then made of the legal document in a book known by the imaginative title "Abstract Index to Deeds". These abstracts are organized by township, concession and lot, with separate pages for each piece of property in the township (or by cadastral number in urban areas). In this way the history of ownership for each piece of property is all together in one place. It will also include any liens on the property such as mortgages and, very importantly, the registration number of the legal document from which the abstract is taken. It will sometimes include the relationship between the parties to the transfer.

In Lanark County, these Abstract Books are maintained in the Registry Office in Almonte. They also have microfilm copies of the legal documents that were abstracted. There is usually a fee for researching in a Registry Office and in Almonte it is \$8.00.

In order to use these resources effectively you need to know the legal designation of the property. This is where the Lanark County Archives in Drummond Centre can come to your rescue. They have the "Assessment Books", which were prepared regularly, by township, for taxation purposes. In addition to the legal designation of the property and its value, the entries will often include information on occupation, size of family and religious denomination of the occupant.

For Carleton County, the Abstract Indexes and copies of the deeds are kept at the Court House but the Copy Books are at the City Archives. To check the Indexes, you need the legal description of the property and you can find this in the Assessment Rolls at the City Archives. There is a nominal fee for searching at the Court House but not at the Archives.

If you want to research a property in Renfrew County, you can visit the Arnprior and District Archives in the Library building. They have the Assessment Rolls, Indexes, and deeds and other instruments of land transfer for the whole county.