

Nova Scotia Archives

Finding Aid - Nova Scotia Commissioner of Crown Lands fonds ()

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Nova Scotia Commissioner of Crown Lands fonds

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Summary information

Repository:	Nova Scotia Archives
Title:	Nova Scotia Commissioner of Crown Lands fonds
Physical description:	* 40 m of textual records * 69 microfilm reels * 191 maps
Dates of creation, revision and deletion:	Revised July 2018 Heather Allen

Administrative history / Biographical sketch

Note

In order to promote settlement in Nova Scotia, Governor Edward Cornwallis was directed in 1749 to make fee simple or absolute possession of land grants tax free for the first three years; thereafter an annual rent was to be paid. Later laws changed the regulations relating to the size of grants, quit rents, and taxation, and, at times, the sale of land took the place of free grants. In 1749 Charles Morris was appointed the first Surveyor General to administer the granting of land. The Surveyor General was responsible for surveying of the boundary lines of land grants, roads, and other lands and the preparation of maps and plans. Deputy surveyors were appointed for each district or county. In 1827 a Commissioner of Crown Lands was appointed to oversee the sale of crown land and in 1851 the commissioner absorbed the position of Surveyor General. A separate Commissioner of Crown Lands for Cape Breton existed until 1847, reporting directly to the Provincial Secretary. In 1877 the Attorney General became ex officio Commissioner of Crown Lands. In 1926 the Department of Lands and Forests was created, and the functions of the commissioner were transferred to the new department.

Notes

Title notes

Immediate source of acquisition

Original records were transferred from the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests.

Location of originals

Originals of many of the records are held by the Crown Land Records Centre, Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources.

Finding aids

Series descriptions available.

Related material

Related records of Crown Lands after 1926 may be found in 163 Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests fonds.

Other notes

- **Publication status:** Published

Series descriptions

Plans, surveys and other records relating to Crown Land grants, by County

Date: 1753-1864, predominant 1784-1830 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series forms part of Nova Scotia Commissioner of Crown Lands fonds and consists of records relating to the granting and, in a few cases, sale, of Crown Lands, including land grants, plans, surveys, petitions, warrants and correspondence. The records are arranged by County, as follows: Annapolis, Cumberland, Guysborough, Halifax, Kings, Lunenburg, Pictou and Shelburne, and chronologically within each county. When the records were arranged at the office of their creation, excerpts and copies of records were placed in order according to the date of the original document rather than the date of the copy, which was not recorded.

Physical description: 2.6 m of textual records

Language of the material:

Location of originals:

RG 20, Series 'C', Vols. 85-93; (All on microfilm except for Vol. 92. Use microfilm reels 9340, 9345-9349)

Alternative form available:

Volumes 85-91 and 93 available on microfilm.

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Indexes to grant books and other material

Date: [ca. 1750]-[ca. 1880] (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series forms part of Nova Scotia Commissioner of Crown Lands fonds and consists of indexes to grant books. Series also includes copies of land grants (v. 81-82) and lists of grantees (v. 163 and 176).

Physical description: 89 cm of textual records

Location of originals:

RG 20, Series 'C', Vols. 81, 82, 158g, 163, 165, 167b, 169, 173, and 175-179

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Series Map F230 and 4.1.4: Land grant maps

Scope and content:

Series forms part of Nova Scotia Commissioner of Crown Lands fonds and consists of maps created by deputy surveyors relating to land grants in the province. Textual records accompany a few maps. Series is arranged alphabetically by county and chronologically within each county. Maps were created as part of the deputy surveyors' reports.

Physical description: 187 maps

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Land petitions and other material

Date: 1765-1914 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series forms part of Nova Scotia Commissioner of Crown Lands fonds and consists of petitions for land, warrants to survey, surveyors' reports, and draft lands grants. Series is arranged chronologically and alphabetically within each year.

Physical description: 14 m of textual records

Physical condition:

Originals are closed for conservation reasons.

Location of originals:

RG 20, Series 'A', Vols. 1-138. Use microfilm reels 15685-15769

Alternative form available:

Available on microfilm. Documents before 1800 have been digitized and are available on the [Archives website.](<http://novascotia.ca/archives/landpapers>)

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Applications for Purchase and Ungranted Petitions

Date: 1781-1910 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series forms part of Nova Scotia Commissioner of Crown Lands fonds and consists of crown land petitions and applications for land purchase, free land grants, leases, and escheats. Series also includes other petitions and applications (granted and ungranted) and supporting records, such as survey warrants, descriptions, reports, maps, correspondence, and memoranda. Series also includes a letter book of Surveyor Charles Morris, which contains copies of letters sent to Surveyor General John Wentworth from 1784 to 1785.

Physical description: * 5.2 m of textual records

* 1 microfilm reel

Note:

Volumes show range of petition numbers on each box.

Immediate source of acquisition:

Some records transferred from the N.S. Dept. of Lands and Forests in 1963.

Location of originals:

Original letter book of Morris held by the Crown Lands Record Centre, N.S. Dept. of Natural Resources. RG 20, Series 'C', Vols. 50, 156, 158a, 166d, 171a, 172(a, c, and d), 174(a and d), 184 (a, d, and e), 184f; RG 20, Series 'E', Vols. 1-40 use microfilm reel 15802-15820; RG 20, Series 'U', Vols. 1-8 use microfilm reel 15821-15823; and microfilm reel 1305

Alternative form available:

Available on microfilm

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Cape Breton land petitions and other material

Date: 1787-1864, predominant 1787-1843 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series forms part of Nova Scotia Commissioner of Crown Lands fonds and consists of primarily, petitions from Cape Breton residents seeking land grants from the crown and other related documents such as surveyors' reports, plans and correspondence. Series is arranged chronologically and then alphabetically by name of applicant. Reports of the Cape Breton surveyor general, or other local surveying officials, to the Provincial Secretary are found at the end of the series. The existence of a separate Commissioner of Crown Lands for Cape Breton reporting directly to the Provincial Secretary, and distinct from the Commissioner of Crown Lands for Nova Scotia, survived the demise of Cape Breton as a separate colony in 1820 and continued until 1847, when the Crown Land Department Act abolished the position of surveyor general of Cape Breton.

Physical description: 1.7 m of textual records

Language of the material:

Note:

The Land grant registration books series of the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests fonds records completed land grants and includes exact descriptions of the parcels granted. Most grants which resulted from these petitions will be recorded in these books.

Location of originals:

Microfilm reels 15788-15801

Finding aids:

[Website database available.](<https://novascotia.ca/archives/land/>)

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Commissioners' correspondence and other material

Date: 1765-1905 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series forms part of Nova Scotia Commissioner of Crown Lands fonds and consists of correspondence of the Commissioner of Crown Lands. Series includes returns from deputy surveyors, drafts of grants, lists of grantees, lists of petitions, surveyors' reports, vouchers, receipts, some annual reports, abstracts of petitions, memoranda, appointments, bonds of surveyors, and royal instructions about granting land. Series also includes petitions, memorials, warrants to survey, and hand-drawn maps and plans of lands granted. Series is arranged mainly by county.

Physical description: 8.1 m of textual records

Location of originals:

RG 20, Series 'C', Vols. 8-49, 51-80b and c, 83-84, 97-123, 148-155; RG 1, Vols. 372, 374 use microfilm reel 15435 and 15436

Alternative form available:

Available on microfilm.

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Commissioners' letterbooks

Date: 1852-1911 (date of creation)

Date: Microfilmed in 1972 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series forms part of Nova Scotia Commissioner of Crown Lands fonds and consists of letterbooks of the Commissioner of Crown Lands (Samuel Fairbanks and James Austen during this time period) and the Attorney General, who was the Minister responsible for Crown Lands from 1877 to 1947. Correspondence is mainly with deputy surveyors and largely administrative in nature, addressing grants, petitions, disputes, employment, and surveys. Series is arranged chronologically, and most volumes contain an alphabetical index of correspondents.

Physical description: 64 microfilm reels of textual records

Location of originals:

Originals held by Crown Lands Record Centre, Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources.

Finding aids:

[File list available.](<http://novascotia.ca/archives/lists/executive-correspondence.pdf>)

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Financial records

Date: 1791-1925 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series forms part of Nova Scotia Commissioner of Crown Lands fonds and consists of financial records of the Crown Lands Office. Series includes the following: financial statements and accounts; abstracts of fees and payments to surveyors; accounts of sales of crown lands; crown lands cash, receipt, sales, and account books; and accounts and returns of surveyors and the registrar of deeds. Series also include surveyors' orders to repay ungranted petitioners and indexes to those orders.

Physical description: 3.6 m of textual records

Location of originals:

RG 20, Series 'C', Vols. 1-7, 124-147, 157, 158 f, 159, 161, 164, 166 a, b, e, and f, 167 a, 168, 172 b, 174 b, and 180-181

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Township records

Date: 1759-[ca. 1847] (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series forms part of Nova Scotia Commissioner of Crown Lands fonds and consists of records relating to the establishment and settlement of townships in Nova Scotia, as well as some areas in New Brunswick. Series includes sixty-eight township grants with lists of grantees, proprietors, settlers, and lots. Series also includes drafts of grants, surveyors' reports, minutes of meetings of proprietors in Newport, warrants, memorials and petitions, and four township maps indicating lot allocations. Until about 1717, land grants were given in the form of townships or locations, generally issued under the proprietorship of a prominent person or persons responsible for settlement of the area. Those listed as grantees were persons whom the proprietors were able to line up as prospective settlers.

Physical description: * 3.5 m of textual records

* 1 microfilm reel

* 4 maps

Immediate source of acquisition:

Microfilm made in 1962.

Location of originals:

Originals held by the Crown Lands Records Centre, N.S. Dept. of Natural Resources.

Alternative form available:

RG 1, Vols. 359-362 and 373. Use microfilm reels 15428-15430, 15434; RG 20, Series 'A', (O/S 192-259 and 542); Microfilm reel 13157; Map F239 and HG 2.

Finding aids:

A guide for exploring the early township records held at the Nova Scotia Archives is available on our [website](<https://novascotia.ca/archives/townships>)

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Journal of Titus Smith

Creator: Smith, Titus

Date: 1801-1833 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series forms part of Nova Scotia Commissioner of Crown Lands fonds and consists of journals Titus Smith kept while surveying Nova Scotia. Journals cover Smith's surveys of Western Nova Scotia and the Eastern Shore and Antigonish area. Along with description of land and property, the journals also provide lists of plants, grasses, shrubs, trees, and general observations about nature. Titus Smith toured the province to do this work in 1801-1802, on order of the government, to report on the suitability of lands for settlement.

Also included are:

Survey Notes 1829-1833

Receipts for Roadwork 1816-1829 (not inclusive)

Physical description: 3 cm of textual records

Location of originals:

RG 1, Vol. 380a+b. use microfilm reel 15441

Alternative form available:

Available on microfilm reel 15441. Transcripts of journals were prepared by NSA staff and can be found in RG1 Vol 380a+b

Publication status:

Published

File / item list