



[Home](#) > [Exploration and Settlement](#) > [Lower Canada Land Petitions](#)

## Lower Canada Land Petitions

### Search Help

#### Lower Canada Land Petitions (RG 1 L3L)

- [Background](#)
- [Database](#)
- [Search Screen](#)
- [How to Interpret the Results](#)
- [How to Obtain Copies](#)
- [Other Resources](#)

Index

does not include volumes 10-28

Digital images available on UNB Reels  
12-32.

#### Background

In the province of Quebec, land distribution was originally based on the seigneurial system, established in 1627 and used until 1854. *Seigneuries* were granted by the King to members of the bourgeoisie, members of important families or former military officers. As proprietor of a *seigneurie*, the *seigneur* had privileges and obligations towards the King or his representative. The *seigneur* granted parcels (concessions) of his land to tenants called *censitaires* or, more commonly, *habitants*. Starting in 1763, new lands were granted according to the township system. Quebec was divided into counties that were divided into townships or *municipalités de paroisses*. The *British North America Act* of 1867 established Crown lands as a provincial responsibility. Only land petitions for Upper and Lower Canada (Ontario and Quebec) were retained by the Government of Canada.

The Lower Canada Land Petitions series (RG 1 L3L) held by Library and Archives Canada consists of the petitions and related records accumulated and/or created by the Executive Council of Lower Canada. The series is divided into three sub-series:

- Minute books and loose minutes of the Land Committee of the Executive Council, 1766-1836 (volumes 1 to 28)
- Petitions for grants or leases of land, or commutation from seigneurial tenure, 1637-1842 (volumes 29 to 209)
- Miscellaneous administrative records, 1743-1842 (volume 210)

Although commonly referred to collectively as the "Lower Canada Land Petitions," the records in this series are more varied in nature than that name implies. They include not only the petitions themselves but also an array of administrative records concerning the management of land disposition in the Province of Lower Canada. The petitions and other records in this series include documents that relate not only to land administration in the Lower Canada period but also to land administration under the preceding New France and Province of Quebec regimes. Records in this series also document land disposition, up to and including 1791, in that part of the colony of Quebec which, after 1791, became Upper Canada. Dates range from 1637 to 1842, but most records were created between 1792 and 1842.

Included are not only the petitions themselves and the documents submitted in support of individual requests but also the various documents that became attached to the petitions as they worked their way through the colonial bureaucracy. The record of each petition thus includes both what was originally submitted by the petitioner and the assorted administrative documents added to the file by the different offices of the government responsible for review of the petition. Some small maps, particularly those set within documents, remain with the petitions. Microfilming of all records was completed in 1966. Microfilming of the nominal card index to the petitions was completed in 1981.

Consult the [Executive Council Office of the Province of Lower Canada](#) fonds for more information about land records for Lower Canada.

## Database

This research tool provides access to more than 95,000 references to the Lower Canada Land Petitions. A nominal card index was prepared for volumes 1 to 10 and 29 to 209 (also available on microfilm reels H-1155 to H-1172). Staff members created a database from this nominal card index.

This research tool is estimated to be at best 85% accurate and complete. Names of petitioners and claimants were indexed, but those of surveyors and authors of many supporting documents were not. Records in volumes 10 to 28 (sub-series Minute Books and Loose Minutes) were not indexed. Certain records in volumes 10 to 28 relating to seigneurial tenure, exploration and surveying are of particular importance for legal or geographical research questions.

[List of contents for volumes 10 to 28.](#)

Important note: Some of the original documents are very difficult to read, and some information in the database may therefore be incorrect and/or incomplete.

## Search Screen

The search screen allows you to search by the name of individual. You can enter a surname and/or given name(s).

Note that some entries include only an initial for the given names. Try searching by surname only. Names can also be written different ways. The entries reflect the spelling of names as they appear on the documents, some of which are barely legible.

When you have entered your search terms, click on "Submit." The number of hits found will be shown at the top of the results screen.

## How to Interpret the Results

Your search will produce a results list, from which you can obtain more detailed descriptions.

The results list contains the following fields:

Name (surname and given name)  
Year(s) of document(s)

You can export the results to a portable storage device or to your own computer.

Click on the underlined name of the individual of interest to you for a more detailed description. The detailed description contains the following fields:

Name (surname and given name)  
Year  
Page(s)  
Volume  
Microfilm  
Reference

Entries are not specific to the page on which a name appears, but rather identify the first and last page numbers of the file, within which the name may appear only once or twice. Entries for individuals who were members of groups will identify all the page numbers of the petition and associated documents for that group. The name of a particular individual may appear only once, as signatory to the petition or within a list of settlers.

Microfilm reels C-2504 to C-2524 have been digitized. For entries with records on these microfilms, you can view the corresponding page(s) by clicking on "View Image." Then, by clicking on the arrows, you can view all the pages of the file for that individual.

All of the Lower Canada land petitions have been microfilmed and are available on reels C-2504 to C-2571. The detailed descriptions of your search results will provide you with the pertinent microfilm reel number.

### How to Obtain Copies

You can print the images or save them on your own computer.

To print a copy of a scanned image, right-click on the image, select "copy," then paste to your word processing software, using "Edit: Paste Special Feature: Device Independent Bitmap."

Use the following link for other options such as borrowing microfilm or ordering copies: [How to Access Library and Archives Canada Records](#)

### Other Resources

Other archival land records exist. Consult the Canadian Genealogy Centre's [Land](#) page for more information about these records.

The land granting process was complex and involved many officials. Records relating to land are found in other fonds at Library and Archives Canada, such as:

- the Office of the Governor General of Canada fonds
- the records of the civil and provincial secretaries for Quebec, Lower Canada and Canada East
- the Land Minute Books of the Executive Council series
- the Office Records of the Clerk of the Executive Council series

Land grants are in the custody of Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec. A list of Crown grants, 1763-1890, arranged by townships within counties, and indexed by grantees, was published in 1891, *List of lands granted by the Crown in the Province of Quebec from 1763 to 31st December 1890*.

Microfilm copies of the records listed in this book are available at the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec. Requests for copies should be addressed to:

Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec  
1012, avenue du Séminaire  
CP 10450  
Sainte-Foy, QC  
G1V 4N1

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