

LAND PRE-EMPTIONS ON GABRIOLA ISLAND

Early settlers on Gabriola acquired their land through “pre-emption”. The British Columbia Archives provides the following explanation of the pre-emption process in their online research guide

http://www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/general/guides/preemptions-homesteads_research_guide.pdf

PRE-EMPTION AND HOMESTEAD CLAIMS

Pre-emption was a method of acquiring provincial Crown land by claiming it for settlement and agricultural purposes. Although it was possible to pre-empt land and not live on it, all pre-emptions were intended solely for cultivation. The pre-emption process existed from as early as 1859 until 1970 when the Land Act was amended to eliminate this method of acquiring Crown land.

Individuals, as well as companies and partnerships, could apply to settle and work (“improve”) the land. A Crown grant to the land was not issued until the pre-emptor made specified improvements and met the citizenship requirement. The Crown grant also had to be registered with a Land Title office to complete the process.

Details of the pre-emption process varied over the years and generally consisted of the following steps:

- A block of vacant, non-reserved, unsurveyed Crown land was selected by the pre-emptor.
- The land was staked and a written application submitted.
- A Certificate of Pre-emption was issued in triplicate (copies to the pre-emptor, the local office, and the department in Victoria).
- After improvements, residency qualification, and land surveying, a Certificate of Improvement was issued and the land purchased at a discount rate or at no further charge.
- A Crown grant was issued and ownership of the land passed into private hands (alienation). The Crown grant had to be registered at a Land Title office and a Certificate of Indefeasible Title (land title deed) issued for the process to be fully completed.
- Responsibility for keeping records of the land now passed to a Land Title office. If the new owner defaulted on taxes, the land reverted to the Crown.

Here are two examples of land pre-emption certificates, including documents declaring land improvements as required. *Bob, I'll drop the certificates off to you for scanning...*

The Gabriola Museum Archives holds copies of the following pre-emption certificates for Gabriola Island settlers:

Buckley, Philip	December 21, 1880
Burrell, Robert	October 27 th , 1873
Canessa, John	March 1, 1882
Caufield, John	April 20, 1872
Chapple, Richard	September 6, 1884
Degnen, Thomas	March 19, 1863
Degnen, James	November 25, 1878 October 18, 1886
Dick, Archibald	August 29, 1870
Dick, James	August 29, 1870
Dick, John	August 29, 1870
Dombrain, Robert P	March 26, 1870
Driver, William	August 26, 1881
Easson, Alexander	February 23, 1874 July 27, 1880
Eastham, John	May 1, 1879
Easthom, Martha	June 30, 1887
Edgar, Magnus	March 3, 1884
Edgar, Mark	June 8, 1886
Elphinstone, Roger	January 11, 1875
Flewett, William Minter	April 21, 1883
Foster, John	May 13, 1882
Foster, Josiah	November 11, 1879

Gordon, James	June 24, 1874
Goss, Henry	November 14, 1873
Gray, Robert	July 17, 1871 March 24, 1888
Green, Charles	April 26, 1880
Hall, Robert	September 22, 1873
Harrower, Samuel	October 4, 1878
Heath, Henry	September 20, 1872
Hoggan, David	July 20, 1872 (also spelled Hogan)
Hoggan, William	July 8, 1872 (also spelled Hogan)
Jefferies, William	May 28, 1970 August 28, 1875
Kemp, John	May 4, 1874 August 24, 1882
LeBoeuf, Theodore	May 18, 1874
Maully, Michael	December 29, 1881
Martin, Jonathan	October 17, 1871 (Saltspring Island) July 17, 1876 February 27, 1884 May 26, 1887
Martin, William	July 17, 1874
McFarlane, Alexander Harbour)	January 28, 1863 (Cala Descanso off Nanaimo)
McLay, James	June 30, 1873
Norris, Richard Pickering	April 20, 1872
Pemberthy, John White	September 12, 1874
Peterson, Henry	September 14, 1880

Provin, John	August 18, 1873
Rivers, Robert; Myles, John	November 26, 1884
Rivers, Robert; Myles, John; McDougal, William	April 16, 1885
Roberts, David Samuel Reese	January 9, 1884 (Mudge Island)
Rogers, Thomas	August 14, 1874
Roe, Marcius	September 24, 1875
Rollo, James	April 28, 1879
Silva, John	April 23, 1883
Shaw, Alexander	April 10, 1882
Shaw, John	April 20, 1882
Wake, Baldwin Arden	July 4, 1876