

Manitoba Homestead Records

by Ted Lomatski

While researching my family tree, I was told that the family came over in 1900, celebrated Easter (which one?) on the ship, and finally arrived at the homestead on Victoria Day. Well, I was unable to confirm the dates, the port of entry, etc. and was unable to locate homestead Letters Patent. After spending far too many hours pouring over Ship Passenger Lists, I decided to try another approach.

From a crude map of the settlement of Sand Hill, Manitoba that my mother had drawn for me years ago so that I could understand where everyone lived in relation to one another - also a good tool to see the intermarriages - I was able to determine the legal description of the land. Armed with that information, I eMailed the Manitoba Land Titles Office and had an extract of the land ownership register for that 1/4 section copied and sent to me.

With that information, I was able to determine that my great-grandparents came to Manitoba in 1901 rather than 1900, did indeed arrive on the homestead on Victoria Day and most interestingly, purchased the land from another individual who probably held the land as a grant

from the Hudson's Bay Company.

In my investigations to find the Homestead Records, I wrote letters everywhere. It was not until last year when I was searching the new online (ArchivaNet) land records at the National Archives, I found records for my relatives in Assiniboia District, NorthWest Territories (now Saskatchewan), but nothing for my great-grandparents. I expressed my frustration to one of the Archivists and he suggested that records from Manitoba proper were held in Manitoba.

When Manitoba was carved out of Rupert's Land and joined confederation in 1870, it was known as the "postage stamp province" and was only about 200 kilometres square. Over the years there were many boundary changes, with the final boundary being fixed in 1931. This was far later than the creation of Saskatchewan and Alberta out of the NorthWest Territories (as Rupert's Land became known) in 1905. As a result of this anomaly, some records were held in Ottawa and others in Winnipeg.