

Pathfinder to Land Petitions

Last Updated: March 2023

Land petitions are documents submitted by applicants to the Executive Council or the Commissioner of Crown Lands in order to request land grants or leases. Applicants often attempted to provide evidence of their identity, trustworthiness, loyalty, and prior service to the Crown through these petitions and supporting documentation.

Two sets of land petition records are accessible at the Archives of Ontario: The Upper Canada Land Petitions, 1793-1867, and Petitions to the Crown Lands Department, 1827-1904.

The Upper Canada Land Petitions, 1793-1867

These records consist of petitions for leases or grants of land and other associated administrative records submitted to the Civil Secretary and Executive Council of Upper Canada. The Archives of Ontario holds copies of these records on microfilm for the convenience of our researchers. The original records are held by Library and Archives Canada. The links below are to pages on their Website, www.collectionscanada.ca.

To search these land petitions by surname, given name, or place, [click here to access the Upper Canada Land Petition database on Library and Archives Canada's website](#). Be sure to search for many alternate spellings to capture all possible petitions.

The database provides the volume number, a bundle number, a petition number, and a microfilm reel number. Take note of these numbers.

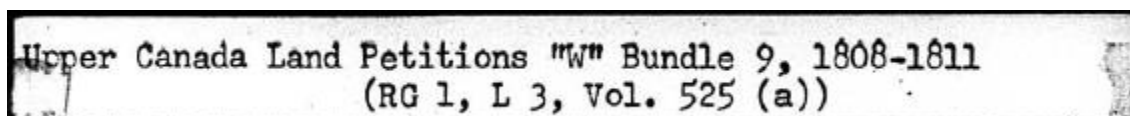
The table below show an example of the entry for Simon Zelotes Watson's 1810 petition for land in Westminster. The petition is #67 in Bundle W 9. You can find this petition on the microfilm reel C-2952.

Surname	Given Name(s)	Place	Year	Volume	Bundle	Petition	Page(s)	Reference	Microfilm
Watson	Simon Zelotes	Westminster	1810	525A	W 9	67		RG 1 L3	C-2952

You can access the microfilm for these petitions [on the Library and Archives Canada Microfilm Digitization Website](#) and in the Archives of Ontario Reading Room. To access microfilm in the Reading Room, retrieve the reel from the Self Service Microfilm Area. The reels will be in Cabinet 2, which is against the west wall of the Reading Room.

If the reference number is RG 5 A1, the petition is part of the Upper Canada Sundries, a collection of correspondence to the Civil Secretary that includes land petitions and other documents that may be valuable for genealogical research. You can find the digitized microfilm and more information about the records [on the Canadiana Héritage website](#). You can also access the microfilm in the Archives of Ontario Reading Room. If you're interested in browsing these records, use the print finding aid D 23, which provides a basic overview of the collection.

Once you've located the correct microfilm reel, you'll need to find the bundle you are looking for. There is a target at the bottom of each page that identifies the bundle you are looking at. See an example of a target for bundle W9 below:



Once you have found the correct bundle, look for the petition number. It is usually in the top right corner of each page.

If you do not find anything in the online database, review the microfilm card indexes to land petitions listed in the User's Guide to the Upper Canada Land Petitions and Land Books. You can find this guide in the rotunda. Reference staff are available to help you locate finding aids or use microfilm equipment if needed.

Petitions to the Crown Lands Department, 1826-1904, RG 1-54

This series consists of microfilmed copies of indexes, registers, and petitions for land or land surveys received by the Commissioner of Crown Lands. The series has been divided into three subseries based on the type of document.

The links below direct you to the online Archives and Information Management System (AIMS), and the Microfilm Interloan Catalogue. Both are located on the Archives' Website, www.archives.gov.on.ca under "Access Our Collections".

RG 1-54-1: Registers and indexes of land petitions 1826-1864

These microfilmed registers and indexes can be used as evidence that a land petition was submitted to the Commissioner of Crown Lands. The indexes provide a petition number, but as the petitions have since been arranged alphabetically by name of applicant, the number is of little use. Additionally, many of the petitions listed in the indexes are not in the Archives of Ontario collection.

The microfilm is available in our Reading Room, and through our [Microfilm Interloan Service](#).

How to access the records:

[Click here to consult the description for sub-series RG 1-54-1](#). Review the microfilm list in the "Finding Aid" section to determine what microfilm reels to review based on the date of the petition.

RG 1-54-2: Petitions for Land 1827-1856

These petitions will sometimes include additional supporting documentation, such as covering letters, locations of requested land, and Order-in-Council numbers in cases where grants were approved. The petitions are organized alphabetically by the surnames of the applicants.

The microfilm is available in our Reading Room, and through our [Microfilm Interloan Service](#).

How to access the records:

First, [click here to consult the microfilm listing for RG 1-54-2](#) to determine which reel to view. There are two separate listings, organized alphabetically – volumes 1 to 54 and boxes 1 to 6. You will need to check both to confirm whether there are any petitions from the individual you are looking for.

Once you have found the correct reel, there should be a typed cover page with the applicant's name before the actual petition documents.

[RG 1-54-3: Petitions for Land Surveys 1842-1904](#)

These petitions received by the Commissioner of Crown Lands were from individuals and communities requesting land surveys. These petitions have not been microfilmed and are not available through our Microfilm Interloan service.

How to access the records:

In the reading room, fill a request slip for RG 1-54-3, container B241993. You can also request the retrieval of the box in advance of your on-site visit by calling us at 416 327 1600 (toll free in Ontario at 1 800 668 9933) or by emailing reference@ontario.ca.