



GEORGINA

Surveying, Squatters & Settlements

Land Surveying

York County was created out of the Home District in 1792 and was larger than it is today. Townships were not surveyed all at once, this would be rare. Surveys were completed as required for settlement. Such is the case with the Berczy settlers, in Markham, the establishment of a baseline in York Township, or a militia lands survey in Etobicoke. The order of survey for “the Gwillimbury’s” was issued in 1800. This is a copy of that letter to surveyor John Stegmann:

York, April 11 1800

*Sir,
Enclosed are your Instructions for the Survey of part of the Townships Gwillimbury and Whitchurch_ Should you be under the necessity of discharging any one of your party previous to the finishing of your Survey, you must take three Receipts, properly witnessed from the person so discharged, to accompany your pay list and from the disagreeable occurrence, you have lately experienced take care that your pay List are Witnessed by some well known ostensible person, in order that there may be no difficulty to the passing of your accounts.
Remember to insert in your pay list the surveys you have carried into execution which will serve as a Report to His Excellency in Council
We are Sir, for the Acting Surveyor General, yours etc. Chewitt & Ridout*

Squatters and Settlements

In many cases, there were settlers in a township prior to the first survey. Typically, a squatter would occupy land and once a survey was completed they would go through the administrative process to acquire the grant or patent and request the particular spot that they were already on. They would argue that they had already made “vast” improvements to the lot. The administrators of the province wanted settlers, not speculators, so the requests would be more likely granted if settlement is already established.

With a grant or patent, the settlers were comfortable- acquiring the actual deed meant trips to Toronto and additional fees. Some did not acquire their deeds until years later- making it appear to us today, as researchers that they didn’t arrive until sometimes years later. The reverse is also true, sometimes a person acquired the land, but never actually lived here.