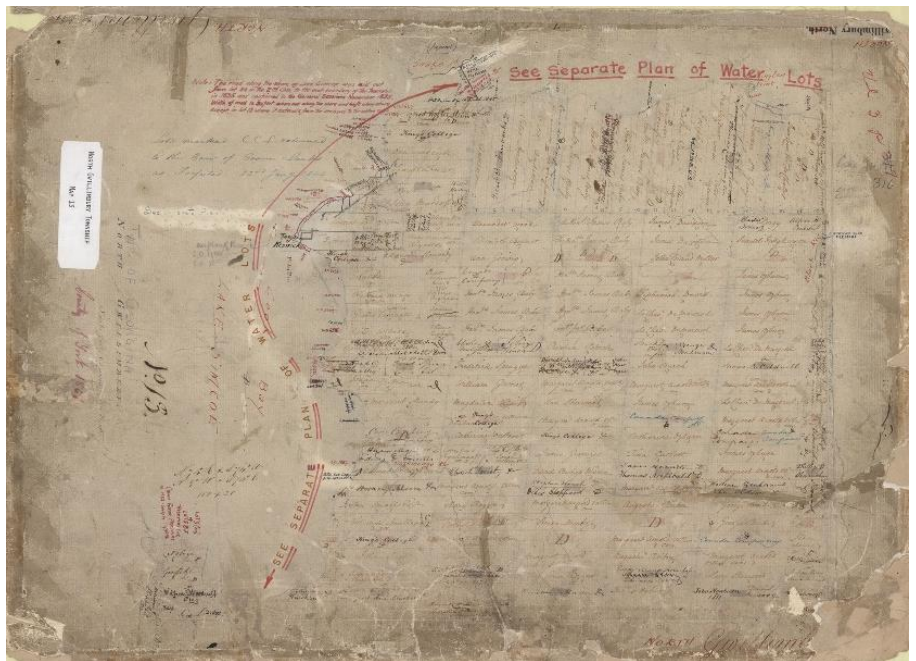




Surveying the Townships

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.

It's important to note that the dates of survey do not mean the land was vacant prior to that date. There were settlers in many areas prior to it being opened for settlement. Typically, a squatter would occupy land and once a survey was completed they would go through the administrative process to be granted land and acquire the 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. On the other hand, and very generally speaking, the usual course of action was to travel to York or other Ports on Lake Ontario after embarkation at Quebec, and contract the services of a Land Agent. That agent would draw up the necessary paperwork (petition) to be submitted to the Executive Council along with a certificate stating that the settler had sworn the necessary oaths of allegiance and submit on the settler's behalf, the requisite fees. The petition was read in Council and either granted or denied. The land agent's office held registers of all the land that was available. The settler would receive a Location Ticket from the Land Board, a document that described how much land he had received and the description of the land, among other details. For many, this location ticket was the only proof that they were permitted to settle that piece of land. Drawing up the actual Grant or Patent was an additional fee.



North Gwillimbury Township Patent Plan; Archives of Ontario, Patent Plans, RG 1-100

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, when the need arose, making it appear to us today as researchers that they didn't arrive until sometimes years later.

The reverse is also true, sometimes a settler acquired the land, but never actually lived here.

The survey of “the Gwillimbury’s” began in 1800, after an Order of Survey was issued by the Surveyor General, Thomas Ridout. Typically, when surveying a township with broken lots, as is the case of Georgina and North Gwillimbury, due to the shoreline of Lake Simcoe, this “Gore” is surveyed first, running off of a baseline, to square off the rest of the township. Presumably, this is the portion surveyed by John Stegmann. In 1803 the work inland was continued by a surveyor named William Hambly and later by Samuel Street Wilmot. The first patents were issued in North Gwillimbury Township in 1802.

On November 4, 1817, Surveyor General Thomas Ridout instructed Deputy Surveyor, Duncan McDonnell, to carry out a survey in the *township back of Scott*. Work began on December 1, 1817 and continued until December 28. McDonnell was back in the township to continue the survey work in January and continued until April 25, 1818. We know from a letter from William Bouchier, dated April 11, 1818, that (aside from he and his brother) three men and their families were settled prior to the completion of the survey: John Comer, Joseph Best and John Peregrine.

Surveyors were directed to choose a suitable location to be reserved as a Town Plot. Rather than the usual 200 acre lot, a smaller portion would be divided up into smaller town lots, reserved for tradesmen, officials, etc. It was understood, that the appropriate location of a town plot would be central to a township, unless a navigable body of water existed within the township. In which case it should be located next to the water.

In the case of North Gwillimbury, the town plot of “Keswick” was chosen - which is the area we now refer to as Roche’s Point.

For Georgina, Deputy Surveyor McDonnell recommended a town plot be reserved at the (Pefferlaw) river at Lot 21 Concession 6; or, present-day Highway 48.

Neither of these ever came to fruition.