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INTRODUCTION

Peter Robinson, 1785-1838

Peter Robinson, the eldest son of Christopher Robinson, an officer in the Queen's Rangers, was born in New Brunswick in 1785. His family moved to Upper Canada in 1792, settling first at Kingston, and then at York in 1798. In 1812 Robinson commanded a rifle company at the capture of Detroit and in 1813 distinguished himself at the defence of Michilimackinac. In 1817 he was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada for the east riding of York. In 1823 and 1825 Robinson promoted emigration schemes which successfully settled large numbers of Irishmen in the Bathurst and Newcastle districts in the neighbourhood of Peterborough, which was named after him. In 1827 Robinson was appointed Commissioner of Crown Lands, with a seat in the Executive and Legislative Councils. He continued in that office until 1836, when the entire Executive Council resigned in a disagreement with Sir Francis Bond Head. Robinson died, unmarried, in Toronto, 8 July 1838.

In 1955 the Ontario Department of Public Records and Archives microfilmed the Robinson Papers in the possession of the Peterborough Public Library. These manuscripts, some 1500 pages, relate primarily to the emigration schemes of 1823 and 1825, and a description of the items filmed is here appended.

Finding aid no. 134 lists the contents of reels M-140 and M-141 and is available at the beginning of both reels. For other papers relating to Peter Robinson, see MG 24 B 74. Papers relating to his duties as Commissioner of Crown Lands are to be found in RG 1.

Peter Robinson Papers, 1823-1844

I Loose Documents

- Reel 1. General Correspondence, 4 July 1823, 8 May 1834 and n.d.
M-140 Includes miscellaneous letters to Peter Robinson concerning his emigration schemes of 1823 and 1825 and drafts or copies of some of his outgoing correspondence. Of special interest are copies of his official correspondence with Robert Wilmot Horton, Under-Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. This series is arranged in chronological order.
2. Applications and Recommendations from or concerning Irishmen wishing to emigrate under Robinson's supervision.
Arranged alphabetically by the names of persons applying or recommended. Most of the recommendations, or certificates of character, are from landlords, magistrates, or clergymen.
3. Embarkation Certificates.
Arranged alphabetically by the names of the families receiving the certificates. In effect, these were the emigrants' notices that their application had been accepted. All Certificates appear to be concerned with Robinson's second (1825) settlement scheme. It does not follow, however, that all persons holding these documents actually embarked.
- Reel 4. List of Robinson's emigrants embarked at Cove in 1823 on the
M-141 "Hebe" and "Stakesby".
There are two lists for each ship differing slightly in detail.
5. Lists of Robinson's emigrants embarked at Cove in 1825.
The emigrants are listed under the ship in which they sailed.
6. Reports by Ships' Surgeons in the conduct and character of emigrants under their care, 1825.
7. Returns by Ships' Surgeons of the time spent in conveying the emigrants after their landing in Canada.
8. Location tickets issued to Robinson's settlers on the authority of the Land Board of the Bathurst District.
Arranged alphabetically by the names of the locatees.
These appear to be confined to the 1823 emigration.
9. List of the emigrants of the 1823 located in Townships of Ramsay, Pakenham, and Huntley.
States the locatee's birthplace in Ireland as well as his place of location in Bathurst. Includes one person located in Goulburn.

10. Various general statements respecting the distribution and total numbers of Robinson's emigrants in Canada.
These seem to be confined to the 1825 group, and indicate fluctuations caused by deaths, births, desertions, and accessions.
11. Answers to a series of questions addressed to Robinson's settlers in 1828 concerning their attitude towards emigration to Canada.
Arranged alphabetically by the names of the persons answering these printed circulars.
12. Assessment Roll of the Township of Smith, 1828.
13. A printed notice headed "Emigration to Canada".
Sets forth the terms of Robinson's plan of settlement for 1825.
14. Miscellaneous documents.

II Manuscript Volumes

1. Schedule of location of 1823 emigrants.
Gives lot on which each was settled, and lists the tools, clothing and livestock issued to each family.
2. Return of emigrants embarked at Cove, 1825.
Gives names and ages of the various members of each family, the names of their ships, and the amount of pork and flour issued to each as ships' rations. (This volume contains all information present in Item 5 of the Loose Papers save the names of the landlords or sponsors of the various emigrants).
3. A list of Robinson's emigrants of 1825 arranged under the name of the Township in which each settled, and showing rations of food issued.
4. A volume very similar to the one listed above, but with certain differences in detail.
5. Account book listing rations issued to the 1825 settlers located in Douro and Smith.
6. Register of blankets, tools, and livestock issued to Robinson's emigrants of 1825.
7. A Schedule of the purchasers of various lots in Peterborough County 1844 77.
The list probably includes persons other than Robinson's settlers or their descendants.
8. Account book of payments under the road-tax assessment, 1844.