Homesteading:
A specific means of acquiring land in Western Canada

In 1872, the Canadian government passed the *Dominion Lands Act.* The act was designed to encourage settlement in Western Canada. It established policies for administering land grants to homesteaders, railways, municipalities, religious groups, and First Nations reserves.

Homestead files were administrative records kept by the federal Department of the Interior (pre-1930) or the Government of Saskatchewan (post-1930). They documented the land grant progress of a homestead.

Please visit the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan's website for more information about the history of homesteading and land records in Saskatchewan.

A **quarter-section** is equal to 160 acres. It is described using a legal land description, e.g. NW 12-02-06-W3

Learn about how Saskatchewan land is surveyed via Information Services Corporation (ISC).

Contents of a homestead file

Each quarter-section of land made available under the *Dominion Lands Act* may have a homestead file that shows a timeline of the land grant process. A homestead file typically has the following documentation:

Application for entry
The application is the initial request by the homesteader to enter and begin settlement on a quarter-section. More than one application can be found in a homestead file.

Applications include some biographical information: birthplace, nationality, place of residence, signature, and date of entry.

Note: Other documentation can sometimes be found in homestead files.

Sworn statements
The statement is a record of improvements made as required by the Dominion Lands Act. Those include total area of cultivated land, population of stock, and value of buildings. One set of statements will be found in a homestead file. They are signed by the homesteader and two witnesses.

Statements include some biographical information: name, age, citizenship, and number of family members.

Notification of patent
The notification informs the homesteader that a patent was issued in their name and that they were eligible to apply for a certificate of title at the Land Registration district office. It is likely that only one notification will be found in a homestead file.

Notifications include limited biographical information: date of patent and postal address.

Related records

Land titles
Records of land titles and transactions, including land grant certificates, are kept by Information Services Corporation (ISC).

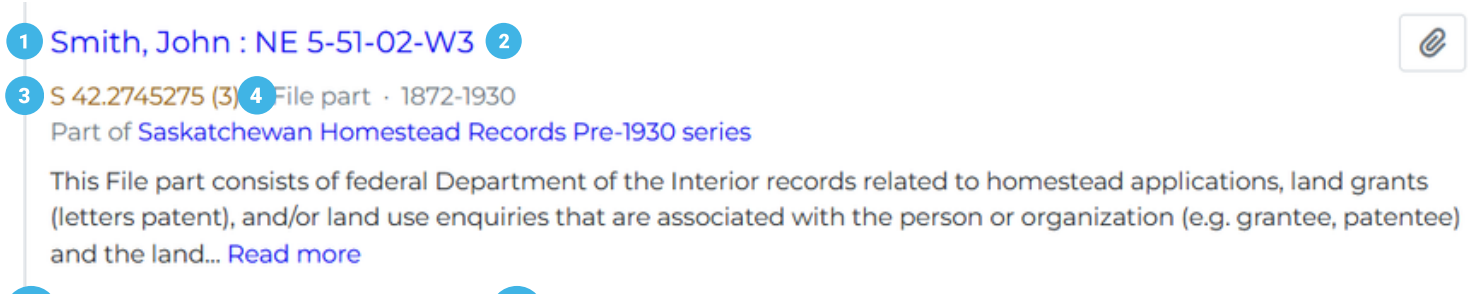
Naturalization certificates
Homesteaders needed to become naturalized citizens prior to receiving patent to their homestead. The application for patent or sworn statements may include a stamp documenting naturalization. Naturalization certificates were not kept with the homestead file.

Citizenship and naturalization records are held by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada or Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

Homestead files at the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan

Use the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan's online catalogue to search for homestead files. Search using the homesteader's name or the legal land description of the quarter-section.

Below is an example from the search results on our catalogue:



1. Name of homesteader
2. Legal land description of homestead
3. Homestead file number
4. A number in brackets following the homestead file number indicates that the homestead file contains more than one application. In this example, John Smith is the third person to have applied.

Why is there more than one search result?

One property, several homesteaders:

A homestead file can include information about multiple people because not every homesteader was successful. Homesteaders cancelled or abandoned for many reasons. Sometimes documentation of cancellation or abandonment is included in the file.

One homesteader, several properties:

The *Dominion Lands Act* allowed a homesteader to obtain a second quarter-section through preemption or purchase. A homesteader who cancelled or abandoned one quarter-section may have tried to homestead on a different quarter-section as well.

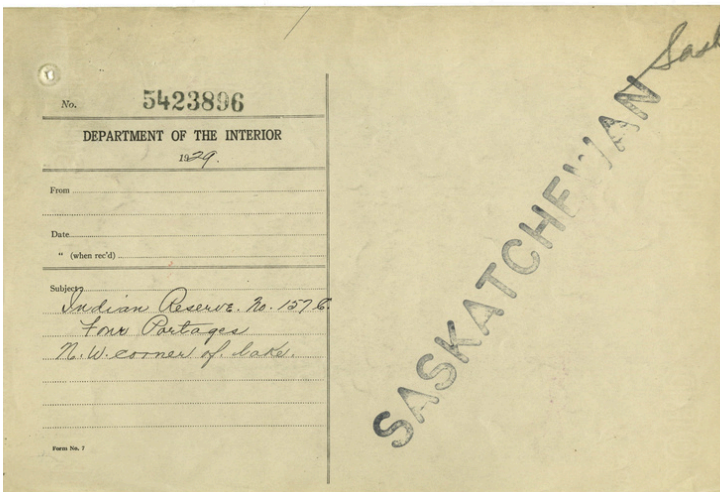
Unable to find a homestead file?

Homestead files are split into two series:

- Pre-1930 Homestead Files (S 42)
- Post-1930 Homestead Files (S 43)

The Post-1930 Homestead Files are not currently listed on the online catalogue but can be searched upon request.

Not every quarter-section was a homestead. Any land bought from a railroad, land company, or another settler will not have a homestead file. Information Services Corporation (ISC) manages land records not related to homesteading.



Viewing records

Records can be viewed in-person or by ordering a reproduction. Records cannot be downloaded from the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan's online catalogue.

Contact us

Contact Reference and Outreach Services to view the records in-person or order reproductions:

- via online contact form
- via telephone: 1-306-787-4068 or toll-free 1-833-382-4068