

VOLUME I

The following is the introductory material to *An Index of Irish Events in Dorchester County, Quebec (Frampton and Vicinity)*. Found in the Registers of Notaires John Walsh, Francois Rouleau, John J. Reny, Joseph Reny, Jean Baptiste Bonneville, Jacques Voyer and Antoine Cauchy. Volume I.

Quebec has a wealth of information and sources of interest to the genealogist. Perhaps its most important aspect is in the ease of finding marriage links to parents and other related families. Further, most church records include the three important events of baptism, marriage, and burials. However, once these vital events have been found it becomes more difficult to fill in the rest of the story. Census records help somewhat in establishing the household every ten years in the later nineteenth century. Notary or notaire (I will use this French term throughout this book) records are a rich source of important information about the lives of our Quebec ancestors.

Unfortunately, research in the notaire records is very difficult and time consuming for several reasons. Perhaps the most intimidating factor for those of us that are English speaking is that most of the records are written in the French language. Another difficulty is that most of the records are currently not indexed. Also, although some standard forms can be found among the records, most are simply handwritten according to the style of the individual notaire. Lastly, even though notaires were affiliated with certain judicial districts, they were basically "licensed" to practice anywhere in Lower Canada, or in later years the Province of Quebec. Further, the parties to a notaire event were free to choose whatever notaire they pleased for recording their events. These sound like enough reasons alone to avoid notaire research completely. However, the research is not all that difficult once you get started and the rewards of finding important documents about you family will make you want to learn more about notaire research.

The fact that most notaire records are in French should not prevent you from delving into the records. In fact, it is not unusual to come across records in the registers that are written in English. I have found that if both parties to an event were English speaking and they were able to read, that the notaire recorded their event in English. Records that were received from notaries elsewhere in Canada and the United States can also be found in English in the registers. Even if the record is in French, if you know a few key French terms and know the names you are looking for, you can at recognize sufficient information to warrant copying the record and having it translated later. Before I began my notaire research, I enrolled in an introductory French course at my local university. I am not "fluent" in French, but I learned enough to recognize the type of document and enough of the common words to read the handwriting. Several of the sample notaire documents I have included in this book are the results of my own amateur translations. So I offer my apologies in advance to any of you that are Francophone (French speaking) persons.

In most of Canada and the United States, genealogists are accustomed to the practice of County governments recording deeds and transactions. The counties always kept master indices of these documents generally known as the Grantee/Grantor books. Some were alphabetized and some were chronologically listed. But the researcher merely needed to scan the periods of time desired and look for the names of their ancestors. Then the indices would provide the contract/document number and that could be used to find the document. Unfortunately, the French tradition of the notaire system didn't quite work that way. Each notaire was a private individual who was "licensed" by the government to record events and transactions. Each

notaire kept their own register and recorded the events chronologically. There are usually several notaires operating in any given county with little or no reference to one another. There are some projects underway to index notaire records. The Parchemin Project has produced an index to notaire records for events occurring before 1765. The Parchemin Project is planning to produce indexes for all Quebec notaire records through 1885. That sounds like it is worth waiting for! So why try to do notaire research now? After I began looking through just the Notaire records for Dorchester County, Quebec I soon realized that such a project will virtually take decades to complete. I spent over a year compiling this index and I believe I may be lucky to have found only about 20% of the records that I set out to find. However, my task was made easy by some of the notaires who had at least wrote the type of event and the names of the parties in the margins of the record. This makes the visual scanning of each record much easier as you look for the names of your ancestors. Although some notaires did not use this practice, the names can usually be gleaned in the first few sentences of the document. So with both of these methods, you only need to look at the first page of each document to ascertain if it has something to do with your ancestors.

Unfortunately, I have found no particular rhyme nor reason on how to figure out which of several notaires in a county are most likely to have the records of a particular ancestor. In fact, I have found records for the same ancestor spread across several different notaire registers. I first thought that Irish people would patronize a notaire that had an Irish background, but that didn't necessary prove true. Then I thought it might be a notaire that lived closest to them, that wasn't true either. I found the best method is to start with the "locals" but also to be open to clues found in local history books and or reference to other notaires found in the notaire documents. I found one such clue to a notaire who practiced in Quebec City. Although, I had my doubts because of its distance from where my ancestors lived. So I decided to sample a single microfilm for a given period of time. I was surprised to find an apprentice agreement that identified my ancestor as a ship's carpenter in Quebec City. This despite the fact that I only knew him as a farmer in Frampton, Quebec. I have found many important documents that illustrate the rich history of my family and the part that they played in the local community.

Because I set out to find records about my Irish ancestors and that this would require me to visually scan every record, I decided to record every significant document that I found that involved Irish persons who lived in Dorchester County, Quebec in the nineteenth century to serve as an index for other researchers looking for events about their Irish ancestors who lived in this area. So this book is meant to provide information to the reader about notaire records, give a few samples (in English), and serve as a finding aid to where notaire documents can be found concerning the Irish persons listed in the index.

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