

# LEE DICKSON GENEALOGY: Upper Canada Lands Records help trace a Butler's Ranger from the American Revolutionary War

Lee Dickson

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In the late 1980s, with skillful guidance from Archives of Ontario archivists and coupled with beginner's luck, I managed to trace a line back to my United Empire Loyalist ancestors. Looking through these documents reaffirms how awesome the Upper Canada land records are.

The numerous groups of land records are a challenge to research and require a good deal of patience and perseverance. These records are the core documents one needs to examine in order to understand Upper Canada's history and genealogy.

My ancestor, Jonathan Matthews, was a private in Butler's Rangers, a provincial regiment loyal to the British Crown and active during the American Revolutionary War. These rangers were amongst the early settlers of Ontario, having fled their homes in America.

The muster rolls of Butler's Rangers do not survive, save the odd pay list and other rare documents. Thus, it is in the Upper Canada Land Petitions that Jonathan is identified as a Butler's Ranger, his wife and children named and direction given to further records of significance.

These Upper Canada Land Petitions (Digitized Microfilm) and Index (Database) are available online through the Library and Archives Canada. The direct link is (Genealogy and Family History) [www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/genealogy/Pages/introduction.aspx](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/genealogy/Pages/introduction.aspx)

Click on "Land." If one has access to the collection on microfilm, such as at the Archives of Ontario, it is easier to search on a reader/scanner and the quality of the image is sharper.

The Jonathan Matthews research eventually led to the proverbial brick wall. I found his wife Ann Clendinning's large extended United Empire Loyalist family well documented. It seemed logical that Jonathan Matthews would also have family in province, as family followed family, but none of his records possess the slightest hint.

Given the commonness of the surname "Matthews," I set upon a project to research all the early Matthews settlers in province: there were many. I don't recommend such a surname search unless one is exceedingly interested in the surname and one has a great deal of time and determination, or the deep pockets to hire someone to carry through such a study.

My interest sparked when I found the Upper Canada Land Petition of a Thomas Matthews:

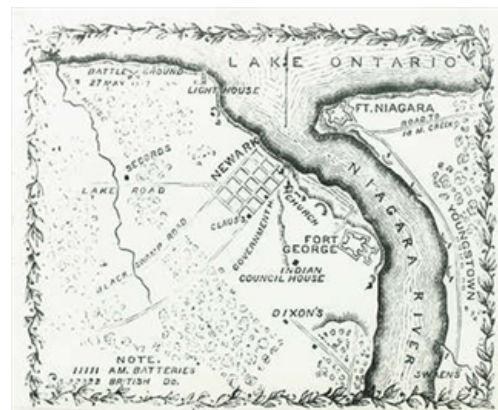
"The petition of [Jonathan] Thomas Matthews, late of The corps of rangers commanded by colonel Butler, Humbly Shews, That he is desirous of settling in a mechanical branch in the town of Newark, and therefore prays your honor to grant him a town lot therein, and as in duty shall ever pray.

"Thos. Matthews [Jonathan his X mark Matthews]. March 28. 1797. Rec'd. 28th March 1797. Read 2d. May, No. 29 ordered a Town Lot in Newark. Gave a Warrant 3d May."

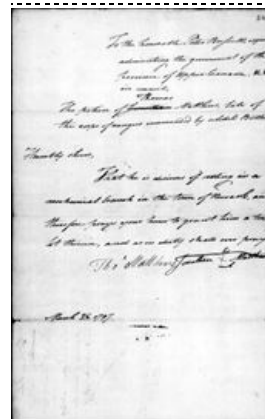
To be continued.

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Toronto Artist Lee Dickson has been a practicing artist since the '70s. She is also a professional general and visual records researcher and a genealogical specialist in Ontario Land Records and the United Empire Loyalists. She can be contacted at [www.leedickson.ca](http://www.leedickson.ca) and [research@leedickson.ca](mailto:research@leedickson.ca)



Thomas Matthews wanted to settle in the Town of Newark.



Thomas Matthews wanted to settle in the Town of Newark. Here is his petition to do so.