

EVIDENCE.

John Davidson, Esquire, one of the Commissioners of Crown Lands in Lower Canada.

When were you appointed to your present office? In October 1837.

What were your opportunities before that appointment of acquiring information as to the state of the Crown property in this Province? I was appointed Surveyor General of Woods and Forests, in 1827; in 1830, that office was abolished, and the duties were to be performed by Mr. Felton, the Commissioner of Crown Lands; the Government offered me a retiring allowance till I could be provided for; not wishing to receive this without an equivalent, I offered my services to assist Mr. Felton. That offer was accepted, and I remained as such Assistant till his suspension, in August, 1836, when I was put in charge of the department.

You have, therefore, been constantly engaged in the department of Crown Lands during the last eight years? I have.

Of what does the landed property of the Crown in this Province consist? All the estates which were held by the King of France at the time of the conquest, which may be arranged as follows:

1st. Certain fiefs in the city of Quebec and town of Three Rivers, whereof the censitaires hold immediately under the crown.

2nd. The Forges of St. Maurice, which were established by the old French government, and have been let for different terms to private persons.

3rd. The King's trading posts, which signifies that portion of the Province of Lower Canada between the settled lands on the North bank of the river St. Lawrence, and the land held under the charter of the Hudson's Bay Company, and which tract is held by that company, under a lease, that licenses to them the sole right of hunting, fishing and trading in that territory. This lease expires in 1842.

4th. The King's Wharves in Quebec, which were originally formed by the old French Government, and have been improved by the British Government, and are now let upon lease to individuals.

5th. The estates held at the time of the conquest by the late order of the Jesuits, which, upon the extinction of that order in the Province, were reserved by the Crown, and which consist of extensive seignories, and other property, including buildings in the city of Quebec, and the town of Three Rivers.

6th. All the beaches and water lots upon all navigable rivers. The beaches consist of the land on both sides of the river, between the high and low water mark, and the water lots extend from the low water mark into deep water.

7th. The whole of the waste and unappropriated land within the Province. In addition to this the Crown is entitled to a mutation fine upon the sale of seignories, varying from the Maille D'or, which is a nominal acknowledgement, to one fifth part of the purchase, which is the more common fine, and payable in either case before the seignor is permitted to perform fealty and homage.