

COPY of a Letter to Lieut. Colonel Cockburn from J. Spry Morris, Esq. Assistant Surveyor General of Nova Scotia.

Surveyor General's Office,  
Halifax, N. S. 27th June 1827.

Sir,

IN compliance with your directions, I have the honour to send a Plan of the Province of Nova Scotia, which I hope will meet your wishes; at the same time, I must candidly inform you, that it is not given as a minute and accurate description of all the locations as they actually were laid out, but rather the general outline of the different granted lands. Indeed, this Office does not contain the requisite materials for compiling such a plan; the mere outline of the Province is perhaps nearly so; but even Dessbarres, who was no ordinary surveyor, has left some points undefined, and there are no surveys whatever of the numerous streams that discharge themselves from this Province, unless you call such the returns of deputy surveyors, some of whom are wretchedly deficient; and, in fact, if they had possessed ability, *there were no means placed in the hands of the Surveyor General* to enable him to proceed in a scientific manner; the consequence has been, that no regular settlements (except very lately) have been formed in this Province; but the practice uniformly was, for a man to select a piece of land, and then for him to apply for it, when a warrant was given to take it wherever it could be found; and upon this authority the Deputy Surveyor proceeded to survey the allotment, which if bounding upon a river or a road, he never took the trouble to survey, but merely fixed upon one point, and then run perhaps the side lines, including perhaps within these lines more water than land; and this practice was pursued in the surveys and granting of townships. The starting point was defined, and from that a line, or the external limits, were ascertained, and a calculation made that there was so much land. Upon this a division took place among the proprietors; and not until years afterwards (when the labour of some had made their lands valuable) did they discover that, owing to the numerous lakes and barrens within the limits of their grant, where individuals expected to find a nice lot of land, he found himself in snug possession of a lake or barren, as it is emphatically termed; hence arose a fruitful source of litigation between the parties.

I should not have thought it necessary to say so much, only that perhaps you might not be altogether aware of the difficulty there is in compiling a plan from many thousand small imperfect surveys; and now we are rather obliged to fit these surveys to the outline of the Province, than to put them down as they actually are on the ground.

It will strike you at once, upon viewing the Plan, that there is still a very considerable proportion of lands in right of the Crown, particularly in the counties of Annapolis, Shelburne, Queen's and Lunenburg; but from all the accounts we have received, I am confident that 40,000 acres of land fit for settlement cannot be found in one tract in either of the four counties. Those blocks of land which are marked on the Plan have not been closely examined, but have been merely passed through, and there are hundreds of small lakes whose situation we are not sufficiently acquainted with so as to enable us to lay them down with accuracy. The county of Sydney, I think, contains a greater proportion of land fit for settlement, in comparison of the lands still remaining in right of the Crown, than any other, and has the advantage of good harbours; but I think the quantity reported as fit for settlement rather over-rated.

I am rather pushed for time, but hope by the Government brig to transmit some further information. I inclose an account, a copy of which has been presented to the Provincial Secretary. Should any thing occur to you in Canada that can be furnished by this Department, it will give the Surveyor General, I am sure, much pleasure to forward it to your address in England.

I am, &c.

(signed) *John S. Morris,*  
Assistant Surveyor General.