

Surveyed Lands in B. C. for Homesteaders

Of 2,292,127 Acres Available for Pre-emption, All But 128,000 in the Peace River Are Reasonably Accessible to Railway Transportation, and 518,195 is Directly Served by the Pacific Great Eastern Railway.

"Surveyed Lands for Settlers" is the title of an interesting pamphlet just issued by the Department of Lands. It holds two maps indicating the surveyed lands along the line of the new railways where thousands of pre-emptors await the settler. Within the new portion of British Columbia there are 2,292,127 acres of surveyed lands awaiting the pre-emptor. With respect to some of these lands the new railways pass through them, but all of the lands, except 128,000 acres in the Peace River, may be described as reasonably accessible.

Along the line of the Grand Trunk Pacific, from Tete Jaune Cache to the Pacific Coast, is found the greatest extent of agricultural lands in the Province. These lands are under the administration of Provincial Commissioners stationed at Fort George, Fort Fraser, Hazelton and Prince Rupert. Good lands, a very favorable climate and first-class railway transportation, coupled with a policy of free lands for settlers, have already commenced the work of transforming this portion of the Province into a series of promising agricultural settlements, with pretentious townsites at each of the local centres.

During the past two years there were issued out of the four offices already mentioned 3,643 pre-emption records, the figures for the year 1913 being 1,680 records, and 1,963 for the year 1914. They become interesting by comparison, in that the records issued out of these four offices for the year 1913 exceed the total number of records issued out of all the offices in the Province for the year 1909, which year in turn was the banner year in the history of the Province up to that time, the pre-emption records issued having made steady gains from 753 in 1903 to 1,620 records in 1909.

Of the surveyed lands available to settlers, there are 146,931 acres in the Cassiar Land District, with 233,408 acres in Range 5 and 209,561 acres in Range 4, Coast District. The Land Commissioners having jurisdiction over these lands are stationed at Prince Rupert, at Hazelton and at Fort Fraser. The pre-emptors' maps show the location of all these surveyed lots, and additional information can be secured respecting most of them upon application to the local or resident commissioner.

In the Cariboo District the available surveyed lands total 789,752 acres, the greater proportion of which is along the line of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, or tributary to the railway, the eastern half of the railway through the Province being within the confines of the Cariboo District. The most central office in connection with the administration of these lands is that at Fort George, although certain of the lands in the extreme west of the district are administered through the office at Fort Fraser, and certain of the lands in the southern portion are administered through the Quesnel Office.

In the Lillooet District there are 518,195 acres of surveyed lands available. These are all lands which will be served directly or indirectly by that part of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway system between Squamish and Fort George. Something over 50 per cent. of these surveys were made during the past season, and very encouraging reports have been received on the prospects of this section of the Province for dairying and mixed farming. These lands are all under the administration of the Land Commissioner stationed at Clinton.

In the Kamloops District the surveyed lands at present available for settlement amount to 72,617. These lands are all tributary to the line of the Canadian Northern Pacific Railway, and are situated between the northern boundary of the Dominion Railway Belt and Tete Jaune Cache. They are all under the administration of the Land Commissioner at Kamloops.

In the Peace River Land District surveys have been made aggregating 128,000 acres. These lands are considered too remote at the present time for immediate settlement, but upon the completion of the Peace River Extension of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway from Fort George the greater portion of the whole area surveyed will be given direct railway communication. These are all administered at the present time through the Fort George Land Office.

Off the Pacific Terminus of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway an extensive system of survey has been carried out on Graham Island, of the Queen Charlotte Islands Group. During the past season 66,133 acres were surveyed on this island, bringing the total surveyed acreage available for settlement on the island up to 193,663 acres.

During the year 1914 there were opened to settlement by pre-emption 114,410 acres of reserved land. Of this area 90,700 acres represented Crown Lands on the South Fork of the Fraser River and lands in the vicinity of Kennedy Lake, Clayoquot District, which were withdrawn from settlement pending survey. The remaining 23,710 acres were made up of logged-off lands, which were subdivided throughout the year. The major portion of these lands were distributed through East and West Kootenay, but extensive areas were also opened on the Salmon River in the Sayward District, and near the Powell River, and Lund, in New Westminster District. As certain of the lands were subdivided into small holdings, there were offered altogether in these reserved areas 979 pre-emption, and, with the exception of a few specially favored localities, there were more pre-emptions offering than were settlers to take them.

As a result of examinations and surveys carried on during the fall, it is the intention of the Lands Department to open very considerable areas of logged-off and reserved lands in the Spring, so that settlers will have a full season to prepare for the winter.

During the year 1914 there were upwards of 4,000 pre-emption records issued from the several Commissioners' offices throughout the Province. This shows a substantial gain over the previous year. The figures have doubled since 1910, when the total issue was 2,049, and have increased four-fold since 1907, when the total was returned at 936.

Taking 125 acres as an average holding under the pre-emption record, the work accomplished by the Lands Department during the past year means that the settlement of the vacant Crown Lands is now proceeding at the rate of half a million acres per annum under this heading alone.

Another outstanding feature of the past year's land administration has been the very marked advance in the number of Crown Grants issued for lands acquired under pre-emption holdings. This means that a much greater number of settlers have improved their lands sufficiently to take title, and a very considerable acreage has been added to the agricultural area of the Province.

With the improved conditions which will follow the operation of the three new railway systems, an even greater advance may be expected next year in the matter of land settlement. Good markets and free lands will work wonders within the next few years in British Columbia.