**Land Title Searching in Salt Spring Island**

Research Report

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Land Title & Government Records Cluster

Landscapes of Injustice Project

University of Victoria

 Prepared summer by

Anna Gooding

Under the supervision of

Jordan Stanger-Ross, University of Victoria

Note: This is a document for practical use in the field, prepared by field researchers. It has not been proofread or copyedited as a research output.

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**Overview of Work**

Salt Spring Island was one of the three study sites researched by the Land Title Cluster in the summer of 2017. In May and June 2017, I searched 341 titles starting with the first available microfilm (circa 1910s or 1920s) until 1974.

The approach to title searching in Salt Spring Island was different from the approach in the Vancouver-Powell Street and Maple Ridge study sites. Instead of searching all properties in a given study site, as was the approach in Powell Street and Maple Ridge, the Salt Spring Island search focused on Japanese-Canadian owned properties (JCOPs) only. I used the online archives of the Salt Spring Island Archives[[1]](#footnote-2) and the Japanese Garden Society of Salt Spring Island[[2]](#footnote-3) to identify the relevant properties. The Salt Spring Island Archives produced a list of Japanese-Canadian residents and owners; however, for title searching, only owners are relevant, not renters. The Japanese Garden Society of Salt Spring Island compiled a list of 12 owners of interest: 11 Japanese Canadians, and an Anglo-Canadian residing in China at the time of the war who was classified as a technical enemy alien. These 12 individuals owned 17 properties at the time of the dispossession, and these were the properties I searched.

After identifying the relevant properties, I used the Property Index Books at the Victoria Land Title Office to identify title numbers. Salt Spring Island falls under the Victoria registry, so all records were housed in Victoria. Rather than tracing properties through the Absolute Fees Books and Indefeasible Fees Books, as was the approach for Maple Ridge, I used the Property Index Books to find titles already available on microfilm. I identified titles from the years 1944-1945 when the properties were seized by the Secretary of State to ensure that I had selected the correct properties, and I searched the title thread backwards to the start of microfilm and forwards to the end date.

The year 1974 was chosen for the end date, with most titles searched beyond that year until 1976. In previous summers, Title Searchers traced titles until either the 1980s or 1974. In Powell Street, Title Searchers traced titles until conversion to digital in the 1980s. In Maple Ridge, Title Searchers traced titles until 1974 due to time constraints and because the year marked one 30-year generation following the seizure of properties in 1944. Initially, I intended to search titles until they were converted in the 1980s, as Title Searchers did for the Powell Street area. However, there were issues with properties combining and subdividing post-1974. To avoid these problems, it was agreed that 1974 would be the end date. By the time we reached this decision, I had searched titles until 1976. So while 1974 is the official end date, in practice titles were searched until 1976.

**List of Properties**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Owner | Property | Title (Seizure by Custodian) |
| Masakichi Inouye | Lot 3, Section 2, Range 2E, North SSI, Cowichan District, Plan 2495 | 150762I |
| Nakazo Ito | Lot 1, Section 4, Range 2E, North SSI, Cowichan District, Plan 3769 | 147636I |
| Toraso Iwasaki | [District] Lots 3 and 4, North SSI, Cowichan District, Including Parcel "A", except that part of Lot 4 lying South of South boundary of 3 and its production east to intersection with "A". | 150953I |
| Masuo Mikado | Amended Parcel "G" of Section 4, Range 3E, North SSI Cowichan District | 147631I |
| Katsuyori Murakami | Lot 1, Section 3, Range 2E, North SSI Cowichan District, Plan 3912 | 147633I |
| Katsuyori Murakami | Part of East 1/2 of Section 3, Range 2E, North SSI, Cowichan District, Plan 246R, containing 7.04 acres | 147632I |
| Masayoshi Murakami | Lot 2, Section 2, Range 1E, North SSI, Cowichan District, Plan 4329 | 152427I |
| Morihei Murakami | Part of E 1/2 of W 1/2 of Section 4, Range 2E, North SSI, Cowichan District, lying to south of public road, except east 25 feet thereof, containing 21 acres | 147637I |
| Tsunetaro Murakami | Lot C of Section 4 and 5, Range 2E, North SSI Cowichan District, Plan 2183 | 147634I |
| Tsunetaro Murakami | Lot 2 of Section 4, North SSI, Cowichan District, Plan 3805 | 147635I |
| Kumanosuki Okano | West 1/2 of Section 3, Range 2E, except the East 25 feet; and the North 20 feet of Section 3, Range 1E lying east of public road, Plan 2143. North SSI, Cowichan District. | 147638I |
| Kumanosuki Okano and Masatoshi Okano | Section 1, Range 1E, North SSI, Cowichan District | 147639I |
| Sueyuki Okano (James S Okano) | Part of West 1/2 of Section 2, Range 2E, North SSI, Cowichan District, lying to North of Rainbow Road, Plan DD10980.S. | 147640I |
| Miles Malcolm Acheson | Part of Section 10, Range 2E, North SSI, Cowichan District, Plan 438-R | Never seized but Vesting No. assigned(see title 123978I) |
| Miles Malcolm Acheson | Parcel A, Section 10, Range 2E, North SSI, Cowichan District | Never seized but Vesting No. assigned(see title 118454I) |

**Challenges and Solutions**

**Extra Properties**

For Salt Spring Island, the scope of research was restricted to 17 relevant properties (15 JCOP properties and 2 properties owned by a man residing in China during the war), rather than requiring wider property searches as was the case for Maple Ridge and Powell Street. However, occasionally the relevant JCOP would appear on a title alongside another property. Any properties that appeared alongside a JCOP between one transaction pre-1942 and 1974 were searched backwards or forwards, whichever was applicable, for one title or until a non-nominal consideration value was listed. This was in order to understand the value of the extra property without searching more titles than necessary.

For example, a JCOP could be combined with another property to form a new property. In title 208655I, Lot 1 of Plan 8275 was created by combining a JCOP with two other properties: Parcel H and Part of the North 6 Chains of Section 4. The new property, Lot 1 of Plan 8275, was searched forwards until 1974. The two non-JC-owned other properties were searched backwards until a non-nominal consideration value was found. For Parcel H, a non-nominal consideration value appears one title back (206000I). For Part of the North 6 Chains of Section 4, a non-nominal consideration value appears two titles back (first title 205999I, second title 42047I). However, title 42047I lists a larger property that subdivides into Part of the North 6 Chains of Section 4 (which later combines with a JCOP), and a second property: Part of the North 6 Chains EX. The second extra property (Part of the North 6 Chains EX) was searched forward 2 titles until post-1974 to get a non-nominal consideration value, but no value was available in this case.

**Describing Salt Spring Properties: Database Changes**

All Salt Spring Island data was entered in the Maple Ridge database. Because there were relatively few titles for Salt Spring, it was determined that entering them in an existing database would be better than creating a new database. Salt Spring Island properties were largely rural and resembled the Maple Ridge properties, so the Maple Ridge database was chosen over the Vancouver database.

I followed the protocols for data entry that were established in previous years and outlined in the *Land Title Cluster Handbook* (Updated September 2016) and the *Title Searcher's Report, Maple Ridge, Summer 2017* (September 30 2016). In some cases, it was necessary to establish new protocol, as outlined:

Location

The Location field was surfaced in the database to assign properties to Salt Spring Island, and distinguish them from Maple Ridge and Steveston properties in the same database.

All relevant properties were part of North Salt Spring Island and the Cowichan District. Rather than add this to the property descriptions, the Location entry for Salt Spring Island describes all properties as part of North SSI, Cowichan District.

Range

It was necessary to add a “Range” field to the property description fields. The Range field was used for the number and cardinal direction (ie. Range 3 East becomes 3E).

Modified Parcel Descriptors

It was necessary to use the Modified Parcel Descriptors to distinguish properties. Following the protocol established in Maple Ridge, a Modified Parcel Descriptor was used to distinguish between the properties in cases where the database did not have enough numerical information for the legal description to generate a unique description in the database. For Salt Spring Island, the Modified Parcel Descriptor used cardinal directions (ie. loi\_E or loi\_W) or a simple short-hand (ie. loi\_A for an “Amended” Lot or loi\_P for “Part” of a Lot). For Salt Spring Island, there were properties where the Parcel field was already in use, so the Modified Parcel Descriptor was entered into the Lot field instead (ie. RG:3E S:00004 L:loi\_P PC:0000H).

**Mapping Salt Spring Properties: Plans and Deed Deposits**

Salt Spring Island titles had a unique method of describing properties: Deed Deposits or D.D.s.

Deed Deposits are descriptions of property in the form of a simple property description, an extended 'metes and bounds' description, or a map (typically a small sketch plan).

DD numbers correspond to the title in which a property first appeared in its current form, normally by subdivision, combination, or the assigning of a parcel name. A property can have multiple DD numbers referring to different transactions in which the property was modified.

For example: “Amended Parcel G (DD 62840I and DD 100143I)”

DD 62840I refers to a map attached to the transfer of title 62840I.

DD 100143I refers to title 100143I in which two properties were combined (from Titles 94962I and 99574I). There is no metes and bounds description and no map/plan.

The property “Part of Amended Parcel G” was created by title 205998I, and could be described in the future as “Part of Amended Parcel G (DD 205998I).”

I made copies of all Deed Deposits with plans. At the Victoria LTO no photography was allowed, so I made photocopies of Deed Deposit plans and scanned the copies. If a plan is not available for a Deed Deposit, then it either included a simple property description or a 'metes and bounds' description, and was not copied. However, whenever possible, full property descriptions were recorded in the Notes field to explain the property.

In addition to all Deed Deposit maps, I gathered all plans and reference plans of the Salt Spring Island properties for GIS. Plans were downloaded from the LTSA program ASTRA and they were uploaded into Zotero by Nicole Yakashiro.

List of Plans and Deed Deposits

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Plans (Collected) | Sketch Plans (Collected) | Deed Deposits with a Plan (Collected) | Deed Deposits without a Plan (Not Collected) |
| 2143216321832495376938053912432972398275858891151821717376192041923919537217542021820820228602327126573 | 246R438R | 1098 OS7631F5742I11204F62840I99574I | 18723F21149F38387I53365I58307I63849I100143I140653I161565I162104I209243I244480I290792I308699I385093I |

1. http://saltspringarchives.com/maps/japanese.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. http://www.saltspringjapanesegarden.com/files/archive/main/Website\_Archives.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)