Rural Settlement Patterns

An overview with pictures

Mr. Thorburn
SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

- Defined:
- Settlement Patterns – The arrangement of where people live on the earth or in a country and the factors that influence this arrangement
- Population distribution – The pattern of where people live in a region or even in the entire country (e.g.: Dispersed and Concentrated)
- Population Density – population divided by the area (mathematical calculation of the number of people who live in each square kilometre of land).
SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

• Rural – Outside cities and towns.
• Urban – Inside cities and towns.
• Most of Canada’s rural residents live in two ecozones: the Mixedwood Plains and the prairie ecozones. In these areas the following settlement patterns exist:
  • The long lots of southern Québec
  • The concession system of southern Ontario
  • The section system of the prairies
There are three types of rural settlement patterns that occurred where large numbers of people settled:

- the long lots of Southern Québec
- the concession system of Southern Ontario
- the section system of the Prairies

Four key things to remember:

- most of the settlers were farmers or supported the farming community
- government policy (or lack thereof) determined the nature of the settlement pattern
- the type of transportation available determined the nature of the settlement pattern
- Canada was settled from east to west
Long lot system of Southern Québec.
• Long lots stretched back from a river because it was the only means of transportation in the early days, both winter and summer. Therefore waterfront became very important and valuable.

• Taxes were based upon the width of the lots; lots became, therefore, very long and thin.

• When all the suitable riverfront areas had been used, roads were built parallel to the river and back a certain distance. A new "rang", or range, of lots was then started with the same pattern fronting onto the road from both sides.
The Long Lot

Strip Village

The Second Rang

The First Rang

Early Settlements

River
• Villages grew up along the roads and because there were so few intersections, the villages tended to be **linear** in shape, that is, they stretched along the road.

• Because the lots were so thin, farmhouses were close together and this was very important in the early years as people were very dependent upon each other for labour and companionship during the long dark winters.

• As French-Canadians moved to other parts of Canada, they took this settlement system with them.

• It can be seen in parts of south-western Ontario near Windsor, southern Manitoba and the Peace River district of British Columbia.
Where is this?
Montréal
(note the long lot pattern)
Concession system of Southern Ontario
• Concessions are areas of land enclosed by the grid pattern of the survey system used in Southern Ontario. Most of these survey lines are now roads.

• Within concessions the land was divided into equal farm lots.
Parallel and close to the shoreline the **baseline** was surveyed. Then, spaced 1.25 miles (approximately 2km) apart, a series of parallel lines was surveyed. These later became **concession roads**.

At the same time a series of lines was surveyed at right angles to the concessions. These became roads known as **county lines**.

The resulting squares, about 2km by 2km are known as **concessions**, and portions of these were given to settlers to clear and farm.
Farmhouses tended to be built near intersections so as to be close to one another and some of these collections of houses grew into villages, towns, etc. if they were on good transportation routes. (Towns also grew at mill sites on rivers or streams.)

For administrative purposes, concessions were put together to form townships, and townships were put together to form counties.
Counties of Southern Ontario
Counties and townships of Southern Ontario
• Why was there a different system in Ontario than Québec?
• Because Ontario was settled later than Québec and the technology to build roads was much improved.
• Note that the distance between the roads varied a little and that roads sometimes did not line up exactly.
• This system of survey and road building was supervised by Col. John Graves Simcoe.
Section system of the Prairies
Western Canada was surveyed before there was any large scale settlement for three reasons:

1. The government was afraid that the U.S. might take over the Canadian west if there was no sign of occupation.

2. The population was growing in Ontario and there was a demand for more land.

3. The government wished to avoid the kind of land disputes that occurred in the U.S. when their west was settled (lawlessness, etc.).
The government needed a fast, efficient system to settle the west. The baseline was the 49th Parallel and survey lines were drawn on maps every 6 miles (10kms) parallel to the baseline. These were called township lines.

North-south lines were surveyed and mapped every 6 miles to form long wide bands called ranges.

The enclosed squares, called townships, are 36 miles square. These were subdivided into 36 one-square-mile blocks called sections. Each section was subdivided into quarter-sections.
survey lines were 6 miles apart

Baseline - 49th parallel

These squares were subdivided into 36 sections, each 1 mile by 1 mile.
each “section” was 1 mile by 1 mile

each section was sub-divided into 4 “quarter-sections”, which were given to settlers, or reserved for churches, schools, the railways, the Hudson Bay Company, etc
Some quarter sections were granted to settlers, some reserved for schools and churches, some for the railway, and some for the Hudson Bay Company, the previous owner.

Each settler family was given a quarter section which they could keep if they built a house and cleared a certain amount of it within a given period of time.
• Many settlers came from Eastern Europe (and even some from Iceland). The farms were larger than in the east because the combination of soil and climate conditions means lower profits per hectare.
• Grain elevators were constructed at regular intervals along the rail lines (for farmers to bring their grain to) and villages and towns grew at these locations.
On average, grain elevators tended to be 13 miles apart along the railway lines.
Isolated Settlements

- Isolated settlements tended to grow at the locations of natural resources and usually in areas where a survey had not taken place. This was a lot of Canada as extensive surveys in the early days were only done on the arable land of the country, which amounts to very little of the Canadian land mass.

- Examples of isolated settlements include fishing ports on coasts, mining and lumbering towns, hydroelectric sites, recreational spots, scientific and military communities, and transportation locations.