

# The Reesor Family in Canada

## Word Search Puzzle

R	E	T	S	A	C	N	A	L	B	G	A	Z	R
D	L	M	S	F	F	L	O	E	O	Z	G	V	T
R	E	L	L	I	M	A	R	I	R	U	O	L	F
E	T	I	N	O	N	N	E	M	N	M	T	S	E
A	N	B	O	A	L	D	E	H	F	U	S	P	L
W	E	H	I	R	I	S	S	C	A	S	E	A	L
F	N	G	T	H	K	T	L	D	N	E	N	R	I
M	I	O	A	P	N	U	S	A	N	S	O	T	V
Y	L	I	M	A	F	N	B	I	Y	R	C	A	R
E	E	P	R	E	T	L	A	H	R	O	T	Z	O
L	O	G	I	R	S	A	V	E	E	H	L	N	S
B	I	A	F	N	D	W	T	L	I	A	C	R	E
M	N	S	F	O	E	E	W	Z	F	R	E	G	E
N	I	B	A	C	P	Z	L	P	F	S	U	V	R

Acre	Family	Land	Pfalz
Affirmation	Fanny Reiff	Linen	Pine
Bern	Flour	Mennonite	Reesorville
Cabin	Halter	Migrants	Reunion
Christian	Horses	Miller	Sparta
Conestoga	Lancaster	Peter	Walnuts

## Why are These Words Significant?

### **Bern**

It is understood that the Risser family originated in the Canton of Bern, Switzerland.

### **Pfalz**

The Risser family left Switzerland in the 1600s to escape religious persecution and migrated to the Palatinate, an area in Germany west of the Rhine River, now known as the Pfalz.

### **Lancaster**

Peter Risser, his wife Elizabeth Herschi, and family members left Germany, travelled down the Rhine River, and sailed from Rotterdam, arriving in Pennsylvania in 1739. They were looking for land and freedom to practice their Mennonite faith. Their land grant for 275 acres was in the northwestern part of Lancaster County. They had a family of five girls and five boys.

### **Affirmation**

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, non-British immigrants to Pennsylvania were required to swear an oath of allegiance to the British king. Since swearing an oath was against the religious beliefs of Mennonites such as the Risser family, they were allowed to make a "solemn affirmation".

### **Fanny Reiff and Christian Risser**

Christian was the sixth child of Peter and Elizabeth Risser. In the early 1800s, Christian and Fanny's son Peter was appointed by his people to come to the new colony of Upper Canada to report on it and choose land. Fanny and Christian and their extended family migrated from Pennsylvania and arrived in Little York (now Toronto) in the fall of 1804. They were the first of our family to live in this country. In what is now the United States, the family name was Risser. For unknown reasons, when they came to Upper Canada, the family name became Reesor.

### **Conestoga**

The Risser family and others in their group made the six-week journey from Pennsylvania with five horse-pulled Conestoga wagons. The wagons could carry well over 900 kg (1 ton) of goods; linen fabric was said to cover the wagons.

### **Miller**

Peter Reesor cleared the land and built flour and lumber mills on the Little Rouge River. Forests of white pine provided building materials. He ultimately took on a significant leadership role in the new community.

### **Reesorville**

The original name of the new community near Highways 7 and 48, now called Markham. The Reesors and other Mennonite families from Pennsylvania bought land in the area.

### **Sparta**

The original name of the community of Box Grove, located in the area of what is now 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the 9<sup>th</sup> Line in Markham. The old trail from Markham ran through Sparta to the mill road that eventually led to Peter's land.

### **Walnuts**

Peter and Christian Reesor are said to have planted walnut trees in the front yards of their new homes, using seeds brought from Pennsylvania.

### **Reunion**

The first general reunion for the Reesor family took place in 1901; another was held in 1904 to mark 100 years of the Reesor family in Canada. In 1950 the decision was made to hold a reunion every 10 years. Since 1980 the reunions have been held at the Markham Fair Grounds.

### **Sources**

*The Reesor Family in Canada: Genealogical and Historical Records 1804-1950.*

*The Reesor Family in Canada: Genealogical and Historical Records 1804-2000.* Markham, ON, The Reesor Family in Canada Genealogical and Historical Society Inc., 2000.