

HISTORY OF AGRICULTURE IN ONTARIO

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History of Agriculture in Ontario 1613-1880

ROBERT LESLIE JONES

With a Foreword by
Fred Landon



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To
MAUDE LACEY JONES

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FOREWORD

SCHOLARLY interest in the history of agriculture has greatly increased in the United States in the last quarter century, stimulated by the work of such men as Edwards, Kellar, Gras, Phillips, Moody, Malin and others. It is now twenty-five years since the Agricultural History Society was founded, with the object of promoting study and research in this broad field, and the Society's publication, *Agricultural History*, has in 1946 reached its twentieth volume. The influence which the Society has exerted upon both the teaching and writing of history in the United States has been particularly valuable in broadening the concept of national history in its entirety.

During this period there have appeared a number of extensive studies, examples of which are the *History of Agriculture in the Northern States, 1620-1860*, by Bidwell and Falconer (1925); N.S.B. Gras's *History of Agriculture in Europe and America* (1925); Lewis C. Gray's *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860* (1933), and in somewhat more restricted fields U. P. Hedrick's *History of Agriculture in the State of New York* (1933) and Ulrich B. Phillips's *Life and Labor in the Old South* (1929). Studies of a more regional or specialized character have been numerous.

This growing interest in agricultural history has shown itself in other ways also. Libraries have set themselves the task of collecting the source materials, both manuscript and printed. Files of the earlier farm journals have been brought together, farm diaries and other records of agricultural activities dug out from attics and old trunks to provide the picture of farm life and farming practices of other days. The library of the Department of Agriculture at Washington is the greatest single depository of this character, but anyone who visits the library of the McCormick Historical Association in Chicago or the libraries of several of the American uni-

versities which are active in this field will go away impressed by the volume and variety of material that they have assembled.

In Canada, despite the importance of agriculture in our national economy, we have been tardy in exploring its place in our earlier history and only in the last decade has there been evidence of any general interest in the subject on the part of historians and economists. As Professor Fowke has pointed out,¹ we have as yet no general histories of Canadian agriculture comparable to the works of Bidwell and Falconer, Gras or Gray, mentioned above, nor any work on Canadian agriculture comparable to those of Innis on the cod fisheries and the fur trade or of Lower on the timber trade of Canada.

Furthermore, it is a matter of concern that so little has been done to assemble and conserve the raw materials of the field, so essential to research and writing. There is only one reasonably good collection of early farm journals in the libraries of Canada and even the agricultural college libraries have been so concerned with the problems of the immediate present that they have tended to neglect the building up of collections similar to those in the United States.

All this is preliminary to welcoming a study of the agricultural history of one extensive region of Canada. Professor Jones has for some years past been publishing preliminary studies in this general field and his larger work on the history of agriculture in the Province of Ontario down to 1880 has been awaited with interest. Residence in the United States and acquaintance with the agriculture of states contiguous to Ontario has assisted him to take an objective and discriminating point of view and to provide interesting comparisons and contrasts between Ontario agriculture and that of neighbouring regions of the republic.

In the making of this study Professor Jones has ranged

¹V. C. Fowke, "An Introduction to Canadian Agricultural History" (*Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, VIII, 1942, p. 62).

widely over the available source material. His annotated bibliography, which occupies a large section of the book, should be welcomed by all students of Canadian history. The list of newspapers which he consulted is in itself imposing, no less than thirty-four titles being included, some extending over a considerable period of years.

Finally, this work is a challenge to further research in the same and similar fields. The author does not regard his work as in any way final for the area which he has examined, and he suggests yet closer investigation of a variety of subjects related to Ontario agriculture and study also of the history of particular areas of the province. Some of the topics which he has mentioned might well be set down for investigation by graduate students in our universities.

FRED LANDON

University of Western Ontario,
London, Ontario.

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PREFACE

Agriculture in its several branches has been, and is now, the foundation on which rests the entire industrial fabric of Ontario. On its prosperity all classes depend—and with a good crop or a bad one, business operations, the abundance of money, and the social comforts of our whole people rise and fall, as do the waters of the sea with the flow and ebb of the tide. CANADA FARMER (Toronto), January 15, 1873, p. 9.

THOUGH agriculture was the dominant industry in Ontario till the end of the nineteenth century, its history has tended to be neglected, except in so far as it is concerned with land settlement and land policy. This volume endeavours to provide a comprehensive description of Ontario agricultural development from the time when Samuel de Champlain set down his observations on the farming practices of the Indians in Huronia to about 1880. The investigations of the Ontario Agricultural Commission in the latter year make it possible to survey the prevailing conditions and tendencies with a fair degree of accuracy. From the economic point of view too, 1880 as a date of termination has much to recommend it. The province had then become adjusted to the effects of termination of reciprocity with the United States, wheat acreage had reached its apogee and the wheat-growing industry was about to decline, and dairying, livestock raising, and fruit-growing had become soundly established. An attempt has been made to deal with all important aspects of agricultural development, among them Indian agriculture, types of settlers, pioneer farming, grain-growing, the grain trade, the livestock industry, the dairy industry, the fruit industry, farmers' organizations and movements, the relations between the timber trade and farming, and tariff policies and their effects. A work thus concerned with the whole agricultural history of an extensive region over a long period necessarily lacks a clear single theme of the kind expected in the investigation of an institution or a policy, but at least it is hoped that a reasonable synthesis has been achieved.

One of the complicating factors in a history having to do with Ontario is nomenclature. In the French period the land comprised in the province in 1880 was part of New France. From 1763 to 1774 it formed a portion of the unorganized Indian country, except for a narrow strip along the Ottawa River which was included in Quebec. Under the Quebec Act of 1774 it belonged to Quebec. By the Constitutional Act of 1791 it became the separate Province of Upper Canada. By the Act of Union of 1840 it was associated with Lower Canada to form the Province of Canada, but the union was not administratively complete, and the old name of Upper Canada was still commonly used. The official name, Canada West, was much less popular. In 1867, on the formation of the Dominion of Canada, Upper Canada again became a separate province, thereafter known as Ontario.

The research for this volume was conducted in the Main Library of the Department of Agriculture at Ottawa, the Public Archives of Canada, the Library of Parliament at Ottawa, the Ottawa Public Library, the Queen's University Library, the University of Toronto Library, the Victoria College Library, the Ontario Parliamentary Library, the Toronto Public Library, the Harvard University libraries, the Boston Public Library, the New York Public Library, the John Crerar Library at Chicago, the Newberry Library at Chicago, the Cincinnati Public Library, the Detroit Public Library, the University of Michigan Library, and the Marietta College Library. I am deeply grateful to the staffs of these institutions for their helpful co-operation. For copying excerpts, verifying references and quotations, or lending rare periodicals, I am under obligation to most of the libraries just mentioned, as well as to the New York State Library at Albany, the Yale University Library, the Library of Congress, the Library of the United States Department of Agriculture, the Cleveland Public Library, the University of Illinois Library, the Ohio State University Library, and the University of Minnesota Library.

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Professor D. G. Creighton of the University of Toronto, Professor Harold A. Innis of the University of Toronto, Professor Frederick Merk of Harvard University, and Professor Gilbert N. Tucker of Yale University, read the manuscript in its initial form of a Harvard University doctoral dissertation. Professor V. C. Fowke of the University of Saskatchewan, Professor Fred Landon of the University of Western Ontario, Dr. O. A. Lemieux of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Miss Jean Lunn of McGill University, and Professor James J. Talman of the University of Western Ontario, read it later, in whole or in part. I am indebted to these critics for many valuable suggestions. Professor George W. Brown of the University of Toronto acted as consultant, and my wife, Maude Lacey Jones, served as proof-reader and indexer.

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ROBERT LESLIE JONES

Marietta, Ohio, May, 1946.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>JHC</i>	<i>Journal of the House of Commons of Canada.</i>
<i>JLAC</i>	<i>Journal of the Legislative Assembly of Canada.</i>
<i>JTBAUC</i>	<i>Journal and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture of Upper Canada.</i>
<i>OACR</i>	<i>Report of the Ontario Agricultural Commission.</i>
<i>OHSPR</i>	<i>Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records.</i>
<i>RAA</i>	<i>Report on Agriculture and Arts (i.e., Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture for the Province of Ontario.)</i>
<i>SPC</i>	<i>Sessional Papers, Canada.</i>
<i>SPO</i>	<i>Sessional Papers, Ontario.</i>
<i>TBA & AAUC</i>	<i>Transactions of the Board of Agriculture and of the Agricultural Association of Upper Canada.</i>
<i>TBAUC</i>	<i>Transactions of the Board of Agriculture of Upper Canada.</i>

CHAPTER I

AGRICULTURE BEFORE THE LOYALISTS¹

OF the vast territory of Ontario, all that counted from the agricultural point of view down to 1880 was the part south of Lake Nipissing, which is now known as Old Ontario or Southern Ontario. This region, to be sure, is of fair size. It has an area of about 51,000 square miles (not counting the surrounding waters), that is, about 4,000 square miles less than the State of Pennsylvania. It has considerable diversity of relief, of soil, and of climate. Except for one large segment, all of it is today occupied by farmers who are normally prosperous.

Four divisions of Old Ontario may be distinguished for the purpose of studying its agricultural history.²

The first division is Eastern Ontario, which includes the portion of the province between the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers. The western boundary of this region is marked roughly by the towns of Pembroke, Perth, and Brockville, or more definitely by the eastern edge of the spur of the Precambrian Shield which stretches down from Northern Ontario to cross the St. Lawrence at the Thousand Islands. Eastern Ontario is underlaid by nearly horizontal shales and sandstones, but the soil is mostly marine till deposited when the Champlain Sea inundated the St. Lawrence Lowlands. Though the soil is for the most part fertile enough, agriculture has been handicapped by a general flatness of terrain, with consequent difficulties in the way of drainage, and in the case of certain crops, by a climate which is more rigorous than that of the parts of the province bordering on the lower Great Lakes. This division of the province is frequently referred to in the

¹With this chapter in general, cf. Schott, *Landnahme und Kolonisation*, pp. 5-58. For developments during the French régime, with special reference to the St. Lawrence Valley, see Innis, *Select Documents in Canadian Economic History*.

²Cf. Colby, *Source Book for Economic Geography*, pp. 5 ff., 72-3. For a good general description of the geography of Old Ontario, see also Herbertson and Howarth (eds.), *Oxford Survey of the British Empire*, vol. IV, chap. I.

pages which follow as the Ottawa Valley, according to the local usage, though strictly speaking the Ottawa Valley includes a narrow strip of the Province of Quebec north of the Ottawa. On the other hand, there are a few instances where the term "Ottawa Valley" is used to describe a region larger than Eastern Ontario, that is, to comprise in addition the parts of the Precambrian Shield drained by the tributaries of the Ottawa. These references are almost all in connection with the timber trade, and should cause no confusion.

The second division of Old Ontario may be called the Ottawa-Huron region. It is bordered on the east by Eastern Ontario, and on the south by a line running from Kingston to the southeastern corner of Georgian Bay. It is part of the Laurentian or Precambrian Shield. This means that it is a maze of low hills, sprawling lakes, turbulent rivers, and often of swamps and muskegs. Its surface has been largely denuded of soil by glacial action. Except along some of the streams, such soils as remain are light and infertile. Though the region offers few agricultural possibilities, farming operations have been carried on in certain parts of it for over ninety years. Abandoned or half-cleared farms, tumble-down buildings, and poverty-stricken inhabitants testify to its inability to support a rural population above a subsistence level.

The third and fourth divisions, Central and Western Ontario, together comprise the part of the province south and west of the Ottawa-Huron region. They may be considered as belonging to the St. Lawrence Lowlands, or according to another classification, to the Central Lowlands. They are underlaid, like Eastern Ontario, by sedimentary rocks. Their soil is glacial till of various kinds. East of Toronto there is abundance of lime in at least 80 per cent of the soil, but west of it there is a much higher proportion of acid soil derived from shale. The surface varies. In some places, such as the Essex peninsula, it is decidedly flat; in others it is very rolling; but mostly it is moderately rolling. On the whole, peninsular Ontario is admirably adapted to agriculture. Except in some waste areas, such as the sands of Norfolk, Northumberland, and Prince Edward counties, the marshes at the mouth of the Grand River, and

various poorly drained sections, most of the land is at present in use.³ The most conspicuous physical feature is the Niagara escarpment which, under the name of Hamilton Mountain or Blue Mountains, runs from Queenston Heights northward to Owen Sound and the Bruce peninsula. In Grey County the summit of this escarpment is about 1,000 feet above the level of the adjacent Great Lakes. On the western side of the escarpment a plateau slopes gradually to Lake Huron and Lake Erie. This escarpment is ordinarily considered to mark the dividing line between Central and Western Ontario.

In general the climate of Old Ontario is favourable to agriculture. There is about three weeks' difference in the advent of the growing season between the Essex peninsula and the region south of Lake Nipissing. Ground frosts come late in September in the Ottawa-Huron region and Eastern Ontario, but usually not till October in Central and Western Ontario, for in Central Ontario the climate is moderated by Lake Ontario and Georgian Bay, and in Western Ontario by Lake Huron and Lake Erie. In the Niagara peninsula fruit belt the average length of the growing season is 212 days and the average length of the frost-free period 158 days. Corresponding figures for other parts of Old Ontario are: Essex and Kent counties, 207 and 155; counties along Lake Erie, 203 and 153; shore of Lake Ontario and the Bay of Quinte, 197 and 143-5; shore of Lake Huron and southern part of Georgian Bay, 196 and 148; counties between Ottawa and St. Lawrence rivers, 194 and 131; Renfrew and adjacent counties, 188 and 119; Algonquin Park (the heart of the Ottawa-Huron region), 176 and 93; Muskoka, 182 and 123; region about Lake Simcoe and the Kawartha Lakes, 191 and 130; uplands between Guelph and Owen Sound, 189 and 126; a belt including the second range of counties north of Lake Erie and parts of the first range of counties north of Lake Ontario

³Chapman, "Adaptation of Crops in Ontario" (*Canadian Geographical Journal*, vol. XXIV, 1942, pp. 253-4); Whitaker, "Agricultural Gradients in Southern Ontario" (*Economic Geography*, vol. XIV, 1938, pp. 112-15). See also Hills, "Pedology, 'The Dirt Science,' and Agricultural Settlement in Ontario" (*Canadian Geographical Journal*, vol. XXIX, 1944, pp. 111-20); and Lee, "Land Utilization in the Middle Grand River Valley" (*Economic Geography*, vol. XX, 1944, pp. 130-51).

(the "South Slopes"), 196 and 135. The average annual precipitation ranges from slightly over 28 inches at Leamington to 38 inches in Muskoka. The only parts of the province where the farmers have much fear of drought are around Leamington and Chatham. The snow which blankets the northern sections of Old Ontario for three or four months, and the southern ones for a shorter time, gave the pioneers an advantage over their contemporaries south of the border in marketing grain, and facilitated the rapid development of the timber trade.⁴

In its primeval state Southern Ontario had three forest belts, which have been classified as the "Carolinian," the "Tolerant Hardwood," and the "Mixed Hardwood and Softwood." The first, which lay along the north shore of Lake Erie, had a number of hardwoods such as the black walnut, the pawpaw, and the tulip-tree, which did not grow elsewhere in Canada. North of it, and including most of the rest of Southern Ontario except the Ottawa-Huron region, was the second belt, with hardwoods such as maple, elm, beech, ash, and oak predominating, but with conifers such as pine, spruce, balsam, and cedar on the sandy or poorly drained soils. The third belt, farther north, was pre-eminently that of the white pine, with red pine occupying a position next in importance.⁵ It was the work of three generations of backwoodsmen and farmers to reduce the first two belts to cleared fields, leaving here and there remnants in the shape of woodlots.

Not all Southern Ontario was forest-covered. As in the adjacent parts of the United States there were "oak-plains." These were rather sandy stretches thinly timbered with oaks. Travellers emerging from the woods were astonished when they first glimpsed them. One such traveller, after visiting Long Point in Norfolk County, wrote: "When I first visited this part of the Province, the sudden change which took place in the aspect of nature seemed like magic. The soil became light and sandy, the forests had dwindled away,

⁴Chapman, "Adaptation of Crops in Ontario," pp. 248, 250-1; Taylor, "Climate and Crop Isopleths for Southern Ontario" (*Economic Geography*, vol. XIV, 1938, p. 90).

⁵Craig, "Forest Resources of Canada" (*Economic Geography*, vol. II, 1926, pp. 401-3).

and natural groves and copses met the eye in their stead. The fields were beautifully level, and the uncultivated lands had more the appearance of a pleasure-ground than of a wilderness. The trees being small and few in number, and distributed in beautiful clumps, did not at all suggest the idea of a forest, but added charms to the country and variety to the prospect.”⁶ Oak-plains, in addition to those at Long Point, were found in or near the valley of the Grand River, especially in the townships of Ancaster (Wentworth County), Burford (Brant County), and Dumfries (Waterloo County); in the Niagara peninsula, in the townships of Niagara (Lincoln County) and Stamford (Welland County); in York County along Dundas Street east of the Humber (Scarlett’s Plains); and in Northumberland County along the southern shore of Rice Lake. Though oak-plains were easy to clear, they did not become popular with settlers for a long time except as pasture. They were liable to many serious criticisms, as Edward Talbot remarked, “such as the want of timber for building, fencing and fuel.” Then he added: “To be obliged to go half a dozen miles for fire-wood, rails, and building materials, would involve an expence, which, in my opinion, no American farmer can at present afford.”⁷ So great was the prejudice against the oak-plains that it was not till almost 1850 that the Rice Lake Plains, for example, were utilized for the growing of wheat.⁸

Though the Loyalist farmers along the southern fringe of Old Ontario inherited scarcely anything directly from the Indians who preceded them, the agriculture of the aborigines deserves attention. The first European to describe it was Samuel de Champlain. In June, 1613, he and his companions toiled up the Ottawa as far as Allumette Lake. On Allumette Island and in the part of Renfrew County to the south of it they found a tribe of Algonkians. Though these Algonkians depended on hunting and fishing for their subsistence, they practised farming to some extent. Their chief product was Indian corn, but they also had squashes and kidney beans. Two years later, when he

⁶Howison, *Sketches of Upper Canada*, p. 153.

⁷Talbot, *Five Years’ Residence*, vol. I, p. 171.

⁸Brown, *Views of Canada and the Colonists* (2nd ed.), pp. 179-80.

again ascended the Ottawa, this time going by way of Lake Nipissing to the Huron country south of Georgian Bay, Champlain found other Indians essentially the same as the Algonkins. The Nipissings of the vicinity of Lake Nipissing cultivated the land very little, though they dried wild fruits. The Ottawas, whose home was on Manitoulin Island and in the region between Lake Huron and Georgian Bay, were, he wrote, "for the most part great warriors, hunters, and fishermen. . . . In general they plant Indian corn, and other cereals."⁹

When Champlain had coasted along the eastern shore of Georgian Bay to Huronia in modern Simcoe County, he found himself in a new kind of countryside—"the largest part being cleared up," and "thickly settled with a countless number of human beings." The Hurons, he observed, depended more on agriculture than on the products of the chase. Their main crop was Indian corn, which they consumed in many forms—as bread, as pudding, as soup, as roasting ears, and in combination with other foods, and which they used in bartering for furs with the Algonkins and Nipissings. Kidney beans and squashes, as among the Algonkins, were next in importance. They cultivated sunflowers for the double purpose of making a kind of soup and a hair-oil. They had dogs, which were "in request at their banquets," and kept bears in captivity, often for several years, to provide another delicacy.¹⁰

Cultivating maize was a laborious task for the Huron women, for to them it invariably fell. As it was difficult for them to chop down the trees with their primitive axes, they burned the bases of the trunks to kill them, and cleared the underbrush out of the deadening. Having done this, they planted the corn in hills about two feet apart, ten kernels to each. We learn from Gabriel Sagard, who was a missionary among the Hurons less than a decade after Champlain's visit, that the corn was planted in the same hills year after year, without the intervening soil being stirred at all. According to Champlain, enough seed was

⁹Grant (ed.), *Voyages of Champlain*, pp. 243-4, 249, 279-80, 303.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 283-5, 314-17. For the importance of Indian corn in the fur-trading economy of the Hurons, see Innis, *Fur Trade in Canada*, p. 23.

sown each year to provide a supply for three or four years, as the Hurons feared that "a bad year may befall them."¹¹ Though this remark is a tribute to the sense of providence of the Indians, it may also suggest that maize was not altogether a dependable crop in Huronia. The Hurons kept their fields in cultivation for a relatively short period, usually not much over five years, though it might be as long as forty, and then abandoned them for new ones. Sagard ascribed this practice to the increasing difficulty of obtaining fuel in the vicinity of the villages, and to the exhaustion of the soil through lack of manuring.¹² A more reasonable explanation is that the clearances were overrun with grass, which the Indians could not eradicate with their wooden shovels and pointed stakes. Under these circumstances they had no choice but to move elsewhere, village and all.¹³

The Hurons and the other Indians supplemented the produce of their fields with nuts, fruits, and berries. They gathered acorns, chestnuts, and walnuts to eat in their natural state and to grind into flour for use in various dishes. They picked wild grapes, plums, cherries, cranberries, and crab-apples, and even preserved the last named in maple syrup. They had strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, gooseberries, and blueberries.¹⁴ Blueberries seem to have been their favourite small fruit. Lahontan wrote that "These Berries serve for several uses, after they are dry'd in the Sun, or in an Oven; for then they make Confits of 'em, or put 'em into Pyes, or infuse 'em in Brandy. The North-Country Savages make a Crop of 'em in the Summer, which affords 'em very seasonable relief, especially when their hunting comes short."¹⁵

The Hurons, like the other Indians of the Great Lakes region, depended on the maple for their sweetening. It was stated about 1684 that the "savages of Canada" tapped the maples, and obtained by evaporation about a pound of sugar

¹¹Grant, *Voyages of Champlain*, p. 327; Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians*, part I, p. 25.

¹²Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians*, part I, p. 586.

¹³Cf. Huntington, *Red Man's Continent*, pp. 155-6.

¹⁴Grant, *Voyages of Champlain*, pp. 284, 288; Lahontan, *New Voyages*, vol. I, p. 217.

¹⁵Lahontan, *New Voyages*, vol. I, p. 254.

for every eight pounds of sap. This was evidently a very old procedure. "The savages here," the notice continued, "have practised this art longer than any now living among them can remember."¹⁶

The other Indian tribes of Southern Ontario in Champlain's time require only brief comment. The Tobacco Nation lived a short distance west of Huronia, and the Neutral Nation had its homeland north of Lake Erie and in northwestern New York. The agriculture of these two tribes differed from that of the Hurons only in the addition of tobacco-growing. Tobacco was cultivated apart from the other crops, and was under the care of the men rather than of the women.¹⁷

Such then was the agriculture of the aborigines of Old Ontario when the first white men arrived. The members of the Huron-Iroquois family, it is clear, had long before the coming of Champlain made the transition from a nomadic to a "shifting-cultivator" type of culture. The Algonkins, the Nipissings, and the Ottawas were in the midst of the process. Though none of the Indians had quite reached the stage of being sedentary agriculturists, they had done remarkably well considering their lack of draft animals and of implements. One must agree with the authority who, in writing of them and other eastern Indians with the same kind of civilization, has stated that "the more the matter is studied from an unprejudiced point of view the more remarkable appear their achievements in farming."¹⁸

Almost as soon as the French and Indians came in contact, they borrowed from each other's agriculture. The French were soon making maple sugar, following the Indian technique in every detail till they understood it well enough to improve upon it. They likewise obtained Indian corn

¹⁶Chamberlain, "Maple Sugar and the Indians" (*American Anthropologist*, vol. iv, 1891, p. 382). Among the best descriptions of Indian maple sugar making in the Great Lakes basin is that of Zeisberger, *History of the Northern American Indians*, pp. 48-50.

¹⁷Grant, *Voyages of Champlain*, pp. 302-4; letter of Father Joseph de la Roche Dallion, July 18, 1627, in Le Clercq, *First Establishment of the Faith*, vol. i, p. 270; Boucher, *True and Genuine Description of New France*, p. 55.

¹⁸Carrier, *Beginnings of Agriculture in America*, p. 41.

and other products of the soil and the knowledge of their culture. Shortly after he founded Quebec, Champlain was growing Indian corn, squashes, and kidney beans in the manner of the natives.¹⁹ On the other hand the Indians obtained tools, particularly iron axes, from the whites. Nor was this all. Even when Champlain first visited the Algonkins of the Ottawa, he observed that they were planting peas, which they had got from the French.²⁰ By 1624 the Recollet missionaries were cultivating the common vegetables of western Europe in their gardens in Huronia,²¹ a demonstration which was not lost on the Indians; and by 1645 the Jesuits were taking young cattle to their missions among the Hurons.²²

The small beginnings of the Europeanization of Indian agriculture were soon reduced to naught by the deadly incursions of the Iroquois. With the westward flight of the Hurons in 1648-9, and with the subsequent vanquishing of the Tobacco and Neutral Nations and the other allies of the Hurons, the Iroquois were unchallenged in Old Ontario. As they were too much engaged in warfare to colonize their conquest, they frequented it only for hunting or for gathering wild rice. Terror of the Iroquois kept out other Indians. Most of the corn fields of the Hurons and their associates before long were overwhelmed by the forest, like those abandoned in the ordinary course of cultivation. A few, for some reason or other, remained as openings, to excite comment from settlers of a later day and to relieve them of the necessity of land-clearing.²³ "By this means it comes to pass," wrote Lahontan of the once populous country of the

¹⁹Saunders, "First Introduction of European Plants and Animals into Canada" (*Canadian Historical Review*, vol. XVI, 1935, p. 392).

²⁰Grant, *Voyages of Champlain*, p. 249. Peas brought from France did much better in the New World than in the Old. ". . . Peas thrive very well here, and one never sees any of those worm-eaten peas full of weevils that one sees in France" (Boucher, *True and Genuine Description of New France*, p. 47).

²¹Le Clercq, *First Establishment of the Faith*, vol. I, p. 209. They were also making wine from the wild grapes (*ibid.*, p. 208).

²²Saunders, "First Introduction of European Plants and Animals into Canada," p. 399.

²³Cf. Chapter v, below. For the prevalence and importance of Indian clearances in eastern North America in general, see Carrier, *Beginnings of Agriculture in America*, pp. 38-40.

Neutrals, "that the Stags, Roe-Bucks and Turkeys, run in great Bodies up and down the shoar, all round the Lake [Erie]." ²⁴ The remnants of the Huron nations lived for a generation near Michilimackinac, bullied by the Iroquois on the east and by the Sioux on the west. About 1680 they descended to the vicinity of Detroit, and became known as Wyandots. Many of their allies followed, especially after the founding of Fort Detroit in 1701 gave some assurance of protection against the Iroquois. The Wyandots came to have several villages, most of them at the western end of Lake Erie. One, however, was on the eastern side of the Detroit River, opposite the fort. In its vicinity was another village peopled by the Ottawas.

James Smith, a young Pennsylvanian, was among the Wyandots and their allies as a captive between 1755 and 1759. In his remarks on their diet and their mode of life, he reveals that they still pursued the agricultural methods that Champlain had found among their ancestors. ²⁵ Another captive, Charles Stuart, mentions that in 1755 an expedition of Wyandots (with some other Indians) raided the English settlements in the modern Fulton County, Pennsylvania, and drove back to their villages near Detroit a number of horses, cattle, and swine. ²⁶ By 1760, as a result of this and later depredations against the Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia frontiers, the Wyandots were "esteemed the richest Indians upon the whole continent, having not only horses in great abundance, but some black cattle and swine." Further, corn-growing with them was on a commercial basis. Major Robert Rogers, who makes the comment just quoted, adds that "they raise great quantities of corn, not only for their own use, but [to] supply several other tribes, who purchase this article from them." ²⁷

²⁴Lahontan, *New Voyages*, vol. I, p. 217.

²⁵*Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col. James Smith*, pp. 26, 44-6, 50-1.

²⁶Bond (ed.), "Captivity of Charles Stuart" (*Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. XIII, 1926-7, pp. 59-66). James Smith also mentions horse-stealing by the Wyandots and their associates (*Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col. James Smith*, pp. 32, 36, 81).

²⁷Rogers, *Concise Account of North America*, pp. 169-70.

Like their predecessors who had lived in Huronia before the Iroquois conquest, the French missionaries working among the Indians during their western wanderings and afterwards practised agriculture, or rather gardening, on a limited scale.²⁸ Then, when the government of New France extended its trading empire into the Great Lakes basin and the Mississippi Valley, and established a chain of military posts to protect it, two of these, Fort Frontenac and Fort Detroit, had some significance in the history of agriculture in Old Ontario. Father Hennepin, who was a missionary at Fort Frontenac between 1676 and 1679, described La Salle's efforts at farming thus :

The Ground which lies along the Brink of this Lake is very fertile: In the space of two Years and a half that I resided there in discharge of my *Mission*, they cultivated more than a hundred Acres of it. Both the *Indian* and *European* Corn, Pulse, Pot-Herbs, Gourds, and Water-Melons, thrrove very well. It is true indeed, that at first the Corn was much spoil'd by Grashoppers; but this is a thing that happens in all the Parts of *Canada* at the first cultivating the Ground, by reason of the extream Humidity of all that Country. The first Planters we sent thither, bred up Poultry there, and transported with them Horned Beasts, which multiply'd there extreamly.²⁹

It should be added that in another work Hennepin noted that La Salle had only thirty-five head of cattle at Fort Frontenac.³⁰ This agricultural enterprise ended in a few years, when Denonville abandoned the fort. When it was rebuilt later, there was again some farming. Charlevoix,

²⁸Its nature is illustrated in an account of an episode which occurred in northeastern Ohio in 1762. At that time Frederick Post, a Moravian missionary, took up his residence there, and set a hired man at cutting down trees, with the intention of growing enough corn for his own use. The Indians made him desist, for they feared that other white settlers would follow him. They told him: "You say, 'that you are come at the instigation of the great spirit, to teach and to preach to us!' so also say the priests at Detroit, whom our Father, the French, has sent among his Indian Children! Well, this being the case, you, as a preacher, want no more land than one of those do, who are content with a garden lot, for to plant vegetables and pretty flowers in, such as the French priests also have, and of which the white people are all fond" (Heckewelder, *Narrative of the Mission of the United Brethren*, p. 63). For a definite contribution made by the French missionaries, see below, p. 73 n.

²⁹Hennepin, *New Discovery*, pp. 17-18.

³⁰Hennepin, *Description of Louisiana*, p. 58.

who visited it in 1721, found that an island opposite the fort was known as Hog Island, because so many pigs were kept there.³¹ But Fort Frontenac remained a military and trading post, and little more. When Rogers went up the Great Lakes in the autumn of 1760, he noticed that the five hundred acres or so of cleared land around it were overrun with clover and pines.³²

Agriculture in the vicinity of Fort Detroit had a more substantial development. The first clearances were made on the western shore, around the fort. Here there soon appeared the narrow fields and the seigneurial windmills characteristic of the manors along the St. Lawrence. In 1748 settlers, including some disbanded soldiers, began to occupy the other bank of the river between the sites of Sandwich and Amherstburg. The new community, called the Petite Côte, had about fifty families in 1760. James Smith, who was taken by his Indian captors to Detroit in 1757, wrote a description of its appearance.

Opposite to Detroit, and below it, was originally a prairie, and laid off in lots about sixty rods broad, and a great length:³³ each lot is divided into two fields, which they cultivate year about. The principal grain that the French raised in these fields was spring wheat and peas.

They built all their houses on the front of these lots on the river side; and as the banks of the river are very low, some of the houses are not above three or four feet above the surface of the water; yet they are in no danger of being disturbed by freshes, as the river seldom rises above eighteen inches; because it is the communication, of the river St. Laurence, from one lake to another.

As dwelling-houses, barns, and stables are all built on the front of these lots; at a distance it appears like a continued row of houses in a town, on each side of the river for a long way. These villages, the town, the river and the plains, being all in view at once, affords a most delightful prospect.³⁴

When Henry Hamilton arrived at Detroit in 1776 to assume his duties as lieutenant-governor, the Petite Côte had changed

³¹Charlevoix, *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France*, vol. III, p. 195.

³²Hough (ed.), *Journals of Major Robert Rogers*, p. 179.

³³For a map illustrating the method of surveying in Sandwich Township, see Schott, *Landnahme und Kolonisation*, p. 57.

³⁴*Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col. James Smith*, pp. 79-80.

little. This was to be attributed to the exclusion of British land-seekers from the western country in accordance with the policy of the Proclamation of October 7, 1763. Hamilton remarked that the settlements on both sides of the river appeared "very smiling," especially on holy days, when the habitants turned out in their finery.³⁵

The French Canadians on their holdings along the strait may have been picturesque, but they were slovenly farmers. This was natural enough, for they were usually much more concerned with the fur trade than they were with agriculture. They had no reason to cultivate their land intensively, for it was fertile enough to produce the crops necessary for their sustenance without any great effort on their part, and cheap enough to permit them to leave half of it in fallow every year. Their conservatism and their ignorance of crop rotations did not prevent them from having adequate crops of wheat, barley, oats, peas, buckwheat, Indian corn, and potatoes. Yet, when every allowance is made for their economic situation, it is still true that they were even more backward in their tillage methods than their English contemporaries on the frontier of New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. When they had their land cleared, they had only the crudest implements with which to prepare the seed-bed. The most notable was a plough of a kind common in the St. Lawrence Valley and in the Illinois country as well as at Detroit, and which was doubtless the same as the French plough of the seventeenth century. It had a wooden mould-board; short and almost perpendicular handles; no coulter; and an almost straight beam resting on an axle supported by two small wheels.³⁶ Such a plough was still in use within a few miles of Detroit in 1818. "It was drawn by two yoke of oxen and two horses, and was conducted by three men, who were making as much noise as if they were moving a barn."³⁷ Incidentally, the French-Canadian *censitaires* of the Petite Côte commonly yoked their oxen by

³⁵Henry Hamilton to Dartmouth, Aug. 29, 1776, in *Michigan Pioneer Collections*, vol. x, 1886, p. 267.

³⁶Hubbard, "Early Colonization of Detroit" (*Michigan Pioneer Collections*, vol. I, pp. 352-3); Reynolds, *Pioneer History of Illinois*, p. 49.

³⁷Watson (ed.), *Men and Times of the Revolution*, p. 428.

the horns rather than by the neck, just as did those in the Illinois country, the St. Lawrence Valley, and Old France.³⁸

Hamilton reported that the 2,500 settlers on both sides of the river had about 3,000 cattle and about 2,000 sheep. They had had few cattle before 1760, and no sheep at all.³⁹ Like the habitants of the St. Lawrence Valley, they had a disproportionate number of horses. These they sometimes used for ploughing, but they really kept them for driving to an endless succession of social activities, for almost every family had "a calash for summer and a cariole for winter." They had also swine, which they fattened in the autumn for their next summer's supply of salt pork. In the summer there was plenty of wet prairie, on which the vegetation was abundant, and there was additional grazing on the fallow fields and in the woodlands; but as there were no meadows ("there is no such thing as yet, as a piece of land laid down for Meadow"), the number of livestock was strictly limited. After the snow came, the settlers gave the little wild hay that they had cured to the horses, so that in the mildest winters the cattle almost starved, and in the severe ones, such as that of 1775-6, many of them perished.⁴⁰

The French Canadians of this region did make one distinctive agricultural contribution. This was in fruit-growing. Every farm had an orchard, in which grew peaches, plums, apples, and especially pears. According to tradition pear-seeds, scions, and even trees were brought from Normandy by some of the first missionaries. By the middle of the nineteenth century the "old French pear trees,"

³⁸Hubbard, "Early Colonization of Detroit," p. 353; Flint, *Letters from America*, p. 238. Yoking oxen by the horns was a practice which gained favour in France in the later Middle Ages, and from it spread to Spain (Clapham and Power (eds.), *Agrarian Life of the Middle Ages*, p. 134).

³⁹It was related of these French settlers along the Detroit River that "of the manufacture of wool they were entirely ignorant, using the fleeces to protect their cellar windows from the frost, and like strange appropriations of that valuable article" (Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, p. 368).

⁴⁰Hamilton to Dartmouth, Aug. 29, 1776, in *Michigan Pioneer Collections*, vol. x, pp. 266-7. A census of the Detroit settlement in 1782 gave the number of heads of families as 321, and the entire population as 2,291; the number of horses as 1,112; the number of cattle as 1,672; the number of sheep as 447; and the number of swine as 1,370 (*ibid.*, vol. x, p. 613).

which flourished under neglect generation after generation, were as characteristic a feature of the landscape between Amherstburg and Sandwich as the surviving seigneurial windmills.⁴¹

The few dozen families on the Petite Côte were reduced to a position of comparative insignificance in the agricultural development of Old Ontario by the coming of the United Empire Loyalists. During the American Revolution, transporting foodstuffs from Montreal to posts such as Fort Niagara proved to be both expensive and precarious, but under the conditions of the period there was no alternative, because garrison and fur-trade demand created a shortage in the Detroit settlement.⁴² As a new agricultural community would solve the difficulty, plans were made, beginning about 1780, for the establishment around the posts in the western part of the Old Province of Quebec of refugees from the rebelling colonies. At that time Haldimand announced his intention of assigning lands opposite the fort at Niagara (which was on the eastern side of the river) to Loyalists who had taken refuge with the garrison. They were to pay no rent, were to be furnished ploughs and other farm implements, and were to be bound to sell to the commanding officer any surplus they produced.⁴³ Five families took up land under this arrangement in 1780. A "Survey of the Settlement at Niagara, 25th August, 1782," shows that there were then 17 families there. They had 236 acres of land under cultivation, owned 49 horses, 61 head of cattle, 30 sheep, and 103 hogs, and in the year 1782 grew 206 bushels of wheat, 926 bushels of Indian corn, 46 bushels of oats, and 630 bushels of potatoes.⁴⁴ These pioneers of Lincoln County were the advance guard of thousands who came to the province on the conclusion of peace in 1783. During that year the government sent out surveyors to divide several districts west of the old French settlements above

⁴¹Hamilton to Dartmouth, Aug. 29, 1776, *ibid.*, vol. x, p. 266; Hubbard, "Early Colonization of Detroit," pp. 355-7; *Michigan Pioneer Collections*, vol. x, p. 70.

⁴²Lt.-Col. M. Bolton to Haldimand, March 24, 1779, in *ibid.*, vol. ix, 1886, pp. 428-9.

⁴³Haldimand to —, July 7, 1780, *ibid.*, vol. x, 1886, pp. 411-12.

⁴⁴*Canadian Archives Report for 1891*, p. 1.

Montreal into townships wherein the British system of tenure would prevail.⁴⁵ Early in 1784 the Loyalists took up their locations. This marked the inauguration of a new era in the agriculture of their northern home.

⁴⁵For a map of a typical "single-front" township of the survey, see Schott, *Landnahme und Kolonisation*, p. 85. Maps of later types of surveys are given on succeeding pages.

CHAPTER II

AGRICULTURE IN THE LOYALIST ERA, 1784-1812¹

THE Loyalists deserved well of the British government and they were well rewarded. When they came to their locations along the St. Lawrence, the Bay of Quinte and the Niagara frontier, they obtained not only free grants of land, but a full issue of rations for two years, just as if they were on military service, a stock of the primitive implements of the day, and other articles necessary for making a start in the wilderness. Moreover, during the summer and autumn of 1784 the government sent agents to the Mohawk Valley, the Montreal district, and Vermont to buy seed winter wheat for them. During the same period the Loyalists obtained cattle, which they had either owned previously or now bought, from the Mohawk country. Finally, the government provided grist mills, which operated free of toll till 1791.²

However anxious and foresighted the government might be, it could not eliminate all privations, such as those associated with the "hungry year" (1788-9), the worst the Loyalists had to endure. Owing to a crop failure throughout the new settlements in 1788, the people were on the verge of starvation by spring. In 1793 some Quakers on the way to Detroit found that the settlers near Newark in Lincoln County had only too vivid a recollection of their sufferings. According to the narrative :

They related the dreadful circumstances they were reduced to in this country, by scarcity of bread and provisions of all kinds, in 1789—when they came to an allowance of one spoonful of meal per day, for one person—eat strawberry leaves, beech leaves, flax seed dried, and ground in a coffee mill—caught the blood of a little pig—bled the almost famished cow and oxen—walked twelve miles for one shive

¹With parts of this chapter, cf. Burt, *Old Province of Quebec*, chap. xv, and Shortt, "Economic Effect of the War of 1812" (*Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records*, vol. x, 1913). Hereafter this authority is cited as *OHSPR*.

²Cruikshank (ed.), *Settlement of the United Empire Loyalists*, pp. 114, 128, 148, 156, 161, 169; "Petitions for Grants of Land in Upper Canada" (*OHSPR*, vol. xxvi, 1930, p. 122).

[slice] of bread, paid twelve shillings for twelve pounds of meal. One of the lads who was hired out, carried his little sister two miles on his back, to let her eat his breakfast, and they gave him none till dinner. The children leaped for joy at one robin being caught, out of which a whole pot of broth was made. They eat mustard, potato tops, sassafras root, and made tea of the tops. The relation was deeply affecting.³

If it had not been for assistance from the government, and a supply of provisions obtained from the Mohawk Valley, half the Loyalist population, it was said, would have perished.⁴ Even later it was well for them that they were not altogether dependent on the produce of their fields, but could obtain on occasion wild meat through hunting or purchase from the Indians, that in the beginning of summer they could ordinarily kill passenger pigeons in great numbers, and that the rivers and lakes could provide plenty of bass and whitefish.⁵ Nevertheless, within ten years the Loyalist communities were solidly on their feet. The most flourishing of all was that along the Bay of Quinte, with Kingston as its commercial centre. All this region, it was remarked in 1794, "is settled, and round the whole Bay so thick settled, that their improvements already meet, and form the appearance of a beautiful old settled country."⁶

On the whole, our judgment must be that the Loyalists were more fortunate than the generality of pioneers. As will be shown later, they had for a dozen years or more an excellent market for their scant surplus among the newcomers, at the garrisons, and even in the western interior. When demand slackened along the Great Lakes, they were

³Lindley, "Account of a Journey to Attend the Indian Treaty" (*Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, vol. xvii, 1892, p. 579). For further details of the Hungry Year, see Guillet, *Early Life in Upper Canada*, pp. 206-14.

⁴John Richardson to John Porteous, Little Falls, May 31, 1789 and June 14, 1789, in Cruikshank (ed.), "John Richardson Letters" (*OHSPR*, vol. vi, 1905, pp. 23-4).

⁵"Canadian Letters" (*Canadian Antiquarian and Numismatic Journal*, 3rd series, vol. ix, 1912, pp. 43-4).

⁶Ogden, *Tour through Upper and Lower Canada*, p. 95. It was reported in 1791 that the Loyalists along the St. Lawrence adjacent to the French settlements did not "fall much short of having as much of the land cleared as the French who have been more than a hundred years in possession" (Campbell, *Travels in the Interior Inhabited Parts of North America*, p. 123).

able to trade at Montreal throughout the entire open season on the St. Lawrence, not solely when the river was in freshet, as was the case with the Ohio Valley farmers who depended on New Orleans. Again, they had no reason to fear the Indians. From 1783 to 1812 the Upper Canada frontier was one of the quietest of which there is record. Its history is not one of scalping by furtive Indians on the borders of settlement, or of "stations" where men hoed corn under the eyes of a garrison, or of bloody Indian war like that in the Ohio country between 1791 and 1795, but one in which predominantly nomadic Indians, such as the Mississaugas, were little more than hunters for the white population, and "settled" ones, such as the Mohawks and the "Moravian" Delawares, were adjusting themselves to European ways of life.⁷

But their greatest asset was in themselves. They were frontiersmen. Most of them came from New York, with the rest coming from the back country of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. About half had been born in the American colonies, and the other half had at least lived in the backwoods.⁸ They had suffered much during the Revolutionary War, and to outward view it might seem that they came to their claims with little except broad shoulders, willing hands, and a determined spirit. Yet they did not fear the wilderness. They knew how to tame the forest, to live in it and in the clearances cut out of it, and to make it profitable. The importance of this knowledge, which we may call their colonial frontier agricultural inheritance, can scarcely be exaggerated. We need only compare the uncertain beginnings of the Pilgrims in Massachusetts in 1620, or the dismal experiences of the misfit group of French émigrés of de Puisaye in York County, with the forthright development of the Loyalist communities to appreciate its significance. A century and a half of frontier expansion had built up a store of information and practices on which the Loyalist backwoodsmen could draw, and which served them as well as it did the pioneers in western New York or in

⁷For the Mississaugas, see Weld, *Travels through the States of North America*, vol. II, pp. 85-6; for the others see below, pp. 51-3.

⁸Burt, *Old Province of Quebec*, pp. 360-1.

western Pennsylvania or in the Ohio country. It not only taught them what not to do, but also what to do and how to do it.⁹

The settler had occasion to use the traditional lore of the frontier as soon as he commenced to look for a suitable location. Long observation had convinced the frontiersmen that the native vegetation of a region furnished a reliable indication of its agricultural possibilities. Few pioneers were deceived by land speculators if they were able to tramp over the lots offered for sale. Classifications of soil on the basis of the kinds of trees that grew on them were made everywhere along the frontier, and as a matter of course found their way into the immigration literature. Here is a typical classification :

Land, upon which black and white Walnut, Chestnut, Hicory, and Basswood, grow, is esteemed the best on the continent. That which is covered with Maple, Beech, and Cherry, is reckoned as second-rate. Those parts which produce Oak, Elm, and Ash, are esteemed excellent wheat-land, but inferior for all other agricultural purposes. Pine, Hemlock, and Cedar land is hardly worth accepting as a present. It is however difficult to select any considerable tract of land, which does not embrace a great variety of wood; but, when a man perceives that Walnut, Chestnut, Hicory, Basswood, and Maple, are promiscuously scattered over his estate, he need not be at all apprehensive of having to cultivate an unproductive soil.¹⁰

Once located, the pioneer cleared his land according to the methods he had learnt from his father or his neighbours. He split rails, built worm fences, and erected his log cabin, according to universal patterns. When he began to farm, experience and necessity alike taught him to practise what is called extensive agriculture, that is, a type in which a large production was achieved through applying whatever labour was available to as much land as possible, rather than highly cultivating a limited area. Accordingly, his farming was universally condemned by European observers as wasteful; for they did not realize, for the most part, that cheap land and

⁹On the colonial agricultural inheritance, see especially Carrier, *Beginnings of Agriculture in America*. There are some useful remarks on the social adjustment of the Loyalists in Clark, *Social Development of Canada*, pp. 205-7.

¹⁰Talbot, *Five Years' Residence*, vol. I, p. 159.

high labour costs would have made any other course out of the question. If the pioneer could not look into the future and tell which seed would grow and which would not, he benefited from the succession of colonial experiments in standard and special crops, which had eliminated the most unsuitable, and left him with a few staples, among them Indian corn and most of the cereals of northern Europe. These, he knew, were fairly satisfactory wherever grown, and economical of labour, not like the flax and hemp which well-meaning officials were constantly trying to have produced commercially.¹¹

His wife was equally adapted to the frontier. She was acquainted with the technique of various household industries, ranging from spinning and sometimes weaving, to the preservation of fruits by drying, and the making of butter and cheese. Together, they formed a family unit, which became closely integrated with the other similar units on the edge of the wilderness. Thus developed the great varieties of frolics or bees, described in every pioneer history—the logging bees, the barn-raising, the corn-huskings, the apple-paring bees, the harvesting and threshing bees, and the rest.

These remarks apply not alone to the Loyalists, but to those who came after them in quest of cheap land, the groups of two or three from the back country of New York or Pennsylvania, who would come into Upper Canada, obtain a claim, build a log house apiece, sow a patch of wheat, and depart, to return the next year with their families, poling or rowing their *bateaux* along the shores, or creaking along the bush roads in their covered wagons, with their boxes carefully covered to make them watertight in fording streams.¹² To a considerable extent, they also apply to the British immigrants who came into Upper Canada, such as

¹¹William H. Brewer, writing of the experiments in special crops during the colonial period, stated: "So extensively did these experiments go on, and so completely had they been tried, that . . . but one species of cultivated plant (sorghum) has been introduced since the Revolutionary War of sufficient importance to be enumerated in the census tables" ("Report on the Cereal Production of the United States," *Tenth Census of the United States*, vol. III, p. 135).

¹²Heriot, *Travels through the Canadas*, p. 152; Ogden, *Tour through Upper and Lower Canada*, p. 103.

the Glengarry Highlanders and the Talbot settlers, who were shortly absorbed in the colonial population, and acquired its knowledge.

Armed, then, for the assault on the forest, the Loyalists quickly passed through the initial stages of pioneering, following the time-worn procedure to be described in a subsequent chapter. Soon they had patches of wheat, rye, oats, buckwheat, and even peas;¹³ little fields of the indispensable Indian corn, with squashes, melons, pumpkins, and gourds, among the rows; and garden plots of flax and common vegetables. Moreover, as occasion offered, they set out seedling orchards. As early as 1794, it was remarked that some of these orchards were already bearing fruit, and that "Peaches, cherries and currants are plenty among all the first settlers."¹⁴ Apple trees had not begun to bear at that time, for the settlement at Niagara was being supplied with apples from the old French community at Detroit, but within another decade or so apples were so common throughout all Upper Canada, and peaches in the western part of it, that they were largely manufactured into cider and peach-brandy.¹⁵

When the Loyalists accumulated sufficient capital to acquire some foundation stock, they had oxen, young cattle, cows, pigs, sheep, and even a few horses, about their clearances. These animals received the minimum of care. Pigs ran wild in the woods, living off the mast, and were often hunted down and killed there without any further fattening. If they were fattened before being slaughtered, it was through being fed a little Indian corn for a few weeks. Cattle were

¹³It is not unlikely that the Loyalists borrowed the cultivation of peas from the French Canadians. The original Loyalists in the Niagara peninsula grew none (see above, p. 15), probably because the pea-bug had rendered the crop uncertain everywhere in the American colonies except northern New York (Bidwell and Falconer, *History of Agriculture in the Northern United States*, p. 99). For another factor in pea cultivation, see below, p. 88. In any case it was not till 1793 that peas were grown in the Bay of Quinte region (La Rochefoucault-Liancourt, *Travels through the United States*, vol. I, p. 499).

¹⁴Ogden, *Tour through Upper and Lower Canada*, p. 101.

¹⁵Weld, *Travels through the States of North America*, vol. II, p. 139; Ogden, *Tour through Upper and Lower Canada*, p. 111; R. Hamilton to J. Askin, Dec. 16, 1804, in Quaife (ed.), *John Askin Papers*, vol. II, p. 447; Smith, *Geographical View of Upper Canada*, pp. 9, 21-2, 67.

left to browse in the woods till early in the winter, and then were given little feed except straw and marsh hay, and no shelter except a windbreak. Sheep were said to thrive, but it must be remembered that only enough were kept to provide the family with clothing, on account of the inevitable losses from wolves.¹⁶

Pioneers on good land anywhere in northern North America ordinarily duplicated this transition from privation to rude abundance, but few, when they had a surplus to dispose of, were so fortunate as the Loyalists. The government had deliberately located them where it did because it hoped that the garrisons at Montreal, Kingston, Niagara, and Detroit, and the developing fur trade of the southwest and northwest, would provide a local market for them. Further to set them on their feet, it followed the policy, beginning in 1786, of paying higher prices for products it purchased from the settlers than it needed to. For example, it paid the garrison contractors, who bought from the farmers, the market price for flour in Lower Canada, plus most of the cost of transporting it above Lachine.¹⁷ No wonder one of the Kingston merchants wrote to his Montreal correspondent that "as long as the British Government shall think proper to hire people to come over to eat our flour, we shall go on very well, and continue to make a figure."¹⁸ Garrison demand likewise stimulated pork-packing along the Bay of Quinte. Here, in the season of 1793-4, the inhabitants cured 480 barrels for the use of the soldiers.¹⁹ The latter, too, were no doubt responsible for the breweries and

¹⁶Ogden, *Tour through Upper and Lower Canada*, p. 98; La Roche-foucault-Liancourt, *Travels through the United States*, vol. I, pp. 462, 502-3. For the sources and characteristics of this livestock, see Chapter IX, below.

¹⁷John Craigie to Alured Clark, Aug. 2, 1792, in Cruikshank (ed.), *Correspondence of Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe*, vol. I, pp. 185-6. Hereafter this authority is cited as *Simcoe Papers*.

¹⁸R. Cartwright to Isaac Todd, Oct. 21, 1792, in Cartwright, *Life and Letters of the Late Honourable Richard Cartwright*, pp. 49-50. Hereafter this authority is cited as *Cartwright*.

¹⁹R. Cartwright to Major Lothbridge, Oct. 10, 1794, in *Cartwright*, p. 66.

distilleries which soon sprang up, and "consumed no inconsiderable portion of our grain."²⁰

For the Loyalists of the Niagara district, as for the old French-Canadian and new British settlers along the Detroit River, the fur trade, especially that of the North West Company, formed an additional market. The western traders seldom cultivated anything larger than a kitchen garden. The inhabitants of such places as Sault Ste. Marie and (after about 1807) Fort William were more or less settled, and had patches of barley, peas, oats, and especially potatoes, but they seldom produced more than enough for their own subsistence.²¹ Under these circumstances, most of the supplies of the western fur trade, except pemmican, had to be brought up the lakes. Accordingly, the merchants who furnished them bought provisions at Detroit and Fort Erie, and sent them up the lakes in sailing vessels. In 1793, about 4,000 bushels of Indian corn and about 190,000 pounds of flour were exported from Detroit to "Michilimackinac and the Falls of St. Mary &c. &c."²² John Askin at Detroit made a contract with the North West Company in 1796 to supply it with 1,200 bushels of hulled corn and 12,000 pounds of flour in each of the three succeeding years.²³ Sometimes the market at Michilimackinac or Sault Ste. Marie was very profitable. This was especially the case when the North West Company and its rivals, such as the X Y Company, were in competition for flour and other provisions.²⁴ On the other hand, the traders often lost heavily in their speculations. For example, a merchant at Fort Erie, who had suffered from the amalgamation of the X Y Company and the North West Company in 1804, wrote that his disap-

²⁰R. Cartwright to Davison & Co., London, Nov. 4, 1797, in *Cartwright*, p. 74. Cf. R. Cartwright to Simcoe, Dec. 15, 1794, in *Simcoe Papers*, vol. III, p. 221.

²¹Franchère, *Narrative of a Voyage to the Northwest Coast*, pp. 338, 395. For the difficulties of farming on St. Joseph Island, see the many letters of John Askin, Jr., in Quaife, *John Askin Papers*.

²²*Simcoe Papers*, vol. II, p. 107.

²³Quaife, *John Askin Papers*, vol. II, p. 24. He bought some of the corn from the "Moravian" Delawares (Bliss, ed., *Diary of David Zeisberger*, vol. II, pp. 427, 480).

²⁴Cf. John Askin to Captain Fearson, March 30, 1800, in Quaife, *John Askin Papers*, vol. II, p. 286.

pointment in the Michilimackinac market was so great that he would not again "be very forward" to try it, "thinking it better to sell at a Saving price at home, than to run great risks for the prospect of an uncertain Advantage."²⁵ Again, it is clear that by 1807 imports of American agricultural produce at Michilimackinac were of considerable significance.²⁶ The agricultural export trade up the lakes therefore lost its former attractiveness. Nevertheless, it did retain much of its importance till the War of 1812, even though long before that time it ceased to be the sole dependence, additional to the garrisons, of the western settlers.

The amount of produce which could be absorbed by the garrisons and the fur traders was limited, and even with the most primitive tillage methods, the Loyalists were soon producing a surplus of wheat. The Scottish traveller Campbell in 1791 reported of Kingston that "above 6,000 bolls [one boll equals six imperial bushels] of wheat were bought up and stored here the preceding year, and that at least one fourth more would have been so this one."²⁷ With the crop of 1792 there was definitely a surplus, which the Kingston merchants began to talk of exporting to Montreal.²⁸ However, it appears that they did not do so till 1794, when they shipped thither 12,823 bushels of wheat, 896 barrels of flour, and 83 barrels of middlings (biscuit flour), quantities to be compared with the 1,624 bushels of wheat and the 3,596 barrels of flour they furnished to the garrisons at Kingston, York, and Niagara.²⁹ The wheat and flour trade down the St. Lawrence gained little in volume for the next five years, though the high prices which prevailed in Lower Canada on account of the French Revolutionary War would, in the ordinary course of events, have stimulated further exports. The incipient export trade was checked by the prevalence of the Hessian fly, which, assisted by dry summers, reduced the production of wheat for a number of years, beginning

²⁵Robert Nichol to John Askin, Aug. 26, 1804, *ibid.*, vol. II, p. 429.

²⁶*York Gazette*, Aug. 22, 1807.

²⁷Campbell, *Travels in the Interior Inhabited Parts of North America*, p. 140.

²⁸R. Cartwright, Jr., to Simcoe, Nov. 12, 1792, in *Simcoe Papers*, vol. I, p. 255.

²⁹R. Cartwright to Simcoe, Dec. 15, 1794, *ibid.*, vol. III, p. 223.

with the harvest of 1794,³⁰ and still more by the sudden development of a market among newcomers on the American side of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes.

The region these new settlers occupied had few permanent residents till after the British evacuation of the western posts in 1796. When more did appear, they were supplied from Upper Canada for several years, as were the American garrisons now occupying the posts at Oswegatchie, Niagara, Presqu'île, and Detroit. The demand from the British and American garrisons, and from the American pioneers, caused prices to rule high for several years. Flour, for example, sold in 1797 for \$4.00 a hundredweight, and peas for \$1.00 a bushel.³¹ Some farmers forgot the generosity of the government in the days when there was nothing but the garrison market, and sold to the Americans the supplies which they had contracted to deliver for the use of the British troops.³² Others simply took high prices for granted, and attempted to profiteer by withholding their supplies from the garrisons in times of scarcity.³³

If the Upper Canadians for four or five years took advantage of the needs of their neighbours across the border, there was nevertheless a community of interests between them. New Yorkers long had their grain ground at Upper Canadian mills, flour and household articles were freely borrowed, and visits and gossip were exchanged.³⁴ As time passed, the dimming memories of the Revolutionary War scarcely served to distinguish the Loyalist from the post-Loyalist land-jobber, or either from the northern New York potash burner. The "Yankee pedlar" from Albany paddled

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 222; John McGill to Simcoe, May 13, 1796, *ibid.*, vol. iv, p. 263. The cutworm had destroyed the crops in the eastern Loyalist settlements in 1785 (*An Englishman in America, 1785*, ed. by Robertson, p. 58).

³¹R. Cartwright to Davison & Co., Nov. 4, 1797, in *Cartwright*, p. 74.

³²John McGill to Simcoe, May 30, 1796, in *Simcoe Papers*, vol. iv, p. 284.

³³John McGill to James Green, June 24, 1798, in Cruikshank and Hunter (eds.), *Correspondence of the Honourable Peter Russell*, vol. II, pp. 191-2.

³⁴Hough, *History of Jefferson County*, p. 251; Hough, *History of St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties*, pp. 274, 335-6; Turner, *Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase*, p. 416.

his canoe along the shores of Upper Canada or New York with perfect indifference to the boundary, for, like the Yankee carpenter or mason, he received the same welcome at every clearance.³⁵

By 1800 the pioneers south of Lake Ontario were not only producing enough for their own needs and that of the adjacent garrisons, but were preparing to send a surplus to Montreal, the only market their transportation facilities permitted them to reach.³⁶ Accordingly, though advertisements still appeared in Upper Canada newspapers on behalf of the American garrisons,³⁷ the merchants and millers of the province again turned to Montreal. Even in 1799 the inhabitants of the Loyalist townships along the St. Lawrence were steadily sending their grain there.³⁸ At this time new settlements as remote as those in Oxford County had wheat to export.³⁹ By the summer of 1800 flour from mills along Lake Ontario was going down the St. Lawrence in considerable quantities.⁴⁰ By midsummer of 1801 the Niagara district exported 5,000 barrels of flour, "which for the first year is really very great."⁴¹ Before the end of 1801, Upper Canada from Kingston westward exported to Montreal 13,963 barrels of fine and superfine flour, 322 barrels of middlings, and 350 bushels of wheat. Of the flour, 2,489 barrels were shipped from the Detroit district.⁴² In 1802, a year of exceptionally good demand, Upper Canada exported 11,422 barrels of flour.⁴³

From this time on, with few interruptions, there was a

³⁵Canniff, *History of the Settlement of Upper Canada*, pp. 215-16.

³⁶Judge Nathan Ford to Stephen Van Rensselaer, Dec. 30, 1799, in Hough, *History of Jefferson County*, pp. 309-10.

³⁷*Niagara Herald*, Jan. 24, Feb. 14, 1801.

³⁸Smyth, *A Short Topographical Description of Upper Canada*, p. 8.

³⁹*Niagara Canada Constellation*, Sept. 13, 1799.

⁴⁰Elias Smith to Joseph Allen, July 23, 1800, in Elias Smith Papers.

⁴¹Robert Nichol to John Askin, June 15, 1801, in Quaife, *John Askin Papers*, vol. II, p. 343.

⁴²*Niagara Herald*, June 13, 1801; R. Cartwright to General Hunter, Oct. 24, 1801, in *Cartwright*, p. 82. However, as late as 1808 it was said that the cost of transportation ordinarily prohibited the sending of flour from Detroit to Montreal (Charles Askin to John Askin, Feb. 25, 1808, in Quaife, *John Askin Papers*, vol. II, p. 596).

⁴³*Quebec Gazette*, April 7, 1803.

strong Lower Canada demand for Upper Canada breadstuffs to export to Great Britain, where a succession of bad crops combined with an occasional shutting off of Baltic wheat supplies to keep the restrictions of the Corn Laws in virtual abeyance.⁴⁴ There was also a market in the British West Indies, but American competition kept this from amounting to very much.⁴⁵

The Lower Canada demand made it profitable for Upper Canada capitalists to erect "merchant mills." In 1806 a traveller visited one of these, which was situated in the Niagara peninsula, below St. Johns. He observed that it was four and a half storeys high, that it had two pairs of stones, and that it was equipped with fanning mills, conveyors, and elevators — in other words, with all the inventions then associated with the name of Oliver Evans and the famous mills along the Brandywine. "This mill," continued the visitor, "was built by a young man, who afterwards built mills [below Niagara Falls] for Messrs. Hamilton and Cartwright."⁴⁶

Mills such as these created a local grain market, acreage expanded in consequence, and by 1805 certain parts of Upper Canada, especially the Bay of Quinte region, were beginning to have reputations for good wheat. "The grain," it was claimed, "is heavier and more plump than any that is raised in the territories of the United States, except such as border upon this immense [St. Lawrence] river."⁴⁷ It was so superior, indeed, that the small amounts exported without being ground were, like the best spring wheat of Lower Canada, in demand in the west of Scotland for blending with the soft local wheat to produce a satisfactory flour.⁴⁸

⁴⁴Ernle, *English Farming Past and Present*, pp. 210-13, 269.

⁴⁵Gray, *Letters from Canada*, pp. 200, 235-7; Bouchette, *Topographical Description of Lower Canada*, pp. 83-4.

⁴⁶Aikins, "Journal of a Journey from Sandwich to York in the Summer of 1806" (*OHSPR*, vol. VI, 1905, p. 18). A description of the inventions of Evans is given in Neftel, "Report on Flour-Milling Processes" (*Tenth Census of the United States*, vol. III, pp. 1 ff.). Descriptions of several grist-mills of the pioneer era are to be found in Guillet, *Early Life in Upper Canada*, pp. 216-31.

⁴⁷Heriot, *Travels through the Canadas*, p. 154. Cf. Boulton, *Sketch of Upper Canada*, p. 38.

⁴⁸Gray, *Letters from Canada*, p. 200.