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Livestock and Immigrant Strategies in Rural Upper Canada, 1814-1851

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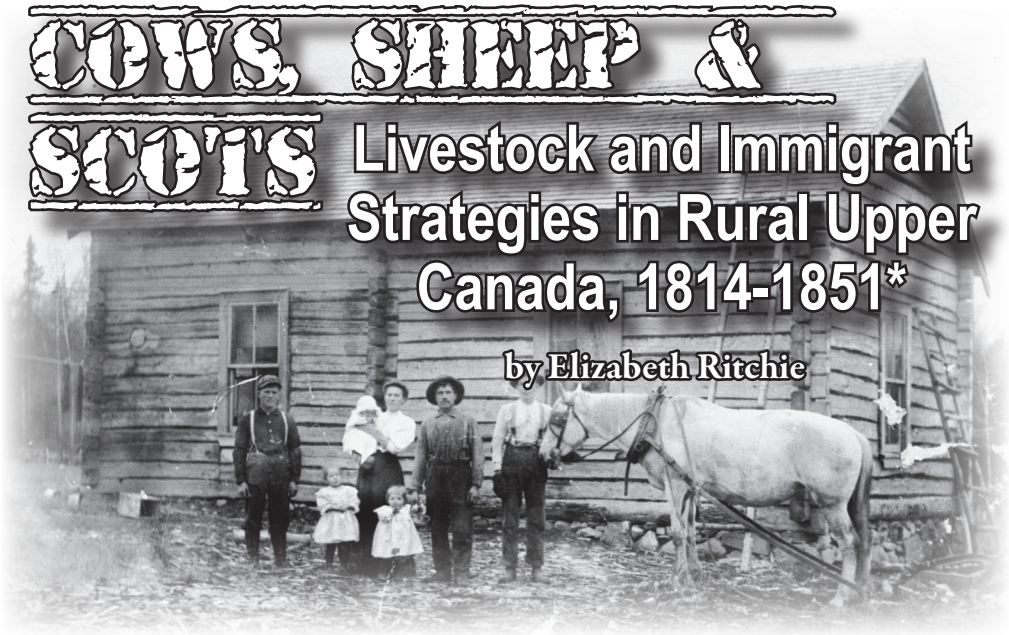
Article abstract

In the ongoing discussion of how Canada's economy developed and how the land was colonised, little attention has been paid to the role of farm animals. The strategies of Scottish immigrants to rural Upper Canada show the centrality of livestock in subsistence, in the informal economy of barter, exchange and credit, and in off-farm sales. Raising stock—particularly cattle, sheep and pigs—was not an addition to settlers' sources of income and subsistence, but underpinned most of them. Letters back to Scotland, supplemented by surveys and census data, show that animals' contribution to clearing forest, raising crops, maintaining soil, providing food and clothing, raising cash or credit, maintaining reciprocal relationships and passing on property was integral to the success of backwoods farmers as they strove first for survival, and then for comfort.



COWS, SHEEP & SCOTS

Livestock and Immigrant Strategies in Rural Upper Canada, 1814-1851*

by Elizabeth Ritchie

In 1833 John Millar was in his early fifties. Recently widowed, he left Dalton parish in southern Scotland, and emigrated with his teenage children plus two older step sons.[1] He acquired partly cleared land in the seventh concession of Edwardsburgh, Grenville County. In a few months he had established a part-time blacksmith business with his sons James and John and had stocked his farm with seven cattle and three sheep. Purchasing partly improved land and stocking it quickly shows Millar had considerable resources. He was one of the many middling sort who aspired to a secure future for himself and a secure inheritance for his children. Like most rural immigrants, Millar's strategy was varied. He was successful at smithing, but this was underpinned by the farm. He grew wheat for sale, but more crops were to feed family and livestock. Over the next twenty years livestock provided him with products for sale and for consumption, they were used for payment and barter, and their draft power improved the value and productivity of his farm.

The importance of livestock in immigration, farming and the economy has rarely been recognized by historians. With the notable exceptions of Edwin C. Guillet's descriptive survey of pioneer

*With grateful thanks to the British Academy-Leverhulme for supporting the Canadian archival research; to Claire Gill and Issie MacPhail for generously sharing their agricultural expertise; and to Doug McCalla, Catharine Wilson and the anonymous reviewer for their meticulous academic advice.

[1] The *History of Leeds and Grenville* gives his children as being Margaret, David, Jennett, and James, though this does not seem to account for them all. He died February 1859, aged 78. Thad W.H. Leavitt, *History of Leeds and Grenville* (Brockville: Recorder Press, 1879), 109-111.

Abstract

In the ongoing discussion of how Canada's economy developed and how the land was colonised, little attention has been paid to the role of farm animals. The strategies of Scottish immigrants to rural Upper Canada show the centrality of livestock in subsistence, in the informal economy of barter, exchange and credit, and in off-farm sales. Raising stock—particularly cattle, sheep and pigs—was not an addition to settlers' sources of income and subsistence, but underpinned most of them. Letters back to Scotland, supplemented by surveys and census data, show that animals' contribution to clearing forest, raising crops, maintaining soil, providing food and clothing, raising cash or credit, maintaining reciprocal relationships and passing on property was integral to the success of backwoods farmers as they strove first for survival, and then for comfort.

Résumé: *Les débats actuels sur le développement économique du Canada et la colonisation des terres n'accordent que peu d'attention au rôle joué par les animaux d'élevage. Les stratégies de subsistance des immigrants écossais dans le Haut-Canada rural démontrent l'importance du bétail dans le cadre informel de troc, de change et de crédit, et dans les ventes hors de l'exploitation agricole. L'élevage – bovin, porcin et ovin – ne constituait pas une source de revenus supplémentaire des colons, mais contribuait plutôt à l'appui de toutes les autres sources. Les lettres envoyées an Écosse, auxquelles s'ajoutent les données de recensement, démontrent que les contributions des animaux au déboisement, à la production agricole, au maintien du sol, au fournissement de nourriture et de vêtements, à l'acquisition d'argent ou de crédit, au maintien de relations de réciprocité et à la transmission de propriétés étaient essentielles à la survie des fermiers, et plus tard à leur confort.*

farming, and Catharine Wilson's investigation of agricultural practices, few historians have examined the place of livestock in rural immigrants' farming strategies.[2] J.I. Little touches on animals as he compares French and Gaelic-speaking settlers in Quebec.[3] Marianne McLean's incisive study of the Glengarry settlers examines migrants' agricultural practices in Scotland in groundbreaking detail, but the North American half focuses on land selection and settlement patterns.[4] Donald Akenson changed our understanding of immigration and the formation of rural Upper Canada, but touched only lightly on farming.[5] Most studies of migration from

[2] Edwin C. Guillet, *The Pioneer Farmer and Backwoodsman* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963, 1970); Catharine Anne Wilson, *A New Lease on Life: Landlords, Tenants, and Immigrants in Ireland and Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994); Catharine Anne Wilson, *Tenants in Time: Family Strategies, Land and Liberalism in Upper Canada, 1799-187*1 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

[3] J.I. Little, *Crofters and Habitants: Settler Society, Economy, and Culture in a Quebec Township, 1848-1881* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

[4] Marianne McLean, *The People of Glengarry: Highlanders in Transition, 1745-1820* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

[5] Donald Harman Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984, 1999).

Britain and Ireland to nineteenth-century North America explain reasons for and methods of emigration, the choice of destination, or are spatial and demographic analyses of settlement.[6] Of those who examine ethnic groups once settled, issues of identity, distinctiveness and assimilation are paramount.[7] This study of Scots does not aim to prove or disprove difference, let alone exceptionality, nor is it an "ethnic" history examining evolving self-identity. Little has demonstrated that some differences among settlers were due to cultural background, but others were due to circumstances.[8] Rather the focus on Scots reduces the range of cultural variables that might affect immigrant farming strategy. In general, Scots fit the patterns identified in the post-staples thesis literature. Douglas McCalla, with Marvin McInnis, Frank Lewis, M.C. Urquhart, David Wood, Wilson, Little and others have demonstrated that Upper Canadians did not simply export timber and wheat but created multiple items for home consumption, exchange, and for sale locally and further afield.[9] Amongst detailed studies of forest products, trade and small-scale rural industries, the role of livestock in this complex rural economy has been under-appreciated. Several historians have acknowledged their importance in passing, Wilson considering the balance of crops and livestock on tenant farms and McCalla even suggesting that animal products came close to rivalling wheat as farmers' main source of income.[10] This lacuna is of long standing even among agricultural historians: Robert Jones, examining agriculture through a commercial lens, claimed livestock was an unimportant "industry" and although Kenneth Kelly understood its importance to gentry farmers he claimed mixed farm-

[6] Bruce S. Elliott, *Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens's University Press, 1988, 2004); Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, eds, *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); T.M. Devine, ed., *Scottish Emigration and Scottish Society* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1992); J.I. Little, "From the Isle of Arran to Inverness Township: A Case Study of Highland Emigration and North American Settlement, 1829-34," *Scottish Economic and Social History* 20:1 (2000), 3-30; Barbara J. Messamore, ed., *Canadian Migration Patterns from Britain and North America* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2004).

[7] For example Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links, and Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Marjory Harper and Michael E. Vance, eds, *Myth, Migration and the Making of Memory: Scotia and Nova Scotia 1700-1990* (1999); Andrew Hinson, "Migrant Scots in a British City: Toronto's Scottish Community, 1881-1911" (PhD Diss., University of Guelph, 2010).

[8] Little, *Crofters and Habitants*, 61-74, 107, 110, 145, 153.

[9] Douglas McCalla, "The Internal Economy of Upper Canada: New Evidence on Agricultural Marketing before 1850," *Agricultural History* 59:3 (1985), 397-416; Douglas McCalla, *Planting the Province: The Economic History of Upper Canada, 1784-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 45-66; Marvin McInnis, "Marketable Surpluses in Ontario Farming, 1860," *Social Science History* 8:4 (1984), 395-424; Frank D. Lewis and M.C. Urquhart, "Growth and the Standard of Living in a Pioneer Economy: Upper Canada, 1826-1851," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 56:1 (1999), 151-181; Little, *Crofters and Habitants*, 9; Wilson, *Tenants in Time*, 168-189.

[10] Wilson, *Tenants in Time*, 168-189; McCalla, *Planting the Province*, 81.

ing was not widespread.[11] These conclusions overlook livestock's vital role in subsistence and in local trade and exchange.

Livestock were critical to pioneer farming: to the personal success or failure of immigrants and to the vast project of turning forest to farmland: the defining process of early nineteenth-century Upper Canada.[12] Scots like Millar were a key immigrant group. In 1842 they accounted for between 12.6% and 14% of the population, and most were farmers.[13] In contrast to constrained opportunities and downward mobility at home they thought, like other settlers, by acquiring land they could achieve subsistence and long-term "independence."[14] This study begins after the peace of 1814 when the arrival of Scots became significant, and ends by mid-century when immigration and population growth slowed and when Upper Canada's best agricultural land had been appropriated. This article is not a quantitative assessment of livestock in comparison with other farm products, but an examination of the vital and various roles of cattle, sheep and pigs in improving any immigrant family's chance at pioneering success.

If wheat was raised for cash, then what was the rationale behind new arrivals raising livestock and dedicating substantial quantities of hard-won agricultural land to feed crops? Letters make it possible to identify settlers' farming practices and priorities. They describe farms in detail, particularly cleared land, crop acreages and livestock numbers. In Millar's case, a run of letters illuminates a more dynamic strategy than the census can articulate. Emigrants' correspondence is frequently criticised for being persuasively rose-tinted. There is some evidence of this but for as many as extolled their new home, others refused to be responsible for friends making such a chancy life decision as emigration. Additionally, while recipients lacked the knowledge to

[11] Robert Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ontario, 1613-1880* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1946), 129; Kenneth Kelly, "Notes on a type of mixed farming practiced in Ontario during the early nineteenth century," *Canadian Geographer* 17:3 (1973), 205-219.

[12] J. David Wood, *Making Ontario: Agricultural Colonization and Landscape Re-Creation before the Railway* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000).

[13] *Censuses of Canada 1667 to 1871: Statistics of Canada Vol. IV*, (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1876), 136. The total population was 487 053, however as 27 309 did not give a place of birth the percentage of Scots from the total of those who did declare (459 744) is 8.6%. Scots were therefore almost equal with the 8.8% English-born, behind the 17% Irish-born. These figures exclude immigrants' Canadian-born children. Other groups: Americans 7.1%, 'Europeans' 1.4%, French Canadians 3%. I have used Akenson's calculations which include the Canadian-born children of settlers. Scots were similar to the English and Welsh (12.9% - 14.3%) and less than the Irish (24.9% - 27.6%). Donald Harman Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984, 1999), 17-20. Gordon Darroch and Michael D. Ornstein, "Ethnicity and Occupational Structure in Canada in 1871: The Vertical Mosaic in Historical Perspective," *Canadian Historical Review* 61:3 (1980), table 7, 326-7.

[14] McLean, *People of Glengarry*, 5; J.M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America 1770-1815* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982), xvi, 221; Michael E. Vance, "Advancement, Moral Worth, and Freedom: The Meaning of Independence for Early Nineteenth-Century Lowland Emigrants to Upper Canada," in *Nation and Province in the First British Empire: Scotland and the Americas, 1600-1800*, edited by Ned C. Landsman (London: Associated University Presses, 2001), 152.

judge forest-clearing achievements, most were experienced in pastoral and arable agriculture. The details and differences of the Canadian situation would have been debated among neighbours on farms in Scotland every time a letter arrived. While numbers gleaned from letters can only be suggestive, they show how these immigrants interpreted their migration experience and what role livestock played within their settlement strategies.

Using letters leads us to aspirational, middling sorts of settler. Writers required sufficient disposable income to purchase paper and ink, and recipients needed to pay postage. Most surviving letters demonstrate abilities beyond the elementary schooling widespread amongst Scots. There were fewer letters from Highlanders: most writers were from Perthshire, and wrote in English rather than Gaelic, demonstrating high levels of education.[15] The shortage is supplemented by the evidence of a farm diary and some wills of similarly affluent Highland settlers. There was no dichotomy between letter-writing Highland and Lowland migrants. Both tended to migrate in self-organised, self-financed parties, usually as part of interconnected family groups or following a pattern of chain migration. Combined with the internal evidence that most authors had purchased and stocked their own farm within a few years of arriving in Canada, it appears most letter-writing migrants had reasonable resources.[16] Although the main focus is on this aspirational middling sort, the livestock strategies of other Scots are considered through the inclusion of the Lanark County Lowlanders who could afford a deposit but required the help of a government supported scheme to migrate; reference to the group of assisted migrants from Lewis who settled in Quebec; and occasional snippets about squatters, innkeepers, and indentured servants. The financial and even subsistence struggles of most letter-writing settlers in the early years should not hide the reality that such Highland and Lowland families had the education, resources and expectation of becoming comfortable within a generation.

Additional information about livestock is gleaned from settlers' guides, Robert Gourlay's *Statistical Account of Canada*, and the 1842 and 1851 agricultural censuses. Guides must be used with caution. Kelly showed many were less descriptive of actual conditions than thinly disguised promotional material for improved farming based on British assumptions.[17] Many authors had no practical experience of farming, however, others

[15] Only a handful of Gaelic letters were identified. None were useful for this study.

[16] Cameron, Haines and Maude published significant collections of Upper Canadian letters from the less well-off, however most surviving evidence from letter-writing Scots farmers suggests they were the middling sort. Wendy Cameron, Sheila Haines, Mary McDougall Maude, eds, *English Immigrant Voices: Labourers' Letters From Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

[17] Kenneth Kelly, "The Transfer of British Ideas on Improved Farming to Ontario during the First Half of the 19th Century," in *Canadian History before Confederation: Essays and Interpretations*, ed. J.M. Bumsted. (Georgetown, ON: Irwin-Dorsey, 1979), 320, 322, 324, 328.

were written by men such as Robert MacDougall, whose detailed advice to Gaelic speakers demonstrated his intimacy with working Upper Canadian land. Area-specific information on average farming practices comes from Gourlay's 1817 account. While much of the publication is an outlet for Gourlay's political ideas, community leaders compiled the pertinent section. These allow regional comparisons based on climate and length of colonization. The agricultural censuses are riddled with problems, especially for 1842 when many townships are missing. Information on important aspects of a farm's economy, such as poultry and timber, was not collected and under-enumeration is endemic, particularly for livestock and for produce consumed on the farm.[18] The detailed household information, however, allows key letter-writing settlers, such as John Miller, to be assessed in his 1851 social and economic context. Overall, the results show livestock was important to those creating and developing new farms for three reasons: 1) as meat, dairy, leather and wool; 2) in improving the value and productivity of the farm through draft power and manure; 3) as a way to accumulate and pass on wealth to the next generation.

New Settlers and Livestock

New settlers tended to acquire stock quickly. How much and the types of animals depended on wealth, families' skill sets and on economic choices, such as whether to make the longer term investment in beef cattle and draft animals, or the steadier productivity of milk cows and chickens. Little discovered ethnic variation in early years of settlement, with families from the Isle of Lewis purchasing more cattle and sheep on arrival than French Canadians who prioritised horses for lumbering.[19] Farmers then developed flocks and herds strategically over the decades to fit the changing needs of the household and changing economic opportunities.

The agricultural census of 1842 shows the ubiquity of livestock. Assuming each household had 6.4 members, Upper Canadians averaged 6.66 "neat cattle" and 7.55 sheep per household.[20] In Wellington District, a rural and a recently settled area, the average was 9.79 and 8.58. In longer-settled Leeds and Lansdowne, the average was eight and thirteen.[21] In Lanark County, where mostly Scottish immigrants had settled ten to twenty-one years previously, a sample of concessions from the 1842 census emphasises the value placed on raising stock. Out of forty-three heads of households only six had no cattle or sheep. These listed their occupations as tailor, merchant, sawyer, wool-carder, miller, and one "farmer"

[18] McInnis, "Marketable Surpluses," 400-1, 413; Lewis and Urquhart, "Growth and the Standard of Living," 154.

[19] Little, *Crofters and Habitants*, 9, 51.

[20] *Censuses of Canada 1667 to 1871*, 138. "Neat cattle" were non-milk producing. Peter Baskerville calculated that in 1850 rural households had an average of 6.4 members, *Ontario: Image, Identity and Power* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press Canada, 2002), 75.

[21] Akenson, *Irish in Ontario*, 200.

who grew nothing that year. Most self-described tradesmen also kept stock and grew crops. The household average of those who kept animals was 7.2 cattle and 12.8 sheep.[22] Slight differences in proportions across Upper Canada can be explained by farmers adapting their strategies to land better or worse suited to arable or pasture, but these consistently small herds are broadly comparable with farm averages in colonial Pennsylvania of 9.6 cattle and under ten in colonial Massachusetts.[23] At the provincial, district, township and concession level, the census snapshot demonstrates livestock were critical to the economic strategies of rural dwellers, including Scottish immigrants.

Whereas the census provides a frozen image, qualitative sources reveal processes and strategies. The choices made by a group of government-sponsored immigrants to Perth County in 1815 of three Scots families, those of John Millar, John Kelly and the Campbells, as well as some advice given to potential settlers, highlights the initial economic strategies of aspiring farmers.

Twenty-three Scottish settlers, mainly from the Lowlands, were questioned by Robert Gourlay after one and after two years on their hundred-acre plots in Perth County. Considering he had political motives for his questioning and that every one of those surveyed declared themselves "well-satisfied," suggests selection, pressure or collaboration. However this does not affect how accurately they counted their stock. This group had required subsidy yet were sufficiently well-off to afford a deposit of £16 per adult male. A year after accessing their land fifteen out of twenty-three had one to three cows. A year later most had up to four. Less than a third had an ox after a year, but after two almost half had between one and four. The statistics, which do not include figures for other animals, suggest healthy growth towards meeting the needs of land and household.[24]

John Millar could afford more than his twenty-three compatriots. Independent migration was expensive and, unlike many, he did not rent, labour for someone else, or live for a season with relatives. He obtained part of lot 21, semi-cleared land, from Daniel Keeler, son of a Loyalist.[25] On top of paying for trans-Atlantic transport for the family, that first

[22] 1842 Census, First Concession, Lanark, Lanark County.

[23] Soils such as those in the Guelph series are among the best in the province, whereas the North Gower series and stony sections in, for example, Grenville County are better suited to permanent pasture. D.W. Hoffman, B.C. Matthews, R.E. Wickland, *Soil Survey of Wellington County Ontario* (Guelph, 1963), Report No. 35 of the Ontario Soil Survey, 25; B.C. Matthews, N.R. Richards, R.E. Wickland, *Soil Survey of Glengarry County Ontario* (Guelph, 1957), Report No. 24 of the Ontario Soil Survey, 54; N.R. Richards, B.C. Matthews, F.F. Morwick, *Soil Survey of Grenville County Ontario* (Guelph, 1949), Report No. 12 of the Ontario Soil Survey, 15. James Lemon, *The Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania* (Baltimore, 1972), 162; Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, "Self-Sufficiency and the Agricultural Economy of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," *William and Mary Quarterly* 41 (1989), 357-8.

[24] Robert Gourlay, *Statistical Account of Upper Canada* (London: Simpkins & Marshall, 1822), 524-6.

[25] Leavitt, *History of Leeds and Grenville*, 109-111.

year Millar either paid compensation for crops in the ground or purchased food. Then he bought stock and farm equipment. Advice on prices abounded. In 1823 a Scottish minister noted a cow was £5, a sheep ten shillings, and a horse £15.[26] Twenty years later a year's provisions cost £22 and erecting buildings and hiring labour required £50.[27] Millar's means enabled him to buy a good starter kit of livestock: oxen, three sheep, a heifer, a milk cow and a calf. Over the next two decades he expanded, particularly into beef and pork production.

Table 1: ***Millar's livestock in the first twenty years of settlement***

	Yokes of Oxen	Cow	Heifer	Calf	Other Cattle	Sheep	Horse	Pigs
1834	1	1	1	3		3		6
1837					4	11	2	10
1842	1	6			some	some	4	8[28]
1846		6	6 in calf	3	2	20	6	7
1847		8[29]			3	20	8	
1851	2[30]	6	10			18	6	4
1853		10						
1854		15 in calf						

With the exception of the census year, 1851, the table is drawn from his letters home and indicates the size and balance of the herds and flocks developed by a fairly well-off new farmer who purchased good quality land.[31] By the late 1840s his retirement strategy involved farming closely with a son and son-in-law so there Table 1 shows an underestimate, including only stock clearly attributed to him personally. Millar is somewhat inconsistent in his accounting; it is likely that in 1837 he also possessed a yoke of oxen and a milk cow. Millar's concern to establish a mixed herd on his new land was typical.

Another experienced farmer was John Kelly. He brought £62 in his pocket from Scotland and took possession of uncleared land in North Easthope, Perth County. After approximately ten years he

[26] William Bell, *Hints to Emigrants in a Series of Letters from Upper Canada* (Edinburgh: Waugh & Innes, 1824), 77.

[27] Journal and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture of Upper Canada for 1855-6, 371 cited in Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ontario*, 67.

[28] These were substantial beasts, described as "of the best breeds" and weighing 20-30 stone each.

[29] By 1847 it is unclear to which household some animals belong as he passed on the farm to his son and son in law. I have therefore included only minimum numbers to avoid exaggeration. Libraries and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), R4416-0-9-E, John Millar and Family Collection, John Millar to James Millar, 10 July 1847.

[30] The census conflates bulls, oxen and steers. He had four beasts in this category which I have noted here as 2 yoke of oxen.

[31] LAC, R4416-0-9-E, John Millar and Family Collection, John Millar to James Millar, 14 November 1834. The soil was mixed sand with loam on a clay bottom. Richards et al, *Soil Survey of Grenville County*, 22-3.

had more than basic stock: one yoke of oxen, three young yokes, three cows, three young cattle, fourteen sheep, about eight hogs, "upwards of twenty hens, geese, and goslings, two dogs and one cat," plus two horses and a colt which he presumably kept in his "very large log barn" along with his wagon, plough, harrows and sleigh.[32] He was a particularly successful farmer and having a variety of livestock and poultry, carefully developed for multiple purposes, was a priority for Kelly, just as it was for Millar.

Even those who immigrated with few resources and were unable to instantly purchase a selection of animals found livestock critical in their plan for success. They usually started with a milk cow and cheaper animals like poultry, pigs or sheep. The Campbells, who obtained their land for free, focused on sheep, possibly because they were cheaper than cattle. After sixteen years they had forty sheep and five cows on their partially cleared farm by the Lake Erie road. Part of their economic strategy was running Campbell's Inn in a log-hut beside their cattle-shed. One customer was disparaging about their troop of barefoot children and non-committal about the fare of milk and corn cakes but, due to their stock, acknowledged that, "notwithstanding their wretched appearance, [they] might be considered prosperous."[33] The importance of livestock to poorer settlers is underscored by indentures signed by parents. Some poorer Scots were advised that in exchange for nine years of a son's labour from about the age of ten, an employer would feed, clothe and educate him then provide "some suits of clothes, a yoke of oxen and a cow."[34] For a boy to become an independent farmer, he needed decent clothes, but most importantly he needed working oxen and a milk cow.

To show the continual importance of stock for immigrants from settlement onwards, figures for twenty families have been extracted from letters and memoirs and assessed alongside the twenty-three settlers from Lanarkshire recorded by Robert Gourlay.

Because this information is taken from letters that were never intended as quantitative surveys, it is likely stock is underestimated. This is particularly the case with long-settled farmers where figures may capture the winding down of their operation. Farms also had higher stocking levels in summer than in winter when feed and barn space were at a premium. The figures cited by William Richardson, Henry Scott and the McNaughtons are of overwintering stock. Other figures are taken from letters written in the summer or from a source with no precise date. Additionally the writers each account for their stock a little differ-

[32] National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), 1968.211(10), *The Life of a Backwoodsman; or particulars of the emigrant's situation in settling on the wild land of Canada* (London: Marchant Singer and Co., 1843), 27-8.

[33] Anna Jameson, *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1839; Toronto: McClelland-Stewart, 1990), 289.

[34] NLS, RB.s.956 (a), *Counsel for Emigrants containing interesting information from numerous sources with original letters from Canada and the United States* (Aberdeen: John Mathison, 1834), 126.

Table 2: *Livestock on selected farms, arranged by years settled*

Years settled	Date	Name	Region of origin	Upper Canadian County	Horse[35]	Cattle[36]	Pig	Sheep[37]
>1	c.1830	JG[38]	unknown	Middlesex	0	6	12	0
>1	1833	"millwright"[39]	Aberdeen	Oxford	0	5	1	3
>1	1834	Archibald & Elizabeth Dickson[40]	Roxburgh	Huron	0	5	0	0
c.1	1843	William & Barbara Webster[41]	Aberdeen-shire	York	0	1	1	0
c. 1	1849	William Richardson[42]	Perthshire	Carleton	1	2	0	yes
c.1	1835	Robert & Margaret Scott[43]	Roxburgh	Stormont	0	4	3	0
4	1817	David Wallace[44]	probably southern Scotland	Elgin	0	4	?	0
2-6	1834	Henry Scott[45]	Roxburgh	Middlesex	1	12	3	16
6	1830	"a settler"[46]	unknown	Wellington	2	30	30	62
6	1830	Malcolm, Peggy, John McNaughton[47]	Highland Perthshire	Halton	0	20	0	25
7	1831	Malcolm, Peggy, John McNaughton[48]	Highland Perthshire	Halton	0	11	0	25
7	1841	Scott family[49]	Roxburgh	Oxford	0	7	0	6
9	1842	John Crerar[50]	Highland Perthshire	Perth	2	21	18	29
9	1842	Robert Fraser[51]	Highland Perthshire	Perth	2	28	40	50
c.9	1843	John Kelly[52]	Lothian	Perth	2	11	8	14
10	1842	John Stewart[53]	Highland Perthshire	Perth	2	25	0	46
c.10		Agnes Grieve[54]	Roxburgh	Stormont	0	11	yes	10
16	1836	Campbell family[55]	Probably Argyll	Elgin	0	5	0	40
17	1837	John MacIntyre[56]	Argyll	Lanark	1	8	0	16
18	1837	James & Nancy Smibert[57]	Peebles-shire	Wentworth	2	5	yes	40+
15-20	Early 1850s	Robert & Margaret Scott[58]	Roxburgh	Stormont	0	3	0	20
c.40	1846	Angus Cattanach[59]	Probably Lochaber	Lancaster	yes	20	>10	48

ently, one perhaps including calves when another did not. Obvious discrepancies have been noted.

Such figures, however statistically wanting, indicate how a range of settlers used livestock strategically from arrival through to years of consolidation and security. Longer established farmers

[35] Excludes colts.

[36] Includes any variety e.g. milk, oxen but excludes calves. In the case of Robert and Margaret Scott in 1835 it includes the pair of oxen they were borrowing.

[37] Letters frequently enumerate sheep then add x were killed by the wolf in the winter. When this happens I include those killed, as it gives a better sense of the farmer's stocking intentions. Excludes lambs.

[38] NLS, RB.s.956 (b), *Sequel to the Counsel for Emigrants*, 60. JG is a wealthy man who is buying partially cleared land at least two locations.

[39] NLS, RB.s.956 (a), *Counsel for Emigrants*, 33-4.

[40] Provincial Archives of Ontario (hereafter PAO), F496, Scott Family Letters, Mrs Archibald Dickson to James Turnbull, 29 September 1834.

[41] Aberdeen University Special Collections (hereafter AUSC), MS2844, Webster to Webster, June 1843.

[42] A. K. Bell Library, MS31/Bundle1, William Richardson to William Imrie, 21 March 1849. Richardson bought a partially cleared farm. With thanks to Paul Baxendale for pointing me to this source.

[43] PAO, F496, Scott Family Letters, Robert Scott to Joseph Scott, 24 August 1835.

[44] Gourlay, *Statistical Account*, 352-3. His origin is judged from the name and his former occupation as a weaver.

[45] NLS, Henry Scott to James Scott, 8 March 1837.

[46] NLS, RB.s.956 (a), *Counsel for Emigrants*, 92. It is unclear whether the 62 is only adult sheep or includes lambs.

[47] PAO, F555, MU1979, Malcolm McNaughton Papers, Malcolm McNaughton to John McNaughton, 2 August 1830. The stock enumerated were those overwintered in 1829-30.

[48] The stock the McNaughtons intended to overwinter in 1830-31.

[49] NRS, GD1/813/3, Isabell Scott to Mrs Redford, 16 April 1841. The Scotts were clearing land extraordinarily fast, presumably through hiring men.

[50] "Letters Collected by the Canada Company to Encourage Emigration, 1842," Fisher Family from Aberfeldy, accessed 19 March 2014, <http://www.fisherfamily.me.uk/history/canada.html>.

[51] *Ibid*.

[52] NLS, 1968.211(10), *Life of a Backwoodsman*, 27-8.

[53] *Ibid*.

[54] PAO, F496, Scott Family Letters, Agnes Grieve to Joseph Scott, 6 June 1844. Pigs were not enumerated.

[55] Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 289.

[56] Wellington County Archives (hereafter WCA), 2004 A2044.88, John MacIntyre to Archibald McCorkindale, 9 May 1837; Michael E. Vance, *Imperial Immigrants: Scottish Settlers in the Upper Ottawa Valley, 1815-40* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2012), 216.

[57] University of Guelph Archives (hereafter UGA), cutting from *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 292, 2 September 1837, 252.

[58] PAO, F496, Scott Family Letters, Robert Scott to Joseph Scott and Robert Black Scott, early 1850s. These are the same Scotts enumerated in 1835 but they were elderly by the 1850s, letting out their land on a sharecropping agreement and keeping only 3 cows and about a score of sheep. Between these dates they presumably kept more stock including a grey mare.

[59] PAO, Cattanach Family Papers, F512, B293926, Diary, 19 May 1846.

with more cattle were probably developing their reputation as breeders, expertise for which Scots became well-known later that century.[60] There is also a correlation between larger herds and the ownership of horses, indicating greater wealth. Gourlay's twenty-three "well satisfied" settlers to Perth County and letter-writing settlers had little stock in the early years. The exceptions are from letters published in settlers' guides. Five to ten years after settlement Fraser, Stewart and Crerar had unusually large herds. These men were part of an initial wave of settlers from Glen Quaich to North Easthope in 1833. Their correspondence appears in a promotional leaflet for the Canada Land Company, suggesting they were exemplary rather than typical. Their livestock strategy is discussed below. The McNaughtons of Halton County hailed from Glen Lyon, twenty miles from Glen Quaich. Although the McNaughtons had been settled for less time, their private letters indicate they were overwintering only slightly fewer cattle and sheep. These northern Perthshire families challenge the popular stereotype of Highland migrants.[61] They provide a strong contrast with their better-known impoverished Highland compatriots who rarely got beyond the slums of Quebec, Montreal or Hamilton. As Alan MacNeil has shown for Nova Scotia, the probability of success was due to resources, opportunities and circumstances, not cultural background.[62] Whether immigrants brought significant capital like Millar and Kelly from Perthshire, laboured hard for a moderate subsistence like the Campbells, or gained their first beasts through fulfilling an indenture, a growing herd was fitted to the requirements and the skills of the household. James Henretta has pointed out that immediate profit was less important than yearly subsistence and long-term security for farm families, so what attributes did horses, cattle, sheep and pigs have which made them a priority?[63]

The Products of Livestock

Despite the ongoing myth of pioneer self-sufficiency, evidence from across eastern North America shows how integrated early settlers were into the market.[64] Livestock were a critical part of that. Henretta has argued that farmers sold their excess, once subsistence needs were met.[65] McInnis proved that by 1860 most Upper Canadian farm families pro-

[60] Margaret Derry, *Ontario's Cattle Kingdom: Purebred Breeders and their World, 1870-1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 18.

[61] The four Highlanders in Gourlay's survey were also from Perthshire and were moderately well-off being able to pay £16 per adult male, with previous occupations of farmer, farm grieve (manager) and weaver. Gourlay, *Statistical Account*, 524.

[62] Alan R. MacNeil, "Cultural Stereotypes and Highland Farming in Eastern Nova Scotia, 1827-1861," *Histoire Sociale-Social History* 29:37 (1986), 52.

[63] James A. Henretta, "Families and Farms: Mentalité in Pre-Industrial America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35:1 (1978), 19.

[64] Allan Smith, "The Myth of the Self-made Man in English Canada, 1850-1914," *Canadian Historical Review* 59:2 (1978), 212.

[65] Henretta, "Families and Farms," 12.

duced a surplus, although few of these were big.[66] Settlers needed money from the outset. They therefore produced cash products such as potash, wheat, cloth or timber—and dairy. It took ten to fifteen years for a farm to become capable of self-sufficiency, however this was not necessarily the aim. Béatrice Craig found that New Brunswick families strove neither to be totally self-sufficient nor purely commercial. Rather they desired a "competency" in which goods were produced and purchased strategically, depending on abilities and financial calculations.[67] Animals provided many items required for competency: milk, meat, eggs, wool, leather, tallow, and a cash income.

Meat was part of the settler diet, but Lewis and Urquhart's suggestion that Upper Canadians ate much beef seems questionable for new settlers.[68] John and Charlotte Carnegie were from modestly prosperous families in the Scottish Borders. They expended most of their resources in migrating and setting up a new farm. After a few years they made economies, letting go of the man hired to help with logging and farming, and the servant who did dairy work and household tasks. John found "fresh mutton or beef in my present circumstances is altogether out of the question."[69] The Carnegies were unaccustomed to the plain fare of potatoes, milk and meal common to the poorer strata of Scottish society and to Canadian settlers in the first few years.[70] In his letters John repeatedly mentions his limited diet based on salt pork. In spring and summer of 1834 they apparently ate little else, with the occasional exception of a lamb, some calf's feet he bought for soup, a deer he shot and the results of occasional fishing trips.[71]

Eating pork or wild game was common. Catharine Parr Traill devoted nine pages of her *Female Emigrant's Guide* to cooking pigeons, squirrels, fish and the like.[72] Pork was common as pigs were cheap to buy and feed.[73] The largely self-sufficient and free-ranging hogs were described by one commentator as a cross between an alligator and a giraffe, with

[66] McInnis, "Marketable Surpluses," 407, 412.

[67] Béatrice Craig, *Backwoods Consumers and Homespun Capitalists: The Rise of a Market Culture in Eastern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 153, 167, 171, 176.

[68] Lewis and Urquhart, "Growth and the Standard of Living," 160. They make this point due to low exports of beef, not considering internal sale and exchange systems.

[69] PAO, Carnegie Family Fonds, John Carnegie jr to John Carnegie, 4 July 1834.

[70] This diet of ordinary Scots in the 1830s and 1840s was supplemented by fish, kale, turnip or cabbage depending on region. Meat was occasionally eaten on holidays. *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, Vol.7: 387; Vol.14: 21, 59, 83, 123, 308, 347; Vol. 15: 59, 94. Joseph Pickering mentioned bread, potatoes, dairy and 'perhaps some meat' when he travelled through Upper Canada in 1826. Guillet, *The Pioneer Farmer and Backwoodsman*, 74, 82.

[71] PAO, Carnegie Family Fonds, John Carnegie jr to John Carnegie, 30 August 1834.

[72] Catharine Parr Traill, *The Female Emigrant's Guide, and Hints on Canadian Housekeeping* (Toronto: MacLear & Co, 1854), 154-162.

[73] Robert MacDougall, *Ceann-Iuil an Fhir Imrich* or *The Emigrant's Guide to North America* (1841) edited by Elizabeth Thompson (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 1998), 105.

the snout of the former and the legs of the latter.[74] Indeed McInnis shows commercial pork production was low on the frontier, so most pigs were for home consumption. Farmers crossbred these creatures into the heavy pigs that were so productive for settlers like John Millar. Sheep were primarily raised for wool, but would have been turned into dinner once their productive years were over.[75]

The middling sort of immigrant appears to have raised cattle for slaughter and sale as well as subsistence. According to their letters even those settled less than five years kept more cattle than necessary for the family's dairy needs. Butchering time was November, before winter feeding became a challenge. The resulting offal and offcuts were served up to family and neighbours. Adam Fergusson enjoyed Mrs Dunwoodie's "excellent sheeps head broth" washed down with her husband's whisky.[76] More profit was made by preserving and selling, rather than eating, the prime cuts of meat. Salting was common, but one guide advised exposing beef to the "frost for a short time, when it becomes hard as ice [then] boxed with snow."[77] Alternatively animals could be sold on the hoof to butchers or drovers to supply towns and the winter lumbering camps. Even twenty years after migrating from Lewis to Winslow County, Quebec, most Scots marketed fewer than four cattle each year.[78] How the Millars integrated commercial meat production into their farm strategy is discussed below. McInnis has investigated meat consumption by Upper Canadians in detail, however for new settlers it is likely much was in the form of wild animals, pork, chicken, mutton or offal rather than prime cuts of beef.[79] Animals were essential for keeping the farm family fed, but a significant element of this was dairy.

Most Scots were accustomed to having a cow, and many women were accomplished at dairying. If they could afford the initial outlay, it provided nourishing food and a saleable product while saving money. A milk cow was so essential that new arrivals were advised to buy one immediately.[80] When John Stewart from Glen Quaich arrived with eight other families at North Easthope in September 1832 he did exactly this. His cow gave milk until spring, when he bought another along with a yoke of oxen.[81] Wil-

[74] J.F. Johnston quoted in Craig, *Backwoods Consumers*, 146, 149.

[75] McInnis, "Marketable Surpluses," 405, 414.

[76] WCA, Wellington County Memoirs, John MacIntyre, citing Adam Fergusson's published account, 57.

[77] NLS, AB.1.79.210, *Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, etc: with the history, present state, and prospects of those colonies in regard to emigration* (London: Cradock and Co., 1843), 15.

[78] Little, *Crofters and Habitants*, 139.

[79] McInnis calculated the average adult male's yearly diet as approximating 7 bushels wheat, 1 bushel of potatoes, 62.5lbs beef, 95lbs pork, 20lbs mutton, 52lbs butter, cheese, and milk. McInnis, "Marketable Surpluses," 405.

[80] NLS, 1968.211(10), *Life of a Backwoodsman*, 15.

[81] "Letters Collected by the Canada Company to Encourage Emigration, 1842," <http://www.fisher-family.me.uk/history/canada.html>.

liam and Barbara Webster were unable to buy stock immediately, but were pleased when they did invest in a six-year-old cow as they had missed having milk.[82] Charlotte Carnegie took on milking when she let her "girl" go, although John worried that "she is not very good at it."[83] It is also likely some settlers milked their ewes. This was common in Lowland Scotland until about 1820 when improving farmers decided it was not worth the resulting loss of condition in the animals, but it continued in the Highlands.[84] Whether sheep were milked or not, a good dairywoman was fundamental to a farm's food supply, its profitability and its diversification.[85] The *Skilful Housewife's Guide* maintained there was "no article of family consumption more in use ... and the economizing of which is more necessary, than [butter]."[86]

Dairy production was vital to the subsistence of a farm and for off-farm sales. One woman earned half the milk of a man's cow by milking it for him, earning her family a small supply without the expense of keeping her own.[87] As well as providing for the family, surplus could be exchanged, pay off debts, earn credit at the store or be sold for cash, especially if the farm was close to a town. Traill maintained "an excellent market can always be obtained" for rich cheese at 7½d per pound and inferior cheese at 5d.[88] In Upper Canada John B's grazing farm was commercially successful largely because his wife's dairying abilities enabled them to ship butter and cheese from Port Stanley.[89] Producing large amounts or good quality dairy was more difficult for settlers with little land cleared as they lacked pasture.[90] Commercial dairying, defined by McInnis as having at least six milk cows, was a feature of longer-settled and larger farms.[91] Most farmers, however, participated in smaller scale exchanges or sales. Anne Menzies, from Breadalbane in the southern Highlands, was brought up in North Easthope. One of her childhood jobs was to walk "six miles

[82] AUSC, MS2844, William Webster to James Webster, June 1843.

[83] PAO, Carnegie Family Fonds, John Carnegie to George Carnegie, 7 June 1836.

[84] Michael Robson, "The Border Farm Worker" in *Farm Servants and Labour in Lowland Scotland 1770-1914*, edited by T.M. Devine (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1984), 90; I.F. Grant, *Highland Folk Ways* (London: Routledge, 1961), 79.

[85] Over the border in Lachine, Lower Canada, Mrs Cameron paid the farm's rent in their first year from her butter sales. National Records of Scotland (hereafter NRS), GD202/70/12, John Cameron to Ewan Cameron, 12 October 1805; R.H. Campbell, 'Agricultural Labour in the South-West' in *Farm Servants and Labour*, 66; Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 150, 156, 158.

[86] Anon, *The Skilful Housewife's Guide: A Book of Domestic Cookery* (Montreal: Armour and Ramsay, 1848), 118.

[87] NLS, RB.s.956 (a), *Counsel for Emigrants*, 115.

[88] Traill, *Female Emigrant's Guide,* 185.

[89] John B's full name is not given and his ethnicity is uncertain, although he is almost certainly of British origin. Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 289.

[90] Guillet, *The Pioneer Farmer and Backwoodsman*, 249-250.

[91] McInnis, "Marketable Surpluses," 414-5.

to Stratford market, carrying my basket of eggs and pail of butter."[92] With a sufficient herd and an experienced woman, dairy could contribute substantially to a farm's surplus.

Sheep were not primarily for food but for wool.[93] Some immigrants immediately purchased a small flock but many waited, having brought enough clothing from the old country to last a few years. This saved capital and in those hectic early years it saved time, which could be devoted to more urgent tasks than wool processing. Table 2 shows that the Scott family purchased six ewes the first fall they were in Oxford County, and that less than a year after arriving in Zorra an Aberdeen family acquired three. A year after immigrating, John Carnegie looked for a few sheep to begin his flock.[94] The table suggests that after six to ten years, farmers had usually built up their flock to about fifteen if for family use, or as many as 40-60 for those operating more commercially. Commercially oriented settlers agreed "sheep were the most profitable stock a farmer can keep in this country" particularly as breeding for wool became more widespread in the 1820s.[95] Alexander Brown was from Galloway so was well acquainted with shepherding techniques. He crossbred Cheviots and Merinos to mix the hardiness of one with the fine wool of the other, and maintained he could typically sell 3lbs of quality wool from each annually.[96] In Lancaster County Angus Cattanach obtained up to 3.7lbs of wool from each of his thirty-six sheep, while Edward Talbot in the southwest expected 2.5lbs.[97] Others operated on a smaller scale, keeping household expenses low by processing their own wool.[98] In Upper Canada tailors were expensive but cold winters meant hardy wool-blended clothing and blankets were vital.[99] Many Scotswomen turned to making their own. William Thomson, a Scottish textile worker, found handloom weaving was widespread in the early 1840s.[100] Everyone wore some homespun and levels of cloth production did not decline until after 1850.[101]

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[92] "Letters Collected by the Canada Company to Encourage Emigration, 1842," <http://www.fisher-family.me.uk/history/canada.html>.

[93] Canadians were not noted for their consumption of mutton. The British background of many residents suggests a heavy consumption of milk. McInnis, "Marketable Surpluses," 404-405.

[94] PAO, Carnegie Family Fonds, Carnegie to Carnegie, 4 July 1834.

[95] Gourlay, *Statistical Account*, 170.

[96] "Sheep Farming in Canada," *Colonial Advocate*, Thursday 3 June 1824, electricscotland, accessed 4 February 2014, <http://www.electricscotland.com/History/canada/sheep_farming.htm>.

[97] PAO, Cattanach Family Papers, F512, B293926, Diary, May 23 1844; Edward Allen Talbot, *Five Years' Residence in the Canadas: including a tour through part of the United States of America, in the year 1823*, Vol. I (London: Longman, 1824), 179.

[98] Examples abound in the *Old Statistical Account for Scotland*.

[99] Kris Inwood and Phyllis Wagg, "The Survival of Handloom Weaving in Rural Canada Circa 1870," *The Journal of Economic History* 53:2 (1993), 353.

[100] William Thomson, *A Tradesman's Travels* (Edinburgh, 1842), 129.

[101] Craig, *Backwoods Consumers*, 182.

People did not produce their own cloth out of poverty; indeed Craig has found that it was on medium surplus farms that most was produced, up to 250% of what was required by a typical family.[102] Wool production was undertaken to supply the family and to take advantage of a market opportunity.[103] In New Brunswick wool producers were not necessarily the cloth producers.[104] This is echoed in the 1851 census snapshot of Edwardsburgh Township where John Millar lived. All fifty households enumerated on the same page as the Millars produced wool, from 4 to 62lbs. Yet only three, including the Millars' 75lbs, the largest quantity, were marked as "sold." The Millars produced no fulled cloth.[105] Presumably the other forty-seven households spun and wove their own wool, or exchanged with neighbours.

The primary strategy of sheep rearing was to produce wool. Greatest profit could be extracted by processing rather than simply selling the wool. This involved multiple skilled and unskilled tasks. James Smibert had been a master weaver in Innerleithen, in the Scottish Borders. He was one of a generation of professional, male Scottish weavers who used their skill to finance their Canadian farming experiment during the economic collapse following the Napoleonic Wars. He and Nancy invested in a flock that they grazed in the woods at minimal cost, absorbing occasional wolf-related losses. In sparsely populated regions wolves were a disincentive to sheep-keeping; in Esquesing the McNaughtons from Glen Lyon were not unusual in losing seven of their flock of twenty-five while they were grazing in the field in broad daylight.[106] Sheep needed to be kept safe, sheltered from the weather, fed through the winter, and lambed in the springtime. Then shearing and processing the wool began.[107] Shearing was sometimes done communally which made the labour of washing the fleece, separating the soiled parts, laying them out to dry, greasing them, then rolling and stacking the bundles, more sociable and fun. After harvest, women and children sorted and picked the wool clean of seeds and burrs, then carded. Spinning was work that could easily be interrupted by the demands of babies, animals and household labour. Many unmarried and elderly women spun to earn money to pay for their keep.[108] Wilson found that more sheep were likely to be

[102] *Ibid*, 182, 193, 196.

[103] Inwood and Wagg, "Survival of Handloom Weaving," 347.

[104] Craig, *Backwoods Consumers*, 182, 184.

[105] 1851 census, Edwardsburgh Township, Grenville County, 159.

[106] PAO, F555, MU1979, Malcolm McNaughton Papers, McNaughton to McNaughton, 2 August 1830.

[107] "Sheep Farming in Canada," <http://www.electricscotland.com/History/canada/sheep_farming.htm>. The little evidence we have of when Scots settlers sheared ranges from May to July. LAC, R2950-0-3-E, MG24-I184, Archibald MacKechnie Diary, 23-24 May 1840; Middleville and District Museum (hereafter MDM), Reference No 122.86, George Easton Diary, 30 July 1837.

[108] Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston, Toronto, 1980), 13-14; Traill, *Female Emigrant's Guide*, 172.

found in households with many older children.[109] Indeed Traill suggested a large family of girls who could spin on the large wheel was a "decided advantage" as homespun cloth was cheap and durable.[110] Presumably in the Smibert household Nancy performed or co-ordinated these tasks. James constructed a loom and took on the weaving operation. In Scotland weaving was a masculine task. By the 1850s in Canada there were still male weavers but it was more common for women to use the skill to make a good living in the backwoods.[111] Some wove their own and others bought wool from neighbours or wove on shares.[112] The produce of the Smibert household was fulled, dyed, and dressed at a local mill. Others dyed their own. Carding mills and factory-made warp sped up the process and made cloth production more attractive.[113] Nancy made James "coarse cloth trousers, waistcoat, and surtout, of home manufacture, dyed a dark reddish brown by the produce of the butternut tree, and ornamented with well worn brass buttons."[114] The rest of the fabric was sold to neighbours and the Smiberts pocketed as much as two dollars a day.[115] Although James took the credit for cloth manufacture, it was the family's ability to keep most elements of cloth production in-house through Nancy's skilled labour and the unskilled labour of the children that enabled them to clothe the family and to make a significant profit from their small flock. The prevalence of sheep on a farm frequently reflected special skills within the household and a family large enough to process wool.

Cattle and sheep were also the source of vital by-products such as leather and tallow. Highland evidence suggests some ordinary farmers had experience in tanning and making leather goods.[116] For those who did not, producing raw materials kept down the costs of processing and craftsmanship. The Millars exchanged hides for dressed leather, presumably with the local tanner, which was then used by the bootmaker to make the family's footwear. Sheepskin and calfskin

[109] Wilson, *New Lease on Life*, 183.

[110] Traill, *Female Emigrant's Guide,* 172.

[111] Dorothy Burnham and Kris Inwood have debated how weaving was gendered. Wilson and Craig found it a female task in Upper Canada and New Brunswick. Wilson, *New Lease on Life*, 180; Craig, *Backwoods Consumers*, 193, 196. There may have been a shift or Scots may have been unusual due to the advanced state of their industrial sector. It is likely that the second generation trained in response to the profitability of weaving measured against other occupations available to men and women.

[112] Traill, *Female Emigrant's Guide,* 177.

[113] Inwood and Wagg, "Survival of Handloom Weaving," 347.

[114] *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal* 6.292, 2 September 1837, 252.

[115] This compares favourably with the good level of income of $1.40 earned by Madawaska weavers. Craig, *Backwoods Consumers*, 192. It is possible Smibert was exaggerating, that there was heightened demand in a region undergoing the initial experience of settlement, or that Smibert's professional work was exceptionally good.

[116] Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, Journey to the Hebrides (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1785, 1996), 389.

could be exchanged for tinware from pedlars.[117] Grease, lard and tallow were also important. Lard was for cooking but could also be sold to town dwellers.[118] "Careful Canadian housewives" procured "a large portion of their soap-grease from the inside, and entrails of ... beasts that are killed on the farm."[119] It had to be boiled then mixed with lye from the ashes of hardwoods felled on the farm to make soap. For candlemaking, the tallow had to be "clean" and "well strained."[120] It could also be sold, in the Millars' case for five to six pence per pound.[121] Poorer backwoods emigrants used a cup of tallow with a wick. Livestock were as vital for the commercial as for the subsistence part of a farm's "competency."

Livestock and their products were also a form of currency for obtaining items from each other, from new arrivals, and from the general store. The store as a source of credit and a place of exchange has been thoroughly explored by McCalla, but exchange between neighbours, and between established farmers and recent immigrants was also common.[122] Many letters home included lists of items that could operate as currency. While Upper Canada's was not a barter economy, cash was often scarce, as in other settler colonies and non-metropolitan parts of Britain.[123] Some wages, such as those of preachers, were mainly paid in produce.[124] It was well-known in Scotland that items which were rare or expensive in Upper Canada such as fabric, clothing, watches or schoolbooks could be imported for profit. A settler in Zorra noted these could be purchased with "grain and cattle, sheep and hogs."[125]

Some new farmers took advantage of the immigrant market. Fraser, Stewart and Crerar from Highland Perthshire settled in North Easthope in 1833, just as the area was being opened up. McInnis identified proximity to major transport arteries as a key determinant for producing a surplus.[126] Being almost a week's journey by ox-cart from the trading centre of Galt, the area was too distant for profitable wheat production. They had, however, established themselves on the major north-west route where a ready market

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[117] Traill, *Female Emigrant's Guide,* 171.

[118] *Ibid,* 151.

[119] *Ibid,* 163.

[120] *Ibid,* 168.

[121] LAC, R4416-0-9-E, John Millar and Family Collection, John Millar to James Millar, 23 November 1843.

[122] McCalla, "The Internal Economy of Upper Canada," 407, 415; Douglas McCalla, "Retailing in the Countryside: Upper Canadian General Stores in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Business and Economic History* 26:2 (1997), 393-403; Craig, *Backwoods Consumers*, 153; Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ontario*, 39, 46.

[123] McCalla, "The Internal Economy of Upper Canada," 401, 407. Many rural Scots were part-paid in kind (produce, fuel, access to land, accommodation, services etc) through the nineteenth century.

[124] John McLaurin to John Scott, 5 July 1825, quoted in Baskerville, *Ontario*, 70.

[125] NLS, RB.s.956 (a), *Counsel for Emigrants*, 63.

[126] McInnis, "Marketable Surpluses," 397.

existed of new arrivals needing to buy livestock.[127] This explains why each had over twenty cattle, as well as Fraser's many pigs and sheep. By 1841 two of the men were sufficiently substantial citizens that they had reinforced the thin ranks of the other three voters in the township.[128] In this way new arrivals obtained livestock to start their farm, and the constant flow of settlers provided a way for established farmers to profit through rearing animals, and to acquire cash or manufactured goods.

Middling farmers used livestock for complicated and opportunistic transactions. The binary of subsistence/commercial is inadequate for explaining the role of animals for farming immigrants. John Millar's use of livestock fits Bettye Hobbs-Pruitt's concept of interdependence in rural communities.[129] The 1851 census suggests Millar operated commercially, producing 550cwts of beef and 1874cwts of pork.[130] When compared with the sample of fifty entries on the same census page, only seven others produced over 300cwts of beef, with one topping 900. Eighty-six percent of those farms barrelled pork, although most averaged far less than him, at 150-450cwts. Millar's crop choices for his fifty cleared acres were oriented to feeding livestock. One hundred and fifty eight acres of woodland could partly feed pigs and cattle, and twenty was pasture.[131] His eleven acres of oats, two of potatoes and one of peas also contributed to the feeding regime. He also had 1.5 acres under buckwheat with four for wheat, the cash crop. Census and letters concur in emphasising Millar's focus on dealing in animals for profit. Millar was not just engaged in straightforward rearing of beef for sale or for the table. Rather he had spun a web of sales and exchanges with farmers and tradesmen. In 1842 the Millars sold a four-year-old horse for $70 "to be paid in cash ten months' credit." When he bought another he "paid her with cows which is a common way of trade here, there being few fairs and money not in circulation." Additionally he received "two cows in payment for work."[132] The Millars used cattle as currency, a form of commercialising agriculture not readily apparent in quantitative sources. They added value to their stock by processing. By that November they decided their yoke of oxen would be more profitable as beef than as working animals. Despite the expense of winter feeding, they kept the beasts until spring, anticipating a rise in

[127] William Johnston, *A History of the County of Perth* (Stratford: O'Beirne, 1903), 301.

[128] *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Perth* (Toronto: H. Belden & Co, 1879), xv.

[129] Pruitt, "Self-Sufficiency," 348. This has been developed for other aspects of the Canadian context in, for example, Douglas McCalla, "A World without Chocolate: Grocery Purchases at Some Upper Canadian Country Stores, 1808-61," *Agricultural History* 79 (2005), 168; T.W. Acheson, "New Brunswick agriculture at the end of the colonial era: a reassessment," *Acadiensis* 22:2 (1993), 8; Craig, *Backwoods Consumers*, 153.

[130] The census asks for barrels or hundredweights. 1851 census, Edwardsburgh Township, Grenville County, 211.

[131] Elizabeth Ritchie, "Feeding in the forest: How Scottish settlers learned to raise livestock in the old growth forests of Upper Canada, 1814-1850," *The Agricultural History Review* (2017).

[132] LAC, R4416-0-9-E, John Millar and Family Collection, John Millar to James Millar, 1 June 1842.

beef prices.[133] A year later Millar had nine or ten head of cattle. Some they sold alive and others were slaughtered at a value of $2 to $2.50 per 100lb. Along with almost 1200cwt of pork, the meat was barrelled up. There was little demand in November, but the Millars waited for the winter lumber camps and people's winter supplies to run low. They kept a close eye on the market and carefully chose when to sell.[134] Like mid-century farm families in New Brunswick, the Millars derived a growing proportion of their income by responding to markets and selling surpluses produced from agricultural specialization.[135] They also used products from live cattle for store credit. In November 1843 butter was selling at the rate of 6d per pound at the store and "retailing out" at 7½d.[136] Although more successful than average, John Millar shows how raising livestock was essential to participating in the systems of sale, credit and exchange which underpinned the rural economy.

The bodies of livestock, their meat, dairy, skin and fat, were critical in subsistence, exchange and the commercial viability of farming immigrants, but equally useful was their labour and manure. Livestock, particularly oxen, were essential for turning the agricultural potential of old growth forest into a sustainable farming operation. They were used, seasonally, for logging, ploughing, harrowing, carting and even threshing.[137] Oxen were tougher, calmer, cheaper and easier to feed than horses, so more popular with most settlers in early years.[138] In 1826 across Upper Canada oxen exceeded horses by 10%, but by 1846 there were over 50% more horses than oxen.[139] Immigrants tended to acquire horses once their farms were established. In 1844, some ten years after arriving, Robert Scott bought himself a "very handsome Grey Mare with a new set of harness and string of Bells everything new."[140] The Scotts, their relatives the Grieves, and their neighbours purchased horses to pull cutters and sleds for winter socialising. These were luxury items: symbols of successful farmers. What was more necessary in the first decade or so were powerful oxen. Andrew Bell observed that farmers "work with oxen, instead of horses, here, as they are better for going in the woods."[141] The weaver James Smibert, having lost his money in a

[133] LAC, R4416-0-9-E, John Millar and Family Collection, Millar to Millar, 29 November 1842.

[134] LAC, R4416-0-9-E, John Millar and Family Collection, John Millar to James Millar, 23 November 1843.

[135] Acheson, "New Brunswick Agriculture," 9; Craig, *Backwoods Consumers*, 150-153.

[136] Millar also detailed prices of wheat, oats, potatoes, wheat flour and oatmeal suggesting he used these commodities in similar ways. LAC, R4416-0-9-E, John Millar and Family Collection, Millar to Millar, 23 November 1843.

[137] PAO, Carnegie Family Fonds, George Carnegie to John Carnegie, 25 March 1834.

[138] Guillet, *The Pioneer Farmer and Backwoodsman*, 40, 75, 76, 97.

[139] Lewis and Urquhart, "Growth and the Standard of Living," 155.

[140] PAO, F496, Scott Family Letters, Grieve to Scott, 6 June 1844.

[141] Andrew Bell quoted in Lamond, *A Narrative of the Rise and Progress of Emigration*, 73.

failed immigration to Pennsylvania and the subsequent move to Flamborough, made the unlikely claim that he cleared six acres without the help of man or beast in his first year. He may have ringed trees, or felled and burnt them for potash *in situ*. However he acknowledged a "want of implements and oxen has kept me back a great deal."[142] Clearing was one of the main land improvements that could be sold on. Squatters, like Peter Armstrong and Tibby Patterson from Hawick, cleared four acres, an improvement for which the owner had to compensate when possession was claimed.[143] In the short term, owning oxen was a saving and could be a good earner. Some families bought their own yoke immediately. Others, like Mr Johnson, hired neighbours to draw logs.[144] That half of Gourlay's Perth County interviewees were oxen-less suggests they also made an arrangement with oxen-owning neighbours.[145] Oxen could be hired with a driver for a dollar a day, a more practical option for new settlers without winter feed or accommodation.[146] When Robert Scott arrived in McKillop Township he bought a cow, a heifer and three swine but no oxen. His son-in-law John Govenlock, however, commissioned him to buy a pair, the compensation being that Scott's family could use them for logging before Govenlock arrived. When the arrangement ended, Scott intended to "raise a pair of oxen... for we cannot get on any longer without them as we will have the ground to plow."[147] Buying or rearing steers was a more affordable, if slow, method of acquiring draft animals. A young Scotsman named Sholto used his earnings to supplement his father's herd. He spent $30, more than four months wages, on a yoke of steers. Although it would be two years before they were fit for ploughing, it was $50 cheaper than buying oxen.[148]

Raising good livestock, or even purchasing appropriate beasts, was a skill not all immigrants had. Robert and Nelly Forrest immigrated to Lanark County to escape the hardships of the weaving and stocking-making slump.[149] In industrializing southwest Scotland they probably had a milk cow but no experience in working with draft animals. The team of oxen the Forrests bought were mismatched, possibly a result of their inexperience. Their son Willy intended to buy a

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[142] UGA, Smibert Family Fonds, 1825-1863, XS1 MS A017, cutting from *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 239, Saturday, 27 August 1836, 243.

[143] John MacTaggart, *Three Years in Canada: An Account of the Actual State of the Country in 1826-7-8*, Vol. I (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), 200.

[144] For example, LAC, R6243-0-3-E, MG24-I35, Journal of Mr. Johnson, 22 July, 2 August, 12 August 1820.

[145] Gourlay, *Statistical Account*, 526.

[146] Guillet, *The Pioneer Farmer and Backwoodsman*, 44, 77, 88.

[147] PAO, F496, Scott Family Letters, Scott to Scott, 24 August 1835.

[148] Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 267.

[149] Norman Murray, *The Scottish Hand Loom Weavers, 1700-1850* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1978), 52, 144-5; Richard Reid, ed., *The Upper Ottawa Valley to 1855* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1990), xxv.

replacement animal and "beef the worst ox at Martinmas."[150] Like many farmers, the Forrests also had two young oxen that they were rearing for a second or a replacement yoke. As they planned on building a log house with a stone chimney and ploughing twelve acres, good oxen were necessary.[151] It was a notable event when oxen sickened or died. George Easton made one of his fullest entries in his diary the day one of his brother's "oxen Dropt down in the yoke... apparently in good health... and died almost instantaneous. A severe loss."[152]

Beyond their labouring capacity, the manure of oxen and other livestock was beneficial for arable land. Kenneth Kelly observed that emigrant guides advocated implementing British improvement farming techniques such as specific crop rotations and the closed nutrient cycle: ploughing in stubble, feeding most crops to stock, and applying all manure.[153] He claimed these methods were only followed by gentry farmers, however evidence in immigrant letters, Gourlay's survey, and the census suggests variations of this were precisely the strategy of most. Immigrants from rural Scotland were familiar with the crop rotations of high farming, and using animal manure to maintain and improve soil quality was a long-standing technique.[154] Guillet maintained manure was mainly placed on summer fallow, but in 1836 John Carnegie used it on a third of his acreage, including the potato and barley land and "a good dose to the Swedish turnips," while James Brown, Lanark County, used dung for wheatfields.[155] Many new farms, however, were understocked and lacked sufficient manure.[156] The inadequate supply was exacerbated when animals, particularly those of poorer or newer settlers, overwintered in the forest where it could not be collected.[157] Because manure was the chief source of fertiliser, there was a strong incentive to keep stock regardless of how poor the market was for their other produce.[158] Animals were, therefore, essential not only to the annual subsistence and surplus of the settlers'

[150] LAC, R3114-0-7-E, MG24-I158, John Forrest Fonds, Robert Forrest to Robert Logan, November 1823.

[151] LAC, R3114-0-7-E, MG24-I158, John Forrest Fonds, Robert Forrest to John Forrest, 23 May 1824.

[152] MDM, Reference No 122.86, George Easton Diary, 9 August 1831, 23 March 1832, 8 May 1837, 18 May 1837, 28 March 1839.

[153] Kelly, "The Transfer of British Ideas," 323-4.

[154] Gourlay, *Statistical Account*, 309, 483, 562, and many other examples. Craig, *Backwoods Consumers*, 143. In 1784 Abertarff, by Loch Ness, was unusual in following the southern Scottish pattern of dunging fields and rotating crops. At that time most Highland farms manured and used the best land intensively. However by the 1830s rotation was commonplace. Alexander Fenton, *Scottish Country Life* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1976), 35, 38. Grant, *Highland Folk Ways*, 90. Variations in Scottish rotation patterns are given in the New Statistical Accounts and Upper Canadian in Gourlay's *Statistical Account*.

[155] MDM, Reference No 122.86, George Easton Diary, 8 September 1838.

[156] Craig, *Backwoods Consumers*, 141.

[157] *Ibid*, 148.

[158] *Ibid*, 177.

family economy, but also to their long-term plans for enhancing the value of their farmland. Without livestock it was not possible for immigrants to tap into the long-term potential profit of cleared, fertile fields.

One main purpose of immigration and creating a farm was to ensure an economically secure future for the family. Along with land, buildings and tools, a farmer's wealth was counted in stock. Indeed cattle rearing Scots thought of land in terms of its carrying capacity: William Carlyle's farm was described as capable of supporting twenty cows.[159] Livestock were not only critical in providing a living or improving prosperity, but also in redistributing wealth to the next generation, especially to females. There is a substantial literature on inheritance patterns and the purpose here is not to discuss Scots' typicality or otherwise. Although Little found slight variations between settlers from Lewis and their French Canadian neighbours, both relied on distributing sheep, cattle and pigs as well as cash and household good to provide for secondary heirs.[160] A small sample of Scotsmen's wills from Lancaster and Glengarry counties demonstrates the important role of stock, especially cattle, in maintaining widows, making sons independent, and providing daughters with dowries. John Murchison, a Glengarry "yeoman", left his 400-acre lot in Charlottenburgh Township, with all property and moveables, to his wife Elizabeth. His sons were given one- or two-hundred-acre pieces of land, probably acquired for that purpose. Murchison followed a similar pattern to that identified by Bruce Elliott for Irish immigrants in the Canadas, and by Richard Easterlin for frontier farmers in the northern United States. Increasing their wealth in order to assure a similar, if not higher, standard of living for the next generation motivated these farmers. Ideally this meant ensuring that the basis of the family's prosperity, the farm, remained intact and settling children on nearby land or in a good non-farming occupation.[161]

Livestock were especially important in providing for females. Nancy Grey Osterud found farmers' wills in New York reflected the view that women were "subordinate members of farm family economies." Husbands provided for widows but not in such a way as made them genuinely independent. Daughters were "placed in a position of dependence on the male heirs."[162] Indeed Murchison's daughters, Barabella and Catherine, were provided for differently than his sons. Presumably with the expectation they would marry, they were jointly given a hundred-acre lot. Only at marriage would they get "two Milch cows each, out of my

[159] LAC, R4416-0-9-E, John Millar and Family Collection, John Millar to James Millar, 29 October 1846.

[160] Little, *Crofters and Habitants*, 117.

[161] Elliott, *Irish Migrants in the Canadas*, 196-203; Richard Easterlin, "Population change and farm settlement in the northern United States," *Journal of Economic History* 36 (1976), 69.

[162] Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 65-6.

moveable property, or the value of them, as they shall choose, with such other assistance as the circumstances of the family may afford."[163] The income from the land plus cattle and other contributions were their dowry. Similarly, Alexander McIntosh's will provided cows and sheep to his daughters.[164] Duncan McCuaig passed land to sons and moveable property to daughters. Donald received fifty acres and Farquhar one hundred along with two horses, four milk cows, one steer, and some sheep. John only received a milk cow and a blanket: his father had probably already assisted him. Mary was given three sheep; Anne one milk cow; Christian one young heifer; Catherine was to receive £15 from Farquhar; and Margaret got eight sheep, bedding, £20 from Farquhar, and sole use of "a Bedroom and Stove in my House" while she remained single.[165] In order to preserve the integrity of the farm he had built, McCuaig used two methods. The first was to provide land for his sons. The second was to burden the main beneficiary, Farquhar, with providing for his sisters from the family farm. Daughters were provided for with goods like bedding or clothing, the use of rooms and, importantly, livestock, which was both wealth and future profit. Lumbering the eldest son with financial responsibility for his mother and siblings could tie up any cash profit the farm made for years, restraining any reinvestment or development.[166] However such inheritance strategies were carefully plotted, intending to provide for the whole family's prosperity yet retain the integrity of the home farm. In Upper Canada, as in other rural colonial societies, the distribution of livestock, and even grazing rights, was essential to this process of property redistribution and was the primary method of providing for daughters.[167]

Conclusion

When John Millar re-established his family in Upper Canada an early priority was purchasing the nucleus of a mixed herd of cattle and a flock of sheep. Livestock that produced wool, dairy and meat to feed and clothe his family, the labour required to clear and work his land, and items for exchange and sale, were fundamental to his success. By 1851 he was one of a minority in Edwardsburgh

[163] LAC, Kenneth McPherson fonds, R3428-0-1-E, MG24 I18, Vol 1 File 1, Last Will and Testament of John Murchison. Livestock as moveable property was especially important to tenants who didn't own land but often owned their livestock. Livestock could be sold when they moved or taken with them. They could also get a chattel mortgage using livestock as collateral. Wilson, *Tenants in Time*, 196.

[164] LAC, Kenneth McPherson Fonds, R3428-0-1-E, MG24 I18, Vol 1 File 1 No 4, Last Will and Testament of Alexander McIntosh, 10 July 1847.

[165] LAC, Kenneth McPherson Fonds, R3428-0-1-E, MG24 I18, Vol 1 File 1 No 4, Last Will and Testament of Duncan McCuaig, 8 July 1846.

[166] David Gagan, *Hopeful Travellers: Families, Land and Social Change in Mid-Victorian Peel County, Canada West* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1981), 53-55.

[167] Ouellette's analysis of early Massachusetts wills identifies the inexpensive sheep as particularly useful in apportioning property to beneficiaries. Susan M. Ouellette, "Divine Providence and Collective Endeavor: Sheep Production in Early Massachusetts," *The New England Quarterly* 69:3 (1996), 367.

living in a stone house rather than a log cabin.[168] In efforts to understand how the settler economy worked, historians of Canada have moved away from focusing on staples and exports, to show the importance of multiple income sources. This has raised questions about the experiences and aspirations of early settlers and the extent to which they were commercially or subsistence-minded. Craig proposed we should think of these farming families as being and desiring neither, instead striving towards a "competency," which produced enough food and raw materials for home production, as well as sufficient off-farm sales for needful or desired purchases. Although livestock have grazed on the peripheries of this historiography, this view of early nineteenth-century farming has not led to an analysis of the role of animals. While farms committed to commercial dairy or meat production were atypical, settlers' needs for food, labour, raw materials, manure and cash meant most farms in the early, not just the late nineteenth-century as Kelly maintained, were mixed.[169] Livestock were actually widespread, underpinning most parts of settlers' multiple income sources. Selecting and using them well was a key strategy for the potential success of any immigrant farmers. Viewing the pioneer farm through a commercial lens hides the necessity of livestock for subsistence, in the informal economy of barter and exchange, and for small-scale sales. Livestock could provide short- as well as long-term profit through pork, wool and dairy, and modest quantities of meat could be sold locally with no need for commercial-scale production. Indeed it was inefficient for the average farmer to focus on only arable or livestock, as the two were interdependent. Draft animals helped clear the fields. Arable land and forest provided the cheapest method of feeding herds and flocks, and their manure was a necessity in sustaining soil fertility for grains and green crops. Together the sectors provided the multiple outputs and cash necessary for a successful rural household. Indeed the significance of livestock went beyond household, local and colonial economies. Through grazing, manuring, and their need for hay, pease and oats, livestock and their needs encouraged settlers to transform old growth forest into farmland. Through the actions and attitudes of aspirational immigrant Scots of the middling sort, it is possible to see the strategic importance of livestock to Upper Canadian settlers striving for "competency." Raising livestock—particularly cattle, sheep and pigs—was not an addition to the multiple sources of income and subsistence, but underpinned most of them. Animals' contribution to clearing forest, raising crops, maintaining soil, providing food and clothing, raising cash or credit, maintaining reciprocal relationships and passing on property was integral to the success of early immigrants.

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[168] 1851 census, Edwardsburgh Township, Grenville County, 159.

[169] Kelly, "Notes on a Type of Mixed Farming," 205, 215; Kelly, "The Transfer of British Ideas," 327.