

THE GROWTH OF COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE
AROUND ST. JOHN'S, 1800-1935:
A STUDY OF LOCAL TRADE IN
RESPONSE TO URBAN DEMAND

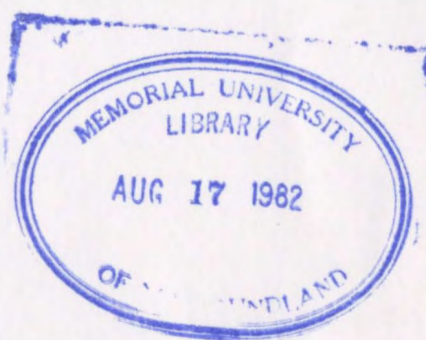
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THE GROWTH OF COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE AROUND
ST. JOHN'S, 1800-1935: A STUDY OF LOCAL
TRADE IN RESPONSE TO URBAN DEMAND

by



Robert Alexander Mac Kinnon, B.A.

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of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

Since World War Two, and particularly since confederation in 1949, the city of St. John's has witnessed considerable change. From a small urban area of about 8,000 families physically encompassing no more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ by $\frac{1}{2}$ miles in 1935, the city has spread deep into the countryside, especially along the old roads out of town. Prior to this recent expansion, the area had been occupied by small family farms, dispersed unevenly along the roads, sometimes for distances of up to ten miles. The roots of this community extend back to the late eighteenth century when the first commercial farms were formed close to St. John's for the explicit purpose of providing fresh food to its inhabitants. Between roughly 1800 and 1840, close to 400 farms were established largely by poor Irish immigrants with some English and a few Scots.

The natural endowment was anything but encouraging for large scale commercial agriculture. Soils were thin, highly leached, acidic, rocky and usually poorly drained. Cultivating the land was back breaking; it involved clearing scrub timber, removing countless rock fragments and applying large amounts of natural fertilizers to the land. Cool, wet summers and a relatively short growing season made crop types of the old world such as wheat and barley impossible to grow commercially. These conditions were only amenable to pastoral grasses and cool weather arable crops like

potatoes, cabbage and turnips. Yet these settlers and their descendants managed to strike deep roots in the area, raising large families from the meagre profits wrested from the land. In the past two or three decades, this traditional farm community has been bulldozed virtually into oblivion. Suburban streets, a university and C.M.H.C. housing now occupy former fields and farmsteads but here and there along the edge of the city a few farmers continue to work the land.

This thesis is an attempt to reconstruct the evolution and development of this traditional farm settlement from its inception to its dissolution. It focuses particularly on the commercial farm economy, seeking to understand the kinds of trading links that were established between the country and the town. Research involved both archival and field investigation. An assessment of archival sources is contained in a bibliographic note. Field work involved a series of interviews supplemented by a reading of the relict agricultural landscape. Interviews were conducted among thirty older residents who lived in the study area most of their lives. Since the dissolution of the community, however, most have been dislodged from their farms. This created some difficulty in tracing informants. Yet, twenty large and small scale farms were reconstructed in detail, supplemented by several other farms for certain other aspects of the study. Information on the formation and evolution of the farm, its location, size, number of acres improved, crops under cultivation, types of livestock,

the farming system and, most importantly, the methods of marketing surplus produce were obtained. This information was coupled with material of a quantitative and documentary nature available in the archives to build up as accurate a picture as possible of the 400 farms which existed during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Wherever possible, sketches, maps and photographs have been used to illustrate aspects of specific farms, as well as spatially delimit the extent of the agrarian hinterland.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the preparation of this thesis I have received the assistance of numerous individuals. The constant guidance, support and friendship of Dr. John Mannion, Department of Geography, made this thesis possible. Without the assistance of Edward Tompkins, who provided archival guidance, the extensive documentary material for this study could not have been completed. A major debt is owed to the farmers whose grandfathers and great-grandfathers formed the subject of this study. Informants are too numerous to list, however, at least a few who gave most generously of their time must be mentioned. Aly O'Brien spent many hours describing the farm community as it was in the early twentieth century and assisted in the final preparation of the manuscript. The Cowan and Clooney families provided family records and photographs, and were outstanding informants.

Many thanks are also due to the following: Memorial University for financial support, the Institute of Social and Economic Research for funding travel expenses for field work, the staff of the Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador and Memorial University Library, particularly those from the Centre for Newfoundland Studies and Inter-library loans. Members of the Department of Geography assisted with various aspects of the study, particularly Dr. Alan Macpherson and Dr. Gordon Handcock. Dr. Gerald Pocius and Richard MacKinnon, Department of Folklore, supplied

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Dr. David Facey-Crowther, Department of History, assisted with early St. John's maps. Michael McIntyre and Damien Morrissey provided cartographic guidance and drafted some of the maps. Mrs. Mary Johnston typed the thesis and assisted in its final preparation. Special thanks to John O'Brien who assisted me in the field and Karen Dickison for her constant support and help in both the archives and field.

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CHAPTER 1

THE ORIGINS AND GROWTH OF A FARM COMMUNITY: APPROACHES AND BACKGROUND

Agricultural geography represents a major field of research in contemporary human geography. Definitions are broad and varied but agricultural geography basically seeks to describe and explain areal variations in land use, the spatial relationships between farming systems, and the factors which create certain forms of agriculture in particular areas (Chisholm, 1962; Reeds, 1964; Symons, 1967; Gregor, 1970; Morgan and Munton, 1971). Geographers generally consider a broad range of factors - environmental, economic and sociocultural - in their treatment of these themes. Although the bulk of existing research in agricultural geography focuses on contemporary problems, aspects of the geography of agriculture also dominate work in historical geography, particularly in Europe and North America where farming has been a vital occupation in the past. Prevalent themes in historical agricultural geography include the relative influences of the physical environment, the ethnic or cultural background of the settlers, the origins of settlement, the spatial patterns of land use and the regional and external economies. Much of the North American literature deals with the evolution of agriculture on the frontier. It focuses on the initial

occupation of the land, the adaptations and modifications of traditional European farming techniques and systems in a new world setting, and the landscape manifestations of these processes (e.g. Clark, 1959; 1968; Harris, 1967; Lemon, 1966; Meinig, 1971; Mannion, 1974; Earle, 1975; Gibson, 1978; Ward, 1979).

The theme least considered in the literature, yet one of considerable importance in understanding the historical geography of agriculture on this continent, is the nature and extent of agricultural commercialism on the frontier. Until recently much of the literature in historical geography and agricultural history has portrayed pioneer North America as a largely subsistent or semi-subsistent agrarian community eking out a living in the isolation of the backwoods. The emphasis has been largely on the modes of agricultural production and less on the capitalization of a farm on the frontier, the initial local trading networks or subsequent urban-hinterland interaction. But the pioneering works of, for example, Lemon (1968, 1972), Conzen (1971), Mitchell (1972, 1977), Kelly (1978) and Osbourne (1980) emphasize a somewhat different type of experience, one largely dominated by a spirit of commercialism and capitalism, where the success of an emerging agricultural community often depended on its response to local and external demands for farm goods.

Agrarian commercialism is defined as a desire to produce a surplus above and beyond subsistence levels and

to respond quickly to opportunities for sale (Mitchell, 1977: 122). The literature suggests it was present and essential from the beginnings of permanent settlement. This was expressed, for example, by mercantile or urban investment in the creation of the pioneer farm, the rapid emergence of trading links between the frontier farm community and the town or city, the high resale value of land near good marketing outlets and a willingness to settle in remoter locations and grow specialized crops fetching high prices. The demands for foodstuffs created by the emerging villages, towns and embryonic farms induced initially a system of door to door peddling by farmers. Later, as demands increased, local stores, a marketplace and sometimes a small merchant community developed. Back-country trade was increasingly controlled by these country storekeepers or small merchants who often had money to invest in land and agricultural endeavors. The literature suggests that formal marketplaces and periodic agricultural fairs served to provide food and fuel for urban populations, increased cash circulation and were important in the dissemination of information on changing technology and conditions for farm goods in the wider market.

Most of the relevant literature on farm commercialism and the frontier is conceived at a macro or regional scale. Conzen's study (1971) of the township of Bloominggrove in Dane County, Wisconsin is a rare exception. This work examines the impact of a growing central place (Madison) on

its immediate rural hinterland. Among the themes Conzen considers are the role of urban land speculators during initial settlement, the spatial distribution of land use, land values, farm size and agricultural mechanization. Conzen discovered high farm land values near Madison were caused by high rates of tenancy. His conclusions suggest that even though Madison was a medium size central place it was still able to organize and exert a continuing and considerable influence on the social and economic activities of its farm hinterland. Conzen says the farmer's sensitivity to changing market conditions was the key to healthy farming. Somewhat similar conclusions have been reached by Lemon (1972) who noted the influence of Philadelphia on southeastern Pennsylvania and Miller (1979) who examined the impact of the city of Syracuse on Onondaga County, New York.

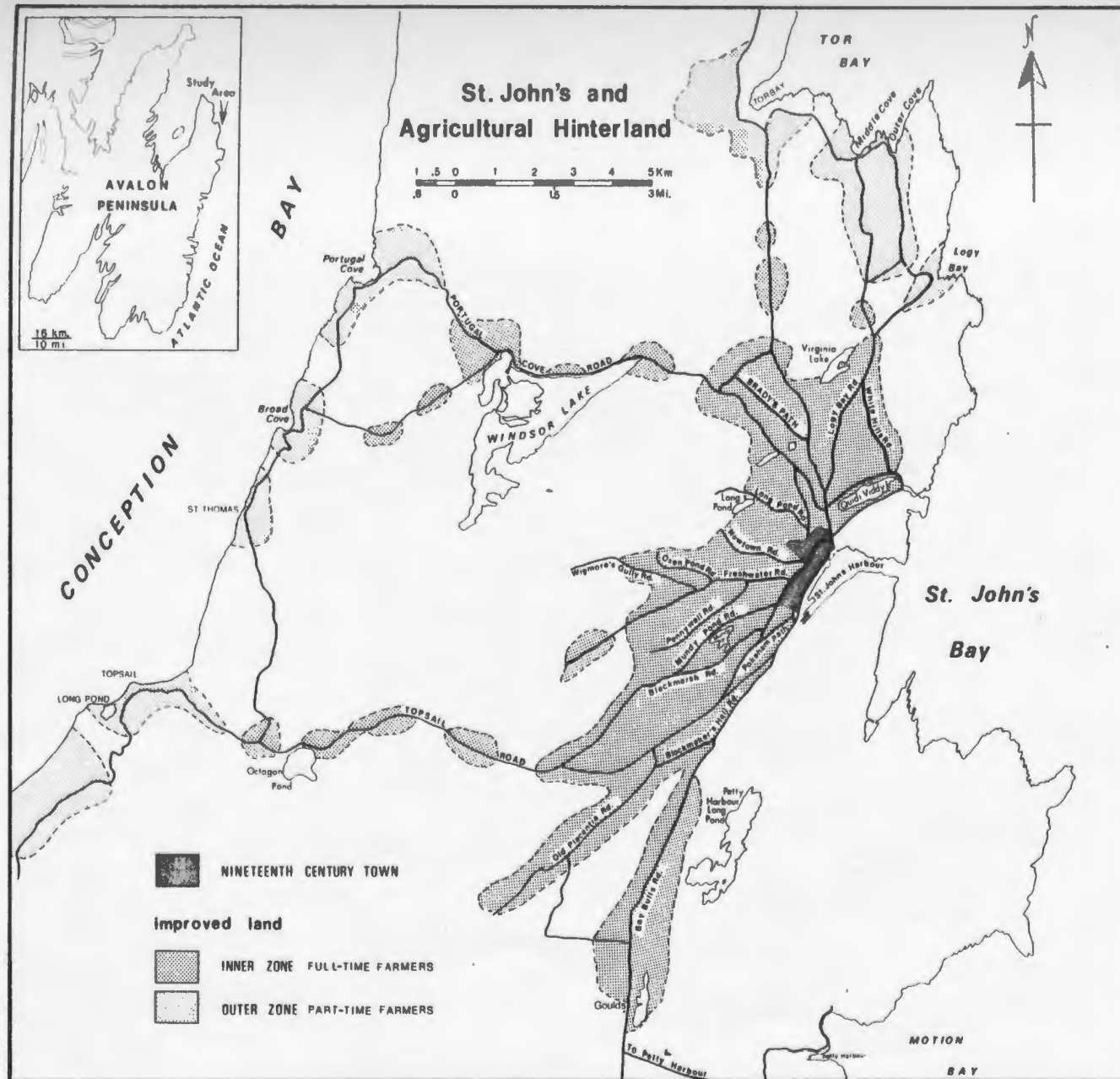
The most apparent lacuna in the historical-geographical literature is an analysis of the structure of marketing farm surpluses, particularly from the perspective of the farmer. The distribution of farm produce relates to all aspects of the farming system but especially to the forms of transportation. In order to survive economically farmers had to have adequate roads to transport their goods to the market, to collect essential supplies and to glean information there about demands for certain crops, price shifts and technological innovations. All of these factors influenced the farmer's choice of product and his marketing

strategies, yet there is little acknowledgement of it in the literature. Harris' statement that, "we know little about the spatial structure of local trade in colonial North America," is an accurate appraisal of the current situation (1978: 126).

This thesis attempts to examine the evolution, development and trading characteristics of a farm community in the immediate environs of St. John's from its inception around the turn of the nineteenth century up until the introduction of truck transport. The topics considered include the initial availability of land, its disposition by official and private personnel and details of its occupancy by poor immigrants from a variety of occupational backgrounds. The setting up and capitalization of the frontier farm, the size, utilization, value and types of farms which evolved, spatial and temporal changes in farm production, development of the road system and especially the disposition of farm surpluses are examined.

The farm community created around St. John's was unusual in the North American context in the sense that the town of St. John's was virtually the only market for the farmer's products. Moreover, the hinterland was extremely restricted spatially. Full-time farming was largely confined to a zone rarely exceeding a few miles on the roads leading from town. Beyond this area were a few scattered farms and the small units of farmer-fishermen on the coast (Figure 1). Apart from some smaller pockets in

Figure 1



Conception Bay, in the southern Avalon and, later in the nineteenth century, on the west coast, there were no comparable farm settlements on the island. Throughout the inner full-time farm zone a variety of conditions existed which are important for comparative analysis. It was occupied by people from a diverse social background, the size of farms, patterns of land use, volume of production and, of course, distance and accessibility to the market all varied. Among the important conditions which did not change were the general quality of the soil and vegetation, the social organization of farm labour, basic range of goods produced, steady demand for local produce in town and farm and transport technology.

The farm community was socially if not ethnically diverse. It was dominated by poor Irish Catholics and their descendants, a spillover of the heavy influx of Irish to St. John's during the first three decades of the nineteenth century (Mannion, 1974: 19). There was a small but significant group of settlers from the south and southwest of England, an even smaller group of Scots and a few settlers from the Maritimes. Although farm size varied the majority of farms were very small by frontier North American standards. Due to the poor quality of the soil and the constraints of climate, only certain crops and livestock products could be profitably produced for the local market, notably potatoes, cabbages, turnips and fresh milk. Small vegetables, butter, beef, pork, mutton,

3 8

lamb, eggs and poultry were adjuncts. Hay and straw were also sold, mainly for horses kept in town. Unlike other areas in nineteenth century rural North America where external demands and price shifts sometimes forced drastic readjustments in the types of crops and livestock raised, the mix of goods produced by the farm community surrounding St. John's changed little. The market for fresh food in town and the structures established for its marketing persisted through the century and indeed up until the dissolution of the farm community during and after World War Two. Through the century the nuclear family was the basic unit of farm production. Only the largest and most commercial farmers hired seasonal or permanent labour. Farm technology was simple, comprising mainly manually-operated tools (e.g. spades, shovels, picks, axes, forks, rakes, scythes, sickles and later the horse-drawn plough and mowing machine). The mode of transport did not change much over the century. It consisted basically of horse-drawn wagons, carts and sleighs.

The farm community developed within the constraints of a physical environment not at all favourable to commercial farming. The shallow till which resulted from glaciation during the Pleistocene period, in combination with heavy rainfall and low rates of evaporation, produced highly leached and acidic soils. These were imperfectly drained and too recent or immature to be fertile. A cultivatable soil was slowly formed through backbreaking

clearing and intensive fertilizing of the land. Farms were hacked out of the sparse, scrub forest and fields were formed on patches of till and along alluvial flats. This involved removing countless rock fragments, constructing drains and persistently adding natural fertilizers such as bog, fish offal, caplin and manure. Cool, wet summers and a growing season of 130 days during which average temperature ranged between 56 and 58 degrees made crops of the old world, such as wheat and barley and even oats, impossible to grow commercially. Such conditions were only amenable to cool weather crops like potatoes, cabbage, turnips and to a lesser extent carrots, parsnips and beets. The physical environment was, however, much more amenable to the growth of cultivated grasses; one English immigrant farmer noted, "the land (was) capable of producing as abundant crops of hay as in Devonshire."¹ Virtually from the outset, dairying formed the backbone of the farm economy. The next chapter will consider the formation of the farm community.

¹J.H.A. (1863), Appendix: 1017.

CHAPTER II

THE FORMATION AND BEGINNINGS OF THE FARM COMMUNITY

Throughout most of the eighteenth century St. John's was little more than a migratory summer fishing station peopled by young men from the British Isles, most of whom normally returned home for the winter. Between 1780 and 1830, however, St. John's was transformed to one of the most important mercantile centres in Canada. It replaced British ports as the organizational centre for the fishery and gradually became the emporium for the island's trade. A resident merchant community comprised mainly of English, Scots and Irish evolved. This transformation was expedited through an unprecedented boom during the Napoleonic Wars when prices for fish soared and a substantial immigration, particularly from Ireland, occurred. It is against this economic and demographic background that a full-time farm community around St. John's was formed.

This chapter examines the factors which influenced agricultural settlement and describes the early agrarian community before 1810.

The Rise of a Sedentary Population

Rapid population growth and the concomitant demand

for fresh food were the main incentives in the formation of a commercial farm community. Between 1750 and 1780, the winter population of the St. John's district increased from approximately 700 to nearly 1500. In the following ten years, this population doubled and by 1810 had reached 7,000 (Figure 2).¹ This trend continued, for in 1830 winter inhabitants numbered more than 11,000, and by the end of the century the urban resident population of St. John's had reached 40,000.² Before 1836 it is difficult to determine accurately the number of permanent residents contained within this population. The reports of the Newfoundland Governors, which annually record the number of winter inhabitants at St. John's, between 1698 and 1830 divide the population into five categories: masters, mistresses, male servants, female servants and children. The rates of transiency among certain categories is difficult to measure. For example, children encompassed all persons under fifteen years of age. This could include children belonging to nuclear families residing in St. John's, as well as boys engaged in the fishery. Despite such ambiguities, the potential permanent population was computed using Hancock's (1977: 19) formula. This suggests that permanent residents and their families increased more than

¹All statistics are taken from the annual returns of the Governors, Series C0194/12-49.

²Newfoundland Department of the Colonial Secretary, Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1901.

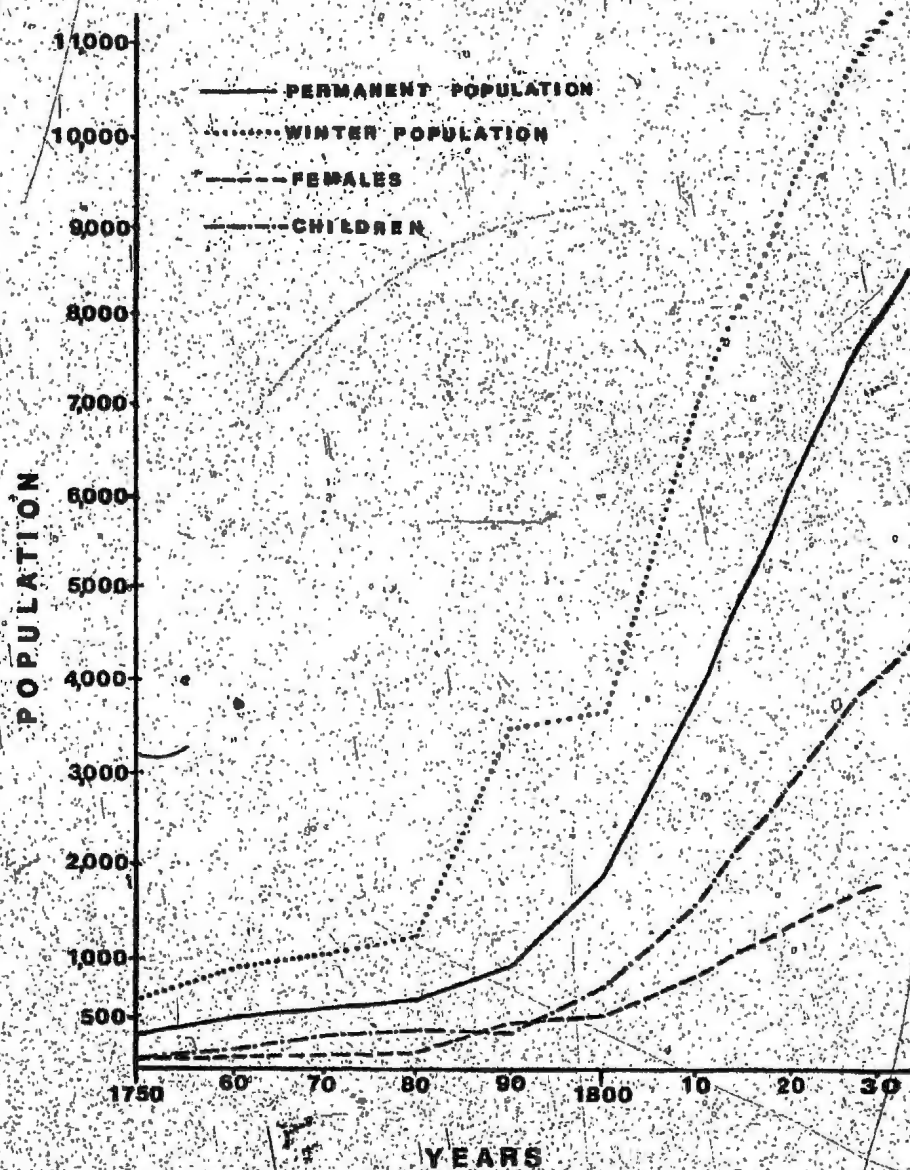


Figure 2

eight times between 1790 and 1830. The consistency in the increase of women and children, particularly after 1800, supports this suggestion. During these decades the female population quintupled and the number of children increased more than tenfold. By 1836 more than 2,000 families resided in the town and immediate environs of St. John's.³ The reasons for this rapid sedentary population increase are complex and poorly understood, and it is not the objective of this thesis to explain them.

Until the end of the eighteenth century, most of the food consumed in St. John's by the migratory fishermen and others was processed, packed in barrels and often shipped from great distances. For example, salt pork, beef and butter came mainly from southeast Ireland, breadstuffs, flour and dried peas from southern England or New England, and products such as tea, coffee, sugar, rum and molasses from the West Indies or through southwest English and mainland North American ports. A restructuring of the food trade occurred largely as a result of Britain's increasing industrialization and its concomitant inability to feed itself. Between 1780 and 1820, the growing dominance of the English market and diminished food exports elsewhere were distinctive features of British trade (Mannion, 1980: 34). The American Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars and the

³ Newfoundland, Department of the Colonial Secretary, Census of Newfoundland, 1836.

War of 1812 interrupted food supply channels somewhat and created a larger demand for processed food. The increased military presence during war time competed with fishermen for salted and dried provisions not only in St. John's but all around the North Atlantic. These factors induced immigrants to turn to local agriculture as a source for fresh food.

Members of the emerging resident middle class (e.g. military officers, doctors, lawyers, civil servants, merchants, agents and artisans) and especially women and children created a demand for fresh foodstuffs. Fresh milk was consumed both by infants and children and used in tea by women. During the eighteenth century the agrarian revolution had established potatoes, turnips and cabbages as important food for livestock and for the kitchen table. This dietary shift from old salted provisions to fresh food was an important motive for the establishment of commercial farms in the wilderness surrounding the town.

The Alienation of Crown Lands and the Forms of Tenure

Throughout the eighteenth century, British laws officially discouraged agricultural activity in Newfoundland. Nevertheless, it appears that imperial edicts were often disregarded and did not seriously impede efforts to occupy and clear land. It is impossible to measure accurately the alienation of land specifically for commercial agriculture,

however, various sources suggest that immigrants had considerable opportunities to do so. As in other areas of colonial North America, farm land was acquired through crown grants, leases from private proprietors or simply through squatting.

Crown Grants

Throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, colonial governors authorized special grants to some St. John's residents. These grants either required payment of a quit rent to the Crown, or, less frequently, were given in fee simple. Those desiring land had to make a formal application to the colonial authorities with a description of property boundaries surveyed by three or four "ancient inhabitants of the town."⁴ This was intended to ensure that title to the land requested was clear. Sometimes, in an effort to provide an incentive for the governor to accept the application, the lot was enclosed, cultivated and built upon even before application was made.⁵ This practice inadvertently caused some occupiers considerable distress for infrequently governors ordered fences knocked down and crops removed.⁶ Grants, however, were initially distributed

⁴L.B.C.S.O. 13 (1797): 240; 340-41.

⁵CO 194/45 (1807): 3.

⁶L.B.C.S.O. 6 (1775): 103; L.B.C.S.O. 13 (1797): 244; L.B.C.S.O. 17 (1804): 306; CO 194/51 (1811): 5; L.B.C.S.O. 26 (1815): 293-94.

mainly to military officers and members of the resident middle class in the town.

Early in the nineteenth century, changes in colonial land administration made crown lands more available to poor immigrants. Governor Gower, for example, leased 300 acres in the immediate environs of town in 1804 which he divided into fifty lots ranging from one to twelve acres for a period of twenty-one years. A further 110 lots of four acres each were awarded by Governor Keats nine years later to "industrious individuals for the purpose of cultivation."⁷ Quit rents ranged from 2/5 to 5/ and these leases could be renewed after thirty years. Apparently rents were reasonable for subleasing was practiced and payment made to the Crown was below that received by certain individuals. During Governor Cochrane's regime, quit rents could be waived upon payment of a lump sum to the Crown and restrictions requiring one third of a Crown grant to be enclosed and cultivated within three years were removed.⁸

Private Leasehold

Leasing land from a private proprietor was common. A letter from Governor Prescott to the Secretary of State

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⁷ L.B.C.S.O. 19 (1804): 50-51; L.B.C.S.O. 24 (1813):

⁸ Cochrane Papers, Mss. 2365 (1831): 228-33.

for the colonies expresses the viability of this tenure, "it rarely occurs that a poor settler ... is able to purchase a lot at the existing rates. We have some good farmers renting small estates to the advantage of landlords and themselves."⁹ Both fee simple and crown land tenants rented uncleared and cleared land to farmer-tenants. Private leases were usually for seven, fourteen or twenty-one years, although leases for a shorter term were also recorded.¹⁰ In the tradition of the British Isles, rents were paid usually quarterly or semi-annually. Subletting could also be a profitable business for the occupying tenant. He could sublet the land in part or in whole, or sell the interest in the lease. Such a system allowed a rapid turnover in occupancy and created complex tenant-subtenant relationships.

An already improved farmstead with a house, out-buildings and cleared fields for cultivation could also be obtained by private leasehold. Farms ranging from ten to twenty acres improved were available from as low as £15 to £50 per annum.¹¹ Rents depended upon the size and quality of farm and its proximity to town. A farm-tenant could, in turn, sublet the whole farmstead, or part of it, like tenants

⁹ Royal Gazette, January 21, 1840.

¹⁰ Royal Gazette, September 13, 1810; Mercantile Journal, February 28, 1817; Royal Gazette, April 6, 1830; June 8, 1830; December 11, 1849.

¹¹ Royal Gazette, September 10, 1810; Mercantile Journal, January 16, 1818; July 7, 1825; September 21, 1826; Royal Gazette, August 21, 1832; Public Ledger, April 10, 1832; The Newfoundlander, January 15, 1846.

with leasehold to a piece of land. The complexity of interests in a farm which resulted was sometimes a source of litigation. A court case over losses incurred by one farm proprietor, as a result of damages caused by a tenant, serves as a representative example of this tenant-subtenant structure.¹² The "Goatery Farm" was established by Captain Henry Edgell on a crown grant in the late eighteenth century and leased by him in 1806 to Robert Brine, a butcher. The terms of the lease were for twenty-one years at £20 per annum. In 1808 Brine sublet the whole farm to William Carson, a medical doctor, who, in turn, sublet part of it. In 1827 Edgell did not renew Brine's lease and brought him to court for allowing the farm to fall into disrepair. This tenant-subtenant system often makes it difficult to ascertain who was actually working a certain farm.

Possessory Title

Possessory claims through squatting were and still remain the basis for many land titles in Newfoundland. Land held in this way could also be bought, sold, leased and sublet. Boundaries of official leases and grants were often

¹² Newfoundland Supreme Court Minutes, November 28, 1828, P.A.N.L. GN5/2/A/1.

extended simply by possession and utilization.¹³ Both Governors Gambler and Gower advocated giving legal title to those claiming land in this manner upon regular payment of a quit rent.¹⁴ In 1819 a Supreme Court decision concluded that the English common law rule of continuous occupation of crown land for 60 years and private land for 20 years was applicable to Newfoundland (McEwan, 1977: 154).

Subsequent governors attempted to implement this decision.

Following the establishment of a local legislature, a Crown Lands Act was designed and became law in 1844. This provided for the issuance of confirmatory title to those in possession of land before 1840 upon its registration. Leasehold and legal title to crown land expanded rapidly throughout the nineteenth century, but this tenure was often based on squatting.

Occupying the Land

Among the first persons known to clear and cultivate ground around St. John's were members of the military. Throughout the eighteenth century, potato gardens supplemented the salt provision diet of soldiers stationed at St. John's, and horses used for hauling military equipment subsisted on hay produced on meadows and rough pasture.

¹³ CO 194/39 (1797): 320; L.B.C.S.O. 25 (1813): 160-64.

¹⁴ CO 194/45 (1804): 32-33.

In 1766 a garden area of about 50 acres surrounding Fort William was designated to be used solely by members of the garrison (Figure 3). This fort, constructed during the late seventeenth century, was situated on the northeastern fringe of town. After construction began on Fort Townshend, situated one mile west of Fort William, this area was extended to encompass another 150 acres (Figure 3). Although defined as "strictly ordnance property," the local civilian population persistently encroached and cultivated gardens.¹⁵ It was this resident civilian population that formed the backbone of the agrarian community.

The roots of local agriculture go back to the turn of the eighteenth century when over-wintering planters were recorded as keeping bullocks, sheep and "common kitchen gardens."¹⁶ Most livestock were killed for consumption during the winter. Around a dozen horses were kept for use around the wharves. Civilians either cleared garden plots themselves or purchased land already improved by soldiers. During the first half of the eighteenth century, a few hundred over-wintering residents annually improved between sixty and one hundred acres and kept approximately 300 cattle, 200 sheep and 300 swine, all imported from New England.¹⁷

¹⁵CO 194/62 (1766): 128-31; L.B.C.S.O. 6 (1755): 69.

¹⁶CO 195/2 (1697): 16-21; CO 195/3 (1702): 116-117.

¹⁷CO 194/10 (1736): 93; CO 194/11 (1741): 50; CO 194/12 (1749): 116.

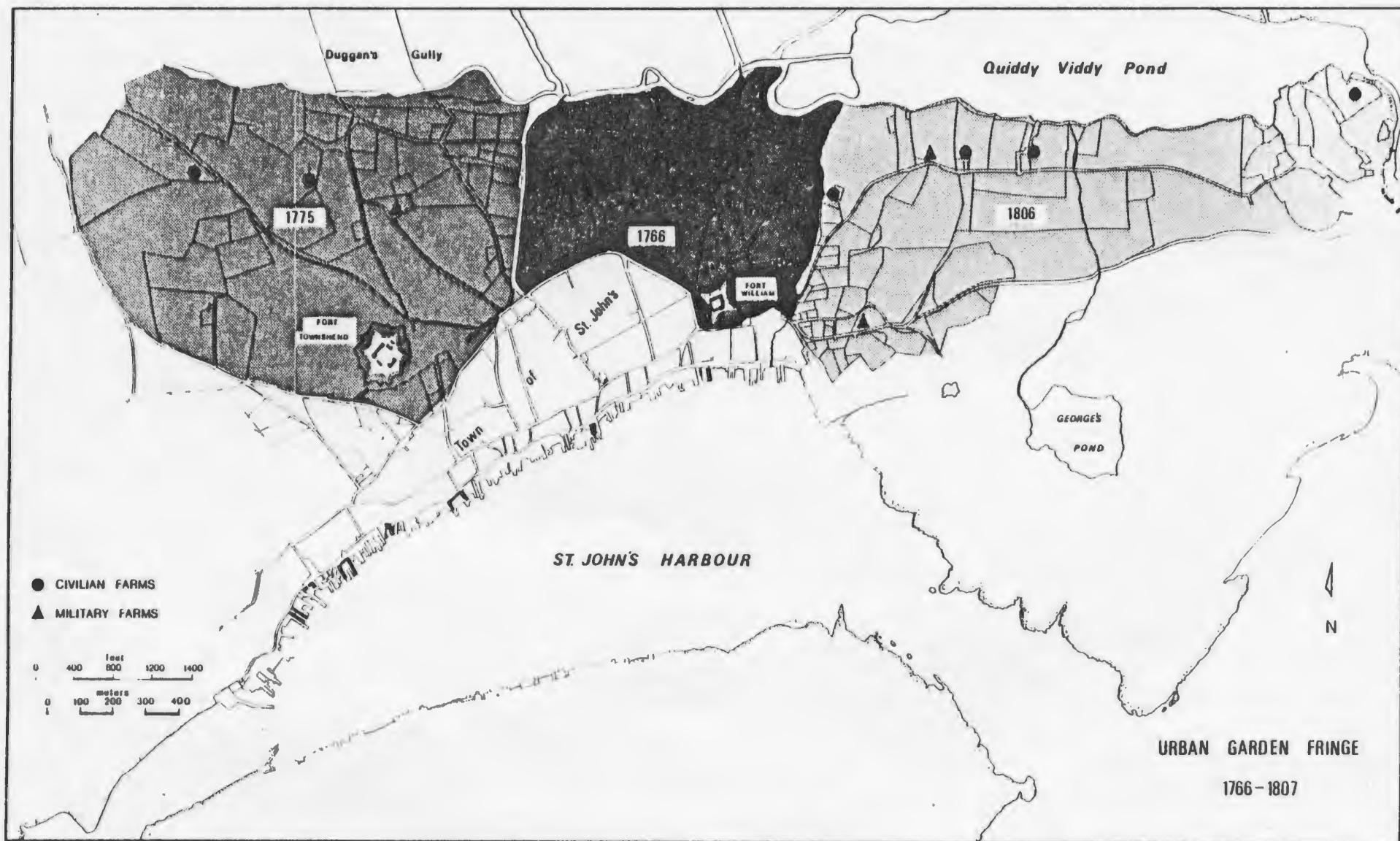


Figure 3

By 1766 these practices had become prevalent enough for Governor Palliser to object:

this indulgence that has formerly been allowed (to officers and soldiers) ... has heretofore been greatly abused by the practise of afterwards pretending to sell the same as property in payment of debts ... by which means the fort has been surrounded by buildings and enclosures made by soldiers and others ... who¹⁸ neither belong to the fishery nor to the garrison.

Subsequent governors attempted to rectify the situation and ordered all persons claiming cultivated enclosures to prove their respective titles. As a result, several properties were expropriated. Most civilian squatters, however, were left undisturbed. By the turn of the nineteenth century, numerous residents had "found the means to clear a little ground on which they have a potato garden and sometimes feed a cow."¹⁹

A map of St. John's, completed by Thomas Eastaff between 1806 and 1807, describes civilian encroachments on ordnance property and depicts the expansion of urban gardens since 1778, their distribution and general use (Figure 3).²⁰ Some 370 acres in the fringe of town were occupied, comprising over 100 plots ranging from less than one to as many as twenty-five acres. One half of all plots

¹⁸CO 194/62 (1766): 128-31.

¹⁹CO 194/45 (1804): 32

²⁰This map forms the basis for Figure 3. This list of occupiers and descriptions of encroachments is found in L.B.C.S.O. 24.(1813): 309-13.

were an acre or less, thirty were between two and five acres, eighteen between six and fifteen acres and only two were over sixteen acres. Most were under mixed land use, comprising potatoes, turnips, carrots, hay and rough pasture. One fifth of all plots were used for ordnance purposes (e.g. woodyard, artillery sheds, soldiers gardens) and another fifth by butchers and farmers. The majority of plots were held by merchants, agents, shopkeepers, civil servants, doctors and artisans living in town. They either sublet the land, hired gardeners and labourers to operate it, or worked the ground themselves.

By 1810 approximately 50 farms were established, encompassing more than 1,000 acres within about a one-mile radius of St. John's (Figure 4). At least ten farms were formed before 1780 and the remainder during the last two decades of the century. Most of these early farmers, like those working gardens in the environs of town, were British Protestants and members of the St. John's middle class, with some other full-time occupations (Appendix A). More than one quarter of the land was under arable cultivation, with the remainder used for hay, grazing and timber. Although an average farm contained about twenty-five acres with seven improved, farm size varied considerably. Of the forty farms for which land use data survive roughly half contained less than five acres under cultivation, twelve between six and ten acres, five between eleven and fifteen and only three more than sixteen acres. The earliest

**DISTRIBUTION OF FARMS
VICINITY OF ST. JOHN'S
1780 - 1810**

One Dot Represents One Farm

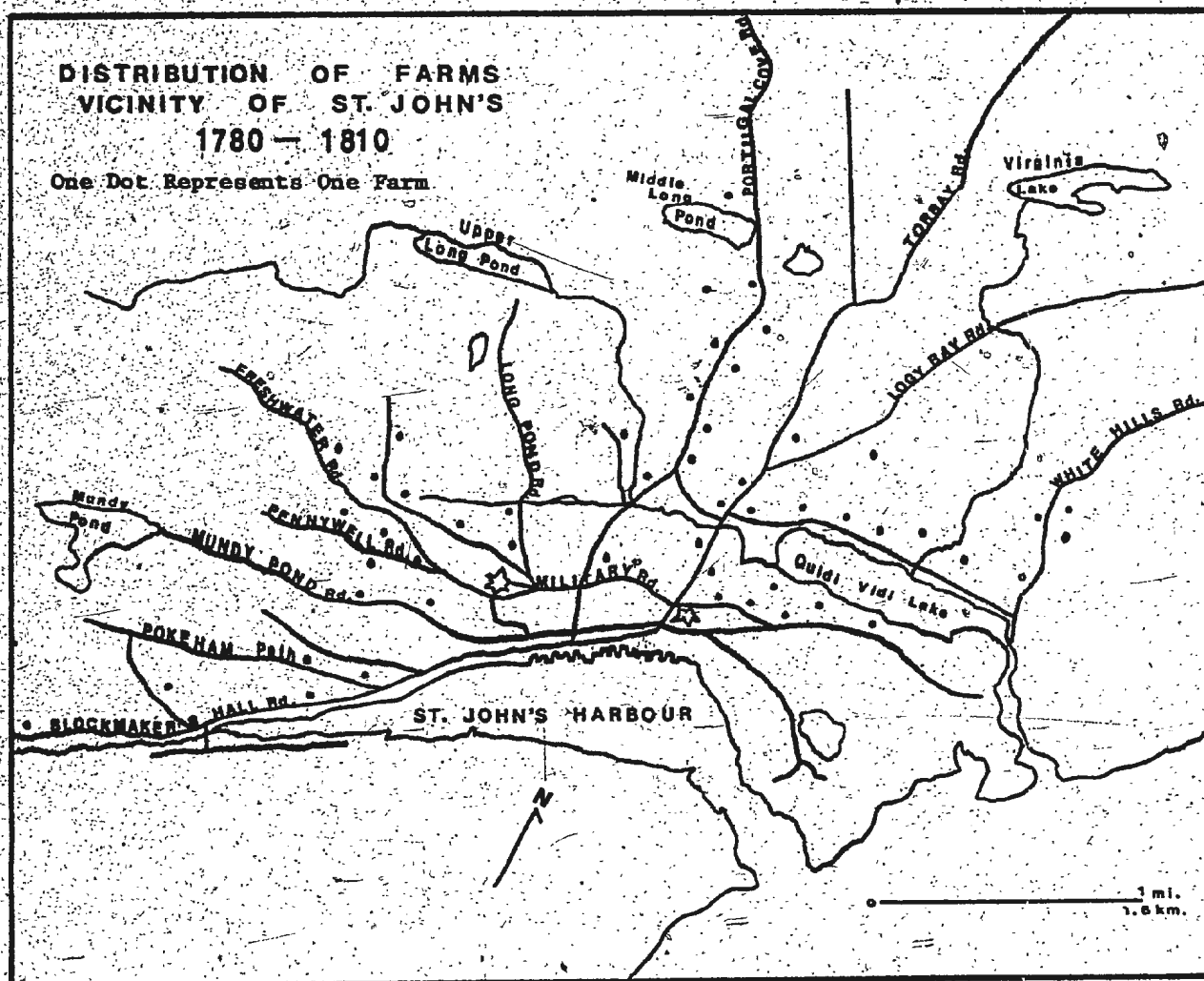


Figure 4

settled farms were mainly established by military officers and resident merchants who were the first to receive crown grants. These were located near the forts and were generally large. For example, Golden Grove, established around 1760 by Captain Criffith Williams on a 200-acre grant along the north shore of Quidi Vidi, contained approximately thirty-six acres under cultivation in 1807. About a dozen of the smallest farms were set up by poor immigrants, mainly of Irish origin. For the most part, however, the small eighteenth century farm community was socially and ethnically different from the Irish farm settlers who flooded the area after 1810.

As in other areas of commercial agriculture, distinct farming districts evolved. Table I provides some idea of the value of leading crops by district in 1807. The most productive area was located northeast of town, extending from the immediate environs of Fort William, around Quidi Vidi, and along the White Hills (Figure 4). This was the original centre of the eighteenth century military gardens and farms, now largely occupied and extended by the civilian population. A road led from town, around the lake, and on to the White Hills, where a number of settlers took advantage of offal from the fishery in Quidi Vidi to fertilize their farms. Some twenty resident fishermen also erected cottages on the White Hills and cultivated gardens. These plots ranged from one to fourteen acres, some of which subsequently evolved into

Table 1

Value of Production, Potatoes and Hay,
Environé of St. John's, 1807

Districts	No. Farms	(£) Potatoes	(£) Hay	(£) Total	(£) Average per farm
Quidi Vidi-White Hills	18	718	1510	2226	123
Upper Long Pond and Freshwater	12	450	390	840	70
Portugal Cove Road	10	155	465	620	62
Mundy Pond, Pokesham Path, Riverhead	8	280	200	480	57
Torbay Road	4	70	220	290	72
Location N/A	3	4	175	179	60
TOTAL	55	1655	2960	4615	74

Source: L.B.C.S.O. 24 (1813): 3-9

small farms. The other most important pocket of farming was directly north of town, along the road from Fort Townshend to Upper Long Pond. In addition to this district's proximity to the fort and town, it was bounded by fresh water streams which made it useful for grazing. Portugal Cove Road was one of the first "lineways" extending into the wilderness and some of the earliest and larger farms were also situated in this district. Military officers, merchants and professionals established well-known farms such as "Pringlesdale," "Goatery," and "Friendly Hall" close to town, but also near scenic ponds like Middle Long Pond (later Kent's Pond) and Three Cornered Pond (Kenny's Pond). About a dozen remaining farms were distributed along the roads leading to Torbay, Monday Pond and Riverhead. Because these areas were most distant from the main node of urban settlement, stretching about a half a mile along the east end of the harbour, they contained fewer and less productive farms. A maze of paths and cart tracks connected these roads linking up with the more isolated farmsteads on the margins of the forest. Few farms were situated more than a mile and a half from town. The nuclear areas of agriculture were in the northern and eastern outskirts of town, in the shadow of the two forts. Although not all commodities grown were recorded in 1807, the total marketable value of those recorded (potatoes and hay) was roughly £5,000. The dominance of Quidi Vidi and the White Hills as an early agricultural area is evident; this district produced more

than twice as much potatoes and hay as any other in 1807
(Table 1).

CHAPTER III

EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT

The vast majority of farms around St. John's were established between 1810 and 1840. This was a period when St. John's became the centre for immigration, particularly from southeast Ireland (Mannion, 1974). The reasons for the migration are complex. Unlike other areas of northwestern Europe, there was relatively little urbanization or industrial growth in Ireland during the industrial revolution. Land pressure became intense after the Napoleonic Wars, farmers were unwilling to subdivide commercially viable farms and southeast Irish towns could not absorb the rising rural population. Conditions in Newfoundland were also a stimulus for migration. During the war, and especially between 1811 and 1815, Newfoundland experienced an unprecedented economic boom and wages for fishermen quadrupled. It was a combination of homeland economic distress and relative new world prosperity that stimulated Irish migrations to Newfoundland. The original farm community was comprised of fairly well-to-do families drawn from the military or the trading community in the town, almost entirely of Protestant and British background, but the heavy influx of poor Catholic Irish resulted in their rapid ascendancy, both in St. John's and in the farm settlements around it. Over seventy per cent of the farms,

by 1840, were established by Irish immigrants and most of the remainder by English, with a few Scots and some settlers from the Maritimes. Merchants or their agents, doctors, military officers and civil servants who dominated the small eighteenth century farm community occupied no more than one sixth of the farms established after 1810.

One of the most difficult questions to answer relates to the process whereby immigrants moved on to the land. As far as can be determined, the majority of farm settlers first worked in St. John's to raise enough money to begin a farm. Capital was needed for obtaining title to land, clearing it and erecting a house and barn. For example, in New Brunswick during the 1830's, a log hut could cost a settler £3 - £5, a cabin with a cellar, chimney and shingled roof between £25 and £40 and twice that amount for a framed and shingled dwelling (Wynn, 1981). A barn might cost a further £25 - £40. Having first selected a plot, the potential settler, sometimes alone or sometimes with the assistance of a servant or kin, grubbed and cleared enough ground for a first crop, usually potatoes. In the wilderness surrounding St. John's, this was estimated by the Surveyor General to cost around £15 per acre (Mannion, 1977: 254). As in New Brunswick, an intending settler required around £30 - £40 before moving on to the land. A Report of the Agricultural Committee of the House of Assembly in 1863 contains a personal narrative

describing one farmer's pioneering experiences. William Ruby arrived in St. John's from south Devon in 1843 and began to clear a farm in 1850. Although Ruby's case was exceptional in the sense that he was an English immigrant arriving at the end of the period of farm expansion, it is representative of the process:

"Have been in the country twenty years. Was a day laborer for seven years. Thirteen years since I took a farm; at the time of taking it was a wilderness. I was a poor man without a shilling. Besides paying for my grant, I borrowed fifty pounds; I paid 5 per cent interest for it. After 4 years, I paid off the principal, at the rate of ten pounds per annum, besides the interest.

I commenced to grub the ground on the 13th May, and before the fall I had about an acre cleared, and about 4 or 5 barrels of potatoes set; the produce was small; I had no manure.

I built a tilt the winter previous by help of neighbors. I cut wood and made broom and sold it to the merchants during the winter.

In clearing my land I left sufficient woods for shelter round each field. The second year I cleared but little ground, having to go to work gardening and farming, to earn money for myself. I obtained 4 s. per day for my labor. . . . I only set about 3 barrels seed potatoes the second year; the produce was small, but I managed to keep my seed. . . . For 18 months I had to take everything on my back, for half a mile, before there was a road made near my house. The third year I used to work about my ground only at intervals, and used to come to town to work. Had about an acre and a half cleared, which I cropped with potatoes, turnips, and cabbage and planted some fruit trees. The vegetable crop improved this year, from being able to apply more manure. My sons were now growing up, and gave some assistance. I had five children, four of whom were ill for some time with measles, which threw me back considerably, I had no assistance from the government during the time.

I have now about 10 acres of land in a good state of cultivation. I had about 13 tons of hay last year which I sold for £5.10s per ton. I sold also 60 barrels of potatoes, at an average price of 7s. 6d. per barrel, and about £5 worth of cabbage, and had sufficient for the use of my family.

" During the past four years I gave a great deal of my time in making my house more comfortable, and built a stable with studs and covered mine with sods. I have now a good house, which will cost £200, with a good walled cellar underneath, and a good well. House is 30 feet long and 20 feet wide.

I have also bought 50 acres of land each, for my two sons, from the government, paid 2s. 3d. per acre; there is no road to it, to induce them to clear it yet, but hope the government will soon give the means for opening up the roads. ...

I think an industrious man, if assisted to clear an acre of land and a free grant given him and seeds given him for the first year, it would be the means of inducing more people to apply themselves to the pursuits of agriculture. A poor man cannot succeed to clear land, unless he has some way to earn something for his support during intervals while clearing the land. ...

The year before last I cut 3 tons of hay per acre. I find turnips a useful and profitable crop, but not so profitable, however, as potatoes. ...

It would take a summer to clear an acre of land where the green woods are; but where the woods have been burnt sometime, I could clear an acre in six weeks.

Farm settlers received some assistance in their efforts to establish farms. Both the colonial governors and some members of the emerging middle class promoted agricultural settlement. Governors like Gambier (1802-3), Gower (1804-6), Holloway (1807-9), and Duckworth (1810-12) acknowledged the increasingly sedentary nature of settlement in Newfoundland and recognized the utility of local cultivation but Governor Keats' revision in land granting policy in 1813, already alluded to, was an important step in the advance of local farm settle-

¹J.H.A. (1863), Appendix: 1014-17.

ment.² Title to land was now much easier to acquire and financial support for roads was forthcoming. Subsequently, Governors Hamilton (1818-24) and particularly Cochrane (1825-34) extended these policies.³ Although some merchants considered that "every barrel of potatoes grown in Newfoundland would reduce the importation of provisions from which they derive enormous profits," others supported and invested in farm settlement and argued with the colonial authorities for its promotion (Morris, 1824: 15).

Support for local agriculture was linked to the fight for local government under the leadership of such men as William Carson, a medical doctor and radical politician, and Patrick Morris, an Irish merchant. They solicited colonial funds to assist poor immigrants establish farms around St. John's through fee simple grants, free farm tools, better roads and a local assembly with powers to re-invest revenues collected into the agricultural sector (Carson, 1812; 1813; Morris, 1824).⁴ These and other merchants encouraged cultivation, "not only by precept but likewise by example," investing their profits from trade in local agriculture (Tocque, 1878:424).

² CO 194/43 (1803): 43; L.B.C.S.O., 18 (1804): 111-18; L.B.C.S.O., 20 (1808): 115; Duckworth Papers, file 22/163 (1810): 19; L.B.C.S.O., 21 (1811): 379; L.B.C.S.O., 25 (1813): 160-64.

³ CO 194/61 (1818): 75; L.B.C.S.O., 31 (1821): 418-19; Cochrane Papers, Mss. 2363 (1825): 78; Cochrane Papers Mss. 2365 (1831): 265-71.

⁴ CO 194/60 (1817): 149-151.

This practice instigated others to "embark their capital in agricultural speculations."⁵

Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of farms by 1840. In Quidi Vidi district the number of farms doubled since 1810 but elsewhere they increased more than sevenfold. Irish immigrants extended and developed the nuclear farming areas and had pushed beyond the old farming core, especially to the west of town. Approximately 400 farms were occupied. Land use data survive for 135 farms. The average farmer claimed title to approximately 40 acres of which less than fifteen were improved. Acres cultivated, however, varied considerably. Table 2 indicates that nearly half of these farms contained less than 10 acres cleared and cultivated.

Table 2

Farm Acreage Under Cultivation 1810 - 1840

<u>Acres Cleared</u>	<u>No. of Farms</u>
1 - 5	32
6 - 10	35
11 - 15	27
16 - 20	21
21 - 50	16
51 - 100	4
TOTAL	135

⁵ Cochrane Papers Mss. 2365 (1831): 267.

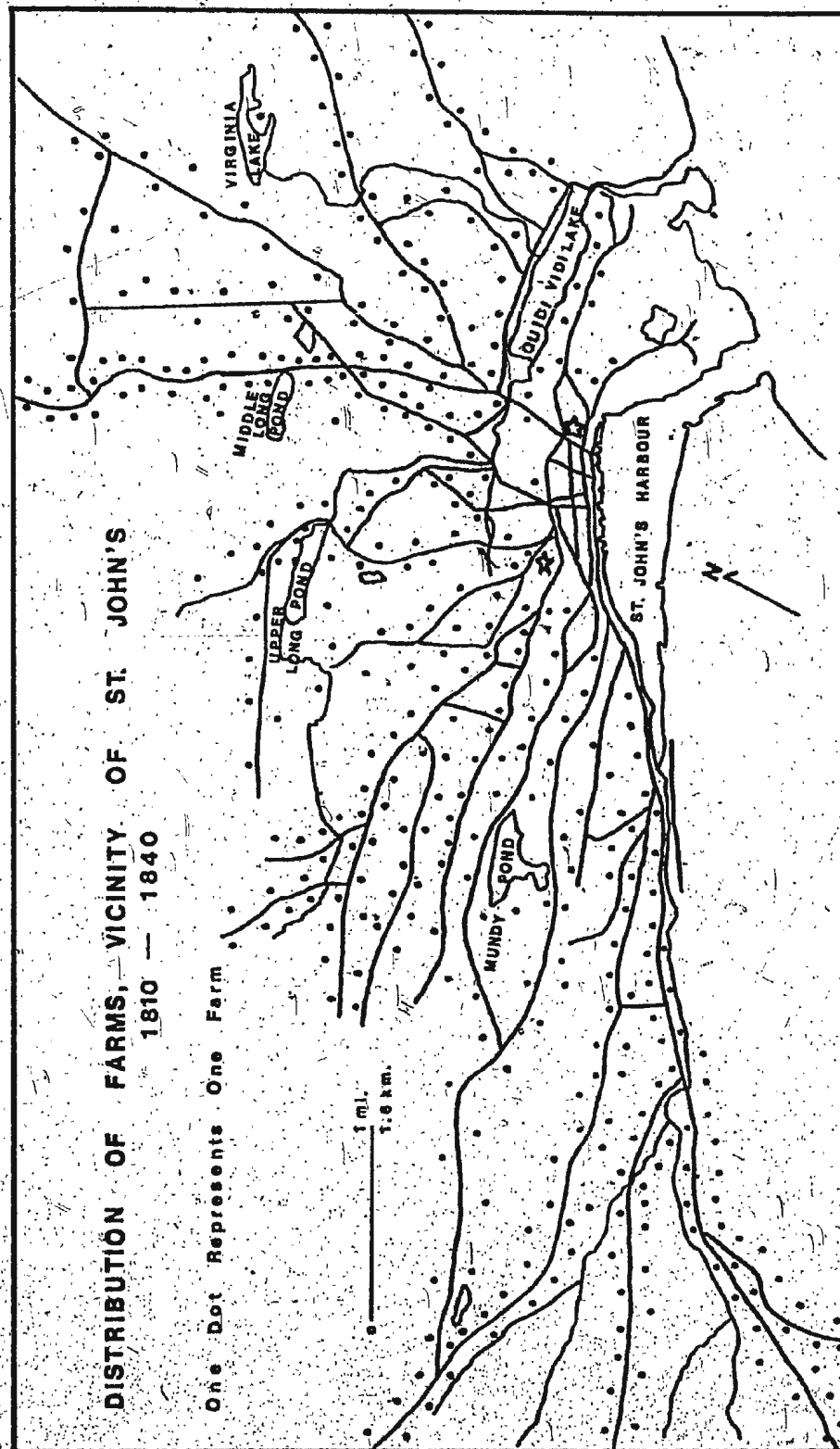


Figure 5

Ratios between acres improved and acres occupied in certain farm districts suggest that some areas were more intensively farmed than others. For example, in the old farm core, northeast of town, over half the land held was improved. By contrast, only one third of the land was cleared in the more recently settled areas west of town.

Irrespective of farm size or acreage under cultivation, the basic mix or balance of goods produced and the methods of production changed little. Hay, potatoes, turnips and cabbage were the main crops and a variety of other vegetables, including carrots, beets, parsnips and savoury were produced in a "kitchen garden" close to the farm house. Fruits such as apples, raspberries, gooseberries and rhubarb, as well as a variety of flowers were grown in a "front garden."

Usually about three quarters of improved acreage on all farms was under hay and the remainder under arable crops. Because milk was the commercial staple, the main objective of the crop rotation scheme was to maximize hay production. Potatoes were followed by oats and hayseed (timothy and clover) and then hay was cultivated, perhaps for four years, before the land was ploughed again and planted with turnips and cabbage (Mannion, 1974: 63). During the summer, livestock grazed in the woods and when field crops were harvested, cattle were allowed in the meadows. Female calves were normally retained for milking and breeding and males sold for veal.

Farming was intensive by North American standards.

Between one third and one half of all property was cleared for agriculture on many farms. Only that part of property cleared for crops was fenced. Field forms were haphazard, being, in part, determined by natural features such as slopes, stone outcrops, streams and marshland, as well as, the hand held tools used in clearing and cultivation (e.g. spades and mattocks). Despite poor soils, relatively high yields were obtained. An acre could produce either three tons of hay, two tons of green oats and straw, sixty barrels of potatoes, eighty barrels of turnips or fifteen tons of cabbage. This was due to heavy manuring and widespread use of crop rotation. Whether a farmer worked five acres or fifty acres, the system of farming did not differ greatly.

Most of the smaller farms were operated by the Irish. These farms usually had between six and fifteen acres under cultivation, which could produce approximately fifty barrels of potatoes, sixty barrels of turnips, 1500 pounds of cabbage and twenty to thirty tons of hay. Livestock generally consisted of one horse, six to ten milk cows, a few calves and, occasionally, some fowl. By contrast, large scale farms were mainly operated by English and Scots, and had between thirty and sixty acres improved. Some could produce 150 barrels of potatoes, the same amount of turnips, twenty-five tons of cabbage and about 100 tons of hay. Livestock included three to six horses, twenty-five or more milk cows, several bullocks, a bull, some fowl and, less frequently, pigs. On small farms labour was supplied

by the farmer and his family, whereas on large farms three or more men were employed, either seasonally or full-time. Farm houses and outbuildings also reflected differences in scale. The small farmhouse was often a simple four-room structure with a root cellar underneath. Outbuildings consisted of one barn and seldom more than two or three small sheds (Plates 1a, 1b). By contrast, the largest farmsteads had larger houses, more than one barn, an ice house, a stone dairy for storing milk, a separate root cellar and several storage sheds.⁶ Plate 2 illustrates "Heathfield," a large farm of 30 improved acres, established and occupied by lowland Scots since the 1820's

The most apparent differences in scale of farming were evident in the estimated cash value of farmsteads provided by Wills and Bonds of Administration between 1813 and 1860.⁷ This represents the farmer's total investment in the land and includes, in addition to his improved acres, his dwelling house, outbuildings, fences, implements, transport vehicles and other fixed assets. Of the 120 farms recorded, thirty-four were valued at less than £50, thirty were between £51 and £100 and twenty between £101

⁶For detailed inventories of three large scale farms see "Rostellan," *The Patriot*, March 29, 1843; *The Newfoundlander*, May 4, 1843; "Willowdale," *Public Ledger*, July 7, 1863 and "Lookout," *Evening Telegram*, March 4, 1893.

⁷Newfoundland Probate Court. Administration Bonds, 1808-1814, 1813-22; Newfoundland Supreme Court, Administration Bonds, 1826-27, 1838-42, P.A.N.L. GN5/2/A/9.

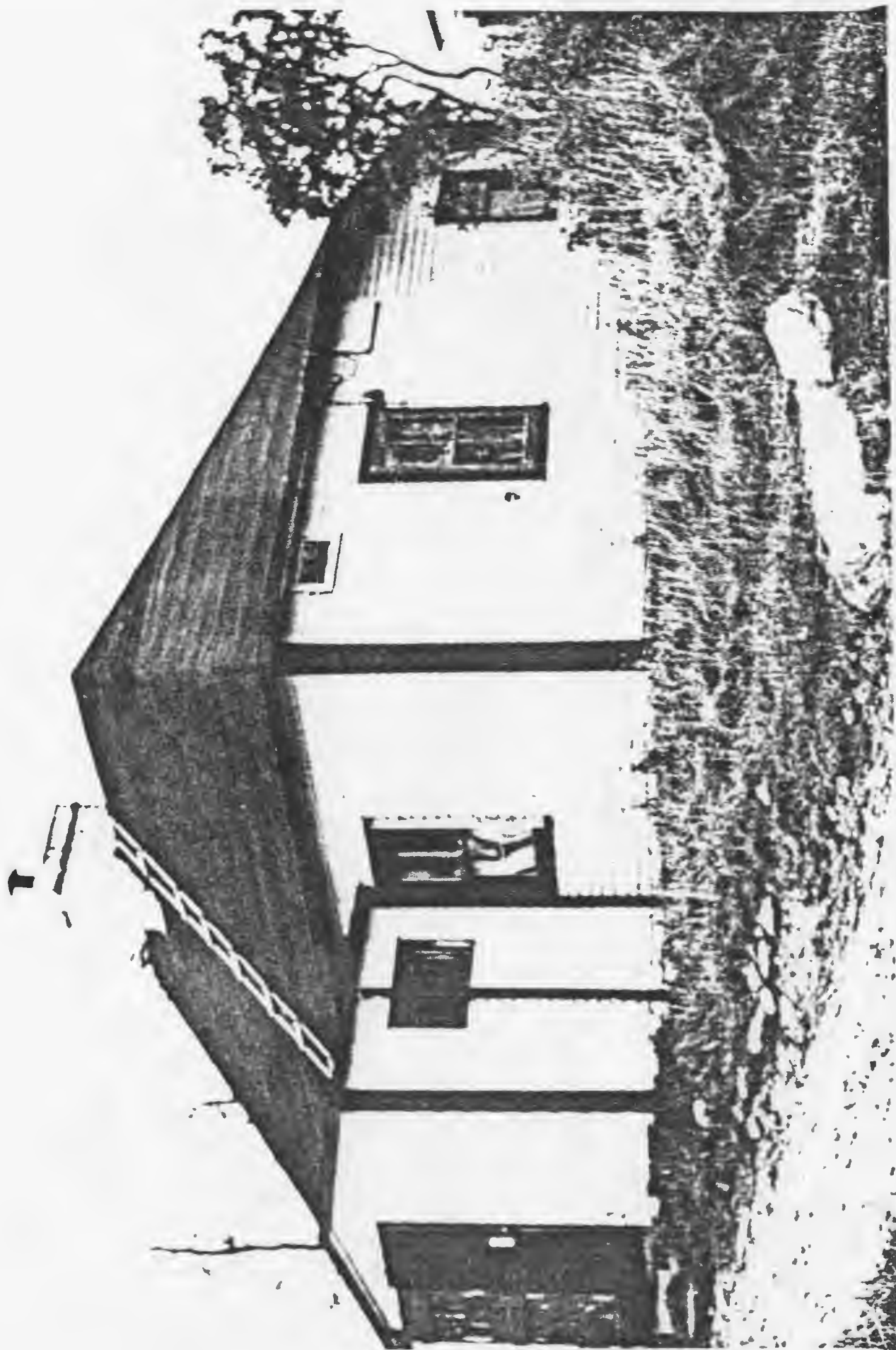


Plate 1a - Gladney Farmhouse

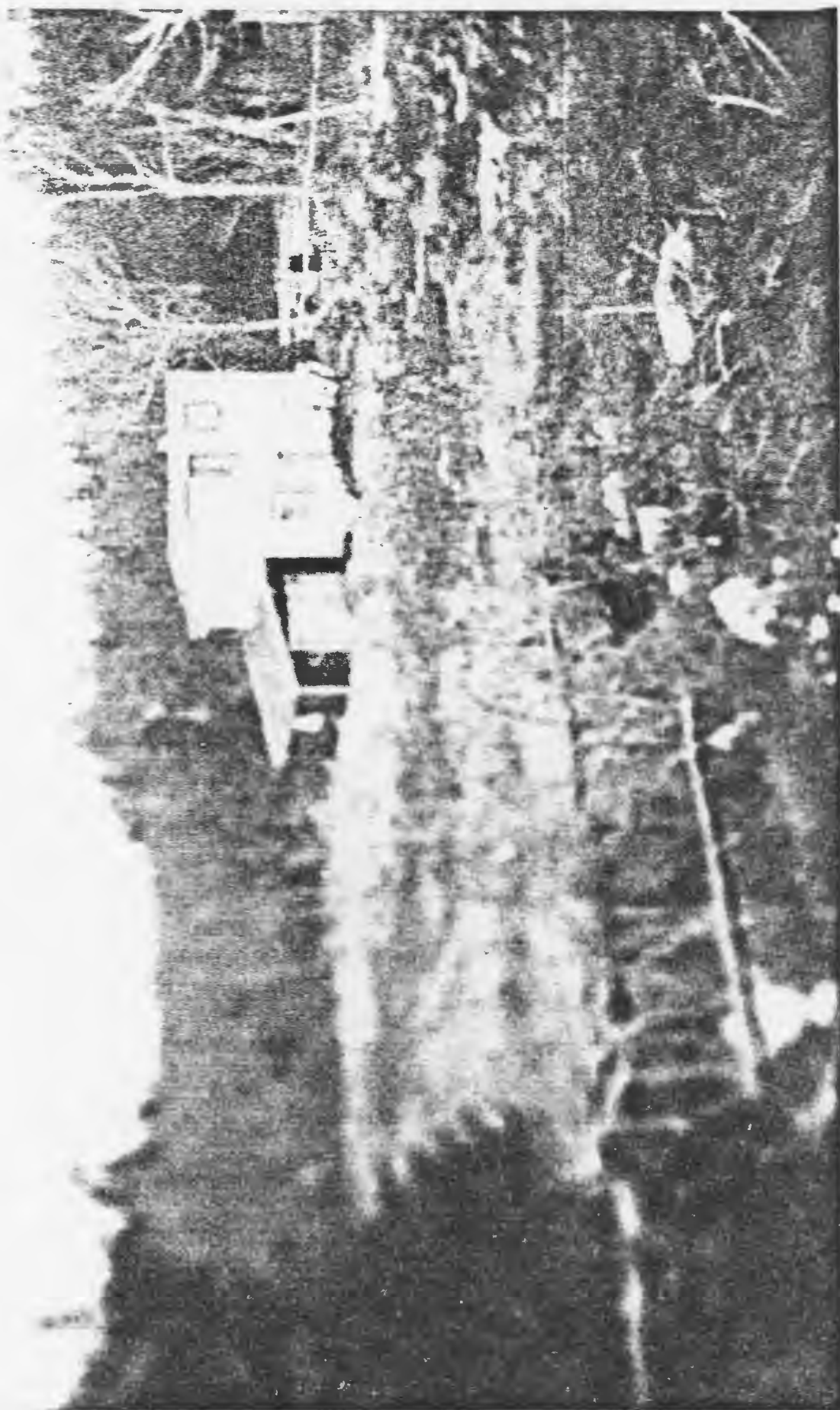


Plate 1b - Tracey Barn

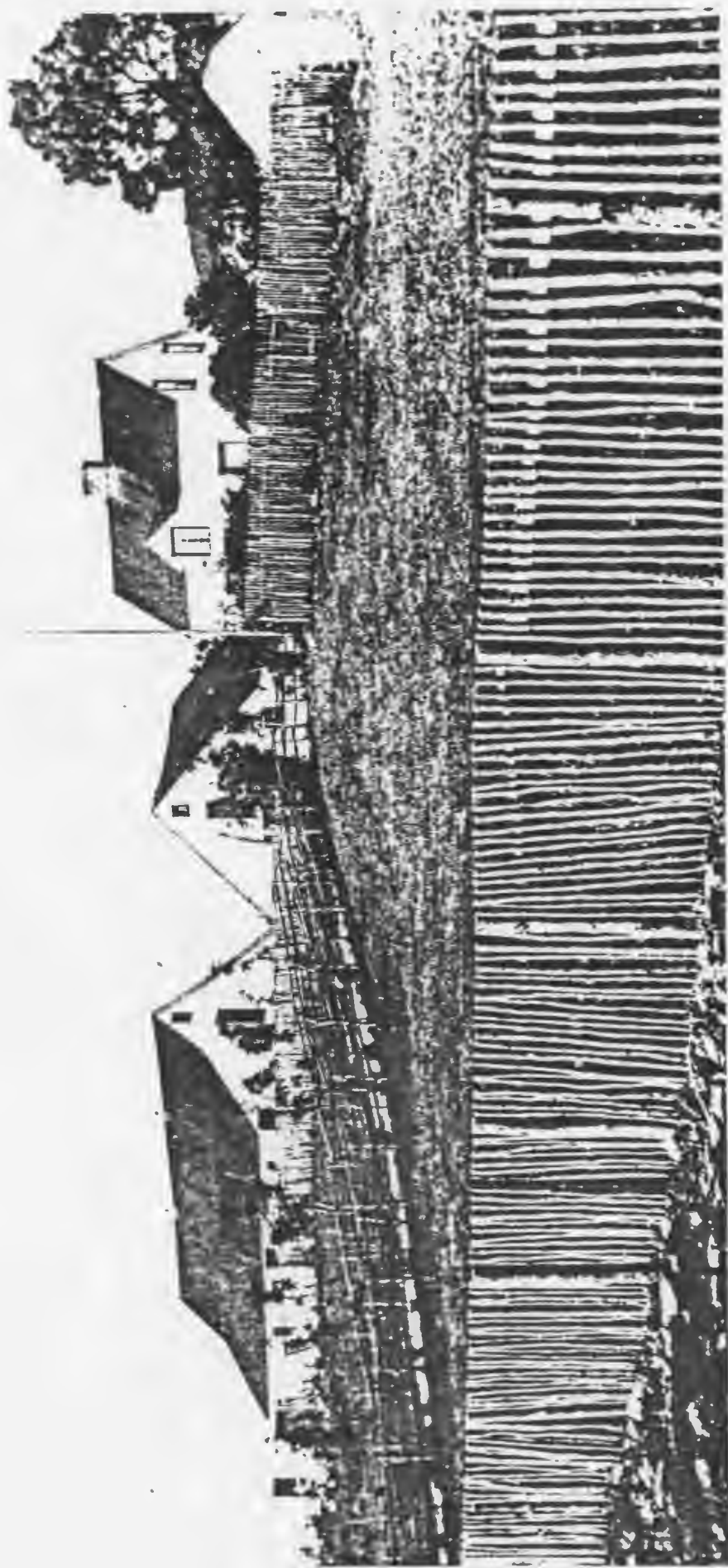


Plate 2 - Heathfield

and £250. Only twenty farms were estimated to be worth £251 - £500, eleven between £501 - £1000 and five between £1001 - £3000. Among the largest and most commercial were "Greenfield" (£3000), Bally Haly (£2500), "Heathfield" (£1500), "Rostellan" (£1000), "Mount Pearl" (£800) and "McKie's Grove" (£789). Large farms were usually named and generally owned by members of the middle class from the town. Of the six farms mentioned here, three were owned by Scots (a civil servant, doctor and tailor), two were owned by Englishmen (a businessman and a retired officer of the British Navy) and one by an Irish Protestant (a former Colonel of the garrison at St. John's).

Apart from capitalizing and operating the largest farms, merchants and others in the town had additional investments in the farm hinterland. More than fifty "country retreats," "seats" or "cottages" were established, mainly by English and Scots after 1830 (Appendix B). Most were situated within a fifteen minute walk of the town. The exterior of the cottage was often highly embellished and the interior suitable "for a gentleman and his family" (Plate 3).⁸ Outbuildings usually consisted of a stable for horses, a carriage house and a shed or two. Few had more than five acres cultivated and all contained extensive "front gardens" with fruit, flowers, ornamental trees and even hedgerows. In addition to the traditional

⁸ Evening Telegram, May 29, 1882.

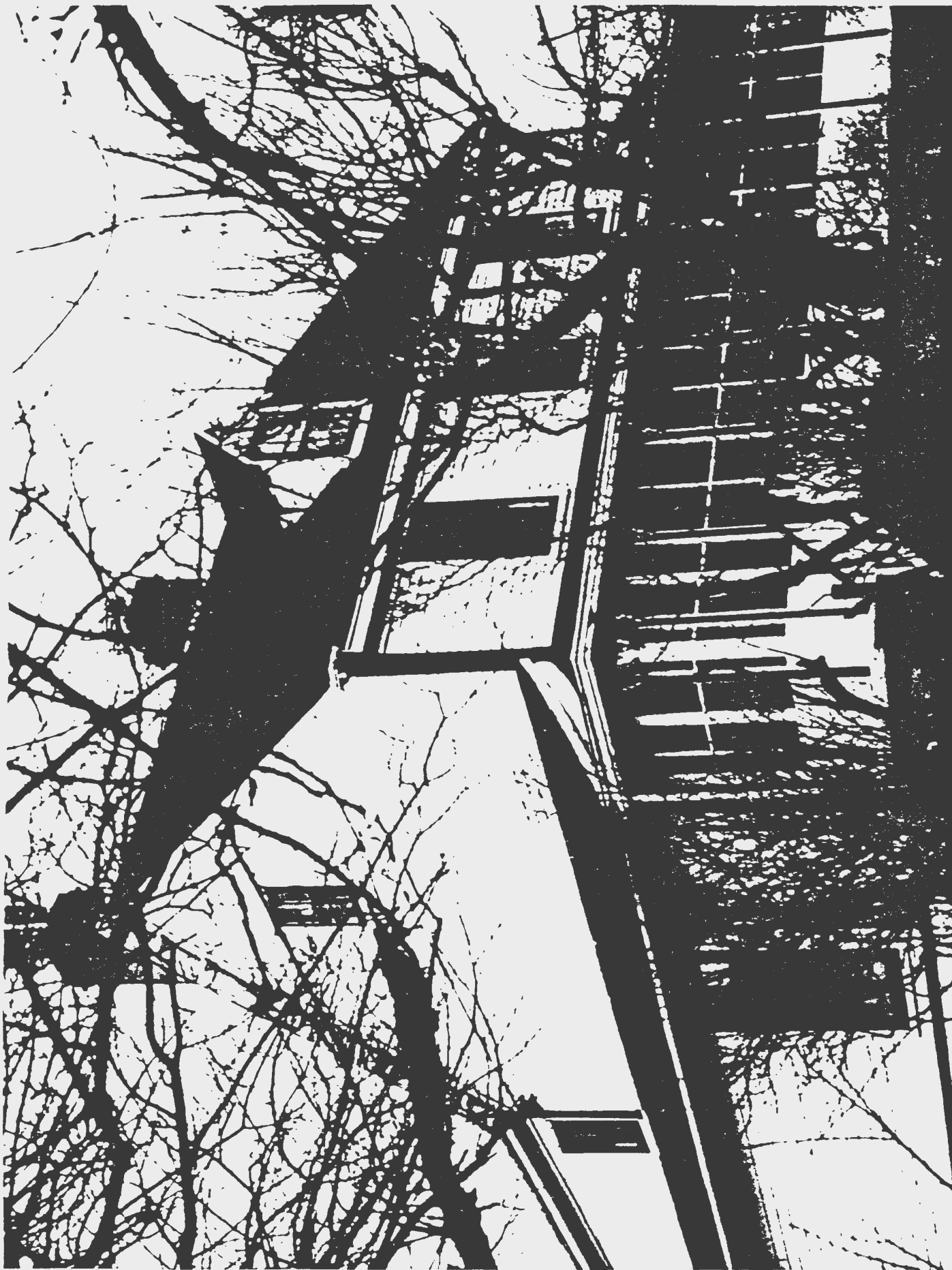


Plate 3 - Retreat Cottage

crops, other foods were produced. The diary of Edward Morris, merchant and politician, describes the seasonal activities of one such "cottage farm" in the mid-nineteenth century and lists the variety of crops produced.⁹ These included marrow, cucumber, sprouts, French beans, radish, spinach, celery, cauliflower, lettuce, mustard, thyme, sage, savoury, red cabbage, parsley and onion. Sometimes seasonal labour was hired and in a few cases hay and other produce were grown for sale in town. Commercial dairying was seldom practiced, except in a few cases where full time farm servants and labourers were employed year round to operate the estate as a small farm (e.g. Maypark, Eskasoni, Northbank). For the most part, these country cottages were occupied by their owners only during summer. In the fall, if the estate was not occupied by a farm servant, it was offered for rent.

By 1850 agricultural colonization in the vicinity of town was virtually complete. An Agricultural Society founded in 1842 sponsored annual exhibitions where prizes were distributed to farmers and cottage owners for the best crops, livestock and improved farmstead within ten miles of town. Seeds of all types were regularly imported and available for sale, bulls were placed at well known farms in all farming districts and attempts were being made to encourage more efficient methods of liming and manuring the soil.

⁹ Edward Morris Diary, 1851-1887, M.H.G. Microfilm.

(O'Brien, 1849; Robinson, 1853). Irrespective of farm size, the system of land use changed little and dairying was clearly the commercial staple among all full-time farmers.

CHAPTER IV

PATTERNS OF PRODUCTION, 1836 - 1935

Although it was almost certainly the period of most rapid expansion in farm settlement, there are no comprehensive censuses of local agriculture between 1810 and 1835. Estimates over this period suggest that improved land more than tripled, while potatoes increased by more than fifty per cent. It is impossible to assess accurately the volumes of other crops and livestock. Published census data begin in 1836 and exist for 1845, 1857, 1869, 1874, 1884, decennially from 1891 to 1921 and for 1935. Despite problems of comparison and reliability, these provide some basis for a quantitative assessment of changes in total farm production.

Newfoundland Censuses: Agricultural Returns and their Limitations

In 1836, acres occupied, acres improved, potatoes, oats, hay, horses, neat cattle, pigs and sheep were recorded. An average farm, according to this census, contained nine improved acres which produced at least forty-six barrels of potatoes, twelve bushels of oats and eight tons of hay. Average livestock consisted of a horse, three cattle and either a sheep or a pig. The census of 1845 distinguished between livestock bred in Newfoundland and those imported. This indicated that approximately one third of the local

horse population and only one fifth of all cattle in the study area were locally bred. Data on milk cows, butter, turnips and "other vegetables" (carrots, parsnips and beets combined) were collected in 1857 and cabbage and poultry added in 1891. Milk, the main commercial staple, and other adjuncts like eggs and local fruit (rhubarb, strawberries, currants) were not recorded until 1911. Ancillary commodities supplied by farmers, like dinnage, firewood, staves and stone for ballast, were never recorded. In addition to the difficulties posed by such inconsistencies, there are more serious problems with some of the returns. The census of 1845, and to a lesser extent 1857, overestimate actual production and that of 1869 underestimates it. Improved acreage figures fluctuate considerably in all censuses and frequently appear to be at odds with production trends. This may have resulted from confusion over the term "improved" by different enumerators. For these reasons, the censuses of 1845 and 1869, as well as improved acreage data, have been excluded from further analysis.

The Function of Crops and Livestock

Agricultural commodities may be classified under arable, pastoral or mixed. Arable included all root crops, as well as pigs; pastoral encompassed pasture and hay, all cattle and their by-products. Horses and poultry may be considered mixed, reflecting aspects of both economies.

Potatoes, the most valuable arable commodity, were both consumed by the farmer's family and sold to housewives in the town. Turnips, cabbages and other vegetables had the same function although turnips, along with oats and hay, were also used as feed for cattle. Hay, the main fodder crop for horses and cattle, was supplemented mainly by oats and generally consumed on-farm. In 1935, the census distinguished between the amount of major crops produced and the amount actually sold. This indicated that approximately one third of all potatoes and turnips and one half of the cabbage grown were sold. Virtually all the hay grown by full-time farmers of the inner zone was consumed on the farm and more than seventy-five percent of all milk produced was sold. Milk cows were clearly the most valuable animals raised. Fresh milk was the mainstay of the farm economy. In addition, cows were a major source of manure for all crops. Likewise, horses were integral in the functioning of the farm system. They were a major consumer of oats which were needed in the crop rotation to turn arable land back into ley; they provided labour for tillage and hauling and were an excellent source of manure. Beef cattle and particularly pigs and poultry were commercial items of lesser importance. Locally raised bullocks and dry milk cows were sold to butchers in town, and pigs, fed mainly on potatoes, fish and table scraps, were raised by a few farmers. Poultry were either sold for consumption or kept for egg production. Sheep and butter were the least important and were mainly

produced for the farmer's own use (e.g. wool for clothes) and for consumption.

Production Trends: The Inner Zone

Between 1836 and 1921, the overall production of the main crops and livestock increased within the inner zone of full-time farming (Figure 6). Milk cows were the only commodity to increase steadily until 1921 and declined only slightly thereafter.¹ Horses, likewise, increased until 1921 but had declined sharply in 1935, possibly reflecting the introduction of motor vehicles into farm transport. Hay and potatoes fluctuated somewhat throughout the nineteenth century, decreasing in both 1884 and 1911. By 1921, however, potato production reached its peak and in 1935 hay reached an unprecedented level of more than 8,000 tons. These fluctuations are difficult to explain but are undoubtedly related to the commercial production of non-perishable, easy-to-transport commodities in the outer zone of part-time farming and hay and potato imports from Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Beef cattle was the only high-value commodity which decreased to negligible levels after 1901. Using standard 1935 prices, the average value of milk cows

¹The decrease between 1857 and 1874 is difficult to explain. It seems highly improbable that milk production decreased during these years. A plausible explanation is that milk cows were greatly overestimated in the census of 1857.

MAIN AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES, INNER ZONE 1836 — 1935

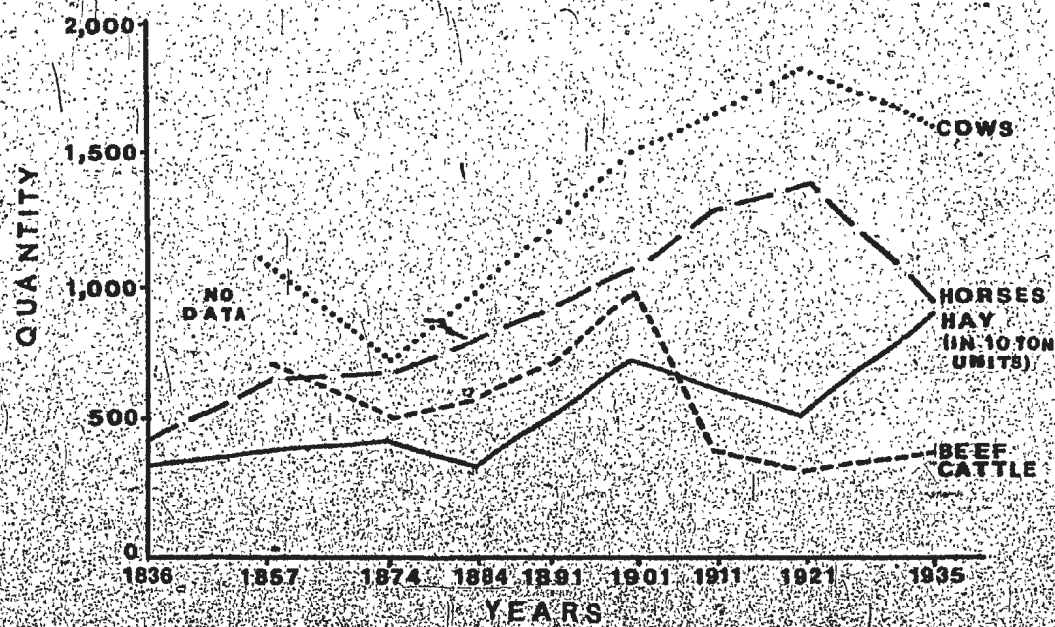
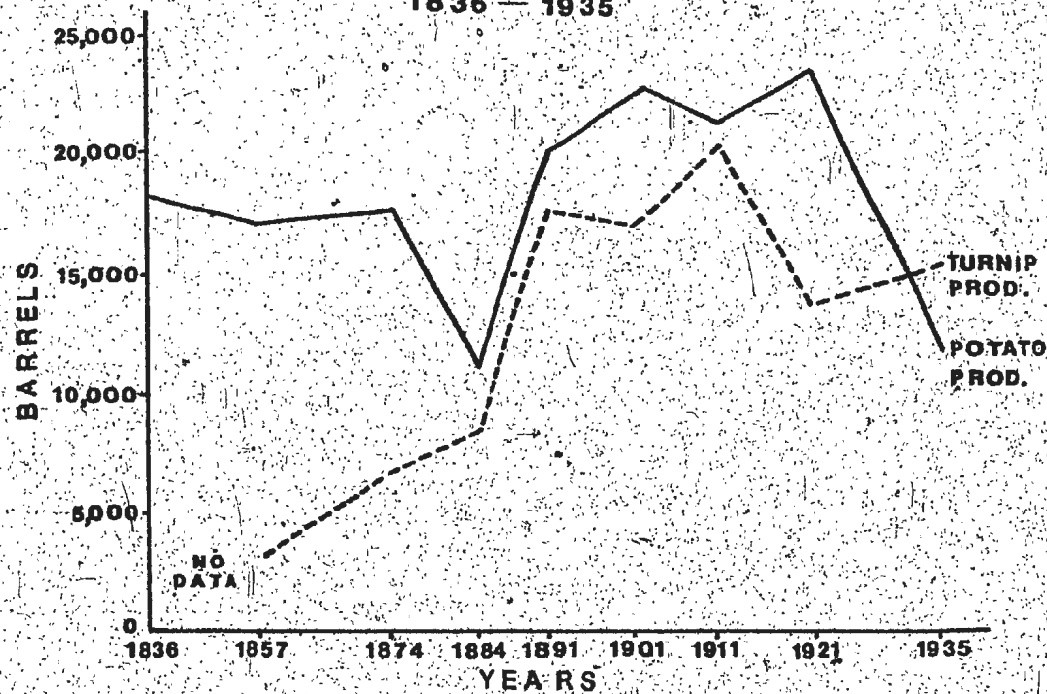


Figure 6

and hay for the century was nearly equal, about \$112,000 each (Table 3).² Horses were about twenty per cent less. On average, these were worth approximately four times more than both potatoes and beef cattle. The reason for this pastoral emphasis is that fresh milk was the only foodstuff impossible to import, horse-drawn vehicles the only means of transport in and around the town and hay the most important farm product in a commercial dairying economy.

All other crops and livestock raised were of far lesser commercial value. Turnips, which increased steadily until 1911 and subsequently declined, had an average value of about \$17,000, half that of potatoes. By 1935, however, turnips were worth slightly more than potatoes. Cabbages, which declined from 700 tons in 1891 to 200 tons in 1921, averaged about one half that of turnips. During the following decade and a half, however, they quintupled and were worth nearly double that of potatoes and turnips combined (Table 3). Eggs, not recorded during the nineteenth century, were worth on average, only \$12,000. Likewise, pigs which increased from just over 100 in 1836 to nearly 900 in 1901 before declining, averaged about \$7,000. It is impossible, however, to measure accurately the amount of these commodities either

²In 1935 cows were \$100 each, horses \$100, beef cattle \$50, pigs \$25, sheep \$10 and poultry \$1.00. Potatoes were \$1.75 per barrel, turnips \$1.50 per barrel, Cabbage \$40 per ton and hay \$24 per ton. Small vegetables and oats were 80 cents per bushel, butter 30 cents per pound, eggs 35 cents per dozen and milk 40 cents per gallon. Department of Colonial Secretary, Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1935:

Table 3

Value (\$) of Agricultural Production, Inner Zone, 1836-1935

	1836	1857	1874	1884	1891	1901	1911	1921	1935	Total	Average
PRODUCTS											
Arable											
Potatoes	22,184	29,653	29,970	20,975	34,963	39,609	36,293	40,559	22,205	286,411	31,823
Turnips	-	4,750	8,746	11,848	25,887	25,476	30,171	20,649	22,912	150,439	16,715
Cabbage	-	-	-	-	6,400	14,920	13,560	8,160	42,200	85,240	9,471
Pigs	1,740	8,280	6,360	4,530	7,425	10,410	13,530	6,645	4,845	63,765	7,085
Oats	3,881	3,391	1,867	1,651	2,226	1,576	3,362	1,530	-	19,484	2,164
Small Vegetables	-	14	332	535	4,684	708	784	651	5,183	12,891	1,432
Total Arable	37,805	46,088	47,275	39,539	81,585	92,699	97,700	78,194	97,345	618,230	68,692
Pastoral											
Milk	-	-	-	-	-	-	181,904	447,222	198,660	827,786	91,975
Milk Cows	-	109,100	70,400	97,900	117,600	144,500	153,800	172,600	158,000	1,023,900	113,765
Hay	75,072	82,752	88,416	71,880	101,400	163,560	127,224	99,048	197,112	1,006,464	111,829
Cattle	49,050	32,550	23,750	25,900	32,650	47,900	18,650	11,350	14,050	255,850	28,427
Butter	-	1,816	6,305	2,463	1,885	2,367	1,749	3,879	1,040	21,504	2,389
Sheep	2,410	3,200	2,705	2,245	3,015	2,050	1,520	380	35	17,560	1,951
Total Pastoral	126,532	229,418	191,576	200,388	256,550	360,377	484,847	734,479	568,897	3,153,064	350,340
Mixed											
Horses	36,500	60,900	62,300	74,900	86,800	101,800	121,500	132,000	114,800	791,500	87,944
Poultry	-	-	-	-	16,558	24,269	33,064	19,350	23,851	117,092	13,010
Eggs	-	-	-	-	-	-	35,380	34,768	40,539	110,687	12,298
Total Mixed	36,500	60,900	62,300	74,900	103,358	126,069	189,944	186,118	179,190	1,019,279	113,253
Total All Commodities	200,837	336,406	301,151	314,827	441,493	579,145	772,491	998,791	845,432	4,790,573	532,285

Source: Newfoundland, Department of Colonial Secretary, Censuses of Newfoundland.

consumed on the farm or sold in town. Sheep, butter, small vegetables and oats were relatively unimportant as items of trade; they had the lowest potential average cash value. This was in part due to competition from imports and the need of extensive pasture for sheep, but the main reason for the insignificance of these commodities in the inner zone was, "the great demand in St. John's for fresh milk."³

Production figures suggest increasing specialization in dairying after 1900 as all commodities except the main crops and livestock declined sharply. This is supported by the value of production recorded in 1935. Milk, valued at \$200,000 was double that of all arable crops combined (Table 3). Evidence also suggests that some arable specialization occurred, albeit on a much smaller scale. Until 1921 potatoes were clearly the most commercial arable crop, however, by 1935 both cabbages and turnips were worth more than potatoes. This is supported by oral tradition which says that during the 1920's and 30's, some farmers either gave up or cut back on their "milk routes" to specialize in certain crops. Among these "specialist farmers" were the O'Dea's, O'Neil's and Roses (cabbage), the Bairds and Winters (poultry), the Ruby's (cabbage and turnips) and the McDonald's (pigs). Dairying, however, was still the dominant commercial staple. All farm inputs and products

³ The Newfoundlander, January 27, 1859.

recorded between 1836 and 1935 had an average value of more than \$500,000, two thirds of which came from pastoral items - hay, milk cows, cattle and butter.

Specialization Within the Inner Zone

The more commercial farms were those closest to town. In 1911 the census describes six farming districts within the inner zone extending from Quidi Vidi in the east end, north past Windsor Lake and west to Topsail and the Goulds. These included an urban fringe of electoral wards within about a two and a half mile radius of town. It comprised Quidi Vidi Lake (the south-north banks and the White Hills), Portugal Cove Road - Brady's Path, Freshwater Valley - Kenmount Road, Topsail Road and Kilbride-Goulds (Figure 1). The St. John's fringe area encompassed farms along all roads leading into town. This included those sections of the Torbay, Portugal Cove, Long Pond, Mundy Pond, Blackmarsh, Topsail and Blockmaker's Hall Roads which were closest to town. In 1911 this district produced more agricultural commodities than any other district (Table 4). By 1935, however, agricultural production had virtually disappeared. Apart from about 2,000 barrels of potatoes and turnips, and nearly 200 tons of cabbage, no other crops were produced in any significant amount (Table 4). Milk cows had declined to one fifth the number in 1911 and now numbered less than 100 head, producing only 24,000 gallons of milk. This contraction was a direct

Table 4
Agricultural Production by District, Inner Farm Zone, 1911-1935

	Hay Tons	Potatoes Brls.	Turnips Brls.	Cabbages Tons	Horses C	Milk Cows	Other Cattle	Sheep	Sows Gallons	Milk Gallons	Butter lbs.
St. John's Urban Fringe											
1911	1790	7166	8046	129	758	563	125	283	448	129574	3120
1935	321	1127	1171	185	189	73	9	4	30	24320	0
Oranmore											
1911	189	639	318	3	32	80	18	0	26	13400	30
1935	246	590	806	5	39	122	23	2	14	46545	25
Portlaoine Road- Randy's Path											
1911	556	2235	1620	20	98	174	47	12	139	36400	610
1935	922	3014	4809	139	173	421	75	0	104	90171	50
Freshwater Valley											
1911	266	689	778	6	36	93	1	0	26	11428	0
1935	148	474	780	17	41	69	5	0	3	28235	100
Trillick Road											
1911	876	4169	3744	32	85	199	38	0	133	65611	2431
1935	949	2584	3944	268	156	436	77	0	111	201790	2282
Kilbride-Goulds											
1911	1624	5841	5608	150	206	429	143	9	130	198348	3877
1935	5856	4900	3765	479	144	459	92	1	61	105590	1320
Total 1911	5301	20739	20114	340	1215	1538	372	304	902	454761	10068
Total 1935	8442	12689	15275	1093	742	1580	281	7	323	496651	3467
% Change	+59	-38	-24	+221	-39	+3	-24	-97	-64	+9.2	-65

result of urban encroachment on agricultural land within this area.

By contrast, other districts experienced increases in production between 1911 and 1935. For example, in the Portugal Cove Road-Brady's Path area, potato production increased by about one third, turnips and cabbage more than trebled and milk cows and fresh milk doubled. Similar increases occurred in dairying in the Quidi Vidi and Freshwater Valley districts and in cabbage farming along the Topsail Road (Table 4).

The most striking contrast in production was in the Kilbride-Goulds area. Most livestock, their byproducts and potatoes and turnips decreased, but hay and cabbage more than tripled. The arable emphasis and increase in hay was undoubtedly a result of this district's distance from town. Oral tradition indicates that farmers seldom travelled more than six miles to deliver fresh milk to town and the most distant sections of this area (Lower Goulds, Big Pond, Petty Harbour Road) were nearly ten miles from St. John's. Production figures suggest that hay and cabbage were commercial crops for some of these distant farmers. Dairying, however, was still important in this district. Milk cows increased between 1911 and 1935 but only slightly. In 1935, 450 cows produced approximately 100,000 gallons of milk for sale in town. This indicates that some large-scale dairy farms were located closer to town but still within the Kilbride area.

The Outer Zone

Production patterns in the outports north of town generally differed from those of the inner zone. The distance from town, for example, of Torbay, Portugal Cove, St. Phillips, Topsail and Kelligrews ruled out commercial dairying (Figure 1). Milk production between 1911 and 1935 was just more than one third that of the inner zone. Instead these part-time farmers produced less perishable crops for sale in St. John's. Potatoes were commercially the most important. They doubled between 1857 and 1901, attaining a value of \$80,000, twice that of the inner zone (Figure 7). Beef cattle, worth an average of \$33,000, were worth slightly more than that of the inner zone. After 1891, however, they were consistently worth about \$10,000 more. Hay, also used as fodder for cattle, steadily increased until 1911 before subsequently declining. Although generally produced on a much smaller scale, between 1901 and 1911 it actually surpassed the level of production in the inner zone which decreased during these years. This implies that farmers of the outer zone supplied some of the fodder demands of dairy farmers, at least after 1900. Other commodities such as sheep, pigs and butter which were relatively unimportant for farmers close to town, were commercial staples for part-time farmers. By 1911 sheep had quadrupled from about 600 in 1836 and had a commercial value of \$23,000, ten times larger than that of the inner zone. Likewise, pigs increased about sevenfold during this period

MAIN AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES, OUTER ZONE

1836 - 1935

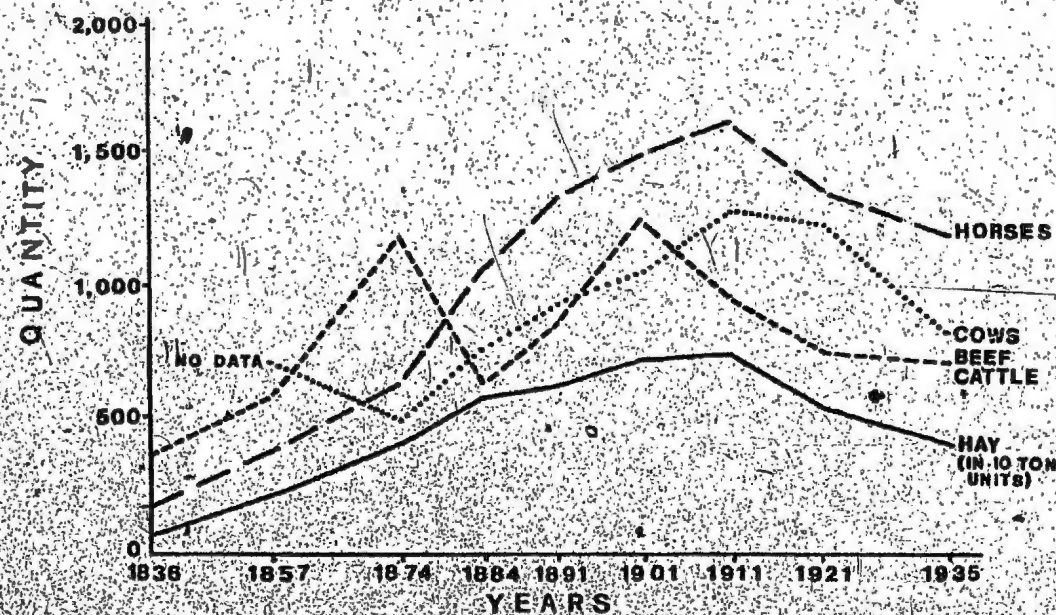
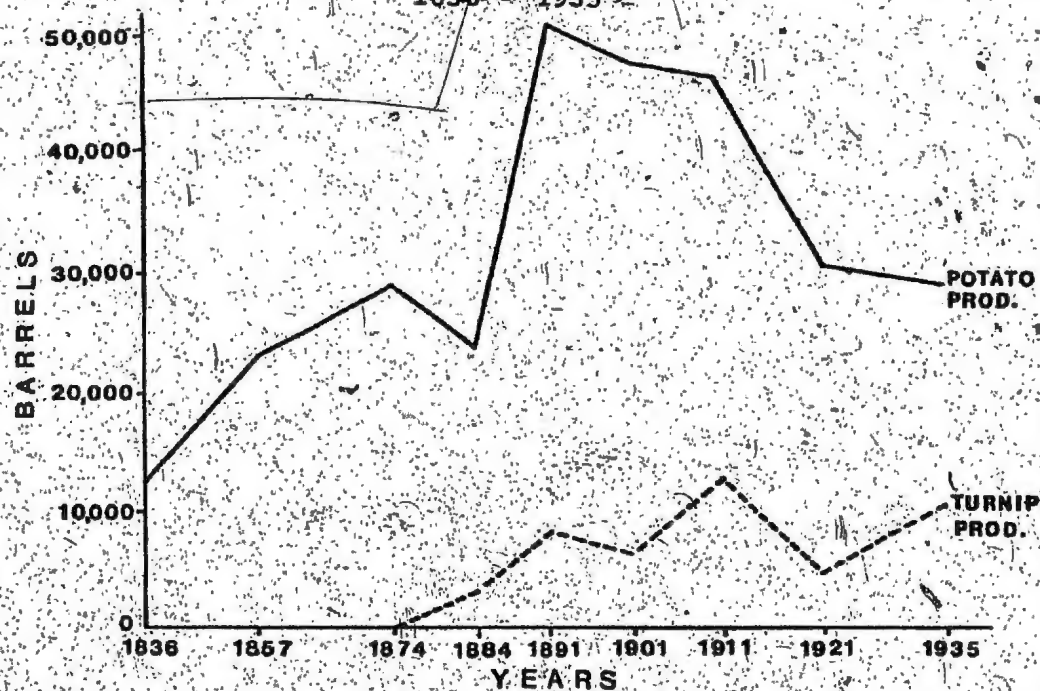


Figure 7

and were worth slightly more than sheep. The average value of pigs was nearly doubled that of the inner zone. Butter, produced for family use only in the inner zone, trebled between 1857 and 1901 and was worth about \$20,000. This suggests that this commodity was nearly as important as, for example, turnips in the inner zone. Cabbage and turnips were of lesser importance for part-time farmers. Although they increased until 1911 before subsequently declining, they were only worth approximately as much as sheep and pigs in the inner zone. These production figures support the suggestion that agriculture was becoming more specialized. Farmers of the inner zone were increasing their production of milk while outport producers increased their supply of less perishable foodstuffs which could be easily transported. The part-time nature of farming in the outer zone, where a commercial fishery dominated, also influenced the balance of goods produced. Sheep could be grazed on unfenced pasture and all other commodities produced for consumption and sale required less attention than milk cows. After 1911 most commodities steadily declined implying that the dissolution of the agrarian community had begun. In the inner zone, this occurred a decade later.

The geographical patterns of production validate in part von Thunen's assumptions on the spatial structure of land use around a central place. Thunen postulated that land-intensive farming declines with increasing distance from the

market due to increasing transportation costs (Thunen, 1826).⁴ The various commodities raised in the hinterland of St. John's were located in fairly distinct production zones. A horticultural zone in the immediate environs of town supplied fresh vegetables to urban consumers. Commercial milk production was confined to a zone extending five or six miles from St. John's and the crop rotation practised by these farmers was aimed towards a maximization of hay. Potatoes, turnips and cabbages were integral to this cropping system and were sold along with wood for fuel and building materials. With increasing distance from St. John's farming became more land-extensive and part-time in nature. In the outports north of town the land was used to produce less perishable goods which required less labour and could be transported cheaply. Butter, sheep, pigs, potatoes and even hay were relatively cheap and easy to drive or transport in comparison to their value. In more distant outports such as those along the Cape Shore in Placentia Bay, butter for the St. John's market was a major product and beef cattle were raised and driven to the town for slaughter (Mannion, 1976).

⁴ For a discussion of von Thunen's model see Chisholm, 1962; Harvey, 1966; Morgan and Munton, 1971; Conzen, 1972; Norton and Conkling, 1974.

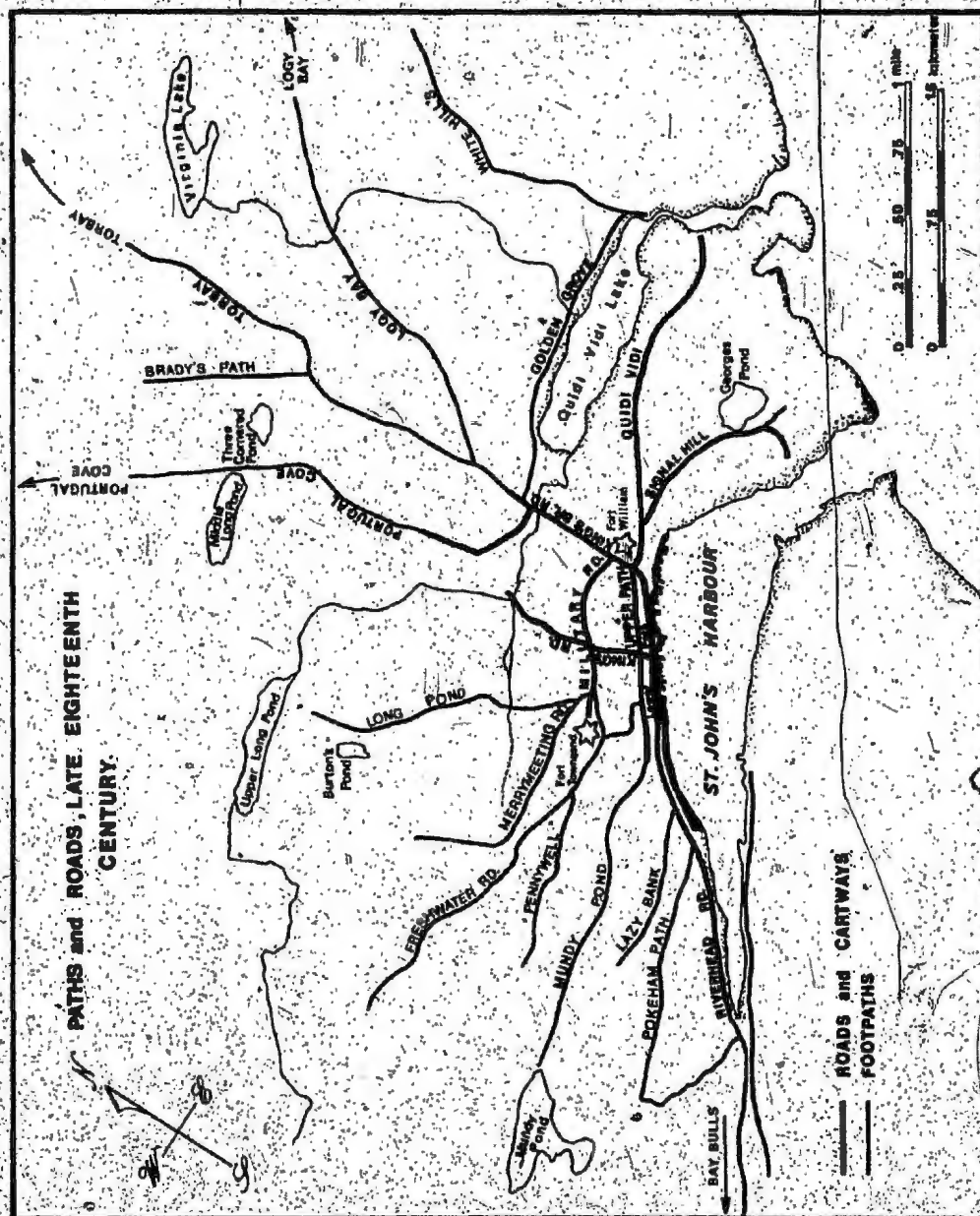
CHAPTER V

THE FARMER AND THE MARKET

Development of a Road System

From its inception the farm community around St. John's was driven by a need to produce a surplus for sale. The manner in which the farmer disposed of this surplus is central to an understanding, not only of the evolution and development of the farm hinterland, but also its geographical reach, stability and longevity. A crucial component in the selling of farm products was the development of a transportation network throughout the hinterland. All farm products were taken to the market in St. John's via a network of paths, cart tracks and roads. From at least the mid-eighteenth century, footpaths connected the town with the surrounding barrens and woods (Figure 8). These were used formerly to transport wood to town for fuel, houses, a wide range of buildings servicing the fishery, and for "dinnage." Paths were also used by fishermen from Quidi Vidi and other outports to travel to St. John's to trade. These paths were not a product of any government subsidization, but evolved gradually in response to local needs.

During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, a period of rapid agricultural expansion, several paths in the vicinity of town were extended and improved (Figure 9).



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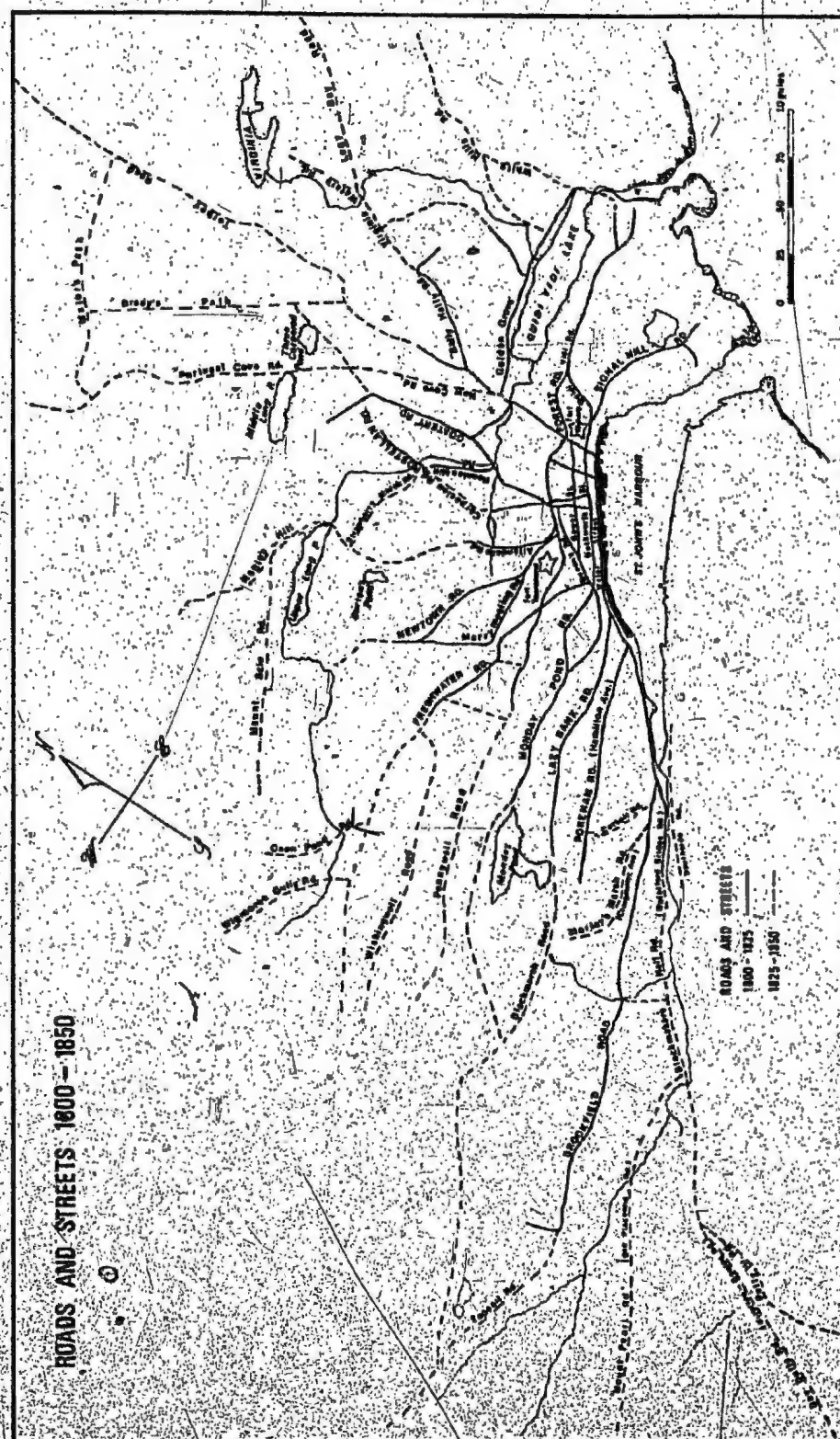


Figure 9

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Fortifications in the Signal Hill, Quidi Vidi and Torbay areas during the late eighteenth century influenced some improvements by the military but early nineteenth century farm interests were more important. In 1803, for example, that section of Quidi Vidi path connecting a farm called "The Forest" to town was widened into a wagon and carriage road (Forest Road).¹ Around the same time Colonel William Haly established a farm (Bally Haly) on the path from Logy Bay and widened and improved a road leading to his farm. He expended more than £40 in this effort and neighboring farmers and others contributed around £30.² The first cart road from the western environs of town was financed by the merchant Henry Thomas as a means of reaching his farm, "Brookfield," established around 1820 (Hibbs, 1924: 33).³ This extended five or six miles from town, was later extended to serve other farms and was adopted by the Road Commission when completing the first line of road to Topsail.³ Many of the earliest roads resulted from the fiscal and physical support of farm owners and occupiers. One exception was the Portugal Cove Road. Since 1792 a committee, comprising merchants and professionals existed whose main objective was to complete a good road to Portugal

¹L.B.C.S.O. 17 (1803): 158-59.

²L.B.C.S.O. 18 (1804): 99; See also Howard F. Barnes, "Roads of Newfoundland to 1854." (M.A. dissertation, Acadia University, 1970): 57.

³Cochrane Papers, Mss. 2351 (1834): 25.

Cove.⁴ This would substantially increase interaction between St. John's and the heavily populated Conception Bay region. By 1811, however, this road was still unfinished and an organized attempt to raise revenue for its completion was made by committee members, Stephen Knight and John Dunscombe, both merchants with farm interests in St. John's.⁵ A lottery was held which sold 600 tickets at \$4.00 each and awarded 137 prizes worth a total value of \$1,200.⁶ Although the profits were expended on this ten mile route, it remained seasonally impassable until the government commenced granting funds for its upkeep during the 1830's.

Governor Cochrane recognized the benefits of an improved road system. Using local revenue collected from sources such as quit rents from crown leases, he immediately implemented a programme aimed at constructing new roads and improving existing ones. In 1826, for example, "more than 800 of the labouring poor were employed ... in repairing the Portugal Cove Road and other approaches to town at a cost of £1750."⁷ Throughout his regime and subsequently, the government annually granted between £1,000 and £5,000 for the construction and upkeep of roads, bridges and drains

⁴ L.B.C.S.O. 12 (1792): 185.

⁵ Royal Gazette, October 31, 1811.

⁶ Royal Gazette, February 12, 1812.

⁷ Barnes, "Roads of Newfoundland": 51.

in the St. John's district.⁸ The work was contracted out in a formal fashion to farmers who could readily supply the necessary equipment (horse and feed, carts, sleighs, wheelbarrows, spades, shovels, land clearing implements, rollers) and expertise. Before he returned to England in 1834, Cochrane supervised the completion of cart and wagon roads to Topsail, Portugal Cove, Torbay and Logy Bay, appointed a full-time Road Commissioner and established a personal farm called "Virginia Waters" (Tocque, 1877: 33-34).⁹ Road Commission reports between 1834 and 1860 indicate that new roads were constructed and existing ones repaired and improved during the 1830's and 40's. By 1844 St. John's enjoyed the amenities of, "well formed roads branching out in all directions of the suburbs."¹⁰ In 1850 only those roads which were most distant from town - Heavytree, Old Placentia and Pouch Cove Roads - were still under construction. The improvement of roads in response to the demands of farmers selling perishable dairy products and merchants desiring increased commercial interaction with other districts occurred elsewhere in pioneer North America (McIlwraith, 1970: 358).

⁸ Cochrane Papers, Mss. 2363 (1827): 228; Cochrane Papers, Mss. 2365 (1830): 140; J.H.A. (1835) Appendix: 131; J.H.A. (1837) Appendix: 9; Public Ledger, May 7, 1844.

⁹ Cochrane Papers, Mss. 2351 (1834): 28.

¹⁰ Morning Courier, November 4, 1844.

The Marketing System

Marketing is defined as the physical transfer of salable commodities between a producer and a consumer. Most studies of agricultural marketing have concentrated on market sites such as the market square or agricultural fair (Kniffen, 1949; Mintz, Mott, Selin, 1975; Cullen, 1979). These identify the physical layout of the marketplace, temporal and spatial synchronization of market systems, the nature of specific trading rings, types of customers and mediums of exchange (Osbourne, 1980: 60). Produce exchanged outside of these formal situations is generally neglected in the literature. In St. John's there was no formal marketplace for the regular sale of local farm goods, although several proposals to establish one in town were made.¹¹ Farmers disposed of their produce in an informal manner from at least the late eighteenth century and received cash or goods not produced on the farm in return.

The Fresh Milk Trade: Production and Marketing

The production of fresh milk, the commercial staple in the zone of full-time farmers, was highly seasonal. Daily milk production per cow lasted for about ten months of

¹¹ L.B.C.S.O. 13 (1797): 369-70; L.B.C.S.O. 18 (1804): 86-7; Royal Gazette, December 17, 1814; November 8, 1831; Morning Courier, August 29, 1845; J.H.A. (1863) Appendix: 1013; J.H.A. (1877) Appendix: 1076-82.

the year and ranged from about two gallons to four gallons during the peak grazing period in July and August. The increased milk surplus during summer was either churned into butter for family consumption or boiled into "scalded cream" for sale. When milk yields were lowest, throughout the fall and winter, a dairy ration of bran, cornmeal, chopped turnips and hay, sometimes mixed with sugar or molasses, was fed to the herd to increase yields. In addition, while yields were declining during late fall, farmers released fat stock. This conserved winter feed for milk cows and generated supplementary income. Root crops could be released gradually throughout the fall, winter and early spring and provided another alternative source of income for the farmer when the optimum amount of milk could not be produced for sale. This seasonality of production permitted farmers to supply regular customers year round.

Milking took place each morning and evening around six. On most farms labour was supplied by the farmer's family; the most commercial "milkmen," however, hired summer or even year round labour. The largest farms employed between three and five labourers who were paid around £14 each year during the 1820's and 30's.¹² All of these men participated in the daily milking. The washing down of the herd and the process of milking was usually completed in less than 45 minutes on

¹²The Newfoundland Supreme Court Records and Registry of Wills regularly refer to the employment of farm labourers.

most small farms. However, some large scale farms needed as much as three hours to complete this twice daily routine. The milk was strained through a linen cloth into one, three or five gallon tin "kettles" or cans for transport. The use of bottles for milk delivery did not come into use until after the turn of the twentieth century. Milk and indeed all salable farm goods were usually transported in either a light four wheeled "express wagon" or a two wheeled milk cart or "jingle" (Plate 4). Both vehicles had wooden wheels, springs, a bench seat and a carrying box and were drawn by one horse. Some farmers used the cumbersome long cart which had a flat wooden frame attached to a pair of iron tired wheels (Plate 5). This latter type was normally used for carrying hay and other heavy bulk commodities produced on the farm. If used in fresh milk or vegetable trade, a square box was fastened to the frame.

A direct producer-consumer exchange system provided all farmers with a weekly cash income. Most commonly, farmers sold their produce directly to the St. John's housewife. The farmer parked in front of the house and filled the housewife's milk container or "jug", using a one pint measure cup. In season, vegetables were sold by the bunch or ~~bulk~~ and all other farm products were first available for sale to the housewife. Because of the small and regular amounts of produce sold daily to each customer, these transactions were rarely documented. The number of customers per farmer ranged from twenty to more than one

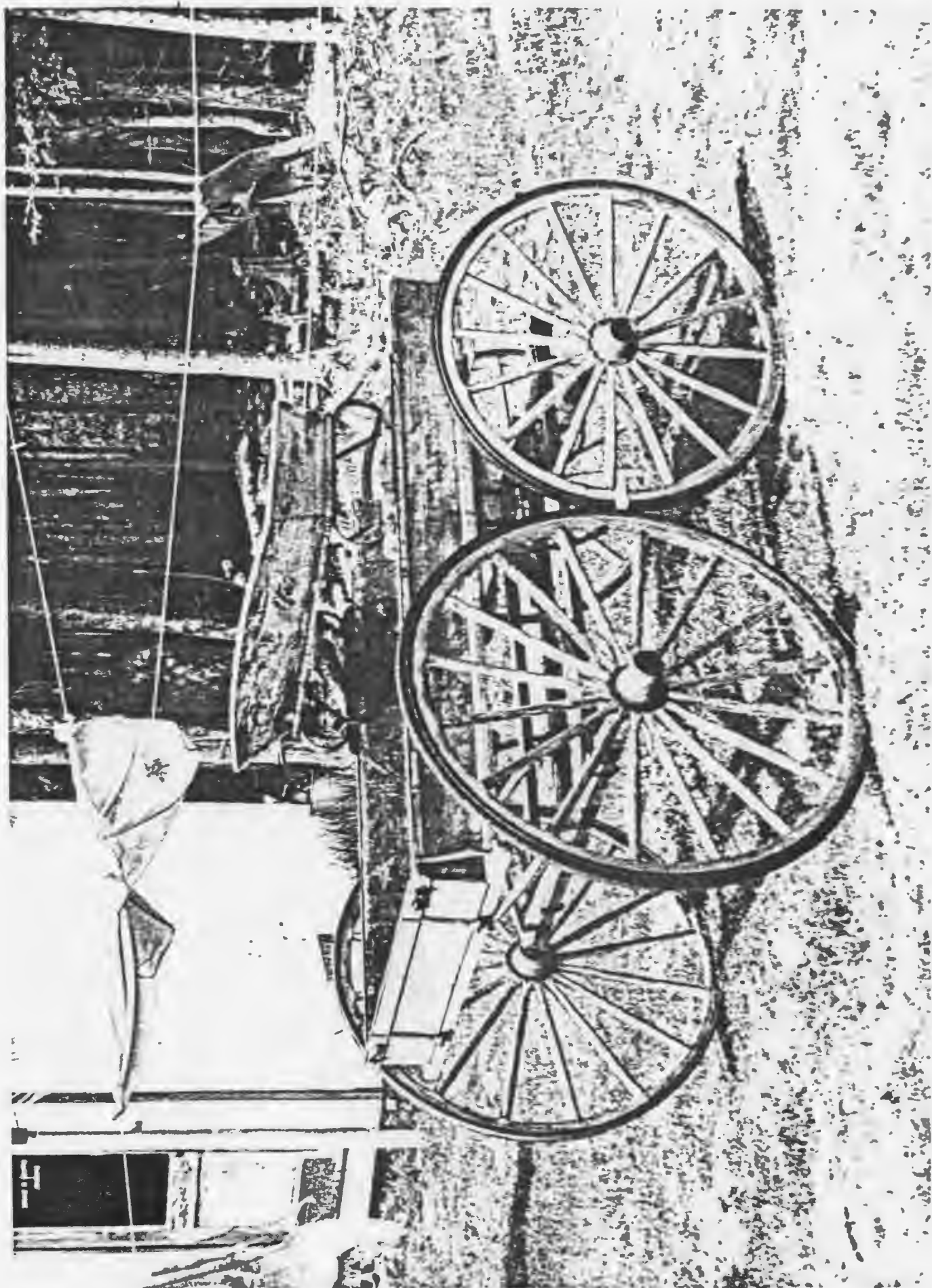


Plate 4 - Express Wagon

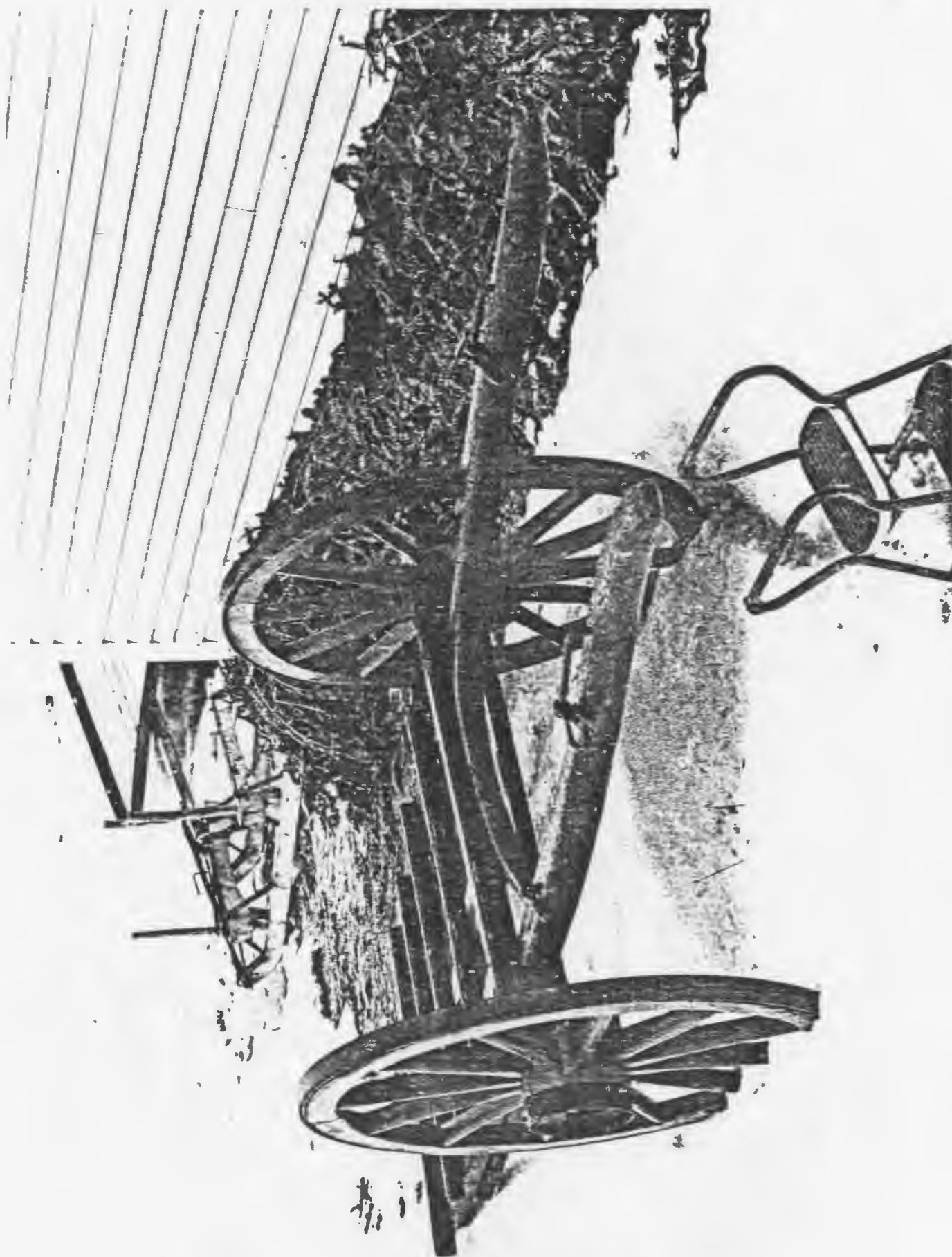


Plate 5 - Long Cart

hundred and this clientele or territory was sometimes supplied by the same farm family over generations. Customers were situated within a discrete area of the town economically accessible to the farm and an informal sense of territoriality prevailed among farmers. Figure 10 illustrates the trading routes of five farmers who operated small and large scale farms. Each farmer supplied only a few customers per street which meant that several farmers made regular deliveries along the same street. This clientele was mainly based on friendship and kinship. New customers were obtained through informal conversation among friends and deviations from the regular trading route accommodated relatives living in other districts of the town. When door to door delivery was completed, the farmer visited a local grocer either to trade or to purchase goods not produced on the farm. "Running milk and vegetables to town" was a time consuming task, taking from one to two hours for the majority of farmers and up to six hours for the most commercial "milkmen".

A less informal type of trade existed between farmers and the dozens of retailing grocers and shopkeepers scattered throughout the town. The trading function of these shops normally was to supply foodstuffs and goods not produced locally. Imported provisions such as salt pork, flour, rolled oats and cornmeal were among the items offered for sale by grocers. Staples such as seeds, pre-mixed dairy rations and fish, as well as luxury items like

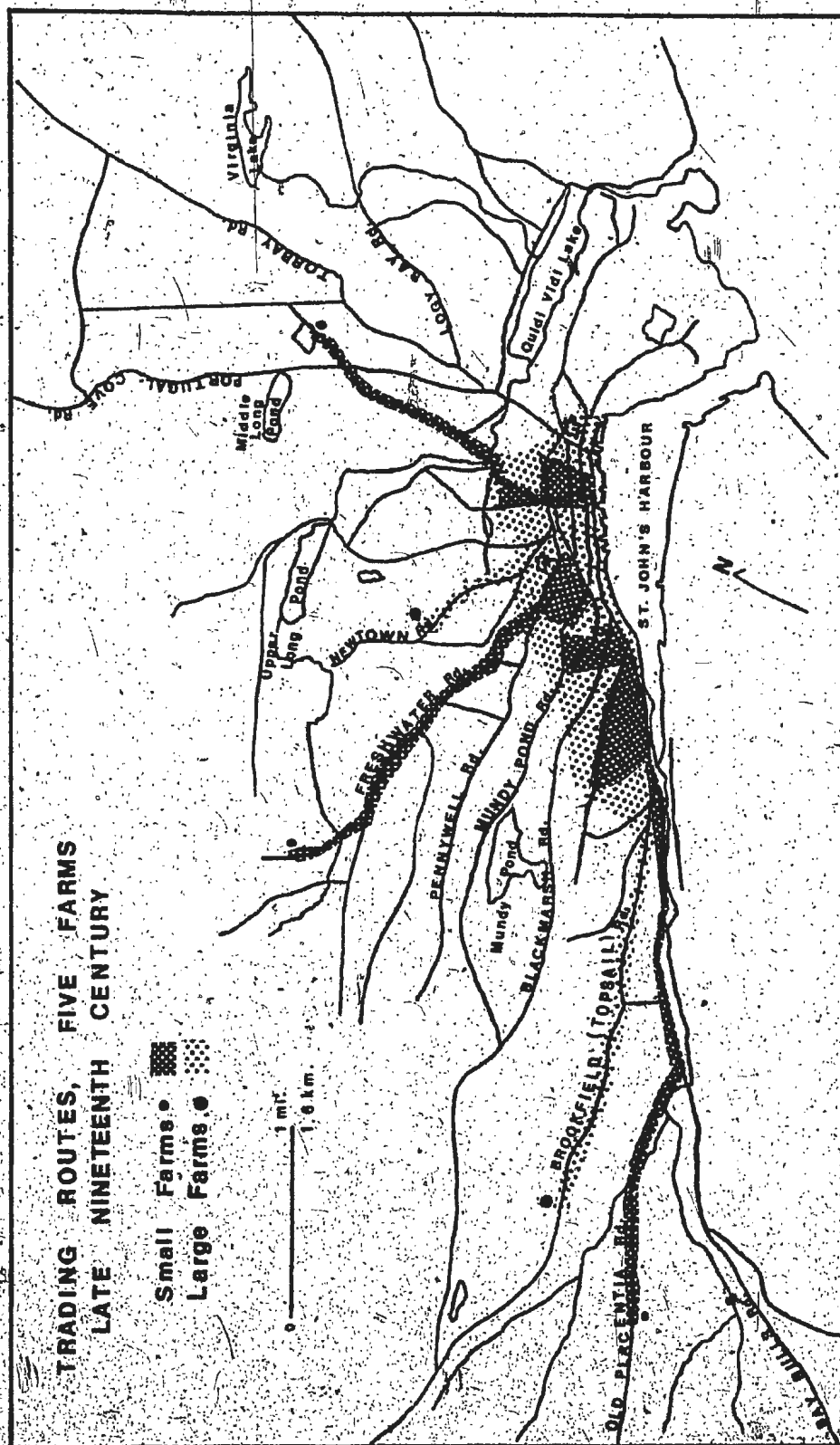


Figure 10

tobacco and rum were also available. A farmer could "take it up" in goods instead of receiving cash payment for his produce. Barter operated according to contemporary prices, however, certain ratios between farm goods and imported or prepared provisions existed. For example, during the early years of the twentieth century, a farmer could barter four barrels of potatoes for one barrel of flour.

Trade between farmers and dealers in agricultural produce such as butchers, butter factories, fishermen and mariners were the least informal. It involved the collection and redistribution of agricultural produce and unlike the shopkeeper trade the medium of exchange was always cash. Local livestock, mainly cattle and veal, and, less frequently, pigs and sheep, were driven to the butcher's abattoir or prepared for sale at the farmstead. In the European tradition, butchers also travelled through the hinterland purchasing livestock from farmers. The leasing of pasture, meadows and aftergrass sometimes was an important adjunct to farm income. From the early nineteenth century, local butchers imported livestock from New England, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.¹³ Following arrival in St. John's, these were pastured and stall fed on local farms and sold at a considerable profit. Butchers either obtained tenure to the field or paid farmers 10 d per day 6/ per week

¹³ CO 194/46 (1806): 11-13; Most issues of local newspapers throughout the nineteenth century publicize auctions of imported livestock which were held almost daily.

or approximately £1 per month per head for the grazing of livestock.¹⁴

An additional market for fresh milk was created by the establishment of two "butterine factories" during the 1870's. These purchased milk in bulk from farmers on a first come, first served basis; most farmers, however, preferred the regular customer trade and sold only their surplus to the factories. This was due to a degree of uncertainty over the amount of milk required by these companies, which depended, in turn, upon the number of farmers selling any morning. Only those who worked at other trades or occupations during the day (e.g., blacksmiths, coopers, carters, cabmen, labourers) or for some reason had no regular milk route, sold all their milk to the "butterines".

Captains and crewmen on Labrador fishing schooners and other sailors also purchased some agricultural produce from local farmers. They arrived in St. John's each October to sell dried fish and before returning home purchased winter supplies for themselves and other families in the outports, mainly in northeastern Newfoundland. This was solely a fresh vegetable trade participated in mainly by specialist vegetable farmers and part-time farmers of the outer zone. Orders were compiled from individual crewmen in an informal manner by farmers on the waterfront. The farmer returned with the

¹⁴Royal Gazette, June 14, 1810; Mercantile Journal, July 10, 1824; Public Ledger, July 27, 1841; The Newfoundlander, October 21, 1847.

order and received cash for his produce. Although it is impossible to measure the scale of this trade, undoubtedly it was small.

The most formal of all structures established for trade were those between farmers and public institutions. These included departments of the garrison, hospitals, the lunatic asylum and the jail. Unlike the more general lines of trade, selling farm goods to institutions is well documented. From at least the late eighteenth century, contracts were available to farmers for the daily and weekly supply of milk, fresh beef and vegetables to the garrison and Naval hospital.¹⁵ In 1850, for example, the recently constructed asylum spent more than £350 on fresh milk, butter, onions, turnips and firewood, and in 1859 the civilian hospital received tenders for the supply of "40 barrels of potatoes, 30 barrels of turnips and 8 barrels of carrots."¹⁶ Supplies for the local jail were tendered for in the same fashion.¹⁷ Payment was in cash either monthly or four times yearly, and bonds of security were required by the farmer. Only the most commercial farmers could afford to extend credit this long. Oral tradition suggests only large

¹⁵Adm. 1/473 (1797): 424; Duckworth Papers file 14/174 (1810); file 22/58 (1810); Royal Gazette, April 2, 1812; April 21, 1814; Mercantile Journal, January 25, 1820.

¹⁶The Patriot, April 13, 1850; Morning Post, October 18, 1850.

¹⁷Royal Gazette, June 11, 1850.

scale farmers held annual contracts with public institutions.

Outport Trade

Due largely to the constraints of distance from town, the part-time farmers of the outer zone practised a different system of marketing. People from communities like Torbay, Portugal Cove, Broad Cove (St. Phillips), Topsail and Kelligrews usually travelled to St. John's once a week, mainly on Saturdays. Only the most commercial came to town during mid-week as well. Potatoes, rather than fresh milk, was the most important cash crop; turnips, cabbage, carrots, parsnips, butter, mutton, pork, fowl, eggs, rabbits and partridge were also offered for sale in season. Other items such as jams made from local fruit, firewood and ladders were also produced for sale. Upon arriving in town, these traders parked on streets in small groups and displayed their produce. Housewives gathered at the wagons or carts, some haggling ensued and transactions were made. Because of the irregularity of supply, part-time farmers were unable to sustain regular customers. Apart from the Outer and Middle Cove area, most lived at least ten miles from town and during winter weekly trips were not always possible. When street trade with housewives was completed, "outport men" congregated in specific districts of the downtown to trade with grocers and to socialize. Those from Torbay gathered at the east end of

Duckworth Street, those from Portugal Cove and Broad Cove gathered on George Street and those from "up the shore" (Topsail-Kelligrews) met at the intersection of Water Street, Blockmaker's Hall Road and Topsail Road.¹⁸

Provisions for the farm were purchased with the cash profits and before returning home in convoy fashion, the men socialized and patronized taverns located in these areas or along the roads out from town. Unlike the fresh milk trade, outport trading was based on the most profitable sites for setting up an informal market in the town.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Despite almost three centuries of occupancy, St. John's was little more than a summer supply base for fishermen from the British Isles in 1775, with a thin band of subsistence gardens and meadows and a few commercially oriented farms around its edges. Half a century later, St. John's had been transformed into an important central place and more than 200 farms had been established in its immediate hinterland. Most of this expansion occurred in the early decades of the nineteenth century and was a product of a complex set of factors. After 1790 the traditional migratory cod fishery involving the annual movement of supplies and personnel from the British Isles to eastern Newfoundland declined. It was replaced by a rising resident fishery and St. John's emerged as the organizational centre, replacing ports in the British Isles.

The demographic structure of the town underwent considerable transformation. Through the eighteenth century the dominant element in the population was young, adult male migrants, largely fishing servants; there were relatively few families. By 1800 society and settlement had become much more diverse and St. John's took on the varied functions of a colonial central place. The merchant community expanded rapidly as Old World houses

relocated their headquarters in the town or new men emerged locally to prosecute the trade. Whereas in the eighteenth century mercantile society was dominated by single and highly transient commission agents for British firms, the new breed were often operating on their own account, were usually married and resident year-round. They limited much of their investment to the town and hinterland. Much more important in the context of the incipient farm community was the rapid emergence of shopkeepers, tavern owners and a wide range of artisans servicing the fishery, all of whom placed new demands on available foodstuffs and also provided capital to develop local agriculture. The growing demand for fresh food among women and children, who more than quintupled between 1790 and 1830, also stimulated agricultural colonization and settlement from the outset. The American Revolution, Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812 interrupted traditional food supply channels and the increased military personnel - both army and navy - all around the North Atlantic competed with fishermen and others in the town for salted and dried provisions. All of these conditions induced the rising sedentary population to turn to local agriculture.

The rising population in other Maritime ports like Halifax, Pictou and St. John, also created new markets for fresh food. In Nova Scotia, for example, about 30,000 newcomers arrived from New England during the 1780's and between 1815 and 1838 there were nearly 40,000 more from British Isles (Wynn, 1979; 89; Campbell, MacLean, 1974;

Many stayed in the ports of arrival, many others moved away, but some moved on to land, both around the ports and towns and often a considerable distance from them. In contrast to St. John's, large pockets of agriculture developed to supply these demands; food was also sent to more distant markets. Prince Edward Island, for example, rapidly became a major supplier of livestock and vegetables for the Maritimes, as well as Boston and Newfoundland. Bay of Fundy settlements and the fertile Kennebecasis and St. John River Valleys supplied St. John, while the counties of Pictou, Lunenburg and Annapolis sold vegetables, fruit, butter and other transportable commodities in Halifax. Little is known, however, about farms around the edges of the ports and towns in these areas.

In contrast to most of the Maritimes, the natural endowment in the vicinity of St. John's was anything but encouraging for commercial agriculture. Soils were poor and the climate harsh, suitable only for the growth of grasses and cool weather crops, mainly potatoes, turnips and cabbage. Old World crops such as wheat, barley and even oats were difficult to grow. At first sight the wonder is why immigrants would attempt to farm the area at all. However, a steady market for fresh food in town, the availability of supplementary employment in St. John's and easy accessibility to land provided immigrants with the incentives and the opportunity to establish farms.

It appears that British laws which officially

() discouraged agricultural activity in Newfoundland were often disregarded and did not seriously impede efforts to occupy and clear land in the vicinity of St. John's. As in the British Isles and in other areas of colonial North America, land was available through crown grants, leases from private proprietors or simply through squatting. Crown grants like in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Pennsylvania and Virginia, for example, were initially distributed mainly as favours to individuals who sometimes lived elsewhere but more often were resident merchants, military officers or members of the emerging middle class (Clark, 1959, 1968; Lemon, 1972; Mitchell, 1977). A military officer could apply for an amount of land which was commensurate to his rank, as payment for his services. As a result, the largest grants in the hinterland were distributed to the highest ranking officers of the local garrison. Land speculation by these early grantees does not appear to have been as prevalent as in Prince Edward Island, for example, but land was considered a commercial commodity to be bought, sold and leased in the local market. Uncleared land, improved land or an outfitted farmstead could be obtained from private proprietors and subletting was common among both tenants and land owners. Colonial government policies during the early 1800's made crown lands more accessible to the arriving immigrants but possessory title or squatting was also common. Like New Brunswick, the unofficial policy of the government was, "shutting an eye

to squatting" (Harris and Warkentin, 1974: 178). Although this caused litigation over land titles during subsequent years, this system of land administration served immigrants and local society much better than has generally been conceded (McEwan, 1977: 158).

Overwintering planters and soldiers of the garrison were the first persons known to clear and cultivate land around St. John's. From at least the beginning of the eighteenth century, tiny garden plots producing potatoes and other vegetables supplemented the salt provision diet of residents. Horses, used for hauling supplies for the fishery and military equipment, along with some cattle and sheep, subsisted on hay produced on meadows and rough pasture. As in other colonial towns like Quebec, a garden area was reserved specifically for military use; it was extensively encroached upon, however, by civilians who subsequently formed the backbone of the farm community (Dahl et al., 1975: 131, 152). Although military officers established some of the earliest farms, their efforts faded rapidly after 1800. In addition to the transiency generally associated with a garrison, this was caused by the growing interest of merchants and others from the town in the agrarian hinterland. Their investment in farms and desire for country cottages was a widespread phenomenon on both sides of the Atlantic. Around St. John's the small eighteenth century farm community comprised just over fifty farms operated mainly by English and Protestant members of

the resident middle class.

Between 1800 and 1840 the Irish population of St. John's increased sevenfold (Mannion, 1974: 19). Concomitantly, the number of farms increased proportionately. This spillover of immigrants on to the land was a local manifestation of a broad pattern occurring in most eastern Canadian ports. A potential farm settler needed capital to obtain legal title to land (if he did not opt for squatting), for seeds, livestock and implements, as well as a house, outbuildings and the construction and improvement of farm roads. To obtain initial investment money, an immigrant could work as a servant in the fishery for a few years, or in a wide range of urban occupations. These included labour along the wharves, as well as a variety of services and trades (e.g. carters, cabmen, coopers, wheelwrights, blacksmiths and butchers).

The main contrasts with other areas of commercial agriculture were the small size of improved acreage on most farms, the stability of the mix of goods produced, the isolation of the area in Atlantic Canada and the single market for surplus agricultural produce. A St. John's farmer could raise a large family on a mere ten acres and many did, particularly the Irish. Only fifteen per cent of the 400 farms established had more than twenty acres under cultivation. The largest of these were operated by English and Scots, possibly a result of their greater access to mercantile or other capital and greater agricultural

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expertise. In areas of nineteenth century Ontario, for example, an average farm contained at least three times more improved land (Mannion, 1974: 74). Land use in the hinterland of St. John's was intensive by North American standards; about three quarters of improved acreage on a farm was under hay and the remainder in root crops. This balance changed little from farm to farm, irrespective of farm size or cultural background and did not alter significantly over time. It is difficult to explain why more extensive agriculture did not evolve later in the century as it did in most areas of mainland North America. Only between one third and one half of all land on a farm was ever cleared for cultivation. The reason involves a combination of factors. Because of the isolation of the island and the tie to a single market, farmers were not affected by changes in external demands which sometimes altered the types of crops grown in other areas. Much more important, soils and climate were inhospitable to commercial grain growing which could have been shipped easily over great distances. The goods which could be profitably produced, mainly milk, potatoes, turnips and cabbage, could not withstand long distance transport, so there was no thought of an agricultural export trade. In addition, labour that might have been invested in extra clearing was absorbed by supplementary occupations in the town and in the fishery.

Dairying was the mainstay of the farm economy from

the outset. This greatly influenced all aspects of the farming system from production through to marketing. The crop rotation system was aimed at maximizing hay production for winter feed and milk cows and horses for transport were commercially the most important animals raised. On average, the production of milk cows was nearly four times more important than, for example, potatoes, the most commercial arable crop. The production of most commodities increased overall until 1921 before subsequently declining and specialization in dairying, and particularly cabbage farming, occurred after 1900. Fluctuations in hay and potato production in the full-time farming area close to town were most likely a result of imports from the Maritimes and the rising production of these commodities in the outports north of town. The decline of this farming hinterland was evident before 1935. After 1911 the city rapidly encroached upon an urban fringe of gardens and dairy farms, and by 1935 agricultural production in this once fertile area was negligible. In the outports distance made commercial dairying impossible. Potatoes and other bulk commodities, including hay after 1900, were the most commercial crops grown; beef cattle, butter and pig production were also much more common than in the inner zone of full-time farming. Production figures indicate that, at its apex in 1921, the aggregate value of agricultural goods raised in the immediate vicinity of town was nearly one-tenth that of the commercial cod fishery in all

of Newfoundland.¹ By 1935, however, the dissolution of the entire agrarian hinterland had begun.

The viability of commercial agriculture in any area in the past depended upon its ability to establish structures for the marketing of surplus produce. St. John's was no exception. Although no formal marketplace was constructed, a complex marketing system persisted for nearly a century and a half. As settlement developed, a network of footpaths were transformed into roads to facilitate the disposition of farm surpluses. In the eighteenth century only a few roads and cartways existed. However, during the early years of the nineteenth century, and particularly after 1825, when settlers filled the countryside surrounding the town, a network of cart and wagon roads emerged. The early nineteenth century pattern provides the framework for much of the present pattern of streets and roads (Figure 9).

A direct producer-consumer system of exchange took place along these roads; the urban housewife and farmer were the main trading partners. This was not dissimilar to the pattern of retailing milk in nineteenth century London (Atkins, 1980). Although producer-retailing was not an important mode of sale, milkmaids either operated independently or were employed by small dealers or the cowkeepers themselves. They conveyed milk from a cowhouse

¹J.H.A. (1922), Appendix: 397.

in the suburbs for a distance of several miles using a shoulder yoke and two pails and made deliveries door to door. Like the full-time farmers near St. John's, they supplied a regular set of customers in discrete areas of the city and frequently a single street was served by five or six retailers. Although later in the century more complex structures for marketing milk emerged, with the establishment of dairy shops and integrated dairy companies, doorstep delivery by itinerant milk sellers was the dominant mode of retailing until the end of the century. Kinship, friendship and ethnicity played integral roles in the functioning of the St. John's system. Customers were recruited through informal conversation among friends and relatives and few transactions were recorded. A lesser volume of goods was delivered to middlemen, such as grocers, butchers, "butterines" and public institutions, mainly hospitals and jails. The part-time farmers in the outports north of town had a distinctly different marketing strategy. Distance ruled out commercial dairying and their inability to make regular trips to town, especially during the winter, meant they could not retain regular customers. "Outportmen" struck a balance between working in a commercial fishery, wresting enough from the land to feed their families and selling the less perishable commodities (e.g. potatoes, butter, cattle, sheep and pigs) at the best sites for setting up an informal market in town.

The evolving farm hinterland around St. John's could

hardly have been much different from the thin bands of intensive, specialized commercial agriculture that encircled other cities and towns in nineteenth century North America. From the few studies there are, we know that urban capital and immigrant labour combined to develop the near hinterland and that the farm community was one where the nuclear family was the basic social unit of production, the farm usually was owned by the family, and the farmer specialized in products marketable in the town. This emphasis could change once the town could no longer absorb the produce of the near-hinterland, or - as in Madison - could not compete with a more distant, external market. Apart from the fresh milk trade, the farmers around St. John's never fully satisfied local demand and St. John's depended on farm produce from elsewhere. Marketing local farm goods in town was conducted in an informal fashion involving door to door delivery throughout the century. There was no formal marketplace. It would be interesting to know what happened around the edges of other towns such as Halifax, Pictou and Quebec. Halifax, for example, had a similar mercantile and staple base, depending largely on its garrison and the fish trade. The topography in its immediate environs was rugged, but the climate more suitable for arable farming. Little is known yet about the character of pioneer farming in the shadow of this or other centres. Before one can assess the typicality or otherwise of the patterns evident in the hinterland of St. John's, there is a

need for several studies along these lines elsewhere in
North America.

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Guide to Primary Sources

Any micro study poses problems for archival investigation and the tiny farm community around St. John's is no exception. Virtually every major collection of documents for the period under review could contain some relevant information, but locating it is frequently a time-consuming and sometimes frustrating task. However, because this farm community was situated in the environs of the capital of Newfoundland, farmers and their activities were regularly recorded in certain government, and some private, primary sources. Census reports, both incomplete (1794, 1797, 1807, 1812, 1815) and published (1836, 1845, 1857, 1869, 1874, 1884, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921 and 1935) represent one of the most direct sources for this study. Despite some problems of comparability, these data provided information about farm settlers, their origins and especially details on the gradual growth of agricultural production. The most rewarding sources examined for the eighteenth century were the official government correspondence, mainly Colonial Office Series 194 and Letter Books of the Colonial Secretary's Office. These contained descriptions, albeit scattered, of the demographic, social and economic conditions of the study area, information on early investment in agriculture, the role of the Military, and the system of land administration.

The private papers of Governors Duckworth (1810-12) and Cochrane (1825-34) provided similar types of information, particularly relating to the alienation of land during their stay in Newfoundland. Beginning in 1833, the Journals of the House of Assembly contained special reports on agriculture, as well as the annual reports of the Road Commission. These helped describe the farm economy and reconstruct the nineteenth century road system. The Registry of Wills of the Newfoundland Supreme Court provided data on the financial circumstances of individual farmers, genealogical information and detailed inventories of specific farmsteads. The most detailed accounts of farms, however, were found in "for sale" advertisements in local newspapers between 1810 and 1890. Advertisements usually described the farm, stating the owner's name, by what tenure held, acreage enclosed and/or cultivated, and less frequently crops, livestock and equipment. Newspapers also provided information on the origins of the farm community, the alienation of land, and the development of roads, the local economy and the market for farm goods. The combination of these sources identified approximately 400 farmers and a profile of their farms. Trade directories, which list farmers by address for 1864-65, 1871 and 1904, were used to substantiate and supplement this sample.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Farms in the Vicinity of St. John's, 1750-1810

<u>Farm Owner</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Acres Cleared</u>
Robert Bell	Military Officer	Portugal Cove Path	1796	-
- Bollard	-	Forest Path	1777	-
John Bulger	Military Officer	Torbay Path	1797	-
Robert Bully	Merchant	Pennywell Path	1775	20
Daniel Camble	Farmer	-	1810	-
Thomas Comerford	-	Pennywell Path	1803	-
Alexander Cormack	Merchant	Cockpit (Craigmillar Ave.) Path	1797	11
Thomas Costelloe	Farmer	White Hills	1807	4
William Coughlan	-	King's Bridge Road	1807	7
- Coughlan	-	Portugal Cove Path	1810	-
Richard Curran	Farmer	Monday Pond Path	1807	6
Charles Denning	-	Torbay Path	1807	3
David Duggan	Medical Doctor	Portugal Cove Path	1797	5
Henry Edgell	Military Officer	Portugal Cove Path	1803	13
- Elford	Military Officer	Quidi Vidi (South bank)	1807	6
William Gaden	Merchant	Torbay Path	1774	2
- Gill	Civil Servant	Forest Road	1775	5
Andrew Greenlawe	-	Portugal Cove Path	1797	6
William Haly	Military Officer	Logy Bay Path	1804	33
James Hayes	-	Riverhead	1810	6

<u>Farm Owner</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Acres Cleared</u>
Michael Hennessey		Portugal Cove Path	1807	4
George Holbrook	Surveyor	Brookfield (Topsail) Road	1807	12
George Hutchings	Merchant	Pokeham (Hamilton Ave.) Path	1781	6
Garrett Keating	Merchant	Pokeham (Hamilton Ave.) Path	1796	6
Stephen Knight	Merchant	Forest Road	1803	5
Luke Maddock	Merchant	Monday Pond Path	1796	5
Thomas Martin	Farmer	White Hills	1804	10
Luke McCarthy	Farmer	White Hills	1797	-
John McCurdy	Medical Doctor	Pokeham (Hamilton Ave.) Path	1797	3
Peter McKie	Customs Collector	Upper Long Pond (Bonaventure) Path	1796	15
Miller	Farmer		1810	-
John Murray	Military Officer	Rennies Mill Road	1803	7
John Pendergast	Farmer	Newtown Road	1806	3
William Pendergast	Farmer	Quidi Vidi (north bank)	1807	4
Thomas Phelan	Farmer	Portugal Cove Path	1810	-
Thomas Pitts	Military Officer	Quidi Vidi (north bank)	1784	5
Sam Pollington		Merrymeeting Path	1730	4
Robert Pringle	Military Officer	Portugal Cove Path	1771	19
John Reardon	Farmer	White Hills	1807	4
Richard Reed	Merchant	Portugal Cove Path	1795	9
Thomas Richardson	Farmer	Quidi Vidi (south bank)	1807	3

<u>Farm Owner</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Acres Cleared</u>
Thomas Skinner	Military Officer	Quidi Vidi (north bank)	1792	10
Thomas Stevenson	-	Portugal Cove Path	1810	-
John Street	-	Newtown Road	1803	-
James Summers	Farmer	King's Bridge Road	1771	-
Thomas Tremblett	Chief Justice	Rennies Mill Road	1804	3
Hugh Tucker	Constable	-	1757	4
- Vinnicomb	-	Quidi Vidi (south Bank)	1780	-
Thomas Wakeham	-	Pennywell Path	1775	4
William Warner	Medical Doctor	Newtown Road	1774	11
Griffith Williams	Military Officer	Quidi Vidi (north bank)	1757	36
George Williams	-	Quidi Vidi (north bank)	1771	-
John Williams	Butcher	Upper Long Pond (Bonaventure Ave.) Path	1810	-
Thomas Williams	-	Freshwater Path	1806	11
James Winter	Merchant	King's Bridge Road	1774	2

Appendix B

Country Cottages in the Vicinity of St. John's

<u>Name of Cottage</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Acres Cleared</u>
Avalon House	Hon. A.W. Desbarres	Brookfield (Topsail) Road	1858	8
Alma Cottage	W.P. Thomas	Brookfield (Topsail) Road	1857	-
Ashleaf	James Murray	Newtown Road	1881	-
Belle Vue	George Winter	Brookfield (Topsail) Road	1835	6
Boncloddy	George Branscombe	Pennywell Road	1884	-
Brynmare	Baird	Portugal Cove Road	1900	-
Castlehale	-	Monday Pond Road	1884	-
Castle Rennie	John Dunscombe	Signal Hill Road	1815	-
Clyde Cottage	Alex Smith	Monday Pond Road	1869	-
Craigmillar	Dr. Samuel Carson	Morley's Marsh Road	1852	4
Curran Villa	Frank Morris	Pennywell Road	1886	3
Eskasoni	Hon. A.W. Harvey	Portugal Cove Road	1877	4
Exmouth	Edward Moore	Brookfield (Topsail) Road	1843	5
Franklin Place	Francis Hamlin	Monday Pond Road	1883	-
Glenbrook	John Stuart	Torbay Road	1857	-

Country Cottages in the Vicinity of St. John's (Cont'd)

<u>Name of Cottage</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Acres Cleared</u>
Hillview	L.T. Chancey	Freshwater Road	1862	-
Highbury	A.D. Hayward	Pennywell Road	1885	-
Hope Cottage	- Steers	Strawberry Marsh Road	1884	-
Hunthill	James Rutherford	Portugal Cove Road	1855	3
May Park	Hon. John Kent	Portugal Cove Road	1858	4
Mount Dorset	James Rolis	-	1885	-
Nonpareil Cottage	Hon. James Crowdy	Signal Hill Road	1842	-
Northbank	Surveyor General Joseph Noad	Nagles Hill Road	1871	-
Paradise Cottage	C.S. Warren	Portugal Cove Road	1857	9
Retreat Cottage	Edward Archibald	King's Bridge Road	1834	-
Richmond Hill	Kenneth McLea	Brookfield (Topsail) Road	1852	3
Riverside	F. Winton	Blockmaker's Hall (Waterford Bridge) Road	1881	-
Rose Cottage	G.T. Brooking	Blockmaker's Hall (Waterford Bridge) Road	1854	-
Sunnybank	R. Mare	Torbay Road	1886	-
Vauxhall	James McBraire	Blockmaker's Hall (Waterford Bridge) Road	1817	-

Country Cottages in the Vicinity of St. John's (Cont'd)

<u>Name of Cottage</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Acres Cleared</u>
Victoria Cottage	- Crowdy	-	1815	-
Virginia Cottage	Governor Cochrane	Torbay Road	1828	4
Waltham Cottage	Christopher Ayre	Portugal Cove Road	1856	4
Way Cottage	James Stuart	Blockmaker's Hall (Waterford Bridge) Road	1855	-
Woodburne	Thomas McGrath	Carpasian Road	1882	3
Woodlands	Charles Fox Bennett	Forest Road	1845	5
Winterton	George Winter	Old Portugal Cove Road	1834	-
York Cottage	-	Blockmaker's Hall (Waterford Bridge) Road	1865	-
<u>Cottage Names Not Available</u>				
	Justice Bourne	-	1884	-
	- Butt	Pennywell Road	1865	4
	W. Hayward	Portugal Cove Road	1843	-
	Aaron Hogsett	Freshwater Road	1848	4
	Surveyor General Helbrook	Portugal Cove Road	1829	5

Country Cottages in the Vicinity of St. John's (Cont'd)

<u>Cottage Names, Not Available</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Acres Cleared</u>
	William Jenkins	Pokeham Path (Hamilton Avenue)	1848	-
	J. Kinsella	Portugal Cove Road	1884	-
	Edward Morris	Quidi Vidi district	1850	-
	Richard Morris	Quidi Vidi district	1827	-
	John Rendell		1844	-
	James Tubrid	Freshwater Road	1845	2
	William Wheatley	Blockmaker's Hall (Waterford Bridge) Road	1868	-
	Robert Winton	Freshwater Road	1870	2
	J. Woolacot	Freshwater Road	1847	-

