

Gentlemen, Farmers, and Gentlemen Half-Farmers:  
The Development of Agricultural Societies in Upper Canada,  
1792-1846

by

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## Abstract

This dissertation examines the leadership of Upper Canada's agricultural societies between 1792 and 1846. These institutions were modelled after agricultural societies first established by Great Britain's aristocracy during the late eighteenth-century to lead the reform of the nation's agricultural practices while reinforcing its hierarchical structure. The transplantation of agricultural societies to Upper Canada was part of a larger effort by the colonial elite to recreate a society modelled after the Georgian institutions of Great Britain.

In the absence of a landed class in Upper Canada, however, the recreation could not be exact. By necessity, agricultural societies were adapted to the colony's particular political and social conditions by drawing upon the examples of contemporary agricultural societies in the United States. These proved to be useful in demonstrating how merchants, government officials and local patrons could approximate aristocratic leadership. Nevertheless, Upper Canada's agricultural societies remained little more than private forums for their members to display their gentlemanly status.

From 1792 through to 1846, many members of the Upper Canadian political elite dreamt of forming a central provincial agricultural society. Prior to 1830, however, such a union of the colony's gentlemen was not possible as the province remained a collection of isolated communities led by uncooperative local oligarchies. In 1830, the provincial legislature circumvented the lack of cooperation by funding the establishment of an agricultural society in each district of the province. This study examines the founding of the Niagara, Home and Midland District Agricultural Societies

by the local patrons of each district and the different leadership characteristics that had evolved by 1846.

By the mid-1840s, agricultural societies remained private clubs, but increased government funding and requirements for accountability expanded their public role. In spite of these developments, the creation of the Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada in 1846 by a small number of elites from the Toronto area demonstrated their continuing attraction to Georgian institutions at the beginning of the Victorian era. It also illustrated that these colonial gentlemen continued to define their gentlemanly leadership in strictly Georgian terms.

## Acknowledgments

My deepest gratitude is extended to Dr. Jane Errington, who came to the aid of an unknown student needing supervision. Her enthusiasm encouragement, advice and criticisms have been invaluable in assisting the completion of this thesis. I hope the simplicity of this statement underscores my appreciation of her assistance.

Of course, I must acknowledge the late Dr. George Rawlyk's gracious assistance in directing me to Dr. Errington and his offer to be a co-supervisor of this dissertation. He has been missed, and I regret the loss of his input to the project.

I would be remiss if I did not also thank those who asked about the thesis during its various stages and listened to me think aloud. My appreciation is extended to the staff of Special Collections at Stauffer Library for their patience in retrieving numerous requests, and most particularly to George Henderson of Queen's University Archives for his interest and assistance. Thanks are also offered to Martina Hardwick for editing one of several "final" drafts of this thesis.

Equally important were those individuals who neither asked nor cared about the thesis. Their ability to distract me from my writing may have somewhat delayed its completion, but occasional falls from the ivory tower only served to replant my feet on the ground.

Special thanks are extended to Jennifer, who has offered much needed support and encouragement, and who has yet to know me when I have not been "just finishing" the thesis. When you read this Jenn, the wait will be over.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to my parents. Their support, both emotional and financial, has been unfaltering. For these things, my thanks have not been expressed often enough. Green Park Farm was at times, a necessary haven from the storms of the academic world and, although now owned by another family, it remains a reminder of the rewards of farming and rural Ontario life.

Of course, none of the above are responsible for any shortcomings of this dissertation. Instead, I gladly attribute them to my time spent engaged in "rural pursuits."

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## Introduction

In June 1793, a British gentleman travelling in Upper Canada passed through the colony's capital of Newark. During his brief stay, he attended a monthly meeting of the Niagara Agricultural Society, an organization which had been founded several months earlier by Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe. The traveller recognized Simcoe's agricultural society as a transplantation of a British institution to the new colony. Yet, he observed the Niagara Agricultural Society's members to be quite unlike the aristocratic membership of Britain's agricultural societies. He commented that, besides Simcoe and a few gentlemen farmers, "Many of the merchants and others unconnected with country business were also members."<sup>1</sup>

Fifty years after later, William Edmundson, editor of the *British American Cultivator*, made a similar characterization of the province's agricultural societies. In his February 1844 issue, Edmundson observed that there "is scarcely a Society established for the promotion of Agricultural improvement, but what mainly owes its existence and support to the exertions and influence of merchants, gentry, and others, who are not directly connected with Agricultural pursuits."<sup>2</sup> Whereas in 1793, the British traveller's comments inferred that the society was not composed of Britain's landed aristocracy, Edmundson's were being critical of Upper Canadian farmers for not supporting the province's agricultural societies. Nevertheless,

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<sup>1</sup>"Canadian Letters: Description of a Tour Thro' the Provinces of Lower and Upper Canada, in the Course of the Years 1792 and '93," *The Canadian Antiquarian and Numismatic Journal*, 3rd series, 9 (July - October, 1912): 54. It has been suggested that the anonymous author of these letters was a man named Hogkinson. See William Colgate, "The Diary of John White," *Ontario History* 47 (1955): 159, note 22.

<sup>2</sup>*British American Cultivator*, February 1844, p. 12.

what is striking about these two observations is the identical emphasis both placed on the membership of gentlemen<sup>3</sup> in Upper Canada's agricultural societies. Although colonial society had transformed dramatically from the wilderness colony it had been in 1793, Edmundson suggested that while the number of agricultural societies had expanded according to the population growth, their gentlemen leaders had changed little in character.

The study that follows focusses on the leadership of Upper Canada's agricultural societies from the founding of the Niagara Agricultural Society in 1792 through to the creation of the Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada in 1846.<sup>4</sup> Its arguments revolve around a central theme that the numerous agricultural societies established in various locales and at different times during this period all shared a number of common characteristics. They were modelled after agricultural societies first established in Britain by the landed aristocracy during the late eighteenth century, but Upper Canada's agricultural societies were led by its merchants, government

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<sup>3</sup>In this study, the term "gentleman" is used to describe those Upper Canadian individuals who, as Robert L. Fraser describes, "most nearly approximated the attributes of an aristocracy." In broad terms, they were set apart from the rest of the colonial population by their education, intelligence and ability, as well as their financial independence derived from a profession or an appointed or elected public office. Specifically, the leaders of Upper Canada's agricultural societies are considered as "gentlemen" in this study, for they came forward out of a sense of *noblesse oblige* to form organizations which maintained their place at the top of the hierarchy of Upper Canadian society. See Robert L. Fraser, "Like Eden in Her Summer Dress: Gentry, Economy and Society: Upper Canada, 1812-1840" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1979), 214-15; R. D. Gidney and W. P. J. Millar, *Professional Gentlemen: The Professions in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 6; S. J. R. Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers: Ontario Society and Politics, 1791-1896* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 98-99; Michael Cross, "The Age of Gentility: The Formation of An Aristocracy in the Ottawa Valley," *Canadian Historical Association Papers* 1967, 105-17.

<sup>4</sup>Although Upper Canada became Canada West after the union of the Canadas in 1841, the old name continued to be used frequently. The Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada, incorporated in 1847, is a perfect example. Therefore, Upper Canada will be used to refer to the colony during the entire 1792 - 1846 period. *Statutes of the Province of Canada, 1847*, 10 and 11 Vic, c. 61. "An act for the incorporation of *The Agricultural Association of Upper Canada*."

officials and other professional gentlemen in order to approximate the aristocratic leadership ideal of the British examples. In the absence of a landed aristocracy, Upper Canadian gentlemen had to adapt agricultural societies to the particular political and social characteristics of the colony. In doing so, they drew upon the examples of agricultural societies which had been founded in the United States by that nation's leading gentlemen.

The transplantation of agricultural societies to Upper Canada from Britain was part of a broader process of creating uniquely Upper Canadian institutions. According to R. D. Gidney and W. P. J. Millar in their recent history of professional gentlemen in nineteenth-century Ontario, the attempt by colonial elites "to re-establish in the wilderness the full panoply of British institutions" has been one of the most familiar stories in Upper Canadian history. They contend that the "production of regularly bred professional men and the re-establishment of professional institutions played a key part in [the] vision of Upper Canada's future."<sup>5</sup> Although colonial institutions did not become, "in any literal sense," exact replicas of British examples, during the first four or five decades of settlement "the outlines of a Georgian establishment appeared to have been put in place."<sup>6</sup> Agricultural societies, institutions which have been largely neglected by historians, were an integral part of the foundation stone of this Georgian establishment.

In Britain, agricultural societies had been the domain of the landed aristocracy. They had been founded specifically to lead the reform of Britain's agricultural practices and, in general, to guide the progress of the nation. Moreover, throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, they

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<sup>5</sup>Gidney and Millar, *Professional Gentlemen*, 14.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 24-25.

were instruments of the British aristocracy's hegemony, as the nation's agriculture was transformed by the enclosure of the landed gentry's vast land holdings. But as a landed aristocracy was not transplanted to Upper Canada with the British institutions, the leadership role for these organizations and society in general devolved to the next best group, the colony's elite gentlemen. And although they did not have the same level of control as their British counterparts, the provincial gentlemen founded agricultural societies for the same purpose. They used agricultural societies as one of a number of institutions to illustrate and exercise their right to lead the colony.

Gidney and Miller suggest that the gentlemen of Upper Canada were able to approximate the personal independence of the British aristocrats, for "a profession was a form of property, and like land itself, freed the gentlemen from dependence on the will of others." To have a profession allowed a gentleman "to lay claim to full membership in that group which was to guide the destinies of Upper Canada by providing it with its political leadership, its central social values, its ruling ideas, its erudition."<sup>7</sup> As Upper Canada was an agrarian nation like Britain, it behooved the colony's leaders, as gentlemen of the Enlightenment, to employ their "scientific" knowledge to guide the agricultural development of the province.

Many of the gentlemen who led Upper Canada's agricultural societies do not necessarily fit into the category of "professional gentlemen" outlined by *Gidney and Millar*. Nevertheless, they were, in their own manner, gentlemen who certainly contributed their support to the maintenance of the transplanted Georgian establishment. The gentleman ranks of Upper Canada's agricultural societies included those individuals whose status relied

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<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

on their election or appointment to a government office. As J. K. Johnson argues, the ability of these individuals to rank themselves among Upper Canada's elite stemmed from the recognition bestowed upon them by the provincial government in the offer of a government office.<sup>8</sup> In addition, there existed in the communities across Upper Canada, local patrons whose prominence and authority, as S. J. R. Noel argues, did not stem from any appointed recognition by the central government. Instead, their status was founded on the respect of the local community and the support of their clients. The respect they received from their local community translated into respect by the central officials of the province, as their support was crucial to the implementation of any province-wide policies. This respect allowed many of them to be a part of the broad category of the colonial elite.<sup>9</sup>

In light of the public roles of their members, Upper Canadian agricultural societies were founded with a semi-public purpose from the beginning of the province. During the 1792-1830 period, agricultural societies had been established by government officials for the public purpose of demonstrating their leadership of the province's agricultural development. Although unofficially sanctioned by the government, the actual agricultural societies were never publicly funded. They were private clubs led by public officials for a purpose that paralleled the official government efforts. Not until 1830, when the legislature was convinced to support agricultural societies financially, did the connection between the government and an agricultural society become explicit. After this date, although their character remained that of a private gentlemen's club, the semi-public agricultural

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<sup>8</sup>J. K. Johnson, *Becoming Prominent: Regional Leadership in Upper Canada, 1791 -1841* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queens' University Press, 1989), 4.

<sup>9</sup>Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers*, 98-9.

societies slowly became public institutions. They were legislated into existence and funded with an annual sum of money from the government finances. By the late 1830s these organizations were required to be accountable for the expenditure of these funds.

Such changes were a reflection of the fact that Upper Canada was by no means a static place throughout the fifty-four years being studied. Nevertheless, despite rapid population and economic growth during the 1830s and 1840s, it remained an agrarian colony. Furthermore, the science of agriculture and the ideology behind the leadership of Upper Canada's agricultural societies remained firmly rooted in the Enlightenment thought of the Georgian era. Gidney and Millar assert that the province "was born in the transitional decade between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was a product of the Anglo-American world of the Georgian era. The social and political assumptions shared by Upper Canadians were rooted in that context."<sup>10</sup> The several cornerstones of a Georgian establishment included a

balanced constitution, including an aristocratic element based on land ownership, administrative appointments, and the profession of law; the provision of an established church; the maintenance of a hierarchical social order based on traditional bonds of deference; the role of patronage, sinecure, and monopoly in securing loyalty and ensuring economic security; the social codes of gentlemanly behaviour; [and] the fierce determination to reassert the boundaries that separated those who were respectable from those who were not.<sup>11</sup>

Led by the colonial elites, agricultural societies were another institution founded to maintain this hierarchical order by creating a forum in which Upper Canadian gentlemen could publicly display their leadership and exact

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<sup>10</sup>Gidney and Millar, *Professional Gentlemen*, xii.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

deference from the province's rural population. This study examines the processes that allowed both the agricultural societies and their leaders to remain firmly rooted in the foundations of Georgian society even as the Victorian age flowered at the mid-way point of the nineteenth century .

The role of the colonial gentlemen in leading Upper Canada's agricultural societies has not been fully examined by historians. In the few instances during the last fifty years that the province's agricultural societies have been discussed, all interpretations have derived from Robert Leslie Jones' 1946 *History of Agriculture in Ontario*. In a chapter devoted to pre-1850 agricultural organizations, Jones characterized the agricultural societies founded before 1830 as "failures;" however, "the work that they attempted seemed potentially useful."<sup>12</sup> As for the societies established with government funds after 1830, he contended that the "progress of the agricultural societies, whether district, county or township was a disappointment to their promoters and friends."<sup>13</sup> Consequently, he determined that it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that the province's agricultural societies served any useful purpose. Jones concluded that it is "easier to over-estimate the importance of the early agricultural societies than to under-estimate it."<sup>14</sup>

Jones did attempt to elaborate upon the fact that Upper Canada's agricultural societies "were not indigenous" but were "akin to [the] 'philosophical' agricultural societies of Great Britain and the United States."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Robert Leslie Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ontario 1613-1880* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1946), 163.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 156-7, 166.

Nevertheless, his argument was only a minor expansion upon the few previous histories of Upper Canadian agricultural societies. The first such attempt had been published in 1856 by the recently created Board of Agriculture for Upper Canada. Its author had argued that at "an early date in the history of the Province, patriotic persons, in imitation of similar institutions in older countries, exerted themselves successfully in the object of establishing local Agricultural Societies." The author had lamented that he could not identify any societies prior to 1825, as the Board of Agriculture did not have "any documents from which to compile a history of the early operations of such Societies."<sup>16</sup>

John Graves Simcoe's agricultural society and other early organizations remained virtually unknown until C. C. James, Deputy Minister of Agriculture for Ontario, first published his research in 1902.<sup>17</sup> In several

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<sup>16</sup>Province of Canada, Board of Agriculture, *Journal and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture for Upper Canada*, vol. 1, 1856, 4. C. C. James suggested that the author of this history was George Buckland, Secretary of the Board of Agriculture for Upper Canada. See C. C. James, "The First Agricultural Societies" in Ontario, Department of Agriculture. *Annual Report of the Bureau of Industries for the Province of Ontario*, 1901, Appendix No. 26, 121.

<sup>17</sup>A few histories had been attempted previous to this time. The first, as mentioned, was published in 1856 by the Board of Agriculture for Upper Canada. In 1862, Richard L. Denison, a former Vice-President of the Provincial Agricultural Association requested information which would help identify any society established prior to 1830 in order that he might write a "little history therefrom some day at my leisure." There exists no record of such a history having been written. *The Canadian Agriculturalist, or Journal and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture of Upper Canada*, February 1, 1862, 62.

The next attempt was not undertaken until 1895 when the Agriculture and Arts Association of Ontario published its history as part of its final annual report. The early period was dealt with in one short paragraph, for, as the author noted, "it would be almost impossible to [compile a history of this period] owing to the obscurity in which the transactions of these early societies are involved." "A History of the Agricultural and Arts Association," in Ontario, Sessional Papers, vol. 28, part 6, 1896, *Fiftieth Annual Report of the Agriculture and Arts Association of Ontario 1895*, Appendix D, 139-40.

Also in the 1890s William Kirby published his *Annals of Niagara*. In this history of that region's Loyalist settlers, he mentioned in a few paragraphs the establishment of John Graves Simcoe's Niagara Agricultural Society. Published originally by the Lundy's Lane Historical Society, however, it was not widely available until his work was republished in 1927. William Kirby, *Annals of Niagara* (1896; reprint, London, Ontario: Edward Phelps, 1972); Mary Jane Edwards, "William Kirby," *DCB*, 8, 551-4.



publications, James compared the age of Simcoe's society to those which had been established in the other British North American colonies and several American states. Although he demonstrated that the Niagara Agricultural Society was not unique in North America, he did not suggest why institutions of the British aristocracy were appearing in both British North America and the United States during the 1780s and 1790s.<sup>18</sup>

Between 1920 and 1940 a few historians discovered the existence of more agricultural societies from the Upper Canadian period, but dismissed them as curiosities because of their perceived lack of utility in changing the colony's agricultural practices. In their two studies, J. E. Middleton and Fred Landon, as well as James J. Talman reviewed the Upper Canadian period and determined that Simcoe's society, and other early agricultural societies which had been recently discovered, were all failures because of their inability to last more than a few years. Except for listing the newly discovered agricultural societies that had existed in the province, these authors were unable to advance the investigation any further. The articles, however, also echoed the 1856 Board of Agriculture's report. For example, Middleton and Landon determined that the originators of Upper Canada's agricultural societies had decided to "show a good example" to the settlers and "transfer to this soil a commonplace institution of English rural life of the period."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>C. C. James, "The First Agricultural Societies," 111-135. See his various restatements of this research in C.C. James, "The Pioneer Agricultural Society of Ontario," *Farming World*, September 1902, p. 211-212; C. C. James, "The First Agricultural Societies," *Queen's Quarterly* 10 (October 1902): 218-223; C.C. James, "History of Farming," in *Canada and its Provinces*, Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty eds., vol. 18 (Toronto: Edinburgh University Press, 1914), pp. 556-569.

<sup>19</sup>In their multi-volume history of Ontario, Middleton and Landon devoted their chapter on "Agriculture in Ontario" to a discussion of the province's agricultural societies. Nevertheless, their interpretation of the early society is brief, for they devote the majority of their chapter to discussions of the Provincial Exhibitions after 1846 and the organization of the Department of Agriculture during the last half of the century. Jesse Edgar Middleton and Fred

As stated, a summation of this small amount of research is contained in Robert Leslie Jones' dated study. Since the publication of his work in 1946, only a few brief overviews which simply refer to Jones' summation have appeared.<sup>20</sup> Even the two institutional histories written by the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies [OAAS], the descendant of the Provincial Agricultural Society of Upper Canada, have accepted Jones' interpretation of Upper Canadian agricultural societies. In terms of the Upper Canadian agricultural societies, neither the 1967 version, nor that of 1992, celebrating the bicentennial of Ontario's agricultural societies, offer any new interpretations.<sup>21</sup> The latest history reaffirms the "humble beginnings" of the 1792-1850 period, characterizing the agricultural societies of Upper Canada as "largely failures."<sup>22</sup>

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Landon, "Agriculture in Ontario," *The Province of Ontario: A History*, vol. 1 (Toronto: The Dominion Publishing Co. Ltd., 1927), 459-79.

In his 1931 article on Upper Canadian agricultural societies, James J. Talman discussed the "interesting phenomenon" of exhibitions sponsored by agricultural societies. In writing this article, he overlooked existing studies, stating that no society, except for Simcoe's, existed prior to 1825. Furthermore, he argued that those societies established after 1830 were isolated and unconnected. Talman determined that they had little effect on the province's agriculture and were simply an opportunity for "social intercourse in the backwoods" which "paved the way" for the later more successful provincial agricultural association. J. J. Talman, "Agricultural Societies of Upper Canada," *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records* 27 (1931): 545-52.

<sup>20</sup>There are later works containing chapters on Upper Canadian agricultural societies which follow this same pattern and offer no new insights. Edwin C. Guillet, *The Pioneer Farmer and Backwoodsman*, vol. 2 (Toronto: The Ontario Publishing Co. Ltd., 1963), p. 129-46; G. Elmore Reaman, *A History of Agriculture in Ontario*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Saunders of Toronto Ltd., 1970), pp. 99-105.

<sup>21</sup>Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies, *The Story of Ontario Agricultural Fairs and Exhibitions 1792-1967* (Picton: Picton Gazette Pub. Co., 1967). Guy Scott, *A Fair Share: A History of Agricultural Societies and Fairs in Ontario 1792 - 1992* (Peterborough: Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies, 1992).

Current academic scholarship also falls into this category. In a chapter offering an overview of early agricultural exhibitions, Elsbeth Heaman draws upon Jones' itemization of Upper Canadian agricultural societies and bases her assessment on the same Jones' pessimism of the effects of these societies. See Elsbeth Heaman, "Commercial Leviathan: Central Canadian Exhibitions at Home and Abroad during the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1996), 37, 49-65.

<sup>22</sup>Scott, *A Fair Share*, 13, 27.

The most significant problem with these interpretations is that they deny Upper Canadian agricultural societies any success because they did not attain the same level of utility as their late nineteenth and twentieth century descendants. The root cause of this interpretation is that historians have artificially isolated these colonial institutions from the ideology that informed their founding. They did not fully explore the British and American heritage to which all these authors have referred. As a result, Upper Canadian agricultural societies have continued to be characterized as little more than curiosities. Moreover, they have never been recognized in the broader Upper Canadian political and social historiography as either important institutions of agricultural development or as even one of the principal political and social organizations of prominent Upper Canadian gentlemen.

It is unfortunate that historians have overlooked C. C. James' 1902 observation that "apart from the Legislature and town meetings...agricultural societies are the oldest forms of organizations of this Province for mutual improvement."<sup>23</sup> Although it is brief, his statement is significant, for it implies that agricultural societies served an official purpose in helping to develop the colony of Upper Canada. It also suggests that the importance of the colony's agricultural societies does not stem merely from the agricultural reforms which they did or did not effect. Instead, as James pointed out, their importance lies in an understanding of their intended semi-public purpose. Thus, in order to evaluate the role of Upper Canada's agricultural societies, it is crucial to comprehend why institutions of "mutual improvement" were encouraged from the very foundation of the province.

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<sup>23</sup>James, "The First Agricultural Societies," *Queen's Quarterly*, 223.

There exists a substantial number of studies of the wider political, social and economic aspects of the Upper Canadian experience upon which this study relies. Among the most important is Jane Errington's study of the development of Upper Canada's ideology and institutions by the colonial leaders, in which she provides a valuable framework for understanding the "dual heritage" of the colony's institutions. The creation of Upper Canada's agricultural societies by the colonial elites illustrates well her assertion that "The political and social institutions established in Upper Canada after 1784 and the attitudes and beliefs of its political, social, and economic leaders were rooted in their understanding of the mother country and of the republic to the south....Moreover, Great Britain and the United States provided [Upper Canadians] with constant points of reference with which to gauge their own development."<sup>24</sup> Although her study pertains to the 1784 to 1828 period, the development of Upper Canada's agricultural societies suggest that the comparative process continued well into the 1840s

In terms of the political and social processes to which these transplanted institutions were adapted, two studies in particular have laid the groundwork for interpreting the development of Upper Canadian agricultural societies. The first is Robert L. Fraser's study of the interplay of the colonial gentry, economy and society. Although his economic assumptions are somewhat dated, his research provides an important outline of the substantial role which the provincial elite played in developing the economy of the agrarian colony. Fraser demonstrates how the Upper Canadian "gentry's limited notion of the development necessary to ensure a prosperous, agrarian society was buttressed by political beliefs dependent

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<sup>24</sup>Jane Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle and Upper Canada: A Developing Colonial Ideology* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 5

upon the hierarchical ordering of a landed society....[They] believed that they as gentlemen were the proper rulers in society rather than merchants businessmen, or farmers."<sup>25</sup> Fraser's focus on a narrowly defined gentry, however, omits agricultural societies as a vital part of the development plans of the Upper Canadian elite. Nevertheless, a more recent study provides an understanding of how the ideology of the elites described by Fraser was taken up by other provincial gentlemen who attempted to assume the role of a gentry.

The manner in which the hierarchical agricultural development was delegated to and supported by the broader ranks of Upper Canadian gentlemen is offered by S.J.R. Noel's examination of what he terms the "culture of clientelism." His study explores the relationship "based upon the roles of patron and client, that grew indigenously out of the social and economic environment of Upper Canada, became an elemental feature of its political life, and long persisted."<sup>26</sup> It was the relationship between the central government officials and the patrons of the province's local communities that was the foundation of the successful agricultural societies' legislation of 1830. Thus, the agricultural societies, like the patron-client relationships on which they were founded persisted throughout the nineteenth century "because they were useful, practical arrangements that were capable of being intelligently adapted to changing conditions."<sup>27</sup>

This thesis attempts to establish Upper Canada's agricultural societies within the broad political, social and economic developments of Upper

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<sup>25</sup>Robert L. Fraser, "Like Eden in Her Summer Dress," 12.

<sup>26</sup>Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers*, 1.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

Canada. It is not a study of agricultural development, however. Although agricultural societies were established to direct the growth of Upper Canada's agriculture, their efforts produced few significant improvements during the 1792-1846 period.

An initial discussion of the development of agricultural societies in Britain within the context of the English Enlightenment's ideology is offered in the first chapter. After outlining the plans which John Graves Simcoe devised for a colonial agricultural society prior to his departure from England for Upper Canada, it provides an overview of the growth of British agricultural societies during the third and fourth quarters of the eighteenth century as organizations to lead the improvement of the nation's agriculture. Fundamental to the ideology of the English Enlightenment were the intertwined concepts of "progress" and "improvement," and nowhere were the results of improvement more readily witnessed than in the application of scientific principles to the practice of agriculture. Drawing upon the tradition of older scientific societies, such as the Royal Society, agricultural societies were an extension of the aristocracy's hegemony. They had been founded to ensure that the improvement of the nation's agriculture occurred without any threat to the existing hierarchical order of society. The English Enlightenment ideology of progress transplanted well from a reinvigorated British society to the untouched frontiers of the New World. As a result, agricultural societies and the enlightened ideology that informed them were recognized by colonial gentlemen as valuable tools of progress in the agrarian states and colonies of North America.

The agricultural societies of Upper Canada were, however, also significantly influenced by the leaders of the agricultural societies of the United States. Thus, as a result of what Jane Errington terms a "dual

heritage," Upper Canadian agricultural societies, like other provincial institutions were not exact replicas of British institutions, for Upper Canadians "attempted to use the best of both worlds – the old and the new – in laying the foundations of their new society."<sup>28</sup> The second part of the opening chapter demonstrates how American examples of agricultural societies and their gentlemanly members from the more developed communities in the United States provided practical approaches to the attainment of the British ideal for the Upper Canadian gentlemen.

The second chapter continues to investigate the agricultural society founded by John Graves Simcoe at Newark and discusses how it differed from Simcoe's desire to keep the society distinctly British. The Niagara Agricultural Society did not become the province-wide institution that Simcoe intended. Instead, it remained a gentlemen's club in which the Niagara merchant elite were able to consolidate further the local mercantile oligarchy by associating with the President of the society, and the peninsula's principal merchant, Robert Hamilton.

A theme which is developed in this chapter is the competitive nature of localized provincial elites. During Upper Canada's first two decades, the colony was little more than a collection of isolated settlements. Furthermore, the number of government officials leading the colony was very small. This led to an insular and insecure elite culture within which agricultural societies provided another arena for the battles of the competing elites. This is illustrated by the failed attempt by Justice Robert Thorpe's to create a new provincial agricultural society at the capital of York in 1808. This society provides a clear example of the importance many in the colony placed on the

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<sup>28</sup>Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 5.

need for proper decorum to maintain one's gentlemanly status. As Robert Thorpe fell from grace, the other Upper Canadian elite quickly ceased to support his agricultural society.

The theme of defensive and competing elites is continued in Chapter 3 which examines agricultural societies founded within the decade following the War of 1812. It presents the experiences of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society, founded in 1818 by the provincial government elite in response to the political agitation of Robert Gourlay. While this society again demonstrates the semi-public nature of an agricultural society in encouraging provincial development, its experience also indicates the continued reluctance of local oligarchies in the province to cooperate with one another. The Upper Canada Agricultural Society had been founded at York with the expectations that other district societies would be formed as branch societies. The Midland District Agricultural Society, founded at Kingston in 1819, demonstrates the depth of these divisions. The gentlemen of Kingston refused to have their organization as a subordinate branch to the York organization. Furthermore, the two independent societies from different areas of the province placed varying degrees of emphasis on either British and American models of agricultural organizations.

Chapter 4 presents a significant transition period in the history of Upper Canada's agricultural societies. During the mid-1820s, the rise of reformers within the provincial House of Assembly added a new element to the forces supporting agricultural societies. In particular, William Lyon Mackenzie and his supporters pressed for the government to become increasingly involved in guiding the direction of the province's agricultural development. Taking their cue from previous examples of government funding to agricultural societies in New York State, reformers pushed for



similar action by the Upper Canadian government. Tory members agreed with reformers on this issue (despite being sharply divided from reformers on many other political issues). From the tory point of view, previous failed attempts at founding an agricultural society with only private funds demonstrated that the New York State example provided a model of how the government could supplement private benevolence. As a result of this common belief, in 1830 the government passed legislation offering money to agricultural societies established in each district of the province.

The second part of this chapter examines the passage of subsequent government legislation that continued government support to agricultural societies throughout the 1830 - 1846 period. It also demonstrates that by the 1840s, Upper Canada's agricultural societies were becoming increasingly public in two important characteristics. First, they had to become more accountable for their spending of public money; second, district agricultural societies began to be more closely incorporated with other government structures such as the District Councils created by Lord Sydenham after the union of Upper and Lower Canada in 1841.

The following two chapters demonstrate that while the agricultural societies drew closer to becoming government institutions, the characteristics of their leadership had changed little. Chapter 5 relates the conflict at York between March and July of 1830, as the Family Compact reacted forcefully to the attempt by William Lyon Mackenzie to found the Home District Agricultural Society. Tories and reformers may have agreed on the necessity of agricultural societies, but the Family Compact refused to allow a reformer such as William Lyon Mackenzie to lead the agricultural society of the provincial capital. Moreover, they hoped that their leadership of the Home District Agricultural Society would set the proper example from gentlemanly

leadership across the province. Once again, it was an agricultural society that provided a very public forum for competition between the Upper Canadian elites.

That the conflict created by the establishment of the Home District Agricultural Society was an isolated incident is demonstrated by Chapter 6. This portion of the thesis, in fact, demonstrates the strength of the agricultural societies' legislation in avoiding conflict. Its success relied on the fact that the bill required no interaction between the local oligarchies of the province. Furthermore, the legislation allowed various local leadership groups to establish these agricultural societies as they saw fit for their particular districts. Specifically, Chapter 6 focuses on the development of agricultural societies in the Midland, Home and Niagara districts. Located within these three political entities were the towns of Kingston, York/Toronto and St. Catharines, whose gentlemen created district agricultural societies that, for the most part, were active throughout the 1830-1846 period. Furthermore, because these areas were among the earliest to be settled, they developed quite independently of each other and are useful in demonstrating the differing experiences of agricultural societies among the eastern, central and western portions of the province. Although all district agricultural societies were founded in accordance with provincial legislation, each district institution was characterized by different leadership and organizational structure.

This chapter explains also how the agricultural legislation reinforced the culture of clientelism which had pervaded Upper Canada's political and social relationship since the very beginnings of the province. The legislation assumed that prominent gentlemen of each district would come forward to lead these agricultural societies in a proper gentlemanly fashion. It also

assumed that the patrons of each district could rely on attracting their clients to support an agricultural society. The result was quite successful. Although the province's settlement increased dramatically between 1830 and 1846, the system of clientelism was flexible enough to adapt to these changes while maintaining a form of leadership that had its origins in the Georgian period. By 1846, the province's agricultural societies were substantially more numerous, but their leadership and overall character had changed little since their origins in 1830.

The final chapter of the thesis returns the history of Upper Canada's agricultural societies to its ideological origins by examining the creation of a provincial association made up of the district agricultural societies, during the 1840s. First, it continues the discussion begun in Chapter 4 concerning the increased public nature of Upper Canada's agricultural societies. Plans first elaborated in 1842 to unite the district organizations included the creation of a government appointed Board of Agriculture to govern the operations of the various agricultural societies. Other schemes called for the inclusion of the District Councillors as part of an overall restructuring of the district agricultural societies to link the agents of agricultural reform more closely to government officials. It would not be until 1846 that plans for a provincial association achieved fruition, however. While the legislation of 1830 had avoided conflict by allowing each district agricultural society to be independent, this factor also hindered the possibility of any united effort from across the province to create a new association.

Finally, the founding of a provincial agricultural association returns to a central theme of this study. Even in the 1840s, British and American agricultural societies continued to influence the foundation of similar Upper Canadian institutions. The example of the Royal Agricultural Society of

England, founded by that nation's landed aristocracy, remained the ideal for the gentlemen who founded the Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada. But, the New York State Agriculture Society offered a more practical approach. It provided the example of a government funded association of local agricultural societies that could fit well with the already publicly funded institutions in Upper Canada.

The creation of this board in 1846 by a small group of Upper Canadian gentlemen, provides a fitting conclusion to this study, as it clearly indicates the strength of Georgian traditions within the leadership of the province's agricultural societies. Although after 1830 the province's agricultural societies were slowly changing from private clubs to public institutions, the full manifestation of that process was several years in the future. Instead, in 1846, a private gentleman's club was ostensibly created to represent Upper Canada's agricultural societies. Its establishment indicated that the leaders of Upper Canada's agricultural societies continued to characterize themselves by the Georgian traditions which had originally led to the creation of these institutions. The Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada, as established in 1846, was little more than the realization of John Graves Simcoe's original plan for a provincial society. Although William Edmundson was unaware of doing so, his almost verbatim repetition of the British traveller's description of the Niagara Agricultural Society spoke volumes on how little the character of the province's agricultural societies had changed in the course of fifty years.

**Chapter 1:  
The Transatlantic World  
of Gentlemanly Agriculture**

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, William Kirby, the zealously Loyalist editor of *The Niagara Mail*<sup>1</sup> was perplexed by the recent discovery of a letter that had been written in 1792 by the American President George Washington to the Scottish politician Sir John Sinclair.<sup>2</sup> The century old correspondence concerning agricultural matters had been found in a desk once owned by Captain Daniel Servos, "a distinguished officer of Butler's Rangers throughout the American Revolutionary War," who had settled in the Niagara area after the conflict. Kirby was hard pressed to explain how correspondence of the American President had come "into the hands of an ardent Loyalist like Captain Servos, a man who had neither love nor respect for Washington."<sup>3</sup> He could only surmise that the first Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe, had received the letter from his friend Sir John Sinclair, and that Captain Servos must have obtained this letter as a

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<sup>1</sup>Kirby's loyalism and Loyalist heritage is well documented. See "Introduction I," in William Kirby, *Annals of Niagara* (1896; reprint, London, Ontario: Edward Phelps, 1972); Mary Jane Edwards, "William Kirby," *DCB*, 8, 551-4. His newspaper article was reprinted without reference to its original publication date by C. C. James in a 1901 history of early North American agricultural societies. C. C. James, "The First Agricultural Societies," in Ontario, Department of Agriculture. Annual Report of the Bureau of Industries for the Province of Ontario, 1901, Appendix No. 26, 125.

<sup>2</sup>Sir John Sinclair was a Member of the Imperial Parliament (1780-1811) and an avid agriculturalist at his estate in Caithness, Scotland. In 1793 he would use his political influence to secure the legislative incorporation of the British Board of Agriculture of which he became the first president. Ernest Clarke, "Sir John Sinclair (1754-1835)," *DNB*, 18, 301-5. The letter is reprinted in James, "The First Agricultural Societies," 126. This correspondence was a reply to an earlier letter which Sinclair had addressed to Washington. See Sir John Sinclair, *The Correspondence of the Right Honourable Sir John Sinclair*, vol. 2 (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), 5, 16. The letter is also found in George Washington's correspondence. See George Washington, *Letters from his excellency George Washington to Arthur Young...and Sir John Sinclair* (Alexandria, [Va.], Cottom and Stewart, 1803), 114-5.

<sup>3</sup>James, "The First Agricultural Societies," 125.

member of Simcoe's Niagara Agricultural Society.<sup>4</sup> But neither Kirby nor later historians could explain why Washington and Sinclair had been discussing agricultural matters or why it had returned across the Atlantic Ocean to Upper Canada.

Washington's letter had journeyed the North Atlantic triangle of like-minded British, American and British North American gentlemen who were well versed in the ideology of the Scientific and Agricultural Revolutions. On both sides of the Atlantic in the last half of the eighteenth century, agriculture was "justly deemed the parent and nurse of arts and commerce—the principal source of a nation's prosperity."<sup>5</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, among the foremost interests of these individuals was the improvement of agricultural practices through the application of science. It was the tangible improvements that resulted from scientific agricultural practices which provided one of the most pronounced indications that scientific principles could greatly contribute to the progress of a nation.

During the last decades of the eighteenth century, it was the Enlightened gentlemen, such as Washington and Sinclair, who performed individual improvements on their own estates. Through the formation of agricultural societies, gentlemen attempted to encourage the acceptance of improved farming practices throughout the nation. While members of the British aristocracy were the acknowledged leaders in developing scientific agricultural practices, the Enlightenment's emphasis on progress translated

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid. Kirby presented no evidence of such a friendship. This is also the only published mention of Daniel Servos' membership in the Niagara Agricultural Society. See Appendix 1.

<sup>5</sup>This statement is taken from a letter published in Nova Scotia by the newly-established agricultural society in 1791. It is a wonderful statement of Enlightenment thought concerning the role of agriculture in strengthening the British nation. See *Letters and Papers on Agriculture: extracted from the correspondence of a Society instituted at Halifax for Promoting Agriculture in the Province of Nova Scotia*, vol. 1 (Halifax: John Howe, 1791), 6-7.

well to the New World ethos of North America. The continent brimmed with an unlimited potential for development. Thus, agricultural societies were soon adopted by North American gentlemen to lead the agricultural development of the colonies.

Washington's letter to Sinclair demonstrates the continued reliance on the exchange of agricultural information between the gentlemen in Britain and those in the United States, even after the American Revolution. In order to disseminate that information, agricultural societies modeled after the institutions of the British aristocracy flourished in the new republic. Such organizations were also formed in the remaining British North American colonies. They also had to adapt to the conditions of colonial society, and the arrival of Washington's letter in Upper Canada illustrates the influence that agricultural developments in the United States had upon those in Upper Canada.

Despite Simcoe's intentions that his agricultural society be an integral part of creating Upper Canada in "the image and transcript of the British people,"<sup>6</sup> this institution, like the colony in general, developed within a North Atlantic triangle. The American adaptations of agricultural societies were as influential in the formation of Upper Canadian institutions as was the aristocratic model itself. The province's agricultural societies displayed characteristics of what Jane Errington aptly terms the "dual heritage" of Upper Canada. They were part of an overall provincial development, which, as she argues, was shaped by colonial leaders who drew upon the best examples

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<sup>6</sup>"John Graves Simcoe to Hon. Henry Dundas, June 30, 1791," in E. A. Cruikshank, ed., *The Correspondence of Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923), 27.

from Britain and the United States to form a specific Upper Canadian ideology and uniquely Upper Canadian institutions.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter will explore the Enlightenment ideology of progress that provided the foundation for both British and North American agricultural societies. While the agricultural societies of Great Britain were an instrument of the British landed classes' hegemony, in Upper Canada, as in the United States, neither the agricultural societies nor the gentlemen who formed them could attain such dominance. Upper Canada's first Lieutenant Governor, John Graves Simcoe, attempted to transplant an exact copy of a British agricultural society to the colony; however, there was neither an aristocracy nor a landed class from which Simcoe could draw members for his institution. Nevertheless, his Niagara Agricultural Society, like other such institutions in North America, drew upon aristocratic models to assert their gentlemanly status in the New World. Therefore, the first agricultural society in Upper Canada was not an exact copy of a British institution; it was heavily influenced by the existing adaptations of British agricultural societies already established in the United States.

Early in 1791, before departing London for Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe wrote an important letter of introduction to Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society and Great Britain's premier scientific statesman.<sup>8</sup> As part of his preparations to become the first Lieutenant

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<sup>7</sup>Errington adds that it was a combination of both of these nations that provided Upper Canadians with "constant points of reference with which to gauge their own development." Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 5.

<sup>8</sup>The most insightful biography of Sir Joseph Banks which places him within the context of the English Enlightenment is that by John Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment: Useful Knowledge and Polite Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). This important letter of introduction has received little attention from Canadian



Governor of Upper Canada, Simcoe expressed his interests in its agricultural development. He suggested to Banks that the new "Colony should in its very Foundations provide for every Assistance that can possibly be procured for the Arts and Sciences."<sup>9</sup> He also indicated that "in the Literary way [he would] be glad to lay the foundation stone of some Society that...might hereafter conduce to the extension of Science." To complement this endeavour, Simcoe wanted a public library to be established with the aid of government funds, "composed of such books that might be useful to the colony." Furthermore, he requested that some "Botanical Arrangement" be developed between Britain and Upper Canada to encourage the production of hemp and flax, "Commodities...which Great Britain now procures from other nations."<sup>10</sup>

A few months later, in August 1791, a pleased John Graves Simcoe noted to his friend Henry Dundas the success he had made with regards to his plans. Lord Grenville had offered him a sum of money "to lay the Foundations of a Public Library," and with this money, Simcoe intended "to procure the Encyclopedia & Books of that Description, Extracts from which might be published in the periodical Papers for the purposes of facilitating Commerce and Agriculture." He stated to Dundas that these funds would "be a great assistance to that literary society which I shall certainly aim at establishing."<sup>11</sup>

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historians. The only individual who recognized its importance was the Reverend Dr. Henry Scadding, who published an earlier version in 1890. In his preface, Scadding correctly argued that the letter set forth Simcoe's "views in regard to what should be done by the introducer of the British Constitution and British habits of thought into a region...of unbroken forest...asking for the ideas of that very eminent and intelligent scientist on the subject." Rev. Henry Scadding ed., *Letter to Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society of Great Britain, written by Lieut. Governor Simcoe, in 1791* (Toronto: The Copp Clark Company, Ltd., Printers, 1890).

<sup>9</sup>"John Graves Simcoe to Sir Joseph Banks, Bart., President of the Royal Society, January 8, 1791," Cruikshank, ed., *Correspondence*, vol. 1, 18.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 17-19.

In terms of understanding Simcoe's ideological foundations for the development of Upper Canada, the importance of the contents of these two letters, and especially his introduction to Sir Joseph Banks cannot be overstated. In them, Simcoe clearly documents his belief in the basic tenets of the English Enlightenment. His views can be divided into two broad categories: the role of an agricultural society in the development of an agrarian colony and the elite membership necessary for its proper influence and successful operation.

A gentleman farmer himself,<sup>12</sup> Simcoe's request to Banks for "every assistance to the Arts and Sciences" was a common theme among gentlemen of late eighteenth century Great Britain, for the landed aristocrats were applying the lessons learned from science to their agricultural practices on

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<sup>11</sup> "J. G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, London, August 12, 1791," *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>12</sup> Simcoe would have been well aware of scientific agriculture and the rise of agricultural societies, for between 1782 and 1791 he himself was an improving gentleman farmer. Having been invalided home in 1781 after seeing action in the American Revolution, he returned to Devon where he married Elizabeth Posthuma Gwillim, whose dowry provided him with a 5000 acre estate. Here they built their manor house, Wolford Lodge, and Simcoe set about improving the estate until his departure for Upper Canada in 1792.

Most biographies of John Graves Simcoe, however, neglect this part of his life. S. R. Mealing's biography of Simcoe notes his wife's purchase of the Wolford estate and quickly passes on to his election to parliament in 1790, arguing only that Simcoe was "unwilling to retire into private life." S. R. Mealing, "John Graves Simcoe," *DCB*, 5, 754. Mealing also demonstrates his misunderstanding of Simcoe in an earlier argument concerning the enthusiasms of Upper Canada's first Lieutenant Governor. In examining the range of projects for Upper Canada in which Simcoe expressed interest, Mealing labels this British official "an intellectual magpie" rather than casting him as a quintessential enlightened gentleman of late eighteenth century Britain. S. R. Mealing, "The Enthusiasms of John Graves Simcoe," in *Historical Essays on Upper Canada*, ed. J. K. Johnson (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1975), 302-16. Other sources do make some mention of his rural pursuits. The entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* notes briefly that upon Simcoe's return to England he "settled down for a time on his own estates to the life of a country gentleman." Charles Alexander Harris, "John Graves Simcoe (1752-1806)," *DNB*, 18, 253. John Ross Robertson's 1911 annotated diary of Elizabeth Posthuma Simcoe and William Renwick Riddell's 1926 biography of John Graves Simcoe offer the most information concerning this decade of Simcoe's life. Riddell notes that Simcoe "spent the next few years as a country gentleman, improving his estate, building a Manor House at Wolford, laying out roads etc." William Renwick Riddell, *The Life of John Graves Simcoe* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Limited, [1926]), 76; John Ross Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1911), 32-3.

their own estates. Science, in Baconian terms, derived from "reason." It was an understanding of humanity and nature gained through the use of natural faculties, to be utilized for the benefit of humankind.<sup>13</sup> Nowhere was this more apparent than in the art of agriculture, and fully expressed in the ideology of improvement and progress which underlay the establishment of British scientific and agricultural societies. John Gascoigne argues in his biography of Sir Joseph Banks that it was the leaders of Scotland who by the mid-eighteenth century, first began to "forge that alliance between science and agriculture which was to provide the basis for the improvers' optimism in Britain more generally." In Scotland, the landed aristocracy's awareness of their backwardness "strengthened their determination to promote schemes which would improve the productivity of Scotland's agriculture and put to better use both its land and its peoples."<sup>14</sup>

In a related study of this period, David Spadafora argues that throughout Britain "the idea of progress was so crucial a concept and so closely interwoven with so many major intellectual trends of the time" that eighteenth-century thought cannot be understood without appreciating their belief in progress.<sup>15</sup> Spadafora defines progress as "the belief in the movement over time of some aspect or aspects of human existence, within a social setting, toward a better condition."<sup>16</sup> "Visible progress in the present gave a promise of still better things to come," and the application of science to

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<sup>13</sup>Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks*, 31-2.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>15</sup>David Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), xiii.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

agriculture produced relatively instantaneous improvements.<sup>17</sup> As a result, Gascoigne argues, "the confidence that the human condition could be improved rippled out from agriculture, the traditional centre of the nation's economic and social order, to most other areas of society."<sup>18</sup>

But individual improvements in agricultural practices were only the beginning of the Agricultural Revolution. By the mid-eighteenth century, there was a widespread belief that gentlemen of science and agriculture needed to come together in a variety of improving and scientific societies to share their knowledge. By doing so, progress would be spurred by the "cumulatively progressive effect of cooperative enterprise."<sup>19</sup> Just as "science was an agent for improving the wealth of nations and the welfare of mankind more generally,"<sup>20</sup> the societies established to promote this improving creed were viewed as important "tools of progress."<sup>21</sup>

To the enlightened gentlemen of John Graves Simcoe's generation, the transplantation of this scientific ideology to the North American continent made complete sense. As Suzanne Zeller has persuasively argued in her study of the culture of Victorian science in nineteenth-century British North America, it was science that offered "solutions to the settler's most basic problems." It "held out the promise of a means to locate good soils for agriculture and valuable mineral deposits for mining and industry, to cope with climate, and to make commercial use of plants and other natural

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 84.

<sup>18</sup>Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks*, 185.

<sup>19</sup>Spadafora, *Idea of Progress*, 80-1.

<sup>20</sup>Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks*, 7.

<sup>21</sup>Spadafora, *Idea of Progress*, 84.

products....Science offered a chance for real prosperity more than mere survival."<sup>22</sup> It "enabled colonists to make sense of the New World by translating and adapting the experience of the Old." As it had been demonstrated in the older North American colonies, Upper Canada, for example, could be transformed from wilderness to "a veritable Garden of Eden, a promised land," by the mere process of cultivation.<sup>23</sup>

A New World mentality was common in eighteenth and nineteenth-century North America, and as Daniel Keon argues, this mentality "may have been one of the cornerstones of English-Canada's evolving intellectual and cultural relationship to the United States."<sup>24</sup> The New World ethos presented North America as a place where emigrants "could attain for themselves and their families greater material comforts and a higher standard of living."<sup>25</sup> Thus, it was through Baconian science that the New World was understood. Agricultural societies and the improving creed upon which they were founded had just as important a role in leading the development of new colonies as they had in transforming Old World practices.

Agricultural societies were first established in Great Britain during the mid-eighteenth century as part of an interconnected approach to the progress of mankind composed of science, agriculture and commerce. As assemblies of

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<sup>22</sup>Suzanne Zeller, *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 3.

<sup>23</sup>Zeller, *Land of Promise, Promised Land: The Culture of Victorian Science in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association Booklet No. 56, 1996), 2-3. See also Fraser, "Like Eden in Her Summer Dress," 80-3.

<sup>24</sup>Daniel John Keon, "The 'New World' Idea in British America: An Analysis of some British Promotional, Travel and Settler Writings 1784-1860" (Ph.D. diss., Queen's University, 1984), ii. S. J. R. Noel also suggests this common ideology. His argument will be discussed further in Chapter 2. Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers*, 27.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

learned gentlemen, the societies focussed a great deal of attention on the study and publication of numerous treatises concerning the importance of agriculture to the nation as well as the results of scientific experiments.<sup>26</sup> John Graves Simcoe envisioned that his society would be created with a similar focus. In his letter to Sir Joseph Banks, he emphasized the need for Upper Canadian gentlemen to familiarize themselves with these publications by expressing his intent to contribute to the Niagara Agricultural Society "in the Literary way."

Great Britain's agricultural societies were intended "for a new class of person, 'gentlemen who [were] in the habit of agricultural experiment'."<sup>27</sup> The agricultural pursuits championed by these societies "harmonized well with a gentleman's way of living. There was the joy of experimentation, and the satisfaction of encouraging one's tenants and neighbors to make improvements."<sup>28</sup> It was an exercise for both the body and mind, offering much more personal satisfaction and benefits to society than the traditional gentleman's pastime of hunting.<sup>29</sup> Part of what John Gascoigne terms "the clubbable world of the Enlightenment," these communities of late

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<sup>26</sup>The editor of the *Upper Canada Gazette* noted in 1796, the subject of agriculture in Britain had employed "the pens of a multitude of its geniuses," producing a "surprisingly numerous" amount of books on the subject. *Upper Canada Gazette*, December 21, 1796, p. 3, c. 1-2. See Appendix 2 for examples of this literature that was owned by the Niagara Agricultural Society. See also G. E. Fussell, *More old English farming books from Tull to the Board of Agriculture 1731-1793* (London: Crosby Lockwood, 1950).

<sup>27</sup>This observation was published by the Bath [Agricultural] Society in 1792, and is quoted in Kenneth Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit: British Agricultural Societies in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Hugh Evelyn Limited, 1972), 3.

<sup>28</sup>John G. Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young 1741-1820*, vol. 97 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1973), 54.

<sup>29</sup>Lord Kames (Henry Home), *The Gentleman Farmer, Being an attempt to improve agriculture, by subjecting it to the test of rational principles*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: Printed for John Bell and G. G. J. and J. Robinson, London, 1788), preface.

eighteenth-century gentlemen provided a "fertile environment" for the spread of the English Enlightenment, as they provided increased opportunities for individuals to gather beyond traditional meetings afforded by the church or family.<sup>30</sup> Founded "to break, or at least weaken, the traditional ways of going about the business of farming,"<sup>31</sup> most societies offered premiums for quality agricultural produce, livestock and inventions, and inspired "industry and innovation through the award of financial and honorary incentives."<sup>32</sup>

During the 1790s there were ninety different agricultural societies operating in England, Scotland and Wales, fifty-six of which had been established since 1780.<sup>33</sup> Rural pursuits and membership in agricultural societies became especially fashionable among Britain's elites with the ascension of George III. The king was the model of a gentleman farmer, being involved in livestock breeding as well as authoring several articles in Arthur Young's *Annals of Agriculture*, under the pseudonym of Ralph Robinson. "Farmer George", according to John Gascoigne, through his agricultural pursuits "further strengthened the association between improvement and patriotism as well as that between improvement and social stability."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks*, 35.

<sup>31</sup>Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit*, 2.

<sup>32</sup>Gwendoline Averley, "English Scientific Societies of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries" (Ph. D. diss., Teeside Polytechnic, University of Durham, 1989), 344.

<sup>33</sup>*ibid.*, 333.

<sup>34</sup>Morris Berman, *Social Change and Scientific Organization: The Royal Institution, 1799-1844* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1978), 34-5; Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks*, 236. For a study of George III's agricultural pursuits, see Harold B. Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish Flock* ([Sydney]: Angus & Robertson, [1964]).

Although the Enlightenment encouraged the English elite to approach problems through "useful knowledge," progress of the nation originated with "an activity which was at the heart of landed society: the practice of agriculture."<sup>35</sup> The "clubbable world" that led this progress "naturally carried with it the notion of social as well as intellectual respectability and it offered many an opportunity for enforcing canons of social or intellectual conformity through the gentle art of blackballing. Attempts to push enlightened values beyond the point where they no longer served the established order were naturally discouraged by the ethos of a club which promoted consensus and civility."<sup>36</sup> In his study of the rise of scientific societies in Britain, Morris Berman argues that within such institutions, "interest in the subjects themselves was secondary to the interest in the social mobility they could afford. Whatever their intellectual value, their social function probably lay in providing easier access to ruling-class circles."<sup>37</sup> The British aristocracy ensured that it was only individuals of wealth and property who were entrusted with the nation's progress, for they possessed the education to conduct proper experiments, the wealth to absorb the effects of possible failures, and the leisure to attend meetings to discuss and publicize their findings.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, the agricultural societies that were established in

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<sup>35</sup>Cascoigne, *Joseph Banks*, 185.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 35-6.

<sup>37</sup>Morris Berman, "'Hegemony' and the Amateur Tradition in British Science," *Journal of Social History* 8(Winter 1975): 37.

<sup>38</sup>This definition of *noblesse oblige* was expressed best by a member of the Bath Society in 1780: "Let Agriculture be studied by gentlemen of landed property, on philosophic principles; let it be taught to their tenants; and the happy consequences will soon be apparent throughout this island." Another member of this same society noted in 1783 that it was gentlemen who had the "power to make experiments which it would be imprudent for common Farmers to make at their own risque [sic]." Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit*, 2-3, 96-97.



Britain were more than just "tools of progress"; they were agents of the British elite's hegemony.

British agricultural societies drew upon the earlier tradition of gentlemen scientific societies. In his study of the Royal Institution at London, Morris Berman argues that the British aristocracy's agricultural experimentation of the eighteenth century stemmed directly from their long-standing monopoly over British scientific investigation. After the inception of Britain's premier scientific institution, the Royal Society, at London in 1660, there had developed what Berman terms a "gentleman amateur tradition." This tradition of wealthy aristocrats pursuing scientific research at their leisure "was closely bound up with the cultural ideal of the English aristocracy, and in fact was part of its hegemonic apparatus."<sup>39</sup> Because of its "association with the aristocracy and the 'proper' way to live,"<sup>40</sup> this "hegemonic ideal of the ruling class served to undercut alternative scientific development."<sup>41</sup>

Berman demonstrates how the Royal Institution, founded at London in 1799, "quickly and naturally became an institution wherein science was to be directed primarily toward agricultural improvement."<sup>42</sup> The institutional embodiment of the "gentlemen amateur tradition," its membership reflected

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<sup>39</sup>Berman, *Social Change*, xx-xxii.

<sup>40</sup>Berman, "'Hegemony' and the Amateur Tradition in British Science," 34.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>42</sup>Berman, *Social Change*, 2. Interest in the application of science had earlier caused a split within the Royal Society. Around 1775, a agreement was made between the Royal Society and the Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, established in 1754, that "the Royal Society should occupy itself with pure science and leave the study of its application to the Society of Arts." Between this date and approximately 1805, agricultural activities were the main activities of this society. See Derek Hudson and Kenneth W. Luckhurst, *The Royal Society of Arts 1754-1954* (London: John Murray, Albermarle Street, 1954), 58, 84.

the strong connection between science and agricultural improvement among the aristocracy. Of the fifty-seven men at the inaugural meeting of the Royal Institution, Berman calculates that half were "improving landlords." They were "members of the peerage and wealthy gentry who were in the forefront of agricultural development and estate exploitation."<sup>43</sup> By 1793, these improving landlords were successful in gaining the establishment of a "half private, half public" Board of Agriculture funded by annual government grants but not answerable to the Treasury.<sup>44</sup> The central scientific institutions at London, such as the Royal Society, the Royal Society of Arts, the Royal Institution and subsequently the Board of Agriculture were joined in promoting and applying scientific discoveries to agricultural practices by local agricultural societies which were established by their peers throughout the British Isles. It was the nation's numerous agricultural societies that provided the opportunities for localized maintenance of the British elite's hegemony.

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<sup>43</sup>Berman, *Social Change*, xxiv.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 191. One of the earlier and most complete arguments for creating an united approach to agricultural improvement is found in Henry Home, Lord Kames' 1776 work *The Gentleman Farmer*. Kames, "a kind of father-figure" to both David Hume and Adam Smith, authored his comments on the loss of the American colonies after the revolution. It was useless to despond, he determined, "for if agriculture be carried on but to the perfection that our soil and climate readily admit, it will amply compensate the loss of these colonies." In his view, the way in which to carry out these agricultural reforms was to establish a "Board for Improving Agriculture...eminent for patriotism and for skill in agriculture." It would also be active in "promoting and propagating knowledge" of new agricultural practices. Kames placed a great deal of emphasis on the "choice of proper members," concluding that this board could be open only to gentlemen "who serve for honour and not for profit." Once these proper gentlemen were found, they could fill out the ranks of the board, as Kames believed such individuals were "well intitled [sic] to choose their companions." As Kames was particularly interested in forming this board in Scotland, he determined that the selection of gentlemen must be confined to those who resided in Edinburgh for part of the year. "Punctual attendance" could not be expected from others. The field became even more narrow, for Kames felt that it "would be unsafe to leave the choice to members of parliament." These individuals were not of the proper calibre, he believed, for they were "obliged to solicit for their friends and voters without regard to merit." Lord Kames, *Gentleman Farmer*, 392 - 406. For information concerning Lord Kames' improving ideology see Spadafora, *Idea of Progress*, 255.

The activities of these local societies support E. P. Thompson's argument that "ruling-class control in the eighteenth century was located primarily in a cultural hegemony."<sup>45</sup> It induced "a state of mind in which the established structures of authority and even modes of exploitation appear[ed] to be in the very course of nature."<sup>46</sup> Significantly, he noted that this cultural hegemony was not dependent "upon constant, day-by-day attention to responsibilities...but upon occasional dramatic interventions."<sup>47</sup> The hosting of public demonstrations of improved tillage, drainage, machinery, crops and the displays of improved livestock breeds by local agricultural societies allowed the public to see the tangible results of scientific agriculture. It also sent the message that even the most minute changes in agricultural practices, that were within the means of all classes, would contribute to the overall improvement of the nation's agriculture and thus to its continual progress.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, the maintenance of order in the face of these dramatic changes was central to the improving creed of the British elite. Morris Berman argues that from its inception, the Royal Institution became an "agricultural laboratory, science now being given an entrepreneurial slant...[and]...a means of containing potential disruption." In response to the

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<sup>45</sup>E. P. Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture," *Journal of Social History* 7(1974): 387.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 388.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 390.

<sup>48</sup>In his study of the English working class, Thompson argued that "the spirit of agricultural improvement in the eighteenth century was impelled less by altruistic desires to banish ugly wastes...than by the desire for fatter rent rolls and larger profits." Enclosure – the process of turning centuries-old commons into private, mono-cultured fields – destroyed the old methods of subsistence agriculture for Britain's poorest classes. According to Thompson, the legal ability of British landowners to effect enclosure "was a plain enough case of class robbery, played according to fair rules of property and law laid down by a Parliament of property-owners and lawyers." E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the Working Class* (New York: Vantage Books, 1966), 217-18.

effects of the French and the Industrial Revolutions during the last decade of the eighteenth century, Berman claims, the "application of the entrepreneurial spirit of the Industrial Revolution to agriculture would, the improving landlords believed, eventually mitigate the sting of rural poverty and thus the threat of social cataclysm."<sup>49</sup>

The improving creed of the late eighteenth century, as John Gascoigne argues, built on the hierarchical society that already existed. Applied to agriculture it offered gradual, controlled progress which maintained that hierarchical society and produced minimal threat to the governing class. Improving landlords were able to gain government legislation and funds to encourage the extension of improvements throughout Britain, for it demonstrated the potential of the nation while respecting the rights of private property.<sup>50</sup> Thus, within this clubbable world progress was successfully reined by the creed of improvement. Scientific experiments were performed by Great Britain's landed classes, who in turn, followed scientific statesmen like Sir Joseph Banks, a personal friend of King George III. With the transformation of the nation's agricultural practices firmly in the grasp of its landed aristocracy, the progress of Great Britain advanced, secure from any radical changes that might threaten the long established hierarchical structure of British society.<sup>51</sup>

Improvement and progress, similarly controlled, were to be at the very heart of Simcoe's policies for Upper Canada. It is imperative to understand that Simcoe was himself an improving gentleman and that the letter he

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<sup>49</sup>Berman uses Eric Hobsbawm's term, the "dual revolution" to describe Britain during the last decade of the eighteenth century. Berman, *Social Change*, xxiii, 1.

<sup>50</sup>Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks*, 235-6.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 55.

wrote to Sir Joseph Banks is weighted with significant information about the Lieutenant Governor's plans for Upper Canada. Sir Joseph Banks was the chief "scientific advisor to the British State," and used that position to promote the "possibilities of rational government to reshape society to realise more fully the fruits of science and enlightened opinion."<sup>52</sup> Simcoe hoped to tap into Banks' support for his Upper Canadian institution. By introducing himself to Banks, Simcoe was ensuring his society's and his own acknowledged position within the clubbable world of the transatlantic enlightened community.

Simcoe's main intent in establishing an agricultural society was to foster a union of Upper Canadian gentlemen in order to lead the agrarian development of his new colony. He envisioned his agricultural society to be a semi-public institution guiding the development of Upper Canada right from the colony's inception. Although a private club, its membership would be composed of many of the colony's leading government officials. The Lieutenant Governor would be its founder, patron and benefactor for the development of the society's library. Furthermore, this society would coordinate any future "Botanical Arrangements" for hemp and flax with government officials and other agricultural societies in Great Britain. Such agreements would not only contribute to the expansion of Upper Canada's agriculture, but also to the progress of Great Britain.

Despite his plans, John Graves Simcoe's Upper Canadian agricultural society could never be the "image and transcript" of the British model. The Lieutenant Governor needed colonial elite to fill the ranks of his society, and the basis of power and gentlemanly status were quite different in the New

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 5.

World than in Great Britain. Moreover, by the time of Simcoe's arrival, other North American agricultural societies had been founded which offered a somewhat different model. "The Society for Promoting Agriculture in Nova Scotia" had been established under the patronage of Lieutenant Governor John Parr in 1789.<sup>53</sup> That same year, Governor Lord Dorchester had established "The Agricultural Society in Canada" at Quebec,<sup>54</sup> and a similar institution was founded at St. John, New Brunswick, in 1790.<sup>55</sup> In addition, after the American Revolution, agricultural societies had been established in several states, including South Carolina and Pennsylvania in 1785, Maine in 1787, New York in 1791, and Massachusetts in 1792.<sup>56</sup> Of these, none was more prestigious than the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture. Among its twenty-three founding members, four had signed the Declaration of Independence, four had been members of the convention to draft the Constitution, seven had been officers in the Revolutionary Army, seven were

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<sup>53</sup>James, "The First Agricultural Societies," 113-17; *Letters and Pape{rs}*, vol. 1, 12, 38.

<sup>54</sup>James, "The First Agricultural Societies," 118-20; *Agricultural Society in Canada, Papers and Letters on Agriculture, Recommended to the Attention of the Canadian Farmers* (Quebec: Samuel Neilson, 1790), I.

<sup>55</sup>James, "The First Agricultural Societies," 117-18; John Douglas White, "Speed the Plough: Agricultural Societies in PreConfederation New Brunswick" (Master's thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1976), 21. Simcoe's society was technically the second such institution established in the colony, for the Agricultural Society in Canada had contained a branch society for the District of Montreal. Prior to 1791, this district included the territory which would become Upper Canada. Although this agricultural society was intended to serve the expanse of the old province of Quebec, it does not appear that there were any actual members of the society living west of Montreal. James, "The First Agricultural Societies," 118-20; *Agricultural Society in Canada, Papers and Letters*, I.

<sup>56</sup>James, "The First Agricultural Societies" in Ontario, Department of Agriculture. *Annual Report of the Bureau of Industries for the Province of Ontario, 1901*, Appendix No. 26, 111-126; Rodney H. True, "The Early Development of Agricultural Societies in the United States", *Annual Report of the American Historical Society for the year 1920* 1 (1920): 295-306.

Congressmen and two were Senators. Benjamin Franklin was a resident member, and President George Washington an honorary member.<sup>57</sup>

Just as George III was the model of the country gentleman for the British Empire, George Washington was the country gentleman for the new republic.<sup>58</sup> An avid farmer at Mount Vernon, the American President regretted that the duties of his "public station" did not allow him the proper time to pay attention to his "favourite pursuit" of agriculture.<sup>59</sup> Despite the revolution, American elites such as Washington, corresponded freely with leading British agriculturists. As the letter in Daniel Servos' possession demonstrated, enlightened gentlemen such as President Washington and Sir John Sinclair of Scotland -- both prominent political figures -- were able to rise above any political divisions and freely discuss intellectual matters such as agriculture.<sup>60</sup> In fact, in itemizing the character of Washington, Sinclair respected him most for his interest in agriculture.<sup>61</sup> Instead of despising the new republic, Sinclair considered it "an empire, which is likely to reach a degree of power and pre-eminence, which the world has not hitherto witnessed...[for]...the foundation" of the United States' power was

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<sup>57</sup>Simon Baatz, *"Venerate the Plough" A History of the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture 1785-1985* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture, 1985), 4-6.

<sup>58</sup>At a symposium of eighteenth century agriculture in 1968, one speaker noted that we "tend to forget that George Washington was a colonial English country gentleman before he became the First Citizen of a new nation." Cecil Wall, "George Washington: Country Gentleman." *Agricultural History* 43 (1969): 5.

<sup>59</sup>George Washington to Sir John Sinclair, October 20, 1792 in Sinclair, *The Correspondence of the Right Honourable Sir John Sinclair, Bart.*, vol. 2, 16.

<sup>60</sup>For examples of this see *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 277-82; vol. 2, 3-80.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. 1, 282; vol. 2, 34-6.

"fortunately laid in the cultivation of the soil, the only true basis of *permanent* national prosperity."<sup>62</sup>

Reasons as to why these American men were interested in organizing British agricultural institutions in the new republic are offered by Tamara Plakins Thornton's examination of the formation of the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture. In *Cultivating Gentlemen*, Thornton expresses her curiosity at the fact that after the revolution, many of Boston's merchants, manufacturers and government officials, who were actively "changing the Massachusetts economy from a farming to a commercial and industrial one...endeavored so assiduously to identify themselves with things rural and agrarian."<sup>63</sup> Members of the Boston elite, she determines, entered the new republic full of contradictions. They had rejected the British aristocracy, but lived on country estates. They were mercantile in outlook, but were gentlemen farmers. Politically, they were polar opposites of the Jeffersonians, but their lifestyle on their country estates paralleled that of Thomas Jefferson at Monticello. This post-revolutionary world was one "in which everything had to be redefined and reoriented," and Thornton concludes that in defining what it meant to be a member of the American elite, "rural pursuits turned out to be a powerful means of self-characterization."<sup>64</sup>

Thornton argues that interest in agriculture on the part of American elites stemmed from their belief that economic functions were "morally charged categories freighted with symbolic significance." Whereas commerce

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., vol. 1, 282; vol. 2, 76-7.

<sup>63</sup>Tamara Plakins Thornton, *Cultivating Gentlemen: The Meaning of Country Life Among the Boston Elite 1785-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 1.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 20-21.



and manufacturing were viewed as negative, rural life and agriculture were overwhelmingly positive.<sup>65</sup> Agriculture was considered the base of power and wealth for any nation and the American yeoman was "the uniquely ideal republican type...the man who made time stand still."<sup>66</sup> In order to avoid the moral decline associated with an industrializing and commercializing nation, elite support and involvement in agriculture was necessary to sustain the virtuous nature of the nation. It behooved the American elite to ensure that industry would be "only a new branch on the agricultural tree." By championing the role of the American yeoman and his labours, the American elites could ensure that "economic development and agrarian virtue would progress together."<sup>67</sup>

But the North American elites' contact with the yeoman was limited, for both the United States and Upper Canada lacked any landed aristocracy. While establishing a large estate conjured up images of the British landed gentry, land for the North American elite was not "the basis of power, prestige, and wealth." Instead, an estate was merely a trapping acquired from the income of commerce or a profession.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, in the absence of a landlord-tenant relationship, there was no direct link between the gentleman farmer and the yeomanry. Any improvements in their land holdings did not

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 6; Concerning the rhetoric and praise of the American yeoman see Donald B. Marti, "Agrarian Thought and Agricultural Progress: The Endeavor for Agricultural Development in New England and New York, 1815 - 1840" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1966), Chapter 10; Marti, "In Praise of Farming: An Aspect of The Movement for Agricultural Improvement in the Northeast, 1815-1840," *New York History* 51 (1970): 351-75; and Lynne Blanton, "The Agrarian Myth in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century American Magazines" (Ph. D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1979).

<sup>67</sup>Marti, "Agrarian Thought," 343-5.

<sup>68</sup>Thornton, *Cultivating Gentlemen*, 22.

translate into profits through increased rents. Thus, Thornton argues, in terms of identifying themselves as rural gentlemen and championing scientific agriculture, the Bostonian elite were not motivated by private pecuniary interests. They did, however, adopt wholeheartedly British ideas of agricultural reforms and "the rhetoric of patriotism and benevolence that informed those innovations."<sup>69</sup> The "endeavor for agricultural improvement enabled gentlemen to reach out to the ordinary farmers, displaying their learning and exacting deference. Men who could not be English lords could be American pedagogues."<sup>70</sup>

Membership in an agricultural society also matched well with the "genteel code" that Richard Bushman argues was well established in North American society by the advent of the American Revolution. The "great merchants and planters, the clergy and professionals, the officers of the courts and government" were all expected to adhere to the genteel code.<sup>71</sup> Thornton argues that the elite of Massachusetts "through a kind of cultural intuition" knew that being a gentleman farmer was appropriate to their "station and pretensions," and that interest in scientific agriculture was what defined a "proper gentleman."<sup>72</sup> Unlike Britain, where agricultural societies were dominated by gentlemen of the aristocracy and landed gentry, in the New World, the absence of such individuals caused the definition of "gentleman" to be much more inclusive.

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>70</sup>Marti, "Agrarian Thought," vii.

<sup>71</sup>Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vantage Books, 1993), xii-xiii.

<sup>72</sup>Thornton, *Cultivating Gentlemen*, 32.

Even in the British context, "the meaning of 'gentleman' had long been somewhat ambiguous."<sup>73</sup> And in Upper Canada, R. D. Gidney and W. P. J. Millar observe that the absence of an aristocracy caused leadership to be "devolved upon those who most nearly approximated the attributes of the aristocracy. These were the few who possessed the advantages of education, superior natural intelligence, respectable station, and property."<sup>74</sup> From the late eighteenth century onwards, Gidney and Millar argue, "the ideal of the 'professional gentleman' was increasingly pervasive" in Upper Canada.<sup>75</sup> The "income of a professional man...was like the income received from land. Metaphorically at least, it was not earned by labour but akin to the rents produced by ownership. A profession was a form of property and, like land itself, freed the gentleman from dependence on the will of others."<sup>76</sup> But this was a serious variance from the ideal landed gentleman.

The absence of landed estates was certainly an obstacle to the Upper Canadian elites' attempt at gaining recognition of their "assumed rank" in provincial society.<sup>77</sup> In his study of the provincial gentry, Robert Fraser argues that "the attempt to forge the substance of the social structure of pre-industrial society upon the pockets of settlement in the uncleared wilderness of Upper Canada" was an audacious move on their part. In his opinion, this effort resulted in "a major contradiction in their self-image," for "it was the possession of landed wealth which imparted independence." It was the

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<sup>73</sup>Gidney and Millar, *Professional Gentlemen*, 6.

<sup>74</sup>Fraser, "Like Eden in Her Summer Dress," 215.

<sup>75</sup>Gidney and Millar, *Professional Gentlemen*, 6.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>77</sup>Fraser, "Like Eden in Her Summer Dress," 208.

landed gentry which possessed the independence which "fitted a man for politics and a concern for the general interest."<sup>78</sup> A land-owning gentleman was fit for politics as he was secure in his fortune and he had nothing gain to from his public office.<sup>79</sup> Thus, in the Upper Canadian situation, Fraser determines that the attempt to transplant British agrarian society to the Upper Canadian frontier created a paradox for the provincial elite. In the absence of landed wealth, these political elite had to secure financial independence through political office.<sup>80</sup> This was exactly opposite of the individuals Lord Kames had believed to be ideal for a board of agriculture at Edinburgh.<sup>81</sup>

A similar situation existed in the United States. As Richard Bushman notes, American gentlemen were "preoccupied with an aristocratic past at the same time as they were rushing into a democratic and capitalistic future....Americans modeled their lives after the aristocrats of a society that was supposedly repudiated at the founding of the nation." But he argues there were certain benefits in focusing on this past, for "it afforded a convenient identity and a definition of position in the confining fluidity of democratic society....The refinement of America involved the capture of aristocratic culture for use in republican society."<sup>82</sup> They managed, as Donald B. Marti argues, "to keep old ideas relevant to a changing social and economic order."<sup>83</sup> And one way to do this was, as Eric Hobsbawm has succinctly argued, to "invent" tradition.

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<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>81</sup>Kames, *Gentleman Farmer*, 398.

<sup>82</sup>Bushman, *Refinement of America*, xix.

An invented tradition, Hobsbawm suggests, is "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past."<sup>84</sup> In terms of agricultural leadership within the agricultural societies, the cultural hegemony of the British aristocracy remained a model for the North American elites to assert their leadership. However, the New World gentlemen's attempt to assert such hegemony resulted in the mere use of the cultural symbols of their fellow gentlemen in Britain. Little effect upon the agriculture of the North American colonies was possible, but an agricultural society as an invented tradition did effectively enforce a code of gentility among the elites of the New World.

Adopting this code of gentility, Bushman argues, resulted in maintaining the genteel standards through a "self-aware performance." This in turn led to the formation of "brilliant and harmonious societies where people came together to perform for one another." In such meetings, these members were "well aware of watching and being watched." Bushman argues that as a result, life became for the genteel individuals "a continuous performance."<sup>85</sup> Tamara Plakins Thornton determined that the members of the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture was not just "a matter of

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<sup>83</sup>Marti, "Agrarian Thought," ix.

<sup>84</sup>Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger ed., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1. For an example of the connection of the invention of tradition with a British North American agricultural society see Phillip McCann, "Culture, State Formation, and the Invention of Tradition: Newfoundland, 1832-1855," in *The Invention of Canada*, ed. Chad Gaffield (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman Ltd., 1994), 271-89.

<sup>85</sup>Bushman, *Refinement of America*, xiv.

mere show," but it was "a highly self-conscious act." Membership was considered "a public service of the highest order that carried with it the moral prestige and national importance of agriculture itself." The Boston elite joined this society to gain from the citizens of the state the "recognition as a ruling class and the deference that accompanied this recognition."<sup>86</sup>

John F. Kasson, however, suggests that the performances of genteel individuals in America were often occasions of "comic confusion." Kasson comments, "The script remained that of English rank-ordered society, but actors frequently failed to dress their parts, learn their lines, or keep to their assigned roles."<sup>87</sup> Agricultural societies in the New World provided a central stage for these performances. As Donald Marti posits, the improvement of agriculture "gave gentlemen a role to perform, a role which asserted their leadership in the agricultural community."<sup>88</sup> While the founders of American agricultural societies did not purposely preclude practical farmers from joining, they could not join, as it would be a recognition of equal social status, thus undermining the pedagogical purpose and public disinterestedness of the society.<sup>89</sup> Thus, like the clubbable world described by John Gascoigne, Bushman argues that in the New World refinement "created a standard for exclusion as well as a mode of association." But, Bushman notes, while the company of refined persons was enjoyable, "the presence of

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<sup>86</sup>Thornton, *Cultivating Gentlemen*, 68-9.

<sup>87</sup>John F. Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 22.

<sup>88</sup>Marti, "Agrarian Thought," vii.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, 69. Simon Baatz, in his study of the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture, argues that the "failure to resolve this contradiction between membership and audience and the inability to bridge the gap between the two groups" was the fundamental cause of the society's lack of success. Baatz, "Venerate the Plough", 2-6.

vulgar persons marred that pleasure."<sup>90</sup> There was another important reason to exclude the yeoman farmer. The elites may have praised the role of the farmer; however, in order to preserve their role, these gentlemen needed to also criticize him for being too "cloddish and unprogressive."<sup>91</sup>

In Upper Canada, the Niagara Agricultural Society provided a stage for the colonial gentlemen to perform. It was one of the colony's earliest institutions, and it stood at the apex of the North Atlantic triangle of the eighteenth-century community of Enlightened gentlemen. The society was founded on the Enlightenment ideology which had demonstrated the usefulness of scientific agriculture to develop the agriculture of the New World. It was an ideology that rested heavily on the clubbable world of the Enlightenment for its implementation. The Niagara Agricultural Society, however, could not be exact replica of the gentlemen's clubs of the British aristocracy. Instead, its membership bore many similarities to that of existing North American agricultural societies. As a result, the Upper Canadian agricultural society, like its American counterparts, also struggled with the problem of trying to procure deference from the province's farmers.

Indeed, this New World variation of a British, aristocratic gentlemen's club developed into little more than an invented tradition. It was a semi-public institution adopted from Great Britain in order to lead the development of the province's agricultural potential in a manner which would maintain a stable hierarchical agrarian society. Despite Simcoe's intentions, the experience of the Niagara Agricultural Society demonstrates that prior to the War of 1812, the Upper Canadian gentlemen could not find

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<sup>90</sup>Bushman, *Refinement of America*, xiv-xv.

<sup>91</sup>Marti, "Agrarian Thought," 406-7.

an audience for their performances beyond their own elite ranks. In fact, because of the insular and insecure nature of the provincial elites, Upper Canadian agricultural societies developed into a forum for competition between its gentlemen members.



**Chapter 2:  
A Society for Promoting Agriculture  
and  
Gardening in our New Country,  
1792-1808**

Lieutenant Governor Simcoe appears to have established his agricultural society in Newark, then the capital of Upper Canada, on October 27, 1792, soon after the new legislature concluded its first session.<sup>1</sup> Simcoe's founding of the province's first extra-governmental institution added to its semi-public status, which rested on the prestigious membership of government office holders. The timing of the agricultural society's creation indicated the role which Simcoe believed the elites would play in guiding the progress of the new colony's agricultural development. It was to be the first step in forming a province-wide institution which would effectively create a united agrarian gentry similar to that of Britain. But an agricultural society could have little real impact in a colony containing only 10, 000 persons scattered between a few, small isolated settlements.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the Niagara Agricultural Society<sup>3</sup> was not, and could not be, "the image and transcript" of

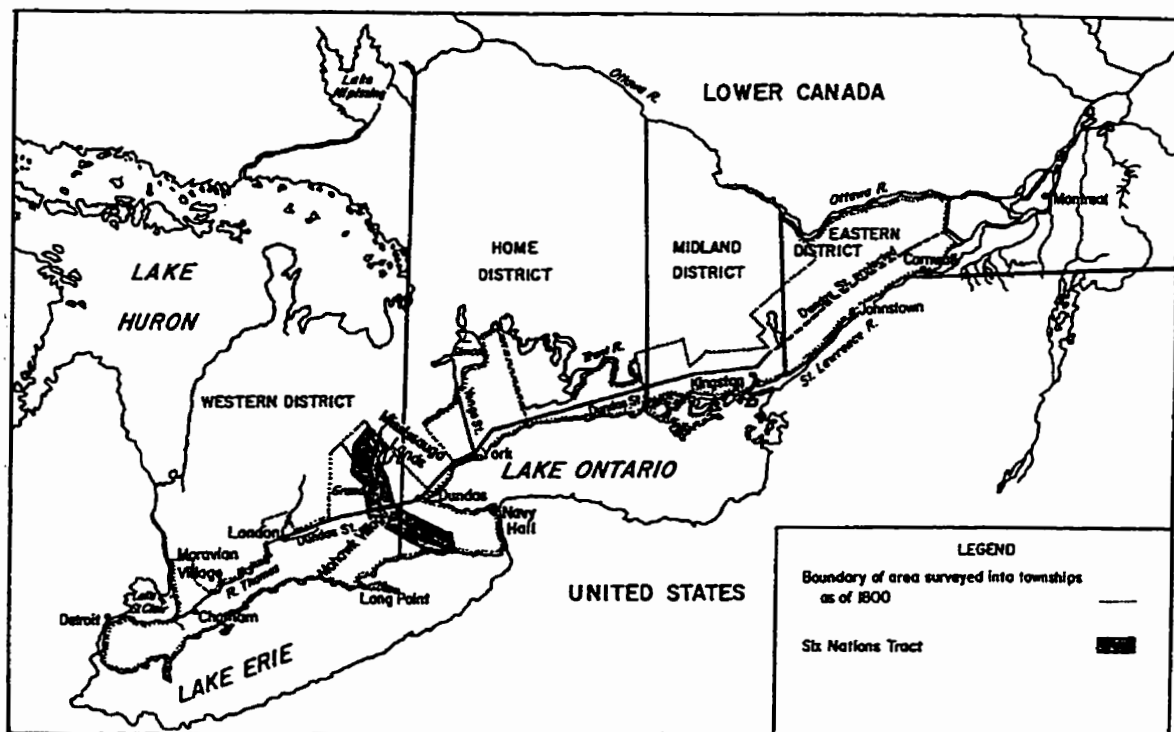
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<sup>1</sup>For information concerning the date of the first meeting see C. C. James, "The First Agricultural Societies," *Annual Report of the Bureau of Industries for the Province of Ontario*, 123. The first session of parliament had been prorogued on October 15, 1792. Fred Armstrong, *Handbook of Upper Canadian Chronology* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1985), 48.

<sup>2</sup> Armstrong, *Handbook of Upper Canadian Chronology*, 272.

<sup>3</sup>The official name of this agricultural society is unclear. Its name in newspaper notices ranges from the "Agricultural Society" to the "Agricultural Society of this Province". An official letter sent to the society by Simcoe's secretary was addressed to the "Agricultural Society of Upper Canada". Robert Hamilton once called it the "Agricultural Society of Niagara". A provincial plaque recently removed from Simcoe Park, Niagara-on-the-Lake called this institution the Niagara Agricultural Society, and this will be the name used in this study. *Upper Canada Gazette*, June 13, 1793, p. 4, c. 2; July 4, 1793, p. 4, c. 2; "From E. B. Littlehales to the Secretary of the Agricultural Society," April 25, 1793, Cruikshank, ed., *Correspondence*, vol. 1, 318; *Upper Canada Gazette*, November 15, 1806, p. 4, c.1; Mary Ellen Perkins, ed. *A Guide to the Provincial Plaques in Ontario* (Toronto: Ministry of Culture and Communication, 1989), 173.

a British agricultural society. In the absence of a coterie of British aristocrats, the Lieutenant-Governor had to rely on the support of the established mercantile and military elite of Newark and the surrounding Niagara peninsula, many of whom had closer ties with the United States than with Britain. For example, the Niagara Agricultural Society's most enthusiastic supporter was its president, Robert Hamilton. A Scotsman, Hamilton had been in North America for 14 years by the time of Simcoe's arrival and had become the most important merchant of the Niagara area.<sup>4</sup> Despite his profession, Hamilton enthusiastically presented himself as an agrarian gentleman; he was the owner of a large estate with one of the colony's finest houses.



Map 1: Extent of Settlement in Upper Canada, circa 1800. Lillian F. Gates, *Land Policies of Upper Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 67.

<sup>4</sup>Bruce G. Wilson, "Robert Hamilton," *DCB*, 5, 402-6.

Therefore, the establishment of the Niagara Agricultural Society in Upper Canada is best characterized as an "invented tradition" in the frontier society. Although merchant-members such as Hamilton could effect few changes to the agriculture of the colony, the agricultural society provided them with a forum in which its gentlemen membership could display publicly their status and remind Upper Canadians of Britain's and Upper Canada's strictly ordered hierarchical society. Moreover, the organization "did much to cement relations among the social elite of the peninsula,"<sup>5</sup> and it was a vehicle which offered other less influential Upper Canadians an opportunity for social mobility through personal interaction with the most wealthy and influential men in the province. Membership in an agricultural society did not always confer gentlemanly status, however.

The history of the Niagara Agricultural Society during the first decade of the nineteenth century fully illustrates that in Upper Canada, the intensely competitive society of the provincial elite caused gentlemanly status to be questioned easily. In 1806, several gentlemen encouraged a union of the society at Newark with the new Upper Canada Agriculture and Commercial Society established at York by the recently arrived Justice Robert Thorpe. This institution appeared to be the realization of a province-wide agricultural association of the province's gentlemen. Where Hamilton, by being elected President of Simcoe's society, had succeeded in attaching the agrarian ideal to his self-definition as a gentleman, Robert Thorpe failed miserably. Instead of maintaining an aloofness of *noblesse oblige*, the latter made no secret of using his presidency of the Upper Canada Agriculture and Commercial Society as a

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<sup>5</sup>Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1983), 143.

vehicle of his personal social and political ambitions. His tactics and unpopular political views quickly offended the provincial elite, for it demonstrated to them his lack of gentlemanly virtue.

Robert Thorpe's leadership of his agricultural society broke from the ideology which had spawned these institutions. Traditionally agricultural societies were intended to transform agricultural practices in a manner which reinforced the hierarchical social order. In contrast, Robert Thorpe attempted to use his agricultural society to circumvent the entrenched leadership of the province. The result was an attack by Robert Hamilton, who employed his status as president of the Niagara Agricultural Society to disgrace Thorpe publicly. Hamilton's action was a performance for the provincial elite; one which was intended to discourage further competition and help stabilize the proper order of Upper Canadian society in face of the hierarchy's first major challenge.

At the Niagara Agricultural Society's inception in October 1792, its patron John Graves Simcoe promised to subscribe ten guineas annually throughout his term as Lieutenant Governor. This money was "to be disposed of in a premium for the benefit of agriculture in whatever manner the members think proper."<sup>6</sup> In addition, Simcoe kept his promise of fostering a "literary society" with his donation of a set of Arthur Young's *Annals of Agriculture*. These were the works of Britain's premier agricultural statistician, "spokesman for the landed classes, [and] a defender of agrarian interests."<sup>7</sup> By all indications, however, the members of the Niagara

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<sup>6</sup>There are no accounts of any premiums ever being offered for competitions sponsored by the Niagara Agricultural Society. "From E. B. Littlehales to the Secretary of the Agricultural Society," April 25, 1793, Cruikshank, ed., *Correspondence*, vol. 1, 318.

Agricultural Society used neither Simcoe's money nor the agricultural science contained in these volumes to any great effect beyond maintaining a gentlemen's club.

The King's Printer first reported activities of the Niagara Agricultural Society in the *Upper Canada Gazette* in June 1793.

On Saturday last, the Agricultural Society of this Province dined together at Free Masons Hall, [Newark,] several Gentlemen were invited, which with the Members of this laudable institution assembled, formed a very numerous party, -- The utmost cheerfulness and conviviality prevailed on this occasion.<sup>8</sup>

Fortunately, one of the gentlemen invited to this meeting recorded his experience.<sup>9</sup> According to his report, this meeting was one of the Niagara Agricultural Society's regular monthly gatherings, at which "the table was abundantly supplied with the produce of [the members'] farms and plantations. Two stewards were in rotation for each meeting, who regulated for the day." He observed that after the meal, "every good purpose was answered by the opportunity [the meeting] afforded of chatting in parties...on the state of crop, tillage, etc."<sup>10</sup>

Besides this report, there exists one other valuable description about the details of the Niagara Agricultural Society's meetings. Reminiscing about

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<sup>7</sup>Gazley, *Life of Arthur Young*, 306, vii. Thirteen volumes of this series were donated by the Niagara Agricultural Society to the Niagara Library in 1805. See Appendix 2.

<sup>8</sup>*Upper Canada Gazette*, June 13, 1793, p. 4, c. 2; July 4, 1793, p. 4, c. 2; Also see C.C. James, "The Pioneer Agricultural Society of Ontario," 211; James, "The First Agricultural Societies," *Queen's Quarterly*, 222.

<sup>9</sup>I am certain that this is the same meeting recorded by the anonymous English traveller quoted in the Introduction. He described this meeting after having attended the parliamentary session of June 1793. The traveller then left Niagara at the end of July. "Canadian Letters," 53, 54, 80.

<sup>10</sup>"Canadian Letters," 54.

his life in Upper Canada, Colonel John Clark of Port Dalhousie wrote in 1860 that he had a "perfect remembrance of the first Agricultural Society," as his father had been a member. Colonel Clark recalled "the great silver snuff-box ornamented with the horn of plenty on its lid" which was passed yearly to each elected president, and throughout the year "remained with the housekeeper who had to supply the next monthly dinner to the Agricultural Society."<sup>11</sup>

On this and other occasions, the Niagara gentlemen met with all the requisite pomp and ceremony befitting a gathering of the British landed classes. They did so despite the fact that the meetings of the society were held in a building that was also used as "a chapel, Court of Justice, a Mason's lodge...a ball room [and] an Indian Council room."<sup>12</sup> And as for the physical appearance of the capital and its society, the English gentleman in attendance indicated that neither attained the status of a proper capital nor even a decent frontier town.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the dinner, the snuff-box, the invited gentlemen, and the report by the King's Printer in the *Upper Canada Gazette*

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<sup>11</sup>"Memoirs of Colonel John Clark of Port Dalhousie, C.W.," *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records* 7 (1906): 158; Also see William Canniff, *History of the Province of Ontario* (Toronto: A. H. Hovey, 1872), 590; James, "The Pioneer Agricultural Society of Ontario," 211; James, "The First Agricultural Societies," *Queen's Quarterly*, 222; James, "The First Agricultural Societies," *Annual Report of the Bureau of Industries for the Province of Ontario*, 122-3. From the limited information available, there is no indication of any other president of this institution. Although Robert Hamilton signed one notice as "formerly president" in March 1797, he appears to have been elected again as president at a meeting of March 18, 1797. See *Upper Canada Gazette*, March 8, 1797, p. 4, c. 3; "Petitions for Grants of Land in Upper Canada, Second Series, 1796-99," E. A. Cruikshank ed., *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records* 26 (1930), 102. Again, in 1806, Hamilton signed a letter as "President pro. tem." *Upper Canada Gazette*, November 15, 1806, p. 4, c. 1.

<sup>12</sup>While one could argue that this location had prestige as a Masonic lodge and as a Court House, the English gentleman indicates that its multifaceted role made it a "very useful building" but not prestigious. "Canadian Letters," 58.

<sup>13</sup>The British gentleman noted that although Newark was the capital, the "prospect of it to a stranger was less than gratifying. It neither presents him with the regularity of ancient establishments, nor yet with the elegant simplicity of rural culture." *Ibid.* 41-2.

were all indicative of the indirect theatrics of "an elaborate hegemonic style" described by E. P. Thompson evoking images of similar meetings of the British aristocracy.<sup>14</sup> Yet, the invited British traveller realized that something was awry. He recognized all present as gentleman, but he recorded, "many of the merchants and others, unconnected with the country business" were included among the members of this society.<sup>15</sup>

In the years prior to Simcoe's arrival, Loyalist officers and Scottish merchants had already established themselves as local leaders of the various settlements of Upper Canada. This was especially true in the Niagara District. Here, as H. V. Nelles demonstrates, the officer classes, "through military appointments were able to transfer their authority to peacetime civilian life." Their ability to maintain a status above other settlers was aided by larger land grants, income from half-pay and their appointments to local government offices. These officers and the merchants of the area soon "merged through friendship and marriage to form a tightly knit oligarchy that supplied the community with military, religious, social, economic and political

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<sup>14</sup>Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture," 388, 389. The theatrics of the agricultural meeting were just as important as the "Feathers, trinkets and all the paraphernalia" which the British traveller witnessed being worn at the opening of the first legislature of Upper Canada. The gentleman commented: "Not expecting such a scene from the appearance of the country, I could not avoid silently interrogating myself, can I be at the extremity of Lake Ontario?" "Canadian Letters," 45. This scenario supports Richard Bushman's argument concerning the "self-aware performance" of the genteel classes of America. Bushman, *Refinement of America*, xiv. Also see Rhys Isaac and his argument in his study of eighteenth century Virginia that "it would be hard to overemphasize the importance of the ceremonial at the center of the coming together on court day." Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 92.

<sup>15</sup>"Canadian Letters," 54. In a subsequent letter, this individual explains his opinion that these merchants are gentlemen, stating: "There are other gentlemen, through the settlement, whose early destination to commerce, took up that period, which is usually devoted to what is termed a regular education." *Ibid.*, 56.

leadership."<sup>16</sup> Nelles argues that this oligarchy was so entrenched that "no one had the presumption to question the cult of respectability."<sup>17</sup>

The meetings of the Lieutenant Governor's Niagara Agricultural Society provided another prominent forum for the further consolidation of the local leadership. Of the twenty-seven members,<sup>18</sup> twelve were merchants from the Niagara area of either Scottish or North American birth. Along with its patron, John Graves Simcoe, and its president, Robert Hamilton, the first executive of the Niagara Agricultural Society included the deputy provincial surveyor general, David W. Smith, the wealthy merchant, lawyer, landholder and cousin of Robert Hamilton, William Dickson, and a Church of England clergyman, Reverend Robert Addison<sup>19</sup> as vice-presidents, with the prominent merchant, Francis Crooks, as Secretary.<sup>20</sup> Besides the membership's commercial and governmental associations, several members

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<sup>16</sup>V. M. Nelles, "Loyalism and Local Power: The District of Niagara 1792 - 1837," *Ontario History* 58 (June 1966): 99-100.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>18</sup>There is no official membership list, but one of twenty-seven individuals has been created from a variety of sources. See Appendix 1. Carnochan, "Names Only, but much more," *Niagara Historical Society*[Publications] 27 (1914-15), 17; James, "The First Agricultural Societies", *Queen's Quarterly*, 222; James, "The First Agricultural Societies," *Annual Report of the Bureau of Industries*, 122-6; "Memoirs of Colonel John Clark of Port Dalhousie, C. W.," 158; Milo M. Quaife, ed., *The John Askin Papers* (Detroit: Detroit Library Commission, 1928), 353-55.

<sup>19</sup>This list of the executive is recorded on a provincial plaque which once stood in Simcoe Park, Niagara-on-the-Lake. Perkins, ed. *A Guide to the Provincial Plaques in Ontario*, 173. While it is plausible that Dickson and Addison were vice-presidents, the source of that information is unclear. See, Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies, *The Story of Ontario Agricultural Fairs and Exhibitions, 1792-1967* (Picton: Picton Gazette Pub. Co., 1967), 1. Janet Carnochan's list of members suggests that Simcoe was the society's first president. However, this is unlikely, as he was the society's patron. Janet Carnochan, "Names Only, but much more," 17; C. C. James identified David W. Smith as a Vice-President. James, "The First Agricultural Societies" *Annual Report of the Bureau of Industries*, 123.

<sup>20</sup>*Upper Canada Gazette*, June 13, 1793, p. 4, c. 2.



were also members of Newark's other major social institution, the Freemasons.<sup>21</sup>

As a result its membership, the Niagara Agricultural Society was North American in character from its establishment. It closely paralleled that of the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture established in the same year. In examining this society's executive, Tamara Plakins Thornton discovered that about one-third were merchants. Another third were "lawyer-statesmen," with rest of the officers composed of physicians and clergy. She also suggests that those gentlemen who had no "obvious link to the commercial class" of Boston, were well connected to this group through the "complex network" of that city's other cultural institutions.<sup>22</sup> Thus, in Newark and well as Boston, it was a commercial vision that dominated the agricultural society.<sup>23</sup>

By overlooking the existence of the Niagara Agricultural Society, several historians have interpreted the initial political tensions between the merchants of the new province and the Lieutenant Governor as personal animosities. They argue that conflict especially arose as John Graves Simcoe, upon his arrival in Newark in 1792, attempted to establish himself within the Niagara oligarchy and advance his own agenda for the development of the

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<sup>21</sup>Both Robert Hamilton and Robert Kerr, a doctor, judge and office holder, had been Provincial Deputy Grand Master of the Freemasons, and Reverend Robert Addison was the Grand Chaplain. Ralfe Clench was another member of the agricultural society who held a variety of government offices and who was "a pioneer in spreading freemasonry's influence throughout the peninsula." Michael Power, 'Religion and Community,' in *The Capital Years: Niagara-on-the-Lake 1792-1796*, eds. Richard Merritt, Nancy Butler and Michael Power (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991), 124-5.

<sup>22</sup>Thornton explains that this profile of the executive of the Massachusetts Society for the Promotion of Agriculture was also applicable to its general membership. Thornton, *Cultivating Gentlemen*, 58-9.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 60.

colony.<sup>24</sup> As Jane Errington argues, early British officials in Upper Canada like Simcoe were viewed as "outsiders" who "showed themselves to have little real appreciation of the land and the people who had already settled the new province." Thus, tension between merchants and British officials arose, as few of the Loyalist leaders had any direct personal or social ties with the British establishment.<sup>25</sup>

Specifically in the Niagara region, according to Robert Hamilton's biographer, Simcoe attempted to dismiss the merchants "as monopolizers of the local economy and subverters of the legitimate political process." Because of this, Bruce Wilson interprets the early years of Simcoe's administration as "an attack by a nascent political elite upon the commercial hegemony in a bid

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<sup>24</sup>In his survey history of Upper Canada, Gerald M. Craig points out that Hamilton's "occasional" opposition to Simcoe's wishes in the Legislative Council "infuriated" Simcoe, resulting in his calling Hamilton "an avowed Republican." Craig continues by suggesting that Hamilton and others "were far from pleased with all the features of the Lieutenant-Governor's design for the province." Craig, *Upper Canada*, 31-2. H. V. Nelles, after listing all the government appointments offered to Hamilton, also argues that Simcoe "continually ascribed to republicanism Hamilton's aggressive commercialism." Nelles, "Loyalism and Local Power," 100-101. David Mills also argues that even though Robert Hamilton was a Loyalist, his opposition to Simcoe's plans caused him to be labeled a republican. But Mills grossly exaggerates these differences, arguing in his rather black and white interpretation of Upper Canadian loyalism that: "Political dissent and opposition were equated with disloyalty." David Mills, *The Idea of Loyalty in Upper Canada 1784-1850* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 19. Bruce Wilson focuses a chapter on the pro-Americanism of Robert Hamilton's commerce and argues that it faced its greatest challenge under Simcoe's administration. Hamilton always placed commercial interests first, and Simcoe emphasized the military and centralization. Wilson, however recognized that although Simcoe won the battle with merchants, he did so by employing the merchants' networks and influence for governmental purposes. See Chapter 8. Wilson, *Enterprises*, 101-27.

<sup>25</sup>Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 29-30. Errington's study does demonstrate the eventual accommodation between the native-born Upper Canadians and the officials from Britain. However, she argues that in the initial years, British officials newly arrived from England sparked conflict, for they had both a misunderstanding of the physical realities of Upper Canada and only a passing interest in the colony as a temporary posting. This annoyed those who saw Upper Canada as home. While they saw Upper Canada as a British possession, their understanding of the colony was significantly different as it was based on the realities of the North American environment. Accordingly, these perceptions were shaped more by the models of development presented by the United States than any British plans conceived by well-intentioned residents of England. See especially Chapter 2.

to control the pioneer society."<sup>26</sup> Robert Hamilton's presidency of the Niagara Agricultural Society, and the involvement of his merchant associates in the society demonstrate that while there were political disagreements, there was a more general agreement on the role of gentlemen in guiding the agricultural development of the colony. This was the same accommodation that allowed new republican leaders such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson to discuss agricultural matters with British gentlemen despite the official severing of political ties after the American Revolution.<sup>27</sup>

A more recent interpretation illustrates that a common understanding of Upper Canadians' relationship to the natural environment as well as their relationship to government. S. J. R Noel comments that since land was at the heart of society and politics, Upper Canadians viewed their colony in the same Enlightened terms as did those in Britain and the United States.<sup>28</sup> The optimism of progress which Simcoe had expressed to Sir Joseph Banks and brought with him to Upper Canada was already being expressed by the Loyalist settlers of the province. Noel argues that American colonists had long realized that "there were few places anywhere that showed the transforming power of man's intervention quite so dramatically."<sup>29</sup> Thus, the settlers of the Niagara region had "carried with them...a basically optimistic colonial-American view of the natural environment and their rightful place in it....That is to say, they possessed the inestimable advantage of knowing

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<sup>26</sup>Wilson, *Enterprises*, 106.

<sup>27</sup>See for example, the correspondence of the Scottish Lord, Sir John Sinclair to many American leaders after the Revolution in Sinclair, *Correspondence of Sir John Sinclair*, vol. 1, 277-82; vol. 2, 3-80.

<sup>28</sup>Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers*, 27. See also Keon, "The 'New World' Idea in British America," ii, 33-4.

<sup>29</sup>Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers*, 30.

that what they were setting out to do could in fact be done."<sup>30</sup> This was only a minor modification of the ideology which the gentlemen farmer, John Graves Simcoe brought with him from Great Britain.

Despite their occupations, the Niagara merchants and the Lieutenant Governor shared a commitment to the agrarian future of Upper Canada. Traditionally, a large part of the merchants' business had been the export of furs and the provisioning of military garrisons. By the 1790s, however, many Upper Canadian merchants had realized that a large part of their income was derived from supplying a growing agricultural population with imported goods, speculating in land, and brokering the grain trade.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the membership of the Niagara Agricultural Society affirms the rapprochement between Simcoe and the merchants that had occurred, as both agreed that agriculture was the basis of the future development of Upper Canada. In particular, Robert Hamilton's presidency of the society indicates that such an agreement was more immediate and less difficult than previous historians have suggested.

The standard interpretation of the relationship between Robert Hamilton and John Graves Simcoe has been that, despite the fact that their wives were "inseparable friends," the Lieutenant Governor "could barely stand Hamilton's company."<sup>32</sup> This appears to be an overstatement of their

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 31-2.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 53-60

<sup>32</sup>V. M. Nelles based the assumption that Simcoe could barely stand Hamilton's company on John Ross Robertson's editorial notes contained in his publication of Elizabeth Simcoe's diary. Nelles appears to have overemphasized Robertson's only suggestion that as a Legislative Councilor, Hamilton incurred Simcoe's "lively displeasure." Nelles, "Loyalism," 103; Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 126-7. For a similar argument, also see Katherine M. J. McKenna, *A Life of Propriety* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 63, Errington, *Lion and the Eagle*, 30, 32; Craig, *Upper Canada*, 31. Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 19. Wilson, *Enterprises*, 101-27.

differences. Simcoe may have disliked Hamilton's opposition to government measures in the Legislative Council, but as gentlemen, they were able to set politics aside. For two men who supposedly disliked each other, Hamilton and Simcoe shared a keen interest in the success of the Niagara Agricultural Society.

Robert Hamilton's involvement in the Niagara Agricultural Society is not all that surprising, for by Simcoe's arrival in 1792, he was already regarded as the "most powerful, wealthy and respected" leader of the merchants and the society of the Niagara District as a whole.<sup>33</sup> Simcoe recognized this and appointed him a Lieutenant of Lincoln County, a position that was as close to a recognition of aristocratic status as was possible in Upper Canada.<sup>34</sup> Hamilton's great house at "The Landing" at Queenston "seemed, with more than a touch of symbolism, to dominate both the surrounding landscape and the river below."<sup>35</sup> It was surrounded by an extensive farm which he managed, combined with his extensive land holdings throughout the district, and "reinforced his public image of landed gentility."<sup>36</sup> Becoming president of the agricultural society provided Hamilton with one more opportunity to lead the Niagara community.<sup>37</sup>

As for the executive and members of the Niagara Agricultural Society, men such as David W. Smith, William Dickson and Robert Kerr were

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<sup>33</sup>Nelles, "Loyalism," 102.

<sup>34</sup>Armstrong, *Handbook of Upper Canadian Chronology*, 152-3.

<sup>35</sup>Wilson, *Enterprises*, 1.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 141-2; Nelles, "Loyalism," 102. Noel notes with irony that Hamilton's home was the most "fittingly vice-regal" in Upper Canada, since Simcoe was living at the considerably less refined Navy Hall in Newark. Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers*, 43.

<sup>37</sup>Wilson, *Enterprises*, 143.

unquestionably counted among the ranks of Upper Canadian gentlemen. Members such as George Forsyth, Francis Crooks and William Dickson, all residents of Newark, were principal merchants in the Niagara region.<sup>38</sup> All had fine homes built in Newark, while in the surrounding rural areas other members had homes that matched or exceeded those built in the capital.<sup>39</sup> For example, there was Colin McNabb's home on the lake shore, Daniel Servos' house near Four Mile Creek, and of course Robert Hamilton's large stone house at the Landing.<sup>40</sup> Hamilton's Queenston estate and these other gentlemen's homes support Richard Bushman's assertion that the eighteenth century North American mansion was as much a performer as the elites who resided in them.<sup>41</sup> As most homes were only half or one full story, mansions clearly stood out on the North American landscape.<sup>42</sup> They were far beyond the practical role of a domicile, becoming "stage sets for dramas."<sup>43</sup>

Significantly, however, there were those members of the Niagara Agricultural Society who did not live in such large homes and had a less firm claim to gentleman status than its patron, president and executive.

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<sup>38</sup>Joy Ormsby, "Building a Town," in *The Capital Years*, 35; "Canadian Letters," 56.

<sup>39</sup>For illustrations of the homes of Smith and Dickson see Ormsby, "Building a Town," in *The Capital Years*, 33, 35.

<sup>40</sup>Niagara Agricultural Society member Thomas Butler could also be included in this list, for his father, Colonel John Butler, owned a fine frame home south of Newark. *Ibid.*, 28-9.

<sup>41</sup>Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 132.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 111-12.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 132. For example, in 1803, Peter Russell, Simcoe's successor as Administrator of Upper Canada, described one of his properties on the north side of Burlington Bay. It contained 600 acres "ascend[ed] gradually from the Bay... and from the Distance at which the Trees stand from each other and the beautiful Verdure under them has more the appearance of a well laid out English Park than Wildland of Upper Canada." Letter to Hugh Farmar from Peter Russell, February 2, 1803, PAC, Hugh Farmar Collection. For a drawing of the plan of this estate made in 1797 see Joy Ormsby, "Building a Town," in *The Capital Years*, 34.

Membership also included a range of Hamilton's lesser associates and other merchants who, during this period, were unable to rise above the social level of their agrarian clientele.<sup>44</sup> For these individuals, the Niagara Agricultural Society provided them with a chance to interact publicly with some of the most prestigious gentlemen of the province and to perform on the same stage as these more prominent men.

Unfortunately, little biographical information exists about these lesser merchants, but one of the members whose financial situation may be representative was the Reverend Robert Addison, one of the of the society's Vice-Presidents. That he was the Church of England clergyman in Niagara and was ranked above the Lieutenant Governor as the most educated man in the province certainly placed him within the ranks of the Upper Canadian gentlemen.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, as Gidney and Millar argue, he still had to maintain his "reputability" and his "connections" to ensure his gentlemanly status.<sup>46</sup> It was these aspects of his life which drew Addison's stature as a colonial gentlemen into question.

The Church of England may have been the *de jure* established religion, but in terms of financial independence there was little that separated Addison's routine and standard of living from the Methodist missionaries on the peninsula. In fact during his initial years at Newark, Addison cynically noted that he had to "dun for his money." He was the Church of England missionary and the chaplain of the House of Assembly, both respectable

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<sup>44</sup>Wilson, *Enterprises*, 178. See Appendix 1.

<sup>45</sup>The British traveller made special note that Reverend Addison ranked at the top of the learned men in Upper Canada. "Canadian Letters," 56. See also, H. E. Turner, "Robert Addison," *DCB*, 6, 3-6.

<sup>46</sup>Gidney and Millar, *Professional Gentlemen*. 7.

positions, but these offices did not pay well. Moreover, he had no church in the peninsula in which to gather his flock, and the many wealthy merchants and government officials proved no better at financing his work or the building of a church than the poorest farmer.<sup>47</sup> In light of these factors, Addison has been described as having "only a transient friendship with the better classes of Niagara society."<sup>48</sup> He has been characterized as "certainly not being an ornament to his profession," and one parishioner described him as a "poor drunken card-playing minister."<sup>49</sup> However, despite his insecure personal finances, which drew into question his personal independence, his position within the executive of the Niagara Agricultural Society secured his gentlemanly status. As a vice-president, he would be seated at meetings alongside Hamilton, Smith, Kerr and Dickson. Nevertheless, while the association within this gentlemen's club of lesser individuals with the more prominent reinforced the local oligarchy, it did little to lead the agricultural development of the area, let alone the province.

Despite the prominent membership of government officials, there appears to have been little contact between the society and the wider rural community of the Niagara Peninsula. Simcoe had envisioned this society to have a semi-public role; however, the Niagara Agricultural Society made little use of the official newspaper of the province to publicize its activities.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>H. E. Turner, "Robert Addison," *DCB*, 6, 3-6; Michael Power, "Religion and Community," in *The Capital Years*, 112-13.

<sup>48</sup>Power, "Religion and Community," 116.

<sup>49</sup>Quoted in George Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America, 1775-1812* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 105.

<sup>50</sup>There exists one letter which may have been written by a member of the society. The letter by "Observer", addressed "To the farmers of Upper Canada," accused them of "carelessness and sloth" in their farming practices. The author informed them that "There is no



In the lone display of interest, one correspondent to the *Upper Canada Gazette* wrote in March 1797 that the society should consider offering competition and premiums for the best examples of agricultural produce. Possibly a member of the society, the author suggested a competition that reflected the primitive nature of Upper Canadian agriculture. He recommended contests such as the best sample of maple sugar, the greatest quantity of wheat raised on one acre of new land and the greatest quantity of wheat grown on the same amount of old land. In order for others to learn from these winning examples, the author also recommended that each award winner be made to describe in detail "the nature of the soil and process of the business in which he claims the premium." In his opinion, such competitions would serve to awaken the inhabitants of the country "from inactivity to lively enterprise."<sup>51</sup>

However, these suggestions do not appear to have been acted upon, and from the few details that can be gleaned, it seems that the Niagara Agricultural Society effected few actual reforms to the agriculture of the province.<sup>52</sup> The society did import fruit trees from a nursery on Long Island,

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fault in the seed or soil; it is in you." After chastising the farmers at length, he challenged them to "Go immediately to the work of reformation, while it is *to-day*." *Upper Canada Gazette*, October 26, 1796, p. 3, c. 1. Actual notices of the Niagara Agricultural Society meetings are located at *Upper Canada Gazette*, June 13, 1793, p. 4, c. 2; July 4, 1793, p. 4, c. 2; March 15, 1797, p. 4, c. 3; *York Gazette*, June 13, 1807, p. 3, c. 1.

<sup>51</sup>It is not known whether the Niagara Agricultural Society offered such a competition. *Upper Canada Gazette*, March 15, 1797, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>52</sup>In 1801, a fair was held in Queenston. Robert Leslie Jones suggested that because "a park for the show of cattle, hogs, &c" was provided, "most of [the livestock] belonged to members of the agricultural society at Niagara." Jones appears to have confused a market fair with what he perceived to be an agricultural exhibition. Considering that there are no references to livestock in connection with the Niagara Agricultural Society, it is doubtful that this show of livestock was sponsored by the agricultural society. Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ontario*, 159. The separation or connection between a market fair and agricultural society-sponsored cattle show in Upper Canada is an issue which remains unclear. There exists only one study attempting to deal with the market fair in Upper Canada. See Brian Osborne, "Trading on a Frontier: The Function of Peddlars, Markets, and Fairs in Nineteenth Century Ontario,"

New York in 1794.<sup>53</sup> And it appears that only one member of the society made concerted efforts at introducing scientific agriculture to the district. Ralfe Clench had the largest and finest orchard in Niagara, consisting of 114 trees -- six types of peaches, five kinds of plums, as well as quinces, apricots and nectarines until it was destroyed in the War of 1812.<sup>54</sup>

Although the Niagara Agricultural Society was little more than a gentlemen's club, President Robert Hamilton appears to have been determined to see the institution fulfill its original semi-public purpose. Late in 1795, he wrote to Simcoe concerning his plans "to modify the Agricultural Society as to form the basis of one which shall embrace the whole province."<sup>55</sup> In proposing this move, Hamilton seems to have been following the example of the British Board of Agriculture which had been established by the Imperial Parliament in 1793.<sup>56</sup> This board had already sparked an interest

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*Canadian Papers in Rural History*, ed. Donald H. Akenson, vol. 2 (Gananoque: Langdale Press, 1980), 59-81. Nevertheless, histories of agricultural societies in Ontario still confuse the two issues. Robert Jones, in his 1945 discussion of Upper Canadian agricultural societies began with an overview of the origin of a British market fair. Jones, *History of Agriculture*, 156-7. This interpretation has been repeated in the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies most recent history. Scott, *Fair Share*, 7-12.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Hamilton noted to John Porteous, a merchant at Little Falls, New York, that these trees were for "a Society established here for the purpose of promoting Agriculture and Gardening in our New Country." This information is contained in a letter from Robert Hamilton to John Porteous, March 9, 1794. John Porteous Papers, PAC. See Janet Carnochan, *History of Niagara* (1914; reprint, Belleville: Mika Publishing, 1973), 266-67. Also see Hamilton's letter to Francis Gore published in the *Upper Canada Gazette*, November 15, 1806, p. 4, c. 1.

<sup>54</sup>Bruce G. Wilson, "Ralfe Clench," *DCB*, 6, 154.

<sup>55</sup>"From J. G. Simcoe to Robert Hamilton," January 30, 1796, Cruikshank ed., *Correspondence*, vol. 4, 187. Hamilton's letter of November 22, 1795 in which he outlines these plans has not survived.

<sup>56</sup>The British Board of Agriculture's purpose was to advance the improvement of agriculture throughout Britain by bringing together "respectable gentlemen, perfectly conversant in and acquainted with the subject." Lasting until 1822, this Board was a government funded, but privately operated institution that performed agricultural surveys of the various counties of the British Isles and provided "a free communication of the different improvements in agriculture, from one part of the country to another." Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons. *The Parliamentary History of England from the earliest period to the year 1803*, vol.

in the United States, for George Washington had been considering the establishment of a national agricultural society since 1794.<sup>57</sup>

Lieutenant Governor Simcoe, now residing in York, responded to Hamilton's plan and stated that while the matter was one "which I have much at heart,"<sup>58</sup> he felt that he should defer the issue until he could personally speak with Hamilton.<sup>59</sup> It does not appear that this meeting was ever held, and by February 1796 the agricultural society's enthusiastic president had to admit that the institution had been "for some time rather neglected by its members." Even Simcoe had not paid his annual subscription. Hamilton suggested that this payment could wait until Simcoe's return when, as the society's patron, he could offer some direction of how the

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30, 949-50. For a complete history of the British Board of Agriculture see, Sir Ernest Clarke, "The Board of Agriculture, 1793-1822," *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England* 9(1898): 1-41 and Rosalind Mitchison, "The Old Board of Agriculture (1793-1822)," *English Historical Review* 74(1959): 41-69. Also see Sir John Sinclair's "Introductory Observations" as President of the Board in Great Britain. Board of Agriculture. *General Report on Enclosures*, 1808, iii-vi.

<sup>57</sup>Ruminating on this matter to Sir John Sinclair in 1794, Washington articulated the problem facing such a board in North America. "We must walk, as other countries have done, before we can run; smaller societies must prepare the way for greater." It would not be until December 1796 that Washington would recommend the formation of a national agricultural society in his last address to both Houses of Congress. Although both Houses reported their agreement with Washington's plan, no such institution was immediately created. See Wall, "George Washington," 6; United States, Senate, *Report of the Commissioner of Patents for the year 1859*, Part 2, Agriculture, 22-23.

<sup>58</sup>"From J. G. Simcoe to Robert Hamilton," January 30, 1796, Cruikshank ed., *Correspondence*, vol. 4, 187. Simcoe was not exaggerating. Mary Beacock Fryer, in her biography of Elizabeth Postuma Simcoe commented, "From the start [of Simcoe's administration], the Duke of Portland had vetoed many of [Simcoe's] plans. His only consolation was the establishment of an Agricultural Society at Newark." Mary Beacock Fryer, *Elizabeth Postuma Simcoe 1792 - 1850: A Biography* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1989), 147.

<sup>59</sup>It is unclear whether this meeting ever took place, as Simcoe left Upper Canada for good in July 1796. "From J. G. Simcoe to Robert Hamilton," January 30, 1796, Cruikshank, ed., *Correspondence*, vol. 4, 187. Also see "From Robert Hamilton to J. G. Simcoe," February 21, 1796, *Ibid.*, 198.

money should be spent.<sup>60</sup> But Simcoe did not return to Newark, and left the province for good in July 1796.

The society did manage to continue without the support of its departed patron. On August 26, 1797, the society petitioned for a "spott [sic] of Ground, on which as a Garden, or small Farm, they might, under their own management, make those experiments so essential in the Profession they are desirous to promote." It received from the government a block of four acres within the town of Newark, and in making this request, Robert Hamilton reiterated his provincial aspirations for the society, emphasizing his desire that this plan would be "followed by every district in the Province." He also expressed hope that the efforts of the Niagara Agricultural Society would "have the best effect in disseminating knoledge [sic], & in promoting Industry, in Agriculture, which they Justly esteem[ed] the first Interest, as well as the chief Pride of Upper Canada."<sup>61</sup>

Despite this land grant, there is no evidence of any activity by the Niagara society during the remaining years of the eighteenth century. But the society did last into the nineteenth century. In 1801, John Askin Senior of Detroit, Robert Hamilton's father-in-law and former business partner, wrote to a member of the Niagara Agricultural Society, Robert Nichol, a former employee of Askin's and a Queenston merchant, requesting information concerning the cultivation of hemp and where to obtain seed. Along with his

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<sup>60</sup>"From Robert Hamilton to J. G. Simcoe," February 21, 1796, *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup>"Petitions for Grants of Land in Upper Canada, Second Series, 1796-99," E. A. Cruikshank ed., *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records*, 26 (1930): 102, and Cruikshank ed., *The Correspondence of the Honourable Peter Russell*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1932), 266.

response, Nichol sent Askin a volume "containing a great deal of very correct information" which was the property of the Agricultural Society.<sup>62</sup>

On its four acre land grant, the society had intended to erect a building in which to deposit its collection of books. The collection contained the volumes of Arthur Young's *Annals of Agriculture*, donated by Simcoe, as well as other standard eighteenth-century texts on British scientific agricultural practice. Valued in 1805 at £32 7s, the society's holdings had grown to fifty volumes. Although the Niagara Agricultural Society donated these books to the Niagara Library, it continued to function (if only sporadically) through to at least 1807 when the newly arrived Lieutenant Governor Francis Gore became its patron.<sup>63</sup> In 1806-7, it briefly gained new life when its members were drawn into a controversy surrounding a second agricultural society; one formed in York.

In September 1805, an opportunity for the realization of Robert Hamilton's dream of a province-wide agricultural society arrived to the colony in the person of Justice Robert Thorpe, a newly appointed associate judge of the Court of the Kings Bench.<sup>64</sup> On February 22, 1806, Thorpe

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<sup>62</sup>See letters "Robert Nichol to John Askin," July 25, 1801, "John Askin to Robert Nichol," August 8, 1801 and Robert Nichol to John Askin August 20, 1801 in Quaife, *John Askin Papers*, 353-55.

<sup>63</sup>Robert L. Jones asserted that as a result of this donation, the Niagara Agricultural Society was "moribund" by 1806. This is an interpretation which follows through to the present day. Jones, however, did not read the earlier histories carefully. Janet Carnochan, having found an old record book of the Niagara Library, reported how the books had been *transferred* to the library and several members of the Niagara Agricultural Society were given membership to the library. However Carnochan, writing in the late nineteenth century, made no suggestion that the agricultural society was no longer in existence. She simply stated that in 1805, "an addition was made to the library." Jones, *History of Agriculture*, 158; Janet Carnochan, *History of Niagara*, 50, 266-68; Scott, *Fair Share*, 18.

<sup>64</sup>G. H. Patterson, "Robert Thorpe," *DCB*, 7, 864-5.

established the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society at York.<sup>65</sup> Those present at the inaugural meeting had resolved that "from the industry of the People, the power of the State and the Wealth of the Subject is derived; and Agriculture being the happiest mode in which industry can be applied, we feel it our duty to Unite, for the purpose of promoting its advancement and accelerating its protection."<sup>66</sup> In Thorpe's view, there were many factors impeding the progress of the colony. Within a few months Thorpe was already expressing his disgust with the condition of the province. Writing to the Undersecretary of State for the Colonies he reported that "Nothing has been done for the Colony, no roads, bad water communication, no Post, no Religion, no Morals, no Education, no Trade, no Industry attended to...".<sup>67</sup>

His purpose in establishing the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society was to "impress an early attention to Hemp" throughout Upper Canada. Members were requested to "exert themselves to engage their neighbours and acquaintance among the Farmers, to cultivate annually a portion of Ground (however small) with Hemp." A Corresponding Committee would be established to receive reports from members concerning the details of how the hemp was grown, in what quantities it was harvested and what expense was involved in preparing it for market.<sup>68</sup> The society itself

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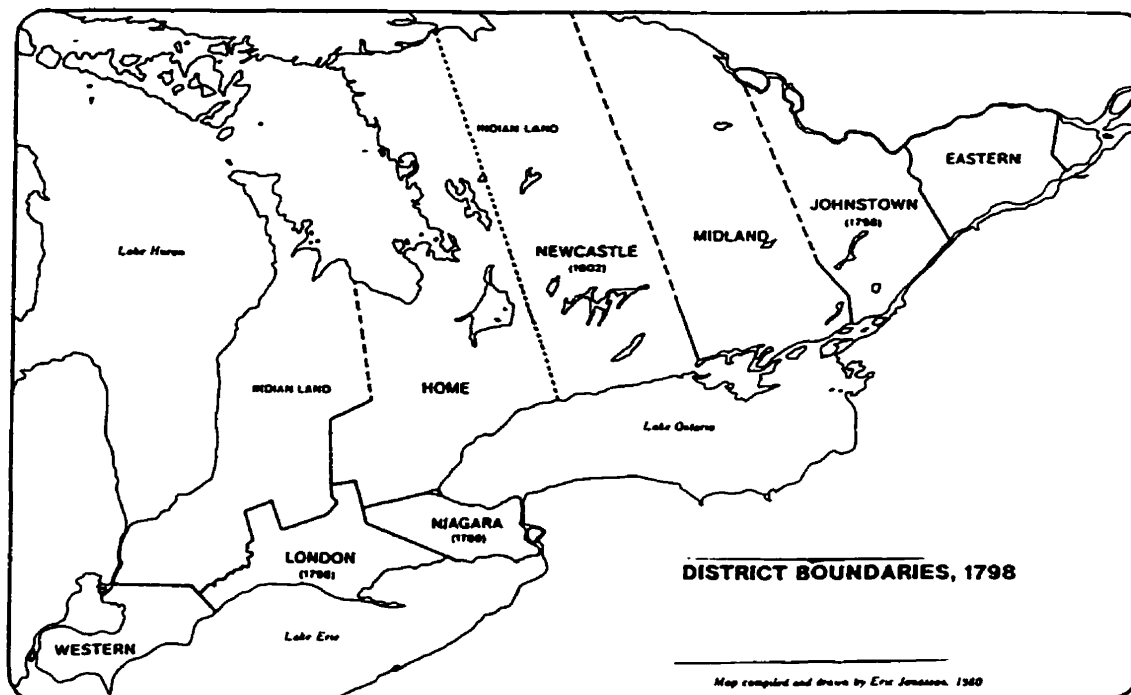
<sup>65</sup>Judge Thorpe to Lord Castlereagh," March 4, 1806, and "Proceedings of the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society," in "Note D. - Political State of Upper Canada in 1806," *Report on Canadian Archives for 1892* (Ottawa: S. E. Dawson, 1893), 40, 41-3; *Upper Canada Gazette*, February 15, 1806, p. 4, c. 2.

<sup>66</sup>"Proceedings of the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society," in "Note D," *Report on Canadian Archives for 1892*, 41.

<sup>67</sup>Judge Thorpe to Edward Cooke, Under Secretary," January 24, 1806, in "Note D," *Report on Canadian Archives for 1892*, 39.

<sup>68</sup>Judge Thorpe to Lord Castlereagh" and "Proceedings of the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society." in "Note D," *Report on Canadian Archives for 1892*, 40, 41-2.

would be centred in York, with representatives organizing branch societies in every district of the province. One of these branch societies was to be composed of the Niagara Agricultural Society and organized by Robert Hamilton.<sup>69</sup>



Map 2: Upper Canada, District Boundaries, 1798. Thomas A. Hillman, *A Statutory Chronology of Ontario: Counties and Municipalities*, (Gananoque: Langdale Press, 1988), 373.

Thorpe's plan to establish the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society and his decision to promote the cultivation of hemp was not unique. By 1805, there was a general interest among the scientific

<sup>69</sup>There are records of two possible branch societies being formed. The first was the "Niagara Branch of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society" planned for the Niagara District. See Appendix 4 for a list of its proposed members. PAC, "Gentlemen Proposed for Vice-Presidents and Directors of the Niagara Branch of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society," William Hamilton Merritt Papers, vol. 1 on reel C-7061. On May 1, 1806, "The Burlington Board of Agriculture" was formed, but there is no clear mention of a connection between the Burlington Board and the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society beyond the timing of its establishment. Jones, *History of Agriculture*, 158; H. H. Robertson, "The First Agricultural Society in the Limits of Wentworth--1806," *Journal and Transactions of the Wentworth Historical Society* 4 (1905): 93-5.

organizations of Britain concerning this commodity in the British North American colonies. Since 1801, the Royal Society of Arts had offered two separate medals to Upper Canadian farmers for cultivating the most acreage of hemp and for the importation into England of the greatest amount of that crop. It also offered awards to Upper Canadians for designs to improve machinery for dressing hemp.<sup>70</sup> By 1803, the British Board of Agriculture had also become interested in promoting the growth of hemp in Upper Canada, and its president had communicated its enthusiasm directly to Lieutenant Governor Peter Hunter.<sup>71</sup>

Hemp, though successfully grown by several farmers of the province, proved to be a fiasco as a commodity. The expenses incurred from its storage and transport quickly erased any anticipated profits. Thus, the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society's success was doomed from the start by Upper Canada's poor infrastructure. However, unlike the Niagara

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<sup>70</sup>Derek Hudson and Kenneth Luckhurst, *The Royal Society of Arts 1754-1954* (London: John Murray, 1954), 91, 157. Also see the *Transactions of the Royal Society Instituted at London for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, 1801-1806* and notices of this society in the *Niagara Herald*, August 29, 1801, p. 3, c. 4; *Upper Canada Gazette*, January 22, 1803, Supplement, p. 5, c. 3 - p. 6, c. 1; December 1, 1804, p. 4, c. 1-2; January 25, 1806, Supplement, p. 5, c. 3-5.

<sup>71</sup>PAC, RG5 A1, Correspondence of the Civil and Provincial Secretaries, 1766 - 1841, Upper Canada Sundries, "1st Earl of Sheffield to Peter Hunter," June 31, 1803, pp. 973-4. (Hereafter cited as Upper Canada Sundries.) This British interest in the culture of hemp in the colonies had been reciprocated in Upper Canada. In 1801, a meeting of the "Gentry, Clergy and Yeomanry of the Home District," was held at York to "form themselves into a society for the encouragement of the culture of HEMP in the Home District." This society does not seem to have lasted longer than its original meeting. Present at the meeting of May 14, 1801 were the Chief Justice, John Elmsley; the Executive Councilor and former Provincial Administrator, Peter Russell; Justice Henry Allcock; the Home District Sheriff, Alexander Macdonell; the merchant and Executive Councilor, William Allan; the merchants Alexander Wood and Duncan Cameron and the King's Printer, John Cameron. *Upper Canada Gazette*, May 16, 1801, p. 4, c. 2. In subsequent years, provincial legislation offering a government bounty on hemp grown in Upper Canada was enacted. *Journals of the House of Assembly, 1801 -1804. Statutes of Upper Canada.* 1804, 44 Geo. 3, c. 11. "An act for granting to His Majesty a certain sum of MONEY, for the further encouragement of the GROWTH and CULTIVATION of HEMP within this Province, and the EXPORTATION thereof."



Agricultural Society which was able to continue as a gentlemen's club with little effective agricultural activity, the collapse of Thorpe's institution by 1808 was less the result of hemp not being a viable commodity than the reaction of various members of the colonial elite to the activities of the society's president himself.<sup>72</sup>

The February 1806 meeting that founded the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society was chaired by Thorpe and attended by "Gentlemen from different parts of the Province." Out of fifty prominent men of the province, a Corresponding Committee for the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society was elected to communicate with the various branch societies to be established in each district of the province. It was composed of: Robert Thorpe; Peter Russell, an Executive Councilor; Justice William Dummer Powell; Thomas Scott, the Attorney General; D'Arcy Boulton, the Solicitor General; William Weekes, a member of the House of Assembly; and Church of England clergyman, the Reverend George O'Kill Stuart. Charles B. Wyatt, the newly appointed Surveyor General, was elected Treasurer, and John Small, the Secretary of the Executive Council, was elected Secretary of the new agricultural society.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>For notices of meetings of this society see, *Upper Canada Gazette*, February 15, 1806, p. 2, c. 2; April 5, 1806, p. 4, c. 2; January 10, 1807, p. 3, c. 3; January 31, 1807, p. 3, c. 3; *York Gazette*, December 23, 1807, p. 3, c. 3; December 30, 1807, p. 3, c. 2-3; February 12, 1808, p. 3, c. 2. For the controversy surrounding this society see *York Gazette*, September 26, 1807, p. 3, c. 2; December 30, 1807, p. 3, c. 2-3; January 6, 1808, p. 3, c. 2; February 12, 1808, p. 3, c. 2; John Cameron, *The Upper Canada Almanac for the year of Our Lord 1810* (York: John Cameron, [1809]), 3-9; John Mills Jackson, *A View of the Political Situation of the Province of Upper Canada in North America* (London: W. Earle, 1809), 25-9, Appendices 6, 19 and 20; [Cartwright, Richard], *Letters of An American Loyalist in Upper Canada, on a Pamphlet Published by John Mills Jackson* (Quebec: n. p., 1810), 87-91 and Reverend C. E. Cartwright, *Life and Letters of the Later Hon. Richard Cartwright* (Toronto: Belford Brothers, 1876), 140-41.

<sup>73</sup>See Appendix 3 for the list of members. Included in the list of original members were: the Provincial Secretary; the Attorney and Solicitor General; the Surveyor General; the Sheriff of the Home District; two Chief Justices; seven Justices of the Peace; the Master in Chancery; the Clerk of the Executive Council; the King's Printer; two Church of England

It is doubtful whether any of the fifty men listed as members ever attended this meeting.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, it is surprising to find Weekes, Wyatt and Small among the executive of this society. Whereas the other members of the Corresponding Committee were the top echelon of the Upper Canadian elite, William Weekes was merely a member of the House of Assembly. Charles Wyatt had been appointed Surveyor General in 1804; however, by 1806 he had begun to fall from grace as a colonial gentleman due to his financial difficulties, his loud clamouring for an increase in fees and his complaints about the men working in his office.<sup>75</sup> Likewise, John Small, despite his position as Secretary of the Executive Council, had for some time been an outsider to the social life in York. John Small and his wife Eliza's characters had been drawn into question as early as 1794, and had been compounded in 1800 by Small's killing of the Attorney General John White in a duel.

By February 1806, even Robert Thorpe himself was a questionable choice for chairman of an Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society. He had arrived in 1805 to a colonial capital of less than 500 persons<sup>76</sup> and had engaged the small and fragile web of social relationships in the capital much like a bull in a china shop.<sup>77</sup> This was not difficult to do, and

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clergymen; two Executive Councilors; two Legislative Councilors; and twelve members of the House of the Assembly. "No. 9. - Proceedings of the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society," in "Note D," *Report on Canadian Archives for 1892*, 41-3.

<sup>74</sup>Justice Thorpe's initiative to establish his plan left little doubt that the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society was to be composed of none but the gentlemen of the province. Those wishing to be involved in this society were to pay one dollar to join and two dollars in annual subscription. Membership, however was not automatic, as "candidates for admission were balloted for with white and black beans." One black bean in three was "considered an exclusion of the person proposed." Cameron, *Upper Canada Almanac 1810*, 3.

<sup>75</sup>Elwood H. Jones, "Charles Burton Wyatt," *DCB*, 7, 929-30.

<sup>76</sup>Edith Firth, *Town of York, 1793-1815* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1962), lxxvii.

<sup>77</sup>In October 1805, the Thorpe's neighbour, Anne Powell, complained that the newly arrived Thorpes refused to call on her home and respect her as a social equal. In addition, she

Thorpe excelled at the task. York contained an elite society so extremely insular and defensive that its social functions were "not mere diversions but battlegrounds on which fights over social position were won and lost."<sup>78</sup> As 1806 progressed, Thorpe's poor social graces, combined with his increasingly anti-government political stance, caused him to quickly fall out of favour with almost all government officials in the province.<sup>79</sup>

Thorpe garnered further disapproval of the Upper Canadian elite after the death of William Weekes in an October 1806 duel with William Dickson. Contravening the proper decorum expected of a member of the judiciary, Thorpe ran as a candidate to replace Weekes in the House of Assembly. In doing so, Thorpe, along with the support of two members of the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society, Treasurer, Charles B. Wyatt and Joseph Willcocks, created the first organized opposition to the Upper Canadian government with an agenda to upset "the order and good government of the province."<sup>80</sup> Thorpe's campaign had an immediate effect on the success of his agricultural society.

Late in 1806, Thorpe wrote to a British official that in Upper Canada, the "scotch Pedlars [sic]...have so long irritated & oppressed the people; there is a chain of them linked from Halifax to Quebec, Montreal, Kingston, York,

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and her husband, Justice William Dummer Powell were not invited to the Thorpe's twice weekly public dinners at which many of the Powell's peers dined. At the same time, however, the Thorpes spent much time and energy courting Peter Russell and his wife, Elizabeth. McKenna, *Life of Propriety*, 66-8.

<sup>78</sup>McKenna, *Life of Propriety*, 61-2.

<sup>79</sup>The scandalous activity of Justice Thorpe as a judge and as a member of York society is well documented. See Firth, *Town of York, 1793-1815*, lxvii-lxviii; Craig, *Upper Canada*, 60-64; Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 48-51; McKenna, *A Life of Propriety*, 66-69; John B. Walton, "An End to All Order: A Study of Upper Canadian Conservative Response to Opposition 1805-1810" (Master's thesis, Queens University, 1977).

<sup>80</sup>Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 50.

Niagara & so on to Detroit – this Shopkeeper Aristocracy has stunted the prosperity of the Province & goaded the people until they have turned from the greatest loyalty to the utmost disaffection.”<sup>81</sup> This criticism of some of the most influential members of Upper Canadian society evoked a strong reaction from Robert Hamilton, still president of the Niagara Agricultural Society.

Presumably in recognition of his presidency of the Niagara Agricultural Society, Robert Hamilton had been elected the representative for the Niagara District to the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society at its inaugural meeting of February 1806.<sup>82</sup> Along with Hamilton, six of the twenty individuals listed as members of the "Niagara Branch of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society" were merchants who had been members of the Niagara Agricultural Society since its inception in 1793.<sup>83</sup> But, in late 1806 when Thorpe began to express his views concerning the "Shopkeeper Aristocracy" and was contesting for a seat in the House of Assembly, Hamilton went on the attack to distance himself from Thorpe's institution and his opposition campaign.

On November 6, 1806, Robert Hamilton wrote to the new Lieutenant Governor, Francis Gore, offering him honorary membership in and

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<sup>81</sup>"Judge Thorpe to Sir George Shee," December 1, 1806, in "Note D," *Report on Canadian Archives for 1892*, 57.

<sup>82</sup>There is evidence that, at first, Hamilton did consider himself an active member of this institution. He distributed copies of an Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society circular throughout the Niagara peninsula. Upon the death of William Weeks, Hamilton noted to the Lieutenant Governor, the result of the duel was "the death of a Member of the Society". Both quoted in General E. A. Cruikshank ed., "Records of Niagara in the Days of Commodore Grant and Lieut.-Governor Gore 1805 - 1811," *Niagara Historical Society [Publications]* 42 (1931): 33, 37.

<sup>83</sup>See Appendix 4 for this list. PAC, "Gentlemen Proposed for Vice-Presidents and Directors of the Niagara Branch of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society," William Hamilton Merritt Papers, vol. 1 on reel C-7061.

requesting his patronage of the Niagara Agricultural Society. Hamilton asserted that his institution had "subsisted with the utmost harmony for upwards of Twenty years." And of its membership, Hamilton announced: "If they have not made a great deal of noise, they flatter themselves that they have done some little good, and they have enjoyed much comfort." Under the patronage of Simcoe, he noted, "they [had] assisted most materially to their country, the variety of Fruit with which it now abounds."<sup>84</sup> Francis Gore responded that he was "much flattered" to accept honorary membership, and enthusiastically offered his patronage and "every assistance, and protection in [his] power."<sup>85</sup>

It is clear that Hamilton's request and Gore's reply were intended as a public insult to Robert Thorpe, for both letters were published by the King's Printer, John Cameron, in the *Upper Canada Gazette*. Robert Hamilton presented the Niagara Agricultural Society to the new Lieutenant Governor as the premier society in the province by highlighting (and exaggerating) the age of the society. Most importantly, he emphasized that his society had a tradition of patronage, as none other than John Graves Simcoe had been its founder and first patron. Hamilton could offer Gore honorary membership in a society which had a long history, previous patronage, and a current membership of respectable, loyal individuals. By November 1806, this was definitely something that Thorpe was unable to offer.

Throughout Thorpe's election campaign and term in the House of Assembly, the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society quickly developed into a forum for Thorpe's oppositionist politics. As one

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<sup>84</sup>By all accounts, this society had only been in existence for 14 years. *Upper Canada Gazette*, November 15, 1806, p. 4, c. 1.

<sup>85</sup>*Upper Canada Gazette*, November 15, 1806, p. 4, c. 2.

disgruntled member, John Cameron, reported, "on our second and third meetings, the impolitic President not occultly, hoodwinked the society's title so far that, on the part of himself and his assigns, it dwindled into an electioneering club." As a result, Cameron noted, the society quickly became "unspeakably disgusting to the decent undesigning members."<sup>86</sup>

What Thorpe either did not recognize or chose to ignore was the fact was that a "strongly defensive cast of mind" characterized the "official culture" of the York elite.<sup>87</sup> The conservative government officials of the province would not take part in a society aimed at circumventing legislative authority. In their view, Thorpe's actions contravened the process of controlled progress that his society should have been fostering. They could not deal with Thorpe's "dangerous" means of addressing the province's problems of development.<sup>88</sup> As John B. Walton argues, Thorpe's actions "outside the accepted bounds of intra-elite politics could only result in his loyalty being questioned."<sup>89</sup> Most insulting to the elite, and what marked Thorpe as an "apostate," was the perception that he was betraying the system "which had favoured and trusted him with a highly respectable position."<sup>90</sup> As the loyalty and official culture of the elite had been "challenged by one of

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<sup>86</sup> John Cameron had many unpleasant things to say about Thorpe and his society in the rambling account contained in his almanac. Cameron had earlier expressed his disgust with Thorpe and the society. Primarily because had not been paid for printing the regulations of the institution, he published a statement withdrawing himself as a member of the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society. See Cameron, *Upper Canada Almanac for 1810*, 3-9; *York Gazette*, September 26, 1807, p. 3, c. 2 and January 6, 1808, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>87</sup>Walton, "An End to All Order," 4.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, 70-1.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, 171-2.

their own,"<sup>91</sup> the response to Thorpe's actions was immediate and "out of all proportion to the threat which he actually posed."<sup>92</sup> The fear of "a domino-like collapse of the entire established order" brought Thorpe's career in Upper Canada as well as support for the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society to a swift end.<sup>93</sup>

While Thorpe was successful in gaining election to the House of Assembly, it resulted in his complete alienation from the Upper Canadian elite. In July 1807, the Executive Council observed that Thorpe's conduct had a "uniform tendency to degrade, embarrass, & vilify his Majesty's Servants & Government" of Upper Canada.<sup>94</sup> This was also the view of Lieutenant Governor Francis Gore who put an end to the judge's political and judicial career in Upper Canada by suspending him from office.<sup>95</sup>

After Thorpe's departure from Upper Canada at the end of 1807, a meeting of his agricultural society was held to investigate the "state of the funds."<sup>96</sup> Having determined that the president had taken the money of the society and used it to fund his election campaign, the few remaining members met again on February 6, 1808, and voted to dissolve the Upper Canadian Agriculture and Commercial Society.<sup>97</sup> At this time, it was suggested that a meeting be held to establish a new society "having for its

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 172.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 168.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 174.

<sup>94</sup>Executive Council Minutes, July 4, 1807, PAC, RG 1 E3 Upper Canada State Submissions, vol. 88, pp. 1-3 on reel C-1202.

<sup>95</sup>Patterson, "Robert Thorpe," *DCB*, 7, 864-5.

<sup>96</sup>*York Gazette*, December 23, 1807, p. 3, c.3

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., December 30, 1807, p. 3, c. 2-3; Cameron, *Upper Canada Almanac*, 3-9.

object the Promotion of Agriculture in general and in particular the Cultivation of Hemp." However, there is no evidence that this society was ever established and not until after the War of 1812 would Upper Canadian elites attempt another province-wide agricultural association.<sup>98</sup>

From the eastern end of the province, the Kingston gentleman merchant Richard Cartwright offered the final assessment on both the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society and the Niagara Agricultural Society. Greatly offended by Robert Thorpe's actions, Cartwright noted that it was "not surprising," that the society, "formed under the auspices of Mr. Thorpe should fail."<sup>99</sup> In his explanation, he also directed criticism at the Niagara Agricultural Society, even though it was led by his former business partner. Cartwright recognized that the society at Niagara was neither scientific nor literary. Instead, he considered it to be a social club that had existed only "for convivial purposes" and had "always been compleatly [sic] inefficient as to the professed object of its institution."<sup>100</sup> While critical of both of these agricultural societies, Richard Cartwright was careful to point out that he was still confident in the potential progress of Upper Canada. He did not "mean to say that the Colony is not susceptible of great improvements,"<sup>101</sup> he simply suggested that "the country is yet too young for [agricultural] societies." Seemingly more in tune with the structure of the New World agriculture and social relationships, he argued:

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<sup>98</sup>*York Gazette*, February 12, 1808, p. 3, c.2.

<sup>99</sup>Cartwright expressed his views in his response to John Mills Jackson's critical assessment of the province. [Cartwright, Richard], *Letters of An American Loyalist in Upper Canada*, 90.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, 91.



That class of men who have time and money to devote to such public spirited institutions, is not yet sufficiently numerous; and there could be little scope for the improvements which such a Society might suggest, in a country where the best cultivated grounds are hardly yet cleared of their timber; where labour is more requisite than skill; and where the cultivator having no rents to pay, is not urged by necessity to change his accustomed modes of tillage, for others held out to him as more productive.<sup>102</sup>

In sum, he realized his peers had created for themselves a stage for their own performances. What they could not create was an audience composed of the province's farmers.

After Thorpe's departure, the Niagara Agricultural Society continued under the patronage of a new lieutenant governor. There are no records of any further activities beyond a grand dinner for the new patron hosted by the society's members at Robert Hamilton's house. The "sumptuous entertainment...prepared for a large company on this occasion" only served to demonstrate the wide gulf between the agricultural society and the farmers of Upper Canada.<sup>103</sup> Although it was reinvigorated briefly, the Niagara Agricultural Society continued to be a gentlemen's club that was maintained as a forum for the elite of the Niagara District to perform for one another.

The Niagara Agricultural Society was quite removed from Lieutenant Governor Simcoe's original intent of creating a semi-public society of gentlemen to lead the province's agricultural development. Although it remained little more than an invented tradition, the institution was not without merit. Influenced by agricultural societies from all points of the

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<sup>102</sup>*ibid.*, 90.

<sup>103</sup>See Carnochan, *History of Niagara*, 268, *York Gazette*, June 13, 1807, p. 3, c. 1. The date of this dinner was June 7, 1807 and not June 5, as Carnochan claimed.

North Atlantic Triangle, the Niagara Agricultural Society was a unique Upper Canadian institution. It had helped to consolidate the colonial merchant and government elite and it demonstrated how these gentlemen could compose the membership of an agricultural society in the absence of an aristocracy.

Nevertheless, the experience of the Niagara Agricultural Society and the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society indicated two fundamental obstacles that would continue to hinder the creation of a provincial agricultural society. As Richard Cartwright noted, in the sparsely settled colony of Upper Canada, the number of gentlemen available to support the efforts of a provincial society with their own financial contributions was too small. Furthermore, the combination of the intense competition between the government elite of York and the rivalry among the local oligarchies of the isolated communities of the province created significant barriers to any successful union. Throughout the subsequent two decades, this inter-elite rivalry continued to hinder the success of Upper Canada's agricultural societies.

**Chapter 3:**  
**"This Society is a Provincial Institution,"**  
**1818-1825**

Despite a doubling of the provincial population between 1811 and 1824, Upper Canada remained a collection of isolated settlements led by local oligarchies in the immediate post-war years.<sup>1</sup> This population boom, coupled with a post-war economic depression, strained the capabilities of the existing colonial government and social institutions. In response to the growing needs of the Upper Canadian society, many new institutions such as schools and libraries, as well as benevolent societies dedicated to ameliorating the plight of the poor were established during this period.<sup>2</sup> By 1819 new agricultural societies had also been founded at York and Kingston. Ostensibly concerned with aiding Upper Canadian farmers to reinvigorate the agricultural economy, these organizations, like their pre-war predecessors, blurred the distinction between a government institution and a social club. As a result, while in part characterized by the post-war growth of provincial institutions, Upper Canada's agricultural societies are best understood in terms of the pre-war examples in both membership and character.

The reasons for such continuities resulted from the most significant factor in the development of Upper Canada during this period. The War of 1812 was a watershed in the economic and social life of Upper Canada.<sup>3</sup> Its end witnessed increased immigration to the province, but peace also ended

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<sup>1</sup>Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 89-90. The estimated population of the province was only 77 000 in 1811 compared to 150 066 by 1824. Armstrong, *Handbook of Upper Canadian Chronology*, 272.

<sup>2</sup>For an overview of the postwar expansion of the province see Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 89-96.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 89.

the wartime economic boom, and the provincial economy sank into a serious depression. Moreover, the war greatly affected the colonial leadership. The already conservative elites had demonstrated their loyalty during this time of crisis and as a result, deeply conservative opinions influenced their leadership and views of colonial development after the conflict. S. F. Wise argues that the defence of the colony had "produced a kind of Messianic Toryism inflexible in its insistence upon unbending adherence to orthodox values." And after the war, the conception of loyalty in the minds of colonial leaders was interpreted to mean more than just allegiance to the British Crown. Loyalty was also an "adherence to the social, political, religious, and cultural values essential, in Tory eyes, to the preservation of the province."<sup>4</sup>

While this fixation on loyalty fostered an increased cohesion among the government elite, it did not translate into immediate unity among the province's scattered settlements. Moreover, in light of a population increasing in number and diversity, as well as the post-war economic depression, the conservative approach taken by these colonial leaders in addressing Upper Canada's problems was considered insufficient by many residents. As a result, at the moment that the provincial elite were trying to foster unity with their idea of provincial development, they were being criticized and challenged by others with competing visions.

The Scottish agitator Robert Gourlay created such an opposition to the provincial leadership upon his arrival in 1817. Like Robert Thorpe in the previous decade, Gourlay was quick to promote his own plan for the colony's future while vehemently criticizing the provincial government's inactivity.

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<sup>4</sup>S. F. Wise, "Conservatism and Political Development: The Canadian Case," in *Essays on Political Culture in Nineteenth Century Canada*, eds. A. B. McKillop and Paul Romney (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993), 191.

Although this Scottish malcontent's political opposition led to his expulsion from Upper Canada, his actions caused the province's elite to question its own leadership of the colony's development. This chapter demonstrates how, in response to Gourlay's challenge, renewed attempts to foster a gentlemanly leadership of Upper Canada's agriculture resulted in the establishment of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society at York in late 1818 and the Midland District Agricultural Society at Kingston in early 1819.

The formation of the agricultural society in York was an attempt to reassert control of the province's development and to foster a cohesive agrarian leadership. Created by some of the top echelon of government elite, the Upper Canada Agricultural Society returned to the same model attempted by Thorpe prior to the war. It was to remain ensconced at the provincial capital with branch societies to be formed under its auspices in the various districts of the province. Through this structure, the gentlemen at York hoped to attract the province's local oligarchies to their vision of provincial development.

Although the activities of Gourlay also motivated the establishment of the Midland District Agricultural Society at Kingston, its executive remained firm in its separateness from the York elite. The refusal of the gentlemen of the colony's largest centre to join with the York society delivered a serious blow to the provincial cohesion the government elite at the provincial capital so badly desired. By 1819, the nascent and distinctive Upper Canadian consciousness<sup>5</sup> was still overcoming old divisions between the elite of Upper Canada's main centres, as well as many barriers, such as its lack of

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<sup>5</sup>Jane Errington argues that "the war came to symbolize the unity and loyalty of all residents of the new land and prompted the development of a new colonial consciousness, one which was distinctly Upper Canadian." Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 89.

communications, both transport and printed medium. The continuing differences between Upper Canada's two most important centres are well reflected by the differing characteristics of the York and Kingston agricultural societies.

Unlike the York gentlemen who drew distinctly upon a British agricultural society as its model, those at Kingston apparently viewed the Upper Canada Agricultural Society at York as just one example among those of Britain, other British North American provinces, and the United States. As a consequence, provincial goals of a unified agrarian leadership remained unfulfilled. Like their pre-war examples, the societies in York and Kingston continued to be clubs of the conservative colonial elite that were unable to influence the general farming population of the province.

Upon Robert Gourlay's arrival in Upper Canada in 1817, he found the colony sinking rapidly into the depths of an economic depression. The withdrawal of the British army, a large customer for agricultural produce, had sent prices plummeting. By 1821-2, Upper Canada's internal markets and the prices for its provincial exports such as wheat and potash were in a dramatic decline.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, relations among Upper Canada's political leaders were strained to the breaking point as a result of the failing economy and intense debates over compensation for wartime losses.

Even before Gourlay's arrival, there had been a crisis within the provincial legislature. During the 1817 session of the Upper Canadian assembly, a committee investigating the state of the province issued

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<sup>6</sup>Douglas McCalla, *Planting the Province: The Economic History of Upper Canada 1784-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 38; Craig, *Upper Canada*, 86; Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 95.

resolutions critical of the government and suggested encouragement of American immigration to the province as a solution. Before the entire list of resolutions could be voted upon by the House of Assembly, Lieutenant Governor Francis Gore prorogued the session, fearing that criticisms of his administration and suggestions of closer relations with the United States increased the vulnerability of the province.<sup>7</sup> Gore's actions demonstrated that opposition to the vulnerable executive of the government would not be tolerated.

Robert Fraser argues that especially after the War of 1812, the provincial elites "increasingly pinned their hopes not on a nascent social structure but on the Constitutional Act and its provision for an appointed legislative council, and on the rule of law, the security of private property, the magistracy, and the legal profession. These institutions provided the best, and seemingly the only defence of order in Upper Canada."<sup>8</sup> The maintenance of such "a graded social structure and that structure's continuance was inseparable from aristocracy." However, as Fraser points out, in Upper Canada there was neither an aristocracy, nor a "settled province-wide, as opposed to local or regional, social structure of any sort."<sup>9</sup> This predicament was the most fundamental obstacle to those members of the conservative Upper Canadian elite attempting to consolidate their power at York. The result, Fraser argues, was a political structure which was "unworkable, and

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<sup>7</sup>Craig, *Upper Canada*, 91-2; Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 28.

<sup>8</sup>Robert L. Fraser, "All the privileges which Englishmen possess': Order, Rights and Constitutionalism in Upper Canada," in *Provincial Justice: Canadian Legal Portraits from the Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, ed. Robert Fraser (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), xxxvi.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, xxx.

hence, unstable."<sup>10</sup> The actions of Robert Gourlay only served to batter further the unstable political foundation.

Initially, Gourlay intended to help alleviate Upper Canada's economic problems by creating an accurate statistical account of the province to encourage the immigration of Britain's farming classes to the colony. Gourlay arrived in 1817 with experience in gathering such statistical evidence, having been appointed in 1799 to survey conditions in the shires of Lincoln and Rutland by none other than Arthur Young, Secretary of the British Board of Agriculture. Furthermore, at his farm in Scotland, Robert Gourlay had been a farmer obsessed with agricultural improvement, writing in 1813 that "I cannot stay my hand from improvement; it is a weakness inherent in my nature." He had also introduced many reforms to his farm while a member of both the Bath and Wiltshire Agricultural Society and the South of England Agricultural Society.<sup>11</sup>

Soon after his arrival to Upper Canada in 1817, Gourlay published a questionnaire of thirty-one questions in the *Upper Canada Gazette*, addressed to the resident landowners of the province. Although similar to his statistical survey work in England, the questionnaire was received with great suspicion by the provincial government. The executive was most concerned with Gourlay's questioning the settlers about what improvements had not been made and asking them to suggest those that should be implemented.<sup>12</sup> Their

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<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, xxxii.

<sup>11</sup>Lois Darroch Milani, *Robert Gourlay, Gadfly* (Thornhill: Ampersand Press, 1971), 12, 50, 58-9; Robert Gourlay, *Statistical Account of Upper Canada*. vol. 2 (1822; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1966), vi-viii. Also see S. R. Mealing's introduction to the Carleton Library series edition of Robert Gourlay, *Statistical Account of Upper Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 8 - 10.

<sup>12</sup>Gourlay's final question read as follows: "31st. What in your opinion, retards the improvement of your township in particular, or the province in general; and what would most contribute to the same?" Gourlay, *Statistical Account*, vol. 1, 274.



suspensions were confirmed by Gourlay's follow up to the questionnaire. He hosted town hall meetings throughout the province during the latter part of 1817 and the first half of 1818 at which he condemned the government and urged those present to use their influence to oppose what he viewed as the administration's repressive measures. Despite doing much the same survey work as he had for a quasi-public board of the Imperial government, it was a result of the town hall meetings that Gourlay was soon labelled a republican.<sup>13</sup> The government's vengeful response to Gourlay's activities revealed much about the insecurities of the provincial executive.

Again during the spring session in 1818, intra-governmental tensions erupted as the House of Assembly prepared an address outlining its grievances concerning the Legislative and Executive Councils. In the face of this hostility, the provincial administrator, Samuel Smith, prorogued the session. More importantly, an already defensive executive concluded that Gourlay was dangerously influencing members of the House of Assembly by encouraging their expressions of disloyal opposition.<sup>14</sup>

Attorney General John Beverley Robinson made the first attempt to silence Gourlay and quell the apparent disruptions he was causing by laying two separate charges of libel against him. Acquitted on both counts, Gourlay forged ahead with his reform platform, hosting a "Convention to the Friends of Enquiry" at York during the first week of July, 1818. But this meeting only

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<sup>13</sup>Robert Gourlay himself published an exhaustive account of his survey, meetings, and trial in three volumes. See, Gourlay, *Statistical Account*, vols. 1-2 and his *General Introduction to Statistical Account of Upper Canada* (1822; reprint, Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1966).

Other summaries of Gourlay's actions in Upper Canada are found in Milani, *Robert Gourlay, Gadfly*; Aileen Dunham, *Political Unrest in Upper Canada* (1927; reprint, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963), 51-61; Craig, *Upper Canada*, 93-100; Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 107-11; Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 29-32; Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers*, 102-4.

<sup>14</sup>Craig, *Upper Canada*, 92-3; Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 109-10.

served to intensify the growing concern among provincial officials, and when the parliament reconvened in October 1818, the official response to Gourlay's actions was decisive and harsh.

Arriving in the middle of these crises, the new Lieutenant Governor, Sir Peregrine Maitland, viewed Gourlay's actions not in terms of Arthur Young's agricultural surveys, but rather in terms of the demands for parliamentary reforms which he had recently witnessed in Britain. This was not surprising, for by 1818 Gourlay had surpassed the questionnaire stage, held a convention, and spoken to his audience in British reformers' language about the landed class's abuse of the British constitution over the lower orders. Thus, in Maitland's eyes, the Upper Canadian government needed to implement "Gagging Acts" such as the Imperial government had passed in 1817 to quell the British reform agitators.<sup>15</sup> Maitland quickly agreed with the provincial executive that Gourlay was a dangerous radical who was "conspiring against constitutional authority, encouraging the tyranny of the people, and, at a very personal level, threatening the continued prominence of many of the tory elite."<sup>16</sup> Government action was needed which would demonstrate that Upper Canada was a loyal colony and not a home for seditious men. Robert Gourlay would receive an overreaction similar to the response to Robert Thorpe and his opposition campaign.

In his speech opening parliament in October 1818, Lieutenant Governor Maitland encouraged the legislature to ban future meetings such as Gourlay's convention. In accordance with this wish, the House of Assembly passed its own version of the British Gagging Acts. Under this legislation "to

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<sup>15</sup>Gourlay's biographer suggests that Gourlay admired Britain's leading reform agitator, William Cobbett, and adopted his writing style. Milani, *Robert Gourlay*, 33.

<sup>16</sup>Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 108.

prevent CERTAIN MEETINGS within this Province," persons electing or elected to assemblies "purporting to represent the people" which were "deliberating on matters of public concern" would be "guilty of a high misdemeanor."<sup>17</sup> While this act effectively prevented Gourlay from holding any more public meetings, Maitland and his Executive Council remained concerned about Gourlay's presence in Upper Canada. Thus, the leaders of the province's judiciary, Chief Justice Powell, Puisné Judge William Campbell, and Attorney General D'Arcy Boulton went one step further and on December 19, 1818, employed the terms of the Sedition Act of 1804 to arrest Gourlay as an alien.<sup>18</sup> However, this judicial tactic only removed Gourlay's immediate threat to the province. His opposition had made these same provincial leaders aware that they needed to take further action to reassert their role in directing the development of Upper Canada.

At the same time as Lieutenant Governor Maitland and his judiciary were plotting their legal tactics against Gourlay, an announcement appeared in the December 10, 1818 issue of the *Upper Canada Gazette* stating that the "propriety of establishing an Agricultural Society in the Home District" had been "lately discussed at a meeting of some gentlemen" of York. Other "gentlemen who wish[ed] to promote such an undertaking" were requested to meet the following week, "for the purpose of taking into consideration the most effectual and practical means to encourage, promote and improve the Agriculture of the Province."<sup>19</sup> Although the formation of an extra-

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<sup>17</sup>*Statutes of Upper Canada*, 1818, 58 Geo. 3, c. 9. This act was passed on October 31, 1818 and given Royal Assent on November 27, 1818.

<sup>18</sup>Milani, *Robert Gourlay*, 186.

<sup>19</sup>*Upper Canada Gazette*, December 10, 1818, p. 3, c. 2.

governmental body "purporting to represent the people" technically contravened the "Gagging Act", a meeting of "several Magistrates and other gentlemen" was held on December 14, 1818, and the gentlemen present agreed "to now and from hence forward unite and associate" in the "Agricultural Society of Upper Canada."<sup>20</sup>

These individuals had no fear of government retribution, for it was the same "magistrates and gentlemen" effecting Gourlay's arrest who organized the Upper Canada Agricultural Society. Its list of officers included the top echelon of the York elite: Sir Peregrine Maitland, Patron; Justice William Campbell, President; Justice D'Arcy Boulton and James Baby, Vice-Presidents; Chief Justice William Dummer Powell, Chief Justice Thomas Scott, Rev. John Strachan, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Wells, Peter Robinson, George Crookshank, Levis Peters Sherwood, Directors; Henry J. Boulton, Treasurer and Robert C. Horne, Secretary.<sup>21</sup> In terms of their profession, the officers of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society<sup>22</sup> consisted of five members of the Executive Council, three members of the Legislative Council, one member of the House of Assembly, the Chief Justice, the recently retired Chief Justice, a Justice of the King's Bench, the Solicitor General, Inspector General, Receiver General, the former Attorney General and the King's Printer. This was the heart of the York elite, and the society's membership combined the old guard

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., December 17, 1818, p. 3, c. 2-4. Lois Darroch Milani suggests that the legal scheming began on November 10, 1818. Both agricultural society meetings were held before Gourlay's arrest on December 19, 1818. Milani, *Robert Gourlay*, 186.

<sup>21</sup>While there is no record of those gentlemen attending the initial December meetings, it can be deduced that the list of the society's officers elected at the January 20, 1819 meeting indicates which individuals established this society. For a complete list of officers from 1819-1820 see Appendix 5. *Upper Canada Gazette*, January 21, 1819, p. 3, c. 3-4.

<sup>22</sup>Despite having been officially constituted as "The Agricultural Society of Upper Canada," it was always referred to as the "Upper Canada Agricultural Society." See *Upper Canada Gazette*, December 17, 1818, p. 3, c. 2-3.

with rising stars in the York's social and political circles such as Robinson, Sherwood and Wells.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the timing and membership of this society indicate that it was more concerned with maintaining the cultural and political hegemony of the government elite than it was an expression of gentlemanly interest in agricultural development. Only a few of these individuals who lived as country gentlemen on their estates at the edge of York had any direct connection to farming.<sup>24</sup>

In spite of his arrest, Gourlay must have found the establishment of this society rather humorous, for his past experience as a member of the Bath and Wiltshire Agricultural Society in Britain had caused him to view such institutions as "worse than useless." Gourlay had been expelled from the British society for his publication of a letter outlining his problems with the institution. In this circular, he had explained that:

Agricultural Societies might have done good in [promoting dexterity and skill among farmers] but their objects have never been sufficiently defined or substantial; and, respecting too little the grand principles which govern all men, they have invariably disgusted the practical farmer, attempting to lead them by slender virtues, -- by empirical pretensions and coxcombical exhibitions.

Thus, it is little wonder that despite having been employed by the British Board of Agriculture, Robert Gourlay did not include agricultural societies as part of his plan for the agricultural improvement of Upper Canada.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>The leadership of this society changed little in the following year. The only significant addition was the election of John Beverley Robinson, the Attorney General of the province as a Vice-President. See Appendix 5. *Ibid.*, March 9, 1820, p. 3, c. 3.

<sup>24</sup>The Boultons lived at "The Grange," Joseph Wells at "Davenport" and James Baby and George Crookshank both had extensive land holdings in and around York. Edith Firth notes in her study of York between 1815-1834 that many of the York "aristocracy" did not live within the town limits but on suburban estates. Edith Firth, *Town of York 1815-1834*, (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1966), lxxxi.

The Upper Canada Agricultural Society announced at its first meeting that it intended to "create competition and emulation amongst the Farmers of this Province...by enabling them to excel in the various branches of Agriculture and Rural Economy." In spite of its magisterial founding, it claimed to be a society for the province's farmers. But the membership dues excluded many potential members. A basic membership which permitted a vote at all General Meetings, was either a subscription of one pound per year or a donation of five or more pounds. A subscription of two pounds per year or a donation of ten pounds entitled a member to two votes. This system continued in proportion for every additional subscription of one pound or donation of five pounds.<sup>26</sup> Such fees were certainly out of the reach of most farmers in Upper Canada.

Along with the York gentlemen, those from other parts of the province were encouraged to become members, for the agricultural society intended to develop into a province-wide association. It was resolved from the outset that when annual subscriptions amounted to twenty or more pounds "in any of the out Districts," a "sufficient number" of directors would be elected with powers to form a branch society. This would increase the ability of the association to foster "competition and emulation...in the various branches of Agricultural pursuits, improvements & productions" throughout the various districts of the province. To accomplish this goal, it was agreed that the Board of Directors would, at times, offer "Premiums, prize medals, or other pecuniary or honorary marks of distinction" for competitions advertised in

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<sup>25</sup>See S. R. Mealing's introduction to the Carleton Library series edition of Robert Gourlay, *Statistical Account*, 8 - 10; Milani, *Robert Gourlay*, 12, 50, 58-9; Gourlay, *Statistical Account of Upper Canada*, vol. 2, vi-viii.

<sup>26</sup>*Upper Canada Gazette*, December 17, 1818, p. 3, c. 2-4.

the *Upper Canada Gazette* three months in advance. In addition, to allow for legislative members from other parts of the province to attend, the General Meeting was set according to the sitting of the Legislature, being held the second Saturday after the commencement of the session.<sup>27</sup>

Understandably, the officers of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society were soon disappointed by the lack of response. It was determined that several of the rules as first resolved were "inexpedient, and inadequate to the carrying into effect the views & purposes of the institution," and, at the first General Meeting, February 10, 1819, the society approved a series of "Supplementary Rules." The most significant changes affected the method of obtaining membership. First, the ability to become a "Member" of the society by subscription was reduced from one pound to ten shillings, with the donation of five pounds remaining as a second method. These rates would allow membership and one vote at all General Meetings. Second, the donation of ten pounds or the subscription of one pound, five shillings per year would allow a member to be a "Director" of the society, permitting him to stand for election of any of the offices of the society.<sup>28</sup>

The supplementary rules of the society also clarified the process involved in forming a district branch. But the Upper Canada Agricultural Society reiterated the necessity of retaining leadership at York, stating: "That as this Society is a Provincial Institution, under the especial sanction & patronage of His Excellency the Lieut. Governor, all General Meetings of the Society, shall be held in the Home District, and not elsewhere."<sup>29</sup> The society's secretary, Robert C. Horne, further defended this position, noting

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., February 18, 1819, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

that "although the general direction and management of the Society, must necessarily be established at the seat of Government, the benefits resulting from it will equally and impartially extend over the whole Province." Therefore, "every respectable person throughout the Province, (farmers particularly), will be happy to enroll their names in so useful and patriotic an institution."<sup>30</sup>

The structure of this institution and the membership it was attempting to attract was very much a product of the defensive, conservative ideology of its founders. As S. F. Wise argues, Upper Canada during this period "was a welter of parochialisms, of disparate groups cut off from one another by differences of origin, religion and language, and by poor communication."<sup>31</sup> But the elites hoped to unify the province by "formulating provincial goals of a distinctive kind and by bequeathing their special sense of mission to the Canadian political culture. Their defensive conservatism led them to build a genuinely provincial political system, based upon the alliance of the central bureaucracy with regional power groups."<sup>32</sup> The formation of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society at York reflected this process. It was an attempt to create a "highly partisan and illiberal"<sup>33</sup> coalition that was to be the hub of a wheel whose spokes of influence would radiate to the proposed branch societies in the outlying districts of the province.

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<sup>30</sup>As well as printing this circular in the *Gazette*, the society had three hundred copies printed and sent out to "the principal gentlemen throughout the province." *Ibid.*, February 18, 1819, p. 3, c. 2-3.

<sup>31</sup>Wise, "Conservatism," 190.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 196-7.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 197.



The plan for branch societies of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society appears to have been patterned on the structure of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada which had been established in 1812 by several of the same gentlemen. This benevolent society had offered relief to those in distress as a result of the war. More importantly, as George Sheppard argues, it had allowed "members of the colonial establishment to claim later that they had taken 'an active part in the war' even though most of them never left the comfort of their homes."<sup>34</sup> A general board of directors of this society of patriotic gentlemen had met at York on the first day of the Quarter Sessions and appointed committees "of their own members, residing in the different districts." In turn, district boards had been requested to submit reports to the general board so "that unity may be preserved in the Society throughout the Province."<sup>35</sup> The Upper Canada Agricultural Society followed this format, for in the opinion of its members, change could best be controlled by centralizing the institution in Upper Canada's capital. The elite at York would direct the agricultural development of the province without ever getting manure on their boots.

While the creation of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society represented another attempt to unite colonial gentlemen in the leadership the agricultural reform of the province, its focus varied significantly from the pre-war agricultural societies of the colony. The new institution's foremost role was to be "encouraging the importation of superior breed animals...facilitating the knowledge & introduction of useful discoveries &

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<sup>34</sup>George Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles: A Social History of the War of 1812 in Upper Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 66-7.

<sup>35</sup>*The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada* (Montreal, Lower Canada: William Gray, 1817), 12-13. For a list of original directors and the district representatives, see pages 17 and 20.

improvements in implements of Husbandry...and...importing and distributing, at prime cost, such rare & valuable seeds of grass, grain and vegetables, as are not in common use, or easily attainable in this country."<sup>36</sup> Despite these lofty aims, only once did the society announce the importation and distribution of seed, and hosting an annual cattle show became its primary function.<sup>37</sup>

The cattle shows of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society suggest that they were modelled after the livestock exhibitions of the Smithfield Club founded by the Duke of Bedford<sup>38</sup> in London in 1798. He and his fellow peers had intended the Smithfield Club to be a national society dedicated to the improvement of the standard of British livestock breeds. Annual competitions hosted by the club offered substantial prize money for classes of cattle, sheep and pigs.<sup>39</sup> Similar to the tradition of this British organization, the Upper Canada Agricultural Society's first cattle show was held on the

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<sup>36</sup>*Upper Canada Gazette*, February 18, 1819, p. 3, c. 3.

<sup>37</sup>In October 1819, the only other activity of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society was recorded. It offered for sale "Yellow Swedish Turnip or Ruta Baga" seed to its membership at cost to be grown for livestock feed. *Ibid.*, October 28, 1819, p. 3, c. 5; November 11, 1819, p. 3, c. 5.

<sup>38</sup>Francis Russell, fifth Duke of Bedford, was an original member of the British Board of Agriculture who had created a model farm at Woburn. Here he had hosted "annual exhibitions of sheep-shearing which lasted several days, and to which the whole agricultural world was invited." Emma Louise, Lady Radford, "Francis Russell, fifth Duke of Bedford," *DNB*, 17, 435-36.

<sup>39</sup>The Duke of Bedford and his fellow peers decided to host exhibitions of improved livestock annually in conjunction with the Smithfield Christmas cattle market of London. Originally, this rather limited competition between gentlemen was held in conjunction with the Smithfield market, but by 1806 the number of competitors had grown, as well as the numbers of interested spectators. Thus, the exhibition became a separate event and was moved to a more commodious location in London. Other notable members of the Smithfield Club were Sir Joseph Banks and Arthur Young. Young was the Honourary Secretary from 1798-1806. Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit*, 53. For a brief overview of the Smithfield Club, extracts from its minutes, membership and prize lists, see E. J. Powell, *History of the Smithfield Club from 1798-1900* (London: The Smithfield Club, 1902).

afternoon of June 17, 1819, at the Market House in York, with premiums awarded for the best bulls, cows and rams.<sup>40</sup>

The show provided a prime opportunity for the demonstration of the loyal commitment of the governing elite to the province's agricultural development. The event was attended by Sir Peregrine Maitland, members of both Houses of Parliament, as well as many people from York and the surrounding countryside.<sup>41</sup> This was exactly the "calculated occasions of popular patronage" that E. P. Thompson has described, for the cattle show, hosted in the market house, was an event which all classes could attend. It simultaneously drew all those present together in a common interest in agricultural reform, while at the same time, the government representatives and the members of the agricultural society demonstrated the wide gulf separating them from the rest of colonial society.<sup>42</sup>

The society's secretary, and King's Printer, Robert C. Horne, concluded that it was "very gratifying to observe that the farmers present appeared to be deeply impressed with the importance and general utility of the association, and expressed their determination to exhibit at the next Show; indeed an impulse is already given, that directed by the fostering care of the Society, and aided by the patriotism of the country, cannot fail to produce the most beneficial effects."<sup>43</sup> He claimed that the event, "considered as a first effort...appeared to give much satisfaction." But the event was only a qualified

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., June 17, 1819, p. 3, c. 5; June 24, 1819, p. 3, c. 4, 5.

<sup>41</sup>*Upper Canada Gazette*, June 24, 1819, p. 3, c. 4.

<sup>42</sup>For this argument using Thompson's interpretation, see McCann, "Culture, State Formation, and the Invention of Tradition: Newfoundland, 1832-1855," in *The Invention of Canada*, 273-89.

<sup>43</sup>*Upper Canada Gazette*, June 24, 1819, p. 3, c. 4.

success. Secretary Horne's description of the competition and the subsequent actions of the society inferred that the larger problems were the society's inability to gain the support of even the Home District's farmers.

At the Upper Canada Agricultural Society Cattle Show, there were several animals entered in the categories for bulls and rams, but only one cow had been brought to the show. Initially, the society had not been going to award any premium in this category since there was no competition. Eventually, however, the judges decided that since this was the first show, the individual showing the lone cow should be remunerated so as to encourage future competition. Horne expressed his disappointment over this situation, for the society knew that there were "much finer Cows in this Town than the one produced." He suggested that the problem had occurred because "people of the town and country, each suppos[ed] that the other would bring forward a large number of these animals."<sup>44</sup> But clearly this understated the situation, for the town and the country competitors were separated by class more than they were location. If the residents of the estates at the edge of York had brought their livestock, they would most certainly have won any competition between their well-tended stock and that walked for many miles by a country farmer to the market square. In fact several of the prize-winners who resided at York were certainly not typical farmers. For example, in the show of rams, one belonging to John Small, the clerk of the Executive Council won first prize, with George Denison's ram from his "Bellevue" estate at the edge of York taking second.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., June 24, 1819, p. 3, c. 4-5.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid. There was no indication of how many competitors there were at this event. A list of prize-winners ranged in location from Etobicoke, Pickering and York.

After this initial cattle show, the society's members realized that there continued to be structural problems with the institution at York. At a meeting held two days after the event, a third round of changes to the membership process were implemented to encourage a wider membership for the organization. The annual subscription rate for membership was again reduced, this time from ten to five shillings. In addition, it was determined that prize winners at future cattle shows would be considered for membership with the highest prize winner in each category considered a Director of the society for the ensuing year. Subscription fees would be deducted from the prize money awarded.<sup>46</sup> Along with these changes, Horne used his position as King's Printer to publicize the actions of the society in his *Upper Canada Gazette* in the hope of gaining support. However, Horne's boosterism and the rule changes apparently had little effect, for the next cattle show of May 17, 1820, would be the last event held by the Upper Canada Agricultural Society.

Robert Horne's report on this final cattle show perhaps provided a fitting end to this organization. In it he expressed his satisfaction that the "Show of Horses and Bulls did great credit to the District," and that the event "was attended by a very large number of Spectators, many whom came from a considerable distance." But having noted that the show "excited much more interest than was expected," he once again expressed the society's "disappointment in not having a larger number of practical farmers join the institution." The agricultural society's Secretary could not understand why farmers did not join, even with the subscription "reduced to one dollar per annum." If more farmers would subscribe their dollar, the society would

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

have more funds, and would "be of vast utility to the country instead of being as at present, from the smallness of its funds, confined to a single Cattle Show in the year for a few animals." He lamented that "Hitherto, the Society has been almost entirely supported by the inhabitants of this town, who are only indirectly interested, from motives of public spirit."<sup>47</sup> This was an admission of the true problem of the institution at York. Just like the pre-war agricultural societies, a benevolent interest in agriculture did not engender wider interest among the farming community; it merely created a social club for the primarily urban and urbane colonial elite.

This organization of the York elite, which held its exhibitions in the centre of town, could not reasonably expect to radiate its influence throughout the province, let alone within the Home District. In the face of the physically disconnected nature of Upper Canadian society this supposed provincial institution only fostered one branch society. The Newcastle Agricultural Society, established in early 1819,<sup>48</sup> was the only glimmer of hope for a province-wide association. The provincial vision was practically stillborn; for the Upper Canada Agricultural Society could not gain the support of their peers in the colony's largest town, Kingston, who expressly refused to join or be subordinate to a York based organization.

Although not the provincial capital, Kingston was the most populous and largest commercial centre of Upper Canada after the War of 1812.<sup>49</sup> The

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<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, May 18, 1820, p. 3, c. 4.

<sup>48</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, May 28, 1819, p. 3, c.4. An agricultural society was also established at Brockville for the Johnstown District at this time, although it appears that it was not a branch society. *Ibid.*, April 9, 1819, p. 3, c. 3; *Upper Canada Gazette*, June 10, 1819, p. 3, c. 3-4.

<sup>49</sup>York's population between 1816 and 1830 rose from 720-2860 persons, while Kingston's population between 1819 and 1830 rose from 1718 to 3587 persons. Not until the next decade would York, continuing its rapid growth, easily surpass Kingston as Upper Canada's largest

war had created a boom in which approximately 250 new houses were built between 1812 and 1820, doubling the size of the town. According to Donald Swainson and Brian Osborne, the military, commercial and administrative operations centred in Kingston became "vital agents in the future destiny of the town."<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, while the war had created a boom, by 1819 the town was suffering from a depression caused primarily by the withdrawal of the British troops. Of the garrison which had numbered 4000 in 1814, fewer than 1000 remained in 1817, and by 1824 this number would be reduced even further to 478. This resulted in an enormous loss not only to the social life of the town, but also to the economy.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, the Kingston elite had its own local problems to solve, which in their opinion were of greater importance than joining together with the gentlemen of York in a subordinate role.

While recognizing the actions taken by the gentlemen in York, the agricultural society at Kingston maintained its independence from its founding in February 1819. Keeping "in view the vast extent of the Province," its membership argued, it did not "seem feasible that this Society should have any closer connection with [the society at York] than that which an occasional correspondence may form."<sup>52</sup>

Reverend John Strachan, a Director of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society, expressed his dismay at this situation to his former student, John Macaulay, the editor of the *Kingston Chronicle*. He lamented that the Midland District Agricultural Society's "show of Independence" was

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urban and commercial centre. Firth, *Town of York 1815-1834*, xxxiv, lxxxii; Kathryn M. Bindon, "Kingston: A Social History 1785-1830" (Ph.D. diss., Queen's University, 1979), 84.

<sup>50</sup>Brian S. Osborne and Donald Swainson, *Kingston Building on the Past* (Westport: Butternut Press Inc., 1988), 53.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 47-54.

<sup>52</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, January 29, 1819, p. 3, c. 3.

"purchased too dearly by sacrificing the best advantages" of such a union which he perceived to be "infinite...to the Province at Large." He stressed that there had been no attempt on the part of the York society to profit from such an arrangement.<sup>53</sup> Strachan, who had educated several of the Kingston elite at his school in Cornwall, demonstrated by these comments his understanding of the separation between Kingston and York.<sup>54</sup> He informed Macaulay that he had foreseen problems and attempted to dissuade his fellow members from broaching the subject of union. But, Strachan stated apologetically, "the benefits appeared so great & the impossibility of objection so obvious" to the members of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society that he had been outvoted when the subject had been discussed by that society.<sup>55</sup>

Strachan and the other members of his society viewed the independence of the agricultural society at Kingston as a lost opportunity to overcome old divisions which remained between Kingston and York and to unite the elites of both locales in a centralized, provincial society. But as noted, Strachan was well aware of the vision these Kingston leaders had for the future of that town. Kathryn Bindon argues in her study of Kingston society that by the 1820s, the "loyalist vision of Kingston's future [had] passed to a generation, largely immigrant, who shared little of the eclectic experience of eighteenth-century North America but who nevertheless understood, in terms of their adopted community, the value of that vision."<sup>56</sup> The Midland

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<sup>53</sup>Archives of Ontario (PAO), Letter of John Strachan to John Macaulay, York, March 11, 1819, Macaulay Papers.

<sup>54</sup>G. M. Craig, "John Strachan," *DCB*, 9, 751-765.

<sup>55</sup>PAO, Letter of John Strachan to John Macaulay, York, March 11, 1819, Macaulay Papers.

<sup>56</sup>Bindon, "Kingston: A Social History," 19-20.



District Agricultural Society, along with other secular organizations, "contributed to the community's self definition, as well as its future growth." It also brought together, "older town dwellers [who] had rural-agricultural leanings" and "bridged the urban-rural mix of the Society's membership."<sup>57</sup>

The initial impetus for an agricultural society in the Midland District seems to have come from Thomas Markland. One of Kingston's principal merchants, he was also "the most influential member of the local 'family compact'...[and]...a gentleman of property and standing" who was "a firm supporter of the executive during the debates centering on Robert Gourlay."<sup>58</sup> Markland chaired the first meeting "establishing an Agricultural Society in the Midland District" on February 8, 1819, at which a committee was formed to draft the rules and regulations for future ratification.<sup>59</sup> Like the chairman, the gentlemen chosen to frame the constitution of the Midland District Agricultural Society were not key members of the provincial judiciary. Kingston was a naval and commercial town, and the gentlemen forming the society reflected this characteristic. The Midland District committee was chaired by Reverend Rowland Grove Curtois, Chaplain of the Forces at Kingston; its members included: the Reverend John Wilson, Headmaster of the Midland District School at Kingston; Benjamin Whitney, a Kingston merchant; Alexander Pringle, co-proprietor of the *Kingston Chronicle*; Anthony Marshall, a Kingston surgeon; and John M. Balfour, a retired army Lieutenant residing in Kingston.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 207.

<sup>58</sup>Jane Errington, "Thomas Markland," *DCB*, 7, 583-4.

<sup>59</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, February 19, 1819, p. 1, c. 5 - p. 2, c. 1-2; *Upper Canada Gazette*, March 4, 1819, p. 3, c. 2-4.

Unlike the Upper Canada Agricultural Society which was insistent in having its meetings in the capital, the Midland District Agricultural Society acknowledged its district mandate by selecting the village of Bath as the location for a February 13, 1819, meeting to vote on the constitution. Those present elected an executive for the year composed of two representatives from each township in the Midland District plus ten representatives from Kingston Township. Allan McLean, a Kingston gentleman, member for the riding of Frontenac and Speaker of the House of Assembly was elected president. The three vice-presidents included: Thomas Markland, Alexander Fisher, a Kingston magistrate in the Court of Quarter Sessions, and James Cotter, member of the House of Assembly for Prince Edward County. George Herchmer Markland, the son of Thomas Markland, was elected Treasurer and Secretary of the society.<sup>61</sup>

Although heavily weighted with Kingston gentlemen, the structure of this organization illustrates the vision of its founders. Members of the agricultural society at Kingston focused much more of their attention on the entire Midland District than their York counterparts did with the Home District. Instead of relying on the Kingston elite to radiate interest throughout the district, those drafting the constitution understood the importance of tapping into the local leaders in the district. Prominent local gentlemen who were similar in station to those in Kingston could better exert their influence

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<sup>60</sup>Thomas Shaw was also a member, but his occupation and place of residence could not be identified. *Kingston Chronicle*, February 19, 1819, p. 2, c. 1; *Upper Canada Gazette*, March 4, 1819, p. 3, c. 3.

<sup>61</sup>For a list of the officers elected at the February 8th meeting, and the officers of the Midland District Agricultural Society elected at the February 13th meeting, see Appendix 6. *Kingston Chronicle*, February 19, 1819, p. 1, c. 5 - p. 2, c. 1-2; July 30, 1819, p. 3, c. 4; *Upper Canada Gazette*, March 4, 1819, p. 3, c. 2-4.

in the townships of the district and solicit members and subscriptions for their society.<sup>62</sup>

The Midland District Agricultural Society also received much support and publicity from the local newspaper editor, John Macaulay (just as the York society had Robert C. Horne to publicize its activities in his *Upper Canada Gazette*). It is unclear whether the editor of the *Kingston Chronicle* was a member of this society,<sup>63</sup> but Macaulay could certainly be considered an *ex-officio* member based on his editorials.<sup>64</sup> Kathryn Bindon argues that Kingston newspaper editors like Macaulay were all respected merchants and professionals "who represented a leading element of Kingston's population." It was newspapers like the *Chronicle*, she argues, "that reinforced the original notion of Kingston's future in all its dimensions, but most notably in terms of its commercial potential." Macaulay championed the efforts of the agricultural society in the columns of his paper, often berating the farmers of the District for not showing more interest in the society's efforts.<sup>65</sup>

He first queried the farmers of the Midland District in his July 2, 1819, issue of the *Chronicle* as to why the new agricultural society did "not meet with the liberal and strenuous support of those whose interests it principally

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<sup>62</sup>J.K. Johnson argues in his study of Upper Canadian Members of the House of Assembly that it is difficult to determine the relative prominence of any gentlemen in a particular area at any particular time. However, he does suggest that the attainment of a government office increased one's prominence from his immediate locality to at least the breadth of a district. See Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 3-4.

<sup>63</sup>His business partner Alexander Pringle was a member. See Appendix 6.

<sup>64</sup>His interest in agriculture is demonstrated by a copy of Sir John Sinclair's *Code of Agriculture* in the collection of the Douglas Library at Queen's University at Kingston. Formerly owned by Macaulay, this book was published in 1821 and contained Sinclair's statement of his theories on the practice of agriculture.

<sup>65</sup>Kathryn Bindon notes that the *Kingston Chronicle* was "deeply involved in the problem of commercial improvement throughout the decade of the 1820s." Bindon, "Kingston: A Social History," 150.

aim[ed] at promoting?" Had the farmers of the district no interest in improving their farms and their livestock? Were they not dismayed by the poor prices for flour or upset that Kingston was supplied with fresh meat by American farmers? In his view, the "apathy and want of public spirit" in these matters should make the Midland District farmers "blush." Macaulay challenged the farmers, by concluding that the "*badness of the times, and scarcity of money* cannot reasonably be offered as an excuse for not coming forward" and supporting the local society.<sup>66</sup>

The following week, he received a response to his questions. "A Correspondent" pointed out to Macaulay that the lack of support was because several of the township officers of the Midland District Agricultural Society had yet to circulate their subscription lists to enlist new members. Macaulay also informed his readers that during the week, he had been notified that certain individuals had made a "few slight objections...[to] the existing regulations of the Society." He did not specify which rules were problematic, but countered that this was not a reason to stay away. In fact, these criticisms presented all the more reason such individuals should become involved. Such objections needed to be raised by members in order that the necessary alterations could be effected. At all costs, he begged the farmers not to allow the new institution "to languish at its commencement, and finally to sink into oblivion."<sup>67</sup>

Macaulay argued that this lack of interest could not possibly be due to "a distrust of the good effects of which it might be productive, for we have the experience of others to light us on our way." He reminded his readers that

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<sup>66</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, July 2, 1819, p. 3, c. 3-4.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, July 9, 1819, p. 3, c. 4.

"Societies have long been established in England on the most extensive scale, whereby the Agriculture of that country has been carried on to a height of perfection unequalled at any other period by any other nation." This was an ideal which he believed could easily be attained by the Upper Canadian farmers, especially considering the fact that "similar Societies" had lately been formed in the United States, and were "spreading rapidly over this vast continent."<sup>68</sup>

In Britain, he noted, agricultural societies "have been the means of converting the most barren wastes and unfruitful soils into highly cultivated and fertile fields," and in the United States, "they have already produced surprising effects in inducing their farmers to adopt a new and improved system of cultivating the soil." Macaulay tried to shame the farmers into support for the society, for in his view it was insulting that the Midland District with all its agricultural potential was lagging far behind the United States or Lower Canada. Even the French Canadians, he argued, "with all their attachment to the habits and customs of their forefathers" had been encouraged to adopt new methods by agricultural societies established at Montreal and Quebec.<sup>69</sup> Clearly, the farmers of the Midland District needed to join the agricultural society, for in Macaulay's view the agriculture of the district was far from attaining the ideal set by Britain.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., July 2, 1819, p. 3, c. 3-4.

<sup>69</sup>In Lower Canada, the government had passed legislation in 1818 offering £2000 in aid to be divided among the agricultural societies existing or being formed in the three districts of the province. *The Revised Acts and Ordinances of Lower Canada*, 1818, 58 Geo. 3, c. 6. "An Act for the Encouragement of Agriculture in this Province." For the Lower Canadian legislative acts regarding the encouragement of agriculture see *The Revised Acts and Ordinances of Lower Canada*, 1845, 547-51.

The agricultural ideal may have been set in Britain, but it appears that for Kingston elites like Macaulay, the most practical means of achieving that ideal was offered by examples from the United States. New York State was an especial example for Upper Canada. As its closest neighbour, its actions were watched with particular interest by Upper Canadians, and as Jane Errington points out, "it was almost as though residents in New York were never considered part of the amorphous whole called the United States."<sup>71</sup> Errington persuasively argues that the United States became Upper Canada's "immediate and constant point of reference. It was a yardstick which Upper

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<sup>70</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, October 22, 1819, p. 3, c. 3-4. At this time, there were contemporary agricultural societies throughout the British North American provinces. In Nova Scotia, it was John Young, writing under the pseudonym "Agricola" who sparked an interest in agricultural reform among that province's elite. A former employee of Sir John Sinclair in Scotland, Young published his first letter from Agricola in the *Acadian Recorder* in July 1818. From the start, he championed the development of local agricultural societies and in particular, influenced by his former employer, the President of the British Board of Agriculture, called for the establishment of a central board of agriculture. By December 1818, Lieutenant Governor Lord Dalhousie, who himself had "an insatiable interest in agricultural improvement," took up Agricola's suggestion and organized a provincial board of agriculture for Nova Scotia. Peter Burroughs "George, 9th Earl of Dalhousie, Ramsay," *DCB*, 7, 722. For the history of Agricola and the Provincial Agricultural Society of Nova Scotia see the following works: John Young, *The Letters of Agricola* (Halifax, N. S.: Holland and Co., 1822); *Reports of the Provincial Agricultural Society of Nova Scotia* (Halifax, N. S.: Holland and Co., 1821); *An Abstract of the Proceedings which occurred at the two meetings of the Provincial Agricultural Society during the Session of 1823* (Halifax, N. S.: Holland and Co., April 1823); J. S. Martell, "The Achievements of Agricola and the Agricultural Societies 1818 - 25," in *Bulletin of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia*, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, vol. 2, no. 2, 1940; R. A. MacLean, "John Young," *DCB*, 7, 930-5; Burroughs, "George, 9th Earl of Dalhousie, Ramsay," *DCB*, 7, 722-33.

By 1826, a central provincial board of agriculture would also be established in New Brunswick as a result of the efforts of Lieutenant Governor Sir Howard Douglas. John Douglas White, "Speed the Plough," 21-22.

While it is difficult to judge the degree to which Agricola's writings and arguments influenced the York elite in establishing a provincial agricultural society, Agricola's writings were available in Upper Canada. This appears to be particularly true in the Kingston area. John Macaulay, editor of the *Kingston Chronicle* published selected letters of Agricola in his newspaper and acted as an agent for subscription to Agricola's publication of his letters in book form. See *Kingston Chronicle*, December 3, 1819, p. 3, c. 4; January 7, 1820, p. 3, c. 5; April 21, 1820, p. 3, c. 3-4.

<sup>71</sup>Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 124-5.

Canadians frequently used to measure their own success."<sup>72</sup> This was especially true in terms of the dual heritage of Upper Canada's agricultural development. Great Britain was "the ideal to be followed," she argues, but in light of the physical difference in soil and climate between the mother country and Upper Canada, it was the United States that offered real examples of what could be attained in the North American environment.<sup>73</sup>

Therefore, it appears that the executive of the Midland District Agricultural Society were influenced by several examples besides those in Britain, when organizing both the structure of the society as well as its cattle shows. While the Smithfield Club cattle show was the model for the agricultural society at York, the Midland District society's exhibition was more of an adaptation of the "Berkshire model" of agricultural exhibition first introduced by Elkanah Watson of Massachusetts in the previous decade.

Watson was a New England gentlemen who, prior to the War of 1812, had determined to make the cattle show "a distinctively American institution with an educational purpose."<sup>74</sup> He is credited as being one of the first American gentlemen to determine that agricultural societies should be established on a more democratic basis than the British model in order to attract the practical farmers of the nation. In October 1810, he had held what was known as the "Berkshire Cattle Show" near his farm in Pittsfield, Berkshire County, Massachusetts. During subsequent years, the Berkshire County Agricultural Society hosted a cattle show offering premiums for the

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 36.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 40-1.

<sup>74</sup>Alfred Charles True, *A History of Agricultural Education in the United States 1785-1925* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1929), 12.

best livestock and an exhibition of domestic manufactures.<sup>75</sup> Watson had returned to his original home at Albany, New York in 1816, and encouraged the development of county agricultural societies in that state. Most importantly, he was instrumental in encouraging the legislative establishment of the New York State Board of Agriculture in April, 1819. By that year, "Watson estimated that all the counties of New England, except Rhode Island, had their fairs on the Berkshire model and were rapidly increasing" throughout New York and many other American states.<sup>76</sup> His influence apparently extended into Upper Canada, and particularly to Kingston.

Not only had the Midland District maintained its independence from a supposed provincial society, it attempted to locate the functions of the society at a convenient point for the farmers, not the gentlemen of Kingston. The struggling Midland District Agricultural Society managed to organize a "District Show" on October 18, 1819. Significantly, it was not held in the Kingston marketplace, but at Adolphustown, as this location was viewed as more central to the Midland District than Kingston.<sup>77</sup> The cattle show also offered a broader range of premiums for competition than its contemporary at York. While prizes were offered for cattle, sheep and pigs, the society also hosted a competition for samples of wheat, barley and white peas.<sup>78</sup> A

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>76</sup>Clifford Lord, "Elkanah Watson and New York's First County Fair," *New York History* 28 (1942): 442-7. For further information on Elkanah Watson, see Jared Van Wagenen, "Elkanah Watson—A Man of Affairs," *New York History* 13(1932): 404-12; Wayne Cadwell Neely, *The Agricultural Fair* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), 51-78; United States, Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Animal Industry, *Special Report of the History and Present Condition of the Sheep Industry of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1892), 218-20.

<sup>77</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, July 30, 1819, p. 3, c. 4; October 8, 1819, p. 3, c. 4.



ploughing match was also held and a premium was offered for the "best improved Plough suited to the agriculture of the country."<sup>79</sup> Livestock, especially cattle, were central to the exhibition, but the emphasis on crops and domestic manufactures made the show as a whole more characteristic of the Berkshire model than the aristocratic livestock breeding club at Smithfield.

In announcing this cattle show in the *Chronicle*, John Macaulay once again took aim at the farmers of the district. Although acknowledging the amount of premiums offered for the show were smaller than those offered by agricultural societies in neighbouring districts,<sup>80</sup> he claimed "they were certainly liberal compared with the scanty fund which ha[d] been raised by subscription in this wealthy District." It was Macaulay's hope that this exhibition would cause many of the district's farmers to encourage the agricultural society and replace their "absolute indifference" with "a spirit of competition."<sup>81</sup>

The show at Adolphustown was considered a success, for the display of cattle "was much greater than what had been expected."<sup>82</sup> The entries in these

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<sup>78</sup>Whereas the Upper Canada Agricultural Society Cattle Show had offered first, second and third prizes in three categories of bulls, cows and rams, the Midland District Agricultural Society offered two prizes each for bulls, cows, rams, ewes and boars. One prize was offered for the best yearling steer or heifer, best breeding sow, and best heifer three years old. In addition, three prizes were offered each for the ploughing of one quarter of an acre with either oxen or horses, and one prize each for the best improved plough "suited to the agriculture of the country," and for the best sample of wheat, barley and peas. *Upper Canada Gazette*, June 24, 1819, p. 3, c. 4-5; *Kingston Chronicle*, July 30, 1819, p. 3, c. 4; October 8, 1819, p. 3 c. 4. For further comparison, the Johnstown District Agricultural Society's cattle show offered prizes for best cultivated farm, Indian corn, wheat, barley, bulls, cows, rams, ewes, boars, sows and stallions. It, too, seems to have been influenced by the Berkshire model. *Ibid.*, October 15, 1819, p. 3 c. 4.

<sup>79</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, July 30, 1819, p. 3, c. 4.

<sup>80</sup>Macaulay was likely referring to the agricultural societies established in the Johnstown and Newcastle Districts. (Johnstown) *Kingston Chronicle*, April 9, 1819, p. 3, c. 3; (Newcastle) *Ibid.*, May 28, 1819, p. 3, c. 4.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, July 30, 1819, p. 3, c. 3.

competitions caused John Macaulay to determine that the cattle show had "produced the happiest effects" and would "excite a spirit of emulation hitherto unknown among the Farmers of this District."<sup>83</sup> At its inaugural meeting, George H. Markland had emphasized the necessity of encouraging the increase of livestock in the district, and the rules committee had determined that prizes awarded by the Midland District Agricultural Society, "must of necessity be chiefly confined to the productions of the grazier." In particular, "encouragement seem[ed] chiefly to be required to promote more generally the breeding and rearing of Stock. "The previous war had created such a demand for beef that at the end of the conflict "scarcely any cattle were left to continue the breed." But as Markland had pointed out, "the cause of the deficiency has so long ceased to operate," and if the farmers had paid "proper attention...the deficiency itself might have by this time been removed."<sup>84</sup>

Despite Macaulay's pleasure at this premier exhibition, he soon expressed concern that it did not offer enough encouragement to stimulate substantial agricultural reforms. He was determined to see the society supported by at least the leading farmers throughout the district. In doing so, his approach to attract such members was more aggressive than that of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society. In the next two issues of his newspaper he outlined the fundamental problems which he believed would hinder the future success of the Midland District Agricultural Society. His initial criticism was that the holding of the cattle show on a Monday had resulted in poor attendance by farmers from other townships. He noted that many

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., October 22, 1819, p. 3, c. 3-4.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., October 22, 1819, p. 3, c. 3-4.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., February 19, 1819, p. 2, c. 1.

farmers had "very properly declined leaving their homes to drive their cattle on the Sunday."<sup>85</sup> The following week, Macaulay promoted a plan to establish cattle shows in each county. These, he believed, would "encourage the institution" as they would "excite a spirit of competition between counties as well as among individuals." He also argued that there needed to be an incentive for the winning livestock to remain in the district for breeding purposes. Therefore, he suggested that prize-winning stock should be retained in the district for at least six months after the show and be made available "for the purpose of improving the breed."<sup>86</sup>

But Macaulay's suggestions were not immediately acted upon, and the success of the District Show and the *Chronicle's* publicity failed to increase enthusiasm for the society. Even support among the Kingston gentlemen faded after the threat of Gourlay was removed from the province. For example, a month's notice was offered for the annual meeting of the society to be held at Kingston in February 1820, but the meeting had to be adjourned to a future date for want of members.<sup>87</sup> At this rescheduled meeting, Macaulay noted, there were no farmers from the country in attendance. In fact, even the members of the Committee who lived outside of the town did not attend.<sup>88</sup>

This resulted in another vitriolic column by the editor of the *Chronicle*. In an attempt to stir the farmers of the district to action, he once again encouraged them to "come forward and support the institution," for if

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<sup>85</sup>[*ibid.*

<sup>86</sup>[*ibid.*

<sup>87</sup>[*ibid.*, January 7, 1820, p. 3, c. 5; February 11, 1820, p. 3, c. 3.

<sup>88</sup>[*ibid.*, February 11, 1820, p. 3, c. 3.

they did not, "the exertions of others will produce very little effect in improving the present wretched state of Agriculture." He warned his readers that the farmers "must pay more attention to their breed of cattle and to their cultivation of their lands" or they could not possibly keep pace with the other districts of the province. Furthermore, drawing again upon the examples of neighbouring Lower Canada and New York State, he warned that "until a proper spirit is manifested by the people of the country," they could not expect "the patronage of the Government or Legislature" in this matter.<sup>89</sup> Subsequently, another meeting of the Midland District Agricultural Society was called for April 27, 1820, to which notice Macaulay added this warning: "Let the farmers then no longer view with indifference this Institution as a thing in which they are not concerned."<sup>90</sup>

Secretary George H. Markland acknowledged to those assembled at the April 27th meeting that the events of 1819 had been disappointing. Directors had been elected for every township of the district, but only four had submitted returns. The resulting lack of subscriptions caused the cancellation of the second cattle show of the year, an event which had been scheduled in the society's original rules for the first Monday in February of 1820. In light of these critical problems, Markland informed those present that they were "to take into some consideration some means of removing the indifference which has been shewn to the best interests of the country" and to make the organization "more popular among the farmers of the District."<sup>91</sup> Unlike the

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., April 7, 1820, p. 3, c. 4. For a similar statement of the value of the Midland District Agricultural Society see the report of Benjamin Whitney, intended to be read at the April 27th meeting. Ibid., May 12, 1820, p. 4, c. 1-2.

<sup>91</sup>See Appendix 6 for the officers elected for 1820. Ibid., May 5, 1820, p. 3, c. 2-4.

Upper Canada Agricultural Society, which had determined that its meetings *must* be held at York, and which had apparently ceased to exist after its May 1820 cattle show, the Midland District Agricultural Society was willing to spread the society's activities throughout the Midland District to ensure its survival.

Sixteen resolutions were agreed upon at this meeting, several of which made fundamental changes to the institution. The society agreed to drop one of its yearly cattle shows and the location and date of the remaining show would be determined at the annual General Meeting. In place of the canceled exhibition, it was agreed that any county within the district which raised £25 in subscriptions was entitled to hold a cattle show, the time and place of which would be decided upon at the General Meeting of the society.<sup>92</sup> As for its officers, new elections were held. Here too, major structural changes were made. The executive of the society in 1819 had consisted of "a President, three Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, and Treasurer, and a Committee of thirty members, ten of whom reside[d] in the township of Kingston."<sup>93</sup> This was altered so that the executive as of April 27, 1820, consisted of a President, five Vice-Presidents,<sup>94</sup> a Secretary, a Treasurer, and "a Committee of 50 members, ten in each County." This move appears to have been an acknowledgment of the difficulties in even leading a *district* institution from its principal centre and the need to tap into the local leadership in the counties distant from Kingston. Markland concluded that "every arrangement" had been

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<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, February 19, 1819, p. 2, c. 1.

<sup>94</sup>This number represented one Vice-President from the five counties of Frontenac, Addington, Lennox, Prince Edward, and Hastings.

undertaken "to encourage the farmers to become members of the society...and to render the institution generally useful."<sup>95</sup>

The Hastings County committee of the Midland District Agricultural Society wasted little time in establishing its own county agricultural society and cattle show. The committee held a meeting in Belleville on May 29, 1820, to organize a county branch. In its view, many farmers would not attend the district fair in the proposed locations of Kingston and Adolphustown, because "the trouble of attending these fairs was considered too great to be compensated by any probable premium, that might be received."<sup>96</sup> Frontenac County followed the Hastings' example during the ensuing year, establishing the Frontenac Agricultural Society at Waterloo on June 30, 1821.<sup>97</sup> The following month, at a meeting at Ernest Town, the Addington Agricultural Society was formed. But these developments resulted in only a partial success in the district society's reformation, for there is no record of societies being formed in either Lennox or Prince Edward Counties.<sup>98</sup>

As for the parent society, the Midland District Agricultural Society survived through 1820, hosting a successful cattle show at Napanee Mills on October 19th, at which there was a "great number of respectable farmers, from different parts of the country present," and an "excellent" show of livestock and a ploughing match were "conducted in a manner highly gratifying to the spectators."<sup>99</sup> The next general meeting of the society was held on May 28,

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<sup>95</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, May 5, 1820, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*, June 2, 1820, p. 3, c. 4; June 9, 1820, p. 3, c. 3-4; For a list of subscribers to this society see the William Bell Papers, p. 286-9, Lennox and Addington County Archives.

<sup>97</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, June 15, 1821, p. 3, c. 4-5; July 6, 1821, p. 3, 3-4.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, July 27, 1821, p. 3, c. 2-3.

1821, after once again being adjourned to a second date due to lack of interest.<sup>100</sup> A new set of officers was elected for the coming year and arrangements were made for a cattle show to be held at Bath in October. But there is no report that this event occurred, and the report of this 1821 general meeting represents the last mention of the Midland District Agricultural Society.<sup>101</sup>

The demise of the district society appears to have been directly linked to the establishment of the Frontenac County Agricultural Society at Waterloo. Its original meeting in June 1821 was held "for the purpose of aiding the Agricultural funds of the Midland District Society, and endeavouring to obtain a cattle Show for the County."<sup>102</sup> However, as a result of the overlap in membership between the two societies, the Frontenac County institution seems to have supplanted the district society. George H. Markland, re-elected in May 1821 as the Secretary of the Midland District Agricultural Society, became Secretary of the first meeting of the Frontenac Society at Waterloo in June, and subsequently became its President. Similarly, Christopher Hagerman, elected as Treasurer of the district society also became a Vice-President of the new county society. As well, five Frontenac County representatives to the parent society became Committee members of the Frontenac County Agricultural Society.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>The Secretary of the Midland District Agricultural Society noted that no individuals from either Prince Edward or Hastings County were present. *Ibid.*, October 27, 1820, p. 3, c. 4-5.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, May 11, 1821, p. 3, c. 5; May 18, 1821, p. 3, c. 5.

<sup>101</sup>See Appendix 6 for the officers elected for 1821. *Ibid.*, June 8, 1821, p. 3, c. 4.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, June 15, 1821, p. 3, c. 4-5.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, June 8, 1821, p. 3, c. 4; June 15, 1821, p. 3, c. 4-5; July 6, 1821, p. 3, c. 3-4. For a complete list of the executive of the Frontenac County Agricultural Society 1821-1823, see Appendix 7.

At the latter county's cattle show held at Waterloo on October 9, 1822,<sup>104</sup> its president, George Markland, delivered a lengthy address encouraging support for the society. Markland expressed his personal belief that the Frontenac society was "now in the full progress of successful operation."<sup>105</sup> He reminded the society's members that not only was the livestock of the Midland District "inferior to what it should be," but its fields were "worse cultivated than those in other countries which do not possess greater advantages." Encouraging those present to surpass the "zealous support" given agricultural societies in Lower Canada and the United States, the president asserted that the farmers of Frontenac County possessed "the chief circumstance necessary to profit in agriculture; in the quantity of soil, if [they] would apply skill and economy in employing [their] labour, and attention to the nature of what [they] produce." Markland concluded with his conviction that in fulfilling this purpose the Frontenac County Agricultural Society could "be made an instrument of great public and private good."<sup>106</sup> However, his confidence in the society was rather premature.

Unfortunately, the valuable window to the activities of the district and the Frontenac County society closed when John Macaulay gave up the editorship of the *Kingston Chronicle* in 1822.<sup>107</sup> There is evidence that this institution continued its operations in 1823, was apparently inactive in 1824,

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<sup>104</sup>There is no evidence that the Frontenac County Agricultural Society held a cattle show in 1821. However, there was a cattle show hosted by the Hastings County Agricultural Society at Belleville in October 1821. The Addington County Agricultural Society had planned to hosted a cattle show at Bath the day previous to the district show, but it is unclear if it was held. *Ibid.*, October 5, 1821, p. 3, c. 2-3; July 27, 1821, p. 3, c. 3.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, October 11, 1822, p. 2, c. 5 - p. 3, c. 1.

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, October 18, 1822, p. 3, c. 2-3.

<sup>107</sup>Robert Lochial Fraser, "John Macaulay," *DCB*, 8, 517.



and held a cattle show in October 1825. But after this date, there is no further mention of any remnants of the original Midland District Agricultural Society.<sup>108</sup>

The decline of the district institution, and subsequently the county society that it fostered, was a reflection of the changing fortunes of its executive. Christopher Hagerman, for example, became involved in the Midland District Society during 1821, the same year in which he was elected as a Member of the House of Assembly for Kingston. His election to the society was a move befitting a prominent Kingston gentleman, but his role in the Frontenac society was quite brief, and may be linked to his fall in financial standings and esteem among his peers after his involvement in the failed "pretended" Bank of Upper Canada in 1822.<sup>109</sup> In addition, George Herchmer Markland, also a student of John Strachan, was a gentleman on the rise to prominence in Upper Canada. While Secretary of the Midland District Agricultural Society, Markland was appointed to the Legislative Council, and while President of the Frontenac County Agricultural Society he was appointed as an honorary member of the Executive Council in 1822. Soon after this date he spent several years in England.<sup>110</sup> Thus, the Frontenac County Agricultural Society was placed in the hands of less prominent gentlemen, such as Samuel Aykroyd and Hugh Christopher Thompson, who served as president and secretary in 1825. Aykroyd was a Kingston merchant, and Thomson was editor of the increasingly popular moderate reform

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<sup>108</sup>The activities of the society after 1822 are advertised in the following issues: *Kingston Chronicle*, June 6, 1823, p. 3, c. 5; June 20, 1823, p. 3, c. 2; October 17, 1823, p. 3, c. 3-4; *Upper Canada Herald*, July 12, 1825, p. 3, c. 5; October 18, 1825, p. 3, c. 5.

<sup>109</sup>Fraser, "Christopher Alexander Hagerman," *DCB*, 7, 365-72.

<sup>110</sup>Robert J. Burns, "George Herchmer (Herkimer) Markland," *DCB*, 9, 534-36.

newspaper, the *Upper Canada Herald*, which he founded at Kingston in 1819.<sup>111</sup>

That the remnants of the Midland District Agricultural Society were able to survive longer than the Upper Canada Agricultural Society was testament to the localized nature of colonial communities. If agricultural societies wished to survive in Upper Canada, they had to be located nearer to the farmers, rather than in the principal town of the district. The gentlemen's club at York appears to have succumbed primarily because of its refusal to operate outside of the province's capital. In contrast, the Midland District Agricultural Society created a method by which a gentlemen's club could possess an element of utility by locating its operations closer to the district farmers. Nevertheless, the eventual demise of both societies suggests that Richard Cartwright's words written in 1810 still had credence. There continued to be too few gentlemen in the province possessed with the leisure, finances and willingness to properly support such private societies.

The differing characteristics of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society and the Midland District Agricultural Society were indicative of the dual nature of the colony's general development. Upper Canadian leaders looked to both Britain and the United States to find examples of institutions which served their particular purpose. Moreover, the characteristics of each society reflect the differences between the colonial elite, for the gentlemen of York and Kingston each presented a different aim for their agricultural society. Echoing the history of the Niagara Agricultural Society, the institution at York began as a semi-public forum in which members of the provincial

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<sup>111</sup>See "Samuel Aykroyd," in Bindon, "Kingston: A Social History," 251-2; H. P. Gundy, "Hugh Christopher Thomson," *DCB*, 772-4. Unfortunately, it is difficult to gauge the publicity which the Frontenac Agricultural Society received in the *Upper Canada Herald*, as very few issues of this newspaper have survived.

administration attempted to prevail upon the disparate local oligarchies and bring them into line with their vision for the province's agricultural development. In actuality, it became little more than a short-lived private club of the York elite to perform their positions of authority attained elsewhere through government office.

In contrast, the Kingston society's refusal to join its counterpart at York, and its subsequent devolution of authority to the counties of the Midland District made no pretensions of any provincial goals. Instead, it focused only on offering encouragement to the farmers of Kingston's hinterland. Furthermore, the realization by the membership of the Kingston agricultural society that even the Midland District was too large an area to direct from Kingston, and its subsequent shifting of responsibility to the county level illustrated the impossibility the York society's original provincial aims.

Although the two agricultural societies ceased their operations in the early 1820s, the belief of the Upper Canadian gentlemen that such institutions were necessary to direct the province's agricultural development did not disappear. During the latter years of the 1820s, calls for provincial agricultural reform continued to be voiced by both newspaper editors and politicians. While they gave birth to a provincial agricultural vision, the forces that had hindered the provincial unity so desired by the administration at York still remained. Thus, the life of any new agricultural societies formed in Upper Canada during the decade continued to be brief. Not until 1830 was a new approach developed that circumvented most of these long-standing obstacles and set in place a lasting foundation for Upper Canada's agricultural societies. The semi-public nature of these gentlemen's clubs was supported by legislation offering public money to support the private activities of these

gentlemanly clubs. Furthermore, gentlemen from each district of the province were attracted to the new approach not only for the money, but because the only coordinating body for the district agricultural societies was the Upper Canadian legislature itself.

**Chapter 4:  
Private Clubs become Public Institutions,  
1824-1846**

Twenty years after the demise of the Frontenac County Agricultural Society in 1826, William Henry Smith, editor of his *Canadian Gazetteer*, assessed the advancements of Upper Canadian agriculture. Every district of the province had its own agricultural society, and each of them offered premiums for the best examples of agricultural produce and livestock. These developments, he noted, had been the direct result of government legislation which, by funding agricultural societies, gave "impetus to the progress of improvement in agriculture." For "many years the agriculture of the province generally was at a very low standard," Smith commented, but "within the last few years it has begun to make great advancements, and is beginning to keep pace with the improvements introduced into England and Scotland."<sup>1</sup>

Influenced by a substantial effort on the part of colonial leaders in the 1820s to address one of the most critical problems facing the province – the poor state of agricultural practices – in 1830 the Upper Canadian government first committed itself to guiding the development and reform of the province's agriculture. Legislation enacted in March of that year offered annual government grants to assist the establishment of new district-based agricultural societies. Between 1830-1846, money for these institutions came increasingly from public funds, and resulted in the agricultural societies described by William Smith.

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<sup>1</sup>William Henry Smith, *Smith's Canadian Gazetteer* (Toronto: H & W Rowsell, 1846), 246-7.

The availability of government funds after 1830 to assist the establishment of agricultural societies in Upper Canada created two important changes in the character of these institutions. First, a greater number of gentlemen were able to become members of an agricultural society, as the personal financial burden to fund an institution's activities was lessened by the availability of government subsidies. Furthermore, while in Upper Canada there had always been a semi-public purpose for establishing agricultural societies, the 1830 act heightened their public nature by employing district agricultural societies as agents for implementing a maturing government policy of provincial agricultural development. Between 1830-1846, agricultural societies became increasingly public organizations through continued government funding and increased requirements for accountability.

Although the agricultural societies operating in York and Kingston at the beginning of the 1820s had been short-lived, their demise did not signal an end to the efforts to replace them with new institutions. Throughout the 1820s, politicians, journalists and other observers were continually criticizing the poor state of Upper Canada's agriculture. It was not until the end of the decade, however, that the matter was discussed seriously by the provincial legislators. Between 1828 and 1830, a dramatic shift had occurred in the leadership of provincial agricultural development as well as the role of agricultural societies. After 1828, the House of Assembly increasingly viewed itself as the central institution of agricultural development.

Moreover, the agricultural societies bill of 1830 was representative of a larger ideological transition occurring within the colony. At this time, Jane Errington argues, "Upper Canada was a society which took for granted its own basic unity and the shared concerns and purposes of its people." While

regional elites and local interests continued to play a major part in the development of the colony, the provincial government began to implement "broad all-encompassing colonial policies."<sup>2</sup> The agricultural societies which the legislature funded were to be agents of the nascent provincial consciousness, leading both the development and reform of Upper Canada's agriculture. It established a standardized process by which each agricultural society in every district of the province received an equal annual government grant and was a step toward creating a well-defined provincial agricultural administration. During the 1840s, this developing agricultural policy fit well into the broader centralization of government institutions begun by Lord Sydenham after the union of the Canadas.

Little attention has ever been paid to the Upper Canadian government's funding of agricultural societies. In fact, it has been generally believed that the Upper Canadian government did not substantially support the agriculture of the colony at all. In his study of Canada's agricultural policy, Vernon Fowke argued that the government funds offered to Upper Canada's agricultural societies "was trifling in amount, formal (even ritualistic) in conception, and indicate[d] that agriculture was no essential part of the real interests in government."<sup>3</sup> Prior to 1850, he concluded, agriculture "called forth gestures of encouragement, and little more, for the basic reason that Canadian agriculture seemed of little consequence in the economic purposes of the region."<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, he misunderstood the role of colonial gentlemen in leading agricultural development and argued that any co-

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<sup>2</sup>Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 91-2.

<sup>3</sup>Vernon C. Fowke, *Canadian Agricultural Policy: The Historical Pattern* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1946), 105.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 105.

ordination of agricultural assistance by the provincial government "was a problem so long as contact with the Executive was lacking."<sup>5</sup>

Robert L. Jones reiterated this interpretation in his history of Ontario's agriculture. He determined that the agricultural societies' legislation of 1830 did little more than "offer a fresh interest" in these institutions. Significantly, he did not consider the act or its subsequent amendments to be part of any government policy to promote the province's agricultural development.<sup>6</sup> Like Fowke, he argued that it was only during the last half of the nineteenth century that "the small beginnings of governmental encouragement and supervision" appeared.<sup>7</sup> It was not until mid-century, he believed, that a "vital influence" was exerted upon agricultural societies with the creation of an official Board of Agriculture.<sup>8</sup> But the formation of this Board stemmed directly from the success of the district agricultural societies that had been funded by the government between 1830 and 1846.

Fowke's and Jones' interpretations have persisted to the present day, as historians continue to give little credence to the Upper Canadian government's financial support of agricultural societies as representative of any sort of provincial development policy. In a recent dissertation concerning Canadian exhibitions, Elsbeth Heaman echoes Jones' and Fowke's conclusions by arguing that "Grants to agricultural societies were an opportunity to buy the good will of the farming population, and most

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 97.

<sup>6</sup>Jones, *History of Agriculture*, 164.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 328.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 329. See acts concerning the Upper Canadian Board of Agriculture and agricultural societies. *Statutes of the Province of Canada*, 1850, 13th & 14th Vic. c. 7 and 1851, 14th & 15th Vic. c.127.



Canadians were farmers." Overlooking the gentlemen's role in leading colonial agricultural development, she argues that this funding was simply the manner in which government officials overcame the "growing barrier" between themselves "and the farmers who paid the taxes."<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to these interpretations, the agricultural societies' legislation of 1830 was important for both the institutions which it fostered as well as the political harmony which its enactment represented. Its origin in the 1820s demonstrates that in terms of a developing agricultural policy, Tories and reformers shared many views. The leaders of the colony, regardless of political persuasion, all understood agriculture in terms of enlightened ideology and the need to encourage scientific agricultural practices to attain the Edenic promise of Upper Canada's climate and soil. Admittedly, maintaining a long-term commitment as the guardian and leader of the province's agricultural development from the late 1820s to the mid-1840s was a difficult task. Tensions between Tories and reformers erupted on many occasions and greatly affected the conduct of government business. As a result of this tense atmosphere, a few lapses in funding to the district agricultural societies did occur. Nevertheless, the Upper Canadian government's use of gentlemen's clubs as publicly funded agents of agricultural reform facilitated the continuance of a gentlemanly leadership of the province's agricultural development. But throughout the 1830 to 1846 period, the characteristics of the Upper Canada's agricultural societies were transformed by the government legislation from private clubs to public institutions.

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<sup>9</sup>Heaman, "Commercial Leviathan," 52. In the official history of Ontario's agricultural societies published by the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies, Guy Scott quickly itemizes the government support, but focuses on the activities of the societies. In comparing them to the popularity of late nineteenth-century agricultural societies, Scott supports Jones' argument that prior to 1850, these institutions "were largely failures." Scott, *A Fair Share*, 27.

Despite the failure of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society and the Midland District Agricultural Society, by the mid-1820s, the model of a gentlemen's club leading the colony's agricultural development continued to be attractive to the provincial elites. The newly appointed King's Printer, Robert Stanton, commented in his October 14, 1826 edition of the *U. E. Loyalist*, on the "many benefits, that might be expected to result, from the formation of Agricultural Societies, where meeting with each other, an opportunity would be afforded, of communicating the most successful methods adopted for the cultivation of the different kinds of Grain--improving Stock--and of acquiring general information, on subjects connected with Husbandry."<sup>10</sup>

His comments are not surprising. Prior to his appointment as the King's Printer, Stanton had lived in Kingston. From the end of the War of 1812 to 1826, he had been a merchant, magistrate and a social climber in Kingston society. In 1823, he had been elected the Treasurer of the Frontenac County Agricultural Society and also commissioned as a notary public.<sup>11</sup> Subsequently, as editor of the *Upper Canada Gazette*, he apparently drew upon his experience with this institution, writing two editorials which attempted to persuade the leading farmers of the Home District of the merits of the Midland District model of an agricultural society.

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<sup>10</sup>*U. E. Loyalist*, October 14, 1826, p. 3, c. 4, p. 4, c. 1.

<sup>11</sup>Hilary Bates Neary, "Robert Stanton," *DCB*, 9, 740-1.

The example of the British gentry's agricultural societies also remained strong for gentlemen such as Stanton, and he pleaded with his readers to consider that country's example. He argued, "in the Mother Country, the means which such Societies afford, not only of increasing Agricultural knowledge, but giving an impulse to the exertions of the Farmer, is fully demonstrated and acknowledged, and...they receive a general support from all classes of society."<sup>12</sup> In addition to exaggerating the "general support" British agricultural societies received,<sup>13</sup> he pointed to successful examples of similar institutions in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and even Lower Canada. Significantly, in light of the ongoing intense debates among government officials concerning the status and loyalty of American settlers in Upper Canada, the King's Printer simply acknowledged in a very curt manner that "In the United States societies are numerous."<sup>14</sup>

Stanton did not propose the creation of a provincial board of agriculture at York, nor did he direct his comments to his governmental peers within the capital. Instead, he expressed his hope that "some of our leading Farmers would...call a meeting for the purpose of establishing an Agricultural Society for the Home District." As for the rest of the province, he simply recommended his plan to the attention of the "adjoining Districts, between whom it would produce a laudable competition, and serve

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<sup>12</sup>*U. E. Loyalist*, October 14, 1826, p. 3, c. 4, p. 4, c. 1.

<sup>13</sup>In fact, even the most prestigious agricultural societies in Britain were in a period of decline. The British Board of Agriculture had ceased to exist in 1822, and the Smithfield Club suffered a loss of interest as a result of the post-Napoleonic War economic depression. This society struggled on in a very limited existence until revived in 1826. See Mitchison, "The Old Board of Agriculture," 64-5, and Powell, *History of the Smithfield Club*, 4-5.

<sup>14</sup>*U. E. Loyalist*, October 14, 1826, p. 3, c. 4, p. 4, c. 1. For discussion of the Alien Question in Upper Canada, see Craig, *Upper Canada*, 106-123; Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 166-184; Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 34-51.

essentially to promote the best interests of the country." Nevertheless, Stanton hoped to see the "establishment and encouragement of agricultural societies throughout the Province." In his view, such societies would be "the most effectual method of acquiring information...of the most modern improvement in husbandry."<sup>15</sup>

It appears that no one immediately followed up on Stanton's editorial, for one year later, the editor again broached the issue of agricultural societies. In doing so, he clarified the class of Home District farmers to which he directed his comments. He noted that during the Assizes, he "had an opportunity...of meeting with several persons from the Country, to whom we have intimated our wish that, some effectual measures could be devised for establishing an Agricultural Society in this District." They agreed with Stanton's opinion that "such a society would be highly beneficial, as it would afford the best means of giving more extensive circulation to useful agricultural information, and lead to many improvements in our system of farming, and raising of Stock." Stanton again challenged the "leading members" of the Home District, those farmers who were "principally interested in the promotion of such objects," to organize a public meeting. He suggested that such a meeting would be most successful if held during the coming Quarter Sessions, "when a number of people from different parts of the Country will necessarily be in attendance at Court." However, no mention of any such initiative ever being taken exists.<sup>16</sup>

What had possibly stirred Stanton's interest was the fact that in August 1827, John Galt had founded "The Agricultural Society of Upper Canada" at

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<sup>15</sup>*U. E. Loyalist*, October 14, 1826, p. 3, c. 4, p. 4, c. 1.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, October 20, 1827, p. 4, c. 1.

Guelph, in the neighbouring District of Gore. Again, strictly founded on the old British model of a private club, this "agricultural association" had been initiated at a dinner of gentlemen at Guelph on August 12, 1827. Forty-three gentlemen signed their names for membership and three British agriculturists were elected as honorary members.<sup>17</sup> This society was founded on expressly loyal principles, for the society resolved to hold its annual meeting on August 12, the King's birthday, and the location would be Guelph, named for the family of George IV.<sup>18</sup> However, despite the professed loyalty and province-wide title the Guelph society's executive was formed of gentlemen who challenged the government elite at York with competing visions of Upper Canada's development. The founder, John Galt, was elected President, with William Dickson, George Hamilton and Joseph Brant forming a committee to manage the affairs of the society.<sup>19</sup>

Galt was unquestionably an English gentleman interested in agriculture. While he is best known for his involvement with the Canada Company, Galt had also been a member of the Royal Society of Arts at London, and active in convincing that society to offer awards for the

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<sup>17</sup>*Gore Gazette*, August 18, 1827, p. 2, c. 3; August 23, 1828, p. 3, c. 2; *Colonial Advocate*, August 30, 1827, p. 2, c. 3. The three British gentlemen were Sir John Sinclair, Thomas Coke, the host of the famous annual Holkham sheep shearing, 177(8)-1821, and J. C. Curwen, an M. P. of Workington Hall and member of the Royal Society of Arts. George Fisher Russell Barker, "Thomas Coke," *DNB*, 4, 705-7; Hudson and Luckhurst, *The Royal Society of Arts 1754-1954*, 69, 78.

<sup>18</sup>John Galt had just founded Guelph in April of 1827. *Gore Gazette*, August 18, 1827, p. 2, c. 3; *Colonial Advocate*, August 30, 1827, p. 2, c. 3; John Galt, *The Autobiography of John Galt*, vol. 2 (London: Cochrane and M'Crone, 1833), 97.

<sup>19</sup>*Gore Gazette*, August 18, 1827, p. 2, c. 3; *Colonial Advocate*, August 30, 1827, p. 2, c. 3. The other member of the committee was the Treasurer, Thomas Smith, Esq., an accountant and cashier to the Canada Company. See Galt, *Autobiography*, vol. 2, Appendix No. 1. For a list of the gentlemen who attached their names to the resolutions see, *Gore Gazette*, August 23, 1828, p. 3, c. 2.

cultivation of hemp in Upper Canada.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, he was no close friend of the York elite. And there were certainly gentlemen in York, including Stanton, who were concerned about Galt's leadership of this "pretended" provincial society. Galt's biographers argue that the "peculiar, inverted society of the little town of York did not know what to make of a man with Galt's vision and purpose." As a result, Galt subsequently fell out of favour with Lieutenant Governor Sir Peregrine Maitland and the rest of the York elite.<sup>21</sup> Galt's society was short-lived, as Galt himself returned to England in early 1829 and it appears that none of the other Agricultural Society of Upper Canada executives continued the society in his absence.<sup>22</sup>

Stanton's 1826 and 1827 editorials, as well as John Galt's agricultural society, are instructive for they illustrate the transitional nature of agricultural societies in the late 1820s. Many gentlemen of the province continued to refer to agricultural societies as a means of directing agricultural

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<sup>20</sup>Galt, *Autobiography*, vol. 1, 97-8; Roger Hall and Nick Whistler, "John Galt," *DCB*, 7, 335-40.

<sup>21</sup>Hall and Whistler, "John Galt," 338. In several ways, the Agricultural Society of Upper Canada echoed earlier societies, for it had among its committee the Honourable William Dickson, now aged fifty-eight, a former member of the Niagara Agricultural Society at Newark, and Robert Hamilton's son, George. Dickson's loyalty had been demonstrated during the Gourlay episode. A cousin of Robert Gourlay's wife, Dickson had at first encouraged Gourlay's survey of the province. But Dickson came to oppose Gourlay's actions and was one of the magistrates who had arrested, interrogated and ordered Gourlay to leave the province. George Hamilton, however, had remained a supporter of Robert Gourlay and was a moderate reform member of the House of Assembly. In addition, Joseph Brant's son, John Brant, was elected as Secretary of the society. This was a clear demonstration of Galt's involvement with the Natives of the Six Nations, sympathies which had "hindered his acceptance into the narrow and partisan society of York." See, Bruce G. Wilson, "William Dickson," *DCB*, 7, 250-2; John C. Weaver, "George Hamilton," *DCB*, 7, 377-9; Hall and Whistler, "John Galt," 338.

<sup>22</sup>Despite meeting the following August, and requesting the patronage of the newly arrived Lieutenant Governor Sir John Colborne in November 1828 there is no evidence that the Agricultural Society of Upper Canada was otherwise active. Unfortunately, the *Gore Gazette*, the main source of information regarding this society, ceased publication in June 1829. *Gore Gazette*, August 9, 1828, p. 3, c. 5; August 23, 1828, p. 3, c. 2; PAC, RG5 A1, Upper Canada Sundries, "John Galt, President of the Agricultural Society of Upper Canada to Sir John Colborne," November 24, 1828, pp. 50501-02.

reform. But as the decade progressed, championing agricultural reform was no longer the exclusive role of the tory elite, and as the Agricultural Society of Upper Canada demonstrated, other gentlemen beside the York elite could also employ this symbol of leadership.<sup>23</sup>

Prominent reformers such as William Lyon Mackenzie were also instrumental in encouraging agricultural development. Mackenzie did so both as a member of parliament and as a newspaper editor. He promoted endeavours in agricultural development similar to those put forth by conservatives such as Robert Stanton. Mackenzie arrived at Queenston in May 1824, and established his reform newspaper *The Colonial Advocate and Journal of Agriculture, Manufactures and Commerce*. His lengthy first issue devoted sixteen pages to his "Editor's Address to the Public," which fully outlined Mackenzie's opinions about Upper Canadian farmers and the current state of agriculture in the province. He based this editorial on a quote from House of Assembly candidate Charles Fothergill's recent speech to the electors of Durham. In this address, Fothergill had stated that Upper Canada had "so long languished in a state of comparative stupor and inactivity, whilst our more enterprising neighbours are laughing us to scorn [sic]."<sup>24</sup> Mackenzie spent the rest of his editorial replying to Fothergill's concerns. In doing so, he demonstrated his belief in the "Edenic myth" of Upper Canada,

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<sup>23</sup>There was one last agricultural society established during the 1820s. This was the "County of Northumberland Agricultural Society" that held its first cattle show at Colborne on October 19, 1829. This society was quite unlike the other societies of the 1820s, as it was based at the county level. However, it was a society of gentlemen that included Benjamin Ewing and James Lyons, members of the House of Assembly from the Northumberland riding. For details of this society see PAO, "Historical Sketch of Northumberland Agricultural Society" Riddell Family Papers; PAO "Report of elections of officers of the County of Agricultural Society," John Steele Papers; PAC, RG5 A1, Upper Canada Sundries, "John Steele re: Northumberland Agricultural Society," June 1, 1830, pp. 56560-56567 and "Durham and Northumberland Agricultural Societies," June 18, 1830, pp. 56790-56793; *Colonial Advocate*, June 8, 1830, p. 1, c. 1.

<sup>24</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, May 18, 1824, p. 2.

arguing that it was "generally allowed that there are *few* parts of America, if any, more healthy, more temperate, or better adapted for British constitutions, or possessing a finer soil, than the Canadas."<sup>25</sup> Mackenzie proclaimed that Upper Canada could be every bit as developed as the United States, and could easily rival its neighbour in agricultural production. Therefore, he was determined to "give due attention to the improved modes of farming in the United States" in future issues of the *Colonial Advocate*, in hopes that this would encourage Upper Canada to have its own agricultural associations and professorships, along with farming improvements "properly rewarded...and a practical, yet scientific race of Farmers."<sup>26</sup>

The Edenic myth of Upper Canada succinctly outlined by Mackenzie is defined by Robert Fraser as a belief that the province had unlimited potential in its agriculture. Just as God had saved Upper Canadians from republicanism, "Providence had bestowed upon them an Eden-like land of benign climate and rich soil." Fraser limits the extent of this belief to the tory elite of the province. It was, he argued, their especial ideology arising from their defence of Upper Canada from republican invasions.<sup>27</sup> However, in terms of the agriculture of Upper Canada, Mackenzie and other reformers who were versed in Baconian science expressed similar beliefs in the providential agricultural bounty bestowed on Upper Canada.

Both tory and reformer understood the province in terms of Baconian science. Suzanne Zeller argues that it was science that "tempted British North Americans with an organizing principle to marshal their common

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 9-10. The "Journal of Agriculture, Manufactures and Commerce" was a regular column, particularly until 1826.

<sup>27</sup>Fraser, "Like Eden in Her Summer Dress," 48-9.



assumptions about progress and development." It provided the colonists, she continues, "with not only the practical means to dominate their physical surroundings but also an ideological framework within which to comprehend the experience of doing so." It was this process, Zeller concludes, that informed this Edenic myth, for science "seemed to provide clues as to the unfolding of Canada's political history."<sup>28</sup> Such physical bounties pointed to an unlimited potential for the development of Upper Canada.

The difference between men such as William Lyon Mackenzie and Robert Stanton in the expression of these views was in the examples they looked to as models of how to attain this potential. Whereas many gentlemen looked to Britain for examples of how to exploit that potential, Mackenzie was awed by the progress of the State of New York that had resulted from the application of science to agriculture. As a result, Mackenzie soon came under attack from the tory elite of Upper Canada, for his first issue of the *Colonial Advocate* appeared in the midst of the ongoing alien debate in the House of Assembly.<sup>29</sup> Mackenzie entered the fray of the alien debate by objecting to the government's policy of discouraging American farmers from settling the province. In Mackenzie's opinion, the "race of farmers" that was crucial to the success of the province would come from the United States. These individuals were at the forefront of agricultural practice in the United States. Mackenzie concluded his lengthy address by boldly stating, "a very great proportion indeed of our most and useful and effectuel [sic] artizans and

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<sup>28</sup>Zeller, *Inventing Canada*, 6-7.

<sup>29</sup>After many acrimonious debates as to whether Americans could settle as citizens of Upper Canada, in 1824 the Court of the King's Bench of Britain had determined that American settlers in Upper Canada were aliens. Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 172-3.

agriculturalists are to be found among the emigrants from the country that gave birth to a Franklin, a Washington, a Hamilton and a Clinton."<sup>30</sup>

Again, New York State was used as an example of agricultural development for Upper Canada. It was that state's Governor, DeWitt Clinton, whom William Lyon Mackenzie and others admired. In leading his state, "Clinton the politician and Clinton the scientific amateur" had combined to give fresh life to agricultural reform and agricultural societies.<sup>31</sup> Looking across the border at New York State in 1824, Mackenzie saw its county agricultural societies connected to a state board fully funded by the legislature, with Governor Clinton himself at the forefront of the institution. Looking within his own province, he noted that he was at a loss to point out any initiative of Lieutenant Governor Peregrine Maitland which had resulted in the improvement of the province, and especially commented on the absence of any agricultural society of which Maitland was either patron, president, or benefactor.<sup>32</sup>

At the midway point of this decade, Mackenzie was not alone in criticizing Upper Canada's agriculture. Other newspaper editors, visitors to the province, and resident observers all commented that significant changes needed to be made to the practice of agriculture, for the province's potential was not being attained. The most critical account, written a few years earlier

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<sup>30</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, May 18, 1824, p. 13-16.

<sup>31</sup>By 1821, there were only eleven of New York's forty-six counties which had not organized societies. However, in 1824, these societies were at their zenith, for funding was cut for these societies in 1826 and without the state funds these societies quickly faded. Marti, "Early Agricultural Societies," 322-4; Marti, "Agrarian Thought," 131-41; Ulysses Prentice Hedrick, *A History of Agriculture in the State of New York* (1933; reprint, New York: Hill and Wang, 1966), 122.

<sup>32</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, May 18, 1824, p. 2-4.

by traveller John Howison, set the general tone of criticisms of Upper Canadian agricultural practices throughout the 1820s. In 1821, he attacked Upper Canadian farmers for having "no system in their agricultural operations," and described them as "untutored incorrigible beings" who were either the "ruffian element of a disbanded regiment, or the outlawed refuse of some European nation." Howison argued that the province had become home to those who had no place "in any civilized country." In his view, the "great barrier to improvement" was "an obstinate contentment and unmoveable fatuity, which would resist every attempt that was made to improve them." He concluded, as did others, that it was "lamentable to think, that the improved part of this beautiful and magnificent Province has fallen into such 'hangmen's hands'."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>John Howison, *Sketches of Upper Canada* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1821), 136-8. While Howison's opinion is an overstatement of the problem, he was joined by enough less dramatic observers to support, in part, his views. Most contemporary observers called for assistance to improve the farming practices of the province's farmers. John Goldie, a botanist, commenting on farmers' method of haying in 1819 argued that he "did not think that a more effectual method could be adopted to rot the hay completely." From the eastern end of the province, Kingston newspaperman John Macaulay expressed his opinion in 1822 that, "too much capital and labour ha[d] been employed in the first settled townships in the clearing of land, and by far too little in the cultivation and improvement of the cleared land." He commented that it was "not unusual to see farms from eighty to a hundred and fifty acres, where one fourth, if not one third, of the land [was] lying waste, exhausted by a continued succession of crops without manure, and which, of course, after the expense of clearing, ceases to yield any profit to the proprietor." The Reverend William Bell of Perth argued in 1824 that the province's agriculture was "still in a very backward state, even in the old settlements." In that same year, Edward Allen Talbot concurred with Macaulay's view stating, that he had "never observed a single acre of land...that was so cultivated as to produce more than two-thirds of the grain, which, under more judicious management, it would certainly have been found to yield." Charles Fothergill, the King's Printer, noted that in the Newcastle District, "many examples [were] found wherein wheat ha[d] been raised on the same ground for 16 or 18 years successively without the application of manure." John Goldie, *Diary of a Journey through Upper Canada and some of the New England States - 1819* (Toronto: Wm. Tyrell & Co., 1897), 21; *Kingston Chronicle*, May 24, 1822, p. 3, c. 1. See Macaulay's earlier statement of this problem in *Ibid.*, September 19, 1819, p. 2, c. 3. Rev. William Bell, *Hints to Emigrants; in a Series of Letters from Upper Canada* (Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1824), 161-2; Edward Allen Talbot, *Five Years Residence in the Canadas*, vol. 1 (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1824), 157-8; Charles Fothergill, *The York Almanac and Royal Calendar of Upper Canada for the Year 1825 Being the First after Bissextile or Leap Year* (York, U. C.: Charles Fothergill, 1824), 53-4.

A decade later, according to William Cattermole's account of the province's agriculture, little had changed in Upper Canadian farming practices. In his opinion, the agriculture of the province was "yet in its infancy." He lamented that Kingston and York were still being "regularly supplied with cattle, and with vegetables from the United States." This was a "circumstance arising from negligence on the Canadian farmers' part." However, Cattermole believed that Upper Canada's "facilities" for exporting wheat and raising cattle "were immense," and many of the problems he witnessed could be prevented by "a little energy" on the part of Upper Canada's farmers.<sup>34</sup>

In spite of these calls for farmers of the province to improve their agricultural practices, until recently, historians have concluded that a nascent provincial agricultural policy was focused on the exportation of wheat. Robert Fraser argues that between 1818 and 1825 six Family Compact members, who characterized themselves as agrarian gentry, established a provincial economic development plan in response to the postwar economic depression. In light of these gentlemen's providential belief in Upper Canada, he contends, they were instrumental in encouraging the provincial government to embark on a massive canal building project which would assist Upper Canadian agricultural produce to reach imperial markets and thus drive the provincial economy.<sup>35</sup>

Fraser determines that it was the recommendations of an 1821 committee of the House of Assembly on the internal resources of the

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<sup>34</sup>William Cattermole, *Emigration: The Advantages of Emigration to Canada* (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1831), 65, 53.

<sup>35</sup>These six men were John Beverley Robinson, John Macaulay, John Strachan, Christopher Hagerman, George Markland and Jonas Jones. Fraser, "Like Eden in Her Summer Dress," 1-12.

province that affirmed "the primacy of wheat" in the Upper Canadian economy. As a result, an economic development strategy was created which "was essentially limited to providing or facilitating cheap and easy transport to markets....The emphasis was on agricultural staples and canals carrying the products of the soil to imperial markets."<sup>36</sup> Thus, Fraser concludes that the manner in which the gentry asserted their leadership of the Upper Canadian economy through to 1840 was the construction of canals to assist in marketing the provincial agricultural production.<sup>37</sup>

Admittedly, Fraser bases his study's economic assumptions on the staples thesis.<sup>38</sup> Since the completion of his study in the 1970s, the interpretation of wheat as a staple commodity in the Upper Canadian economy has been brought into question.<sup>39</sup> Exports were just one part of the agricultural economy, and as Douglas McCalla suggests in his study of the province's economy, "focusing on the staples thesis alone yields an oversimplified and fundamentally inaccurate view of the processes of economic development in Upper Canada."<sup>40</sup> He suggests that key factors in

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<sup>36</sup>Fraser makes this argument despite his belief that the committee, "[u]nable to find satisfactory statistical information which might provide a sound basis for a critical examination of the economy...fell back on impressions for the want of anything better." *Ibid.*, 108-116.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 149-99.

<sup>38</sup>Fraser's study was heavily influenced by Donald Creighton's *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence*. *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>39</sup>R. Marvin McNis questions whether wheat was as central and dominant to the provincial economy and if it actually fulfilled the role of a staple. He concludes that it was not a staple, arguing that the wheat economy must be understood in conjunction with other important farm commodities such as animal husbandry. R. Marvin McNis, "Perspectives on Ontario Agriculture 1815-1930," in *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, vol. 8, ed. Donald H. Akenson (Gananoque: Langdale Press, 1992), 17-127

<sup>40</sup>McCalla, *Planting the Province*, 5.

the Upper Canadian economy were the development of the family farm, the local community and markets for the produce of their farms.<sup>41</sup>

McCalla's arguments lead not only to a questioning of the dominance of wheat in the Upper Canadian economy, but also indicate that Fraser's focus on six Family Compact members as the most influential in the development the agricultural economy is inaccurate. For example, W. H. Smith, writing in the mid-1840s, suggested three reasons for the general improvement of Upper Canadian agriculture. First, he considered the "emigration into the country of scientific agriculturists, with the establishment of agricultural societies, [to] have been mainly instrumental in producing this great change." Second, livestock "of a different and better description" than that which had been previously raised in the province had been imported. And third, he argued that "much land that was previously considered by the old proprietors worn out, has been improved and brought back, by means of judicious treatment, to its old capabilities."<sup>42</sup>

While Fraser is correct in the gentry's leadership of canal building, he overlooks Upper Canada's agricultural societies as a part of the government's agricultural leadership. In doing so, Fraser neglects the contributions of a reform-dominated House of Assembly to the province's agricultural development during the last few years of the 1820s. Also well versed in the Enlightened ideology of progress, reformers viewed improvements to the farming practices in the province as being of equal importance. Such

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 69. McCalla determines that farm output consisted of three elements; first the production for household consumption, second the production for local markets, and third, production of wheat for the local and export markets. He argues that "income from the market was divided equally between wheat and all other income sources." Ibid., 89.

<sup>42</sup>Smith, *Smith's Canadian Gazetteer*, 246-7.

knowledge was affirmed by a series of resolutions in the House of Assembly in the parliamentary sessions of 1829 and 1830.

Upper Canada's tenth parliament began a new era for Upper Canada, as it was composed of the first majority of individuals who were in opposition to the provincial executive. Most historians view this parliament as the beginning of a deepening and bitter political feud between tory and reform factions. Aileen Dunham argued in her 1926 study of political unrest in Upper Canada that despite the reformers' domination of the tories in the House of Assembly by a thirty-five to fifteen margin, they "proved that a reform assembly could accomplish less in the way of constructive legislation than a tory assembly."<sup>43</sup> The House of Assembly spent much of its time debating fifty-three bills which were rejected by the Legislative Council. Subsequent historians such as G. M. Craig have argued that between 1828 and 1830 the reformers "were able to harass and complain, but unable to produce a positive result against a powerful executive...Their best efforts were rejected or simply ignored by the upper chamber." But the passage of the agricultural societies legislation contradicts this view, for it had full support of both houses of parliament.<sup>44</sup>

On January 13, 1829, Thomas Dalton, a Kingston reformer and former Secretary of the Frontenac Agricultural Society,<sup>45</sup> introduced a series of resolutions on commerce and agriculture to the House of Assembly. The first four outlined the Enlightened ideology of an agrarian society, and the role

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<sup>43</sup>Dunham, *Political Unrest in Upper Canada, 1815-1836*, 118, 136-7.

<sup>44</sup>Craig, *Upper Canada*, 195-6. Also see Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 187-8; Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 72; Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 137-8.

<sup>45</sup>Ian R. Dalton, "Thomas Dalton," *DCB*, 7, 228-31. Dalton served as Secretary in 1821, the Frontenac Society's inaugural year. See Appendix 7.

government was required to perform in the leadership of the provincial agricultural economy. These resolutions announced that:

it is a solemn duty of this house, to promote, and to guard with jealous watchfulness, the commercial and agricultural interests of this Province...[I]t is the decided opinion of this house that our commerce and our agriculture are so sympathetically allied, and so mutually dependent on each other, that they are both benefited or deteriorated from the self same causes, and consequently must languish or flourish in union.

The subsequent two resolutions demonstrated the legislature's belief that it was the combined success of the province's agriculture and commerce which made possible the province's prosperity. The first reaffirmed the Edenic myth, stating, "the nature of our soil and climate stamps the country fundamentally agricultural, and that its Geographical position, advantage of its vast inland navigable waters stamp it as fundamentally commercial." Next, the legislature determined that "the comfort and happiness, the strength or weakness, and the ignorance or illumination of its population, must altogether depend, on the assiduity or supineness with which are pursued, the two attractive objects, agriculture and commerce, the foundation and superstructure the prosperity, power, and greatness of nations."<sup>46</sup>

As a whole, these resolutions demonstrated a fundamental shift in some members' perception of the role of the Upper Canadian government. While these resolutions did not survive debate to receive a vote, they were published by at least two newspapers of the province, and demonstrate that government members were determined to "guard" and ensure that the

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<sup>46</sup>House of Assembly, *Journals*, January 9, 13, 28, 1829, 5, 8, 25. The resolutions were published in *Kingston Chronicle*, January 31, 1829, p. 2, c. 1; *Colonial Advocate*, January 2, 1829, p. 2, c. 2-3. At Dalton's request, these resolutions were considered by a committee of the whole on January 28. Progress was reported, and the committee determined to sit again the following week. However, there is no report of the legislature having done so. *Ibid.*, January 28, 1829, 25.



commercial and agricultural interests of the colony became a public and provincial concern, not just a pastime of an agrarian gentry. The resolutions were both the expression of a provincial consciousness and the foundation of a nascent provincial agricultural policy. They also illustrate the ideology behind the movement to establish government-funded agricultural societies.

During the first session of this parliament, William Lyon Mackenzie took the lead in establishing several parliamentary committees concerning the province's agriculture. Following his motion, the House of Assembly created a Standing Committee on Agriculture<sup>47</sup> that later was requested to "take into consideration the establishing of agricultural societies, in this Province, and submit a plan for carrying the same into effect."<sup>48</sup> There is no evidence that this committee submitted a report.

Another three member committee was formed to consider a petition from residents of Stormont County who complained that among other economic problems, all previous attempts at establishing agricultural societies in the province had "proved altogether abortive." The 173 signatories of Stormont requested that parliament support the creation of a "Provincial Agricultural Society," for British agricultural societies had "made England little less than a well cultivated garden." Furthermore, the petitioners stated that agricultural societies in the United States enabled "American neighbors to undersell [Upper Canadian] markets; to supply our American Colonies with those very articles we should furnish ourselves." Again, there was no report from this committee; however, it did consider the matter significant

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<sup>47</sup>House of Assembly, *Journals*, January 14, 19, 1829, 11, 14; *Colonial Advocate*, January 22, 1829, p. 2, c. 5; *Kingston Chronicle*, January 31, 1829, p. 2, c. 4.

<sup>48</sup>House of Assembly, *Journals*, January 28, 1829, 25.

enough to have the petition published.<sup>49</sup> By the end of this session, Dalton's resolutions, the Standing Committee on Agriculture, and the committee dealing with the petition had not produced any concrete results. Nevertheless, these discussions laid the groundwork for the legislation that publicly fund Upper Canadian agricultural societies.<sup>50</sup>

Both tories and reformers drew upon British and American examples of government funding to agricultural societies, but in 1829-30, most of the examples to which the Upper Canada legislators referred had ceased to exist. In Britain, the Imperial government had terminated funding to the Board of Agriculture in 1822. In Nova Scotia, government grants funding a central board of agriculture had been canceled in 1825. In that same year, the New York State legislature also had allowed its government grants to expire.<sup>51</sup> Only Upper Canada's neighbouring province continued its financial support of agricultural improvements. In 1828, the Lower Canadian legislature appropriated government funds to be distributed to district agricultural societies in accordance with their population.<sup>52</sup> But the agricultural societies' legislation enacted by the Upper Canadian parliament was an amalgam of several examples both current and previous. Most importantly, it was

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<sup>49</sup>This petition also requested that livestock imported for breeding purposes be allowed into the province free of duty. See *Ibid.*, March 4, 19, 1829, 48, 71. The "Petition of S. Cutler and 172 others, Freeholders of the County of Stormont" is found in Appendix 51 of this same journal.

<sup>50</sup>This session did pass legislation dedicated to improving the provincial infrastructure. It enacted legislation allowing the construction of a harbour at Cobourg, further support for the Welland Canal, surveying, road, lighthouse and bridge construction. See 10 Geo. 4, c. 9, 11, 13-16, 20, 21 (1829).

<sup>51</sup>Mitchison, "The Old Board of Agriculture," 64-5; Martell, "The Achievements of Agricola." 15; Hedrick, *History of Agriculture in the State of New York*, 122.

<sup>52</sup>Lower Canada, 9 Geo. IV, c. 48 (1828). A central board of agriculture had been established in New Brunswick in 1826; however, it is unclear as to what funding the government offered, or as to how long this board remained in existence. See White, "Speed the Plough," 21.

founded upon the Enlightened ideology of government aid to agricultural improvements that both tory and reform could appreciate.<sup>53</sup>

Early in the parliamentary session of 1830 Charles Fothergill, the House of Assembly representative for the Durham riding, gave notice that he intended to introduce a bill "in aid of the Agricultural Interests" of Upper Canada and "to relieve our Farmers from the difficulties arising from the scarcity of money."<sup>54</sup> In introducing this legislation, Fothergill appears to have been the linchpin in gaining support for the agricultural society issue from across the political spectrum. Generally, as his biographer Paul Romney suggests, Fothergill's "conservative reform" views, "and his image of gentility and respectability [were] useful to the emergent reform movement at a time when many people still equated 'party' activity with disloyalty."<sup>55</sup>

Before his departure from Britain to Upper Canada, Charles Fothergill had been a gentleman of the Enlightenment. A "savant with a sense of duty," Fothergill had been a naturalist, race horse breeder and farmer. Upon his arrival in Upper Canada, he had settled near Cobourg in 1817, but by 1822 he had moved to York to take up his appointment as the King's Printer. In addition, from 1825 to 1831, Fothergill was the House of Assembly representative for Durham County. His initial election campaign had been fought on the motto "AGRICULTURE and INTERNAL IMPROVEMENT, without the aid of those who EAT more than they EARN." However, his opposition to the government had lost him his position as King's Printer in early 1826. As an assemblyman, Fothergill became recognized as the leading member of the

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<sup>53</sup>For a discussion of the role of government in promoting agricultural improvement, see Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks*, 186 and more generally Chapter 5, 185-236.

<sup>54</sup>House of Assembly, *Journal*, January 9, 1830, 2.

<sup>55</sup>Paul Romney, "Charles Fothergill," *DCB*, 7, 316-20.

opposition representatives in the legislature, and Paul Romney describes the agricultural society bill as both Fothergill's "chief legislative legacy" and his "swan-song."<sup>56</sup>

From a procedural point of view, it is unclear why Charles Fothergill took the initiative on this matter, as he was not a member of any commercial or agricultural committee during the previous session of parliament. However, it does appear that his introduction of the bill early in the second session was influenced by discussions of the previous session. On January 12th, 1830, the House of Assembly went into a committee of the whole to consider "the best means to promote the institution and prosperity of Agricultural Societies, in this Province." Once again, it was Fothergill who initiated debate by introducing a series of resolutions concerning agricultural societies.<sup>57</sup>

In his introductory comments, he outlined the basic tenets of English Enlightenment thought. As improved agriculture was at the heart of a well-ordered agrarian society he explained, the "importance of a successful and well directed system of agriculture must be obvious to all, because it lays a foundation, a superstructure for all future wealth, prosperity and grandeur. It

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<sup>56</sup>Romney also argues that agricultural societies "did little or nothing to foster the technical innovations that their promoter had preached." Thus, he concludes that agricultural societies "stood as so many monuments to his inability to understand the rank-and-file farmers he lived among in Durham County and claimed to represent." Romney, "A Man Out of Place: The Life of Charles Fothergill; Naturalist, Businessman, Journalist, Politician, 1782 - 1840" (Ph. D. diss., University of Toronto, 1981), 516-17. For further details on this enigmatic politician see James L. Baillie, Jr., "Charles Fothergill 1782 - 1840," *Canadian Historical Review* 25 (1944): 376-96; Romney, "Charles Fothergill," *DCB*, 7, 316-20; Romney, "A Conservative Reformer in Upper Canada: Charles Fothergill, Responsible Government and the 'British Party,' 1824-1840," *Historical Papers* 1984, 42-61.

<sup>57</sup>These resolutions may have been authored by the Select Committee on Agriculture from the previous session. However, this matter remains unclear, as the resolutions were not published. House of Assembly, *Journals*, January 12, 1830, 9; *Colonial Advocate*, January 21, 1830, p. 2 c. 1.

is the foundation of society." In his opinion, agricultural societies were "attended with very beneficial effects—they bring together people from different parts; and the various means for promoting the grand objects of the whole, are made known to all, so that great good results to the community." However, he continued, "in many parts of the country the people are poor, and find themselves unable to carry into effect the object of their wishes. To enable them to do this, not only in those poor districts, but to excite the people to the subject throughout the Province, is the object of these resolutions." He hoped that his resolutions would result in encouragement to the farmers "by giving each district a certain sum" of government funds.<sup>58</sup>

Once debate on the bill began, Charles Fothergill was the first to speak to the committee. In his experience, "he had seen very great and beneficial results from such institutions in England and he was satisfied like benefits might be realized from the same means in this country." Fothergill stated his pleasure that there was no objection to the bill among those he had consulted, only debate as to the amount of money to be granted. For example, James Wilson, a reformer from Prince Edward County,<sup>59</sup> "had not any doubt of the propriety of any measure that would call up the country from the slumber into which it had fallen...the outlay [would] pay the government well...grant this money to the agricultural societies and it will change the face of the country directly."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> For the reported minutes of this debate, see the *Colonial Advocate*, January 21, 1830, p. 2 c. 1-3.

<sup>59</sup> Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 237.

<sup>60</sup> *Colonial Advocate*, January 21, 1830, p. 2, c. 1.

But William Warren Baldwin, the elderly reformer representing Norfolk,<sup>61</sup> echoed the words written 20 years earlier by Richard Cartwright. In Baldwin's opinion, "the lands were not sufficiently cultivated to require the aid of these societies; nor did he think as much benefit would result from them here, at the present day, as in those old countries which were under a high state of cultivation." He believed that this expenditure of government funds, "instead of benefiting the farmers...[would embarrass them], and thereby be injurious to the country."<sup>62</sup>

During the debate, members expressed differing views on the administration of the proposed agricultural societies. Peter Perry, a reformer representing the Lennox and Addington riding,<sup>63</sup> believed that there should be "some general principles" established to govern each society. In contrast, James Wilson, while "pleased with the principles" outlined by other members for a central society, "thought it best to begin with no consistent principles, and then the societies could go in with greater assurance." Charles Fothergill "apprehended it would be impossible to establish any general rule for the regulation of all the societies," and James Lyons, another reformer from Northumberland County and a Director of its agricultural society,<sup>64</sup> "remarked that the prosperity of all societies and institutions depended on their being established on liberal principles." If the agricultural societies were to be successful, he argued, "they must be untrammelled."

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<sup>61</sup>Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 172.

<sup>62</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, January 21, 1830, p. 2, c. 1.

<sup>63</sup>Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 219.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 204, *Colonial Advocate*, June 3, 1830, p. 1, c. 1.

William Lyon Mackenzie rose to speak in favour of a sum given to each district in accordance with its population. "Lower Canada had adopted this method, and it had proved very beneficial," he argued. However, by the end of the debate, Mackenzie told the committee that he had been persuaded that distribution by population "was a mistake," as it would deny money to the back regions of the districts most in need of assistance. Ironically, Mackenzie then declared that he "was well pleased with the plan of having a central society with branches, after the manner of Dr. Strachan in the boards of Education." This was a rather odd admission, for the central board he supported was that very structure of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society which he had criticized. Not surprisingly, Mackenzie, while using Strachan's boards of education as an example, quickly added that he did not like "that gentleman's principles."<sup>65</sup>

In the end, concern over administration was solved through the debate over funding. Fothergill had moved that the committee establish £100 as the amount to be offered to each district on "certain conditions," but he was not impressed with the idea of a central board or establishing "any general rule for the regulation of all societies." Instead, he proposed that the money be placed with Lieutenant-Governor John Colborne, "whom he knew to be a warm friend to agriculture."<sup>66</sup> All applicants for this money would have to submit a request to the Lieutenant Governor "with satisfactory evidence that

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<sup>65</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, January 21, 1830, p. 2, c. 2-3. For Mackenzie's criticism of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society see *Colonial Advocate*, April 1, 1830, p. 3, c. 1-3.

<sup>66</sup>Lieutenant Governor Sir John Colborne arrived to Upper Canada in 1828 from Guernsey where he had served for seven years in the same capacity. In Guernsey, he had introduced many infrastructure reforms and had been associated with agricultural societies on that island. Marion L. Phelps, "John Colborne, 1st Baron Seaton," *DCB*, 9, 137-45.

[they] were entitled to receive it."<sup>67</sup> In other words, the government itself was to become the central board of agriculture for Upper Canada.

When the House resumed, this committee of the whole reported several resolutions in support of government funding to agricultural societies:

Resolved, That as a prosperous agriculture is the broadest and firmest base of national strength and wealth, it is highly expedient to promote the welfare of all such institutions as may tend to the accomplishment of that desired object.

Resolved, That the experience of England and other enlightened communities, having shewn that the institution of Agricultural Societies in different sections of the country has greatly promoted the success of the farmer, it is wise and politic in this Legislature to give all the encouragement in its power to such Agricultural Societies as are, or may be, founded on a liberal footing within this Province.<sup>68</sup>

These resolutions, expressing the same ideology as Dalton's unsuccessful resolutions of 1829 were adopted by the House. Subsequently, the committee drafted a bill offering funds to any society established in a district for the purposes of introducing to the province "valuable livestock, grain, grass seeds, useful implements, &c. &c. &c."<sup>69</sup> Such institutions would be able to request £100 annually from the Lieutenant Governor for the next four years. However, a district agricultural society had to have private subscriptions amounting to £50 in the hands of its treasurer before it could petition for

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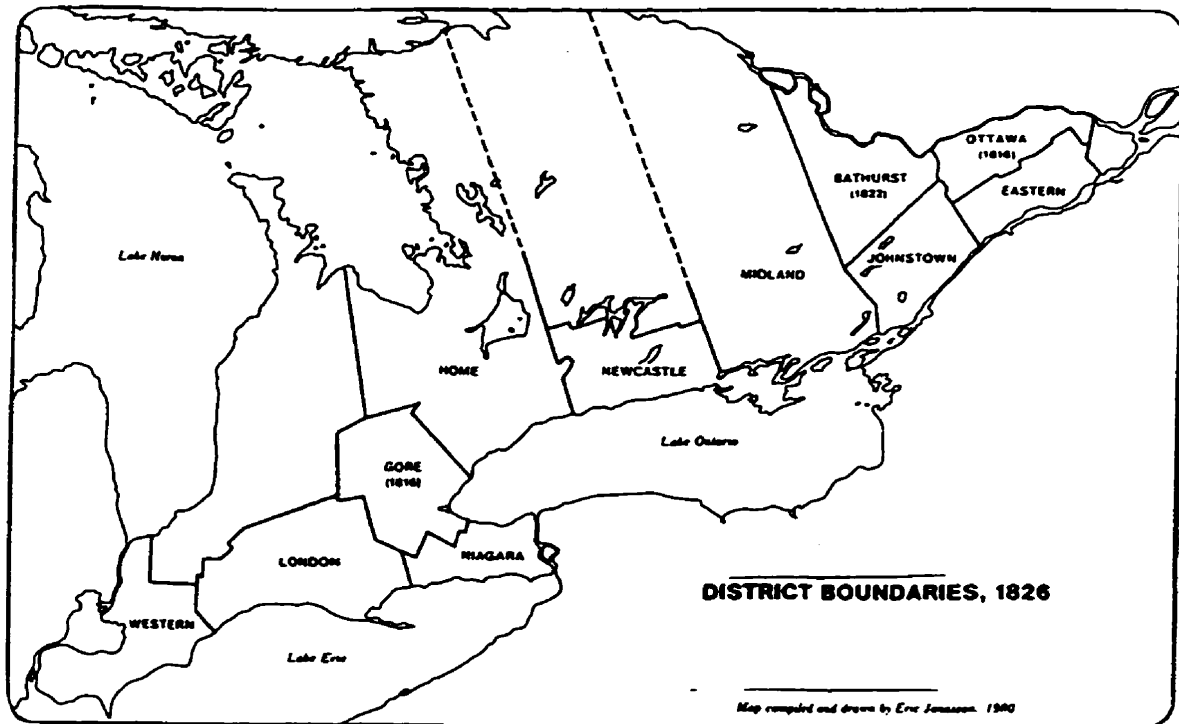
<sup>67</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, January 21, 1830, p. 2, c. 3

<sup>68</sup>A select committee of Charles Fothergill, James Lyons and Thomas Dalton was appointed to draft a bill based on these resolutions. House of Assembly, *Journals*, January 12, 1830, 9.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, January 12, 1830, 9. The bill was reported to the House on February 17, 1830 and passed on February 24th. *Ibid.*, February 17, 1830, 57; February 24, 1830, 67.



these public funds. The bill also specified that in such districts where agricultural societies had already formed at the county level, the government funds were to be divided equally among the district and county societies.<sup>70</sup>



Map 3: Upper Canada, District Boundaries, 1826. Hillman, *A Statutory Chronology of Ontario*, 334.

Demonstrating the unanimous opinion on this subject between the reform-dominated House of Assembly and the conservative Legislative Council, the lower House was informed on March 3, 1830 that the members of the upper chamber had passed the bill without amendment, and three days later, Royal Assent was given to "An Act to encourage the Establishment of Agricultural Societies in the several Districts of this Province."<sup>71</sup> This new

<sup>70</sup>This was directed at the Northumberland County Agricultural Society, which provides a rare example of an Upper Canadian agricultural society which was founded prior to the passage of the act and was able to take advantage of the government funding. See note 26.

plan for agricultural societies set aside the dream of a united province-wide body of gentry leading the development of the colony's agriculture. Instead, it fostered independent district societies united only by their application for government assistance.

For the next sixteen years, agricultural societies in Upper Canada would be able to use government funds to develop independently of their counterparts in neighbouring districts. Future legislation during this period increased funding to these societies and required them to become more accountable for the public funds that they used. In addition, the act contained assurances that proper leadership would be established for each district society. As the funds were placed directly in the hands of the Lieutenant Governor, only properly organized district agricultural societies would be able to petition for and receive funds.

Three years later, as this initial act offering financial support to the district agricultural societies neared the end of its four year existence, both the Home and the Niagara District Agricultural Societies gave notice of their intention to petition the government for its continuance.<sup>72</sup> Within the House of Assembly, Sir Allan Napier McNab, the conservative member from Wentworth, made an attempt to have a bill supporting its continuance passed during the session of December 1833.<sup>73</sup> However, McNab's bill only

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<sup>71</sup>House of Assembly, *Journals*, March 3, 1830, 76; Legislative Council, *Journals*, February 25, 26, 27, March 3, 1830, 92, 94, 97, 106; *Statutes of Upper Canada*, 1830, 11 Geo. IV, c.10.

<sup>72</sup>There exist notices of intention to petition published by the Home District Agricultural Society, but there is no mention of such a petition in the published journals of the House of Assembly. For the Home District Agricultural Society's petition see: *Upper Canada Gazette*, June 6, 1833, p. 8, c. 2; *Patriot*, June 28, 1833, p. 3, c. 2; December 6, 1833, p. 3, c. 6; *Canadian Freeman*, September 5, 1833, p. 4, c. 5.

For the petition see: *Upper Canada Gazette*, August 22, 1833, p. 5, c. 2; *Patriot*, December 10, 1833, p. 2, c. 4; December 13, p. 2, c. 1; House of Assembly, *Journal*, December 4, 1833, 26; December 6, 1833, 32.

survived an initial debate, after which there was no mention of the House of Assembly's intent to discuss the matter further.<sup>74</sup> During this same session, the agricultural bill of 1830 also received attention from a select committee appointed to determine what bills were about to expire. However, the renewal of this act was not included among the committee's recommendations.<sup>75</sup> Thus, the act was not renewed after its expiration in 1834 and the provincial agricultural societies were once again private associations. It is unclear why the 1833 initiative introduced by a conservative member failed. In general, this session was dominated by the attention paid to Mackenzie's radicalism and his grievances leveled at the government.

During the first session of the new reform-dominated parliament in January 1835,<sup>76</sup> the House established a committee to report on expired and expiring laws.<sup>77</sup> Unlike its predecessor, this committee reported two resolutions concerning the agricultural societies bill. The first suggested that £1200 be allocated to support the agricultural societies of the province and dispensed according to the original terms of the 1830 act.<sup>78</sup> In order to ensure

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<sup>73</sup>House of Assembly, *Journal*, November 19, 1833, 9; *Patriot*, November 22, 1833, p. 2, c.3; December 10, 1833, p. 2, c.4.

<sup>74</sup>House of Assembly, *Journal*, December 12, 1833, 41.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, November 26, 1833, January 9, 1834, 15, 71. Although Allan Napier McNab, a conservative, introduced this bill, the fact that it progressed no further than a second reading may have had to do with its introduction a few days prior to William Lyon Mackenzie's final expulsion from the House of Assembly. See Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 136-149; Craig, *Upper Canada*, 188-225.

<sup>76</sup>J. K. Johnson calculated the reform majority to have been 37-29. Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 138.

<sup>77</sup>"Report of the Select Committee, Appointed to examine and Report, what laws have expired and are about to expire," April 6, 1835. House of Assembly, *Appendix to the Journal of the House of Assembly of Upper Canada*, vol. 2, no. 104, 18.

<sup>78</sup>Presumably the £1200 was recommended to apportion £100 to each of the 12 districts of the province. For these districts see Armstrong, *Handbook of Upper Canadian Chronology*, 139.

the funds were being properly employed, the committee also recommended that the district societies would have to account for all funds previously granted. In future, each district agricultural society would be required to be more publicly accountable, having to submit an annual account of previous expenditures upon application for the government grant.<sup>79</sup> The subsequent bill to revive funding for agricultural societies passed through both houses of parliament<sup>80</sup> with a condition that it only continue for one year from the date of its passage.<sup>81</sup>

Upon this law's expiration during the 1836 session, the legislature again considered the matter of financial assistance to the province's agriculture and how aiding this sector of the provincial economy would assist the encouragement of domestic manufacturing and trade. Initiated and led by the reformer Charles Duncombe, a ten member select committee dominated by reformers and farmers from across the province was established to consider "Agriculture and the improvement of the breeds of animals and seeds of grains, and upon trade and manufactures."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>House of Assembly, *Journals*, April 7, 1835, 342.

<sup>80</sup>Previous to the report of the select committee on expiring laws, Charles Duncombe had given notice that he intended to introduce a bill to continue the agricultural society act. House of Assembly, *Journals*, February 18, 1835, 152. The bill, once introduced on April 8, was given the second reading the following day, amended, read a third time and passed on the same day. On April 13, it was passed by the Legislative Council, and received Royal Assent on April 16. House of Assembly, *Journal*, April 8, 9, 14, 1835, 351-2, 381.

<sup>81</sup>*Statutes of Upper Canada*, 1835, 5 Wm. 4, c. 11.

<sup>82</sup>Only one member of the committee, John MacIntosh, was not a farmer. Although he was a sailor and ship owner, he represented the Fourth Riding of York, one of the most prosperous agricultural areas in the province. For the list of members see: House of Assembly, *Journals*, January 22, 1836, 51. The occupations and political leanings of each of these members is taken from J. K. Johnson's biographies in *Becoming Prominent*, Appendix, 169-238. The fact that reformers took the lead on this issue does not suggest that this or any other subject was supported by a well defined and organized political party, for none existed. Reform support for agricultural societies confirms J. K. Johnson's argument that the reformers "occupationally

The report which Duncombe's committee issued was well received by the House of Assembly and deemed important enough to print in the proceedings of the legislature.<sup>83</sup> In the preamble to its recommendations, this committee, like Thomas Dalton's resolutions of 1829, justified why agriculture should be further encouraged by the legislature. It recalled that agriculture was "the only true and solid basis on which the permanent prosperity and wealth of most nations must rest." Furthermore, they noted, "the subject of agriculture has in all enlightened ages and countries claimed the attention of men of the highest stations and most distinguished talents in society." However, the committee pointed out that the success and "permanent advancement" of the province could only occur in proportion to the extent to which agriculture was "properly adapted to the soil...and fostered by a liberal and enlightened government."

Therefore, this latest parliamentary committee reaffirmed the agrarian nature of Upper Canadian society. It argued that in a colony "where manufactures and the mechanical arts" were not, and would not "probably for some time to come, add much to the general wealth, the encouragement of agriculture in its various branches should claim the particular attention of the Legislature." In doing so, this committee also reaffirmed the commitment made by the parliament in 1829 to guard Upper Canada's agricultural interests. Specifically, it believed the government's role should be one of securing the easiest and cheapest conveyances to the best markets for agricultural produce and assist in the improvement of livestock, seeds and machinery of the province. It was also the government's duty to "diffus[e] a  

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reflected...a traditional rural past [and] of course their own heavily rural constituencies from which they drew most of their support." Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 143.

<sup>83</sup>House of Assembly, *Journals*, March 23, 1836, 331.

knowledge of the best manner of conducting agricultural operations so that the greatest quantity and best quality may be produced by the least labour and expense."<sup>84</sup> Thus, the committee viewed the construction of canals as only one part of a broader agricultural policy of internal improvement.

Having outlined the necessities for the legislature to be involved in the encouragement of agricultural development, the committee made several recommendations with the intention of accomplishing "the *permanent* prosperity of agriculture" in Upper Canada.<sup>85</sup> But as the committee turned again to agricultural societies as the engine of this reform, it seems that while they were following the ideology of the English Enlightenment they were also drawing upon the example of New York State. The resolutions of this committee of reformers expounded the same ideology championed earlier by gentlemen such as Sir Joseph Banks and Sir John Graves Simcoe as to the role government needed to play in guiding the agricultural reform necessary to achieve progress. However, in 1836, those calling for government support had two examples to follow, neither of which were from Britain. The Lower Canadian government had passed new legislation funding agricultural societies at the county level in 1834. Here, a maximum of £80 was to be distributed each year until 1840 to each county on the basis of double the amount of subscriptions raised by an agricultural society.<sup>86</sup>

New York State provided an equal or greater impetus for the Upper Canadian agricultural committee. In its report, the committee emphasized that any funds given to agricultural societies would be expended specifically

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>House of Assembly, *Journals*, March 23, 1836, 331.

<sup>86</sup>Lower Canada, 1834, 4 Wm. IV, c. 7. It is unclear if this funding did indeed last for the seven year period promised in the act.

on the procurement of "the best and most approved seeds of grain, and grass and breeds of livestock," as well as to circulate "some practical works or treatises" on agriculture among the township agricultural society members. In stating this, the committee demonstrated its familiarity with New York State's agriculture by suggesting that the Upper Canadian grant be used, in part, to purchase subscriptions to the *Genesee Farmer and gardener's journal* which had been established in Rochester, New York by Luther Tucker in 1831.<sup>87</sup> In the absence of any domestic agricultural periodical, the committee was most likely recommending a periodical which already had some circulation throughout Upper Canada.<sup>88</sup>

By recommending the *Genesee Farmer* in its report, the committee on agriculture also implicitly adopted the arguments put forth by the American newspaper editors in support of funding for agricultural societies by the New York State government. Both Jesse Buel and Luther Tucker were strong supporters of agricultural societies and exhibitions, and throughout the 1830s *The Cultivator* was the official organ of the New York State Agricultural

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<sup>87</sup>House of Assembly, *Journal*, March 23, 1836, 331. They also recommended circulation of William Evans, *A Treatise on the theory and practice of agriculture* (Montreal: Fabre, Perrault and Co., 1835). Until the 1840s, there was no Upper Canadian agricultural journal in publication. See Chapter 7.

<sup>88</sup>For example, upon publication of the first issue of the *Genesee Farmer* in 1831, the Niagara District Agricultural Society had ordered four copies "for the benefit of the members of that Society." In printing this notice in his *Christian Guardian*, Egerton Ryerson commented that he believed the *Genesee Farmer* would "pay triple the price of the subscription to any farmer that can afford to take it." *Christian Guardian*, August 13, 1831, p. 158, c. 5.

The following year, the Midland District Agricultural Society ordered the binding of the issues of *New England Farmer* which it possessed. The *New England Farmer* had been in publication at Boston, Massachusetts since 1822. *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, February 4, 1832, p. 2, c. 5.

In 1835, the Midland District Agricultural Society had also ordered 12 copies of *The Cultivator* published by Jesse Buel at Albany "in order to give the members of the Society information on the American system of Farming." *The Cultivator* had begun publication at Albany, New York in 1834. *British Whig*, May 19, 1835, p. 2, c. 3.

Society, and as Donald B. Marti argues "behaved as a lobby, almost as a political faction."<sup>89</sup> For the Upper Canadian legislators, the American journals not only contained practical agricultural advice, they also reaffirmed the need of government support of agriculture.

In looking at these examples, the House of Assembly committee on agriculture stated the need to alter the basis on which the Upper Canadian government funded its agricultural societies. It was the committee's opinion that the "benefits anticipated" from the legislative grants to the district agricultural societies had "not been realized, nor produced that good which might reasonably have been expected to result from such liberal appropriations." It discovered that the money given to the district had been given primarily in premiums at fairs to those within the closest proximity to the competition. Those at the outer edges of the districts were not receiving the benefits in equal proportions. Thus, the committee recommended that the grant money be distributed among the townships rather than the districts of the province. Funds would be granted on the basis of population and the amount each township society raised in subscriptions.<sup>90</sup> Such changes were sensible, for Upper Canada had changed significantly in the six years since the original legislation had been passed. In 1830 the province had had a population of 213 156. Six years later, as a result of wide-scale immigration, the population had swelled by more than another 160 000. This had pushed the settlement of the province back further from the lakeshores, increasing the number of districts, counties and townships.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Concerning the newspapers of Buel and Tucker see Hedrick, *History of Agriculture in the State of New York*, 120-21, 318-22. Concerning New York State agricultural societies in the 1830s see Marti, "Early Agricultural Societies in New York: The Foundations of Improvement," *New York History* 48 (1967), 324-8.

<sup>90</sup>House of Assembly, *Journal*, March 23, 1836, 331.



After being tabled, the report was the debated by the House, resulting in the adoption of a resolution that a sum of money be granted "in aid of township agricultural societies, not to exceed in any instance, the sum of twelve pounds ten shillings to any one township."<sup>92</sup> Accordingly, the House drafted a bill, and after several amendments, it was sent up to the Legislative Council for approval.<sup>93</sup> But in this chamber, the agricultural societies' bill underwent several fundamental changes. In effect, the Legislative Council rewrote the entire bill, cancelling the shift to the township level and maintaining the district or county base of a properly constituted agricultural society.<sup>94</sup> After this, the amended bill was sent back to the House of Assembly for its concurrence. But the Legislative Council's amendments were the death of the bill, as it received no further attention from the lower house.<sup>95</sup>

The Legislative Council's treatment of this bill was a vindictive reaction to other actions by the reform members of the House of Assembly. While the bill was under consideration by the upper house, the House of Assembly had issued an address calling for responsible government. To force its demands, the House of Assembly also voted in favour of not passing a government supply bill. In response, on the day prior to the Legislative Council's destruction of the agricultural societies' bill, Lieutenant Governor Sir Francis Bond Head had prorogued the legislature, threatening to refuse his assent to those bills expending government funds which already been

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<sup>91</sup>Armstrong, *Handbook of Upper Canadian Chronology*, 272, 198.

<sup>92</sup>House of Assembly, *Journals*, March 23, 1836, 332.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, March 23, April 13, 1836, 332, 441, 445.

<sup>94</sup>After the expiration of four years, the bill would be extended to the next session of parliament and no longer. Legislative Council, *Journal*, April 19, 1836, 188. Unfortunately no copy of either version of the bill exists to compare the amended version with the original.

<sup>95</sup>House of Assembly, *Journals*, April 19, 1836, 494.

passed.<sup>96</sup> Thus, the rejection of the shift to township-based societies by the Legislative Council appears to have been motivated by a need to curb the efforts of the reformers and to maintain traditional standards of leadership. The origin and timing of the bill was its own worst enemy, as the bill was returned for the approval of a hostile House of Assembly in a legislative session whose dissolution was imminent.

New elections in the province resulted in a House of Assembly dominated by conservative members.<sup>97</sup> Once the new parliament began, it was a tory who took up the matter of government funding for agricultural societies. John B. Marks, the Vice-President of the Midland District Agricultural Society appears to have used the report, resolutions and draft bills from the last session to create a new agricultural societies legislation.<sup>98</sup> As the Chairman of a Standing Committee on Agriculture, Marks and his fellow conservative committee members, which included the President of the Home District Agricultural Society, E. W. Thomson, and a director of the Midland District Agricultural Society, George H. Detlor,<sup>99</sup> introduced and guided a new agricultural societies' bill through the House.<sup>100</sup>

This new act offered provisions for Upper Canada's agricultural societies to become much more public in character. No longer would a society have to raise £50 in order to gain £100 in government funds. The new bill

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<sup>96</sup>Craig, *Upper Canada*, 235-6; Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 170-2

<sup>97</sup>Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 138.

<sup>98</sup>House of Assembly, *Journal*, November 10, 1836, 21.

<sup>99</sup>*Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, May 10, 1837, p. 3, c. 1.

<sup>100</sup>House of Assembly, *Journal*, November 15, 18, 29, 1836, February 8, 9, 15, 1837, 45, 71, 108, 372, 421, 423, 483. The editor of the *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette* commended Marks for his "most creditable perseverance" in promoting this bill through its various stages of passage. *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, May 10, 1837, p. 3, c. 1.

required that any district society only had to raise a minimum of £25 to apply for government funds. In return, the government would pay double the amount raised by subscription, up to a maximum of £200. Thus, public funds would be available for the next four years, ranging from £50 to £200, allowing funding to newer, less well-supported societies, as well as those that had been established for several years. Following the recommendations of the Legislative Council during the last session, this bill further standardized the process of requesting government funds. It set forth both a form which the district treasurers had to use to account for the previous years' expenditures, and a certificate to state the amount of funds raised by the society.

Significantly, the new legislation drew upon the contents of the agricultural committee's bill lost during the last session, in its allowance for county, riding or township agricultural societies to be established. However, the latter would be only funded by the government in conjunction with the district society, so long as no more than one society existed per county, riding, or township. This compromise allowed the district society to remain as the institution which had to submit the application for government funding. The county, riding or township societies would receive the government funds in proportion to the amount of subscriptions which they had raised but those funds would be distributed by the district society's treasurer.<sup>101</sup>

That this bill passed both houses of parliament without amendment<sup>102</sup> demonstrates that the vindictive evisceration of the bill during the previous session of parliament had more to do with the larger reform and tory conflict than with any difference in belief concerning the need to commit

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<sup>101</sup>*Statutes of Upper Canada, 1837, 7 Wm. 4, c. 23.*

<sup>102</sup>*House of Assembly, Journals, February 15, 1837, 483.*

government funds to agricultural development. Through the 1837 act, the government doubled its commitment while halving the necessary subscriptions of each agricultural society. Significantly, it also found a way to encourage the development of township societies, while at the same time it increased the public accountability of the district institutions. Agricultural societies throughout the province were finally on solid financial footing. The 1837 legislation continued to be in effect until 1841 and at that point the new government of the Province of Canada extended its funding commitment until the end of the parliamentary session after November 1, 1844.<sup>103</sup>

In anticipation of the end to funding in 1843, a committee was established "to consider the best mode of granting Legislative aid for the encouragement of Agriculture in this Province."<sup>104</sup> In doing so, there appears to have been pressure from both Upper and Lower Canada for a rethinking of the means of government support for agricultural societies.<sup>105</sup> However, the issue received no further attention until the next parliament of Canada in 1845.<sup>106</sup> After a debate entailing matters concerning each part of the province, two bills were enacted maintaining a separate funding system for Upper and Lower Canadian agricultural societies.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>*Statutes of the Province of Canada*, 1841, 4&5 Vic, c. 23.

<sup>104</sup>Province of Canada, House of Assembly, *Journal*, October 27, November 14, 1843, 76, 122.

<sup>105</sup>The government had received a petition requesting that the agricultural societies of the lower province be "placed on the same footing" as those in Upper Canada. Province of Canada, House of Assembly, *Journal*, September 17, 1842, 17.

<sup>106</sup>Funding was not suspended, however, for the act of 1841 allowed funding to continue to the end of the session following November 1844. *Statutes of the Province of Canada*, 1841, 4&5 Vic, c. 23.

<sup>107</sup>Province of Canada, *Journals*, February 17, 20, 21, 23, March 5, 6, 7, 25, 1845, 271, 285, 291, 308, 326, 328-9, 337, 371, 400. For the legislation affecting Lower Canada see *Statutes of the Province of Canada*, 1845, 8 Vic, c. 53. Separate legislation for each province was not uncommon.

The Canadian government further strengthened its financial commitment to the Upper Canadian agricultural societies. New legislation provided that after the minimum of £25 was collected by the district agricultural society treasurer, any district institution would receive treble instead of double the amount of subscriptions in government funds, with the maximum amount increased to £250. Once again, the increased contribution of public funds came with an increase in accountability. The Secretary of each society was required to report annually to "the three branches of the Legislature" within fifteen days of the opening of each session of parliament. This report was to include the amounts subscribed, the amount of government funds received, and the society's expenses. Also required were a list of persons who had received premiums from the society as well as the competition for which they had received this money. In the interests of sharing the knowledge of agricultural improvements implemented in the various parts of the province, each district society was required to submit to the government "all such other observations and information as [the Secretary] shall deem likely to the improvement of Agriculture."<sup>108</sup>

The newly-revised structure of government funding and the increased accountability of the district societies fit in well with the overall administrative reforms being implemented in the united provinces after 1841. Beginning with Lord Sydenham, the first Governor General after union, governmental machinery was adjusted to "establish clear and coherent chains of command."<sup>109</sup> Sydenham created District Councils which he termed "his

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S. J. R. Noel notes that it was a common practice, and "separate and very different legislation was invariably the rule" when dealing with important matters. He argues that there "was no attempt to legislate institutional uniformity." Noel, *Patron, Clients, Brokers*, 149.

<sup>108</sup>*Statutes of the Province of Canada*, 1845, 8 Vic, c. 54.

most important administrative reform."<sup>110</sup> It offered the opportunity for purely local matters to be handled by the District Council, freeing the central government from those issues which were not of a provincial concern. However, this was not to be confused with a form of responsible government. District Councils institutionalized the arms-length connection between the regional leaders and the central government that had always been part of the governance of Upper Canada.<sup>111</sup> J. M. S. Careless has commented that they were the "typical Sydenham compromise between authority above and the rights of the people below."<sup>112</sup> The councils were composed of elected representatives of each township within the district operating under the direction of a government-appointed warden. While they were an attempt to foster local harmony, they also acted as an avenue for "further, unintended change."<sup>113</sup> Ian Radforth contends that Sydenham's centralist reforms could be more effectively implemented at the local level through these district councils.<sup>114</sup>

During this period there were agriculturists who were impressed by Sydenham's reforms, and proposed coordinating the efforts of the province's district agricultural societies with those of the District Councils. In addition,

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<sup>109</sup>J.M.S. Careless, *The Union of the Canadas* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), 38. For a thorough study of these reforms see J. E. Hodgetts, *Pioneer Public Service: An Administrative History of the United Canadas, 1841-1867* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955).

<sup>110</sup>Ian Radforth, "Sydenham and Utilitarian Reform," in *Colonial Leviathan, State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Canada*, eds. Allan Greer and Ian Radforth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 82.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, 82-5; Careless, *Union of the Canadas*, 53-4.

<sup>112</sup>Careless, *Union of the Canadas*, 53-4.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup>Radforth, "Sydenham and Utilitarian Reform", 84.

proposals were made to establish a Board of Agriculture patterned after Sydenham's Board of Works established in 1841<sup>115</sup> This agricultural board would be formed of government appointed officials to coordinate the activities of all the district societies. Not until 1850 was such board created.<sup>116</sup> In the meantime, the government continued to act in the place of a board, administrating the funding to each district society, and receiving the reports from these same institutions that it fostered.

By the mid-1840s then, Upper Canada had a well-established system of government funded agricultural societies. They were semi-public institutions charged with implementing a nascent provincial policy of agricultural development. It was a policy that had been developed by both Tories and reformers in spite of the acrimonious relations between these two factions. Only in the 1840s did the government policy become clearly identified through increased and consistent funding, as well as through improved communications with the submission of an annual report by each district agricultural society to the government.

Upper Canada's district agricultural societies were created out of concern over the poor state of the province's agriculture in the 1820s and developed from the examples of government assistance in other provinces and nations. Through this process they became uniquely Upper Canadian organizations. Nevertheless, even the government did not legislate into existence a province-wide agricultural society in the years between 1830 and 1846. Instead, the government allowed each district agricultural society to develop independent of any other district organization. This prevented the

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<sup>115</sup>For the details of this plan see *British American Cultivator*, July 1843, p. 104, c. 3 - p. 105, c. 3. Also see Chapter 7.

<sup>116</sup>*Statutes of the Province of Canada*, 1850, 13 & 14 Vic., c. 73.

lingering regional oligarchies from coming into conflict with the government elite at York. Independence, however, provided the opportunity for the district agricultural societies to develop their own unique characteristics.

In some ways, the creation of an independent agricultural society in each district of the province hindered the progress toward establishing the dream of a provincial association of agricultural gentlemen. Although publicly funded, the district agricultural societies of Upper Canada remained clubs for the gentlemen of each district throughout the 1830 to 1846 period. With the offer of government funds in 1830, it was the established local oligarchies of each district who came forward to form their own agricultural society. And as the legislation required adherence only to a few broad provisions, the district patrons were able to finance the creation of a gentlemen's club for themselves and their associates who resided in the district. Although the public accountability of each district agricultural society increased during the 1840s, their character remained unquestionably Georgian and gentlemanly well into the Victorian age.



**Chapter 5:  
The Farming Compact  
York, 1830**

Having recently circulated a petition and held a public meeting in support of "The Home District Agricultural Society," William Lyon Mackenzie informed readers of his *Colonial Advocate* on April 1, 1830, of his wishes for this society. Recalling the failure of York's Upper Canada Agricultural Society in 1820, Mackenzie hoped that his "institution now in embryo [would] be longer lived" than its predecessor at York. That society, he recalled, had been "composed on that weak & exclusive principle on which chiefly all the governments of Canada have hitherto acted, and it *consequently* died a natural death about ten years ago." In contrast to York's former agricultural society, Mackenzie invited individuals from "all classes and ranks" to join his society, "for in each class, so called, are to be found honest, intelligent, capable individuals, possessed of liberal and extended views -- true friends of the country." He specifically requested that those interested in becoming members "strive to leave their political feelings behind them...and to overcome for a few hours that bitterness of personal animosity which ha[d] long made the town of York deservedly a bye-word[sic] and a reproach." But Mackenzie's involvement in this organization would be brief. He would lose control of the Home District Agricultural Society to a cabal of York's official elite who used the founding of this institution to entrench yet again the principle of exclusivity.<sup>1</sup>

Continually captivated by the republican rhetoric of the yeoman farmer, William Lyon Mackenzie considered the farmer's involvement in

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<sup>1</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, April 1, 1830, p. 3, c. 1-3.

agricultural societies as an important step towards a change in the leadership of Upper Canadian society as a whole. However, the consolidating tory oligarchy at York, or as Mackenzie would later term it, the "Family Compact," did not agree. Its members refused to allow the agricultural society at the provincial capital to be any less than the premier gentlemen's club of Upper Canada. Unlike Mackenzie's disgust with the Upper Canada Agricultural Society, in the opinion of the Family Compact its exclusive principles were necessary to maintain the colony's social hierarchy and to keep offensive individuals like Mackenzie from attaining positions of authority. Therefore, despite Mackenzie's stated hopes, the creation of the Home District Agricultural Society demonstrated the impossibility of his request for a politics-free organization.

Most district agricultural societies founded in the 1830s and 1840s, in part as a result of the new agricultural bill which provided funds, appeared with little controversy; but the establishment of the Home District Agricultural Society in the spring of 1830 served as a public battleground for the political and social tensions brewing in "the political cockpit"<sup>2</sup> of York. Despite the common ground reformers and tories had found within the House of Assembly concerning agricultural matters, there was a race in the capital to claim the money for the Home District offered by the agricultural societies' legislation. William Lyon Mackenzie was the first out of the gate; however, he was quickly removed from the competition by members of the Family Compact. Relations between the Family Compact and William Lyon Mackenzie had been tense for some time, and the reformer's attempt to

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<sup>2</sup>Paul Romney, "A struggle for authority: Toronto society and politics in 1834," in *Forging a Consensus: Historical Essays on Toronto*, ed. Victor Russell (University of Toronto Press, 1984), 9-40, 14.

establish the Home District Agricultural Society broke the uneasy relations into open hostilities.

Long before the organization of the Home District Agricultural Society, York had been the centre of heated political tensions. Since 1828, York's tory elites had had to deal with the election of the first reform-dominated House of Assembly. In the 1828 elections, the high tory John Beverley Robinson had contested the town of York riding against Dr. Thomas D. Morrison, the radical reform candidate.<sup>3</sup> Despite the reform sweep of the province, the electorate of York had returned Robinson by a narrow margin. After his success, Robinson as a tory, had been isolated within the Home District, since reformers William Lyon Mackenzie, Jesse Ketchum, and John Cawthra represented the surrounding ridings.<sup>4</sup> However, by 1830 Robinson had been appointed Chief Justice of the province. In a by-election, Robert Baldwin, a moderate reform candidate, won a seat by a mere nine votes over the tory candidate, William Botsford Jarvis.<sup>5</sup> These elections demonstrated that the "provincial urban professional/bureaucratic establishment in the capital" was no longer "able to control the electoral politics of the district." J. K. Johnson argues that by the late 1820s there developed "a kind of rural hinterland resistance in the York and Simcoe county ridings....Bureaucrats and officials...were replaced after 1828 by 'men of the people'."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Firth, *Town of York 1815-1834*, xli.

<sup>4</sup>Mackenzie and Ketchum represented the two member rural riding of York, and Cawthra was the elected member for the riding of Simcoe. Armstrong, *Handbook of Upper Canadian Chronology*, 85.

<sup>5</sup>Firth, *Town of York 1815-1834*, xl-xlii.

<sup>6</sup>Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 155-6.

By 1830, York's politics were changing. Its population had doubled during the last decade,<sup>7</sup> and the by-election of 1830 increased the tories' fear that there was a sector of York's society developing that supported moderate reform opposition – a sector which the tories could not command. A new group of professionals was organizing in York, which, although below the social level of the elites who lived on their estates at the edge of town, began to act as a cohesive group. The growing number of merchants serving the rapidly developing town were foremost among this new social grouping.<sup>8</sup>

In this tempestuous capital, radical reformers, like William Lyon Mackenzie, became lightning rods for the ire of the defensive tory elite. Mackenzie's inflammatory personality and defamatory editorials in his *Colonial Advocate* effectively intensified a running feud, both political and personal, that had been fought between Mackenzie and the York elite from the time of his arrival in York in 1824. Particularly after 1826, each had become a target of the other's wrath. Mackenzie's printing press had been thrown into the York harbour by youthful members of the town's elite, and Mackenzie was substantially compensated through the courts for his loss.<sup>9</sup> Despite the growth of the capital's population, official circles in York remained small enough that political opponents had many opportunities for face to face battles in their daily lives. As a result, political quarrels became

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<sup>7</sup>Between 1820 and 1826, the population of York swelled from 1240 to 2235 individuals. By 1830, the population had increased to 2860 persons. Firth, *Town of York, 1815-1834*, lxxxii.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, xxviii, xli, lxxxi. Also see Paul Romney's discussion of the changing society and leadership of York in the face of population growth. Paul Romney, "A struggle for authority," 9-14.

<sup>9</sup>See Romney's interpretation of the repercussions of this incident. "From the Types Riot to the Rebellion: Elite Ideology, Anti-legal Sentiment, Political Violence, and the Rule of Law in Upper Canada," *Ontario History* 79(1987): 113-44.

"one of York's distinctive entertainments,"<sup>10</sup> both on the streets of York and inside the House of Assembly where Mackenzie had proven himself fastidious in his willingness to debate any minute detail.<sup>11</sup>

Mackenzie's announcement of the establishment in the spring of 1830 of a Home District agricultural society was viewed by York's tory elite as yet another threat to its authority. Its response to Mackenzie's efforts displayed the existence of what Mackenzie would term in 1833 the "family compact." This was the oligarchy of several Executive and Legislative Councillors who had intimate familial, personal and professional connections and whose success depended on "a larger coterie of associates and friends."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the events of April to July 1830 surrounding the creation of the Home District Agricultural Society was one of the most public and overlooked displays of the Family Compact's attempt to maintain its political control of York and its institutions.

Two days after the Agricultural Societies Act was given Royal Assent, a petition was circulated to gather support for a Home District Agricultural Society. "This notice was signed by 36 inhabitants, farmers, mechanics, merchants and professional men, including three out of the four Members of Assembly for the District."<sup>13</sup> William Lyon Mackenzie subsequently

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<sup>10</sup>Romney, "A struggle for authority," 14.

<sup>11</sup>William Dawson LeSueur, *William Lyon Mackenzie: A Reinterpretation* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1979), 137-8.

<sup>12</sup>This definition is taken from Robert E. Saunders, "What Was the Family Compact?," in *Historical Essays on Upper Canada*, ed. J. K. Johnson (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1975), 122-39, 136.

<sup>13</sup> Presumably it was Mackenzie who circulated this petition. The three Members of the House of Assembly were the reformers Mackenzie, Robert Baldwin and Jesse Ketchum. *Colonial Advocate*, July 8, 1830, p.2, c. 3. For the complete list of names and occupations see Appendix 8.

published a notice and circulated hand bills calling for a public meeting to be held on March 25, 1830, to establish an agricultural society in the Home District and elect officers for the year.<sup>14</sup>

Support for this petition was apparently solicited from the merchants around the market square in York and from the few farmers and other professionals who were in town that day, for the list is heavily weighted by individuals with businesses in York. The plan for an agricultural society gained the support of 11 merchants, 9 farmers, 2 butchers, 2 physicians, 2 lawyers, a brewer, the House of Assembly clerk, a watchmaker, tanner, shipwright and a British author writing an emigrant guide to Upper Canada.<sup>15</sup> These men were primarily reform supporters,<sup>16</sup> but more importantly, they included York merchants and businessmen who relied on a prosperous agricultural hinterland for the success of their business. These were the growing group of professionals that the tory elite of York could not control.

Despite the initial support of the petition, Mackenzie was disappointed that on March 25, only forty persons braved the "broken up roads" and "very uncomfortable" weather to attend the first meeting. Mackenzie was particularly disgusted that not one of "the official faction" of the capital had attended, "although handbills had been liberally circulated among them"

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<sup>14</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, March 11, 1830, p. 3, c. 4; July 8, 1830, p. 2, c. 1; *Christian Guardian*, March 20, 1830, p. 143, c. 3.

<sup>15</sup>Only one signee of the petition could not be identified. Five farmers are included in the total who are only identified as such because they were found to be living in the townships surrounding York. See Appendix 8.

<sup>16</sup>Of these 36 men, the voting record of 17 individuals can be identified from a list of balloting for the January 28, 1830 York by-election. Fifteen individuals supported the reform candidate for York and two only voted for the tory candidate. The two tory supporters in Mackenzie's list were John Anderson, a York merchant and Seneca Ketchum, the reformer Jesse Ketchum's brother. See Edith Firth, *Town of York 1815-1834*, 126-9.

previous to the meeting. In the absence of a large attendance, those present determined it to be "presumptive" to "organize such a society and frame a constitution whereby to bind the district."<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, those in attendance did state their general agreement that the formation of agricultural societies in the province would "greatly contribute to the improvement of Agriculture in this Province." Accordingly, a series of resolutions composing a draft constitution of a "Home District Agricultural Society" were recorded. This institution was to be led by a permanent committee of fifteen ordinary members, composed of one President, two Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer, a Secretary, and ten Directors. Membership would be a minimum of five shillings, with life memberships to be available upon the donation of an as yet unspecified amount of money. At the end of this meeting, eight individuals were elected to solicit subscriptions for the society, and a request was to be made to the six newspaper editors of York to publish the proceedings in their newspapers.<sup>18</sup> The meeting was then adjourned until April 8th when those subscribing to the society were to vote on the resolutions, and create a properly constituted Home District Agricultural Society.<sup>19</sup>

These resolutions were in no way representative of any radical reform platform. In fact, the proposed constitution varied little from that of the previous agricultural society at York. Mackenzie's plans could in no way be

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<sup>17</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, July 8, 1830, p. 2, c. 3. It is unclear if Mackenzie attended this meeting, for he argued a few months later that he neither called nor attended it. However, there is no indication of any other individual having the same passionate involvement in its establishment. See *Ibid.*, July 1, 1830, p. 2, c. 3-4.

<sup>18</sup>The six newspapers were the *Upper Canada Gazette*, *Observer*, *Colonial Advocate*, *Christian Guardian*, *Courier of Upper Canada*, and the *Canadian Freeman*.

<sup>19</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, April 1, 1830, p. 3, c. 1-2; *Christian Guardian*, April 3, 1830, p. 159, c. 2-3.

interpreted as disloyal, for the plans for his society followed what could be considered a formula for the structure of an agricultural society. Furthermore, the meeting resolved that the "members of the Legislative Council and the House of Assembly, residing in the Home District" would be honorary members of the society. Those few present at the meeting also agreed "to present a humble address" to Lieutenant Governor Sir John Colborne "requesting that His Excellency would honour the society by becoming its patron."<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, the Family Compact and its supporters believed the society was being organized by "the shopkeeping interest of York under the patronage of Mackenzie."<sup>21</sup> This brought the fledgling organization under their scrutiny and resulted in their determination to remove Mackenzie's influence from the organization and take control of the infant society themselves. The first indication was Robert Stanton's inexplicable inability to find space in his *Upper Canada Gazette* to publish the first meeting's proceedings, although he was normally a firm supporter.<sup>22</sup>

But it was Edward O'Brien, a cohort of the Family Compact, who was one of the first to plot the demise of Mackenzie's society. A recently emigrated half-pay officer farming near Thornhill, O'Brien was an acquaintance of the Lieutenant Governor, and therefore well connected to and a "natural ally" of Family Compact members.<sup>23</sup> On April 8, 1830, he traveled to York to "attend

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<sup>20</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, April 1, 1830, p. 3, c. 1-2.

<sup>21</sup>PAO, Mary O'Brien Journal #32, April 8, 1830.

<sup>22</sup>While these proceedings were sent to the *Upper Canada Gazette*, they were not published. See *Colonial Advocate*, April 1, 1830, p. 3, c. 1-2; *Christian Guardian*, April 3, 1830, p. 159, c. 2-3.

<sup>23</sup>Audrey Saunders Miller, *The Journals of Mary O'Brien 1828-1838* (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada Ltd., 1968), xvii; Miller, "Edward George O'Brien, DCB, 10, 554 - 5. "Dr.



and protest against the formation" of Mackenzie's agricultural society. However, upon his arrival, O'Brien had little to protest against, for only he and "a man he took with him" were present.<sup>24</sup> The agricultural society meeting had been scheduled for the Grand Jury Room of the Court House, but at that same time, Mackenzie was defending himself in the libel case brought against him by James Small. Indeed, there could be no meeting of the agricultural society that day, for the court house was packed with spectators of the trial which lasted twelve hours, with four hours taken up by Mackenzie's address to the jury as his own advocate.<sup>25</sup> Mackenzie later reflected that, "so intense was the excitement created thereby and so general the attendance in the court house, that no other meeting could have been then held with a reasonable expectation of constituting a society."<sup>26</sup>

In light of this missed meeting, two different decisions to host another meeting were made, foreshadowing the impending battle. First, Edward O'Brien and the other man who had arrived at the Court House, "formally adjourned the meeting till further notice."<sup>27</sup> Afterwards, O'Brien and his soon-to-be brother-in-law, Richard Gapper -- another half-pay officer who

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John Strachan and Christopher Hagerman were York residents on whom the family frequently called when they visited the capital...they also called on Sir John and Lady Colborne." Miller, "York Street Politics, 1828 to 1837," *Ontario History* 62 (1970): 101.

<sup>24</sup>PAO, Mary O'Brien Journal #32, April 8, 1830; Miller, "Yonge Street Politics," 107.

<sup>25</sup>Mackenzie was defending himself against libel charges for comments he had made about James Small during the first by-election for the riding of York in November 1829. Small had unsuccessfully run as an independent candidate after John Beverley Robinson's promotion to the post of Chief Justice. He was infuriated that during the campaign Mackenzie had called him a tory government supporter. Frederick H. Armstrong, "James Edward Small, DCB, 9, 724-725; Charles Lindsey, *The Life and Times of William Lyon Mackenzie*, vol. 1 (Toronto: P. R. Randall, 1862), 173-7; Miller, "Yonge Street Politics," 105-7.

<sup>26</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, July 8, 1830, p. 2, c. 3.

<sup>27</sup>PAO, Mary O'Brien Journal #32, April 8, 1830; Miller, "Yonge Street Politics," 107.

farmed land between Thornhill and Richmond Hill<sup>28</sup> – decided to take the formation of an agricultural society "into their own hands and [conduct] it properly."<sup>29</sup> However, at the same time, James Doyle, a lawyer in York,<sup>30</sup> who had been elected acting secretary at the March 25th agricultural society meeting, took it upon himself to postpone the meeting for one month.<sup>31</sup>

During the month of April, Mackenzie continued to work on the establishment of the society. He wrote to John Neilson, president of the Agricultural Society of the District of Quebec, requesting a copy of that institution's "rules, regulations and system of management." In his letter to Neilson, Mackenzie stated that in establishing the Home District Agricultural Society, he had only newspaper accounts as a guide, which, he noted were "less full than could be wished for."<sup>32</sup> However, the attempt to gather information and form ties with agricultural societies in Lower Canada was in vain, for Mackenzie was quickly losing control of his society.

The postponed meeting of the agricultural society called for May 8, 1830, never occurred, for members of the Family Compact announced the organization of their own society. This initiative did not come from Edward O'Brien, but from D'Arcy Boulton Jr., the former attorney general of Upper

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<sup>28</sup>Miller, *Journals of Mary O'Brien*, ix-xi.

<sup>29</sup>PAO, Mary O'Brien Journal #32, April 8, 1830; Miller, "Yonge Street Politics," 107.

<sup>30</sup>See Appendix 8.

<sup>31</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, April 22, 1830, p.3, c. 3. Mackenzie apparently disliked this decision, as he later stated that Doyle had "considered himself authorized to call an adjourned meeting." See the *Colonial Advocate*, July 8, 1830, p. 2, c. 4.

<sup>32</sup>John Neilson was also the editor of the *Quebec Gazette*. Sonia Chassé, Rita Girard-Wallot and Jean-Pierre Wallot, "John Neilson, *DCB*, 7, 644-49; Margaret Fairley ed., *The Selected Writings of William Lyon Mackenzie 1824 - 1837* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1960), 294; PAO, "Mackenzie to Mr. John Neilson, Esq., Quebec, April 25, 1830," W. L. Mackenzie Correspondence, Mackenzie-Lindsey Papers.

Canada, squire of "The Grange" and the man who Mackenzie would later place at the very centre of the Family Compact.<sup>33</sup> Boulton had circulated his own petition in support of "forming an Agricultural Society for the Home District." He then employed the services of William Botsford Jarvis, the Sheriff of the Home District, whom others have described as the "Sheriff of the Family Compact."<sup>34</sup> On behalf of Boulton, Jarvis placed an advertisement in the May 6th issue of the *Courier of Upper Canada* which stated that in "compliance with the request of D'Arcy Boulton the younger and twenty-one others, Freeholders of the Home District" a meeting would be held at the Court House in York on May 15, 1830, "for the purpose of forming an Agricultural Society for the Home District."<sup>35</sup>

Later, reflecting on this development, Mackenzie explained that the meeting that James Doyle had rescheduled was not held, for "it was thought by some that it would be better to pass it over for a few days and see what the Sheriff's notice would produce, in order to give all parties a fair chance in a matter wherein the public good alone was professedly sought after."<sup>36</sup> However, Mackenzie's immediate reaction was less placid. In publishing Jarvis' notice in the May 13th issue of his *Colonial Advocate*, Mackenzie made it clear that he perfectly understood what would result from Boulton's manoeuvre, for he announced the Sheriff's advertisement to his readers with the following statement:

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<sup>33</sup>John Lownsbrough, "D'Arcy Boulton," *DCB*, 6, 78-80.

<sup>34</sup>Robert J. Burns, "William Botsford Jarvis," *DCB*, 9, 411-12.

<sup>35</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, May 13, 1830, p. 3, c. 3-4.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, July 8, 1830, p. 2, c. 4.

All former attempts at establishing an efficient Home District Agricultural Society having failed from the non-attendance of the farmers, who are the parties to be benefited, the sheriff at the insistence of Mr. D'Arcy Boulton, Jr., and others, has called a meeting in town on Saturday next; and we have now no doubt, but that as an association will be organized by a class of inhabitants who are doubtless both able and willing to spare from their ample official incomes a sum sufficient, with the provincial grant, to confer signal benefits upon the agriculture of the district.<sup>37</sup>

Mackenzie criticized the Home District farmers for missing an opportunity to organize their own society. There could not be two district agricultural societies, and he knew that once the tory oligarchy took control there would be no hope of challenging their political and financial power. Nevertheless, as a consequence of Boulton's tactics, battles would be fought on two future occasions, and the Court House at York would become the venue in which members of the tory elite of York would publicly display their united front by taking over the establishment of the Home District Agricultural Society.

The first battle was held at Boulton's meeting on May 15, 1830, at the York Court House. There exists a first-hand account of this meeting written by a certain Humphrey Clod.<sup>38</sup> Published in the *Colonial Advocate*, it may in fact have been authored by William Lyon Mackenzie, who was in attendance.<sup>39</sup> In Clod's opinion, the meeting was "indeed confused and

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., May 13, 1830, p. 3, c. 3-4.

<sup>38</sup>The full name of the author was given as "Humphrey Clod, Esq., Major 7th Regiment, York Militia." The account of the meeting is found in the following issues: *Colonial Advocate*, May 20, 1830, p. 2, c. 3-4; June 24, 1830, p. 3, c. 3-4.

<sup>39</sup>Audrey Saunders Mills suggests this in note 12 of her "Yonge Street Politics," 110. Paul Romney characterizes Mackenzie as quite accomplished at the art of satire. Romney, "From the Types Riot to the Rebellion," 117. In later issue, however, Clod wrote to the *Colonial Advocate* to assure its readers about the validity of his report of this Court House meeting.

disorderly." It had been called for noon, but when Clod arrived at one o'clock, only two other persons were present. After absenting himself for half an hour, Clod returned to find D'Arcy Boulton present, as well as several of the signees of Boulton's petition calling for the meeting.<sup>40</sup> Also assembled inside the bar, "as if to represent the aristocracy"<sup>41</sup> were John Elmsley, the "well placed wealthy gentleman farmer of his 'Clover Hill' estate north of York;"<sup>42</sup> Charles C. Small, the Clerk of the Crown and Common Pleas;<sup>43</sup> William Allan, the pre-eminent Toronto businessman and Legislative Councillor;<sup>44</sup> Robert Stanton, the King's Printer;<sup>45</sup> Stephen Jarvis, and his son, William B. Jarvis;<sup>46</sup> J. W. Gamble, a magistrate from Etobicoke, and brother-in-law of William Allan;<sup>47</sup> James Small, the lawyer who had just recently unsuccessfully sued Mackenzie for libel;<sup>48</sup> Samuel Peters Jarvis, the Deputy Provincial Secretary and Registrar, and leader of the group which had

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*Advocate* to assure its readers about the validity of his report of this Court House meeting. "There was no *lamprooning* at all about the matter." His report "sent to the Advocate...was as correct as it was possible for a reporter to make it." *Ibid.*, July 1, 1830, p. 2, c. 3-4.

<sup>40</sup>Unfortunately, D'Arcy Boulton's petition containing all twenty-one names has not survived.

<sup>41</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, June 24, 1830, p. 3, c. 3-4.

<sup>42</sup>Elmsley was the son of the former chief justice of Upper Canada, and by 1830 was himself a gentleman on the rise in provincial politics. In September 1830, Elmsley would be appointed to the Executive Council and in January 1831 become a member of the Legislative Council. Henri Pilon, "John Elmsley," *DCB*, 9, 239-243.

<sup>43</sup>S. R. Mealing, "John Small," *DCB*, 6, 721-2; Armstrong, *Handbook of Upper Canadian Chronology*, 118.

<sup>44</sup>In Collaboration, "William Allan," *DCB*, 8, 4-12.

<sup>45</sup>Hilary Bates Neary, "Robert Stanton," *DCB*, 9, 740-1.

<sup>46</sup>Robert J. Burns, "William Botsford Jarvis," *DCB*, 9, 411-2.

<sup>47</sup>Barrie Dyster, "John William Gamble," *DCB*, 10, 299-301.

<sup>48</sup>Frederick H. Armstrong, "James Edward Small," *DCB*, 9, 724-5.

smashed Mackenzie's printing press six years earlier,<sup>49</sup> Robert G. Anderson, chief teller of the Bank of Upper Canada,<sup>50</sup> Francis Thomas Billings, Home District Treasurer,<sup>51</sup> Edward O'Brien, and John Fenton, the "Clerk of [the] English Church and Clerk of the Police Office" at York.<sup>52</sup>

This collection of York's gentlemen was quite unlike those who had attended the original March 25th organizational meeting. These men represented the heart of the York tory elite and several of their close associates. Although Clod suggested the mere 23 individuals present had made the Court House look like "a Brobdingnagian pantry or an Ogre's cheese-closet," it was the authority of those sitting within the bar that loomed large. By seating themselves within the bar for this meeting, these government officials paraded their leadership of York society as well as their intentions for the meeting and the future direction of the agricultural society. As Rhys Isaac argues, in colonial society the court house occupied a unique place, both physically and socially. Even on days when court was not in session, its chambers were more than just public meeting rooms. "The court was central to the organization of society. Its functions went deeper than the conduct of business and the distribution of patronage. The court was the guardian of the Law, and the Law defined rights and obligations."<sup>53</sup> Even

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<sup>49</sup>Douglas Leighton and Robert J. Burns, "Samuel Peters Jarvis," *DCB*, 8, 431-3.

<sup>50</sup>Romney, "Struggle for Authority," 17.

<sup>51</sup>Armstrong, *Handbook of Upper Canadian Chronology*, 173, Firth, *Town of York, 1815-1834*, 127; George Walton, *York Commercial Directory, Street Guide, and Register 1833-4* (York, U. C.: Thomas Dalton, [1833]), 37.

<sup>52</sup>Walton, *York Commercial Directory*, 40.

<sup>53</sup>Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 93-4. R. D. Gidney and W. P. J. Millar suggest that in nineteenth-century Ontario, the two public worksites were the pulpit and the courtroom. "In the courts, justice was not only done, but *seen* to be done, in matters of concern to individuals and in those

though court was not in session, these elites were drawing upon all the authority this esteemed and respected location offered. Their perceived abuse of this power would be a matter upon which Mackenzie would later reflect.<sup>54</sup>

Mackenzie also attended this meeting, but he stood outside the bar with John Macfarlane, the officially elected chair of the March 25th meeting.<sup>55</sup> Clod noted that unlike the elites, Mackenzie and the others "occup[ied] the space usually filled by the farmers in court-time." According to Clod, John Elmsley insulted those standing outside the bar by making a request for subscription from within the bar to the men on the other side who had already organized such a society. However, this awkward moment passed as more people entered the Court Room, and it was finally decided that if a meeting was to be held, it had to be officially organized. Except for the gathering of the elite inside the bar, there had yet been no official start to the meeting. However, after waiting several more minutes Sheriff Jarvis was called to the chair, and John Elmsley was appointed secretary.

It appears that Boulton and his entourage had not thought beyond hosting this first meeting, for they had no written resolutions to be voted on. The meeting was yet again delayed as, ironically, a copy of the resolutions passed at Mackenzie's meeting of March 25th had to be retrieved from the *Colonial Advocate's* office. During this wait, Clod noted that the elite looked

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where the collective good was maintained against breaches of the criminal law." Gidney and Millar, *Professional Gentlemen*, 127. Paul Romney comments that in Upper Canadian society the importance of the assizes "and the number of participants made [them] the great public event of the year, at least when there was no parliamentary election." Romney, *Mr Attorney: The Attorney General for Ontario in Court, Cabinet, and Legislature, 1791 - 1899* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 37.

<sup>54</sup>After having his printing press destroyed, Mackenzie had published many editorials criticizing the other abuses of the York elite. See Romney, "From the Types Riot to the Rebellion," 113-44.

<sup>55</sup>Clod noted that Michael Whitmore also joined Mackenzie and Macfarlane, but Whitmore has not been identified.

anxiously at the door in vain hopes that more farmers would appear so that the meeting would "carry an appearance of a farmers meeting." But according to Clod, this had been unlikely to happen. The Home District Treasurer, Francis T. Billings, had been dispatched numerous times to call farmers in from the streets to attend the meeting, and in Clod's words, the response that Billings received from these individuals was that "if the meeting was called by D'Arcy Boulton and the big-bugs, our safety lies in steering clear of it – burnt children dread fire."<sup>56</sup>

Back inside the court house, one of the first people to speak was Richard Gapper. Although he was not from York, he, like his brother-in-law Edward O'Brien<sup>57</sup> considered himself a part of the York elite, and offered his subscription as a gift, "from the gentlemen of the town of York to the farmers in the country. We give and they receive."<sup>58</sup> Reaffirming this position, the Chairman, William B. Jarvis, announced that he was in favour of using the government money to fund a private society. He recommended not allowing any farmer of the district to be eligible for the government money if they did not subscribe to this particular society. Jarvis also believed that only members of six months standing should be able to compete for prizes offered by the society. Another individual supported these comments by noting that as the farmers had shown their reluctance to become involved, those present should "bear the burthen." He was in favour of electing officers for the ensuing year from those present.

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<sup>56</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, June 24, 1830, p. 3, c. 3-4.

<sup>57</sup>Mary Gapper and Edward O'Brien were wed just two days previous to the May 15th meeting. Miller, *Journals of Mary O'Brien*, 109-13.

<sup>58</sup>The last statement appears to be Clod's sarcastic addition.



But not all those in attendance believed in the old society model, for at this point the entire meeting fell into chaos. As one person attempted to be heard over the voice of the next, Clod was only able to select a few comments from the *mêlée*:

Some of the speakers recommended an adjournment and a meeting to be called in the country--others were for doing what they did quickly-- "we are no farmers" said one --"its their own fault if the country-folks wont attend when we offer them our aid and the use of this building for nothing" quoth a second--"this can scarcely be termed a public meeting," added a third, "for the public *are not with us.*"

Before the uproar became too great and he decided to leave, Clod understood that the majority of those present were opposed to the chair's exclusive opinions, and the meeting decided that farmers would be admitted to the new society.<sup>59</sup>

In contrast to Clod's detailed criticisms, the story told from the other side of the bar was much less dramatic. Mary O'Brien related in her journal that her brother Richard and her husband Edward were elected as two of the society's twelve directors for the ensuing year. She also noted that the necessary £50 was subscribed, thus making the society eligible for the government's £100.<sup>60</sup> After Clod's departure from the court house meeting order must have been restored, for nine resolutions were passed. The society was to be called "The Home District Agricultural Society," membership was set at an annual subscription of five shillings, and the members would meet at four General Meetings per year to be held on the same days as the General

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<sup>59</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, June 24, 1830, p. 3, c. 3-4.

<sup>60</sup>PAO, Mary O'Brien Journal #36, May 15, 1830.

Quarter Sessions for the District. These meetings would be conducted by a President, twelve Directors, a Secretary and a Treasurer.<sup>61</sup>

Those present elected George Crookshank as President of the new society. He had been a director of the former Upper Canada Agricultural Society, and a former president of the bank of Upper Canada. Crookshank, who lived "on an opulent scale" on his estate just west of York, was very much the quintessential Upper Canadian gentleman farmer.<sup>62</sup> William B. Jarvis was voted Treasurer, and John Elmsley chosen as Secretary. The twelve Directors included many of the men assembled within the bar at the Court House. These were: William Allan, John Elmsley, D'Arcy Boulton Jr., Edward O'Brien, Richard Gapper, John W. Gamble, Charles C. Small, Robert Stanton and Robert Anderson. Also elected as directors were Peter Robinson, who had served in that capacity with the former Upper Canada Agricultural Society. In 1830, he was the Commissioner of Crown Lands and Surveyor General of Woods, as well as an Executive and Legislative Councillor.<sup>63</sup> Alexander Wood, a York businessman and justice of the peace,<sup>64</sup> and James Fitzgibbon, a War of 1812 hero and Clerk of the House of Assembly, were also chosen as directors.<sup>65</sup> After the elections, a petition was drafted and sent to the Lieutenant Governor for the provincial grant and the Directors were

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<sup>61</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, May 20, 1830, p. 3, c. 4; *Upper Canada Gazette*, May 27, 1830, p. 3, c. 4. For a list of the officers of the Home District Agricultural Society see Appendix 9.

<sup>62</sup>Frederick H. Armstrong, "George Crookshank," *DCB*, 8, 191-2.

<sup>63</sup>Wendy Cameron, "Peter Robinson," *DCB*, 7, 753-7.

<sup>64</sup>Edith G. Firth, "Alexander Wood," *DCB*, 7, 919-921; Firth, *Town of York, 1815-1834*, 126.

<sup>65</sup>Ruth McKenzie, "James FitzGibbon," *DCB*, 9, 264-7. *Colonial Advocate*, May 20, 1830, p. 3, c. 4; *Upper Canada Gazette*, May 27, 1830, p. 3, c. 4. For a list of the officers of the Home District Agricultural Society see Appendix 9.

instructed to form a committee to draft a constitution to be submitted for approval at the first General Meeting on July 6, 1830, at which new elections would be held.<sup>66</sup> Thus, by the close of this May 15, 1830 meeting, the York elite had successfully gained control of William Lyon Mackenzie's "nursling."<sup>67</sup>

Humphrey Clod later wrote again to the *Colonial Advocate* to express his disgust at the behaviour of "'the gentlemen,' (as the worthies of the Court House are pleased to style themselves *par excellence*)." In his opinion the government officials had commandeered the Home District Agricultural Society, and by petitioning the government for the grant "took the *public* money under their own especial control." Clod argued that the Home District would "benefit but little from such meetings" until the York elites remembered that they were "located in the midst of *ten thousand* North American Freemen, *owners of the soil*, and jealous of their liberties."<sup>68</sup> Clod's comments illustrate the importance of the government funds to the creation of an agricultural society. Mackenzie's initiative to found the Home District Agricultural Society rested primarily on the receipt of the government grant. Even the more wealthy York elite, who had commandeered the formation of the society, realized how critical the government grant was to the operations of the new organization.

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<sup>66</sup>*Upper Canada Gazette*, May 27, 1830, p. 3, c. 4. It would appear that these new elections returned these same individuals to their positions. A list of individuals present at a meeting in September, 1830 suggests Thomas S. Smyth was added to the ranks. *Canadian Freeman*, September 28, 1830, p. 3, c.3. This petition is found in PAC, Upper Canada Sundries, "Petition to His Excellency Sir John Colborne" May 15, 1830, pp. 56403-04.

<sup>67</sup>PAO, Mary O'Brien Journal # 32, April 8, 1830.

<sup>68</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, July 1, 1830, p. 2, c. 3-4.

Five days after the meeting, Mackenzie also published a brief, antagonistic editorial in which he bitterly attacked the York elite, or in his words, the "official junto." He expressed his desire that "the Agricultural Society (such as it is) may flourish, become useful to the country and promote its happiness." What troubled Mackenzie was that at this meeting he had counted only four farmers present unlike the eighteen men whom he termed "themselves." In contrast, of the thirty or forty who had attended the March 25th meeting, he claimed nearly a dozen were "respectable farmers." Mackenzie expressed his disgust that "*not one of the faction* would grace a meeting of real farmers by their presence."

Mackenzie also indicated that apparently at the May 15th Court House meeting the £50 was subscribed very quickly and the election of officers followed soon after. This, he declared was not following "the Spirit of the Act." He charged that the meeting had contravened the government's purpose for establishing agricultural societies on a district-wide basis. As the necessary £50 had been collected from the mere twenty individuals who attended the Court House meeting, Mackenzie believed that this small group of York elite intended to use the £100 government grant to finance their own private club instead of a district-wide association of farmers.<sup>69</sup>

Others in the province also expressed their disgust at the actions of the York elite and their all-too-familiar tactics. William Buell Jr., a reformer in the House of Assembly and editor of the *Brockville Recorder*, concurred with Mackenzie's opinion of the Family Compact. A champion of Brockville's ability to compete with York and Kingston, Buell expressed his concerns that the control of the agricultural society at York was not just about the Home

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., May 20, 1830, p. 2, c. 3-4.

District. He was appalled that, once again, the tory oligarchy at York refused to allow anyone but itself to lead the development of the province:

It now only remains for the Farmers to enter and humbly compete for the prizes under these great men and all will be complete. Truly the manner in which things of this nature are generally conducted in this Province is calculated to excite disgust in a thinking mind. A certain set of men must manage all public matters in their own way or they will withdraw their support from useful public objects; while a no less respectable and worthy class, who do not wish to assume so much, see that they can have no chance of enjoying equal privileges, quietly attend their private occupations. Thus important and useful public institutions often fail, for want of a proper amalgamation of the individuals which should have a share in their management. An Agricultural Society is of this description, and is it in vain to think of a society operating to advantage without placing its management proportionably [sic] within the power of those most interested in its success.<sup>70</sup>

Buell, like Mackenzie, understood that the leadership of this society was not just about control of a local organization. The Family Compact's actions had announced who it believed should lead the district institutions of agricultural development, and they clearly intended to send the message throughout the province.

However, as with previous Upper Canadian agricultural societies, the Home District society's elite membership proved to be a liability in gaining wider support for the institution. Previous to the May 15th meeting, Richard Gapper's wife Fanny and her sister-in-law had attempted "to engage recruits for the agricultural society,"<sup>71</sup> and following the May 15th meeting, the

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<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, June 10, 1830, p. 4, c. 1.

<sup>71</sup>PAO, Mary O'Brien Journal # 36, May 15, 1830.

society's directors were also busy gathering subscriptions for the General Meeting on July 6th. For example, Edward O'Brien attempted to solicit subscriptions "to his agricultural society" at the general training of the militia on June 4th.<sup>72</sup> These efforts must not have been very successful. Writing to his brother-in-law Anthony in England, O'Brien suggested the society was "badly in want of some person, you for instance, sufficiently active and idle and somewhat scientific withal to take an interest in the thing and to induce others to do the same, for I am much in dread that notwithstanding all that has been done, the Ag'l Soc'y will die, not a natural death but what they call in Ireland of a 'decay'."<sup>73</sup> Decay was not the only immediate concern of the Home District Agricultural Society's executive, for the second battle between the Family Compact and William Lyon Mackenzie occurred at the first general meeting on July 6, 1830.

There exist two versions of what transpired, Edward O'Brien's and William Lyon Mackenzie's. According to O'Brien, the first General Meeting had "got on much better than [he] anticipated." To him, the farmers finally seemed to be taking an interest, having "come forward in tolerable numbers and with their support."<sup>74</sup> In his view, the attendance of William Lyon Mackenzie was the only major problem. Apparently, an offer of membership was made to Mackenzie by the Treasurer, William B. Jarvis, but Mackenzie refused to subscribe. This proved to be a critical problem, for in O'Brien's

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., Journal #38, June 4, 1830.

<sup>73</sup>PAO, "Letter from Edward O'Brien to Anthony Gapper," Mary O'Brien Journal #39, July 6, 1830. Anthony Gapper was a scientific gentleman who had been in Upper Canada and had toured the province recording the varieties of mammals found in Upper Canada. He subsequently had his findings published upon his return to England. Miller, *Journals of Mary O'Brien*, xiii - xv.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

opinion, while the meeting was in a public place, and while anyone could witness the meeting, only members could speak during the creation of by-laws and the constitution.<sup>75</sup> Keeping Mackenzie silent, however, proved to be difficult.

O'Brien's version of the general meeting described how Mackenzie, with "his accustomed impudence," rose to speak. John Elmsley and William Jarvis promptly tried to persuade him to be quiet, as he was not a member, but Mackenzie persisted. During this mayhem, the Chairman, George Crookshank, was asked to leave the Chair. John Elmsley then grabbed hold of Mackenzie, but let him go as others suggested allowing the latter a chance to remain quiet. But as soon as he was left alone, Mackenzie began to speak again, and "it became quite evident he came for the express purpose of interrupting the proceedings and causing a row." O'Brien and Richard Gapper grabbed Mackenzie and forcibly removed him from the Court House, preventing his return by fastening the door from the inside. According to O'Brien, the "little blackguard then like a spoilt and ill-behaved baby, kept thumping at the door." George Taylor Denison of Rusholme<sup>76</sup> suggested some time later that the door should be unbolted as there were farmers who might wish to come in, and he would personally see that Mackenzie remained silent. When asked how he planned to do this, he replied, "by giving him a slap on the chops to be sure." The door was then unlocked, but the culprit had gone. Recalling this incident, O'Brien suggested that "had

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>O'Brien identified George Taylor Denison as "a Mr. Dennieson." George Taylor Denison lived at Rusholme, an estate west of York, where he raised crops, livestock and thoroughbred horses. Denison lived very much like a member of the British gentry, for he had tenants on farms adjoining his property with rents partially commuted to labour on his estate. David Gagan, "George Taylor Denison," *DCB* 10, 224-5. Also see David Gagan, *The Denison Family of Toronto 1792 -1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 19.

Mackenzie come in a second time, a tumble from the windows of the Grand Jury room would most certainly be his fate."<sup>77</sup>

Mackenzie's version was much more dramatic. In his newspaper report, he maintained his insistence that the meeting had been a public one, thus open and free to all. In his view, all resolutions remained "only provisional...until the country could be brought to act in concert" with the two dozen people who established the agricultural society at the May 15th Court House meeting.<sup>78</sup> He had assumed that the public was invited to this meeting to establish the society, for the previous meeting had only produced a dozen resolutions and not a constitution. He argued that the "members of a *society* which advertises that it has *no constitution*, can neither claim rights nor enforce obligations—even their officers, if such there be, can have no duties to perform, for it is the constitution that makes the society."<sup>79</sup> Therefore, Mackenzie felt that he had "a good equitable right to come there and assist in making the constitution as liberal, useful and comprehensive as possible." If what he attempted to propose was not approved, "he would be content with having done his duty, for he certainly wished the society to be so constituted as to be useful."<sup>80</sup>

He claimed that he had risen in response to the second clause of the proposed constitution being debated which suggested that the society have sixty directors. Mackenzie opposed this proposal, as he felt that it would be

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<sup>77</sup>PAO, "Letter from Edward O'Brien to Anthony Gapper," Mary O'Brien Journal #39, July 6, 1830.

<sup>78</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, July 8, 1830, p. 2, c. 4.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, July 15, 1830, p. 3, c. 3. Mackenzie makes a lengthy case concerning the lack of a constitution in this editorial entitled "THE OFFICIAL OUTRAGE!"

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, July 8, 1830, p. 2, c. 5.



impossible for sixty members from across the district to come together every time a meeting was called.<sup>81</sup> He would later claim that it was not "possible for any one to offer a remark in a more unassuming and unobtrusive manner than he did on that occasion." But as he rose to speak, "The Official Riot," as Mackenzie termed it, began.<sup>82</sup>

Mackenzie claimed to have had "violent hands" laid on him during the first attempt to remove him, and that he had been struck only once, he believed, by Richard Gapper.<sup>83</sup> In a later editorial, Mackenzie expressed his disgust at being evicted from the meeting. He played on the fact that the Court House was a public room which contained "the King's throne."<sup>84</sup> This object and the coat of arms was the very symbol of the "descent of authority from above."<sup>85</sup> He wondered how at "the foot of the throne itself," such a "scene of riot and disorder" could occur. He was especially offended that he, as an elected Assemblyman representing the farmers of the Home District at a meeting establishing an agricultural society, had been "collared and insulted in the neighbourhood of the *throne*." He concluded that if such abuses were allowed to occur by "the Hon. John Elmsley and his majesterial

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<sup>81</sup>It is unclear on what basis these directors were to be elected. As no copy of the constitution exists, it is not evident whether this was a further concentration of power at York, or an attempt to tap into county leadership. Possibly this number represented directors for each township of the Home District. *Ibid.*, p. 2, c. 4.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, July 15, 1830, p. 3, c. 3.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, July 8, 1830, p. 2, c. 5. Edward O'Brien appended to his letter to Anthony Gapper the versions of the story as recorded by Mackenzie in the *Colonial Advocate* and by Francis Collins in his *Canadian Freeman*. Unfortunately, no copy of this issue of the *Canadian Freeman* exists. Edward noted that Mackenzie's "account [was] so far false that no one attempted to strike him." See PAO, "Letter from Edward O'Brien to Anthony Gapper," Mary O'Brien Journal #39, July 6, 1830.

<sup>84</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, July 15, 1830, p. 3, c. 3.

<sup>85</sup>Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 94.

compeers...the liberty of the subject and the rights of the many must be at a very low ebb."<sup>86</sup>

Contrary to O'Brien's version of the meeting, Mackenzie asserted that despite his attendance at meetings and personal expenditures in gaining the establishment of the institution, he had not been either requested to subscribe, nor had he refused such an offer. Mackenzie intended to take legal action as a result of his physical removal from the meeting by a "few placemen" of John Elmsley. He suggested that it would be "for a jury of the country to say whether such conduct as was displayed by Messrs. Elmsley, Gapper, Young and O'Brien be correct and proper or whether it merits public reprobation."<sup>87</sup> However, by November, Mackenzie declared that he was not going to proceed with prosecution for the "assault" he received at this meeting. He had used the incident to his political advantage and was satisfied with his re-election to the House of Assembly.<sup>88</sup>

To place the battle for control of the Home District Agricultural Society within the larger context of Upper Canada, one has to concur with S. J. R. Noel's conclusion that in one important way William Lyon Mackenzie and the members of the Family Compact were alike. Their "personal attachment"

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<sup>86</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, July 15, 1830, p. 3, c. 3. Mackenzie highlighted the irony of the "abuses" he suffered in the presence of the "throne." As Paul Romney suggests, the tory elite, many of whom were legal professionals, recognized themselves "as guardians of the provincial constitution." This was a duty imposed upon them by the Law Society of Upper Canada. He argues, however, that many were perceived by the public as paid agents of an economic system, entrenched in law, that discriminated against agrarian smallholders and left them at the mercy of the merchant and the moneylender." Romney, "From the Types Riot to the Rebellion," 121.

<sup>87</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>88</sup>On November 7, 1830, Mary O'Brien recorded that the news at church on that day was that since Mackenzie had won a seat in the provincial elections, he was satisfied with public opinion and did not plan to "carry on the prosecution for the assault or rather turn out he got at the Agricultural meeting." PAO, Mary O'Brien Journal #45, November 7, 1830.

to York, their immersion "in the furious conflicts of the capital," and their "exclusively urban careers and interests...made them rather anomalous figures in a society that was overwhelmingly rural and agrarian."<sup>89</sup> Indeed, interest in leading the agricultural society was about the symbolic control of another of York's institutions and York society itself. Mackenzie looked to the potential of the Home District Agricultural Society to be led by farmers as a pressure group to further the government reforms he championed. The Family Compact, on the other hand, needed to control this society to maintain their monopoly of York's institutions, and more importantly, to exert their influence on the farmers of the Home District who were otherwise represented by reformers in the House of Assembly.

While these and future political battles at York would characterize the Home District Agricultural Society throughout the 1830-46 period, other such institutions in the outlying districts of the province were not affected by its problems. As Noel argues, Mackenzie and the Family Compact were also alike in overestimating each other's influence. "Mackenzie seemed to assume that because the Compact loomed so large in Toronto its shadow had necessarily to extend across the province, whereas in reality it did not, or did so only weakly and intermittently."<sup>90</sup> The examples of the Midland and Niagara Agricultural Societies, discussed in the following chapter demonstrate that the political controversy characterizing the establishment of the Home District Agricultural Society at York was an anomaly in Upper Canada. The politics of York were not necessarily the politics of the province as a whole.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Noel, *Patrons. Clients, Brokers*, 98.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*

As the legislation of 1830 offered government funds to establish district societies with no requirements for interaction, the Family Compact who formed the Home District Agricultural Society could not aspire to the aims of its predecessor, the Upper Canada Agricultural Society. It could not be a central provincial institution radiating its influence out from York to other district societies. Under the legislation of 1830, that role had been effectively placed in the hands of the provincial legislature. In fact, the Family Compact could barely control the Home District. The symbolic message that they had tried to send by their domination of the May 15, 1830 meeting at the Court House at York was certainly heard by Mackenzie at York, but in the rural hinterland of York and throughout the rest of the province the message was only heard by those who chose to listen. Many did not.

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

**Chapter 6:  
Gentleman, Farmers, and "Gentleman-Half-Farmers":  
District Agricultural Societies, 1830-1846.**

As the founding of the Home District Agricultural Society demonstrated, the introduction of government support did not result in a complete break from past models of agricultural societies as gentlemanly clubs. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, many Upper Canadian societies including those for the Home, Midland and Niagara Districts, retained much of the private character of their predecessors, merely using public money to fund activities for their membership. Nevertheless, over the course of this period, the agricultural society legislation did create an important shift in the leadership of these institutions. Previous attempts to establish colonial agricultural societies by the provincial elite had failed to interest many of the province's local oligarchies.

The 1830 legislation funding the encouragement of agricultural societies in the districts of the province overcame such long-standing indifference. In passing this bill, the colonial legislature at York committed itself to act in the place of a central board of agriculture. As a result, the new district societies were not required to be a branch of any central institution established at the capital. Furthermore, the government provided funds for agricultural societies without enacting explicit requirements for their leadership. Instead, the act tapped into the same Upper Canadian patron-client system on which the operation of the colonial government depended.<sup>1</sup> Leadership requirements for these new institutions were not included in the act, for provincial legislators implicitly understood that either they, or other

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<sup>1</sup>S. J. R. Noel suggests that the patron-client relationship was "an elemental feature" of Upper Canada's political life. Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers*, 1.

patrons in each district, who already held appointed and elected offices, would establish these new agricultural societies. In doing so, local patrons would invest these publicly funded organizations with the same authority and respect they received as government officials.

In his study of the politics of clientelism, S. J. R. Noel argues that a "general 'culture of clientelism'" had existed Upper Canada from its beginning, that involved much more than politics or "government dispensed patronage." Noel asserts that the term clientelism "identifies a *pattern* of patron-client relationships that is woven into the total fabric of the community, and whose political effectiveness and durability are all the greater precisely because it is *not* exclusively political." In Upper Canada, clientelism was "long assumed to be a normal part of the political process because it was a normal part of practically everything else."<sup>2</sup>

The passage of the agricultural societies' legislation and the spread of these institutions throughout the colony illustrated a nascent provincial vision of development. Yet the implementation of province-wide goals required the support of the local patrons, and as shall be seen later in this chapter, the agricultural societies for the Niagara, Midland and Home Districts, received such endorsement. As a result of being founded within Upper Canada's clientelism – a system that was quite resilient to change – the general pattern of district agricultural societies' leadership evolved little between the passage of the initial act in 1830 and the establishment of a provincial association of the district societies in 1846.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>The emphasis is Noel's. *Ibid.*, 14 - 15.

<sup>3</sup>Noel contends that clientelism proved very resistant to change, despite the fact that by the late 1830s the province's political system had become "manifestly deficient and inadequate." Although the tory system of government, he argues, "was basically too anarchic to be led...it nevertheless rested on a solid foundation of shared values and proven patron-client

During this period, Upper Canada underwent many social and political changes. From 1830 through to the union of Upper and Lower Canada in 1841, the population of the province had more than doubled, and it nearly doubled again by the mid-1840s.<sup>4</sup> An influx of immigrants dramatically pushed the settlement of the province well into the interior away from a string of communities along the province's southern fringe. Furthermore, by the 1840s many of the older colonial elites had passed on, leaving the leadership of the province to younger gentlemen who were not of Loyalist stock, and who had not proven their loyalty in the War of 1812.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, clientelism continued to be a fundamental aspect of Upper Canadian politics and society.<sup>6</sup>

In many ways, Upper Canadian society changed very little during the 1840s despite substantial increases in the provincial population. J. K. Johnson suggests that by 1841, it was still a "profoundly rural province" with an urban population that composed only 11.5% of its total.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, R. D. Gidney and W. P. J. Millar argue that the "traditional assumptions about the place of the professional gentleman in society, his role and prerogatives," continued to have merit well past the midway point of the century.<sup>8</sup> Agricultural societies had always been the concern of the Upper Canadian gentlemen who

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relationships: when threatened, it could respond in concert and with surprising strength." *Ibid.*, 79, 101-2.

<sup>4</sup>The Upper Canadian population in 1830 stood at 231 156 inhabitants. By 1842 this had increased to 487 053 and by 1848 it had swelled rapidly to 725 879 persons. Armstrong, *Handbook of Upper Canadian Chronology*, 272.

<sup>5</sup>Fraser, "Like Eden in Her Summer Dress," 342-3; Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers*, 110-1.

<sup>6</sup>Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers*, 110-1.

<sup>7</sup>Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 8.

<sup>8</sup>Gidney and Millar, *Professional Gentlemen*, 387.

attempted to recreate the institutions of the British aristocracy. And it was during the 1830s and 1840s that they were successful in attaining a leadership role within the publicly funded district agricultural societies of the province. The Georgian definitions of gentlemanly status persisted as local patrons, in part, defined themselves as gentlemen by leading institutions which were rooted in the ideology of the English Enlightenment. Moreover, the leaders of the district agricultural societies were concerned with that part of society which, although expanding, was doing so within the stable system of clientelism set in place with the very foundation of the province. Therefore, despite significant changes among the urban and commercial elite by the 1840s, many Upper Canadian gentlemen continued to characterize themselves as patrons in much the same manner as their predecessors.

What did change by the 1840s, however, was the number of societies within each district. Public grants to establish and support agricultural societies after 1830 meant that the subscribing members were no longer solely responsible for raising an organization's operating funds and prize money. This removed a significant financial barrier to the farmers, merchants and businessmen of the province who did not have the personal wealth of the foremost provincial elites. As a result, a wider range of individuals were able to join a district society. To accommodate the expanding settlement, county and township agricultural societies were encouraged by new government legislation. Also based on the patron-client system, these smaller associations were linked to the district society through common executive members. By 1846, the activities of a district agricultural society were focused mainly on its township and county branches as the district became primarily a channel through which the branches received their portion of the government funds.



Significantly, clientelism lent one defining characteristic to Upper Canada's district agricultural societies. No two societies were alike. The Family Compact may have taken control of the Home District Agricultural Society, but this York oligarchy did not set the exclusive standard of leadership for all district agricultural societies. Political and personal battles waged in York were not necessarily those of the province. Outside of the capital, as Noel argues, "politics for the most part retained the 'parish pump' quality and more often than not revolved around old loyalties, old feuds, and local personalities." The Family Compact, Noel states, although dominating the "machinery of government" at the capital, was "by no means guaranteed that its political dominance would necessarily extend to the local level in an unbroken 'line of command.' Instead, the very system of non-responsible government...that ensured the Compact's position of privilege in the capital...[ironically]...also ensured a substantial measure of local autonomy." Local patrons did not defer to the Family Compact socially, "and saw no reason to do so politically."<sup>9</sup>

Legislation allowed district agricultural societies to develop independently, and they assumed local characteristics created by the social and political idiosyncrasies of each district. Moreover, from the 1830 passage of the first agricultural societies bill to the organization of a Provincial Agricultural Association in 1846, interaction between district societies was neither required nor fostered. This further entrenched the differing characteristics from one district society to the next.

Publicly funded agricultural societies were respected social organizations in each district of the province after 1830, however. This is

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<sup>9</sup>Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers*, 98-9.

perhaps best demonstrated by the example of the Bathurst District Agricultural Society. In August of 1835, a coup of sorts occurred at its annual meeting at Bytown, when its membership, consisting of the Ottawa Valley gentry, was descended upon by Peter Ayles, "the timber king," and his Bytown mob known as the Shiners. They paid their one dollar membership, and turned the meeting into a drunken mêlée. When it came time for the election of officers, Ayles and his crew easily outnumbered the regular members and voted the executive out of office, electing timbermen to all positions of the society. For the next two years, the Shiners controlled the Bathurst District Agricultural Society, causing the gentry to give up any hopes of regaining control. As a result, in April 1837, the Bathurst gentry were forced to establish another agricultural society.<sup>10</sup>

Almost comedic in its occurrence, this episode was more than just a drunken challenge taken up by Ayles and the Shiners. Michael Cross argues that "few organizations were dearer to the hearts of the Carleton gentry than the Agricultural Society, in which they paid at least lip service to the agrarian myth, so important a part of the gentle ideal as imported from Britain." Particularly in the timber frontier of the Ottawa Valley, the elites could not faithfully reproduce British culture. Instead, Cross notes, "they produced a distortion, an exaggeration" to the point "that they parodied, rather than mirrored, English customs."<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, by taking over the agricultural society, Ayles "had declared war on the gentility."<sup>12</sup> The Shiners recognized the social leadership offered by the Bathurst District Agricultural Society and

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<sup>10</sup>Michael S. Cross, "The Shiners' War: Social Violence in the Ottawa Valley in the 1830s," *Canadian Historical Review* 54 (March 1973), 1-26, 17.

<sup>11</sup>Cross, "The Age of Gentility: The Formation of An Aristocracy in the Ottawa Valley," *Canadian Historical Association Papers* 1967, 109-10.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

knew that in taking control of this institution they had struck at the heart of the pretensions of gentility of the Bytown elite. Furthermore, Aylen continued to lead the agricultural society, in order to add the deference of the farming population of the district to that which he already received from the timber interests at Bytown. Like the establishment of the Home District Agricultural Society and the "Official Riot" that ensued, the Shiners' coup was an exceptional event in the history of the province's agricultural societies. It does illustrate, however, that a district agricultural society was widely recognized as an institution of authority during the Upper Canadian period.

As a result of the localized nature of the district agricultural societies from 1830 to 1846, identifying the general characteristics of their leaders is a difficult task. In spite of the local variations, however, there are broad qualities that define the gentlemen who formed the executive of the district agricultural societies.<sup>13</sup> This chapter will first examine the patron-client relationship that dominated Upper Canadian politics and society. It will assess the general prominence of these patrons and the gentlemanly characteristics of the leaders of district agricultural societies. Subsequently, the examples of the agricultural societies established in the Niagara, Midland and Home Districts will be employed to illustrate how regional differences strongly characterized each society. Every district organization in the province followed the same principles outlined by the provincial legislation. In leadership and organizational structure, however, these three societies were

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<sup>13</sup>This chapter will define the executive as being the President, Vice-Presidents, Secretary and Treasurer. A Director was also a part of a society's executive as it was an elected position. This position has been omitted from this study as many of these individuals could not be identified. Only in specific instances will the Directors be included.

very much influenced by the local interests and political debates of their respective districts.

Between 1830 and 1846, the district agricultural societies of Upper Canada remained rooted in the culture of clientelism that influenced the province' society and politics. Clientelism's permanence, S. J. R. Noel argues, resulted from the fact that patron-client relations "were useful, practical arrangements that were capable of being intelligently adapted to changing conditions; in short, they filled a gap in the nineteenth-century social organization, and the reciprocal benefits on which they were based were real."<sup>14</sup> He suggests that there was a distinct difference between what he terms the "political system" and the "clientele system" in Upper Canada. It was the political system, based upon the province's Constitutional Act that had allowed the formation of the Family Compact. While its members had connections to the clientele system, it was not the basis of their power. The "structures and institutions" of the constitution "had created substantial roles" for the oligarchy, and over time they had mastered its processes. In contrast, the province's rural patrons' connections with the political system were "problematical and not the source of their eminence." Unlike the Family Compact, the patrons "were rooted in the clientele system and derived their power and influence mainly from their symbiotic relationship with their clients in the social and economic development of an agrarian society."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers*, 17.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 106-7

Outside of York, it was the rural patrons who, after the passage of the agricultural societies act in March 1830, were quite willing to procure the government money to organize district agricultural societies and operate them within their clientele system. District agricultural societies fit hand-in-glove into the patron-client relationship. They were established by the colonial government to lead provincial agricultural development; however, as they were led by the district patrons, they developed local rather than provincial aims. The officers of these new public institutions were not appointed by the provincial executive. Instead, they were elected on the basis of the earned respect that was the key to the patron-client system. As their prominence was derived from local clients, regional leaders often had few obligations and did not have to defer to the provincial elite at York.<sup>16</sup>

The process by which these local patrons attained prominence is well outlined by J. K. Johnson in his study of the Upper Canadian members of the House of Assembly. He determines that the majority of representatives generally had first achieved prominence by being appointed as a magistrate or granted a commission as an officer in the provincial militia. By doing so, these gentlemen had gained what Johnson terms a "double stamp" of approval both by the local oligarchy as well as the central elite. If these individuals were elected to the House of Assembly, they garnered a "triple approval," for they had gained the additional public approval of the voters of the riding.<sup>17</sup>

The characterization of prominence that Johnson offers for Assemblymen applies to the leaders of the district agricultural societies, as it

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 99.

<sup>17</sup>Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 4.

was the local patrons who were elected to executive positions. In general, they owned large amounts of property, held other government offices and had been offered commissions by their superiors. "No matter what corner of the province they represented," Johnson argues, "it is likely that most [Members of the House of Assembly] saw themselves as being entitled to some measure of deference."<sup>18</sup> Most elected members, he continues, would not have attained "the ideal standards of the provincial 'gentry'" as identified by Robert L. Fraser in his study of Upper Canada's gentry. Although they exacted deference, they were not characterized as "those set apart by gentle birth, education and good breeding."<sup>19</sup> Instead, Johnson concludes that "as a group they had earned a general collective right to local distinction," even though there were some Assemblymen "who by any standard were not gentlemen."<sup>20</sup> In fact, Johnson argues, it is difficult to pinpoint accurately the contemporary prominence of any one Upper Canadian gentleman. Individuals defined as leaders by contemporaries or later authors "were not all that exceptional even in their own time, while others...were beyond doubt very conspicuous and successful leaders of people and opinion."<sup>21</sup>

Peter Russell compliments this observation in his study of Upper Canada's social structure. He points out that there was a great difference in a person's social status in the predominantly rural portions of the province and in the "complex, highly differentiated urban society." A shopkeeper in

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 158.

<sup>19</sup>Quoted in Ibid. Fraser suggests that the Family Compact members "referred to themselves as 'gentry'. Obviously borrowed from English social structure it describes men of lesser stature than aristocracy but set apart by gentle birth, education, and good breeding, in other words, gentlemen." Fraser, "Like Eden in Her Summer Dress," 5.

<sup>20</sup>Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 159.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 9.

Kingston, for example, was lower down in the ranks of respectability than in the outlying districts of the province where he might have the largest business in the area and might "seriously be considered as [a] possible assemblyman."<sup>22</sup>

As an institution in every district of the province, Upper Canadian agricultural societies continued to be attractive to men of varying degrees of prominence as they offered an opportunity for social mobility. Individuals whose gentlemanly status was questionable could ameliorate their status through membership in an institution led by prominent gentlemen. Upper Canadians, Russell suggests, operated within an implicit system of "stable social stratification and personal social mobility."<sup>23</sup> It offered mobility to all Upper Canadians, so long as "they respected the legitimacy of the social structure itself."<sup>24</sup> Upper Canada's district agricultural societies, established by provincial gentlemen, remained rooted in the character of the "clubbable world" and the "genteel code" of their predecessors. Consequently, the ability for upward mobility was set by those already at the top, thus effecting the chances of those at the bottom to raise their level of respectability.<sup>25</sup> Joining an agricultural society and presenting oneself as a candidate for its offices is a perfect example of social mobility that "harmoniz[ed] personal ambition with a fixed hierarchy...a gradual rise by the proper means of the right people."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Peter A. Russell, *Attitudes to Social Structure and Mobility in Upper Canada 1815 - 1840* (Queenston, Ont: The Edward Mellen Press, 1990), 6.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 201-2.

This process ensured that Upper Canada's agricultural development would progress properly and be led by appropriate gentlemen. Thus, as the government funded agricultural societies buttressed the hierarchical nature of Upper Canadian society, they created a public forum for the colonial elite to retain the Georgian assumptions that defined gentlemanly status well into the Victorian age.

In their study of nineteenth-century professional gentlemen, R. D. Gidney and W. P. J. Millar comment that by mid-nineteenth century, the provincial society,

could no longer be tidily divided into a gentry class consisting of a handful of office-holders, professional gentlemen, and wealthy merchants, the natural-born leaders of society, and a largely undifferentiated mass of men below them known throughout the Anglo-American world as 'men of the middling sort' -- its artisans and mechanics, yeoman farmers, shopkeepers, dissenting ministers, clerks, and all those other individuals who were neither privileged by wealth and power nor reduced to the penury of wage labour."<sup>27</sup>

The emergence and expansion of this Victorian middle class "undermine[d] the certitudes held by an earlier generation of Upper Canadians about the natural ordering of society."<sup>28</sup> In the 1840s, there were new "business and commercial interests eager to remake the world in their own image by sweeping away all the accumulated debris of the past."<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, as the term gentleman had developed apart from its traditional connection to landed wealth and classical education, Gidney and Millar argue, it "could be

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<sup>27</sup>Gidney and Millar, *Professional Gentlemen*, 203-4.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.



expropriated by anyone who could persuade public opinion, or even a segment of it, that his educational or moral credentials warranted that distinction."<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, despite a "sustained attack" on the long-standing definitions of what constituted gentleman status, at the end of the 1840s, Gidney and Millar maintain, "the institutions and assumptions of Georgian professionalism were still largely intact."<sup>31</sup> The longevity of the Georgian roots of Upper Canada's social order stemmed from the fact that many of the gentlemen of the mid-nineteenth century "were born and raised, read their texts and learned their manners, before the Queen Victoria's accession." Clearly, it was this "Georgian frame of mind"<sup>32</sup> which influenced the executive members of the province's agricultural societies throughout the 1830s *and* the 1840s. Much had changed within the province, but the district patrons who lead the Upper Canada's agricultural societies focused on what had not changed. Those interested in leading an institution so firmly rooted in the ideology of the previous century were predisposed to identify themselves as gentlemen in Georgian terms. They upheld the culture of clientelism, and they continued to promote and develop the agricultural foundation of the province's economy.

It must be remembered, however, that these are the broad characteristics of Upper Canada's gentleman patrons. The examples of the Niagara, Midland, and Home District Agricultural Societies demonstrate that any definition of gentleman or patron was not uniform across the province.

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 207.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 387.

Both the Niagara and Midland District Agricultural Societies illustrate a leadership that clearly relied on clientelism to both found the institution and later to spread its influence throughout the district. The individuals elected to the offices of these two societies were gentlemen who derived their prominence from the local population of the district. The Home District Agricultural Society, however, developed rather differently. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, its founding was dominated by the Family Compact. The agricultural society's leadership soon found it necessary, however, to employ the clientele system to attract support from the outlying regions of the district. Throughout the last half of the 1830s and into the 1840s, the relationship between the district organization and the township branches it sponsored seemed strained. By the middle of the latter decade, the district organization, centred within the rapidly expanding city of Toronto, began to manifest characteristics derived from Toronto's urban and commercial interests. As a result, its township branch societies appeared to become secondary to its role as a Toronto gentleman's club.

### **The Niagara Agricultural Society**

The Niagara District Agricultural Society was established at a meeting of individuals at a hotel in St. Catharines on June 7, 1830.<sup>33</sup> And although between 1830 and 1846 the population grew modestly, the Niagara District's political boundaries changed little.<sup>34</sup> Its 18 townships which existed in 1830

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<sup>33</sup>*Spirit of the Times*, June 24, 1830, p. 1, c. 1; *Niagara Gleaner*, June 26, 1830, p. 4, c. 4.

<sup>34</sup>In 1830, the Niagara District contained 20 916 inhabitants. William Smith suggested that the population of the Niagara District was 31 549 in 1842 and that it had increased by one-fifth to 37 859 by 1846. This 1842 figure is almost 1000 persons fewer than the government's report of 32 445 for 1840. The official report for 1843 set the population at 36 642. Upper Canada, House of Assembly, *Journals*, Appendix, "Population Returns for 1830," 1 Wm. 4, 1st Sess, 11th Parl., 1831; Province of Canada. House of Assembly, *Journals*, Appendix T,

had expanded to 23 by 1841, and were contained within the two counties of Haldimand and Lincoln.<sup>35</sup> Reflecting this stable growth, the constitution created at the inaugural meeting of the Niagara District Agricultural Society, as well as the first elected executive, were not substantially altered during the 1830-46 period.<sup>36</sup>

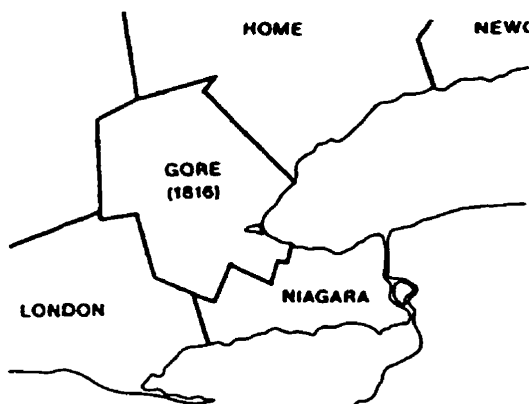


Map 4: Niagara District circa 1838. Nick and Helma Mika, *The Shaping of Ontario from Exploration to Confederation* (Belleville: Mika Publishing Company, 1985), 261.

"Population Returns, 1841." 4-5 Vic., 1st Sess., 1st Parl., 1841; *Ibid.*, Appendix F. F. "Return of Enumeration..." 7 Vic., 3rd Sess., 1st Parl., 1843; Smith, *Smith's Gazetteer*, 125.

<sup>35</sup>Upper Canada, House of Assembly, *Journals*, Appendix, "Population Returns for 1830," 1 Wm. 4, 1st Sess, 11th Parl., 1831; Province of Canada. House of Assembly, *Journals*, Appendix T, "Population Returns, 1841."

<sup>36</sup>See Appendix 9 for a list of the executives of the Niagara District Agricultural Society between 1830-46.



Map 5: Niagara District Boundaries, 1826.  
Hillman, *A Statutory Chronology of Ontario*, 334.



Map 6: Niagara District Boundaries, 1849.  
George Spragge, "The Districts of Upper Canada 1788 -1849," Ontario Historical Society, *Profiles of a Province*, (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1967), 41.

Unique among the constitutions of the three societies studied in this chapter, the resolutions founding the Niagara District Agricultural Society included a clause which stated that only farmers could be elected to an office of the new society.<sup>37</sup> It was a noble attempt by its founding members to attract support of the farmers from the district, but it did little to mask the fact that the society was established by the gentlemen patrons of the district. Throughout the 1830s and 40s, it remained a private club whose activities were for the benefits of its members. Although it hosted cattle shows across the district, the first by-law for this event stated, "No person to be allowed any benefit of this Society, unless he is an actual annual Subscriber."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup>Unfortunately, no copy of the Niagara District Agricultural Society's constitution has survived. Information concerning this clause comes from its removal from the constitution in 1834. *British American Journal*, June 24, 1834, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>38</sup>*Farmers' Journal and Welland Canal Intelligencer*, January [?], 1831, p. 3, c. 4.

At the inaugural meeting of June 1830, George Adams was elected president of the Niagara District Agricultural Society, and he retained this position until his death at the age of 73 in 1844.<sup>39</sup> Adams was an Upper Canadian gentleman whose prominence is difficult to assess accurately. He was not one of the wealthy provincial elite, but through his government office and personal connections with other Niagara patrons he had established himself as a prominent gentleman of Niagara District.

Adams' election as President is interesting, considering that the merchant Samuel Street Jr. was also present at the inaugural meeting. Upon his death in 1844, Street was considered "the most wealthy individual in the Niagara District."<sup>40</sup> At the 1830 meeting, he offered a "liberal donation" to the Niagara District Agricultural Society and, in return, was "constituted a member for life."<sup>41</sup> Yet, Street was neither elected to an office of the society, nor was he involved beyond offering his donation. Instead, it was the seemingly less prominent Adams who was voted to lead the society.

In his obituary, George Adams was remembered as "one of the oldest and most prominent inhabitants" of the Niagara District. His "energy and example" were recalled as the "chief cause" of the "triumphant success" of the Niagara District Agricultural Society.<sup>42</sup> A later commentator would note that

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<sup>39</sup>In 1842, the aging president did tender his resignation; however, at the "unanimous request of the members," he consented to its withdrawal, and was later officially re-elected as president. *St. Catharines Journal*, May 26, 1842, p. 3, c. 2; June 9, 1842, p. 3, c. 3; August 16, 1844, p. 3, c. 3.

<sup>40</sup>*St. Catharines Journal*, August 23, 1844, p. 3, c. 3. Street was known as Samuel Street Jr. to distinguish him from his uncle, Samuel Street (1753-1815). See In Collaboration with Bruce A. Parker, "Samuel Street," *DCB*, 5, 782.

<sup>41</sup>*Niagara Gleaner*, June 26, 1830, p. 4, c. 4.

<sup>42</sup>*St. Catharines Journal*, August 16, 1844, p. 3, c. 3.

in the St. Catharines area, "none was more *loved and beloved*."<sup>43</sup> Born in Londonderry, Ireland Adams had emigrated to Canandagua, New York, where he had learned the currier and tanner trade. He had apparently arrived in Queenston during the American Revolution "with only two shillings," but he had found a patron in Robert Hamilton who had established him as a partner in a milling operation on the Niagara River with Benjamin Canby.<sup>44</sup> Adams had purchased from Hamilton two hundred acres of the merchant's land which was next to that of William Hamilton Merritt, the future promoter of the Welland Canal.<sup>45</sup> Adams, a "severely wounded" veteran of the War of 1812,<sup>46</sup> was associated with his neighbour in this project as an original subscriber and promoter.<sup>47</sup>

Adams and Merritt were also fellow Magistrates on the bench of the Court of Request.<sup>48</sup> Despite the fact that the role of magistrate was among the lowest of the judiciary,<sup>49</sup> Adams gained his position as a gentleman through this office. He was remembered by residents of the district, "as their general

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<sup>43</sup>"A Walk around Town! O," Junius [Oliver Seymour Phelps], *St. Catharines A to Z* (St. Catharines, Ont: The St. Catharines and Lincoln Historical Society, 1967). Emphasis is original.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. Benjamin Canby and John McGill had been granted a 999 year lease for this mill site by John Graves Simcoe in 1795. The Adams and Canby partnership lasted until 1801. Paul Romney, "Robert Randall," DCB, 6, 628-29; *Niagara Herald*, March 21, 1804, p. 3, c. 4.

<sup>45</sup>John N. Jackson, *St. Catharines: Canada's Canal City* (St. Catharines, Ontario: Stonehouse Publications, 1993), p. 33-4.

<sup>46</sup>*St. Catharines Journal*, August 16, 1844, p. 3, c. 3.

<sup>47</sup>Adams "subsequently disagreed with Mr. Merritt about the proper route of the same....therefore became a lukewarm supporter." "A Walk about Town! W," *St. Catharines A to Z*.

<sup>48</sup>*St. Catharines Journal*, August 16, 1844, p. 3, c. 3; "A Walk about Town! O," *St. Catharines A to Z*.

<sup>49</sup>Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 62.

arbiter – settling all their differences, and zealously promoting harmony and peace."<sup>50</sup> His office as President of the Niagara Agricultural Society was clearly an extension of his role as a patron. In 1842, William Hamilton Merritt, at that point the MPP for Lincoln North, wrote to George Adams, noting that the President of the agricultural society was "the most direct and appropriate channel through which any communications to the public, on any subject relating to [agriculture], can be made."<sup>51</sup>

The members present at the society's first meeting also elected a locally prominent individual as Secretary. Little biographical evidence remains concerning Samuel Wood, but he appears to have been a well respected local patron.<sup>52</sup> Like George Adams, Wood held the office of Secretary for most of the 1830 to 1845 period, replacing the deceased President in 1845.<sup>53</sup>

The creation of the constitution was entrusted to a group of six individuals including: Adam Stull, a yeoman from Grantham Township;<sup>54</sup> Johnson Butler, a gentleman merchant from St. Catharines;<sup>55</sup> Cyrus Sumner,

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<sup>50</sup>*St. Catharines Journal*, August 16, 1844, p. 3, c. 3.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, July 21, 1842, p. 2, c. 3.

<sup>52</sup>Except for his involvement in the Niagara District Agricultural Society, Samuel Wood remains unidentified. Oliver Seymour Phelps commented that he remembered the pride taken by Wood in the success of the society's cattle shows. "A Walk around Town! U," *St. Catharines A to Z*.

<sup>53</sup>Adam Stull was elected Secretary in 1833, and James Fitz-Gerald in 1834. John Gibson retained his position as Treasurer throughout the 1830-46 period. Upon Adams' death in April, 1844, Walter H. Dickson, a vice-president of the Niagara District Agricultural Society and the M.P.P. for Niagara (Town), acted as the interim president until the following year. Walter was the son of the Legislative Councillor William Dickson, who had been a member of the Niagara Agricultural Society. Ontario. Legislative Library Research and Information Services. *Legislators and Legislatures of Ontario*, 1984, vol. 1, 103; Henry J. Morgan, ed., *The Canadian Parliamentary Companion*, 6th ed. (Montreal: Gazette Steam Printing House, 1871), 12. See Appendix 9. *St. Catharines Journal*, May 1, 1845, p. 3, c. 3.

<sup>54</sup>Thomas B. Wilson, *Marriage Bonds of Ontario 1803 - 1834* (Lamberton, N. J.: Huntendon House, 1985), 215.

a physician from Clinton Township who had been a member of the original Niagara Agricultural Society,<sup>56</sup> David William Smith, a gentleman from St. Catharines;<sup>57</sup> and John Gibson "a well known Englishman," a "successful farmer...an enterprising wool carder...cloth dresser" and a justice of the peace.<sup>58</sup> Directors for each of the townships within the district were also elected to solicit subscriptions for the society <sup>59</sup>

The Directors apparently had limited success as it appears that the Niagara District Agricultural Society could not gather the necessary £50 to petition the government until December 1830, six months after its inaugural meeting.<sup>60</sup> Following a difficult first year, the society appointed a committee to revise its constitution in January 1832.<sup>61</sup> In an attempt to expand the support of the society by the farmers within the district, in May 1832 the Niagara District Agricultural Society increased the number of directors per township from one to five. Presumably this would both reduce the burden on one individual to scour the township for subscriptions, and it would gain more support by tapping further into the support of the township patrons.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 106, 337.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 218. This was not the same David William Smith of the first Niagara Agricultural Society as he had returned to England in July 1802.

<sup>58</sup>"A Walk around Town! Q," *St. Catharines A to Z*. The committee also included James Clendinning who remains unidentified.

<sup>59</sup>*Spirit of the Times*, June 24, 1830, p. 1, c. 1; *Niagara Gleaner*, June 26, 1830, p. 4, c. 4. Another list of thirteen Directors appears in a petition requesting government funds. Presumably, these Directors were elected as proper officials of the Niagara District Agricultural Society after the drafting of a constitution sometime between June and December 1830. PAC, RG5 A1, Upper Canada Sundries, "Petition to Sir John Colborne," December 1830, pp. 59142-4.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 59142-44.

<sup>61</sup>*Farmers' Journal and Welland Canal Intelligencer*, January 18, 1832, p. 3, c. 1.



At the same time, the Niagara District Agricultural Society also hoped to attract more prominent gentlemen residing in the district. It passed a resolution allowing for any person subscribing £2 10s to be entitled to a life membership in the Niagara District Agricultural Society.<sup>63</sup>

The society also received assistance from Hiram Leavenworth, the editor of *The Farmers' Journal and Welland Canal Intelligencer*.<sup>64</sup> In January 1832, he appended to the report of the Niagara District Agricultural Society meeting a request for the farmers to aid "the unwearied efforts of those now struggling not only for a measure eminently calculated to encourage the agriculture of the district, but to promote the general prosperity of the whole country." Also following the patron-client approach, Leavenworth distributed copies of this issue to several gentlemen throughout the Niagara District who were not subscribers, but whom he hoped would lend their influence and support to the organization.<sup>65</sup>

Still lacking sufficient support after its first three years, the Niagara District Agricultural Society finally abandoned its goal of being an institution ostensibly led by farmers. At the June 1834 general meeting, the clause of the society's constitution which had read "that none but actual *Farmers* can serve as officers of the society" was replaced by a new clause stating that "any person may be considered competent" to fill any position in the Society, "no matter

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<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, May 17, 1832, p. 3, c. 4.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup>Leavenworth had come to Queenston in 1821 at the request of William Lyon Mackenzie to be employed printing the *Colonial Advocate*. He had begun publishing his own newspaper devoted to "the agricultural interests of this fertile and growing land" at St. Catharines in February 1826. "A Walk Around Town! P," *St. Catharines A to Z; Farmers' Journal and Welland Canal Intelligencer*, February 1, 1826, p. 1, c. 1.

<sup>65</sup>*Farmers' Journal and Welland Canal Intelligencer*, January 18, 1832, p. 3, c. 1.

what his profession or calling may be."<sup>66</sup> This represented no real change in the society's executive. Rather, it affirmed the status of those gentlemen who had led the society from its founding.

Upon its formation, the main focus of the society was hosting both spring and fall cattle shows. In the interests of the farmers of the district as a whole, an attempt was made to host one of each year's cattle shows in a centre other than St. Catharines<sup>67</sup> During this period, St. Catharines became the

<sup>66</sup>*British American Journal*, June 24, 1834, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>67</sup>This table is compiled from a variety of newspaper advertisements. After 1830, the years in which there are not two shows identified may be the result of there not being one held, or it not being advertised in the newspaper. In listing the limited references made to these events, the following does not include repeated insertions of each notice, although it may include similar advertisements in different newspapers. Where two locations are given, the former is the location of the spring cattle show, and the latter is the location of the autumn event.

1831: Chippewa, Clinton. *Farmers' Journal and Welland Canal Intelligencer*, January [?], 1831, p. 3, c. 4; October 12, 1831, p. 3, c. 2-3; November 16, 1831, p. 3, c. 1-2.

1832: St. Catharines. *Niagara Gleaner*, May 12, 1832, p. 3, c.2; *Farmers' Journal and Welland Canal Intelligencer*, May 17, 1832, p. 3, c. 4.

1833: St. Davids. *Niagara Gleaner*, May 18, 1833, p. 2, c. 5-6; *Farmers' Journal and Welland Canal Intelligencer*, April 18, 1833, p. 3, c.2; [July 12], 1833, p. 3, c.3.

1834: St. Catharines. *British American Journal*, June 24, 1834, p. 3, c.2-3.

1835: St. Catharines, Niagara. *British American Journal*, May 7, 1835, p. 3, c.2; June 25, 1835, p. 2, c.1; *St. Catharines Journal*, November 12, 1835, p. 3, c.1.

1836: St. Catharines, Niagara. *St. Catharines Journal*, May 5, 1836, p. 3, c.3; June 16, 1836, p. 3, c.1; October 20, 1836, p. 3, c.2; December 8, 1836, p. 2, c.5

1838: St. Catharines. *St. Catharines Journal*, May 17, 1838, p. 3, c.1; May 31, 1838, p. 3, c.2; June 14, 1838, p. 2, c.5; June 21, 1838, p. 3, c.2; July 5, 1838, p. 3, c.2; October 25, 1838, p. 3, c.1.

1840: St. Catharines, Stamford. *St. Catharines Journal*, July 23, 1840, p. 3, c. 1; September 17, 1840, p. 3, c.1.

1841: Drummondville, St. Catharines. *St. Catharines Journal*, May 13, 1841, p. 3, c. 1-2; May 27, 1841, p. 2, c. 5; June 24, 1841, p. 3, c. 4; October 28, 1841, p. 3, c.4; November 4, 1841, p. 2, c. 6 - p. 3, c.1; November 18, 1841, p. 4, c.1.

1842: Drummondville, St. Catharines. *St. Catharines Journal*, April 21, 1842, p. 2, c.5; April 28, 1842, p. 2, c.5; May 26, 1842, p. 3, c.1-2; *British American Cultivator*, June 1842, p. 81, c. 1; November 3, 1842, p. 2, c.5; November 17, 1842, p. 2, c. 5;

1843: St. Davids, Niagara. *St. Catharines Journal*, May 4, 1843, p. 2, c.6; June 1, 1843, p. 2, c. 2; October 12, 1843, p. 2, c. 3; *British American Cultivator*, December 1843, p. 182, c. 1.

1844: St. Catharines, Drummondville. *St. Catharines Journal*, May 17, 1844, p. 3, c. 2; May 24, 1844, p. 3, c.1; November 14, 1844, p. 3, c.3-4.

1845: St. Davids, St. Catharines. *St. Catharines Journal*, May 1, 1845, p. 3, c.3; May 29, 1845, p. 3, c.6; September 18, 1845, p. 3, c.1; October 16, 1845, p. 3, c.1; October 23, 1845, p. 3, c.2; November 6, 1845, p. 3, c.1-2;

primary location for these events, as it was the centre of the Welland Canal's operations and the main urban centre of the Niagara District.<sup>68</sup> A village which had contained only 384 persons in 1827, St. Catharines' population swelled to 1130 by 1835. In 1845, it was incorporated as a town with a population of 3500 persons.<sup>69</sup> George Adams' farm was on the edge of the village and it was in St. Catharines that the agricultural society held its meetings.<sup>70</sup>

After its autumn cattle show in 1836, the Niagara District Agricultural Society, having struggled since 1830, ceased its operations. Its "revival" did not occur until May 1838 with the renewal of government grants.<sup>71</sup> An urgent circular was issued for officers and members of the Niagara District Agricultural Society to meet on May 31, 1838, "for the purpose of devising some plan to fulfil [sic] the required conditions...to obtain the annual grant of Parliament" in order that the society would not "be totally lost" to the farmers of the district.<sup>72</sup> Hiram Leavenworth was "highly gratified in being able to announce the revival of operations" of the Niagara District Agricultural Society with its hosting of a cattle show in St. Catharines on June 28, 1838.<sup>73</sup>

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1846 Drummondville, Beavertams. *St. Catharines Journal*, April 16, 1846, p. 3, c.2; May 14, 1846, p. 3, c. 1-2; September 17, 1846, p. 3, c.1; October 22, 1846, p. 3, c.1-2.

<sup>68</sup>The Welland Canal was begun in 1824 and first used 5 years later. Construction to improve the canal continued, especially until 1845. For a general description of the emergence of St. Catharines see Jackson, *St. Catharines: Canada's Canal City*, 35-47.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 32, 43.

<sup>70</sup>A map showing the location of Adams' farm is located in *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>71</sup>In October 1838, Hiram Leavenworth, who gave much attention to the activities of the Niagara District Agricultural Society, commented on "the almost dormant energies of our Farmers generally" in regards to the society. After this notice there is no mention of the society's activities until May 1838. *St. Catharines Journal*, October 26, 1836, p. 3, c 2; *Ibid.*, May 31, 1838, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, May 17, 1838, p. 3, c. 3.

By the time the month had passed, however, both the Niagara District Agricultural Society Spring Cattle Show and its the new executive would be held in greater esteem by Leavenworth and the residents of the district.

The Niagara District Agricultural Society was the only institution of the three studied in this chapter that was directly affected by the Upper Canada Rebellion. Since December 1837, the district had been the scene of "Patriot" raids and border skirmishes involving refugees and American sympathizers of the failed Upper Canadian Rebellion. One of the last such raids began on June 11, 1838 when approximately thirty rebels began raiding the Short Hills area outside of St. Catharines.<sup>74</sup> This area was known for its "political radicalism," and on June 20 radicals executed a raid on the village of St. John's.<sup>75</sup> It was between these two dates, armed with the knowledge that the patriots were in the area, that Hiram Leavenworth wrote an editorial which anticipated the June 28 cattle show as a timely demonstration of the goodness of man rather than "the rude arts of war that lately burst on our slumbers."<sup>76</sup>

In this editorial, entitled "St. Catharines Cattle Show and Fair" Leavenworth mourned "the evils entailed on our nature," and was "sickened at the sight of our brother imbruing his hands in the blood of his brother." Yet anticipating the upcoming cattle show, the editor noted "with pleasure, the efforts that are made to meliorate society by uniting its members in stronger and sweeter ties of unity and love." Leavenworth announced, "Let

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., May 31, 1838, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>74</sup>Colin Read, "The Short Hills Raid of June, 1838, and its Aftermath," *Ontario History* 68 (June 1976): 93-4; Read, *The Rising in Western Upper Canada 1837-8* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 137.

<sup>75</sup>Read, "Short Hills Raid," 98-9

<sup>76</sup>*St. Catharines Journal*, June 14, 1838, p. 2, c. 5.

the formation of a Niagara District Agricultural Society, be a rallying point to bring forward the sturdy yeomanry of the country to a knowledge of the duties and privileges set before them, in this favoured and fertile colony: and as time fades away from our grasp, we shall be more and more an united, loyal, happy and triumphant people."<sup>77</sup>

By the time that the Spring Cattle Show was held, the patriot raid begun on June 20 had ended and many of the rebels captured. This event proved to be the first opportunity for the area to celebrate, and it was also weighted with the significance of being the day of Queen Victoria's coronation. On the evening of the cattle show, an illumination took place in St. Catharines, "accompanied by the usual demonstrations of joy, on such occasions, such as the throwing of fireballs, the firing of musketry, and the lighting of bonfires." Thus, Leavenworth noted in his July 5, 1838 issue that "notwithstanding the recent insurrectionary disturbances at the Short Hills, and the consequent unsettled state of publick [sic] feeling, the concourse of Farmers and others interested, was much larger than usual."<sup>78</sup>

Just as Leavenworth deemed the revival of the agricultural society to be very timely, its significance was not lost on the executive of the organization itself. In "consideration of the particular interest taken in the success" of the institution, a list was published of those gentlemen who had voluntarily subscribed £1 each to allow a resumption of its operations. As a reward for their timely subscription, the 41 individuals who had not been elected officers were appointed Directors.<sup>79</sup> Thus reborn, the Niagara District Agricultural Society continued to operate successfully throughout the 1840s.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., July 5, 1838, p. 3, c. 2.

Another interesting aspect of the 1838 agricultural society elections was their demonstration that executive membership was transferable from one district society to another among those identified as Upper Canadian gentlemen. In that year, William B. Robinson was elected as a Vice-President of the society. He was the younger brother of John Beverley and Peter Robinson, and son-in-law of the Home District Agricultural Society's President, William Jarvis. He was also a merchant from Newmarket, who had been a Vice-President of the Home District Agricultural Society in 1835. In 1837, Robinson, the elected House of Assembly member for the riding of Simcoe, had been one of three men appointed as commissioners to supervise the expenditure of the legislative grant to improve the Welland Canal. Although only recently arrived in St. Catharines, he did not just become a member. It appears that Robinson's leadership was sought by the Niagara District Agricultural Society, as he was elected to a senior position within the society.<sup>81</sup>

That the characteristics of the Niagara District Agricultural Society of the 1840s had changed little from its beginnings in 1830 is best demonstrated by the district society's sponsoring of the publication of a book on agriculture for use in the province's schools. *The Canadian Agricultural Reader*, anonymously written by "a Vice-President of the Niagara District Agricultural Society and Township Superintendent of Common Schools," was launched at a dinner following the autumn cattle show in 1845.<sup>82</sup> This book upheld the

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>No information concerning the society's activities appears to have been published in 1839.

<sup>81</sup>See Appendices 9 and 11. Julia Jarvis, "William Benjamin Robinson," *DCB*, 10, 622.

<sup>82</sup>*The Canadian Agricultural Reader designed principally for the use of schools* (Niagara: John Simpson, 1845); *St. Catharines Journal*, November 6, 1845, p. 3, c. 2.

tradition of *noblesse oblige*, for it offered the youth of the province an opportunity to learn the agricultural techniques known by its gentleman author, Reverend Thomas Brock Fuller, the godson of Sir Isaac Brock, a son-in-law of Samuel Street Jr., and a former student of John Strachan. Fuller had moved from Chatham to Thorold to assume the position the rural dean of Niagara in 1840.<sup>83</sup> By 1845, Fuller had been elected a Vice-President of the Niagara District Agricultural Society.

The only significant change that occurred within the Niagara District Agricultural Society after its rebirth in 1838 was its sponsorship of township branch societies. These branches, however, were more of an addition to the district society's activities rather than a transformation of that organization. In response to new government legislation, county and township societies began to organize throughout the Niagara District in 1845. During that year, the county of Haldimand, and the townships of Clinton and Grimsby each organized a society. By 1846, there was also one established at Pelham.<sup>84</sup> After this date, there existed two levels of societies in the Niagara District. The district organization continued its own operations as it had prior to 1845. Its connection to the township level appears to have been only maintained in order to channel the government funding through to its branch societies.

While the expansion of the district society had long been the goal of its leaders, not everyone agreed with its implementation. In a November 1845 letter to the editor of the *St. Catharines Journal*, Samuel Wood, President of the Niagara District Agricultural Society, expressed his belief that the district would be better served to have societies formed out of every three or four

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<sup>83</sup>Richard E. Ruggle, "Thomas Brock Fuller," *DCB*, 11, 326-7.

<sup>84</sup>*Globe*, November 4, 1846, p. 3, c. 4; *British Colonist*, November 10, 1846, p. 2, c. 5.

townships. Wood argued that if societies were formed in every township, "the funds would be so limited for each, that they would avail but little."<sup>85</sup> There was also the problem of township branches holding their cattle shows on the same day as other townships or the district cattle show. As all would suffer from the lack of attendance this would cause, on October 29, 1846, a meeting of delegates from all the township societies was scheduled "to make such arrangements as will tend to the general improvement" of this situation.<sup>86</sup>

Despite the addition of coordinating and funding township branch societies to its mandate, the Niagara District Agricultural Society of 1846 had changed little in character from its beginnings in 1830 (although it was not financially stable until the 1840s). In the 1830s the district patrons had relied on the patrons of the townships to support the district organization. During the following decade, in response to increased settlement and new government legislation, the executive of the Niagara District Agricultural Society relied on these same township patrons to establish its branch societies.

### **The Midland District Agricultural Society**

Unlike the Niagara District Agricultural Society, its counterpart in the Midland District was founded in a district which was substantially transformed between 1830 and 1846. In 1830, the Midland District consisted of five counties, Hastings, Prince Edward, Lennox, Addington and Frontenac,

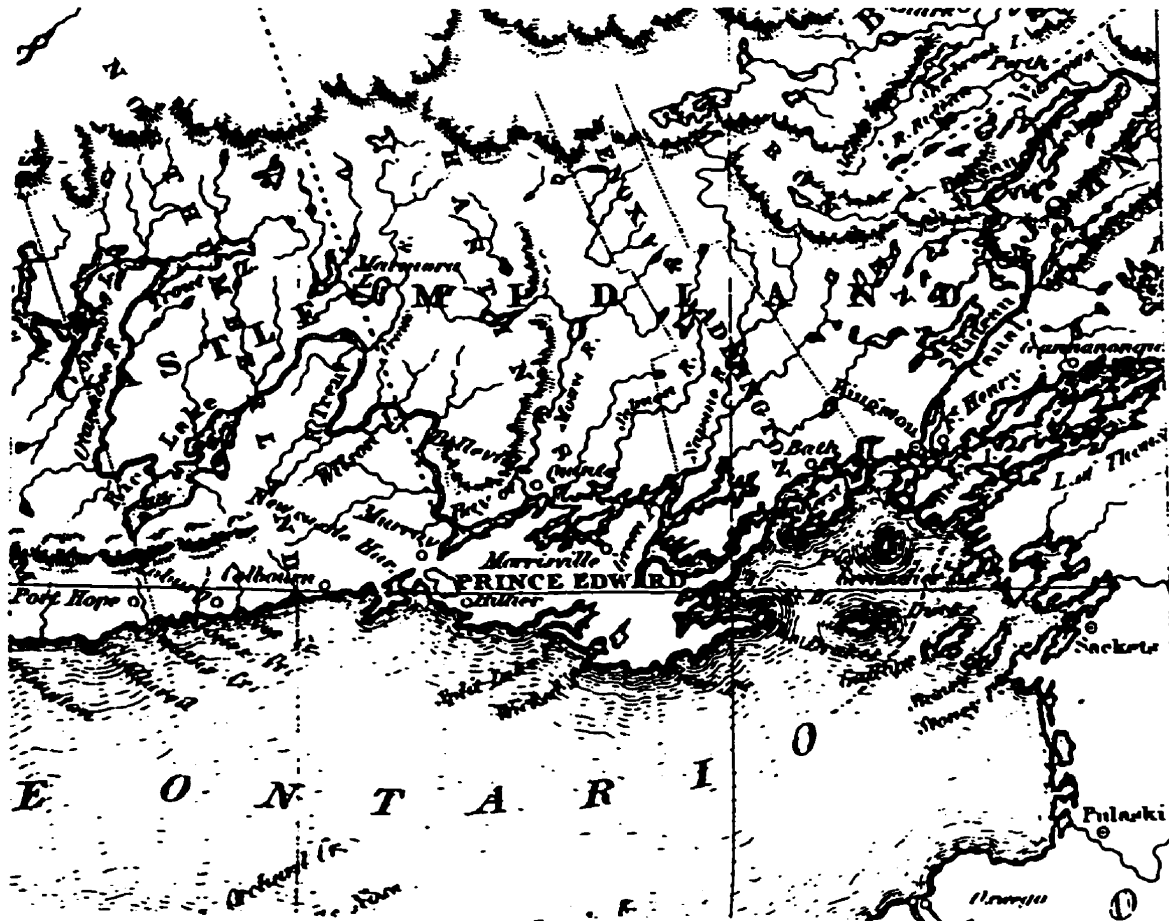
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<sup>85</sup>*St. Catharines Journal*, November 6, 1845, p. 3, c. 1-2. This letter was published as having been written by the Secretary of the society A. K. Boomer. See *Ibid.*, November 13, 1845, p. 3, c. 2. for a correction of the author.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, October 22, 1846, p. 3, c. 1.



containing a population of 34, 190 inhabitants.<sup>87</sup> By the time of union, it had been reduced to the county of Frontenac and the united counties of Lennox and Addington with a population of 28, 756 persons distributed among Kingston and thirteen townships.<sup>88</sup> By 1846 the total number of persons in the district increased to approximately 45, 231.<sup>89</sup>

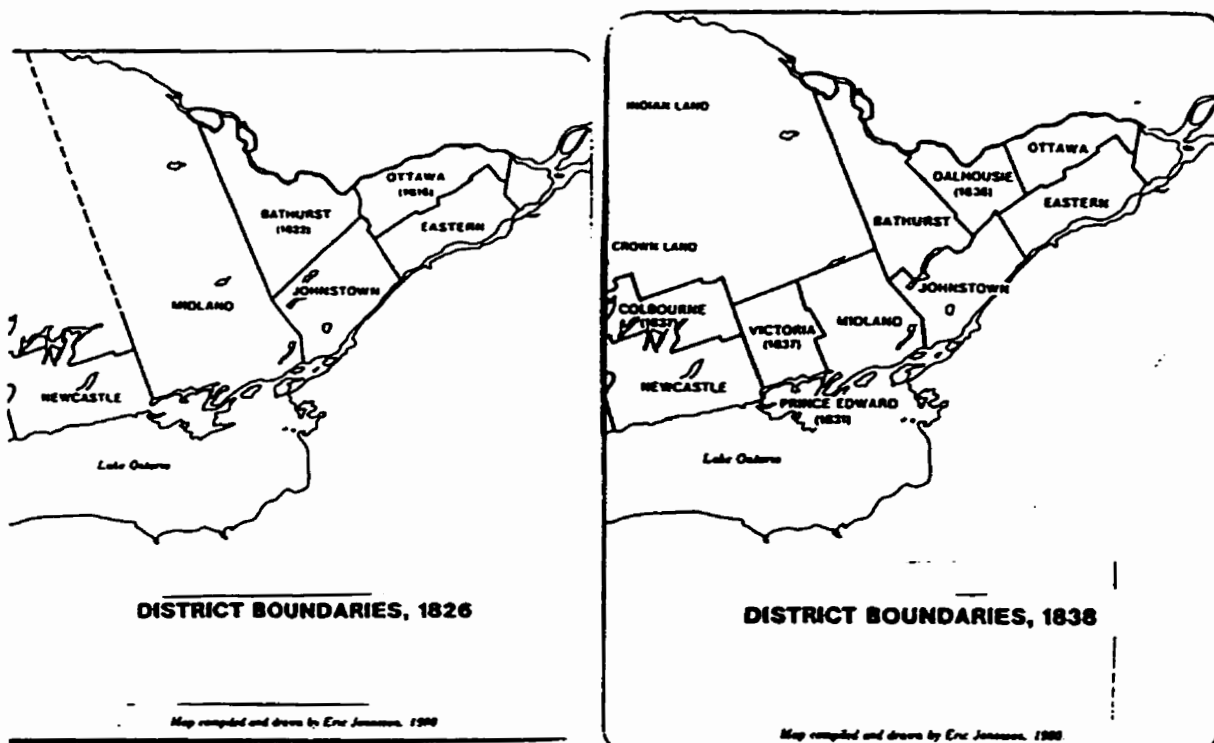


Map 7: Midland District circa 1838. Mika, *The Shaping of Ontario*, 261.

<sup>87</sup>Upper Canada, House of Assembly, *Journals*, Appendix, "Population Returns for 1830," 1 Wm. 4, 1st Sess, 11th Parl., 1831.

<sup>88</sup>Province of Canada. House of Assembly, *Journals*, Appendix T, "Population Returns, 1841." 4-5 Vic, 1st Sess., 1st Parl., 1841.

<sup>89</sup>William Smith's base number of 38 770 inhabitants in 1842 is larger than the government's total of 34 448 in 1843. He suggested that between 1842 and 1846, the population of the district increased by one-sixth. Smith, *Smith's Gazetteer*, 115; Province of Canada. House of Assembly, *Journals*, Appendix F. F. "Return of Enumeration..." 7 Vic, 3rd Sess., 1st Parl, 1843.



Map 8: Midland District Boundaries, 1826.  
Hillman, *A Statutory Chronology  
of Ontario*, 334.

Map 9: Midland District Boundaries, 1838.  
Hillman, *A Statutory Chronology  
of Ontario*, 335.

On April 27, 1830, a meeting was held at the Kingston Court House at which a form of a constitution for a "Midland District Agricultural Society" was read and submitted to the meeting for approval. The meeting was then adjourned until the following evening when the constitution for the "Midland District Agricultural Society" was formally adopted.<sup>90</sup> The society elected John Macaulay as its first President. Macaulay, the former editor of the *Kingston Chronicle*, had been a staunch supporter of the district agricultural society of 1820s. One of Kingston's most prominent businessmen, with Loyalist roots reaching back to the beginnings of the town, he was a natural choice for President. Between 1830 and 1836, John Macaulay was at the height

<sup>90</sup>For the full report of the founding of the Midland District Agricultural Society see *Kingston Chronicle*, April 17, 1830, p. 3, c. 3; May 8, 1830, p. 2, c. 6 - p. 3, c. 1-2.

of his business career and he also held several government offices, including that of postmaster. Involved in both Kingston and provincial politics, he was described by Lieutenant Governor John Colborne as a gentleman who led an "opulent" life.<sup>91</sup>

The members also elected another newspaperman, Hugh C. Thomson to the position of Secretary. Thomson was the editor of the *Upper Canada Herald*, the MHA for Frontenac County, a Justice of the Peace, and former Secretary of the old Frontenac Agricultural Society. In the early 1830s, he and Macaulay were commissioned by the provincial government to report on the founding of a provincial penitentiary at Kingston.<sup>92</sup>

While the executive was composed of Kingston gentlemen,<sup>93</sup> the constitution reflected the format of the old Midland District Agricultural Society. Just as the earlier organization had sponsored county societies, the district institution established in 1830 was based entirely on the support of the county patrons, and by the 1840s the support of the township patrons.<sup>94</sup> The original constitution of 1830 provided for an executive formed of five Vice-Presidents, one for each county in the district, and thirty Directors, six per county. The Vice-Presidents elected at this meeting consisted of five county

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<sup>91</sup>Fraser, "John Macaulay," *DCB*, 8, 514 -22; Bindon, "Kingston," 454; S. F. Wise, "John Macaulay: Tory for all Seasons," in *To Preserve and Defend: Essays on Kingston in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Gerald Tulchinsky (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976), 185-202.

<sup>92</sup>H. P. Gundy, "Hugh Christopher Thompson," *DCB*, 6, 772 -4; Gundy, "Hugh C. Thomson: Editor, Publisher and Politician, 1791 - 1834," in Tulchinsky ed., *To Preserve and Defend*, 203-22.

<sup>93</sup>David J. Smith, a longtime gentleman resident of Kingston was also voted to the office of Treasurer. Bindon, "Kingston," 591; William D. Reid, *Death Notices of Ontario* (Lambertville, N. J.: Hunterdon House, 1980), 299.

<sup>94</sup>See Appendix 10 for a list of the executive of the Midland District Agricultural Society from 1830 - 1846.

patrons from the large territory of the Midland District: Frontenac County, John B. Marks, Secretary to the Commodore at the Kingston naval yards and a farmer in Pittsburgh Township;<sup>95</sup> Addington County, Isaac Fraser, registrar and former MHA for Lennox and Addington who operated a woolen mill in Ernestown Township;<sup>96</sup> Lennox County, Allan MacPherson, miller, merchant and patron of the developing town of Napanee;<sup>97</sup> Prince Edward County, Asa Worden (Werden), a farmer, miller, lumberman and land speculator from Athol Township, who would be elected to the House of Assembly later in 1830;<sup>98</sup> Hastings County, William Bell, a Justice of the Peace and Coroner from Belleville.<sup>99</sup> These gentlemen were instructed to call meetings in their respective counties to elect county Vice-Presidents and Directors as well as to collect subscriptions necessary to apply for the government grant.<sup>100</sup>

The constitution of the Midland District Agricultural Society offered a certain degree of independence to the county societies. Both the district and county boards were free to "frame by-laws and regulations, for their own guidance and conduct as they may seem fit," provided that there was no

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<sup>95</sup>Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 214; *British Whig*, May 2, 1845, p. 2, c. 6.

<sup>96</sup>Walter S. Herrington, *History of the County of Lennox and Addington* (Toronto: MacMillan Company of Canada, Ltd., 1913), 375.

<sup>97</sup>Lennox and Addington Centennial Brochure Committee, *Historical Glimpses of Lennox and Addington County* ([Napanee, Ont.]: Lennox and Addington County Council, 1964), 54-55.

<sup>98</sup>Prince Edward Historical Society, *Historic Prince Edward* ([Picton, Ont.]: The Society, 1976), p. 19; Armstrong, *Handbook of Upper Canadian Chronology*, 73; Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 234.

<sup>99</sup>"Correspondence, 1779-1836," William Bell Papers, Lennox and Addington Museum and Archives.

<sup>100</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, May 8, 1830, p. 3, c. 1.

infringement by one organization on the other. The district society synchronized the county and district activities, and it ensured that relevant matters discussed in the various counties would be tabled at the district meeting. Specifically, it ordered that the general meetings of each county occur "at a convenient time before the holding of the Court of Quarter Sessions," at which time the quarterly general meetings of the Midland District Agricultural Society were to be held.<sup>101</sup>

In the early 1830s, an increase in settlement, combined with old divisions between local oligarchies resulted in fundamental changes to the original Midland District. As a result, its agricultural society had to abandon its original intention of organizing five county societies in the district. In the Midland District Agricultural Society's first petition for the government bounty, President John Macaulay noted that the funds which the society had raised came solely from subscribers living in Frontenac, Lennox and Addington counties.<sup>102</sup>

It was not until 1831 that Prince Edward County was able to form a county society. The Prince Edward County Agricultural Society did not, however, become a county branch of the Midland District Agricultural Society for two reasons. First, its membership was "unable to see a prospect of any good arising from continuing themselves with the Midland District Agricultural Society on account of the distance from Kingston and from the small proportion" of funds which it would receive through such an

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>PAC, RG5 A1, Upper Canada Sundries, "Petition to Sir John Colborne," November 16, 1830, pp. 58489-91.

association.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, in that same year, Prince Edward County became a separate district.<sup>104</sup>

Like Prince Edward County, the patrons of Hasting County could not organize a society in 1830. Moreover, no society was established for several years, and until 1835, the Midland District Agricultural Society was unable to receive the entire £100 government grant. Finally, in 1835, the Midland District society bluntly informed the government that no funds had ever been subscribed by Hastings County, "which [had] never taken any interest" in the affairs of the Kingston organization regardless of the opportunities available.<sup>105</sup> Thus, President Macaulay requested that the full sum be awarded to the Midland District Agricultural Society and be distributed between Frontenac County and the united counties of Lennox and Addington.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, "Prince Edward Agricultural Society to Sir John Colborne," July 6, 1831, pp. 61305-18. The Midland District society apparently opposed this separation and gained the support of the government. The Attorney General determined that the Prince Edward Society, although now contained within a new district could not be entitled to any more funds than what it would have received through a connection with the Midland District Agricultural Society. *Ibid.*, October 1, 1831, pp. 62114-15.

<sup>104</sup>*Statutes of Upper Canada*, 1 Wm 4. c.7 This act received Royal Assent, March 16, 1831. See Spragge, "The Districts of Upper Canada 1788 -1849", 34-42, 40.

<sup>105</sup>PAC, RG5 A1, Upper Canada Sundries, "John Macaulay to Colonel Rowan," September 4, 1835, pp. 85969-71; *Ibid.*, "John Macaulay to Colonel Rowan," December 24, 1834, pp. 81033-4. In 1837, Hastings County would become part of the newly incorporated Victoria District. 7Wm 4 Chap. 31.; Spragge, "Districts of Upper Canada," 40.

<sup>106</sup>In 1831, President Macaulay suggested that the Midland District Agricultural Society constitution which recognized Lennox and Addington as two separate counties, be amended to conform to the provincial act of 1798 which had incorporated the two counties as one. This proposed amendment, however, aroused "great surprise" at the next meeting of the Midland District Agricultural Society. It had been generally believed that the two counties were considered separate except for election purposes. PAC, RG5 A1, Upper Canada Sundries, "John Macaulay to Edward MacMahon," December 23, 1831, pp. 63021-24; "John Macaulay to Edward MacMahon," January 31, 1832, pp. 63973-75; "John Macaulay to Colonel Rowan," August 22, 1833, pp. 72747; "John Macaulay to Colonel Rowan," December 24, 1833, pp. 81033-34; "John Macaulay to Colonel Rowan," December 31, 1834, pp. 81425-29.

From its very beginning, the Midland District Agricultural Society was created as a coordinating organization whose main focus was the hosting of cattle shows for its two county societies. Its first cattle show was in 1831, and in early 1832, the district society sought to expand the attendance at these events. The society petitioned the government with a request that the district be allowed to host two "Chartered Fairs for buying and selling Cattle," each year at Kingston and "two at such other places as may be considered most convenient."<sup>107</sup> By the time of the cattle show of October 1833, the society's petition had been granted, and the Frontenac County Agricultural Society held its cattle show at the Kingston Fair.<sup>108</sup> The following year, a similar fair for Lennox and Addington was established at Napanee,<sup>109</sup> and in 1835, the Lennox and Addington Agricultural Society began a tradition of holding its cattle show for one day of the Napanee Fair.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, February 4, 1832, p. 2, c. 5. Subsequently, the Midland District Agricultural Society agreed to draft a petition requesting the Lieutenant Governor to establish chartered fairs in the Midland District. *Ibid.*, March 24, 1832, p. 3, c. 1.

<sup>108</sup>*Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, October 5, 1833, p. 3, c. 2; October 12, 1833, p. 2, c. 4.

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.*, September 20, 1834, p. 2, c. 5.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, July 22, 1835, p. 3, c. 5. Details about the regularity of the Lennox and Addington Cattle Shows are somewhat sketchy, but it appears that at least the autumn cattle shows in 1835, 1838 and 1842 were held in conjunction with the Napanee Fair. In 1840, the Midland District Agricultural Society ordered the Lennox and Addington society to hold its cattle show in connection with the fair. But the connection between these two events seems to have been lost, for in 1841, the cattle show was held at Bath. Nevertheless, at a meeting at the Napanee Fair of 1841, it was decided to host the cattle show in connection with the fair in 1842. *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, July 25, 1841, p. 1, c. 6; *The Canadian Farmer and Mechanic*, September 15, 1841, p. 23-24. The last notice for the Lennox and Addington Cattle Show in conjunction with the Napanee Fair appeared in September 1842. *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, September 3, 1842, p. 3, c. 2.

As for the Frontenac County Society, it appears to have maintained the connection with the Kingston Fair until the fall of 1842, when it moved its cattle show to Waterloo. By 1844, the relationship had clearly ended, as the Midland District Agricultural Society shifted its organization from the county to the township level. *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, June 29, 1842, p. 2, c. 6; *Ibid.*, August 22, 1838, p. 2, c. 4; August 18, 1838, p. 3, c. 2; *British Whig*, August 30, 1838, p. 2, c. 6.

In sponsoring these competitions, the constitution of the Midland District Agricultural Society had attempted originally to move away from the private club model by stating that: "All persons who are *bona fide* residents within the District may become candidates for prizes, whether they be members of the Society or not."<sup>111</sup> By 1833, however, the Frontenac County society imposed an entrance fee for livestock and produce that was "not the property of subscribers."<sup>112</sup> The Lennox and Addington County society also restricted its competition by 1835, ruling that "no premiums be awarded to any person not a Member of the Society."<sup>113</sup>

The structure and leadership of the Midland District Agricultural Society changed substantially between 1834 and 1836. First, within four years of their founding, the Frontenac and Lennox and Addington County Agricultural Societies became completely private clubs. In light of the cancellation of government funds in 1834, the Vice-President for Frontenac County, John B. Marks, reluctantly announced the abandonment of the district agricultural society, as public money had been critical to its survival. He believed that "a sufficient number of public spirited individuals [could] be found in each County of the District, willing to support the agricultural interests of the country, and [who would] form themselves into Societies for that purpose."<sup>114</sup> With no government funds to be received, a district society was no longer needed. Therefore, Marks proposed a motion which was seconded by Isaac Fraser, the Vice-President of the Lennox and Addington

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<sup>111</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, May 8, 1830, p. 3, c. 1.

<sup>112</sup>*Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, October 5, 1833, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*, July 22, 1835, p. 3, c. 5.

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, April 26, 1834, p. 3, 1-2.



society, that county societies be formed and that the £70 remaining in the District Society funds be divided between the counties.<sup>115</sup>

In the following year, however, government grants were renewed, and the Midland District Agricultural Society was reformed in order to petition for, receive and distribute these funds. In spite of its rebirth, the independence of the county societies established during the previous year was retained. As of September 1, 1835, the two counties were directed by the renewed district organization to form themselves into "separate Societies." In the new constitution, each was given the ability to choose its own Directors and Secretary, make arrangements for cattle shows, and set its own premiums. The bounty collected from the government, plus money raised in the town of Kingston would be distributed by the Midland District Agricultural Society in proportion to the amount of subscriptions raised in each county.<sup>116</sup>

The resuscitated Midland District Agricultural Society witnessed two important losses to its leadership. First, it had lost the institution's original Secretary, Hugh C. Thomson, who had died at age 43 from a "severe affliction of the lungs," immediately after the 1834 meeting held to temporarily cease the society's operations.<sup>117</sup> Secondly, in 1836, the society lost its first president when John Macaulay moved to Toronto to assume his appointment as a Legislative Councillor and Surveyor General.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup>Ibid. After this motion was passed, votes of thanks were offered to the President John Macaulay for among other things, "his general conduct for the good of the society." Hugh C. Thomson, Secretary, and David J. Smith, Treasurer, were offered thanks "for their exertions and attention to the affairs of the Society since its commencement." John Marks was also commended for "his public spirit, zeal and unwearied exertions in promoting the object of the Society."

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., July 22, 1835, p. 3, c. 5; *British Whig*, July 28, 1835, p. 3, c. 4-5.

<sup>117</sup>*Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, April 26, 1834, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>118</sup>Fraser, "John Macaulay," *DCB*, 8, 519.

Macaulay's replacement as President was John Bennet Marks. Since the society's founding, he had been a Vice-President of the district organization and Chairman of the Frontenac County Society. Marks was clearly a well respected gentleman of Kingston, Frontenac County and the Midland District. He had arrived in Upper Canada during the War of 1812, and assumed a post at the Kingston dockyards. He remained President of the Midland District Agricultural Society into the late 1840s. By the time of his retirement from the naval yards in 1845, he had held various offices including, MHA for Frontenac, (1836-41), a Colonel of the Militia, and Associate Judge of Assize, Justice of the Peace, and Warden of the Midland District since 1841. Upon the occasion of his retirement, a notice stated that "no gentleman has so well deserved, and at the same time so universally received, the esteem and approbation of all classes of the Canadian community."<sup>119</sup>

While the departure of Thomson and Macaulay was a loss, the society had been primarily operated by the county patrons since its founding. As the district society was based at the county level, Marks was arguably already an important leader of the organization. It would be under Marks guidance that the Midland District Agricultural Society shifted its mandate from the county to the township level during the 1840s.

Throughout the rest of the 1830s and into the beginning of the 1840s, the society continued to operate within the two semi-independent county societies. Therefore, Kingston's "age of greatness" as the province's capital between February 1841 and June 1844<sup>120</sup> had little bearing on the operations of the Midland District Agricultural Society. Although the society held its

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<sup>119</sup>*British Whig*, May 2, 1845, p. 2, c. 6; Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 214.

<sup>120</sup> The capital of the Canadas shifted to Montreal in 1844. Osborne and Swainson, *Kingston*, 110-11.

meetings in Kingston, from its founding it had been influenced more by the changing nature of the settlement in the rural areas of the district than it had by the political or commercial aspects of Kingston. This characteristic was plainly evident in the mid-1840s with the further shift of the society's operations to the township level.

In his speech to the membership in 1844, President John Marks suggested that the idea of establishing township societies in place of the larger county and district societies was one that had "long been contemplated" by the society.<sup>121</sup> Branch societies for both Wolfe and Amherst Island had already been established in 1840 and 1843 respectively.<sup>122</sup> Accordingly, the Midland District Agricultural Society resolved that the county societies would be replaced by a Branch Agricultural Society in each Township.<sup>123</sup> Each township society would be governed by a committee of ten, out of which a Chairman, a Secretary and a Treasurer would be chosen. A sum of £50 from the government grant, as well as subscriptions raised from residents in

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<sup>121</sup>*British Whig*, April 23, 1844, p. 2, c. 7 - p. 3, c. 1; *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, April 24, 1844, p. 3, c. 1. In the spring of 1837, in conformity with new legislation guided through parliament by John B. Marks, the Midland District Agricultural Society amended its constitution to include 2 Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer, a Secretary and a Director for each township. In response to this new organization, the executive of the Midland District Agricultural Society swelled to include a President, Treasurer, four Vice-Presidents and a Recording Secretary for minutes of its meetings and a Corresponding Secretary to communicate with the two county societies. *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, May 10, 1837, p. 3, c. 1-2; *British Whig*, May 12, 1837, p. 2, c. 5, p. 3, c. 1. For a copy of the revised constitution, see *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, August 3, 1837, p. 2, c. 6 - p. 3, c. 2.

Constitutional revisions were again undertaken in July 1840, as the Midland District Agricultural Society clarified its organization and supervision of the county societies. County Directors were increased from one to four per township and three Directors were to be elected for to gather support from the residents of Kingston for the society. *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, July 25, 1840, p. 1, c. 4-6.

<sup>122</sup>*Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, June 10, 1840, p. 1, c. 5-6; July 25, 1840, p. 1, c. 5; July 12, 1843, p. 3, c. 1.

<sup>123</sup>This move was in response to William Edmundson's plan published in his *British American Cultivator* which was also being adopted by the Home District Agricultural Society. See Chapter 7.

Kingston would be reserved for the purposes of the District society.<sup>124</sup> During 1844, six township societies were formed, each hosting its own cattle show.<sup>125</sup>

At the next annual meeting of the Midland District Agricultural Society in July 1845, the formation of township branches was formalized in the new constitution of the district society.<sup>126</sup> In championing this plan, President Marks stated his belief that Township Branch Societies would "no doubt be the best means of immediately extending the advantages of Agricultural knowledge amongst our widely scattered population."<sup>127</sup> Not all apparently agreed with Marks, for only after "being warmly debated" was the new constitution adopted.<sup>128</sup>

As a result of their various constitutional changes, the Frontenac and Lennox and Addington County branches were replaced by township branches. By 1846, the Midland District Agricultural Society had truly sponsored the development of agricultural societies throughout the entire district. From its establishment, the district organization had allowed a great deal of

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<sup>124</sup>*British Whig*, May 17, 1844, p. 2, c. 5; *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, May 22, 1844, p. 2, c. 3; *British Colonist*, May 28, 1844, p. 2, c. 7.

<sup>125</sup>*British Whig*, July 15, 1845, p. 2, c. 6. The exact six townships are unclear. At a meeting of May 14, 1844, the Midland District Agricultural Society had scheduled cattle shows for Adolphustown, Camden, Ernestown, Fredericksburgh, Kingston, Pittsburgh, Richmond and Sheffield townships. Of these eight townships, only Ernestown and Pittsburgh townships advertised their cattle shows in 1844. *British Whig*, May 17, 1844, p. 2, c. 5; September 3, 1844, p. 2, c. 7; September 27, 1844, p. 2, c. 5; October 4, 1844, p. 2, c. 5; *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, May 22, 1844, p. 2, c. 3; *British Colonist*, May 28, 1844, p. 2, c. 7. In 1845, the Midland District Agricultural Society advertised the township cattle shows for Kingston, Loughborough, Camden, Ernestown, Pittsburgh, Fredericksburgh. *British Whig*, September 30, 1845, p. 3, c. 4.

<sup>126</sup>Dr. Edward J. Barker, the editor of Kingston's *British Whig*, and a former Corresponding Secretary for the district agricultural society, aptly indicated the ramifications of this new constitution. His notice of the society's meeting to debate the new constitution stated, "The Annual Meeting of the Old Agricultural Society, and the formation of the New Society took place on Tuesday last." *British Whig*, July 11, 45, p. 3, c. 1.

<sup>127</sup>*Ibid.*, July 15, 1845, p. 2, c. 6-7.

<sup>128</sup>*Ibid.*, August 15, 1845, p. 3, c. 1-2.

independence on the part of the county societies, and after 1844, its township branches. Consequently, after 1845, it became an institution through which government funds were received and distributed, leaving the hosting of cattle shows and direction of agricultural reforms up to the individual township societies. Nevertheless, the operations of the society at the district, county and township level continued to be conducted by the local patrons.

### **The Home District Agricultural Society**

At a dinner hosted by the Home District Agricultural Society after its spring cattle show in 1846, about seventy people listened to its President, Edward William Thomson recall that sixteen years earlier the Home District Agricultural Society had numbered only ten individuals. He expressed his gratification that many more gentlemen now gathered every year to witness "the onward progress and success of the society."<sup>129</sup> Secretary George Dupont Wells expressed similar sentiments. Making light of what had always been a nagging problem for the society, he remarked that he was "not going to touch politics" in his speech. Instead, he focused his remarks on the harmony of the membership, agreeing with the president that he had also witnessed the growth of the Home District Agricultural Society. Wells concluded his remarks by expressing his hope that in future, "the same good feeling may continue between the farmers and gentlemen-half-farmers as heretofore."<sup>130</sup> The President's and Secretary's words on this occasion, however, were an attempt to gloss over the fact that since 1830, the intense politics of Toronto

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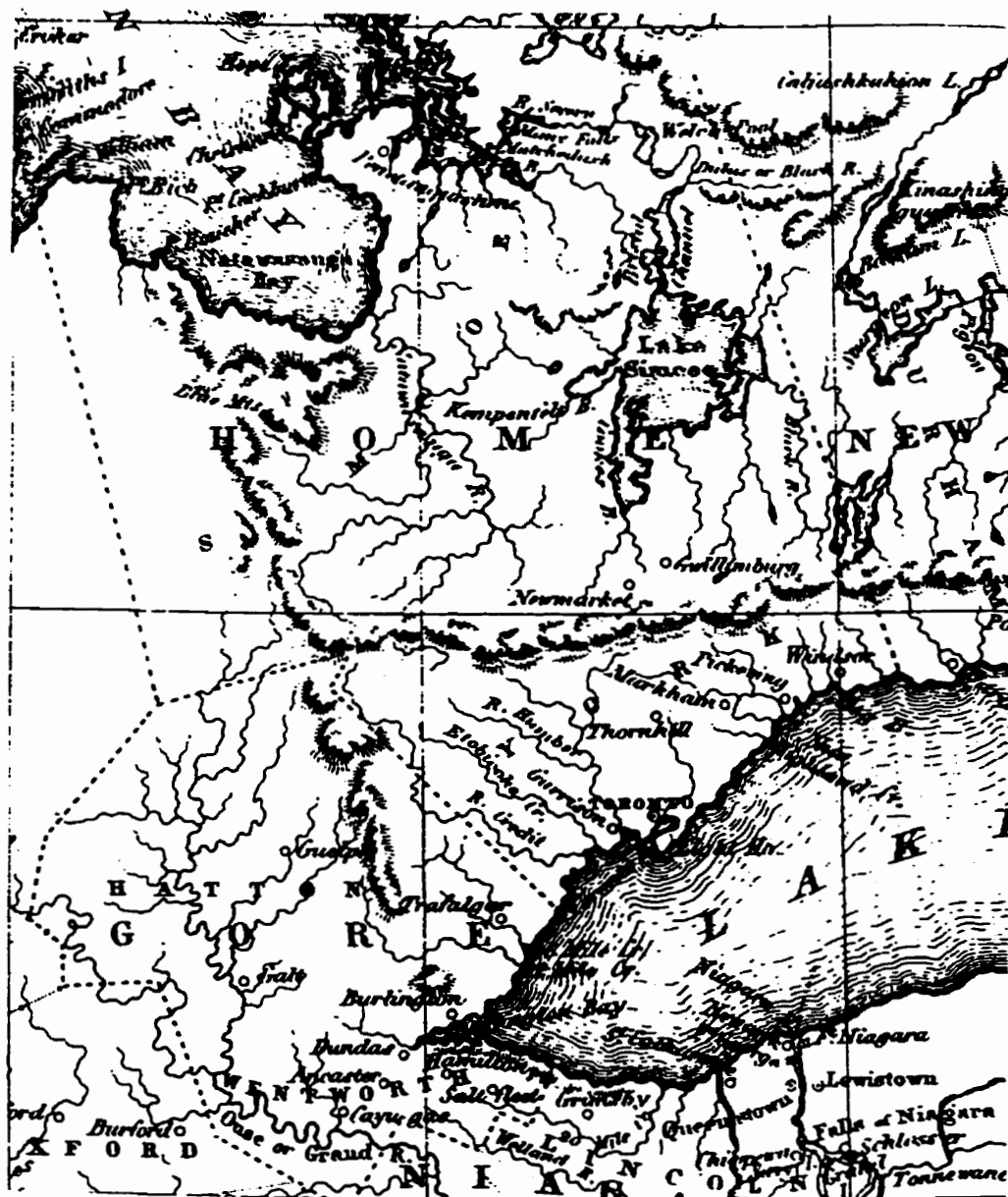
<sup>129</sup>*British Colonist*, May 15, 1846, p. 2, c. 8 - p. 3, c. 1.

<sup>130</sup>*ibid.*

and the Home District had always affected the operations of the society and relations between its members.

In fact, the experience of the Home District Agricultural Society prior to the Upper Canadian Rebellion of 1837 presents a good example of the tensions that arose from the mixture of Family Compact members and their adherents with the rural patrons of the Home District. Throughout the 1830s a core group of tory elites clung to its control of the agricultural society. They soon realized, however, that if the agricultural society was to represent the farmers of Home District, it required the cooperation and participation of the prominent reformers who were the local patrons of the district. What created the tension was the fact that the rural patrons of the Home District were mostly prominent reformers.

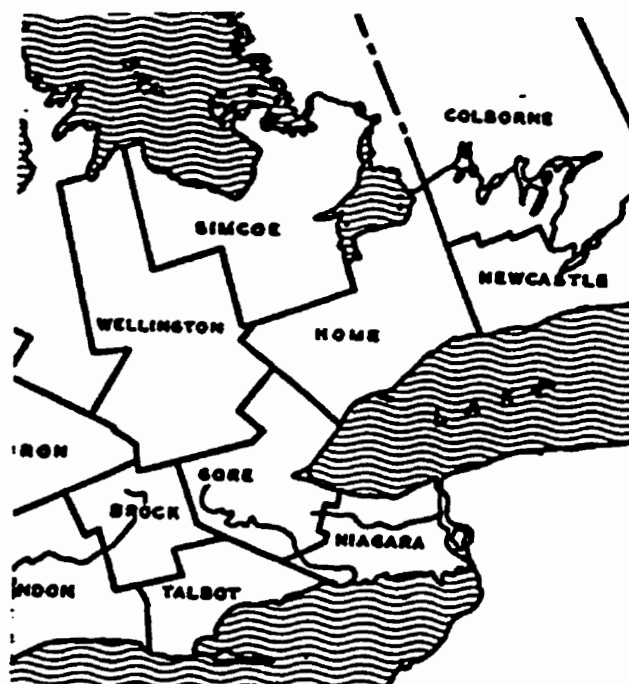
After the rebellion, the Home District Agricultural Society increasingly relied on the rural patrons to lead the society's activities outside of Toronto. Branch societies were sponsored which, by the mid-1840s, became more independent of the district society that remained firmly centred in Toronto. As far as these township branches were concerned, the district society became primarily an organization through which they received government funds. While this was similar to the experience of the other two districts, the Home District Agricultural Society did not become inward-looking by focusing its attention on its township branches. Instead, the district society set in place the necessary structures for the township societies to operate efficiently, while it focused its attention on its status as a Toronto gentleman's club. It increasingly became interested in the commercial aspect of agriculture that drove the Toronto's economy, and its membership reflected its interest in the urban surroundings rather than the outlying rural areas of the district.



Map 10: Home District circa 1838. Mika, *The Shaping of Ontario*, 261. This map does not show the Simcoe District, established in 1837. See Map 12.



Map 11: Home District Boundaries, 1826.  
Hillman, *A Statutory Chronology of Ontario*, 334.



Map 12: Home District Boundaries, 1849.  
Spragge, "Districts of Upper Canada," 41.

Neither the provincial capital, nor the Home District remained the same small communities that they had been in the spring of 1830 when the Tory elite took control of the Home District Agricultural Society. Unlike the Niagara and Midland Districts, the Home District underwent a period of incredible growth between 1830 and 1846. Its population stood at 28,565 in 1830,<sup>131</sup> but this was just the beginning of a 128% population increase that occurred between 1829 and 1835 alone.<sup>132</sup> By 1841 the Home District's

<sup>131</sup>Upper Canada, House of Assembly, *Journals*, Appendix, "Population Returns for 1830," 1 Wm. 4, 1st Sess, 11th Parl., 1831.

<sup>132</sup>Osborne and Swainson, *Kingston*, 166.



population had swelled to 51,043 inhabitants,<sup>133</sup> and in 1846 it contained some 70,624 residents.<sup>134</sup>

The Home District also underwent changes in its territory. In 1830, it contained 24 townships within the two counties of York and Simcoe.<sup>135</sup> Between 1830 and 1837, the Home District Agricultural Society had within its mandate the rapidly developing counties of York and Simcoe. In the latter year, however, Simcoe County was established as its own district. As a result, after 1837, the Toronto society was only concerned with the 24 townships of York County.<sup>136</sup>

York also rapidly transformed from a small town of 2860 individuals in 1830 into the incorporated City of Toronto in 1834. To the shock of Toronto's tory elite, William Lyon Mackenzie was elected mayor and the inaugural city council was dominated by reformers.<sup>137</sup> This set in motion a municipal struggle for authority between Toronto's tories and reformers throughout the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>138</sup> By 1841, the city contained 13,092 inhabitants,<sup>139</sup> and

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<sup>133</sup>Province of Canada. House of Assembly, *Journals*, Appendix T, "Population Returns, 1841." 4-5 Vic., 1st Sess., 1st Parl., 1841.

<sup>134</sup>Smith stated that the population of the Home District in 1842 was 58 853 persons, which he estimated had increased by one-fifth by 1846. Smith, *Smith's Gazetteer*, 81.

<sup>135</sup>Upper Canada, House of Assembly, *Journals*, Appendix, "Population Returns for 1830," 1 Wm. 4, 1st Sess, 11th Parl., 1831.

<sup>136</sup>Simcoe County was proclaimed a separate district by 7 William IV, c. 32. See Spragge, "Districts of Upper Canada," 40; Province of Canada. House of Assembly, *Journals*, Appendix T, "Population Returns, 1841." 4-5 Vic., 1st Sess., 1st Parl., 1841.

<sup>137</sup>Paul Romney argues that it is difficult "to conceive how sorely it grated on the provincial establishment and its minions to see Mackenzie elected to the mayoralty." Romney, "Struggle for Authority," 21.

<sup>138</sup>*Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>139</sup>Upper Canada, House of Assembly, *Journals*, Appendix, "Population Returns for 1830," 1 Wm. 4, 1st Sess, 11th Parl., 1831; Province of Canada. House of Assembly, *Journals*, Appendix T, "Population Returns, 1841." 4-5 Vic., 1st Sess., 1st Parl., 1841; Fred Armstrong

within the next seven years, another 10,000 individuals called the city home.<sup>140</sup>

As the Home District Agricultural Society President, E. W. Thomson noted in his 1846 speech, the organization struggled during its first three years. In 1831, the leadership was handed from the original President, George Crookshank, to one of the first Directors, Alexander Wood, and in 1833, John Elmsley, another original Director, was elected to the position. By 1834, however, none of these former presidents were officers of the Home District Agricultural Society. In fact, of the original executive members in 1830, only two individuals were elected to future executive positions. Richard Gapper became a Vice-President 1836 and 1837, but it was William Botsford Jarvis who was consistently a member of the Home District Agricultural Society's leadership. First serving as Secretary in 1830, Jarvis became President in 1834. In fact, from the mid-1830s to the mid-1840s, the Home District Agricultural Society became the domain of four prominent gentlemen. William B. Jarvis and Edward W. Thomson alternated between the positions of President and Vice-President, George Dupont Wells retained his position as Secretary and William Atkinson remained the society's Treasurer until 1846.<sup>141</sup>

William B. Jarvis was very much a patriarch of Toronto. Resident of his "Rosedale" estate, he maintained his post as Sheriff of the Home District throughout the 1830s and 1840s, was heavily involved in the city's development, and was a member of several of its benevolent societies.<sup>142</sup>

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suggests the population at union was 15, 336. Armstrong, *Handbook of Upper Canadian Chronology*, 272.

<sup>140</sup>Armstrong, *Handbook of Upper Canadian Chronology*, 272.

<sup>141</sup>For a list of the officers of the Home District Agricultural Society from 1830-46, see Appendix 11.

<sup>142</sup>Burns, "William Botsford Jarvis," *DCB*, 9, 411-12.

Edward W. Thomson was a military officer who, in 1830, had been a newcomer to York. He had preceded Jarvis' involvement with the Home District Agricultural Society as he had attended William Lyon Mackenzie's first meeting to found the organization. Despite his attendance and his participation on a committee to solicit subscriptions for the society, Thomson was not a Mackenzie supporter. In fact, he later ran against Mackenzie in the House of Assembly elections for the 2nd Riding of York County in 1834 and 1836, being successful in his second campaign. Thomson had been a contractor for the Welland, Rideau and St. Lawrence canals, but in 1832 moved to Toronto Township. There, he established himself as a borderline "fanatical" farmer, spending much of his time and money importing and breeding livestock.<sup>143</sup>

George Dupont Wells, the Secretary of the society from 1835 onwards, had direct ties to the old tory elite of York, for he was the son of Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Wells, a former Director of the old Upper Canada Agricultural Society. Wells, like his father, was the quintessential gentleman farmer, for he spent his days on the family's 200 acre "Davenport" estate, five miles north of York, which his father had purchased in 1821.<sup>144</sup> On the other hand, the Treasurer, William Atkinson, appears to have represented the growing class of professional tory gentlemen in Toronto. A saddler from London who operated his shop in Market Square,<sup>145</sup> Atkinson represented the mid-1830s

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<sup>143</sup>Ann MacKenzie, "Edward William Thomson," *DCB*, 9, 788-9; *Colonial Advocate*, April 1, 1830, p. 3, c. 1; *Christian Guardian*, April 3, 1830, p. 159, c. 3; Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 15-16.

<sup>144</sup>G. M. Craig, "Joseph Wells," *DCB*, 8, 925-7.

<sup>145</sup>George Walton, *York Commercial Directory, Street Guide, and Register 1833-4* (York, U. C. : Thomas Dalton, [1833]), 23.

rise of the city's commercial class to what Paul Romney describes as the "symbolic admission...to a junior membership of the elite."<sup>146</sup>

The activities of the Home District Agricultural Society's which this quartet directed were predominantly focused on Toronto. All of its quarterly meetings were held in the city and the society held its cattle shows in prominent locations in the city throughout the 1830s and 1840s. The organization's first cattle show was held on October 4, 1830 at Market Square in conjunction with the York Fair.<sup>147</sup> This prominent location was intended to attract the attention of all Home District residents attending the market. Most of the people present, however, could only observe the exhibition. Despite its use of government money, the Home District Agricultural Society remained a private club as its constitution limited competition to members of the society.<sup>148</sup>

Although ostensibly a society for the rural part of the Home District, none of the society's cattle shows were ever held outside of the city. The agricultural society hosted its cattle show at Market Square again in 1831, 1833 and 1834.<sup>149</sup> The event first became detached from the market fair in 1832, when the society moved its exhibition to the space in front of the old

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<sup>146</sup>Romney, "Struggle for Authority," 11.

<sup>147</sup>*Canadian Freeman*, September 28, 1830, p. 3, c. 3. That this event was hosted in conjunction with the York Fair at Market Square is taken from Francis Collins' editorial written after the event which discusses the two events in tandem. *Ibid.*, October 7, 1830, p. 3, c. 1-2.

<sup>148</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, May 5, 1831, Supplement, c. 3; *Canadian Freeman*, May 5, 1831, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>149</sup>The advertisement for the 1831 spring event was entitled "Home District Agricultural Society, Cattle Show, Ploughing Match, and YORK FAIR." *Colonial Advocate*, May 5, 1831, Supplement, c. 3; *Canadian Freeman*, May 5, 1831, p. 3, c. 2.

1833: William Helliwell noted that on May 20, 1833, he "started for York as it was fair day and also show day of Horses and Cattle of the Agricultural Society." See "Extracts from Memorandums of William Helliwell," Firth, *Town of York, 1815-1834*, 338.

1834: *Patriot*, September 19, 1834, p. 3, c. 2.

parliament buildings.<sup>150</sup> In 1836 and 1838, it returned to this location, with the display of root crops in City Hall.<sup>151</sup> In 1839, the cattle show relocated again to the grounds in front of the new parliament buildings.<sup>152</sup> Not until 1841 did the society find a permanent home for its exhibitions in the space in front of the new jail and court house.<sup>153</sup>

While the society's cattle shows always remained in Toronto, by the mid-1830s, the society did reach out to the patrons of the Home District for support. During 1834 and 1835, the Home District Agricultural Society underwent an important change in character, as the tory elite of Toronto were forced to involve the rural patrons of the Home District if they hoped to spread the influence of its activities throughout the district. At the same time as the original Family Compact executive (except Jarvis) ceased to lead the agricultural society, patrons of the Home District including prominent reformers, were elected as replacements.

In the Home District Agricultural Society's elections of 1834, William B. Jarvis was elected to his first term as President. Replacing Jarvis as Secretary was David Gibson, "a prosperous farmer" on land he had purchased in 1829 at Willowdale on Yonge Street, York Township. Appointed a surveyor, he was one of the Home District's rural patrons for also in 1834 he was elected as the House of Assembly member for the First Riding of York. Regarded as a "moderate and sensible" reformer, Gibson was nonetheless a "reasonable but

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<sup>150</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, May 10, 1832, p. 3, c. 5.

<sup>151</sup>No locations were given for the 1837 shows. *Royal Standard*, November 9, 1836, p. 4, c. 2; *Toronto Patriot*, September 25, 1838, p. 3, c. 4.

<sup>152</sup>*British Colonist*, April 24, 1839, p. 3, c. 5.

<sup>153</sup>*Examiner*, April 28, 1841, p. 3, c. 4.

forceful proponent of radical reform."<sup>154</sup> Although Gibson did not hold the position longer than one year, he remained a director of the society in 1836.<sup>155</sup> The passing of the position of Secretary from Jarvis to Gibson was a shift across the political spectrum.

The experience of another reformer elected to the executive of the Home District Agricultural Society demonstrated the tensions created by a district society led by a tory executive trying to attract rural, reform patrons to its offices. Samuel Lount, a blacksmith and farmer from the Holland Landing area, was elected a Vice-President in 1835. A reformer elected to the House of Assembly for the riding of Simcoe in 1834, Lount was considered an "extremely generous man" and had become "one of the most highly respected settlers in the area." Three years later, however, Lount was executed for his involvement in the Upper Canadian Rebellion of December 1837. Although he had influenced many from his riding to join the march down Yonge Street, during the uprising he and David Gibson had stopped William Lyon Mackenzie from burning Sheriff Jarvis' house.<sup>156</sup> Lount and Gibson may have saved a fellow agricultural society member's house, but ironically, it was William B. Jarvis who, as Home District Sheriff, presided over Lount's execution.<sup>157</sup> If Gibson had not fled to the United States, he too might have suffered the same fate.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>154</sup>Ronald L. Stagg, "David Gibson," *DCB*, 9, 313-14.

<sup>155</sup>George Walton, *The City of Toronto and the Home District Commercial Directory and Register with Almanack and Calandar for 1837* (Toronto: T. Dalton and W. J. Coates), 191.

<sup>156</sup>Stagg, "Samuel Lount," *DCB*, 7, 518-9.

<sup>157</sup>Burns, "William Botsford Jarvis," *DCB*, 9, 412.

<sup>158</sup>After the failed rebellion, Gibson hid near Oshawa for a month before escaping to New York State. He did not return to the province and his surveying duties until 1848. Stagg, "David Gibson," *DCB*, 9, 313.

Despite the political crises of 1836-1838, there was no entrenchment of the Toronto tory elite within the executive positions of the Home District Agricultural Society. In fact, the elections of February 1837 served to broaden the support of the district patrons.<sup>159</sup> The newly elected House of Assembly representative for the 2nd Riding of York, Edward W. Thomson, was elected President, and original members William B. Jarvis and Richard Gapper were elected Vice-Presidents. Positioned alongside Jarvis and Gapper as Vice-Presidents, however, were John Sanderson, a farmer from Chinguacousy Township;<sup>160</sup> John Torrance, possibly a farmer from Scarborough Township;<sup>161</sup> and George Miller, a farmer from Toronto Township.<sup>162</sup> While there is no indication as to whether these men were reform or tory supporters, they were certainly not attached in any way to the provincial elite as were Thomson, Jarvis and Gapper. Instead, they represent the fact that in the rapidly transforming Home District, the success of the district agricultural society relied on the recognized patrons of a county or township.

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<sup>159</sup>*Constitution*, January 25, 1837, p. 4, c. 4. Unfortunately, no list of officers for 1838 has survived that might demonstrate any changes in the Home District Agricultural Society membership as a result of the rebellion. The only indication of the Home District Agricultural Society executive elected in 1838 is that William Atkinson remained Treasurer and George Dupont Wells as Secretary. PAC, RG5 A1, Upper Canada Sundries, "Abstract of sums of money subscribed...," July 28, 1838, pp. 110795-97; *Upper Canada Gazette*, August 2, 1838, p. 10, c. 3.

<sup>160</sup>John Sanderson is recorded as living at Lot 22, Concession 3, Chinguacousy Township. Walton, *City of Toronto*, 70.

<sup>161</sup>The only information concerning John Torrance's residence is that he was a District Councillor for Scarborough Township in 1843. He was also the Secretary of the Township of Scarborough Agricultural Society in 1843. *British American Cultivator*, December 1843, 181, 184.

<sup>162</sup>George Miller is recorded as living at Lot 16, Concession N 1, Toronto Township. He apparently was involved in importing and breeding sheep. Walton, *City of Toronto*, 170; *The Royal Standard and Toronto Daily Advertiser*, November 9 1836, p. 4, c. 1-2.

Township and riding societies had been formed within the district since at least 1835.<sup>163</sup> Sponsoring of these branch societies continued during the last years of the 1830s and into the 1840s in response to new provincial legislation encouraging county and township societies. At its annual meeting on February 14, 1844, a sum of £150 was established to aid the organization of township auxiliary agricultural societies that could be formed before May 1st, 1844. Individual township auxiliaries would be financed from this sum in proportion to the amount they raised in subscriptions.<sup>164</sup> Furthermore, in that same year, a constitutional amendment made the Presidents of the township auxiliary societies automatic *ex officio* Directors of the Home District Agricultural Society.<sup>165</sup>

At a February 1845 meeting, the Home District Agricultural Society adopted a plan to better integrate the executive of the township branches with the executive of the district organization. The plan called for each township branch to elect two Directors to represent the society on the District executive. In addition, the district society was to elect one Director for each township branch in order that the district organization be represented in each township.

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<sup>163</sup>Riding societies were not included in the government legislation. There exist notices of the following township and riding agricultural societies prior to 1844. East Riding of the County of York, *Patriot*, March 21, 1835, p. 3, c. 6; Second Riding of the County of York, *Christian Guardian*, January 20, 1836, p. 43, c. 6; *Correspondent and Advocate*, January 21, 1836, p. 3, c. 6; Township of Toronto, *Constitution*, January 25, 1837, p. 3, c. 5; Townships of Whitby and Pickering, *Patriot*, September 22, 1837, p. 4, c. 6; Newmarket Agricultural Society, *Mirror*, May 15, 1840, p. 3, c. 5; Etobicoke Agricultural Society, *Examiner*, November 10, 1841, p. 3, c. 3. Also see the Home District Agricultural Society Treasurer's reports in: PAC, RG5 A1, Upper Canada Sundries, "Abstracts of sums of money subscribed...", July 28, 1838, pp. 110795-97; "Abstract of sums of money subscribed...", August 31, 1839, pp. 124597-99; By the time of the meeting, Auxiliary Societies already had been established in the townships of Vaughan, Markham, York, Scarborough, Toronto and Whitby. *British American Cultivator*, February 1844, p. 18.

<sup>164</sup>*British American Cultivator*, April 1844, 50.

<sup>165</sup>*Ibid.*, February 1844, p. 18, c. 1.



Furthermore, a District Councillor from each township was to be elected as a Director of the district organization. Accordingly, the quarterly meetings of the Home District Agricultural Society were to be aligned with those of the District Council. The originator of this plan, William G. Edmundson, editor of the *British American Cultivator* and member of the Fourth Riding of York Agricultural Society, wanted to locate the leadership of the society in the townships rather than in the city of Toronto. In the future the district organization would be "under the direction of three Directors residing in each Township – one elected by the members of the District Society, and the other two by the members of the Branch Society." If all the townships in the district adopted this plan, then the Home District Agricultural Society would "be governed by about sixty Directors."<sup>166</sup>

The important aspect missing from Edmundson's plan as adopted by the society at Toronto was any change to its top executives. During the 1840s, the executive appears to have supported Edmundson's plan to organize the rural branches, while at the same time becoming increasingly an urban gentleman's club. A membership list of the executives and directors of the Home District Agricultural Society in 1846 demonstrates that Edmundson's plan was not implemented fully. The officers of the Home District Agricultural Society had changed little. Edward W. Thomson, now the Warden of the Home District, was elected President, while William B. Jarvis took his turn as Vice-President. Joining Jarvis in this role was John W. Gamble, a tory District Councillor, miller, manufacturer, and self proclaimed squire of Pine Grove in Vaughan Township.<sup>167</sup> The gentleman of Davenport,

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<sup>166</sup>*Ibid.*, March 1845, p. 82-3. This plan was part of Edmundson's larger scheme to create a provincial agricultural association. See Chapter 7.

George Dupont Wells, retained his position as Secretary and was aided by the Toronto Township Councillor, William B. Crew, who was elected to the position of Assistant Secretary. Replacing William Atkinson as Treasurer was a Vice-President of the York Township Agricultural Society, Franklin Jacques.<sup>168</sup>

In addition, the list of Directors does not indicate that it was an organization composed of rural township officers. In fact, such a large number of Toronto's gentleman had not been elected Directors since 1830. The sixteen Directors included:<sup>169</sup> George Dupont Wells; William Henry Boulton, resident of the "Grange," Mayor of Toronto and tory MPP for Toronto;<sup>170</sup> James Hervey Price, resident of "Castlefield" in York Township, and leading reform MPP for the First Riding of York;<sup>171</sup> George Skeffington Connor, a lawyer and "excellent Irish gentlemen in speech and manner";<sup>172</sup> J. P. De la Haye, the French Master at Upper Canada College; Justice Peter Lawrence; W. A. Baldwin, brother of prominent reformer, Robert Baldwin; Richard L. Denison, the businessman resident of his "Dover Court" estate on the west side of Toronto;<sup>173</sup> George Miller, the farmer from Toronto

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<sup>167</sup>Gamble owned an milling complex which included a grist and flour mill, sawmill, distillery and a cloth factory. Gamble "saw himself the squire of a god-fearing parish, a thriving village, to which his own industries were crucial, and a trusty yeomanry." Barrie Dyster, "John William Gamble," *DCB*, 10, 299-300.

<sup>168</sup>*British American Cultivator*, February 1844, 33.

<sup>169</sup>George Brown, *Brown's Toronto City and Home District Directory, 1846-7* (Toronto: George Brown, 1846), 32. Directors listed below whose biographical information is not specifically cited are identified in this city directory.

<sup>170</sup>Hereward Senior, "William Henry Boulton," *DCB*, 10, 79-80.

<sup>171</sup>Lillian F. Gates, "James Hervey Price," *DCB*, 11, 712-14.

<sup>172</sup>R. Lynn Ogden, "George Skeffington Connor," *DCB*, 11, 151.

<sup>173</sup>Gagan, *The Denison Family*, 20-1.

Township who had previously been a Vice-President of the society; Jonathan Scott and Jonathan Dunn, two Toronto butchers; and William Atkinson, the Toronto saddler who had been replaced as Treasurer by Franklin Jacques.<sup>174</sup> Except for the election of Gamble, Price and Jacques, this list presents an executive that was not substantially derived from the township patrons of the Home District. Moreover, the election of Toronto gentlemen as Directors, indicates an urban, rather than a rural shift in interest among the gentlemen leading the Home District Agricultural Society.

Two years earlier, as the Home District Agricultural Society had formally established its township branch societies, it also had offered branch status to a newly founded horticultural society in Toronto. In January 1844 an advertisement directed to the "inhabitants of Toronto, friendly to the formation of a Horticultural and Floricultural Society" appeared in the *British Colonist*. Submitted by "the Gardeners" of Toronto, it "particularly" requested the "attendance of the Gentry."<sup>175</sup> As a result of this meeting a "Toronto Horticultural Society" was established as an equal branches to those in the townships of the Home District.<sup>176</sup>

There were several important distinctions that set this branch society apart from those of the rural areas. First of all, the horticultural society was established by members of the executive of the Home District Agricultural Society. The latter organization's respective President and Treasurer, William B. Jarvis and William Atkinson, not only had helped establish this new

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<sup>174</sup>The list of directors also included several unidentified individuals, Robert Cooper, Alexander Shaw, John Scarlett and a Dr. Hamilton. Brown, *Brown's Toronto City and Home District Directory*, 32.

<sup>175</sup>*British Colonist*, January 12, 1844, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>176</sup>*British American Cultivator*, December 1843, 185.

Toronto Horticultural Society but were elected to its same executive offices.<sup>177</sup> This was a significant move, for as a branch of the Home District Agricultural Society, its activities were funded through the provincial government's agricultural society legislation. Moreover, the shift in interest from agriculture to horticulture had significant moral overtones.

According to Tamara Plakins Thornton, many members of the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture had, by 1829, become heavily involved in horticulture and expressed that interest by establishing the Massachusetts Horticultural Society.<sup>178</sup> This was not a passing interest. Rather it was an expression of the changing identification of a gentlemen in a commercial city. While many of these individuals had always been interested in horticulture, the establishment of a society dedicated to the advancement of horticulture represented a fundamental change in "the styles in rural pursuits." She argues, "the sense of what sort of countryside activity was most appropriate to the elite [was] changing."<sup>179</sup>

Unlike the reasons behind establishing an agricultural society, interest in horticulture was certainly not about its utility. "In fact, horticultural vogue was just the opposite. It concerned the preference for the beautiful over the practical, for ornament over utility."<sup>180</sup> Moreover, these urban elites were seeking to identify themselves "not only as individuals, but as a class." Particularly, it was the fear of moral decay that created an interest in the "cultural refinement as symbolized by horticulture....[T]he passage from

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<sup>177</sup>Ibid., January 1844, 2.

<sup>178</sup>Thornton, *Cultivating Gentlemen*, 147-57.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid., 160.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid., 161.

utility from ornament was nothing other than the victorious entrance into the highest stage of civilization."<sup>181</sup> Horticulture, Thornton argues, was "a moral antidote," credited with the ability to cultivate man morally, intellectually and physically."<sup>182</sup>

As with the Boston elite of the 1830s, there were gentlemen in the rapidly expanding commercial city of Toronto in the 1840s who needed to establish themselves as members of an urban elite class. Interest in ornamental horticulture was what would distinguish themselves and their properties from the growing numbers of prosperous farmers on the outskirts of the city. An earlier Toronto Horticultural Society had been established in 1834, but the numbers of gentlemen were apparently not enough to ensure the survival of the Toronto Horticultural Society.<sup>183</sup> Significantly, however, this society's executive had contained gentlemen who had been executive members of agricultural societies in York and Kingston during the 1820s.

A decade later, Toronto was much larger, as was the number of elite gentlemen interested in horticulture. As the Toronto Horticultural Society was founded under the auspices of its parent Home District Agricultural

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<sup>181</sup>Ibid., 163.

<sup>182</sup>Ibid., 168. Thornton argues that throughout the antebellum period the horticultural interests flourished. She suggests that the more extravagant horticulture displays towards the end of this period indicated "an easing of the need to prove legitimacy, a first, tentative step into the postbellum sensibility of unapologetic authority." Ibid., 172.

<sup>183</sup>The executive of this society included the Executive Councillors, John Beverley Robinson, the Chief Justice; George Herkimer Markland, the Inspector General; John Henry Dunn, the Receiver General, and Colonel Joseph Wells. Pleasance Crawford, "The Roots of the Toronto Horticultural Society," *Ontario History* 89(1997): 126. In this article, Pleasance Crawford suggests that the horticultural society stemmed from similar roots as Upper Canada's agricultural societies. She bases this assumption on the cross membership between the Home District Agricultural Society and the Toronto Horticultural Society. But Crawford incorrectly assumes the continued existence of the horticultural society from 1834. As a result, she overlooks its rebirth as a branch of the Home District Agricultural Society in 1844. The last published notice of the first Toronto Horticultural Society appeared in *The Constitution*, September 21, 1836, p. 3, c. 1.

Society, its concerns presented the direction which many of the district executive's interests were heading. The district agricultural society at Toronto continued to host its cattle shows in the city, but throughout the first half of the 1840s, it focused its attention on the commercial interests of Toronto. Fred Armstrong argues that in 1825, Toronto had been "a market village; ten years later the basis was laid for it to become an important metropolis." By the time of union, Toronto "was well on its long march to usurp the [commercial] hegemony of Montreal."<sup>184</sup> It was after union that Toronto "the commercial city matured." According to Peter Way's study of the social conflict in Toronto during the 1840s, the city was undergoing a period of "structural transition and growth" with the domination of commerce in its economic life.<sup>185</sup>

At a dinner hosted by the Home District Agricultural Society in the City Hall after its Spring Cattle Show in April 1840, Benjamin Thorne was invited to deliver a speech to the nearly 200 persons in attendance.<sup>186</sup> Thorne was a miller, exporter of flour and an importer of metal, groceries and dry goods, around whose enterprises and influence developed the town of Thornhill. He was one the most successful businessmen in the province and rapidly becoming its largest flour exporter.<sup>187</sup> On this evening, Thorne delivered a

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<sup>184</sup>Armstrong, *A City in the Making: Progress, People and Perils in Victorian Toronto* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1988), 36, 48.

<sup>185</sup>Peter John Way, "Political Process and Social Conflict: Group Disorder in Tory Toronto of the 1840s" (Master's thesis, Queen's University, 1983), 103-4.

<sup>186</sup>*Toronto Patriot*, April 28, 1840, p, 2, c. 3. Wells request for the use of the City Hall for this event is found in: PAO "Toronto City Council Papers," MS 385, vol. 2. March 19, 1840.

<sup>187</sup>Thorne's biographer states that "no man became a success in Upper Canada faster than Benjamin Thorne, few were more successful, and few fell faster or farther." At the peak of his business between 1840 and 1844, Thorne's success would be short-lived. With the repeal of the British corn laws in 1846, he was caught with too large a supply of flour. Two years later he was financially ruined and in that year committed suicide. Stagg, "Benjamin Thorne," *DCB*, 7, 862-3.

concise speech marked by his knowledge of the "commercial and agricultural relations" in the province.<sup>188</sup> Four years later, Thorne would be invited again to speak to a similar dinner on the subject of "Agriculture and Commerce."<sup>189</sup>

George P. Ridout was also invited to speak to a Home District Agricultural Society dinner in 1841. Ridout was the President of the newly established Toronto Board of Trade, and one of Toronto's largest hardware merchants.<sup>190</sup> On this occasion, he delivered a speech which was "neat and appropriate...observing that it is impossible to separate the agricultural from the commercial interests of the country."<sup>191</sup> Thorne and Ridout's speeches as well as the Home District Agricultural Society's involvement in conferences with Ridout's Board of Trade concerning trade issues demonstrate the agricultural society's interest in the commercial aspect of agriculture during the 1840s.<sup>192</sup>

Interest in commerce, horticulture and the district's agriculture itself combined with the continual political battles of Toronto appear to have ignited political debate about the functions of the Home District Agricultural Society. In early 1845, Secretary George Dupont Wells felt it necessary to append a notice stating: "N. B. – No politics !!" to the advertisement for the agricultural society's cattle show.<sup>193</sup> It was a warning which seemed to stir up

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<sup>188</sup>*Toronto Patriot*, April 28, 1840, p. 2, c. 3.

<sup>189</sup>*Ibid.*, October 11, 1844, p. 3, c. 1.

<sup>190</sup>Douglas McCalla, "George Ridout," *DCB*, 10, 619-20.

<sup>191</sup>*British Colonist*, May 19, 1841, p. 2, c. 6.

<sup>192</sup>*British Colonist*, December 1, 1841, p. 2, c. 6-7; December 8, 1841, p. 2, c. 6-7; December 15, 1841, p. 2, c. 7 - p. 3, c. 4; August 21, 1846, p. 2, c. 3; September 25, 1846, p. 2, c. 7. *British American Cultivator*, October 1843, 156; *British Colonist*, August 21, 1846, p. 2, c. 3.

<sup>193</sup>*British Colonist*, March 18, 1845, p. 3, c. 5; *British American Cultivator*, April 1845, p. 127.

more political debate than it suppressed. Not since the "Official Riot" of 1830 had the Home District Agricultural Society been a target of editorial criticism within the pages of Toronto's newspapers. Wells' notice, however, certainly caught the attention of James Lesslie, editor of the reform *Examiner*.

Lesslie, a former business partner and family friend of William Lyon Mackenzie,<sup>194</sup> attacked the Home District Agricultural Society's Secretary for his arrogance in inserting this notice. He was upset by the call for no politics which he assumed warned against the introduction of any politics in the speeches offered at the dinner after the cattle show. Lesslie knew the "political predilections" of the society's executive and thought the warning came "with a very bad grace" from those who were "evidently actuated by a spirit of the most ultra political partizanship."<sup>195</sup>

Lesslie charged that there was an obvious role which politics already played in the "discharge of [the executive's] official duties." The advertisement of the exhibition, which took up two columns of print, had "been published for months" in four tory papers in Toronto, yet, Lesslie claimed they had "been carefully excluded from every one of the Reform Journals." In his view, George D. Wells' warning was ironic, as politics had created "a spirit" which was "already working evil and may result in disastrous consequences to the Society." He claimed that the "falling off in the attendance" of the cattle show was directly connected to the fact that tory journals had "a very limited circulation among the farmers generally." Furthermore, Lesslie suggested that "the bulk of the members of the Society [were] good substantial Reformers," who would "never look into the

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<sup>194</sup>J. M. S. Careless, "James Lesslie," *DCB*, 11, 516-19.

<sup>195</sup>*Examiner*, May 21, 1845, p. 3, c. 2.



columns of a Tory paper, and [were] subsequently kept in ignorance of the arrangements."<sup>196</sup>

In the following issue of the *Examiner*, Lesslie continued to express his opinions on this matter. Replying to a tory response concerning his previous accusations in the *Patriot*,<sup>197</sup> he clarified his initial opinions, stating that they were not a condemnation of the entire Home District Agricultural Society, but a criticism of the "discretionary power vested in" President Jarvis and Secretary Wells. Lesslie warned that the funds of the Home District Agricultural Society were "considerable," and that if the members were not careful, the control of its finances would be "the object of Tory cupidity and selfishness." The selection of tory newspapers to publish the advertisements of the society was, in his opinion, a "cheap way" to sustain a tory press. Thus, the insertion of the notice "No politics!!" was "the sure way to create political party distinctions in the Society." If partisanship was used to announce the exhibitions, he argued, the "same spirit [would] pervade all its operations, preferences would be given to the competitors of a party, and the prizes [would] be awarded on the same principle."<sup>198</sup>

Apparently, politics intruded upon the society's dinner following the autumn 1845 cattle show. The speeches of President William B. Jarvis and William H. Boulton, Mayor of Toronto, and eldest son of D'Arcy Boulton Jr., were well received by the audience. When William Edmundson spoke, however, he was "*coughed down*." Edmundson, Lesslie claimed, although not "a fluent speaker" and "tedious in his remarks" was a devoted member of

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<sup>196</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup>Unfortunately this issue of the *Patriot* has not survived.

<sup>198</sup>*Examiner*, May 28, 1845, p. 3, c. 3-4.

the Home District Agricultural Society and, in Lesslie's view, "was entitled to the courtesy and respect of a gentleman."<sup>199</sup> The society used Edmundson's *British American Cultivator* extensively to publish its proceedings, and by 1845, both Edmundson and the society's executive were actively promoting a provincial agricultural association. Although his indignation and concern were likely exaggerated, Lesslie's comments may have had some merit.

Secretary Well's warning against political debates and Lesslie's reports about the society appear to represent the peculiar municipal politics of Toronto. As Peter Way contends, Toronto's growing commercial sector created an atmosphere in which "the seeds of internal discord" were planted and flourished.<sup>200</sup> After the Rebellion of 1837, Toronto had become "the centre of Rabid toryism in Upper Canada."<sup>201</sup> While "the general reaction" to the rebellion in the province was "a shift to the right," Way argues that it "was neither as intense or sustained as in Toronto." Here, the effect was "a reconstitution of the City into a tory political preserve."<sup>202</sup> During the 1840s, the "corporation became an instrument of tory policy," and Way argues that the "development of the conservative mythology had important ramifications for group conflict in Toronto during the 1840s, for from it there grew a tory hubris which led the faction to assume the role of arbiter of loyalty."<sup>203</sup> Way concludes that one's political identification was of utmost

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<sup>199</sup>Ibid.

<sup>200</sup>Way, "Political Process and Social Conflict," 104.

<sup>201</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>202</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>203</sup>Ibid., 18.

importance in the city as the social composition of both the reformers and the tories straddled all levels of society."<sup>204</sup>

Way's interpretation, however, does not answer why reformers were elected to offices of an organization still guarded by a tory leadership. Fred Armstrong argues that the focus on politics caused Toronto to be "seen as a provincial capital rather than an economic hub and thus an important aspect of its growth has been obscured." He notes that its role as capital "can easily be exaggerated." There were advantages to being a provincial capital, but Armstrong asserts that "in the end, losing the seat of government to Kingston in 1841...had little adverse effect on the city."<sup>205</sup>

Similarly, David Mills argues that the new generation of political elite in Upper Canada after union was focused on economic development rather than ideological conflict. "Unlike the old Tory Compact, which reflected the aspirations of a propertied professional oligarchy, the new elite reflected the concerns of an urban and commercial class."<sup>206</sup> Throughout the 1830s, he contends, more moderate tories came to accept the moderate reformers' belief that loyalty could be demonstrated by respectability.<sup>207</sup> Subsequently in the 1840s, opposition was no longer necessarily disloyal, and within the developing party system, "dissent could be legitimate."<sup>208</sup> Thus, in the 1840s, commitment to the development of the province was the primary occupation of the political elite and the foundation of their ideal of loyalty. Furthermore,

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<sup>204</sup>*Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>205</sup>Armstrong, *A City in the Making*, 36-7.

<sup>206</sup>Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 135.

<sup>207</sup>*Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>208</sup>*Ibid.*, 111, 127.

this commitment to provincial development, Mills contends, led to "a growing sense of provincial nationalism."<sup>209</sup> The executive of the Home District Agricultural Society, whose livelihoods were made in Upper Canada's principal commercial centre, were championing a provincial nationalism, albeit a "Torontocentric" nationalism.

The membership and the commercial interests of the Home District Agricultural Society of the 1840s reflect these trends. It was an intricate grouping of gentlemen for a complex number of reasons. Gentlemen advancing the economic development of the province, both tory and reform, were welcome in this Toronto social club. Yet, as economic development was the central interest of both the provincial and municipal governments, it is easy to understand how any meeting of these gentlemen could erupt into a political battle. Wells' notice was, without a doubt, necessary.

In some ways, the Home District Agricultural Society had transformed significantly between 1830 and 1846. Created by Family Compact members, it had reached out to the rural reform patrons of the Home District to spawn a number of township branch societies. As the agricultural society became interested in the commercial aspect of Toronto's development, the society's membership became more complex. Political battles erupted as tories, reformers, those interested in the urban commerce, those still concerned with agricultural practices and those fascinated by horticultural ornamentation were all involved in the society's leadership to some degree. Yet, at its heart, the Georgian assumptions of a gentleman agricultural leader continued to be the ideology which motivated the well entrenched executive of the Home District Agricultural Society.

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<sup>209</sup>Ibid., 135-6.

Despite all the changes within the rapidly expanding commercial city of Toronto, William B. Jarvis, Edward W. Thomson and George D. Wells continued to attract the city's urban gentlemen to their society by presenting themselves as gentlemen farmers. Furthermore, even after Toronto ceased to be the provincial capital, the Home District Agricultural Society still maintained an air of being the most prestigious agricultural society in the province. Operating almost as an institution separate from the township branches, it continued to host its activities in the centre of the city, and to be led by gentlemen of Toronto. This fostered the development of ties with commercial institutions such as the Board of Trade, as well as the creation of a horticultural society. These were initiatives that did not concern executive of the Midland or Niagara District Agricultural Societies. Moreover, as will be further developed in the following chapter, it was this entrenched Georgian nature and sense of prestige that caused the leaders of the Home District Agricultural Society to lead a renewed pursuit of John Graves Simcoe's dream of a province-wide agricultural society in the 1840s.

By 1846, the Home, Niagara and Midland District Agricultural Societies appeared to share only a few similar characteristics. Each district society continued to adhere to the government legislation and each had developed township branches. As a result of the provincial legislation and the clientele system of Upper Canada, each district agricultural society evolved in differing ways, according to the district's peculiar politics and society. Significantly, no legislation during this period fostered any interaction between each district agricultural society. As a result, in districts such as Niagara and Midland, the agricultural societies tended to be somewhat inward-looking. Their chief concern was the formation, funding and coordination of their township

branches. While this was also a concern of the Home District Agricultural Society, its executive members were caught up in the booming commercial growth of Toronto. Out of a somewhat uncomfortable union of tories and reformers developed a provincial nationalism which, as it matured, created an impetus for the formation of a provincial society. Nevertheless, the localized characteristics of the district agricultural societies and their leaders, fostered by the government legislation and the clientele system, would remain an impediment to any immediate success of a provincial agricultural association.

There was one more underlying similarity, however. All the leaders of the district agricultural societies continued to be Georgian gentlemen throughout the 1830 to 1846 period. Although the prominence of the patrons varied from district to district, the reliance on these individuals for leadership ensured that district agricultural societies and the provincial agricultural economy would be guided by the province's gentlemen. Upper Canada's agricultural societies may have been increasingly funded by the provincial government; however, by 1846 they remained best characterized as gentlemen's clubs. Consequently, the attempt to create a provincial agricultural association was conducted in a manner befitting the late-eighteenth century rather than the Victorian world of the 1840s.

**Chapter 7:  
A Humble Imitation of Similar Societies:  
The Establishment of the Provincial Agricultural Association,  
1841-1846**

After having travelled in Upper Canada, James Taylor published a narrative of his tours in 1846 which contained his assessment of the farming practices of the province's settlers. In his description, he acknowledged that agricultural societies existed throughout the province, but in Taylor's opinion, the "scientific labours" of these institutions were not "much regarded by one-fourth of the province." Nevertheless, he asserted with pride that the creation of the Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada witnessed "the most influential people...strenuously exerting themselves in favour of a general movement."<sup>1</sup>

Founded in the summer of 1846, the Provincial Agricultural Association originated from an attempt to foster a united, province-wide approach to Upper Canada's agricultural reform. The plan was to create an overarching organization composed of representatives from each of the individual district societies of Upper Canada. Ironically, that process was hindered by the very creation of the Provincial Agricultural Association. Its leaders were a handful of gentlemen who had determined amongst themselves to establish a private gentleman's club for the benefit of the province's agricultural development. Its success did not rely on the government structure of district agricultural societies already in place, but rested on the hope that other Upper Canadian gentlemen would offer their financial support. Thus, unlike the original plans, the Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada, centred in Toronto, was no more a provincial

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<sup>1</sup>James Taylor, *Narrative of a Voyage to, and Travels in Upper Canada* (Hull: John Nicholson, 1846), 71-2.

institution than its predecessors: John Graves Simcoe's Niagara Agricultural Society, Robert Thorpe's Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society, or the Upper Canada Agricultural Society of 1818-20.

This chapter examines at some length the various plans for the provincial union of Upper Canada's agricultural societies that were championed between 1841 and 1846, for they demonstrate how different the Provincial Agricultural Association was from the initial plans. The editors of Upper Canada's emerging agricultural press who first championed these schemes believed that the province's district agricultural societies could be united through a modification of the existing structure that had been legislated by the government. In this way, the disparate efforts of the individual district agricultural societies would be linked together in a provincial body that followed a coordinated plan of reform. Although the editors' plans followed the same general pattern as previous attempts to establish a provincial society, the calls for restructure meshed well with the overall administrative reforms and processes of state formation which the government of the united Canadas was implementing during this period.

Subsequently, the chapter examines the establishment of the Provincial Agricultural Association in 1846 and its contrasting approach to the previous well laid out plans. During the 1840s, the district agricultural societies were developing a more public character by implementing the government's maturing policy of agricultural development. Nevertheless, those very societies had originated as transplanted institutions from Great Britain. Their purpose had been to reform the province's agriculture in a manner which would buttressed the Georgian foundations of Upper Canadian society. Moreover, the Upper Canadian gentlemen who directed these institutions continued their attempts to approximate the leadership of the British



aristocrats. It is with the creation of the Provincial Agricultural Association that R. D. Gidney and W.P.J. Millar's argument concerning the persistence of Upper Canadian gentlemen who characterized themselves in Georgian terms is highlighted.

The founding of the provincial association demonstrated how the ideology of the English Enlightenment continued to guide the leadership of Upper Canada's agricultural societies. The purpose of the Provincial Agricultural Association as envisioned by its gentlemen founders was not one of coordination. Instead, it was to further strengthen the hierarchical nature of Upper Canada's Georgian establishment by creating a private gentlemen's club to lead the development of an agrarian nation in a typical eighteenth-century manner. Therefore, even with the dawn of the Victorian age, the formation of Upper Canada's Provincial Agricultural Association stemmed more from the pursuit of the dream of a province-wide agricultural society which had first been suggested by John Graves Simcoe in 1791 than any process of state formation. Its establishment, in fact, exemplifies how the processes which had contributed to – and hindered – previous attempts to create agricultural societies in Upper Canada played important roles in its formation.

A quintessential example of the continued dual heritage of Upper Canada's institutions, the Provincial Agricultural Association was formed by colonial gentlemen to emulate the British aristocracy, but they also looked to the New York State Agricultural Society for practical means by which this could be accomplished. In September 1846, a letter signed by "J.B.W." was printed by Toronto's *British Colonist*. Presumably, its author was William B. Jarvis, the Vice-President and original member of the Home District Agricultural Society. In his letter, "J.B.W." left little question as to the

influences behind the creation of the Provincial Agricultural Association and the exhibition it was planning to host in October. He announced that the formation of the "'Provincial Agricultural Society' [was] in humble imitation of the 'Royal Agricultural Society of England' and similar societies in the United States."<sup>2</sup> Founded in 1838, the Royal Agricultural Society of England and its annual exhibition was the institution which "J.B.W." and his peers truly admired. In his letter, he tried to encourage support from the province's gentlemen by noting that it was the "first men in England have been found to be prominent in subscribing to the funds and assisting in the duties of similar associations in the mother country."<sup>3</sup> A successful association required Upper Canadian gentlemen to do the same. But even in the 1840s, private gentlemen's clubs remained difficult to maintain in Upper Canada without government assistance. Once again, New York State provided an example of a government offering annual funding to a state-wide society, particularly towards the hosting of an annual state agricultural exhibition.

Upper Canada also had a tradition of government funding. The use of government funds to assist district societies in Upper Canada had certainly been a success. It had initially allowed a greater number of gentlemen to support these institutions, and later, it had fostered the development of county and township organizations in response to a rapidly growing rural population. Although the Provincial Agricultural Association was created as a private society, it hoped to acquire donations from the public money given to the district societies it claimed to represent.

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<sup>2</sup>*British Colonist*, September 11, 1846, p. 2, c. 6-7.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

The involvement of Jarvis and other members of the Home District Agricultural Society, however, entrenched one of the fundamental obstacles to achieving a truly provincial association of agricultural gentlemen. Throughout the sixteen years after the passage of the agricultural societies' legislation, the successful expansion of the district organizations had illustrated that the strength of the government's policy was the independence granted to each district society. This avoided the problems that had plagued earlier attempts at forming a single agricultural society for Upper Canada by not requiring any interaction between the persistent local oligarchies that existed throughout the province. The creation of a new provincial society by Toronto gentlemen who were members of that city's tory oligarchy served only to heighten once again the reluctance of local patrons who led the other district agricultural societies to offer their support. Nevertheless, their own independence reflected a leadership that was based in the same Georgian roots as the Provincial Agricultural Association's attempt to achieve the long-standing dream of a province-wide agricultural society for Upper Canada

The initial outline of a plan for a provincial agricultural association appeared in the first issue of the *Canadian Farmer and Mechanic*, published in Kingston in August 1841. Its editor, A. B. E. F. Garfield queried, would not "a more perfect knowledge of the country's resources be obtained, and its wants known and supplied" if an association were formed of delegates from the various districts of the province? Garfield did not publish any specific plans, for he wished to "merely suggest the *propriety* of the formation of such a society, for the purpose of eliciting inquiry, and provoking discussion on the

subject."<sup>4</sup> There was little opportunity for his readers to respond to this matter as Garfield left Kingston in the autumn of 1841 for Syracuse, New York to begin a newspaper there.

His Kingston business, which he had left behind due to financial difficulties, was acquired by William Edmundson and John Eastwood of Toronto, who began publishing the *British American Cultivator* in January 1842.<sup>5</sup> Throughout its first year, publishers Edmundson and Eastwood were aided by an editor, William Evans of Montreal.<sup>6</sup> Evans was a zealous agricultural reformer in Lower Canada, and an official of the Agricultural Society of the Montreal District.<sup>7</sup>

It did not take long for the subject of a provincial association to be presented in the *British American Cultivator*. In the third issue, the

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<sup>4</sup>*The Canadian Farmer and Mechanic*, August 16, 1841, p. 3. In the final issue of his paper, Garfield did receive one letter in support of his plan from Archibald MacDonald, President of the County of Russell Agricultural Society of the Ottawa District. *Ibid.*, October 15, 1841, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup>Publishing an agricultural journal in Upper Canada had already been proven a difficult task. During the last half of the 1830s several unsuccessful attempts had been made to establish an agricultural periodical in Upper Canada. The following list of examples apparently did not progress beyond a publication of their prospectus. *The Upper Canada Farmer* was to be published in February 1837 at the office of the *Cobourg Star*. See *Courier of Upper Canada*, December 24, 1836, p. 4, c. 1-2. Subsequent failed attempts were made to establish this journal. See *Kingston Spectator*, March 16, 1837, p. 3, c. 2; *St Catharines Journal*, April 26, 1841, p. 3, c. 3. In 1837 John Smith announced in Toronto that he intended to launch *The British North American, Religious, Agricultural, Literary and Scientific Monthly Magazine*. See *Constitution*, January 4, 1837, p. 4, c. 4; *Correspondent and Advocate*, January 4, 1837, p. 3, c. 6. In 1839, J. H. Sears of St Catharines printed at least one issue of his *Canadian Cultivator*. See *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, September 18, 1839, p. 2, c. 5. For Sears' address to the public, see *St Catharines Journal*, November 21, 1839, p. 4, 1-3.

<sup>6</sup>Ann MacKenzie, "William Graham Edmundson," *DCB*, 8, 266-7.

<sup>7</sup>In 1835, Evans had published *A treatise on the theory and practice of agriculture*, and in the following year he published a *Supplementary volume*. In 1837, his third book, *Agricultural improvement by the education of those who are engaged as a profession* was published. Evans too, had attempted in 1838 to publish his own agricultural periodical; however, due to a lack of subscriptions, the *Canadian Quarterly Agricultural and Industrial Magazine* failed after only two issues. See *St. Catharines Journal*, September 20, 1838, p. 1, c. 2; Jean Claude Robert, "William Evans," *DCB*, 8, 277-9.

publishers reprinted the by-laws, regulations and membership list of Justice Robert Thorpe's Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society of 1806. Edmundson and Eastwood suggested that this was a model for the farmers to either "patronize or refuse." The publishers argued that, "the want of union on the part of our agriculturists in the formation of respectable and efficient societies is truly lamentable." Not knowing the problems caused by Robert Thorpe, they admired his plan for a province-wide agricultural society, and commented that the "patriotism shown by our forefathers on that occasion is highly complimentary." Eastwood and Edmundson hoped that "the sons and grandsons of those venerable and respected pioneers" would similarly advance "the interests of the agricultural and commercial classes of this province." <sup>8</sup>

The subsequent issue of April 1842 presented a detailed plan for a provincial board of agriculture. In an editorial column entitled "The Encouragement Which Ought To Be Given By The Government To Agriculture In British America," Evans criticized the poor state of agriculture and lack of capital in the provinces. Echoing authors throughout Upper Canada's existence, he argued that the "want of education and agricultural skill" in the Canadas pointed out "the necessity for the Government adopting decided and active measures for the encouragement of agriculture." While he acknowledged the annual government grants to the province's district agricultural societies, he complained that "we know by experience that this mode of proceeding will never effect the encouragement and information required to insure us a prosperous and improved agriculture in British America." In Evan's opinion, there were two important examples for both

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<sup>8</sup>*British American Cultivator*, March 1842, pp. 34-35.

the farmers and the Canadian government to adopt; the first an agricultural society of Great Britain; and the second, a society from New York State.<sup>9</sup>

Evans' praise of the British aristocracy and its agricultural societies again illustrates the allure this had for Upper Canadian gentlemen. In his view, "the rich and powerful landed proprietors [took] care of the interests of agriculture." Evans considered them to be overseers of both the agricultural reform and the commercial end of agriculture, for not only did they perform experiments at their own cost but also provided the farmer and his produce "ample protection from foreign competition. The capital employed in agriculture is abundant to afford the very best chance of success...In fact nothing is neglected that could possibly improve agriculture, or promote the prosperity of those engaged in it as proprietors, farmers, or labourers." Therefore, Evans considered the example of the Royal Agricultural Society of England and the good it was producing in that country to be a useful model for colonial gentlemen to follow.<sup>10</sup>

At the time of Evans' article, the example of the Royal Agricultural Society was only four years old, but the traditions which it was maintaining were from the eighteenth century. The previous national society, the Board of Agriculture, had disappeared in 1822 with the cessation of funding from the British government. Throughout the 1820s and 1830s several existing and newly formed societies continued the application of science to agricultural practices,<sup>11</sup> but it was not until 1838 that another national agricultural institution, the Royal Agricultural Society of England was successfully

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., April, 1842, p. 54

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>For a list of these societies see Nicholas Goddard, *Harvests of Change: The Royal Agricultural Society of England 1838-1988* (London: Quiller Press Ltd., 1988), 5-6.

established.<sup>12</sup> Its small number of landowners, like the members of the former Board of Agriculture were agricultural writers and farming enthusiasts who were just as interested in "legislative means for the achievement of rural prosperity" as they were interested in the "scientific development of agriculture."<sup>13</sup>

In suggesting the Royal Agricultural Society to Upper Canadian gentlemen, William Evans was referring to a society which itself was attempting to recreate the former British Board of Agriculture by improving on that organization's experiences and shortcomings.<sup>14</sup> The Royal Agricultural Society of England's founders had believed that there was merit in recreating this Georgian institutions. They had been "convinced that the potential for raising the productivity of English agriculture could only be realized by the methods which had transformed manufacturing industry in the early nineteenth century, in particular the application of 'capital' and 'science', although the precise terms in which this was so and what was understood as 'science' was far from clearly specified." In general there existed the belief that though the Board of Agriculture had long ceased operations, there remained a need for a national board to encourage an increase in agricultural practices based on scientific principles.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Initially formed as the England Agricultural Society the institution received its Royal Charter from Queen Victoria in 1840. *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 1. For a less analytical study of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, see James A. Scott Watson, *The History of the Royal Society of England, 1838 - 1939* (London: Royal Agricultural Society, 1939). See also Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit*, 57-9; Powell, *History of the Smithfield Club*, 6-7.

<sup>14</sup>Goddard, *Harvests of Change*, 6-8.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

In England too, it had been a newspaperman, the editor of the *Mark Lane Express and Agricultural Journal* -- "one of the most influential nineteenth century agricultural newspapers" -- who had publicized a plan for a new national society.<sup>16</sup> After 1834, William Shaw had championed a national, non-political agricultural society modeled after the Highland Society in Scotland and the Paris Central Society.<sup>17</sup> Several landowners had taken up Shaw's idea in 1835; however, the Central Agricultural Society which they had formed failed to gain wide support because of its interest in political matters.<sup>18</sup> It was not until December 1837, that the call for an English Agricultural Society was made at a dinner of the Smithfield Club. Thus, the formation of a new national agricultural organization had been firmly rooted in the Georgian past. The Smithfield Club had changed little since its founding in the late 1790s as it continued to be an elite club of aristocrats whose hobby was stockbreeding.<sup>19</sup>

The Royal Agricultural Society of England was formed in 1838 with the motto "Practice with Science" which embodied its objectives of "encouraging the application of science to agriculture, the stimulation of agricultural progress and development, and the generation and communication of agricultural information."<sup>20</sup> The society held an agricultural show which rotated annually throughout the counties of England.<sup>21</sup> Significantly, unlike

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<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 17-19.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 19. See Powell, *History of the Smithfield Club*, 6-7, especially the note on p. 7.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 31.



the unsuccessful Central Board of Agriculture, this society of land-owners resolved from the outset not to speak of any issue of "political tendency" or matter "pending in the either Houses of Parliament."<sup>22</sup>

At the time of Evan's *British American Cultivator* article in 1842, the membership of the English society was unabashedly the domain of the aristocracy, containing a membership of only two percent of the early Victorian agriculturists.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, Evans encouraged the recreation of this society in Upper Canada by using the same logic expressed by Upper Canadian gentlemen since the 1790s. He queried:

If the people of England have thought it necessary to unite all parties in a Society for promoting agricultural improvement and prosperity in a country, where agriculture is already in a higher state of improvement than in any other part of the globe; why should it not be good for us to adopt means that would be likely to produce the same results? We already have sufficient experience that we cannot attain this good through the instrumentality of any local Societies that may be formed here.<sup>24</sup>

William Evans, however, was realistic in his expectations for a similar society in the Canadas, just like Richard Cartwright had in 1810. He concluded that the province could not "have such a Society as that of England, because...we have no rich and powerful landed proprietors to encourage improvements, or take any active interest in agricultural prosperity." He admitted that there were "many good farmers in this country certainly, who cultivate their lands

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<sup>22</sup>Nicholas Goddard argues that: "Many tenant farmers would have welcomed a political element in the societies proceedings, but this was not possible under the Society's constitution and it was not the Royal's function to lobby on behalf of the agricultural interests." *Ibid.*, 24, 30.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 28-30.

<sup>24</sup>*British American Cultivator*, April 1842, p. 54.

in the best manner, and then show a good example to the uninstructed, but this is not sufficient to effect the general improvement of husbandry, with the sort of population we have here." A much more concerted approach was needed, Evans asserted, to change the practices of the many backward, illiterate and prejudiced farmers in the province.<sup>25</sup>

Evans realized that, like the legislation passed in 1830 to fund the creation of district agricultural societies in Upper Canada, government funds were also necessary to implement his scheme. In his view, the government would "have to do for us, what the Royal Agricultural Society of England are [sic] doing for that country, and this we humbly conceive, can be best effected by the institution of a General Board of Agriculture."<sup>26</sup> Evans suggested that this could be modeled after the Board of Works which had been "very wisely established" by Lord Sydenham in 1841, to undertake the improvement of the province's infrastructure, primarily the construction of canals and roads.<sup>27</sup> A Board of Agriculture, he reasoned, "would not be less necessary to promote the improvement and prosperity of agriculture," for under its mandate, "the wants of the agricultural class [could] be most effectually and impartially brought before the Government and the Legislature."<sup>28</sup>

Like all previous attempts to establish agricultural societies in Upper Canada, William Evans' modification of the Royal Agricultural Society of England's model also possessed a dual heritage. The ideal society was from Great Britain, but necessarily modified by New York State examples to create a

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.; Careless, *Union of the Canadas*, 51.

<sup>28</sup>*British American Cultivator*, April 1842, p. 55.

viable provincial institution. In his article, Evans began with praise for the Royal Society of England and a recommendation of it as a model for the Canadas. However, he subsequently appended a modified plan from New York State to demonstrate how the Canadian government should recreate the British ideal. This plan was a reprinted article from Evan's short-lived *Canadian Quarterly Agricultural and Industrial Magazine* of 1838, in which he had created a scheme for a provincial agricultural association based upon an 1837 report of the Committee of Agriculture the State of New York. Although the article was five years old, its substance was of current interest, for the committee's report had contributed to the establishment of a state-wide agricultural society by the New York State legislature in 1841.

The New York State government had funded a state board of agriculture between 1819 and 1825. As in Britain, funding had been allowed to lapse, and it was not until 1832 that the issue had been revived in the New York State legislature. In that year, the state governor had indicated his support for agricultural societies but made no proposals for legislative support. Nevertheless, the idea had been picked up by a "vigorous agricultural press" which hosted a state convention on the issue in the same year.<sup>29</sup> Those present had drafted a constitution for a New York State Agricultural Society to coordinate the local county agricultural societies. Although the convention had been unsuccessful in gaining government funding between 1832 and 1841, the society maintained a prominent political profile in the state capital.<sup>30</sup> It had continually petitioned the government for financial aid and designated the Albany agricultural journal, *The*

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<sup>29</sup>Marti, "Early Agricultural Societies," 324. See also Hedrick, *A History of Agriculture in the State of New York*, 120.

<sup>30</sup>Marti, "Early Agricultural Societies," 326.

*Cultivator* as its official publication in 1834. Finally, in 1841, the legislature had endowed the New York State Agricultural Society with \$8000 per year for five years to be divided among the various counties of the state. Out of this sum \$700 was to be retained by the society for the purposes of hosting a cattle show and fair at Syracuse in 1842. This first fair was a humble beginning for what would rapidly develop into the very successful New York State Fair.<sup>31</sup>

The plan for a provincial Board of Agriculture which Evans published in the April 1842 issue of the *British American Cultivator* involved both Upper and Lower Canada. It proposed that a board be composed of three or five members appointed by the Governor, who would retain their positions for at least five years, and be paid the same amount as a Member of the House of Assembly. This board would hold quarterly meetings at Quebec, Montreal, Kingston and Toronto to coordinate the activities of the district agricultural societies, and to ensure they were operating under "judicious rules and regulations."<sup>32</sup>

No one took up Evans' proposal. His article, however, did serve as the first comprehensive vision of how to coordinate the activities of the various district agricultural societies in the province. In the spring of 1843, William Edmundson took over the editorship of the paper and a year after William Evans' article had been published, William Edmundson requested input from his readership concerning the formation of a provincial agricultural association.<sup>33</sup> Unlike Evans' call for the creation of a top-down Board of

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<sup>31</sup>Hedrick, *A History of Agriculture in the State of New York*, 121-2.

<sup>32</sup>*British American Cultivator*, April 1842, p. 55. Evans' plan for a Board of Agriculture, originally published in 1838, would not be realized in Upper Canada until 1850. See 13 & 14 Vic. c. 73 (1850)

<sup>33</sup>For Edmundson's initial discussions of a provincial society see the following articles in the *British American Cultivator*. "Grand Provincial Show," March 1843, p. 37; "The

Agricultural consisting of government appointed members, Edmundson proposed a restructuring of the existing district agricultural institutions, beginning with the establishment of township agricultural societies. He believed that his approach which was directed at Upper Canada alone would only require a "few public benefactors" in each township to "engage their services in the task of stirring up their less active neighbours." In doing so, he argued, the "work of improvement" would "soon gain a foothold."<sup>34</sup>

Edmundson's scheme called for the creation of District Boards of Agriculture composed of District Councillors as well as a "General Board of Agriculture for Upper Canada" constituted of selected members from each of the District Boards.<sup>35</sup> Like Evans, Edmundson also believed that these organizations "must be constituted by act of parliament, and the General Board must have a liberal parliamentary grant of money placed under its control, for the general purposes of fostering and promoting a better system of agriculture among us."<sup>36</sup>

Whereas Evans' plan for a Board of Agriculture had been influenced by the establishment of the Board of Works, Edmundson's vision of a "General Board of Agriculture" was modelled after another part of Sydenham's administrative reforms, the District Councils. As previously discussed, each District Council was composed of elected township representatives who met quarterly under the authority of a District Warden appointed by the

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Pittsburg Farmer," May 1843, p. 73; Letter from Adam Fergusson, June 1843, p. 88; Letter from J. W. Rose, June 1843, p. 92; "Boards of Agriculture," July 1843, pp. 104 - 5; "Local Agricultural Clubs...," October 1843, p. 145; "Agriculture - What it is, and What it ought to be," November, 1843, p. 162-4; "An Important Movement," December 1843, p. 180.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., July 1843, pp. 104-5.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 104-5.

provincial government. Edmundson initially proposed a provincial agricultural association whose leadership would be provided by the elected District Councillors. Membership would be drawn from township representatives selected from across the province. In this way, Edmundson believed, the elected municipal leadership would adopt agricultural reform into the mandate of their local governance. Furthermore, they could use their contacts with the provincial government through the warden to influence the legislature to commit to financial support for these efforts. In Edmundson's view, it would be reasonable "to suppose that any subject connected with Agricultural improvement would receive [the] countenance and hearty support of those elected in each township as a councillor."<sup>37</sup> Clearly, Edmundson was drawing his examples more from the political lobby of the New York State agricultural societies than the private, non-political Royal Agricultural Society of England.

In November 1843, Edmundson presented a revised plan for a provincial association. His suggested reforms now rested on the establishment of three levels of agricultural leadership and represented a much more formal, institutionalized structure. His scheme paralleled the political reforms undertaken by the government of the united Canadas, and meshed with the process of state formation which government bodies such as the District Councils represented.<sup>38</sup>

Once again, Edmundson started at the township level, stating, "We must begin at the foot of the ladder, by forming local clubs of agriculture."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>See for example, Radforth, "Sydenham and Utilitarian Reform," in *Colonial Leviathan*, 64-102.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., November 1843, p. 163.

First, "Township Agricultural Clubs", led by a "board of directors, consisting of the most influential and patriotic farmers in the township," would meet once a month to discuss agricultural topics. At the second level, Edmundson believed, "as a matter of course, the most intelligent would be selected" from each township club to form the District Board which would meet once per quarter assessing and disseminating information provided by the township clubs.

On the next rung of the ladder, a Provincial Board of Agriculture would be formed by the election of one or two representatives from each District Board. "The duties devolving on this Board would be of the highest order, so far as agriculture and the general prosperity of the country is concerned." Edmundson argued that communication between the district boards was essential. The first task of the District Board would be for the management of a "Journal of Canadian Agriculture" containing material contributed from the Township Clubs and District Boards. Such a journal, Edmundson argued, would allow "each farmer in the province [to] avail himself of the combined experience of his class." Second, like the New York State Agricultural Society and the Royal Agricultural Society of England, this Provincial Board would manage an annual provincial exhibition, to be hosted in a different district of the province from year to year.<sup>40</sup>

As a member of the Home District Agricultural Society, Edmundson's first concerted effort was to convince his own society to initiate his scheme.<sup>41</sup> This approach, however, brought with it serious liabilities, as executive

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<sup>40</sup>For the entire plan, see "Agriculture – What it is, and what it ought to be," *Ibid.*, pp. 162-4.

<sup>41</sup>Edmundson concluded the outline of his plan with the announcement that he was "bent on organizing Clubs in the several townships of the Home District, on the principles embraced in [his] article." *Ibid.*

members of the Home District Agricultural Society not only adopted Edmundson's plan, but took control of its future development. The support of prominent Home District Agricultural Society executives, such as William B. Jarvis and Edward W. Thomson, was invaluable for the implementation of Edmundson's plan; however, founding the society on the support of Toronto Tories who had been involved in the antagonistic founding of the Home District Agricultural Society would make it difficult to attract the local patrons who led the province's other district agricultural societies to any new association.

"A meeting of several influential persons resident in the Home District" took place on November 4, 1843, to consider "the proposition of forming Township Societies in connection with the District Agricultural Societies now established, and for other matters connected with the agricultural interests of the Province." The chair of this meeting was William B. Jarvis, Sheriff of the Home District, and a Vice-President of the Home District Agricultural Society. Both the plan to reorganize the agricultural society as well as a plan for a "Provincial Agricultural Association" were tabled. Edward W. Thomson, Warden of the Home District, and a Vice-President of the Home District Agricultural Society, moved that this plan be presented two days later at another public meeting to be held at the Court House in Toronto.<sup>42</sup>

Several members of the Home District Agricultural Society and District Councillors along with other inhabitants of the Home District were present at

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<sup>42</sup>In Edmundson's article, both Jarvis and Thomson are listed as Vice-Presidents. It is likely that there is a typographical error in one of these individuals' roles. There is no indication that any other person assumed the role of President during this year. This is difficult to determine, however, as this is the only mention of their roles during 1843. *Ibid.*, December 1843, pp. 184-5.



this meeting.<sup>43</sup> Edward W. Thomson acted as chairman and W. H. Mitchell, District Councillor for Pickering, was Secretary. The first resolution that was passed echoed the plans which John Graves Simcoe had outlined to Sir Joseph Banks in 1791. It stated that "it would materially tend to the prosperity of this Province, if the Agricultural Societies now established were so connected, that an uniform system in their management should be pursued." This being agreed to, a second resolution was passed that incorporated Edmundson's ambitious scheme to reform Upper Canada's district agricultural societies. "In order to accomplish so desirable an object, it is of the opinion of this meeting that a 'Provincial Agricultural Association' should be formed, with branch Societies in each District, and auxiliaries in each Township of the Province, to be severally called 'The Canada Agricultural Association,' 'The \_\_\_\_\_ District Branch Agricultural Society,' and 'The Township of \_\_\_\_\_ Auxiliary Society, in connection with the \_\_\_\_\_ District Branch Agricultural Society.'"44

Similar to the initial plans of Robert Thorpe's Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society of 1806 and those of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society of 1818, Edmundson's scheme called for an Auxiliary Agricultural Society to be established in a uniform manner in every township of Upper Canada. They were to be governed by a Chairman, not less than three Directors, a Secretary and a Treasurer elected annually by members who had subscribed five shillings per year. Auxiliaries were to meet on a monthly basis within the township to conduct business and to discuss "topics connected with the interests of agriculturists." The Secretary was "expected to

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<sup>43</sup>See Appendix 12 for a partial list of those present at this meeting.

<sup>44</sup>The name Canada seems to have only included Upper Canada. *British American Cultivator*. December 1843, pp. 184-5.

read a paper upon the subject of agriculture" at the meeting as well as present any communications, or agricultural intelligence received during the preceding month. He would also transmit to the district society "information, or other matter that may be considered worthy of being forwarded." In addition, at these meetings, "the agricultural Journal supported by the Society" was to be distributed to members.<sup>45</sup>

Unlike the existing township agricultural societies that functioned as their individual leaders saw fit, these new township auxiliary societies were

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid. Of course, Edmundson expected the *British American Cultivator* to be the journal of the new society. During the previous year, he had sent copies of the first issue of the *British American Cultivator* to each postmaster throughout both provinces, particularly to its "most influential Farmers, in the hope of making it generally known; being confident that it is only necessary to bring it to the notice of those classes, for whose benefit it is intended, to induce them to become Subscribers." Ibid., January 1842, p. 1, c. 2. Edmundson had also sent copies of this paper to Governor General Sir Charles Bagot, for distribution among the members of the Executive Council or for "whatever purpose you [he might] think proper." PAC, Canada West; Provincial Secretary's numbered correspondence files, RG5, C1, vol. 83, PSO/CW file 147/2924 of 1842 on microfilm reel C-13568.

From its beginning, the *British American Cultivator* had been well regarded by the established press of the province, drawing recommendations from the various publishers to their readership. The editor of the *Examiner* went so far as to say that it "far exceeds any publication of the kind on the continent." *Examiner*, May 11, 1842, p. 3, c. 2. See also *Mirror*, December 31, 1841, p. 2, c.5; *Patriot*, June 17, 1842, p. 2, c.2; *St. Catharine's Journal*, April 14, 1842, p. 2, c. 5; *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, November 12, 1842, p. 2, c.7. Edmundson, however, needed to strongly advertise his new periodical, for he had stiff competition. In his estimation, the *New Genesee Farmer* had a circulation of about 1500 copies throughout the Province of Canada. *British American Cultivator*, January 1842, p. 1. In his newspaper, he took several opportunities to describe the financial possibilities of his business. In December 1843, he projected that because of the new auxiliary societies of the Home District Agricultural Society established in the townships, the *Cultivator* would "receive a circulation of not less than 4000 copies for the ensuing year within the limits of the Home District." Ibid., December 1843, p. 180. In April 1845, Edmundson was even more direct about the circulation of his journal as he postulated that if every one of the over 300 townships in the province had a branch society that subscribed to his journal (each with an average of 50 members) he could reach a circulation of 15000 copies. He asserted that 10000 paying subscribers was the necessary level of income for him to "afford to occupy his whole time in conducting the journal, and its columns could be filled with valuable engravings." "Township of Whitby Agricultural Society," Ibid., April 1845, p. 107. Also see Ibid., "Township Agricultural Societies," September 1846, pp. 260-1. By May 1843, Edmundson was forced by financial difficulties to move from Toronto to a farm in Whitchurch Township 27 miles from Toronto. The distance involved hindered both his farming and writing and by November 1845, with a circulation of about 5000 copies, Edmundson claimed that in four years he had not received payment for his work and "sustained a loss of £500 in cash." See MacKenzie, "William Graham Edmundson," *DCB*, 8, 266-7.

to promote a new and common approach to agricultural development directed at specific and coordinated reforms. Experimentation with new crops was to be a central function, albeit "upon such a scale as, in the event of a failure, may not prove injurious to the grower." Members were to focus their energy on growing crops "not usually grown in their Township," such as hops, flax, hemp and broom corn, as well as winter feed for livestock such as mangle wurtzle, carrots, ruta бага, and "other succulent roots." Farmers would be encouraged to experiment with manures, composts, or "such other matter." Township societies were also to support the commercial development of the province, specifically the erection of oil mills (for flax and other seeds), carding, fulling mills, and clothing manufactories.<sup>46</sup>

As noted, the next "rung up the ladder" from the township auxiliary societies was to be District Branch Societies. Each would be led by a President, two Vice-Presidents, twelve Directors, a Secretary and a Treasurer, elected annually by members subscribing ten shillings per year. The Chairmen of the Township Auxilliary Societies would act as *ex officio* Directors of the District Branch Society, which would meet quarterly to conduct business and to deal with information transmitted to them by the township societies of the district. In doing so, the District Society would act as a clearing house of agricultural information, transmitting important information received from one township society to the other townships of the district.

District Societies were also to hold "periodical District exhibitions and ploughing matches" in which every township member could be a competitor without charge. They were to be responsible for organizing tours of farms, drafting reports on cultivation, establishing periodical fairs for the buying and

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<sup>46</sup>*British American Cultivator*, December 1843, pp. 184-185.

selling of horses and other livestock, establishing corn markets, introducing to the district improved farm stock and "labour saving implements," as well the encouragement of the erection of mills or other machinery connected to agriculture. All actions of these District Branch Societies were to be subsequently reported to the Provincial Agricultural Association.<sup>47</sup>

The overarching "Canada Agricultural Association" was to be patronized by the Governor, and led by a President, Vice-Presidents (being the number of District Presidents), twelve Directors, two Secretaries and a Treasurer who would meet on a quarterly basis. Half of the money being granted to District Agricultural Societies was to be directed to the provincial association to fund its efforts. The association was to perform several roles. Notably, it would publish a periodical or annual newspaper "expressly devoted to agricultural intelligence and scientific information" to be distributed free of charge to each agricultural society member. Second, the association was to establish an experimental or model farm. And most importantly, this association would be responsible for sponsoring an annual grand provincial exhibition. The competition would be open, free of charge, to all members from the District Branches or Township Auxiliaries.<sup>48</sup>

At the November 6, 1843, meeting at the Court House in Toronto, this comprehensive plan was adopted, and the Home District Agricultural Society was promptly reformed. District Councillors were requested to be responsible for forming the Township Auxiliary Societies of the Home District Agricultural Society in their respective townships. At the next scheduled election of officers for the Home District Agricultural Society, in February

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

1844, the Chairmen of these new Auxiliary Societies were to be present in order to reorganize the Home District Agricultural Society as the "Home District Branch Society." The tory triumvirate of the Home District Agricultural Society, Edward W. Thomson, William B. Jarvis and George D. Wells, along with William Edmundson, were requested to form a committee to "open a correspondence with the Agricultural Societies in the different Districts," in order to publicize this plan throughout the province.<sup>49</sup> Edmundson had gained the support of the Home District Agricultural Society, but with the appointment of the corresponding committee, Edmundson's control of his plan began to shift into the hands of Jarvis and Thomson.

Nevertheless, Edmundson praised the members of the Home District Agricultural Society for setting "a noble example to their fellow agriculturists of other districts." He also commended them for following his suggestion of having the District Councillors "exert their influence" in establishing Township Auxiliary Societies. With his faith resting on the success of these township patrons, Edmundson optimistically suggested that within three months there would be at least twenty associations in the Home District, each with a membership ranging from forty to three hundred members. He was "confident, that the thinking portion of the population would become members at once, and would recommend it to all with whom they ha[d] influence."<sup>50</sup>

The Home District Agricultural Society held its annual meeting on February 14, 1844, to appoint officers "and to discuss certain matters of deep

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid. Thomson was also Warden of the Home District.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., January 1844, pp. 2-3

importance to the general interests of the Society."<sup>51</sup> As described previously in Chapter 6, the society offered a sum of £150 in aid of organizing township auxiliaries in the Home District.<sup>52</sup> The society also connected itself with the District Council, as society's quarterly meetings were rescheduled to match the weeks in which the councils assembled in Toronto.<sup>53</sup> This reorganization, however, was a much smaller step than Edmundson had hoped. Those present at the meeting agreed that the "clause which has reference to the organization of a Provincial Society [be] very properly postponed for further consideration."<sup>54</sup>

Outside of the Home District, there had been only mild support for Edmundson's scheme. In fact, it appears that only the Gore District Agricultural Society and the Midland District Agricultural Society adopted portions of this plan.<sup>55</sup> Although almost 25 years had passed, the presentation

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., January 1844, p. 10; April 1844, p. 50.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., February 1844, p. 18.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., February 1844, p. 18; April, 1844, p. 50.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., April, 1844, p. 50.

<sup>55</sup>For the support of the Gore District see Ibid., April 1844, p. 54.

Midland District: In April 1844, the following notice was published in the Kingston newspapers. "The attention of all the Members will be called to the consideration of a plan (set forth in the *British American Cultivator*) for forming Township Agricultural Societies in connection with an Institution to be established under the name and title of the "Canada Agricultural Association." *British Whig*, April 23, 1844, p. 2, c.7 - p. 3, c.1; *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, April 24, 1844, p. 3, c.1. Details of this meeting, and the portions of Edmundson's plan are outlined in Chapter 6. See *British Whig*, May 17, 1844, p. 2, c.5; *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, May 22, 1844, p. 2, c.3; *British Colonist*, May 28, 1844, p. 2, c.7.

Niagara District: There is no mention of Edmundson's plans in the surviving information of this district's agricultural society. The membership must have been aware of the plan, for in 1843, it had adopted a resolution to purchase subscriptions to Edmundson's *British American Cultivator* for its members. *St Catharines Journal*, June 15, 1843, p. 2, c. 3. See the Niagara District Agricultural Society's Treasurer's Report to the provincial government for the years 1845 and 1846. RG 5, C1, vol. 176 Register entry for file 66/13207 of 1846; on microfilm reel H-2365 and RG 5, C1, vol. 203 Register entry for file 167/16986 of 1847; on microfilm reel H-2374.

There was also a positive response received from the Gananoque Agricultural Society see *British American Cultivator*, February, 1844, p. 18.

of this scheme by the triumvirate of the Home District Agricultural Society was not that different than the attempted formation of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society of 1819-20. It was quite unlike the legislation of 1830 which had formed the district agricultural societies across the province. At that time, local patrons were allowed to create a district society with an independent vision suited to the local needs. While Edmundson's plan was intended to coordinate the efforts of all societies to a provincial plan of reform, the increasing leadership of Jarvis and Thomson made it appear that the full adoption of this plan would sacrifice the local independence to the leaders of Toronto.

In two separate and rather lengthy articles in the March 1844 issue of the *Cultivator*, Edmundson berated the apathetic farm leaders of the province who were not embracing his plan or independently championing the cause of the farmer.<sup>56</sup> At the same time, however, Edmundson confidently stated that he expected to announce in his April issue "a conventional meeting" to be soon held in either Cobourg or Hamilton to found the Canada Agricultural Association.<sup>57</sup> No such announcement was made, and by January 1845, he lamented that: "Scarcely a mention has been made of the proposed National Agricultural Institution which attracted some attention during the early part of last winter, and which ere would have been established in Canada, had the leading agriculturists been more united and zealous in the cause." He concluded that if more attention was paid to establishing Township Societies throughout the province, it was "highly probable that a Provincial Society [would] be organised before the expiration of the ensuing twelvemonth."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>*British American Cultivator*, March 1844, pp. 34-5.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 35

The agreed postponement of the association by the Home District Agricultural Society in April 1844 turned out to be a year and a half in length. Not until a November 1845 meeting of the Home District Agricultural Society did the idea of a provincial agricultural association progress any further. Once again, the Home District Agricultural Society executive took control of the planning by establishing a committee including President Jarvis, Vice-President Thomson, Secretary Wells as well as William Edmundson and a Mr. Perry. Following the schemes that had been outlined during previous years in the pages of the *British American Cultivator* this committee was to draft

an Address to the Legislature, praying for an act of appropriation for a Provincial Agricultural Society, and to submit a Prospectus for such a Society, and also to pray the Council of King's College to found and endow a Professorship of Agriculture in that Institution; and that the Committee shall have power also to report a scheme to be recommended to the Legislature by an Address, for the establishment of a Board of Agriculture in the Province of Canada.

The gentlemen present at this meeting also requested William Edmundson to publish the proceedings of this meeting "with an invitation to other Agricultural Societies to co-operate with the Society, by sending delegates" to the Home District Agricultural Society's annual meeting in February.<sup>59</sup>

Unfortunately, no record of the February meeting has survived. However, at a May 13, 1846, meeting of the Home District Agricultural Society, its President, E. W. Thomson, put forward a resolution which embodied the decisions of the November meeting and expressed the opinion of the society that "the cause of agriculture would be greatly promoted through the agency of a Provincial Agricultural Society." As it was deemed

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<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, January 1845, p. 16.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, January 1846, p. 10.



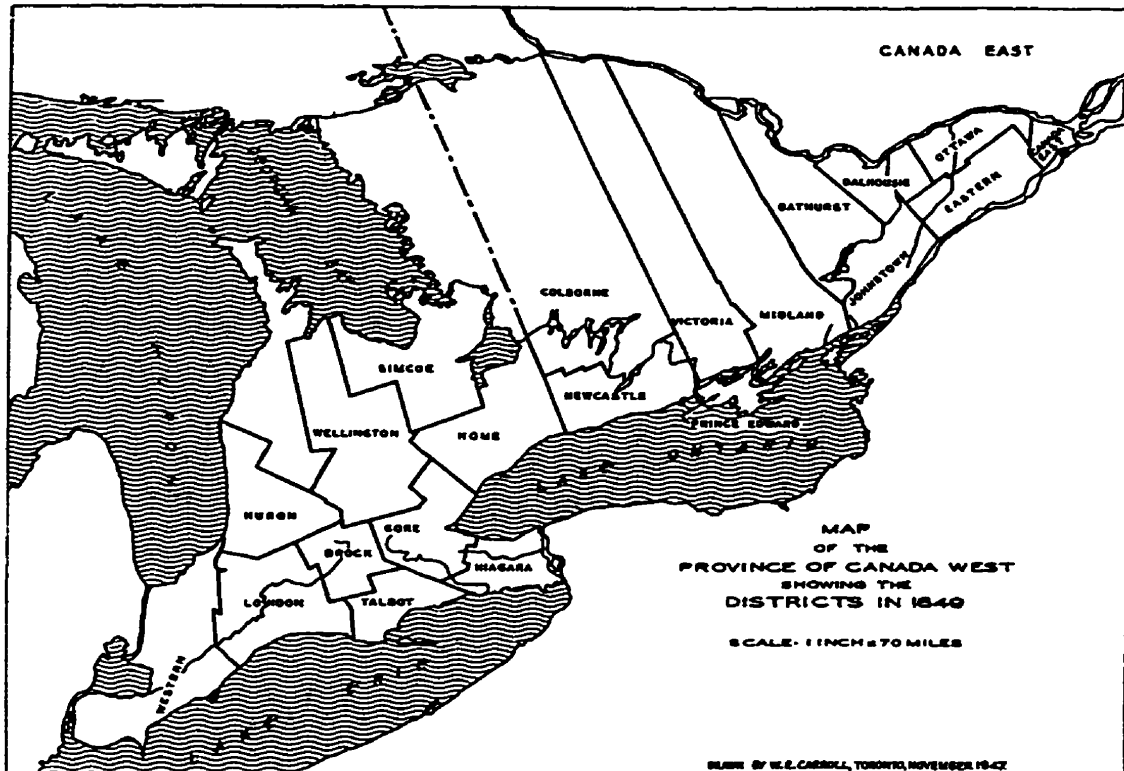
necessary that "the Agricultural Societies in Canada West should have a voice in its proper organization," a meeting of delegates from these institutions was ordered to be "called at the earliest possible opportunity." In order to carry this plan into effect, a committee of George D. Wells, William Edmundson, and Toronto Township Councillor William B. Crew, was created to appoint a place and time for a meeting and "to open a correspondence with the several Agricultural Societies in Canada West, soliciting their co-operation in the proposed general organization."<sup>60</sup> Once again, there was little response from the outlying districts.

It is unclear how the committee expected agricultural gentlemen from across the province to attend a convention at the Court House in Toronto from July 15 - 17, 1846, as this date was during the busiest weeks of the farm year. Even Edmundson later admitted that: "Owing to the busy season the meeting was not numerously attended."<sup>61</sup> Despite the poor attendance, however, he believed that "the gentlemen who took part in the proceedings manifested a great degree of praiseworthy zeal in their endeavors to promote the object for which it was called." Nevertheless, those present determined that if the association was to be "truly national in its character and all its bearings," the "next meeting should not be held in Toronto." Thus, a constitution was drafted for adoption at a meeting scheduled for Hamilton on August 17th.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>*British American Cultivator*, June 1846, pp. 166-7; Province of Canada. Board of Agriculture. *Journals and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture of Upper Canada*. vol. 1. 1856, 20-21; "A History of the Agricultural and Arts Association," in Ontario, Sessional Papers, vol. 28, part 6, Appendix D, 1856, *Fiftieth Annual Report of the Agriculture and Arts Association of Ontario*, 1895, 139-40.

<sup>61</sup>*British American Cultivator*, August 1846, p. 242.



Map 13: Upper Canada, District Boundaries, 1849. Spragge, "Districts of Upper Canada," 41.

Like the July meeting in Toronto, the meeting at Hamilton's Court House was neither well attended, nor was it at all representative of the districts of the province. Of the eighteen district representatives in attendance, the Johnstown and Huron Districts each had one representative present, two representatives each from the Home, Wellington, Colborne and Brock Districts attended, while eight individuals from the host district of Gore were present.<sup>63</sup> Noticeably absent were any representatives from the Midland<sup>64</sup> or

<sup>62</sup>*Journal and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture*, vol. 1., 1856, 21; *British American Cultivator*, August 1846, p. 242; *Niagara Chronicle*, July 31, 1846, p. 2, c. 5; *British Colonist*, August 21, 1846, p. 2, c. 4; *Newcastle Farmer*, September 1, 1846, p. 14, c. 2-3.

<sup>63</sup>See Appendix 13 for a list of the delegates.

<sup>64</sup>Unfortunately no copies of the *British Whig* exist for 1846. Similarly, there exist only scattered issues of the *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette* for that same year. However, there

the Niagara District Agricultural Societies.<sup>65</sup> Led by local patrons who, since 1830, had focussed on the reform of agriculture in their own district, the primary role of both district societies had developed into the coordination of the township societies which they had fostered by the mid-1840s.

The fact that so few individuals were present created great concern at the meeting. Many gentlemen questioned whether they could "proceed to business or not," with only seven out of twenty districts represented. Agreement was reached, however, with the comments of the Colborne District's Sheriff that he and his colleague "had come one hundred and fifty miles to attend this Association, and he hoped the meeting would not break up without effecting its object." According to a report by George Brown in his *Banner*, the meeting proceeded under the guidance of Chairman Edward W. Thomson, President of the Home District Agricultural Society. William Edmundson was appointed Secretary. This occurred only after "a good deal of discussion...as to the probability of carrying such an object into efficient operation, and the beneficial results which had arisen from the operation of similar Societies in the State of New York, which had suggested the utility of the present Association for the Agricultural interests of the Province."<sup>66</sup>

The constitution for the "Provincial Agricultural Association and Board of Agriculture for Canada West" adopted at this meeting was quite different than Edmundson's proposals. Although it termed itself a "Board of

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is a complete run between August 22- October 7, 21, 28 and November 14-December 26, 1846. During this time, there was only one mention of the Provincial Agricultural Association, that being a brief acknowledgment that the Provincial Exhibition had been held in Toronto. *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, November 21, 1846, p. 3, c. 1.

<sup>65</sup>The only mention of the organization of the Provincial Agricultural Association in the *St. Catharines Journal* was a notice copied from the *Hamilton Gazette*. Editor, Hiram Leavenworth, expressed his disappointment that "the District of Niagara was not represented on the occasion." *St. Catharines Journal*, August 27, 1846, p. 3, c. 1.

<sup>66</sup>*Banner*, September 4, 1846, p. 3, c. 3.

Agriculture," the provincial association was not officially sanctioned by the government and could not receive and public funds. Its connections to the district societies, beyond those of the Home and Gore Districts, was limited to the attendance of members of other societies to this meeting. In sum, it was little more than a new private gentleman's club that was attempting to gain more prestige than the district societies on account of its provincial pretensions.

The constitution stated that the "objects of the Association shall be the improvement of Farm Stock and Produce; the improvement of Tillage, Agricultural Implements, &c.; and the encouragement of Domestic Manufactures, of Useful Inventions, and generally, of every branch of Rural and Domestic Economy." Relying solely on private contributions, the provincial association offered membership to those subscribing five shillings or more per year, and life membership to those subscribing two pounds ten shillings or more. The society was to be governed by two delegates from each district who would meet on an annual basis. If no election of delegates was held, then the President and Secretary of each district society would be considered as *ex-officio* members.<sup>67</sup>

One reason for the simplicity of this organization appears to have been that those present at this meeting in Hamilton were quite anxious to organize a Provincial Exhibition like the New York State Fair for the coming month of October. As it was already late August, an election of temporary officers was held. Edward W. Thomson was elected President, John Wetenhall of the Gore District Agricultural Society<sup>68</sup> and Henry Ruttan, Sheriff of the Newcastle

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<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*; *British American Cultivator*, September 1846, p. 262 - 3; *British Colonist*, August 21, 1846, p. 2, c. 4; *Journal and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture*, vol. 1., 1856, 21-5.

District<sup>69</sup> were elected Vice-Presidents with William G. Edmundson chosen as both Secretary and Treasurer.<sup>70</sup> After more than four years of discussing the structure of a provincial agricultural association, one was established. It was far from province-wide in its representation, however.

The location of the exhibition also provoked a "long discussion" at the August meeting in Hamilton.<sup>71</sup> Apparently the Home District Agricultural Society settled this debate by offering £100 in support of this exhibition if it was held in Toronto. The society informed the meeting that it would only donate £50 if another location was chosen.<sup>72</sup> A useful explanation of this manoeuvre is offered by Keith Walden's argument concerning Toronto's initiation of its Industrial Exhibition in 1879. He suggests that that "exhibition was designed to engineer consent, to legitimate the leadership of particular interests...For Torontonians trying to extend the influence of their metropolis, for the city's industrial capitalist élite trying to prove itself, and for a growing middle class trying to solidify its identity and secure its hold, the great show was a valuable lever."<sup>73</sup> The same forces had influenced the government elite at York to host the Upper Canada Agricultural Society cattle

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<sup>68</sup>John Wetenhall of Nelson Township was "one of the principle shorthorned breeders in the province and an extensive farmer." PAC, MG 24 H 71, R. Kay Diary, 39.

<sup>69</sup>Ruttan's name does not appear on the list of individuals present at the meeting.

<sup>70</sup>*Journal and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture*, vol. 1., 1856, 21-5; *British American Cultivator*, September 1846, pp. 262-3.

<sup>71</sup>*Banner*, September 4, 1846, p. 3, c. 3.

<sup>72</sup>The Johnstown District Agricultural Society also offered £20 and a portion of their public grant regardless of where the exhibition was held. *St Catharines Journal*, August 27, 1846, p. 3, c.1. The Canada Company offered £50 to the Association, £25 of which was to be offered as a premium for growing wheat for the next season. *British Colonist*, October, 20, 1846, Supplement, c. 2.

<sup>73</sup>Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 15.

show in the capital's market square in 1819. And in 1830, the Family Compact had hoped its control of the Home District Agricultural Society would present a model of leadership for the outlying districts of the province. By 1846, Toronto was no longer the provincial capital but its agricultural society ensured that Upper Canada's only city would be showcased by hosting this event for visitors from across the province.<sup>74</sup>

In his "J. B. W." letter to the *British Colonist*, Jarvis expressed his pride that the creation of a Provincial Agricultural Association had "long been a favorite one" with some of the members of the Home District Agricultural Society and that the society had "set a noble example to its sister societies" in funding £100 to the upcoming exhibition. His letter contained the challenge to other societies to fund even half that amount to the exhibition in order "to carry out this first effort to imitate the 'acts and deed of our father land' with credit to themselves and benefit to the country." But he also warned that to accomplish this goal there "must be no jealousy or backwardness upon the part of the inhabitants of the country." A failure in the first year, he argued, would be "deplored."<sup>75</sup>

News of the formation of this society was well received by the press, especially that of Toronto. Most newspaper editors in September and early October 1846 hoped that the society would be well supported by farmers from across the province, and looked forward to a successful provincial exhibition in Toronto.<sup>76</sup> In the October 1846 issue of his *British American Cultivator*,

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<sup>74</sup>In order for people from across the province to attend, steamboat operators and stage coach proprietors offered special service for the exhibition. *British Colonist*, September 11, 1846, p. 2, c. 6-7.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup>See for example, *British Colonist* September 11, 1846. p. 2, c. 3. George Brown, editor of *The Globe* noted, "there cannot be any better mode of promoting the prosperity of the

Edmundson promoted the new Association and its imminent exhibition. Confessing that the "arrangements may not be as complete as would have been the case if more time had been given the Committee of Management," he announced that "preparations [were] being made on a grand scale." Edmundson was confident that the "prizes, and attendance of visitors, w[ould] be equal to the first efforts of similar Associations in Great Britain and other countries where they have been introduced." He also had no doubt that those attending the exhibition would "return home strongly impressed with the important influence that such mammoth exhibitions will have upon the productive interests of the country."<sup>77</sup>

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country." He believed that as this meeting was "the first that has been held of a Provincial and not a local character, it cannot fail to secure a numerous attendance from every quarter of the Province." *Globe*, October 13, 1846, p. 2, c.5. Others such as Egerton Ryerson, presumed that the "importance of such an exhibition...can only be fully appreciated by those who have witnessed the impulse given to [agriculture, horticulture and domestic manufactures] by similar exhibitions in other countries." *Christian Guardian*, September 30, 1846, p. 198, c. 5. Charles Lindsey, editor of the reform *Examiner* maintained the same skepticism of anything founded by Jarvis or Thomson that his predecessor James Lesslie held. He remained guarded in its enthusiasm, noting: "We are not about to shower unmeasured laudations upon a thing yet scarcely in existence." *Examiner*, September 16, 1846, p. 3, c. 2-3.

<sup>77</sup>*British American Cultivator*, October 1846, p. 294. This chapter will only deal with the exhibition as the primary reason for the founding of the Provincial Agricultural Association in 1846. There are two studies which deal extensively with ideology behind "Grand Exhibitions" and their role in the developing province. The first is Elsbeth Heaman's "Commercial Leviathan." This dissertation focuses primarily on late nineteenth-century exhibitions, but her first chapter offers a overview of the European origins of markets, fairs and exhibitions. The second chapter offers a description of the adoption of this ideology in Upper and Lower Canada, and the subsequent growth of early nineteenth-century agricultural exhibitions in these two provinces. Heaman's first two chapters are highly descriptive; however, her main argument is that exhibitions were "saturated with upper class values." They were useful educators, she argues, for "the kind of knowledge transmitted at an exhibition was easily grasped even by an illiterate *habitant* because it was made identical with reason itself, as reason was understood at the time." Heaman, "Commercial Leviathan," 18, 21.

Heaman's work is succinctly summed up in the preface and introduction of Keith Walden's examination of Toronto's Industrial Exhibition, founded in 1879. Walden introduces his study with an overview of the emergence of agricultural exhibitions from European roots of the market fair and early nineteenth-century cattle shows hosted by Upper Canada's agricultural societies. He bases his study on the argument that "fairs were instruments of hegemony, used by élites to generate support for culture dominated by white, male, middle-class values, and organized increasingly around capitalist production and the possibilities of consumption thus provided." Walden furthers this point by suggesting that the annual fair "had a greater impact on visitors [than the larger world exhibitions of the late nineteenth

Hosting the first Provincial Agricultural Exhibition in Toronto, however, allowed an opportunity for the politics which had marred the operations of the Home District Agricultural Society to interfere with the new association's activities. In late September, George Brown, editor of the *Banner*, noted "with deep regret an attempt to convert this Society into a political engine." Citing an "uncalled for and injudicious article" in the *Toronto Herald*, he criticized its editor for being "on the watch for political effect." Similar to the Home District Agricultural Society's Cattle Show dinner of the previous autumn when Edmundson's speech had been so rudely interrupted,<sup>78</sup> the *Herald* also expressed its dislike of William Edmundson by criticizing his role as Secretary of the Provincial Agricultural Association. Apparently, he "had not the right politics" for the *Herald's* editor. An organ of Toronto's Orange Order,<sup>79</sup> the *Herald* had stated that "surely some gentleman of standing in the country, some one well known and generally respected, some one not obnoxious to the imputation of disloyalty, could easily have been prevailed upon to accept the office of Honorary Secretary to a Grand Provincial Association, with a salaried assistant to take the drudgery off his hands."<sup>80</sup>

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century], who often returned time and again. The opportunities for molding were more sustained." He suggests that the impact on the visitor coming to an urban centre such as Toronto to see the exhibition was also a significant aspect of the visitor's experience. While his study examines the late nineteenth-century presentation of modern urban culture offered by the Industrial Exhibition and the city of Toronto, his arguments offer potential for a proper examination of ideology behind and the visitors' experience of the Provincial Agricultural Exhibition first hosted by the Provincial Agricultural Association in 1846. Walden, *Becoming Modern*, xiv-xvi.

<sup>78</sup>See Chapter 6.

<sup>79</sup>The editor of the *Toronto Commercial Herald* was John F. Rogers whose newspaper possessed a "strong Orange bias." Ronald J. Stagg, "Samuel Thompson," *DCB*, 11, 877.

<sup>80</sup>Unfortunately, the issue of the *Herald* has not survived. *Banner*, September 25, 1846, p. 4, c. 2-3.



To these "unhandsome and illtimed" comments Brown sarcastically commented on the persistence of the Toronto tory oligarchy and its dispensing of patronage. He replied, "Yes, let some Tory, who has done nothing for the Province but crush its rising rights and greatness, have all the honours of Secretary." Such "Tory aggrandizement," Brown argued, had been "the mode in which all matters had been managed in Canada." He optimistically concluded that such an attempt "to injure an institution of such vital importance can only have the effect of rallying around it men of every political party who desire the prosperity of the Province."<sup>81</sup>

George Brown's reaction to the *Herald's* editorial echoed the criticisms which had been levelled at the Family Compact by William Lyon Mackenzie in his *Colonial Advocate* of 1830 during the founding of the Home District Agricultural Society. In 1846, the Family Compact was long gone, but Brown's concerns were valid. After the October exhibition, the Provincial Agricultural Association would quickly be altered in a manner which was not all that different from the Family Compact's domination of the founding of the Home District Agricultural Society.

The first "Grand Provincial Exhibition of Agricultural, Manufacturing, and Horticultural Products, The Fine Arts, &c."<sup>82</sup> was held on the grounds of the Government House in Toronto on Wednesday and Thursday the 21st and 22nd of October, 1846.<sup>83</sup> This site, the corner of King and Graves (now Simcoe)

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>*British American Cultivator*, October 1846, p. 313.

<sup>83</sup>This event had originally been scheduled to be held at the Caer Howell Grounds, but for unknown reasons the event was shifted to the grounds of the Government House. A "day or two previous to the exhibition," handbills were distributed notifying the change to the new location. *Examiner*, October 28, 1846, p. 2, c. 3.

Streets, was about the most prominent location in the city.<sup>84</sup> Eighteen categories of competition were offered from the various categories advertised in the exhibition's all inclusive title, and approximately £300 in money and £100 in books were offered as prizes.<sup>85</sup> The agricultural exhibition also served as a horticultural show, a display "of ingenuity in every department of skill and science," as well as an exhibition of "collections of paintings, whether the works of the old masters, or of living artists, – statuary, &c., and any other works of art."<sup>86</sup> Despite "bad roads and not the most encouraging weather," Hugh Scobie, editor of the *British Colonist*, determined that this first exhibition "realized all that its most zealous advocates could have expected."<sup>87</sup>

The first day was the main day of the show with "several distinguished gentlemen of the province...address[ing] the assembled multitude in terms appropriate to the important objects of their meeting."<sup>88</sup> The show of cattle was held in the field behind Upper Canada College, with the implements and carriages displayed on the grounds of the Government House. Inside this building, the exhibition of fruits, grains and vegetables occupied the lower rooms, while domestic manufactures, fine arts and mechanical instruments

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<sup>84</sup>John Withrow notes that this location was called the "four corners of Toronto." It was bounded by Upper Canada College on the northwest corner, the Government House on the southwest, St. Andrew's Church on the southeast and a saloon on the northeast. "Hence the 'four corners' of Education, Legislation, Salvation and Damnation." John Withrow, "Born out of Protest," in *Once Upon a Century: 100 Year History of the "Ex"* (Toronto: J. H. Robinson Publishing Ltd., 1978), 10.

<sup>85</sup>*Examiner*, October 14, 1846, p. 2, c. 4; For the complete list of categories see *British American Cultivator*, October 1846, pp. 313-9.

<sup>86</sup>*British Colonist*, September 11, 1846, p. 2, c. 6-7.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, October 23, 1846, p. 2, c. 2.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, October 16, 1846, p. 2, c. 3.

were displayed in various rooms on the upper level.<sup>89</sup> On the second day the ploughing match occurred "in a field convenient to the Show Ground."<sup>90</sup>

At the end of the first day, two hundred and sixteen people assembled in the Government House<sup>91</sup> for the "good old 'John Bull' system of dining."<sup>92</sup> Those seated at the head table demonstrated that the Provincial Agricultural Association was not necessarily the vanguard for a new format for Upper Canada's district agricultural societies. Although it had a much larger attendance, it differed little from the 1793 dinner of the Niagara Agricultural Society at Freemason's Hall, Newark. Those present at the Toronto City Hall dinner drew upon the same traditions and displayed all the theatrics as had its earlier counterpart over fifty years earlier.

The President of the Provincial Agricultural Association, Edward W. Thomson, chaired the head table, flanked by the Chief Justice John Beverley Robinson on his right and Sir Charles Chichester, a former Lieutenant Governor of Trinidad, seated to his left.<sup>93</sup> Following the dinner, numerous city and provincial officials offered many toasts and lengthy speeches. Notably absent were any toasts offered to the example of the New York State Fair;

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<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, October 27, 1846, p. 2, c. 6.

<sup>90</sup>*British American Cultivator*, October 1846, p. 318.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, October 27, 1846, p. 2, c. 6; *British American Cultivator*, November 1846, p. 324; George Brown also claimed that there were 200 gentleman at this dinner. *Banner*, October 23, 1846, p. 3, c. 1. Egerton Ryerson, however, claimed that there were "upwards of three hundred sat down to dinner." *Christian Guardian*, October, 28, 1846, p. 6, c. 3.

<sup>92</sup>*British Colonist*, September 11, 1846, p. 2, c. 7.

<sup>93</sup>*Christian Guardian*, October 28, 1846, p. 6, c. 3. It is unclear as to why Sir Charles Chichester was in Toronto. He was, however, prestigiously "reputed one of the best regimental commanding officers in the British Army." As well as his Lieutenant Governorship of Trinidad, he had commanded the 81st Regiment in the West Indies and America. He died in Toronto the following April. Henry Manners Chichester, "Sir Charles Chichester," *DNB*, 4, 236.

toasts were offered to the Royal Agricultural Society of England and to other societies in the British Isles.<sup>94</sup>

Most of the gentlemen who were requested to speak were government officials, primarily from Toronto. John B. Marks, the President of the Midland District Agricultural Society and Warden of the Midland District, however, was one of the few gentlemen from other districts to address the crowd. He announced to the dinner guests his enthusiasm for the Provincial Agricultural Association, for he believed it "would form a nucleus for the proceedings of other bodies." He regretted, however, that the membership of the Association was only 300 individuals and suggested that "every district would, in future years, give £20 towards the funds of the Association."<sup>95</sup> Neither Marks' speech nor the exhibition received any coverage by the Kingston press.<sup>96</sup> Likewise, although William Hamilton Merritt, the MPP from Lincoln North, also delivered a speech, there was little coverage of the event in the *St Catharines Journal*.<sup>97</sup> Regional barriers to province-wide communications still existed which would continue to hinder the widespread support of a provincial institution. The Toronto press, however, paid much

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<sup>94</sup>*British Colonist*, October 27, 1846, p. 2, c. 8.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup>Apparently the *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette* did not widely publicize the event. However, there are issues of this newspaper missing at critical dates. In what appears to be the first mention of the exhibition, in the November 21st edition, while announcing the receipt of the *British American Cultivator*, the *Chronicle and Gazette* mildly endorsed the exhibition and promised to publish in the next issue the description offered by the *Cultivator*. This promise was not kept. *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, November 21, 1846, p. 3, c.1.

<sup>97</sup>The only mention of the event in the *St Catharines Journal* was a copy of the *British Colonist's* description of the event as well as the insertion of the address given at the exhibition by Adam Fergusson. *St Catharines Journal*, October 29, 1846, p. 3, c. 1-3.

attention to this unprecedented exhibition, especially to the after-dinner speeches.<sup>98</sup>

To some Toronto editors, this assemblage of speakers smacked too much of tory politics. Reformer Charles Donlevy summed up the occasion by stating in the *Mirror* that after having read the report of the speeches he determined that "a more vapid display of unncanning [sic] and inappropriate bottle-froth, never before met our eyes." Excepting a select few speeches, he claimed that "there were not ten words of common sense uttered by the whole company."<sup>99</sup> This and other attacks evoked a defence of the Provincial Agricultural Association by Hugh Scobie in his *British Colonist* in late November.<sup>100</sup> In disgust, he noted that people had hoped and prayed "that the formation of this Association would be unstained by any exhibition of party or political rancor, either by public journalists or disappointed and crabbed political adventurers." However, after having watched the columns of other newspapers for several weeks, he could no longer help but express his "astonishment" and "disgust" at those who "seized on every feature of the late meeting which their venomous ingenuity could by possibility twist, to aid their nefarious designs." In contrast, Scobie asserted that in his opinion, "it was glorifying in the extreme to witness the harmony that prevailed" at the exhibition dinner. Men of all political beliefs, "jostling elbows at the same

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<sup>98</sup>For reports see, *British Colonist*, October 23, 1846, p. 2, c. 2; October 27, 1846, p. 2, c. 6-8 - p. 3, c. 3.; October 30, 1846, p. 2, c. 3-4; November 17, 1846, p. 2, c. 1-3; *Banner*, October 23, 1846, p. 3, c. 1; October 30, 1846, p. 3, c. 1-2 (The latter is a reprint from George Brown's *Globe*. That issue has not survived.); *Globe*, November 4, 1846, p. 2, c. 4; *Christian Guardian*, October 28, 1846, p. 6, c. 3; *Examiner*, October 28, 1846, p. 2, c. 3-5; *Mirror*, October 30, 1846, p. 2, c. 4. For coverage from Upper Canada's two agricultural periodicals see, *Newcastle Farmer*, November 2, 1846, pp. 31-2; *British American Cultivator*, November 1846, pp. 321-47.

<sup>99</sup>*Mirror*, October 30, 1846, p. 2, c. 4.

<sup>100</sup>Scobie included examples of criticisms from the *Hamilton Journal & Express* and the *Montreal Gazette* in his editorial. *British Colonist*, November 17, 1846, p. 2, c.1-3.

table" seemed to forget "all but the one object, -- the advancement of Agriculture and Manufactures in Canada."<sup>101</sup>

Indeed, a union of gentlemen spanning tory and reform politics had been created by the Provincial Agricultural Association. Exemplifying this was the invitation extended to the Honourable Adam Fergusson not only to speak with other dignitaries at the dinner, but also to deliver an agricultural address from the verandah of the Government House at two o'clock on the second day of the Exhibition. Fergusson was the perfect example of a Scottish country gentlemen. He had been a director of the Highland Society of Scotland, and in 1831 had been sent by that society to the Canadas and the United States to examine the state of agriculture and the potential for emigration. Impressed with Upper Canada, he had returned in 1833 with his family, established his farm "Woodhill" near Waterdown, and helped found the town of Fergus. Privately at Woodhill, he employed the techniques of improved agriculture and imported pure-bred cattle stock to develop his herd. Later in the century, these efforts would earn him the respect of having a "considerable number" of the short-horned cattle in Canada traced to the animals which he imported.<sup>102</sup> Although by 1846, he was active in the formation of a Reform party, he had previously commanded a militia unit during the Rebellion of 1837. Since 1839, Fergusson had served as a Legislative Councillor, being appointed by Lieutenant Governor Sir George Arthur as "a gentlemen from Scotland, highly respectable and intelligent."<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>*British Colonist*, November 17, 1846, p. 2, c.1-3.

<sup>102</sup>Elwood H. Jones, "Adam Fergusson," *DCB*, 9, 251-2; Board of Agriculture of Upper Canada, *The Canada Herd Book*, vol. 1, xiv.

<sup>103</sup>Jones, "Adam Fergusson," *DCB*, 9, 251-2.

In his private and public life, Adam Fergusson was a gentleman reformer who the Tories could respect. He truly represented the changing definition of Upper Canadian loyalty of the 1840s as described by David Mills.<sup>104</sup> Although a reformer, Fergusson's loyalty was not in question since he was deeply committed to the economic development of the province's agriculture. As early as 1843, he had informed William Edmundson and the readers of the *British American Cultivator* of the need for a government funded Board of Agriculture along the same lines as the old British Board of Agriculture. In this letter, he had expressed his belief in the Edenic myth of Upper Canada, stating: "Enthusiastically attached to rural life and agricultural pursuits, the longer I live in Canada, the more I am filled with gratitude and admiration at the *yet untouched* resources which a beneficent Providence has allotted to her sons."<sup>105</sup> Even Edward W. Thomson, upon being voted the first President of the Provincial Agricultural Association in August 1846, had felt that Adam Fergusson would have been the better candidate for the position and had expected both to meet Fergusson and to nominate him for the presidency. Considering Fergusson's past role with the Highland Society of Scotland, Thomson considered him "better acquainted with the management of such societies."<sup>106</sup> Although he was not a part of the initial association, Fergusson was soon elected to an executive position after the Provincial Exhibition.

The final event of this first Provincial Exhibition was a meeting of the Directors and Members of the Provincial Agricultural Association at the

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<sup>104</sup>For David Mill's argument concerning political consensus over provincial development see Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 135-6.

<sup>105</sup>*British American Cultivator*, June 1843, p. 88.

<sup>106</sup>*Banner*, September 4, 1846, p. 3, c. 3.

Toronto Court House to elect officers for the ensuing year. Those gentlemen elected to positions were: Edward W. Thomson, President for a second term, Adam Fergusson, Senior Vice-President, Henry Ruttan, Second Vice-President and William Edmundson, Secretary and Treasurer. After the elections, the membership passed a resolution clarifying the executive structure of the association. The members present agreed that "the Society shall be governed by a President, two Vice-Presidents, and forty Directors, two from every District, and in case no Director be chosen for the any of the districts of this province, then the President and the Secretary, where no such elections have been made, shall be *ex officio* Directors for such District."<sup>107</sup>

The most fundamental alteration to the constitution was put forward by William B. Jarvis. He began with a request that the name of the institution be changed from the "Provincial Agricultural Association and Board of Agriculture for Canada West" to "The Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada."<sup>108</sup> This move reflects David Mills' argument that among Upper Canadian gentlemen, the "confidence stimulated by provincial development was expressed in a growing sense of provincial nationalism."<sup>109</sup> Moreover, the return to the name "Upper Canada" combined with the loss of "Board of Agriculture" from the title indicated that the direction in which this association was heading was back towards the Georgian roots of a gentlemen's society.

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<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, November 1846, pp. 344-5; *Journal and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture*, vol. 1, 41-4.

<sup>108</sup>*British American Cultivator*, November 1846, pp. 344-5; *Journal and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture*, vol. 1, 41-4.

<sup>109</sup>Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 136.



Yet if Jarvis' motion indicated that this was an attempt to recreate a Royal Agricultural Society of England in Upper Canada, the leaders of the provincial association realized, as William Evans had in 1842, that private funds from the Upper Canadian gentlemen who were members would not be sufficient to continue its operation. They also realized, however, that the district agricultural societies received annual funding from the government and would be a valuable financial resource for the Provincial Agricultural Association. Therefore, while the membership agreed to petition each branch of the legislature "for an annual Grant from the general revenue of the Province,"<sup>110</sup> in the mean time, they also petitioned the various district societies of the province for financial aid. Once again, the ideal of the British model had to be modified in order to create a viable Upper Canadian institution.

As constituted, the Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada, however, was primarily a gentlemen's club for the Presidents and Secretaries of the district agricultural societies. For these leaders and any other subscribing member, it offered the potential for additional prestige by performing their gentlemanly role of agricultural leadership on a provincial rather than the district stage. If there was any question that the leadership of the association remained with the select few who had organized the society and their inner circle of friends, a clear answer was offered in 1847 as the Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada petitioned the Canadian legislature for incorporation.

Listed in the preamble to "An Act for the incorporation of *The Agricultural Association of Upper Canada*," passed on July 28, 1847, were the

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<sup>110</sup>Ibid.

names of the members who had petitioned the legislature for the passage of this act.<sup>111</sup> The thirty gentlemen named were almost identical to the list of the Provincial Agricultural Associations' original Life Members.<sup>112</sup> There were only six other additions to the Life Members seeking incorporation. These gentlemen consisted of the Senior and Second Vice-Presidents of the association, two directors of the Home District Agricultural Society, and the MPPs for Simcoe and Lanark.<sup>113</sup>

In terms of their public roles, the gentlemen seeking the society's incorporation differed little from the leaders of any previous agricultural society established in Toronto. Once again, this was not an association of farmers, but the province's leading gentlemen. The list of thirty gentlemen included MPPs, government officials, lawyers, millers, merchants and businessmen. In fact, only three of the individuals could be considered gentlemen farmers.<sup>114</sup> Sixteen of the thirty gentlemen lived in Toronto with a further ten residing in the Home District. The other four individuals may not have lived in the Toronto area, but two were provincial officials and two were executives of the Provincial Agricultural Association.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>111</sup>*Statutes of the Province of Canada, 1847, 10 & 11 Vic., c. 61.*

<sup>112</sup>Compare the Life Members' list in Appendix 14 with that from the act of incorporation in Appendix 15.

<sup>113</sup>Respectively, these men were Adam Fergusson, Henry Ruttan, Robert Cooper, John Sanderson, William B. Robinson, and Malcolm Cameron. See Appendix 15.

<sup>114</sup>These included Adam Fergusson at "Woodhill," James Hervey Price at "Castlefield," and Edward W. Thomson. Francis Boyd and John Sanderson may have also been farmers, but they have not been positively identified.

<sup>115</sup>These included James Buchanan an ex-consul of Canada, who resided at Drummondville; Malcolm Cameron, the MPP for Lanark, who had recently moved to Sarnia and would later represent the Kent riding; Adam Fergusson, the Senior Vice-President of the association who resided in East Flamborough Township; and Henry Ruttan, the Second Vice-President of the association, who was also the Sheriff of the Newcastle District.

seven of the petitioners were either executives or directors of the Home District Agricultural Society. These gentlemen represented more than the petitioners to the legislature for incorporation. These were the true leaders of the Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada.

During the October 1846 meeting, William Jarvis had successfully presented a motion, stating "That the President, Vice-Presidents and the Directors [of the Provincial Agricultural Association] have the power to *nominate* a Committee from among the members of the Association, to assist in the management of the Association, which committee, during their continuance in office, shall have full power to speak and vote at all meetings of the Board, in the same manner as if they had been elected Directors from any district of the province."*[emphasis added]*<sup>116</sup> Jarvis' clause offered the potential to create an inner circle of gentlemen to operate the association, and in the months following the Provincial Agricultural Exhibition the executive and the Life Members demonstrated that this was indeed the case.<sup>117</sup>

The Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada of 1846 was neither the provincial government sponsored Board of Agriculture suggested by William Evans, nor was it the well organized association of township societies that William Edmundson had proposed. Like the Royal Agricultural Society of England, the Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada was a gentlemen's club. It pretended to speak for all the district agricultural societies, but the Provincial Agricultural Association did not greatly increase

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<sup>116</sup>*British American Cultivator*, September 1846, p. 262-3.

<sup>117</sup>While this clause was passed by the meeting and as demonstrated below was put into use, it did not appear in the constitution appended to the act offering the association official incorporation. See *British American Cultivator*, November 1846, pp. 344-5; *Journal and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture*, vol. 1, 41-4; *Statutes of the Province of Canada*, 1847, 10 and 11 Vic., c. 61.

the interaction, communication and coordination between the numerous institutions. Instead, it was merely a private club, which allowed any Upper Canadian gentleman who wished to join, and to have the opportunity to perform his gentlemanly role on a provincial stage.

Most importantly, the creation of the Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada demonstrated that little had changed in the organization of agricultural societies since John Graves Simcoe's arrival in 1792. The gentlemen of Upper Canada continued their attempts to emulate the British examples, while using the examples of New York State and Upper Canada's growing tradition of agricultural societies to make them viable. In 1846, it was once again the colonial gentlemen, and not farmers who came forward in the absence of an aristocracy to form the Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada. By doing so, the establishment of the provincial association did not follow earlier plans that had been intended to further the transition of Upper Canada's agricultural societies from private clubs to public institutions. Nevertheless, the Provincial Agricultural Association was envious of the public funds which the district societies received. The association was created as a private society, but those involved realized that government support was necessary for the success of their association. Even if it did not become officially sanctioned by the government, the founders of the Provincial Agricultural Association realized that government funds could be gained by acquiring a portion of the public funds received by each of the province's twenty the district agricultural societies.

Significantly, when the Provincial Agricultural Association for Upper Canada was quickly founded in August 1846, and restructured in October, no cry of alarm was raised that this organization was very different than any plans previously circulated. Perhaps the plans of Evans and Edmundson had

been too ambitious in their attempt to draw the agricultural societies of Upper Canada further away from their Georgian roots. Although reluctant to offer support for the provincial society, the local patrons continued to guide their district agricultural societies in the well established Georgian culture of clientelism. In the mid-1840s, there remained an ambivalent attitude about the leadership of the new provincial society. All agricultural society leaders, however, continued to use these institutions as a stage to display their gentlemanly characteristics. Whether the performance was on a township, county, district or provincial stage, at mid-nineteenth century, the script was still phrased in Georgian rather than Victorian terms.

## Conclusion

In 1852, Susanna Moodie described the Provincial Agricultural Association, commenting that "[a]ll the leading men in the province [were] members of this truly honourable institution."<sup>1</sup> Her observation suggests that, just as the leadership and character of Upper Canadian agricultural societies had transformed little during their first fifty years, the Enlightened ideology and gentlemanly character of these institutions was newly invigorated by the creation of a provincial organization.

In fact, the establishment of the Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada in 1846 is somewhat of an artificial ending point to this study. The intention of this thesis was to gain an understanding of the role which colonial gentlemen played in leading Upper Canada's agricultural societies. As such, the creation of the provincial association in 1846 offers a useful concluding event by illustrating how Upper Canadian gentlemen finally attained the goal of a provincial agricultural society

Concluding this study in 1846, however, leaves several important issues from the Upper Canadian period unresolved. Specifically, it ends with the private gentlemen's club of the Provincial Agricultural Association set apart from the majority of the district, county and township societies. While these, too, were gentlemen's clubs, using the events of 1846 as a cut-off point leaves the processes transforming the local agricultural societies from private clubs into public institutions in an artificial stasis. By the late 1830s district agricultural societies had been required to report their financial statements

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<sup>1</sup>Susanna Moodie, *Life in the Clearings versus the Bush* (London: Richard Bentley, 1853), 320.

annually to the government in a standardized manner. Furthermore, as exemplified by the Home District Agricultural Society, alliances were made with the newly established District Councils during the 1840s. The purpose of such relationships was to gain public support for the agricultural societies from the District Councillors as well as the provincial legislators.

Similarly, although the Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada did not receive any direct government funding, it was successful in obtaining funds through the public money offered to the district societies. By the time of the Provincial Agricultural Association's first annual meeting in October 1846, financial support had been received from seven of twenty district agricultural societies. The districts of London, Durham, Victoria, Home, Prince Edward, Colborne, Northumberland, as well as the Gananoque Agricultural Society all had contributed sums ranging from £5 to £100.<sup>2</sup> The Provincial Agricultural Association's acquisition of this grant money combined with its official incorporation by the provincial government in 1847, drew the association into the public sphere.

As a whole, by the start of the 1850s, the township, county (the old district divisions had been replaced by counties in 1849) as well as the provincial association became much more public in nature. First, in 1850, the provincial government created a Board of Agriculture which was quite similar to the New York State Agricultural Society. It was led by a seven member committee that was elected by the Directors of county agricultural societies. Moreover, its public leadership was knitted together with the

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<sup>2</sup>A substantial donation of fifty pounds had also been presented by the Canada Company. In fact, the society had over £482 in funds by the end of its first provincial exhibition. For the financial statement of the Provincial Agricultural Association, see *Journal and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture*. vol. 1, 1856, 44.

private executive of the Provincial Agricultural Association.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, an act passed during the following year clarified the communication structure of the Board, causing the county and township agricultural societies to become fully accountable to this new government agency.<sup>4</sup> In 1853, the Board of Agriculture of Upper Canada evolved into a Bureau which at Confederation formed the nucleus of both the Canadian and Ontario Departments of Agriculture.<sup>5</sup>

While assessing the development of the Canadian Department of Agriculture during the 1850s and 1860s, J. E. Hodgetts commented that "Here, surely, on the harsh Canadian soil, we see the last full-flowering of the Age of Enlightenment." He argued that the Department of Agriculture had only "presided" over the organizational structure of the province's agriculture, "for it neither inspired its inception nor actively directed its course."<sup>6</sup> Until 1850, "the entire administration of agricultural affairs was vested in privately operated societies," which continued to be "confined to a small clique of well-to-do farmers who least needed the support."<sup>7</sup> "In return for its annual grants, the government hoped that the private organizations would feed a constant flow of information of factual information into the central statistical section."<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, in his history of Ontario's public service, Hodgetts

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<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 9; Hodgetts, *Pioneer Public Service*, 232; *Statutes of the Province of Canada*, 1850, 13 & 14 Vic., c. 73.

<sup>4</sup>*Journal and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture*. vol. 1, 1856, 9-12; *Statutes of the Province of Canada*, 1851, 14 & 15 Vic., c. 127.

<sup>5</sup>*Journal and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture*. vol. 1, 12-13; Hodgetts, *Pioneer Public Service*, 232; *Statutes of the Province of Canada*, 1853, 16 Vic., c. 11.

<sup>6</sup>Hodgetts, *Pioneer Public Service*, 229.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 231.



noted that even in 1890, "the essence" of the Department of Agriculture's function was described as "the general supervision of all societies and associations in receipt of Legislative grants, receiving from them general reports and financial statements which are carefully examined." With the old Upper Canadian agricultural societies at its core, the Ontario Department of Agriculture inherited a well organized channel of communication between the government and the province's leading farmers.<sup>9</sup>

Robert Leslie Jones and other historians may have been correct in suggesting that Upper Canada's agricultural societies were failures and that their real utility was not adequately displayed until after 1850. Nevertheless, the Upper Canadian agricultural societies cannot be denied all credibility, for as Hodgetts asserted, it was the efforts of the Upper Canadian gentlemen who led them that set in place the structures of the agricultural societies and the Department of Agriculture of the late nineteenth century. This had been done by establishing government funded district agricultural societies in 1830 which meshed well with the culture of clientelism. Firmly rooted in Upper Canadian society since the eighteenth century, it was clientelism that had created a leadership flexible enough to ensure that these Enlightened institutions rooted in the Georgian era could flourish as the Victorian age blossomed.

As this thesis has attempted to demonstrate, the fundamental reason why Georgian institutions survived at the beginning of the Victorian era was the leaders of the agricultural societies themselves. The Enlightenment ideology that had initially led to the formation of agricultural societies

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 229.

<sup>9</sup>Hodgetts, *From Arm's Length to Hands-On: The Formative Years of Ontario's Public Service, 1867 - 1940*, (University of Toronto Press, 1995), 26.

maintained its existence in the North American province through to the mid-nineteenth century primarily because those gentlemen leading these institutions continued to characterize themselves in Georgian terms.

Early agricultural society leaders such as William B. Jarvis and Edward W. Thomson would have viewed 1846 as merely part of the natural progression of Upper Canada's agricultural societies. They did not step aside for a new Victorian leadership to take over. Instead, each continued to be involved in agricultural societies into the 1860s. Jarvis died in 1864, and Thomson died the following year, while walking to Toronto from his farm to attend a meeting of the Provincial Agricultural Association.<sup>10</sup> Even Adam Fergusson, the former member of the Highland Society of Scotland and elected President of the Provincial Agricultural Association in 1846 helped maintain a personal link to the Enlightenment as a leading member of the Board of Agriculture for Upper Canada until his death in 1862.<sup>11</sup>

It is perhaps William Edmundson who provides the most fitting conclusion to this study, however. Throughout the early 1840s, the editor of the *British American Cultivator* had been the most active individual in promoting the formation of the Provincial Agricultural Association. Although he had been rewarded for this by being voted this institution's first Secretary and Treasurer, Edmundson was criticized by some who believed he had attained a position that was above his social status. While he associated with gentlemen such as William B. Jarvis and Edward W. Thomson in the Home District Agricultural Society and the Provincial Agricultural

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<sup>10</sup>Burns, "William Botsford Jarvis, DCB, 9, 411; MacKenzie, "Edward William Thomson (Thompson), DCB, 9, 789.

<sup>11</sup>Jones, "Adam Fergusson," DCB, 9, 251-2.

Association, he was no more than a farmer and editor. Edmundson did not possess the financial independence of Upper Canada's professional gentlemen's class. In order to sustain the *British American Cultivator*, Edmundson had attempted several losing ventures such as buying his own farm, selling agricultural implements and operating a land and patent agency office.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, unlike the other officers of the Provincial Agricultural Association who offered their leadership as an act of *noblesse oblige*, Edmundson stood to profit from the success of the society. If his newspaper had been adopted as the official journal of the new association, its circulation would have increased substantially.

Edmundson proved his detractors correct during his time as Secretary and Treasurer of the Provincial Agricultural Association. Between 1846 and 1848, he handled the funds of the society poorly, making many unauthorized purchases. As a result, in 1848, the other officers of the organization took action against Edmundson requesting that he reimburse the association's accounts. With his private and public life in financial disarray, William Edmundson left Toronto in disgrace for the United States. He died in obscurity in Illinois just three years later.<sup>13</sup>

William Edmundson's short admission into the exclusive club of the Provincial Agricultural Association's executive was a sharp contrast to the longevity of the leadership provided by numerous other quintessential Georgian gentlemen farmers such as William Jarvis or Edward Thomson. Edmundson helped reinvigorate the long-standing dream of a provincial agricultural society, but it was the leaders of the Upper Canada's agricultural

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<sup>12</sup>MacKenzie, "William Graham Edmundson," *DCB*, 8, 266-7.

<sup>13</sup>*ibid.*

societies who continued to lead the improvement of a Georgian agrarian society even after the onset of the Victorian era.

## Appendix 1: Members of the Agricultural Society at Newark 1792 -1807<sup>1</sup>

|  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe |                             |
| David William Smith                    |                             |
| Reverend Robert Addison                | John MacNabb                |
| Robert Kerr                            | Jacob A. Ball               |
| George Forsyth                         | L. Clement                  |
| Hon. Robert Hamilton                   | Francis Crooks <sup>2</sup> |
| Colin MacNabb                          | Warner Nelles               |
| Hon. William Dickson                   | John Warren                 |
| Dr. James Muirhead                     | Samuel Street               |
| Thomas Butler                          | Captain Usher               |
| John Symington                         | George Ball                 |
| Joseph Edwards                         | Abram Nelles                |
| Ralfe Clench                           | James Kerby <sup>3</sup>    |
| Dr. Cyrus Sumner                       | Daniel Servos <sup>4</sup>  |
| James Clark <sup>5</sup>               | Robert Nichol <sup>6</sup>  |

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<sup>1</sup>This list is based on one prepared by Janet Carnochan but includes additional names which are cited below. Janet Carnochan, "Names Only, but much more," *Niagara Historical Society*[Publications] 27 (1914-15), 17.

<sup>2</sup>Carnochan listed Francis Crooks as "Miss Crooks," *Ibid.* For mention of Francis Crooks as a member see C. C. James, "The First Agricultural Societies," *Queen's Quarterly* 10 (October 1902), 222.

<sup>3</sup>Carnochan listed James Kerby as "J. Kirby," Carnochan, "Names Only, but much more," 17.

<sup>4</sup>Daniel Servos' involvement is noted by C. C. James, "The First Agricultural Societies" in Ontario, Department of Agriculture. *Annual Report of the Bureau of Industries for the Province of Ontario, 1901*, Appendix No. 26, 125-6.

<sup>5</sup>James Clark's involvement is also noted by C. C. James. *Ibid.*, 122; "Memoirs of Colonel John Clark of Port Dalhousie, C. W." *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records* 7 (1906): 158.

<sup>6</sup>The John Askin Papers indicate that Robert Nichol was a member in 1801. Milo M. Quaife, ed., *The John Askin Papers* (Detroit: Detroit Library Commission, 1928), 353-55.

**Appendix 2: List of books donated to the Niagara Library by the Niagara Agricultural Society, 1805.<sup>1</sup>**

|     |         |                            |        |
|-----|---------|----------------------------|--------|
| 1.  | 348-361 | Young's Agriculturalist    | £10    |
| 2.  | 362-366 | Museum Rusticus            | £3 4s  |
| 3.  | 367-368 | Young's Tour in Ireland    | £1 8s  |
| 4.  | 369-374 | Wright's Husbandry         | £3 12s |
| 5.  | 375-376 | Marshal's Midland County   | £1 8s  |
| 6.  | 377-378 | Adam's Agriculturalist     | £1 8s  |
| 7.  | 379-381 | Douglas, Agriculturalist   | £2     |
| 8.  | 382-383 | Dickson's Husbandry        | £1 8s  |
| 9.  | 384     | Hart's Husbandry           | £1 2s  |
| 10. | 385-386 | Anderson's Agriculturalist | £1 8s  |
| 11. | 387     | Gentleman Farmer           | 14s    |
| 12. | 388-392 | Bath Papers                | £3 10s |
| 13. | 393-394 | Dickson's Agriculturalist  | £1 4s  |
| 14. | 395     | Dublin Society             | 16s    |
| 15. | 396     | Small and Barron           | 9s     |
| 16. | 397     | Hume on Agriculture        | 6s     |

TOTAL: £32 7s

**Proper Titles:<sup>2</sup>**

1. Arthur Young. *Annals of Agriculture & other Useful Arts Collected and Published by Arthur Young.* vols i-xlvi, Printed by H. Goldney &—. 1784-1815
2. [Royal Society of Arts]. *Museum Rusticum et Commercial or Select Papers on Agriculture, Commerce, Arts and Manufacturers.* 6 vols. London 1764-6.
3. Arthur Young, *A Tour in Ireland; with General Observations on the Present State of that Kingdom: Made in the Years 1776, 1777 and*

<sup>1</sup> The numbers in the second column are from the entries in a register of the Niagara Library and indicate the number of volumes per title. Janet Carnochan, *History of Niagara* (1914; reprint, Belleville: Mika Publishing, 1973), 267; Carnochan, "Niagara Library, 1800 to 1820," *Niagara Historical Society* [Publications] 6 (1900): 1-30; C.C. James, "The Pioneer Agricultural Society of Ontario," *Farming World*, Special Fair Number, September 1902, 212.

<sup>2</sup> The complete titles of the Niagara Agricultural Society's library are found in the following sources. G. E. Fussell, *More old English farming books from Tull to the Board of Agriculture 1731-1793* (London: Crosby Lockwood, 1950); Kenneth Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit: British Agricultural Societies in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Hugh Evelyn Ltd., 1972).

1778, and brought down to the end of 1779 (with 2 plates),  
London: Printed for T. Cadell and J. Dodsley, 1780.

4. Robert Maxwell. *The practical husbandman, being a collection of mescellaneous papers on husbandry &c.* Edinburgh: Printed by C. Wright and company for the author, 1757.
5. William Marshall. *The rural economy of the Midland Counties.* London, 1790.
6. James Adams. *Practical Essays in Agriculture...Carefully collected and digested from the most eminent authors with experimental remarks.* 2 vols. Printed for T. Cadell, London, 1789.
7. *A Dissertation on the Chief Obstacles to the Improvement of land and introducing better methods of Agriculture throughout Scotland.* Printed and sold by F. Douglas, Aberdeen, 1760.
8. Adam Dickson. *Treatise on Agriculture.* 2 vols. Edinburgh, 1762, 1770.
9. Anonymous [Rev. Walter Harte]. *Essays in husbandry.* London: Printed for W. Frederick in Bath, 1764.
10. A Farmer [James Anderson]. *Essays relating to Agriculture and Rural Affairs.* Edinburgh, 1775.
11. Lord Kames. *The Gentlemen Farmer.* Edinburgh: Printed for W. Creech, Edinburgh, and T. Cadell, London, 1776.
12. *Letters and Papers of the Bath Society*
13. Adam Dickson. *The Husbandry of the Ancients.* Printed for J. Dickson and W. Creech: Edinburgh and C. Robinson and T. Cadel: London, 1778.
14. *Dublin Society Transactions*
15. Professor William Barron, F.R.S.E. *Essays on the Mechanical principles of the Plough.* Edinburgh, 1774.  
James Small. *Treatise of Ploughs and Wheel Carriages.* Edinburgh, 1784.
16. Clarke, Thomas Brooke. *A Survey of the strength and opulence of Great Britain...with obeservations by...and David Hume, in a correspondence with Kames.* London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1801.

**Appendix 3: Members of the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society, February 22, 1806.<sup>1</sup>**

**Officers:**

**Chairman:**

Hon. Mr. Justice Robert Thorpe

**Secretary:**

John Small, Esq.

**Treasurer:**

Charles B. Wyatt, Esq.

**Corresponding Committee:**

Hon. Justice Mr. Robert Thorpe

The Hon. Peter Russell

Hon. Mr. Justice William Dummer Powell

Hon. Thomas Scott, Attorney General

D'Arcy Boulton, Esq., Solicitor General, M. H. A.

William Weekes, Esq., M. H. A.

Reverend George OKill Stuart

**District Representatives:**

**For the Niagara District:**

The Hon. Robert Hamilton

**For the Western District:**

The Hon. James Baby

**For the London District:**

Benajah Mallory, Esq., M.H.A.

**For the Midland District:**

Allan McLean, Esq., M.H.A.

**For the Eastern District:**

John Crysler, Esq., M.H.A.

**For the Johnstown District:**

Peter Howard, Esq., M. H. A.

**For the Newcastle District:**

David McGregor Rogers, Esq., M. H. A.

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<sup>1</sup> "Proceedings of the Upper Canada Agricultural and Commercial Society," in Public Archives of Canada. *Report on Canadian Archives for 1892*, Note D, No. 9, (Ottawa: S. E. Dawson, 1893), 41-43.



**Original Members:**

Hon. Justice Robert Thorpe  
 Hon. Justice William Dummer Powell  
 Hon. Thomas Scott  
 William Jarvis, Secretary of the Province  
 Allan McLean, M.H.A.  
 William Weekes, M.H.A.  
 Peter Howard, M.H.A.  
 D'Arcy Boulton, M.H.A.  
 David Cowen, M.H.A.  
 Ralfe Clench, M.H.A.  
 David McGregor Rogers, M.H.A.  
 John Bennett  
 John Cameron  
 William Willcocks, J.P.  
 Robert Baldwin, J.P.  
 Reverend George OKill Stuart  
 T. B. Gough  
 Reverend Robert Addison  
 William Stanton, D.P.  
 Frederick Baron De Hoen  
 H.W. Baldwin, Master in Chancery  
 Charles B. Wyatt, Surveyor General  
 Elisha Beman, J.P.  
 Willam Graham  
 Joseph Willcocks, Sheriff of the Home District  
 John Small, Clerk of the Crown in Chancery

Hon. Peter Russell  
 Hon. Robert Hamilton  
 Hon. James Baby  
 Thomas Dorland, M.H.A.  
 Robert Nelles, M.H.A.  
 Solomon Hill, M.H.A.  
 Benajah Mallory, M.H.A.  
 Ebenezer Washburn, M.H.A.  
 Samuel Ridout  
 Quetton St. George  
 John Berkee  
 Thomas Mosley  
 Richard Ferguson, J.P.  
 William Allan, J.P.  
 William Gilkinson  
 William Cooper  
 Simon McNabb  
 George Lane  
 Robert Henderson  
 John Ashbridge  
 William Chewett, J.P.  
 Thomas Ridout, C.P.  
 William Bond  
 Stillwell Willson

**Appendix 4: "Gentlemen Proposed for Vice-Presidents & Directors of the Niagara District Branch of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society," [1806]<sup>1</sup>**

|                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| First Vice-President  | Reverend Robert Addison |
| Second Vice-President | Thomas Merritt, Esq.    |
| Treasurer             | John Symington, Esq.    |
| Secretary             | James Kerby             |

Directors:

|                      |                                |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| For Niagara Township | Robert Hamilton                |
| Bertie               | John Warren                    |
| Willoughby           | Captain Usher                  |
| Stamford             | Samuel Street                  |
| Grantham             | George Adams                   |
| Louth                | George Ball                    |
| Clinton              | Dr. Cyrus Sumner               |
| Grimsby              | Abraham Nelles                 |
| Crowland             | Crowil Hilsen                  |
| Humberstone          | Christian Zavitz               |
| Wainfleet            | Shubal Park                    |
| Caistor              | Edmond Hodge                   |
| Gainsborough         | John Taylor [name crossed out] |
| Thorold              | John Decow                     |
| Pelham               | Elijah Phelps                  |
| Grand River          | Warner Nelles                  |

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<sup>1</sup>PAC, William Hamilton Merritt Papers, vol. 1 on reel C- 7061. This document is not dated.

## Appendix 5: Officers of the Upper Canada Agricultural Society, York.

1819<sup>1</sup>

Patron:

His Excellency Sir Peregrine Maitland, K. C. B.

President:

The Hon. Mr. Justice William Campbell

Vice-Presidents:

The Hon. James Baby

The Hon. Mr. Justice D'Arcy Boulton

Directors:

The Hon. Mr. Chief Justice William Dummer Powell

The Hon. Mr. Chief Justice Thomas Scott

The Hon. and Rev. Dr. John Strachan

Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Wells

Peter Robinson, Esq.

George Crookshank, Esq.

Levius P. Sherwood, Esq.

Treasurer:

Henry John Boulton, Esq.

Secretary:

Robert C. Horne, Esq.

1820<sup>2</sup>

President:

Hon. James Baby

Vice-Presidents:

Hon. Mr. Justice D'Arcy Boulton

John Beverley Robinson, Esq.

Secretary:

Robert C. Horne, Esq.

Treasurer:

Henry John Boulton, Esq.

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<sup>1</sup>*Upper Canada Gazette*, January 21, 1819, p. 3, c. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, March 9, 1820, p. 3, c. 3.

## Appendix 6: Officers of the Agricultural Society of the Midland District

**1819<sup>1</sup>**

Those chosen for positions at inaugural meeting, February 8, 1819:

Chairman:

Thomas Markland

Committee elected to draft rules and regulations for the society:

Chairman:

The Reverend Rowland Grove Curtois

Members:

The Reverend John Wilson

Thomas Shaw, Esq.

Benjamin Whitney, Esq.

Alexander Pringle, Esq.

Anthony Marshall, Esq.

John M. Balfour, Esq.

Officers for 1819 elected at the subsequent meeting at Bath, February 13, 1819:

President:

Hon. Allan McLean, Esq. [M.H.A Frontenac]

Vice-Presidents:

Alexander Fisher, Esq.

Thomas Markland, Esq.

James Cotter, Esq.

Treasurer and Secretary:

G. H. Markland, Esq.

Committee:

Kingston:

G. H. Markland, Esq.

John Kirby, Esq.

Thomas Shaw, Esq.

Lawrence Herchmer, Esq.

Benjamin Whitney, Esq.

William Mitchell, Esq.

John M. Balfour, Esq.

Anthony McGuin, Esq.

Smith Bartlet, Esq.

Micajah Purdy, Esq.

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<sup>1</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, February 19, 1819, p. 1, c. 5 - p. 2, c. 2; *Upper Canada Gazette*, March 4, 1819, p. 3, c. 2-4.

Ernest Town  
 Issac Fraser, Esq.  
 John Church, Esq.

Adolphustown  
 Thomas Dorland, Esq.  
 Benjamin Clapp, Esq.

Hallowell  
 John Stoenson, senr., Esq.  
 Samuel Williams, Esq.

Ameliasburg  
 James Young, Esq.  
 Bedal Dorland, Esq.

Thurlow  
 John Canniffe, Esq.  
 James M. Nabb, Esq.

Camden  
 John Carscallon, Esq.

Fredericksburg  
 W. Crawford, Esq.  
 Davis Hawley, Esq.

Marysburg  
 Henry McDonnell, Esq.

Sophiasburg  
 S. Munro, Esq.  
 Jacob Cronk, Esq.

Sidney  
 Thomas Jones, Esq.  
 Gilbert Harris, Esq.

Richmond  
 Allan MacPherson, Esq.  
 Andrew Kimmerly, Esq.

Pittsburg and Wolfe Island  
 Col. D. MacPherson

**1820<sup>1</sup>**

President:

Alexander Fisher

Vice-Presidents:

Thomas Dorland  
 Thomas Fenney  
 Benjamin Whitney  
 Ebenezer Washburn  
 John W. Myers

Treasurer:

William Mitchell

Secretary:

Hugh C. Thomson

**1821<sup>2</sup>**

President:

Alexander Fisher

Vice-Presidents:

Benjamin Whitney  
 Davis Hawley  
 William Crawford  
 James Wilson  
 Robert Smith

Treasurer:

Christopher A. Hagerman

Secretary:

George H. Markland

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<sup>1</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, May 5, 1820, p. 3, c. 3.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, June 8, 1821, p. 3, c. 4.

**Appendix 7: Officers of the Frontenac County Agricultural Society, 1821-1823.****1821<sup>1</sup>****President:**

George H. Markland

**Vice-Presidents:**Christopher A. Hagerman  
Micajah Purdy**Treasurer:**

Smith Bartlett

**Secretary:**

Thomas Dalton

**Committee:**Samuel Aykroyd  
James Atkinson  
Joseph Ferris  
Barnabas Wartman  
Lewis Day  
Elijah Beach  
Stephen Miles  
Nathaniel Caverly  
Robert Innes**1822<sup>2</sup>****President:**

George H. Markland

**Vice-Presidents:**Micajah Purdy  
Joseph Ferris**Committee:**James Atkinson  
Benjamin Wartman  
Richard Ellerbeck  
Nathaniel Caverly  
John Lake  
Stephen Miles  
Elijah Beach  
Samuel Cone  
Francis Lattimore  
Henry Shibley  
Samuel Aykroyd  
John King  
Robert Innis  
Hugh C. Thomson  
Albert MacMichael

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<sup>1</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, July 6, 1821, p. 3, c. 4.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, June 21, 1822, p. 3, c. 4.

1823<sup>1</sup>

President:

The Hon. George H. Markland

Vice-Presidents:

Joseph Ferris

Samuel Aykroyd

Dr. Horace Yeomans

Treasurer:

Robert Stanton

Secretary:

Daniel Ferris

Hugh C. Thomson

Committee:

J. Whitehead

John Lake

Francis Lattimore

James Atkinson

John Warner

Archibald Richmond

John King

John Campbell

Albert McMichael

William Guess

Benjamin Wartman

Nathaniel Caverly

Lewis Day

Elijah Beach

1825<sup>2</sup>

President:

Samuel Aykroyd

Secretary:

Hugh C. Thomson

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<sup>1</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, June 20, 1823, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>2</sup>*Upper Canada Herald*, July 12, 1825, p. 3, c. 5.

**Appendix 8: Individuals signing Mackenzie's petition of March 8, 1830, calling for the formation of a Home District Agricultural Society.<sup>1</sup>**

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Jesse Ketchum        | tanner - 36 Yonge Street<br>MHA York - reform candidate  |
| Robert Baldwin       | lawyer - 23 Yonge Street<br>MHA York (town) - reform candidate   |
| Alexander Burnside   | physician<br>voted reform in 1830 election   |
| James Doyle          | lawyer<br>voted reform in 1830 election  |
| William L. Mackenzie | editor of <i>Colonial Advocate</i><br>MHA York - reform candidate  |
| John Cummer          | yeoman - Yonge Street<br>voted reform in 1830 election   |
| Robert Rutherford    | merchant - General Store - 105 King Street<br>Northwest corner Market Square<br>voted reform in 1830 election            |
| Seneca Ketchum       | yeoman<br>brother of Jesse Ketchum<br>voted tory in 1830 election  |
| Henry S. Sullivan    | attorney in firm of Baldwin and Sullivan   |
| R. A. Parker         | merchant - Groceries, Wines, Liquors and Dry<br>Goods - 106 King Street and 193 King Street at<br>corner of Yonge Street |

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<sup>1</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, March 11, 1830, p. 3, c. 4; *Christian Guardian*, March 20, 1830, p. 143, c. 3. Biographical information is found in the following locations: *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*; George Walton, *York Commercial Directory, Street Guide, and Register 1833-4* (York, U. C.: Thomas Dalton, [1833]); George Walton, *The City of Toronto and the Home District Commercial Directory and Register with Almanack and Calendar for 1837* (Toronto: T. Dalton and W. J. Coates, 1837); George Brown, *Brown's Toronto City and Home District Directory 1846-7* (Toronto: George Brown, 1846); *Commemorative Biographical Record of the County of York Ontario* (Toronto: J. H. Beers, 1907); Edith Firth, *Town of York, 1815 - 1835* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1966), xxvii, 126-129; William D. Reid, *Death Notices of Ontario* (Labertville, N. J.: Hunderdon House, 1980).



|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Thomas D. Morrison              | physician<br>reform candidate for York (town) in 1828<br>election<br>voted reform in 1830 election           |
| William Cattermole <sup>1</sup> | British travel writer, Land Agent  |
| Thomas Stoyell                  | yeoman<br>voted reform in 1830 elections   |
| Thomas Bell, Junr.              | merchant - General Store - 109 King Street - Market<br>Square  |
| John Scott                      | butcher - Yonge Street Road  |
| John Dennis                     | shipwright<br>voted reform in 1830 election  |
| William Bergin                  | merchant - General Store - 96 King Street<br>voted reform in 1830 election                                   |
| William Arthurs                 | merchant - Groceries, Dry Goods, and Provision<br>Store - 96 King Street - Northwest corner Market<br>Square |
| John Anderson                   | merchant - 44 Lot St. West<br>voted tory in 1830s election   |
| John McFarlane                  | yeoman[?]<br>Lot 25, Concession 4, Etobicoke Township  |
| Joseph Cawthra                  | merchant - corner of Frederick Street and Palace<br>Street<br>voted reform in 1830 election                  |
| John Hugill                     | brewer<br>voted reform in 1830 election  |

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<sup>1</sup>William Cattermole was a British gentleman who had resided in Upper Canada for three years and was employed as a land agent. He returned to England in 1830 and published an emigration guide for the province. William Cattermole, *Emigration: The Advantages of Emigration to Canada* (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1831), iii-iv.

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| John Bishop         | butcher - 6 Market Lane<br>voted reform in 1830 election  |
| Robert Stobo        | ?   |
| J. A. Mackenzie     | watchmaker<br>voted reform in 1830 election   |
| John Endicott       | yeoman[?]<br>Lot 56, Concession 1, Vaughan Township   |
| Thomas Silverthorn  | yeoman[?]<br>Lot 2, Concession 4, Uxbridge Township   |
| Amos Griswold       | yeoman[?]<br>Lot 23, Concession 23, Pickering Township  |
| James Newbigging    | merchant - Murray, Newbigging and Company<br>Yonge Street Road  |
| William Moore       | yeoman<br>200 acres Lot 1 Concession 2, York Township   |
| D. Brooke, Junr.    | gentleman - Richmond Street   |
| Thomas Vaux [Vaugh] | clerk in the House of Assembly<br>8 Richmond Street   |
| Silas Burnham       | merchant - General Store - 67 King Street East  |
| Barnabas Brennan    | merchant  |
| James Jones         | yeoman[?]<br>Scarborough Township   |
| Charles D. Sheldon  | merchant, manufacturer<br>Sheldon, Dutcher and Co. York Foundry and<br>Steam-engine Factory, and Dealers in Dry Goods,<br>Groceries, etc.,<br>20, 22, 24, and 26 Yonge Street |

**Appendix 9: Officers of the Niagara District Agricultural Society, 1830-1846.****1830<sup>1</sup>**

President:

George Adams

By-law Committee:

Adam Stull

Johnson Butler

David W. Smith

John Gibson

James Clendinning

Secretary:

Samuel Wood

**1832<sup>3</sup>**

President:

George Adams

Vice-President:

Dr. Cyrus Sumner

Director:

George Marlatt

Treasurer:

John Gibson

Secretary:

Samuel Wood

**1831<sup>2</sup>**

President:

George Adams

Vice-Presidents:

Cyrus Sumner

Adam Stull

Directors:

John Lampman

Dennis Woolverton

Treasurer:

John Gibson

Secretary:

Samuel Wood

**1833<sup>4</sup>**

President:

George Adams

Vice-Presidents:

James Gordon

Thomas Butler

Dr. Cyrus Sumner

Secretary:

Adam Stull

---

<sup>1</sup>*Niagara Gleaner*, June 26, 1830, p. 4, c. 4; PAC, Upper Canadian Sundries, "Petition to Sir John Colborne from George Adams, President of the Niagara District Agricultural Society," December [?], 1830, pp. 59142-4.

<sup>2</sup>*Farmers Journal and Welland Canal Intelligencer*, January 18, 1832, p. 3, c. 1.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, May 17, 1832, p. 3, c. 4; *Niagara Gleaner*, May 12, 1832, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>4</sup>*Farmers Journal and Welland Canal Intelligencer*, June [12?], 1833, p. 3, c. 1.

**1834<sup>1</sup>**

President:

George Adams

Vice-Presidents:

Dr. Cyrus Sumner  
 James Gordon  
 Alexander McDonell  
 George Connolly

Treasurer:

John Gibson

Secretary:

James Fitz-Gerald

**1842<sup>3</sup>**

President:

George Adams

Vice-Presidents:

William Woodruff  
 Walter H. Dickson  
 W. Kingsmill  
 John Stewart  
 John Lemon

Treasurer:

John Gibson

Secretary:

Samuel Wood

**1838<sup>2</sup>**

President:

George Adams

Vice-Presidents:

Thomas Butler  
 Walter H. Dickson  
 Timothy Hixson  
 William Woodruff  
 Lachlan Bell  
 William B. Robinson

Treasurer:

John Gibson

Secretary:

Samuel Wood

**1845<sup>4</sup>**

President:

Samuel Wood

Vice-President:

Rev. Thomas B. Fuller

Treasurer:

John Gibson

Secretary:

A. K. Boomer

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<sup>1</sup>*British American Journal*, June 24, 1834, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>2</sup>*St Catharines Journal*, July 5, 1838, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, June 9, 1842, p. 3, c. 3.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, May 1, 1845, p. 3, c. 3.

**Appendix 10: Officers of the Midland Distinct Agricultural Society, 1830-1846.****1830<sup>1</sup>**

President:

John Macaulay

Vice-Presidents:

Isaac Fraser

John Marks

Treasurer:

David J. Smith

Secretary:

Hugh C. Thomson

**1834<sup>3</sup>**

President:

John Macaulay

Vice-Presidents:

Isaac Fraser

John Marks

Treasurer:

David J. Smith

Secretary:

Hugh C. Thomson/  
G. W. Yarker**1831<sup>2</sup>**

President:

John Macaulay

Vice-Presidents:

John Marks

Peter Davy

Allan MacPherson

Treasurer:

David J. Smith

Secretary:

Hugh C. Thomson

**1835<sup>4</sup>**

President:

John Macaulay

Vice-Presidents:

John Marks

Allan MacPherson

Treasurer:

David J. Smith

Secretary:

Thomas Rice

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<sup>1</sup>*Kingston Chronicle*, May 8, 1830, p. 3, c. 1; July 31, 1830, p. 2, c. 6.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, March 5, 1831, p. 3, c. 3, 4; August 27, 1831, p. 3, c. 6.

<sup>3</sup>*Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, April 26, 1834, p. 3, c. 1-2; September 13, 1834, p. 3, c. 1.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, May 9, 1835, p. 3, c. 2; *British Whig*, May 19, 1835, p. 2, c. 3.

**1836<sup>1</sup>****President:**

John Macaulay

**Vice-Presidents:**

John Marks

Allan MacPherson

**Treasurer:**

David J. Smith

**Secretaries pro tem.:**

John Marks

Alexander Pringle

**1837<sup>2</sup>****President:**

John Marks

**Vice-Presidents:****Frontenac:**

William Logie

William Holditch

**Lennox:**

Allan MacPherson

John Church

**Addington:**

Peter Davy

Nathan Fellows

**Treasurer:**

David J. Smith

**Recording Secretary:**

William Holditch

**Corresponding Secretary:**

Alexander Pringle

**1838-39<sup>3</sup>****President:**

John Marks

**Treasurer:**

David J. Smith

**Corresponding Secretary:**

Alexander Pringle

**Recording Secretary:**Thomas A. Corbett/  
Dr. Edward J. Barker**1840<sup>4</sup>****President:**

John Marks

**Treasurer:**

David J. Smith

**Corresponding Secretary:**

Dr. Edward J. Barker

**Recording Secretary:**

Thomas A. Corbett

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<sup>1</sup>*Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, April 30, 1836, p. 3, c. 2; September 3, 1836, p. 3, c. 3.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, May 10, 1837, p. 3, c. 1; *British Whig*, May 12, 1837, p. 2, c. 5.

<sup>3</sup>*Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, September 19, 1838, p. 2, c. 4; October 31, 1838, p. 2, c. 6; June 27, 1840, p. 2, c. 6.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, July 25, 1840, p. 1, c. 6.

**1842<sup>1</sup>****President:**

John Marks

**Vice-President:**

James Sampson

**Corresponding Secretary:**

Dr. Edward J. Barker

**Recording Secretary:**

Thomas Glassup

**1844-45<sup>2</sup>****President:**

John Marks

**Vice-President:**

James Sampson

**Secretary and Treasurer:**

Thomas Glassup

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<sup>1</sup>*Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, April 30, 1842, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>2</sup>*British Whig*, April 23, 1844, p. 3, c. 1; July 15, 1845, p. 2, c. 7.

**Appendix 11: Officers of the Home District Agricultural Society, 1830-46.****1830<sup>1</sup>**

President:

George Crookshank

Secretary:

William B. Jarvis

Treasurer:

John Elmsley

Directors:

William Allan

Alexander Wood

D'Arcy Boulton Jr.

John William Gamble

Robert Stanton

James Fitzgibbon

Peter Robinson

John Elmsley

Edward O'Brien

Charles C. Small

Richard Gapper

Robert Anderson

**1831<sup>2</sup>**

President:

Alexander Wood

Treasurer:

William B. Jarvis

**1833<sup>3</sup>**

President:

John Elmsley

Vice-President:

Edward W. Thomson

Secretary and Treasurer:

William B. Jarvis

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<sup>1</sup>*Colonial Advocate*, May 20, 1830, p. 3, c. 4; *Upper Canada Gazette*, May 27, 1830, p. 3, c. 4; William Cattermole, *Emigration: The Advantages of Emigration to Canada* (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1831), 66.

<sup>2</sup>PAC, Upper Canada Sundries, "Petition of the President and Directors of the Home District, October 12, 1831," pp. 62155-58.

<sup>3</sup>George Walton, *York Commercial Directory, Street Guide, and Register 1833-4* (York U. C.: Thomas Dalton, [1833]), 132.



**1834<sup>1</sup>****President:**

William B. Jarvis

**Vice-President:**

Edward W. Thomson

**Secretary:**

David Gibson

**Treasurer:**

William Atkinson

**1835<sup>2</sup>****President:**

William B. Jarvis

**Vice-Presidents:**

Edward W. Thomson

Charles Fothergill

Richard Gapper

William B. Robinson

Thomas Mair

Samuel Lount

**Secretary:**

George Dupont Wells

**Treasurer:**

William Atkinson

**1837<sup>3</sup>****President:**

Edward W. Thomson

**Vice-Presidents:**

William B. Jarvis

John Torrence

George Miller

John Sanderson

Richard C. Gapper

**Secretary:**

George Dupont Wells

**Treasurer:**

William Atkinson

**1841<sup>4</sup>****President:**

Edward W. Thomson

**Secretary:**

George Dupont Wells

**Treasurer:**

William Atkinson

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<sup>1</sup>*Patriot*, September 19, 1834, p. 3, c. 2; PAC, Upper Canada Sundries, "Financial Statement of the Home District Agricultural Society," January 23, 1835, pp. 81758-59.

<sup>2</sup>*Patriot*, July 14, 1835, p. 2, c. 5.

<sup>3</sup>George Walton, *The City of Toronto and the Home District Commercial Directory and Register with Almanack and Calendar for 1837* (Toronto: T. Dalton and W. J. Coates, 1837), 191.

<sup>4</sup>*British Colonist*, May 19, 1841, p. 2, c. 5-6.

1844<sup>1</sup>

President:

William B. Jarvis

Vice-Presidents:

Edward W. Thomson

Captain Harris

Secretary:

George Dupont Wells

1845<sup>2</sup>

President:

William B. Jarvis

Vice-President:

Edward W. Thomson

Secretary:

George Dupont Wells

Treasurer:

William Atkinson

1846<sup>3</sup>

President:

Edward W. Thomson

Vice-Presidents

William B. Jarvis

John W. Gamble

Secretary and Vice-President (*ex officio*):

George Dupont Wells

Treasurer and Vice-President (*ex officio*):

Franklin Jacques

Assistant Secretary:

William B. Crewe

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<sup>1</sup>*British American Cultivator*, April 1844, p. 50; *Toronto Patriot*, October 11, 1844, p. 3, c. 1.

<sup>2</sup>*British Colonist*, May 20, 1845, p. 3, c. 2; *British American Cultivator*, April 1845, p. 127.

<sup>3</sup>George Brown, *Brown's Toronto City and Home District Directory 1846-7* (Toronto: George Brown, 1846), 32.

**Appendix 12: Gentlemen present at meeting to establish the Canada Agricultural Association, November 6, 1843.<sup>1</sup>**

William B. Jarvis, Home District Sheriff

Edward W. Thomson, Home District Warden

Colonel William Thompson, District Councillor for the Township of  
Toronto

W. H. Mitchell, Councillor for Pickering

Dr. Crew, Councillor for Toronto Township

John Torrence, Councillor for Scarborough

William G. Edmundson, Editor of the *British American Cultivator*

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<sup>1</sup>*British American Cultivator*, December 1843, pp. 184-5; Province of Canada, Board of Agriculture, *Journal and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture of Upper Canada*, vol. 1, 1856, 19.

**Appendix 13: Delegates present at meeting to establish the "Provincial Agricultural Association and Board of Agriculture for Canada West," Hamilton, August 17, 1846.<sup>1</sup>**

George Crawford, Johnstown District  
Sheriff Conger, Colborne District  
W. H. Wrighton, Colborne District  
Edward W. Thomson, Home District  
William G. Edmundson, Home District  
John Wetenhall, Gore District  
Henry Moyle, Gore District  
Col. Burrowes, Gore District  
Col. Dixon, Gore District  
Allen Good, Gore District  
Henry Parsons, Gore District  
David Christie, Gore District  
William Miller, Gore District  
John Harland, Wellington District  
James Cowan, Wellington District  
Captain Purley, Brock District  
G. Brown, Brock District  
John Longworth, Huron District  
Henry Ruttan, Newcastle District

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<sup>1</sup>*British American Cultivator*, September 1846, pp. 262-3; Province of Canada, Board of Agriculture, *Journal and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture of Upper Canada*, vol. 1, 1856, 22-3; *Banner*, September 1846, p. 3, c. 3.



**Appendix 15: Members of the Agricultural Association of Upper Canada seeking its incorporation, 1847.<sup>1</sup>**

Hon. Adam Fergusson  
 Hon. Henry J. Boulton  
 Hon. J. Æmelius Irving  
 Edward W. Thomson  
 Henry Ruttan  
 John W. Gamble  
 William A. Baldwin  
 Joseph C. Morrison  
 Francis Boyd  
 Joseph Beckett  
 Clarke Gamble  
 James G. Worts  
 Malcolm Cameron  
 William P. Howland  
 William Hume Blake

Hon. William B. Robinson  
 Hon. Robert Baldwin  
 Frederick Widder  
 William B. Jarvis  
 William H. Boulton  
 William G. Edmundson  
 Skeffington Connor  
 James H. Price  
 James M. Strachan  
 Charles E. Small  
 James Buchanan  
 John Sanderson  
 Donald Bethune  
 Benjamin Thorne  
 Robert Cooper

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<sup>1</sup>Province of Canada, Board of Agriculture, *Journal and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture of Upper Canada*, vol. 1, 1856, 45; *Statutes of the Province of Canada*, 1847, 10 & 11 Vic. c. 61.

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John Glass Malloch Diary

John Macaulay Papers

Mackenzie-Lindsey Papers

Miscellaneous Collection 1825 #2

Miscellaneous Collection 1832-1835

Miscellaneous Collection 1906-1909

Mary O'Brien Journals

Riddell Family Papers

John Steele Papers

Toronto City Council Papers

Hiram Walker Collection

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RG 1 E3 Upper Canada State Submissions.

RG 5 B3 vol. 8 Upper Canada Petitions and Addresses, 1792-1841.

RG 5 C1 Canada West. Provincial Secretary's numbered correspondence files.

John Colborne Papers

Constable Letter Book

Hugh Farmar Collection

William Hamilton Merritt Papers

Hamnet Pinhey Hill Collection

R. Kay Diary

John Porteus Papers

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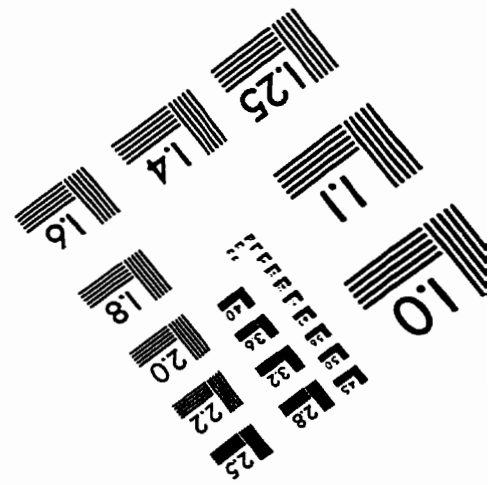
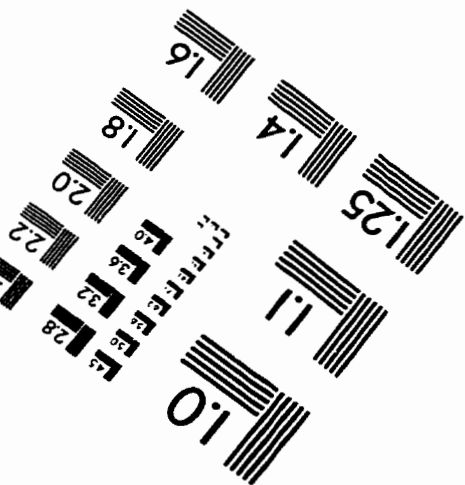
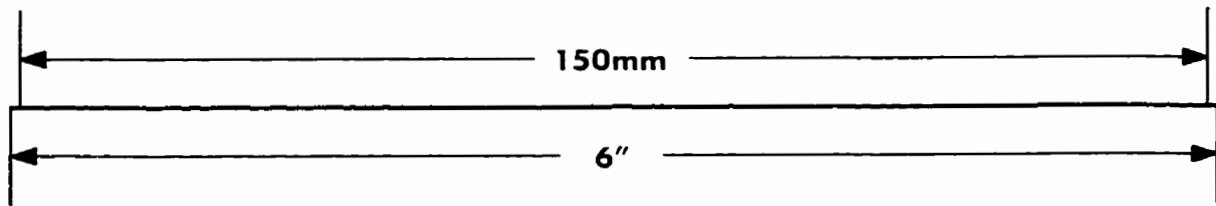
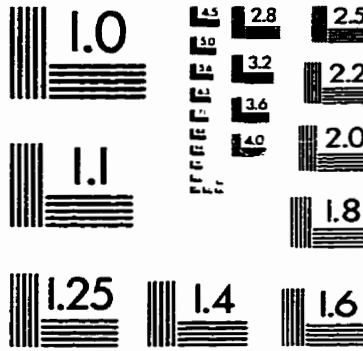
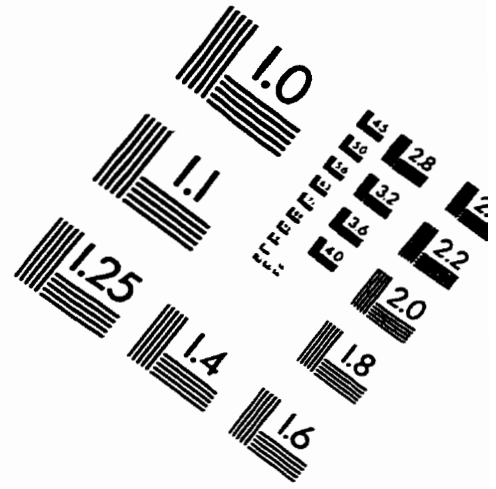
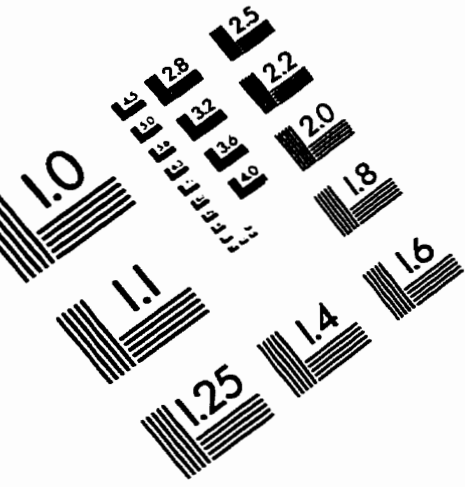
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