

Re-imagining Niagara: A Spatial Study of
Economic Development (1783-1812)

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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Abstract

The end of the American Revolution marked a turning point in the history of Niagara. In the span of three decades, this Upper Canadian district evolved as the territory of nomadic groups of Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations into the post-war settlement of approximately 15,000 white, black, and British-allied Indigenous nations. Some arrived immediately as refugees of the late war, while other families came later in hopes of securing a brighter future.

Historians generally discuss this period of Niagara's history in terms of its socio-political developments, while economic histories of the "Loyalist Era" are most often assigned a broader lens focusing on trade and commerce in Upper Canada. To fill this historiographical gap, this paper investigates the economic developments within the Niagara region from 1783-1812, using geographic information systems (GIS) to analyze the role of geography alongside human agency in commodity production and the formation of local trade networks.

This thesis includes an interactive webmap used to analyze a carefully compiled geospatial database of commodity sales gathered from primary sources. Historical GIS sets this project apart from others by bringing the investigations back to the land, showing how farmers and merchants responded to natural barriers like distance, wetlands, elevation and soil type, inciting individuals to adapt according to their personal circumstances.

Ultimately, this project illustrates Niagara's post-war transition from its role as a transshipment point in a larger transatlantic trade system into a productive agrarian economy by the early 19th century. The Niagara escarpment and the region's many creeks and rivers were the economic hubs wherein diverse groups of people converged to participate in industries that formed society's foundational economic structures. At the same time, participation in Niagara's economy was limited by factors of race, gender, and class. Thus, it also discusses how individuals maneuvered through their subjective socio-political positions within society in their own unique way.

The re-interpretation of primary sources using spatial tools presents Niagara as an important colonial region into which the British government poured significant funds for its strategic position and market potential. Exposing its commercial development provides a tangible contribution to this part of Canadian history.

Key Words: Niagara, Historical GIS, Loyalist, Upper Canada, Economic Development

Acknowledgements

Growing up in Niagara, I have biked, hiked, skated, kayaked and driven through each of the areas mentioned in this thesis, but my interest in local history did not really begin until my involvement at Nelles Manor in Grimsby in 2016. This research stems from the stories and lessons learned within that community, as I worked to understand the connections between the land I live on, and the people who came before me. I am grateful to the friends I met along the way; for the enlightening discussions, book recommendations, and for always cheering me on.

I would also like to acknowledge the History Department at Brock University, for being instrumental in my research skill development over the past six years. I have had the privilege of working with and learning from some incredible professors and classmates during this time. A special thank-you goes to my graduate supervisor Dr. Daniel Samson for his mentorship. I deeply appreciate his knowledge and insight, and his words of encouragement that often strengthened my confidence. I was also supported by Dr. Colin Rose, whom I thank for his guidance and training as I entered the world of historical GIS. Dr. Joshua MacFadyen of the University of PEI also deserves recognition, for the time and effort he put into reviewing this paper, offering critical advice to help me better this research.

This research was funded in part by generous scholarships from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Niagara Historical Society/David C. Murray & Elizabeth Surtees. I am sincerely grateful to these organizations for their financial aid. I would like to also thank my family for their constant emotional support. My thoughtful mother and her handy red pen deserve credit for uncovering the typos in my final drafts. Finally, I give thanks to God, the Giver of all good things, for His steadfast faithfulness to me.

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A Note on GIS

This research is driven by spatial analysis, using ArcGIS software to deepen the investigation of Niagara's economic development from 1783 to 1812. The resulting webmap can be a useful tool for users to interact with solo, but it is best understood in conjunction with this paper. To access the webmap on your browser, click here: <https://arcg.is/0Xj9Km> The map's layers, when activated in specific combinations, reveal important patterns that contribute to conclusions made in this paper. The GIS analyses developed in this project have been woven into the following chapters, which contain bolded footnotes that prompt the reader to turn on layers correlating to the argument being presented. The significance of each analysis is explained within the body of the paper. When the analysis is complete, *turn those layers off*, and continue reading.

Introduction

This thesis is a spatial history project that uses digital mapping tools to investigate trade networks in the Niagara district of Upper Canada, presenting a regional study of commercial development that situates itself within a broader framework of colonial exchange. The project builds onto the existing literature of colonial development by offering an interactive web-based format with which to examine the translation of goods across space and time. This research is fundamentally about economic development on a regional scale, but situates itself within Canadian historiographical arguments about power dynamics in burgeoning colonial societies.

In Niagara, Loyalist era socio-economic connections were shaped by both the natural and the human landscape. In this thesis, the arguments supporting this statement are based on a combination of textual research and interpretations of spatial data. Historical geographic information systems (GIS) are a particularly useful form of analysis by demanding a closer look at the land itself, guiding historians to a deeper understanding of the ways in which geography impacted development. Interpretations from the GIS present clear topographical delineations of settlement; primarily along main waterways and the Niagara escarpment. They also reveal patterns of production and consumption in rural markets, providing insight into the effects of geography on communication networks and the exchange of labour and resources.

This thesis argues that the Niagara region transitioned out of the American Revolution from its role as a transshipment point in a larger transatlantic trade system into a productive agrarian economy by the early 19th century. Human and geographical actors intertwined to facilitate the production and movement of goods as Niagara's rural commodities slowly and erratically entered into Atlantic markets. GIS technology reveals physical features such as the escarpment and the region's many creeks and rivers as the economic hubs wherein diverse

groups of people converged to participate in industries that formed society's foundational economic structures during the Loyalist era.

The foregrounding of geography in this study does not negate the value of human agency. In this case, the natural environment and human action were intertwined in their impacts on development. For example, both proximity to manufacturing and sale points in the flour supply chain, and free black labour were essential to surplus wheat production for white farmers during the first decade of settlement in Niagara. This thesis argues that participation in Niagara's economy was limited by factors of race, gender, and class; thus individuals maneuvered through their subjective socio-political position within society in their own unique way.

Niagara merchants facilitated trade in and out of the region, connecting farmers to external markets in Kingston, Detroit, and Montreal. By the 19th century, Niagara had become a notable contributor to provincial exports, especially with products like flour, potash, and lumber. During the American Revolution, Niagara existed mainly as a transshipment point in the larger Laurentian trade network. This thesis also shows how merchants during the 1780s relied on the fur trade and the Niagara portage to create deeper ties in the peninsula. Communicating with partners around the lower Great Lakes, they bettered their position locally so they could enter the 19th century with a more established set of capital gains.

This study investigates Niagara's Loyalist farmers and their relationships with merchants and the British government over a period of three decades. Late 18th century account book data is interpreted through GIS to depict patterns of production and consumption from a spatial angle. A combination of textual and digital sources inform this study which comprises a geospatial database of merchants, trade routes, and commodities from 1783-1812 as the foundation of the project and primary driver of this research.

The three chapters in this study are divided by decade, examining the contributions of the government, farmers, and merchants to the economic development of Niagara. Since GIS analyses are an efficient way of visualizing temporal data, this categorization allows for a clear understanding of progress throughout both space and time. It applies an analytical framework that recognizes the powerful eastward flow of goods while acknowledging the fundamental differences that come with regional development.

The Niagara Region in Canadian History

Niagara's colonial history has traditionally been told as a very local story in the early twentieth century by resident historians like Janet Carnochan and Brigadier General Ernest Cruikshank.¹ Both individuals provide information useful to this study regarding the names of influential figures in the region, political and economic relationships that were formed, and how this affected subsequent years of Niagara development. Their compilations of primary sources are useful as a tool of reference but do not provide serious analyses of the events they describe, preferring instead to narrate a range of facts and allow the reader to infer their significance.

Alternatively, Niagara's history has been told as part of the broader story of Canadian development. For much of the mid-twentieth century, Canadian historians framed their arguments around the Laurentian thesis. Elaborated by University of Toronto professor Donald Creighton in his 1937 book *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850*, the Laurentian thesis supported the idea of the St. Lawrence being a river system that facilitated a

¹ Carnochan's contributions to Niagara as a lifelong educator and president of the Niagara Historical Society (NHS) live on in the NHS museum collections, her publications serving as valuable reference works for this study regarding topics of genealogy or community landmarks. A Brigadier General in World War I, influential in the establishment of Ontario's Bureau of Archives, and originally from Fort Erie, Cruikshank was placed in charge of the province's military documents from 1908-1911. Though never formally trained as an historian, he also wrote a number of brief histories about the Niagara region during the Loyalist era.

British merchant class monopoly on the market economy via staple exports.² This large-scale, trans-Atlantic model provides this study with useful ways of thinking about Niagara's place within Upper Canada and its role in the larger Great Lakes trade structure. Creighton's framework stems from the "staples thesis," posed by Canadian historian Harold Innis in his book *The Fur Trade in Canada*.³ This theory positions Canada's economic development as a force driven by the export of staple products like furs, wheat, and fish, suggesting that Canada as a country developed in response to this lateral movement of staple products from the continent over to Britain. This in turn formed a cultural connection that impacted the building of Canadian socio-political and industrial structures. For much of the later 20th century, Innis' theory dominated the conception of the developing colonial economy, aided by the more specific Laurentian thesis.

Over time, other Canadian historians adapted the Laurentian and staples models to develop new economic theories.⁴ For example, the "metropolitan thesis" placed the urban community as the driver of the early Canadian economy. According to Canadian historians like J. M. S. Careless, the expanding frontier did not progress in isolation from society, but rather relied on the metropolitan areas that grew alongside by supplying capital, transportation, and business opportunities.⁵

² Donald Creighton, *The Empire of the St. Lawrence*. (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1956), 5.

³ Harold A. Innis and Arthur J. Ray, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*. The Canada 150 Collection. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 401.

⁴ Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing Since 1900*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1976), 273.

⁵ J. M. S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History," *The Canadian Historical Review* 35, no 1 (1954): 1.

However, when applied to this study of economic development in Niagara, the Laurentian thesis is limited by its all-encompassing nature and ignores the fact that provinces developed independently from one another. Canadian historian John McCallum offers such fundamental critiques in his book *Unequal Beginnings: Agriculture and Economic Development in Quebec and Ontario Until 1870*. He argues that the development of Quebec and Ontario differed, and that separate early industries and economic systems became entrenched.⁶ He bases his arguments on an analysis of late 18th and early 19th century trade patterns as agricultural goods traveled to Montreal down the Laurentian route. In Ontario, he states, “markets, capital, materials, and labour were overwhelmingly local.”⁷ Meanwhile in Quebec, industrial growth relied heavily on external elements. Thus, the foundations laid in Upper Canada created better opportunities for later farmers to continue growing in the 20th century. This focus on sources of labour and materials from a provincial rather than a national lens informs our understanding of Niagara’s place within the nascent Upper Canadian economy.

However, McCallum’s study begins after 1812, which comes after the scope of this thesis. Other economic histories like Robert Leslie Jones in his *History of Agriculture in Ontario* also focus only briefly on the Loyalist era.⁸ Such omissions are likely due to the lack of sources that exist for this time period. This is where a study of Niagara’s economy in the Loyalist era fills the gaps in scholarship. This study focuses on Niagara’s unstable transition into the 19th century, applying an analytical framework that recognizes the value of the Laurentian thesis in

⁶ John McCallum, *Unequal Beginnings: Agriculture and Economic Development in Quebec and Ontario Until 1870*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 6.

⁷ McCallum, *Unequal Beginnings*, 6.

⁸ Robert Leslie Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ontario 1613-1880*. (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1946).

explaining the powerful eastward flow of goods while acknowledging its limitations regarding the fundamental differences that come with regional development.

There is only one full-scale study of economic development in this period, Bruce Wilson's *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton: a study of wealth and influence in early Upper Canada, 1776-1812*, published in 1983.⁹ Wilson outlines the economic development of Niagara with a focus on the region's preeminent eighteenth-century merchant. While his book provides a mainly mercantile concentration, this thesis focuses more on the development of farming households, stories of settlement and capital accumulation in connection with local geography.

Regional histories became more popular in Canada throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Canadian scholars began writing with the view that patterns of growth and decline were not universal, but rather specific to political and geographic environments. One of the first to highlight this was French-Canadian historian Fernand Ouellet, who pointed towards social structures as shapers of Quebec's economic development, rather than government policies or military conflict.¹⁰ His work fits into the *Annales* school of thought which stems from early twentieth century France and emphasizes *la longue durée* as the proper way to interpret history. Members of this school believe that the long-term historical structures, connected to sociological and geographic approaches, give a more wholistic view of history than do singular political and military events.

Maritime historian T. W. Acheson also applied regional influences to his work, especially noted in his 1972 article "The National Policy and the Industrialization of the Maritimes, 1880-

⁹ Bruce Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton: a study of wealth and influence in early Upper Canada, 1776-1812*. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1983).

¹⁰ Fernand Ouellet, *Lower Canada 1791-1840: Social Change & Nationalism*. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1980).

1910.”¹¹ Here, Acheson highlights the relationship between diversifying colonial regions and the government in nineteenth century Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, using social factors to paint growth patterns as “human and historical rather than geographic.”¹² Similarly, Quebec historian Allan Greer’s *Peasant, Lord, and Merchant: Rural Society in Three Quebec Parishes 1740-1840* applies a focus on societal relationships to understand economic patterns. He argues that decades of peasant farming in Lower Canada resulted in farmers achieving subsistence level household production. In Upper Canada, historian Douglas McCalla argues that local production for household consumption was just as vital to the economy as were exports. His book *Planting the Province: The Economic History of Upper Canada 1784-1870* offers this fresh perspective.¹³

McCallum, Ouellet, Greer, Acheson and McCalla’s frameworks impact this study by encouraging a shift in focus from the movement of goods to the societal structures that these movers inhabited while navigating their new lives in Niagara. This spatial study investigates the role of kinship and class and the relationship between the British government, farmers and merchants in developing capital assets and generational wealth during the Loyalist era.

A third major dimension that historians explored after the 1960s occurred parallel to the rise of the New Left and social history. By this point, Canadian historians were no longer concerned with understanding the country’s national identity, but focused more on interpreting histories based on gender, class, and ethnicity. This increasing specialization of history, and the penetration of scholarly spaces traditionally occupied by white male academics garnered a variety of new perspectives that had until this point been uncharted. Historians offered critiques

¹¹ T. W. Acheson, "The National Policy and the Industrialization of the Maritimes, 1880-1910." *Acadiensis* 1, no. 2 (1972): 3-28. Accessed December 4, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30302421>

¹² Acheson, "The National Policy and the Industrialization of the Maritimes." 4.

¹³ Douglas McCalla, *Planting the Province: the economic history of Upper Canada, 1784-1870*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

of prior views of economic development in Canada, showing their limitations in grouping society under singular categories. Instead, social historians offered new approaches once again to the understanding of colonial exchange, focusing on relationships of power on an even smaller scale.

Rural historians have been influential in framing this Niagara study by providing case studies of wealth accumulation in colonial Canadian societies. Daniel Samson's study of Nova Scotia's "improvers" show how the building of community organizations like agricultural societies allowed people to connect and discuss ideas, ultimately creating an elite-led society in the 19th century.¹⁴ On a different note, Rusty Bittermann argues in his study of 19th century rural Nova Scotian that settlement was differentiated, and the initial distribution of resources created divisions that became deeper throughout the lives of subsequent generations.¹⁵ Bittermann offers a poignant look at the role of geography in early agricultural success, and generational wealth, a topic heavily centered in this thesis about Niagara. Samson and Bittermann inform this Niagara study by providing analytical frameworks focusing on relationships of power and the division of class in colonial society, impacted by factors such as initial distribution of resources. In Niagara, resource distribution and kinship connections impacted the choices made by Loyalist farmers and merchants. Bruce Wilson even devotes an entire chapter to the importance of kinship in strengthening mercantile enterprises in Niagara.¹⁶ This study contains a deeper investigation of such relationships between individuals and households.

¹⁴ Daniel Samson, *The Spirit of Industry and Improvement: Liberal Government and Rural-Industrial Society, Nova Scotia, 1790-1862*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 2008), 270.

¹⁵ Rusty Bittermann, "The Hierarchy of the Soil: Land and Labour in a 19th Century Cape Breton Community" *Acadiensis* 18, no. 1 (1988): 34, accessed February 25, 2019, <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/Acadiensis/article/view/12258/0>.

¹⁶ "Kinship and Commerce: The Hamilton Network" (58-67) in Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton: a study of wealth and influence in early Upper Canada, 1776 1812*. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1983), 58-67.

This development of community organizations and the differentiation of class has been studied in the Upper Canadian context, but hardly mention the Niagara region. John Clarke argues in his study of settlement in western Ontario that land ownership combined with a good education created a base of men that led the community.¹⁷ J. K. Johnson argues that instead of land ownership, wealth was associated with mercantile activity in combination with non-commercial activities such as holding public office. Thus, these historians also contribute ideas about “improvers” in society and the entrenching of wealth disparities based on class and resource distribution beginning in the Loyalist era, but ultimately a focus on Niagara is absent.

Social historians also placed a heightened view on the role of women in colonial societies. Cecelia Morgan and Jane Errington provide gendered approaches to Upper Canadian history, offering useful analyses of women’s work in Upper Canada.¹⁸ This study of Niagara points to the vital role of women in household production, the work that they did, and societal expectations of gendered work practices. Morgan and Errington provide a useful lens for approaching women’s studies when so few sources directly from working women exist. This research will address the question of how women exhibited agency through these upheavals by examining the choices made within strategic marriages, shop keeping, organization of labour and familial relations.

This thesis also pursues questions of “loyalism.” Errington provides valuable studies of loyalism along with Maya Jasanoff, an historian who explores the Loyalist dispersion throughout

¹⁷ John Clarke, *Land, Power, and Economics on the Frontier of Upper Canada*. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

¹⁸ Cecilia Morgan, *Public Men and Virtuous Women: The Gendered Languages of Religion and Politics in Upper Canada, 1791-1850*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. Cecilia Morgan) and Jane Errington, *Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790-1840*, (Montreal [Que: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995).

British North America.¹⁹ Jasanoff studies the origins of many of diverse groups of people and how their ideologies were largely formed by life in the thirteen colonies, as well as their differing motivations for remaining loyal to the British. In this Niagara study, Joseph Brant and the Six Nations, African slaves, and white Protestant men and women were influenced by socio-political undertones that affected their privilege in making economic choices.

This project situates itself within Canadian historiographical arguments about power dynamics in burgeoning colonial societies. With a focus on relationships of power, the investigation of economic development should also include questions about class and race. From a post-colonial viewpoint, historians have recently thought about Canada with completely different assumptions than the traditional views that legitimized imperialism offer. University of Manitoba history professor Adele Perry has made notable contributions to this approach through works such as *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World*.²⁰ By exploring intimate domestic relations, Perry simultaneously explains systems of governance, rule, economy, and kinship between people of different races, genders, and classes by moving the focus from the individual to different types of families. Susan Hill's *The Clay We Are Made of: Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on the Grand River* is a frequently consulted source in this Niagara thesis, offering insight on how the Haudenosaunee fit into Niagara's developing economy during the Loyalist era.²¹

¹⁹ Jane Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada: A Developing Colonial Ideology*. 2nd ed. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012) and Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Knopf, 2011).

²⁰ Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 19.

²¹ Susan Hill, *The Clay We Are Made of: Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on the Grand River* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017),

Families worked towards accumulating capital in a post-war debt economy by sharing labour and resources, diversifying commercial interests, and strategically engaging in profitable markets. However, participation in Niagara's economy was limited by factors of race, gender, and class. Black peoples' contributions to Niagara's loyalist era economy are also underrepresented in traditional studies of Niagara. Robin Winks' broad study of Black people in Canada hardly mention any Niagara-specific stories, and thus the contributions of free Black Loyalists as well as enslaved workers to Niagara's early market agriculture are worth further study.²² These also tie into socio-political discussions of what it really meant to be a "Loyalist" at that time.

Finally, this historiography has recently intersected in most recent years with spatial histories and the use of historical GIS. Spatial historians Jim Clifford and Joshua Macfadyen cover these topics of trade, commodity circuits and GIS in their recent studies.²³ Clifford's approach depicts the benefits of digital tools for visualizing trade relationships and the historical movement of commodities in 19th century London, while Macfadyen uses GIS to demonstrate how flax was a critical transnational commodity produced in Canada and the norther United States during the 19th century.²⁴ Again, understanding the relationship between geography and economic development is valuable to this Niagara study, but adding digital tools in this way can also include spatial and temporal elements that enhance a reader's understanding of the material. Macfadyen argues that a mill was "a place where former slave owners, Unionists, and escaped

²² Robin Winks. *Blacks in Canada: A History* (McGill-Queens Press, 1997).

²³ Jim Clifford, *West Ham and the River Lea: A Social and Environmental History of London's Industrialized Marshland, 1839-1914*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2017).

²⁴ Joshua MacFadyen, *Flax Americana: A History of the Fibre and Oil That Covered a Continent*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-McQueen's Press, 2018).

slaves worked together, not equally, and not exactly cheek by jowl, but together.”²⁵ Similarly, in Niagara, this study discusses mills and potasheries as critical nodes in early settler communities.

By reinterpreting the sources with GIS technology, historians can fill in the gaps where the sources are missing critical data. Niagara’s sources do not include detailed accounts from leading merchants, which are vital to the understanding of early economic patterns and rural trade relationships. GIS outputs can allow historians to think about what might have been taking place, thoughtfully inferring production and consumption patterns that do not exist in the sources. The approaches mentioned thus far all inform the approach taken towards the study of Niagara’s economic development during this period. GIS tools are useful for analyzing these connections between people on both a local and provincial scale as they visualize shifting boundaries and patterns in activity determined by geographic features.

GIS Methods

The field of spatial history emerged from late twentieth century advances in computer technology, although visualizations of historical data had already been prevalent throughout earlier centuries.²⁶ Digital technology revolutionized the way in which historians visualize the past, and software like ArcGIS turned scholarship into a more interactive experience, providing visualizations to support research conclusions. Yet, digital historians argue that previously a creative appendage to research, historical GIS is now directly driving analyses of the past.²⁷

²⁵ Macfadyen, *Flax Americana*, 35.

²⁶ Michael Friendly, “A Brief History of Data Visualization” in *Handbook of Computational Statistics: Data Visualization*, C. Chen, W. Härdle, A Unwin eds., (Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2007), 12. Charles Minard’s 1869 graphic of the Napoleonic campaign in Russia in 1812 is touted as possibly the best graphic ever created, and explaining history using maps and photographs has been a popular pedagogical tool.

²⁷ Ian Gregory and Alistair Geddes, *Toward Spatial Humanities: Historical GIS and Spatial History*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2014), x.

Historical GIS projects were originally used for quantitative analyses of things like migrations, demographic changes and economic progressions. However, these quantitative social science histories are no longer centred around the compilation of databases for the purpose of presenting interesting visual outputs. Instead, they are now being used to deepen the quantitative realm in attempts at reframing old questions and discovering new knowledge about the past. Historical GIS has allowed historians to go beyond the static display of a pre-evaluated dataset, offering a deeper understanding of history by using analyses of both qualitative and quantitative information to explore relationships across time and space. The field of spatial history is also broadening as spatial technology opens itself to wider audiences by analyzing more abstract concepts such as art, culture, and literature through the study of qualitative sources like books, personal letters, and diaries.²⁸ Spatial history projects now engage with topics such as urban history, environmental history, rural history, and include professionals from a range of disciplines like geography, earth science, archaeology, ethnography, and sociology.²⁹

While some textual work has been completed concerning 18th century economic development in Niagara, there has not been an historical GIS approach to this topic before. GIS sets this project apart from others by bringing the investigations back to the land, and informing one's understanding of the relationship between the land and its people over time. When discussing economic theories such as the staples thesis, GIS allows historians to display the

²⁸ Gregory and Geddes, *Toward Spatial Humanities*, x.

²⁹ Gregory and Geddes include three chapters discussing the importance of spatial histories for other areas of study. For example, Southall writes about Great Britain HGIS as a database that has been able to help “health researchers, archivists, government environmental agencies, and companies selling advice to the property sector.” (p. 92) Meeks & Mostern show the use of gazetteers in understanding political changes in imperial China, connecting the data to ecological information in order to study history in a way that promotes connections between “geopolitics, ecology, and spatial politics.” (p. 139) Hallam & Roberts argue a similar view, but emphasize the qualitative importance of what they call “cinematic cartography”, arguing that the contemporary turn towards spatial technology can connect history with other genres of “social studies, geography, urban studies, film, media and cultural studies.” (p. 146).

location and quantity of various commodity production, ultimately revealing how Niagara's farmers strategically participated in a variety of rural markets. In this way, GIS helps to answer broader questions about whether Niagara's value was simply in its transshipment function, or if its people had a greater impact on provincial production.

Similarly, when discussing the deterministic nature of geography as debated by Canadian historians, GIS aids in understanding the impacts of physical features alongside the agency of individuals. Seeing how farmers and merchants reacted to natural barriers like distance, wetlands, soil type and elevation reinforces the argument that people were not controlled by, but rather responded to them in a way that shaped Niagara's economy. The location of one's farm did not determine their survival, but rather incited individuals to adapt according to the needs of their current situation. Thus, while geography in many ways shaped trade patterns, the GIS shows how other factors like the use of slave labour were used to establish wealth at that time.

Environmental historian Daniel MacFarlane recently explored the validity of the Laurentian thesis, or, the significance of the St. Lawrence river for wider socio-economic development, using spatial analysis. Using Google Earth, MacFarlane highlighted the navigation path of the seaway, layered points of interest, and historical map overlays for multiple avenues of analysis.³⁰ A similar project exists regarding the mid to late 19th century economic history of the Niagara region; the mapping of the Welland Canals by retired Brock University Map Librarian Colleen Beard.³¹ In 2010, Beard created an interactive webtool to examine the historic Welland Canals that were established in 1829 in St. Catharines, Ontario. She used historic aerial

³⁰ Colleen Beard, Jim Clifford, and Daniel Macfarlane, "Mapping the Welland Canals and the St. Lawrence Seaway with Google Earth," in *Historical GIS Research in Canada*, eds. Jennifer Bonnell and Marcel Fortin, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2014), 31.

³¹ Colleen Beard, *Historic Welland Canals Mapping Project (HWCMP)*, ArcGIS WebApp: <https://arcg.is/1nGyPm>

photographs, maps and audio interviews from Brock University's GIS Library and Archives & Special Collections and uploaded them to Google Earth. Users can click on point symbols, revealing photos, maps, or interviews that identify its specific history, giving people a tour-like experience from their own computer screen.³² The fact that Google Earth was MacFarlane and Beard's program of choice shows that one does not need an intricate knowledge of ArcGIS or other mapping software to make a valuable, innovative contribution to spatial history.

There are multiple types of data used in this GIS. This includes historical maps that have been geo-referenced by the Brock University Map, Data, and GIS Library, and layers that already exist elsewhere in the ArcGIS portal such as 20th century soil, escarpment boundary, and floodplain maps. Historical images and basemaps made up of pixels are some examples of this map's "raster data." In addition to raster-based data, this GIS also contains vector data. Tables containing quantitative information gathered from various primary sources including flour, lumber and potash sales at the King's Mills on the Four Mile Creek, the form of such retail payments, and the location of the saw and grist mills that appeared in Niagara during the first decade of Loyalist settlement are some examples of this. Commodity sales data is compiled from the account books of the Servos family who operated the King's Mills and includes commodity type, quantity, price, the name of the seller, and where their home farm was located.

Spatial historians extract and transform data from both quantitative and qualitative sources as the foundation of their research. They use census records and ledgers to create numerical datasets, but they also use non-numerical sources such as newspaper articles and

³² Beard, Clifford and Macfarlane, "Mapping the Welland Canals and the St. Lawrence Seaway with Google Earth," 41. Beard states that this project has "shown how digital technologies have allowed libraries to easily transform their valued historical collections from traditional print format to digital spatial information that reveals new knowledge."

personal diaries to extract information that can be displayed spatially.³³ The data used in this project was carefully compiled from a variety of primary sources from the Loyalist era including account books, an atlas of Niagara township maps, Upper Canada land petitions, and personal narratives of travels through Niagara. Secondary source descriptions of geographical features and land ownership are also used to determine the location of historical highways and farms.

The account books in question are Volumes One to Five belonging to the Servos family; entries recorded by miller Daniel until his death in 1803, and afterwards by his son John.³⁴ These volumes hold some of the best late 18th to early 19th century rural Niagara data in existence because they present much of the accounting history of one location in a linear fashion over the span of three decades. Using original credit and debit data from the King's Mills on the Four Mile Creek provides a small survey of domestic exchange, revealing who participated in trade, where, when, and in what capacity, as well as how these transactions changed over a period of three decades. Flour sales data from the account books was compiled into twenty-seven individual tables, one table per year spanning from 1784 to 1811, within a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Each table includes separate columns of data that contain the name of the customer, their township of residence, the X and Y coordinates of their farm, the quantity and value of wheat and flour being exchanged, the form of payment and additional notes. This method was repeated on a smaller scale with lumber and potash sales, the years of lumber analysis spanning the 1780s and the potash sales only from 1800 to 1801. When added to the GIS, these attribute tables appear as point data that can be individually selected to reveal the metadata of that

³³ Anne Kelly Knowles and Amy Hillier eds., *Placing History: How Maps, Spatial Data, and GIS are Changing Historical Scholarship*. (Redlands, California: ESRI Press, 2008). Geoff Cunfer in his study of dust storms in the late 19th and early 20th century American mid-west uses newspaper descriptions of dust storms for qualitative info, and census data for quantitative data.

³⁴ J. Anthony Doyle, "Loyalism, Patronage, and Enterprise: The Servos Family in British North America 1726-1942," PhD diss., (McMaster University, 2006), 262.

farmer's transaction. Yet, ArcGIS does more than simply display point data. In the following chapters these layers are analyzed further by changing their symbology and performing basic analyses with the Buffer and Merge tools to combine datasets and project boundary lines.

One of the first issues with using GIS that presented itself was determining which data should be used to create the attribute tables. Some historians make such decisions in their textual work, reading a variety of sources and choosing which ones to include in their research.

Historical GIS employs a similar process of reading sources and choosing which data to include in the map. This project requires a thoughtful selection of sources with which one can analyze Niagara's Loyalist era economic development. The next issue that arises is that quantitative data such as census records, agricultural production statistics and merchant data from that time do not exist in a neat and accessible format.³⁵ The challenges of incomplete data posed by premodern sources are issues common to spatial historians and bring forward broader questions regarding the use of GIS as an authority.³⁶ Some of these historians argue that HGIS does not simply reproduce the fragmented nature of its data, but can instead point to patterns behind its obscurities. In other words, by adding spatial context to data, the data can "assume a different form from their original presentation."³⁷ Most quantitative sources from this time period are

³⁵ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 3. For example, Niagara's most prevalent merchant Robert Hamilton engaged in trade with hundreds of individuals throughout the peninsula and beyond, but there is no collection of his many day books, account books and ledgers in existence. Instead, historians have pieced together materials located in archives, universities, libraries, and museums across Ontario and the United States to understand the scope of Hamilton's enterprises.

³⁶ Eduardo Fabbro, "From the *Decima* to the DECIMA and back again: the data behind the data" in *Mapping Space, Sense, and Movement in Florence: Historical GIS and the Early Modern City*, edited by Colin Rose and Nicholas Terpstra. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 53-62. In developing the DECIMA GIS as a spatial study of Renaissance Florence, researchers encountered issues regarding the organization of a database using inconsistent sources. Ultimately, they developed their database by establishing standard information fields, standardizing texts, and adjusting fields when required while the database took shape.

³⁷ Fabbro, 61-62. The *Decima* manuscripts were transformed into a DECIMA database that allows modern readers to experience the "feeling of the city."

missing periods of months or years, many of these sources are undigitized, and those that are digitized are often not transcribed or text searchable. The Servos accounts are missing periods of data in the late 1790s, and there are references to other account books being used in conjunction with the ones that have been preserved.³⁸ This means that this analysis is potentially missing a cross-section of the population doing business at the King's Mills. There are more plentiful and better-quality records that exist from 19th and 20th century Niagara farmers and business owners, but their data does not align with the temporal scope of this study. This is one of the main reasons why economic studies of Loyalist-era Niagara focus largely on merchants at the Niagara portage and ignore the role of first- and second-generation farmers, simply because the data is overwhelmingly incomplete. Records from women and Indigenous farmers are even scarcer.

Thus, this study employs the Servos flour and lumber data from the Four Mile Creek, and potash data from the Fifteen Mile Creek potashery as two separate case studies comprised of approximately 250 family accounts with over 1,300 individual transactions, displaying small-scale patterns used in conjunction with textual research, to present broader arguments about economic development in Niagara. Historical GIS allowed for an investigation of where and how patterns emerge, and how geographical features such as water and the Niagara escarpment impacted economic development. Such studies also include analytical factors of space and time, which expand the capacity for understanding how development occurred from the 1780s to 1812, and throughout the different townships.

³⁸ Account with Philip Beamer Sr. in "Account Book Volume IV 1799-180," *Daniel Servos Records 1779-1826*. MS 538. Archives of Ontario, 19. This page records a debit towards Beamer in 1801 posted "in the other Book." In the same volume, account No. 3 with Henry Disher records an account settlement in 1800 "Posted to the small white book." "Volume II 1785-1795," 2, shows an account with Richard Springer with his debits from 1797 posted "In the Black Covered Book."

Finding the coordinates for the individual farms presented another series of problems. Historical maps of Niagara townships, Upper Canada land petitions and detailed ancestry research were the avenues used to determine where customers of the King's Mills may have lived. The X and Y coordinates were pinpointed by overlaying the geo-referenced historical maps onto the modern base map of Niagara and hovering the cursor over the middle of the individuals' 100-acre plot(s), the coordinates displayed on the bottom of the map. However, there is a wide margin for error here. Some names in the Servos accounts are indecipherable, some surnames do not appear on any historical maps or in any censuses and archival references, many families owned multiple pieces of land in different townships, and many "squatted" on land before receiving official title to it, meaning that the name on the 100-acre plot did not always accurately reflect which family lived there. The coordinates used in this project were determined based on a wide yet incomplete amalgamation of sources, meaning there are most likely a few errors in the point data. The fact that point data has been rounded to the nearest 100 acres is also problematic because in the 1780s the average family only cultivated an average of 10 acres of land.³⁹ Also, some families owned random 100-acre plots in multiple townships, and some owned grids of hundreds or even thousands of acres collectively between a father and his sons, such as the Secord family in Niagara or the Nelles family in Grimsby. Knowing which farmland people owned is not the same as pinpointing the geographical source of agricultural production, and thus is not a completely accurate representation of agricultural space.

The field of spatial history offers potential for the analysis of primary sources, but with new technology comes persistent issues. Reducing narrative sources to mere entries in a tabular

³⁹ "Hamilton's note to Quebec RE settlers" in Library and Archives Canada, Alexander Hamilton and family fonds, Family correspondence and estate records [textual record] MG 24 I 26. This note includes the 1787 census of Niagara township taken by Robert Hamilton.

database is difficult to begin with, but can become even more complicated when the sources are missing or contradictory.⁴⁰ For this project, there were numerous factors that impacted the final GIS model. However, this project still provides a tangible contribution to a thus far unexplored avenue of analysis. Spatial studies allow historians to interpret data in different ways, pushing them to uncover patterns that shed new light on old stories. In this case, spatializing the commercial development of Niagara offers new interpretations of merchant activity in simultaneously local and national economic contexts via its “deep map” of GIS layers spanning several periods. As the digital humanities expand our access to sources and analytical tools, historians should consider taking a spatial approach towards studying history.

⁴⁰ Knowles & Hillier, *Placing History: How Maps, Spatial Data, and GIS are Changing Historical Scholarship*, 272. Knowles and Hillier discuss issues with mapping ambiguous references. There are also roadblocks within academic institutions, as there is still an epistemological divide between the studies of history and geography, since students of history are not being taught practical skills like drawing and visually representing data. They argue that this lack of academic resources has resulted in many scholars independently, and often clumsily, attempting to uncover the nuances of mapping spatial data.

Chapter I- Initial Settlement: Economic Foundations (1783-1789)


A Brief Pre-Loyalist History of Niagara

The period following the American Revolution is referred to by Canadian historians as the “Loyalist Era,” referencing the thousands of refugees who came to British North America throughout the 1780s and 90s. Approximately thirty thousand United Empire Loyalists moved into Nova Scotia, two thousand to Quebec, and six thousand into present-day Ontario.⁴¹ Prior to Loyalist settlement, the Niagara peninsula was inhabited for around three hundred years by Iroquoian-speaking people known by Jesuit priests as the Neutral Confederacy who in addition to hunting and trading engaged in agriculture in parts of Niagara township and who disappeared in the mid-17th century.⁴² They formed three main east-west trails, choosing to travel along the escarpment because it provided a flat, linear path and was a clear indicator of direction, connecting those living north of Lake Ontario to the Haudenosaunee in western New York.⁴³ The Haudenosaunee regularly crossed the Niagara River to hunt for furs that they would then trade with Dutch and English merchants. These well-worn paths were later augmented by the Mississauga Nation who inhabited the lands between York and the Head of the Lake, or modern-day Burlington, travelling through on their way to the Niagara River.⁴⁴ The most prominent

⁴¹ Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, (New York: Knopf, 2010), 23.

⁴² Mary Jackes, “The mid-seventeenth century collapse of Iroquoian Ontario: examining the last burial place of the Neutral Nation” in *Vers une anthrologie des catastrophes: 9e Journées anthropologiques de Valbonne*, Séguy et al. eds., (Antibes: APDCA, 2008), 367. Accessed from: <http://www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/~mkjackes/Valbonne.pdf>
The 1976 excavation of a Neutral Nation cemetery in Grimsby, Ontario points to a smallpox epidemic, Iroquoian warfare, and famine as the reasons for their decline.

⁴³ Andrew F. Burghardt, “The Origin and Development of the Road Network of the Niagara Peninsula, Ontario, 1770-1851.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 59, no. 3 (1969): 422. Accessed from: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1969.tb00683.x>

⁴⁴ **Turn on the very top GIS layer in the contents pane, entitled “Main Indigenous Routes.” Turn on “Niagara Escarpment Boundary” layer also to see how the trails run parallel to the top and bottom of the escarpment. Click the “Show Legend” icon  to view each individual route.**

Indigenous route through Niagara was the Iroquois trail that ran from Queenston to Ancaster along the bottom of the escarpment, but the Mohawk trail along the top of the escarpment and the Lakeshore trail along Lake Ontario were also essential.⁴⁵

French influence in the peninsula in the 17th century did not extend far beyond the Niagara River. For much of this time, the Beaver Wars had taken place in the lower Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River regions between the Haudenosaunee and Algonquin peoples. The French attempted to extend influence and reduce Haudenosaunee capacity in these areas, intervening in the Pays d'en Haut in support of their Algonquian allies and trading partners. One of the places the French extended influence was Niagara. Realizing the strategic function of the Niagara portage, they built the first storehouse and stockade named Fort Conti at the mouth of the Niagara River in 1683.⁴⁶ One of the Haudenosaunee nations, local Seneca fought off French encroachment and the site was abandoned in 1689.⁴⁷ This set the tone for the next few years, but a strategic, peaceful trade relationship between the French and Seneca peoples became established in the 1720s.⁴⁸ Soldiers worked with the Seneca to bring goods up and down the escarpment, constructing a basic portage route with storehouses along the east side of the river as well as Fort Niagara and Fort Erie on opposite ends.⁴⁹ The portage became a valuable centre of

⁴⁵ Burghardt, "The Origin and Development of the Road Network of the Niagara Peninsula, Ontario", 424.

⁴⁶ Francis Parkman, *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West*. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1908), 128. Accessed from: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/40143/40143-h/40143-h.htm>.

⁴⁷ Daniel Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 159.

⁴⁸ Richter, 235, writes: "the vast majority of Iroquois now [in the late 1710's] agreed with the neutralists in their determination now to rely on native cultural resources rather than on exclusive alliances with the colonial powers."

⁴⁹ Alan Gallay ed., *Colonial Wars of North America, 1512-1763: An Encyclopedia*, (Routledge, 2015), 109. Louis-Thomas Chabert de Joncaire, a French soldier stationed in Niagara, built a trading post at the mouth of the Niagara River that was expanded by 1723 into a garrison able to house up to 300 soldiers.

communication and trans-shipment in French control of trade around the Great Lakes and Ohio River Valley for almost forty years.⁵⁰

During the Seven Years War, the British gained control of the Forts along the Niagara River. In so doing, they also gained access to the valuable interior trade. By 1763, Pontiac's rebellion against the British in Detroit and the western Posts ended after negotiations between the Indigenous Nations of the Great Lakes and Superintendent of Indian Affairs Sir William Johnson, culminating in the 1764 *Treaty of Niagara*. In this treaty, the Seneca agreed to cede the entire Niagara River, including a four-mile strip on the west side between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. Hill describes this treaty as a “means for both the Haudenosaunee and the Crown to repair part of their very strained relationship,” much of the strain coming from the fact that some Seneca had participated in Pontiac's rebellion.⁵¹ British use of the land west of the Niagara River only allowed improvements that were necessary for the portage, so there was still no civilian settlement.⁵² Fort Niagara's role as a military supply depot for British occupants lasted until the 1790s. In addition, authorities now had full access to trade in the interior, having usurped the Seneca's historic control over portage. Overall, the pre-Loyalist history of Niagara was characterized by shifting relationships and negotiations of alliance and enmity between French, British and Indigenous traders operating in this unique geographical space.

Government Paternalism

During the American Revolution, British authorities saw the need for local food production as Loyalist families, both of European descent and from Iroquoian settlements,

⁵⁰ Turn on the next GIS layer, entitled “French Portage Route.”

⁵¹ Hill, *The Clay We Are Made of*, 124.

⁵² Hill, 124. It was to be used “only for the King's purposes.”

flocked to Fort Niagara seeking refuge.⁵³ At that time, the western banks of the river in what is now Niagara-on-the-Lake were occupied by Butler's Rangers, a British regiment led by Col. John Butler. In violation of the 1764 treaty, the government allowed four or five refugee families to erect small cabins in 1780 and produce spring wheat, corn, oats and buckwheat to supplement food rations for the growing number of people across the river.⁵⁴ Completely reliant on supplies from the British government, these settlers were unable to plant wheat that year because their shipment of seed, hoes and grindstones did not arrive until the following spring. In 1781 Indian Affairs Superintendent Col. Guy Johnson officially purchased for agricultural use the two miles on either side of the Niagara river between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie from the Mississaugas for 300 suits of clothing.⁵⁵ By 1782, sixteen families lived on what became dubbed the "Government's farm" and had cleared 230 acres of land.⁵⁶ Administrators promised to build a sawmill and gristmill at the mouth of the Four Mile Creek, but further delays on shipments of iron works and millstones forced farmers to take their harvested grains to the fort in exchange for flour during the first few years.

While the end of the Revolution brought about many political shifts for the British government and the province of Quebec, the economic state of the peninsula remained relatively consistent throughout the 1780s. Niagara's economy during this decade was financed by a

⁵³ Hill, *The Clay We Are Made of*, 133. Most of the Haudenosaunee sought refuge at Fort Niagara in 1779 after American soldiers destroyed their lands in the Clinton-Sullivan campaign throughout New York and Pennsylvania.

⁵⁴ Library and Archives Canada, Haldimand Papers, R11231-0-1-E, "Letters to Officers commanding at Niagara, n.d, 1779-1783," MG 21, add. mss. 21764, microfilm reel H-1447, (B-104), page 380. Accessed from: http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/ocihm.lac_reel_h1447/1435?r=0&s=5.

⁵⁵ Smith, Donald B. "The Dispossession of the Mississauga Indians" in *Historical Essays on Upper Canada*, J. K. Johnson and Bruce Wilson eds. (McGill-Queen's Press, 1989), 72.

⁵⁶ **Scroll down the Contents pane and turn on GIS layer entitled "Government Farm 1782."** The historic map was originally drawn inaccurately, the Four Mile Creek too close to the government farm, so it does not match up perfectly with current features. Found in Alan Hughes, "The Early Surveys of Township No. 1 and the Niagara Peninsula" in *Niagara's Changing Landscapes*, ed. Hugh Gayler (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994), 215.

paternal government and well-connected merchants who facilitated the establishment of a solid agricultural class of farmers and tradesmen. This chapter details the specific roles of administrative, merchant and farming classes and how they interacted to form the foundations of Niagara's Loyalist era economy.

The British government performed a paternal role in the lives of Loyalists as they transitioned out of the revolution into farming at Niagara. Between 1783-89, the British funded parts of this transition by providing free food rations, seeds and farm tools, offering a ready market by purchasing surplus wheat, corn and peas for the garrison at Fort Niagara, building mills and storehouses and offering cash for war losses as well as rent-free land. Primary sources written by government officials like General Haldimand and Governor Simcoe often mention the government-proposed aid, but sources from within Niagara itself show that the shipment of rations, tools, and seeds into the region was unreliable, and people felt the regulations on local trade and ownership of capital were restrictive. Local development was controlled by placing regulations on private shipping and portaging, land ownership, mill construction and cross-border trade; rules which they amended over time because of merchant and farmer complaints. This shows the agency of people from other socio-economic classes who were equally influential in this study of Loyalist-era economic development.

In comparison with their American neighbours, the Loyalists in Niagara received substantial government aid. During the "Hungry Year" of 1788-89 after wheat crops had been destroyed by the Hessian fly, the people of Niagara received twenty-five times more food aid than did those living in the state of New York who were given almost nothing from their government.⁵⁷ Food rations were handed out in Niagara until 1786, but the British administration

⁵⁷ Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 23.

in Montreal took care of the Loyalists in such moments of need in continued recognition of the people's loyalty and also to strengthen the population so they could continue producing food for the Niagara garrisons.⁵⁸ Yet, as local sources point out, the food aid in Niagara was unstable from 1783-86.⁵⁹ The unreliable flow of cash and goods from Montreal kept the new farming families satisfied just enough so British leaders could focus on bigger issues of international peace negotiations and territorial reconstruction in the American colonies. Conflict continued after 1783 with the Indigenous nations in the Ohio River Valley, taking time and resources from the British military and Indian Department who wanted to maintain their dominance over trade in that region, now in direct competition with the United States.⁶⁰ While the political shifts around Niagara were significant in terms of immigration and perimeter changes, its economic function as a transshipment point between Kingston and Detroit remained relatively stable post-war.⁶¹

Origins of the term “Loyalist”

Canadian historians have recently argued that the term “Loyalist” encompasses a wider variety of people than traditional histories mention, and that this is important for understanding

⁵⁸ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 24.

⁵⁹ Library and Archives Canada, Haldimand Papers, R11231-0-1-E, “Letters from Officers commanding at Niagara, n.d, 1782-1784,” MG 21, add. mss. 21763, microfilm reel H-1447, (B-103), page 492. Accessed from: http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_h1447/1040?r=0&s=6. A petition of farmers at Niagara reads: “On our first settling, you were pleased to read to us His Excellency, General Haldimand's proposals on which we settled and expecting one year's provisions and a blacksmith to work for us, which we have not had yet, part only of the provisions has been given to us.” At the Grand River too, people were “destitute of Provision” according to Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of*, 147.

⁶⁰ Michael McDonnell, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015), 316. McDonnell writes that the British wanted to maintain a good relationship with the Odawa and other western Nations to keep hold of the fur trade that brought the empire £200,000 per year, and also to receive their protection from potential American attack on young British settlements near Detroit and Michilimackinac.

⁶¹ **Turn on GIS layers entitled “Fur Trade Route” and “Great Lakes Fur Trade Stops 1780s.”** Scroll out to see the route stretch between Michilimackinac and Quebec. Click on the Fur Trade Stops to see more detailed information about their place in the Laurentian fur trade.

motivations for settlement and post-war activity.⁶² They did not share one homogenous political ideology. The first wave of Loyalists that settled in Niagara during the 1780s saw themselves as “true” Loyalists, with differing political motivations for settlement than the later waves of Loyalists that came from the late 1780s to the early 1800s.⁶³ Those who arrived later came less out of patriotism and more so due to economic incentives.⁶⁴ Yet, even those “true” Loyalists of the 1780s did not view their place as British colonists in the same way as people like Governor Simcoe and other British administrators, because they were the products of an Anglo-American upbringing. While Upper Canadians were devoted patriots to the British empire, their loyalty was affected by their republican upbringing, their consequent beliefs about political representation and individual rights and freedoms, and their attachment to family and neighbours still living in the new United States.⁶⁵ While the Loyalists admired the political and economic advancements being made in the United States, they saw other aspects of that required avoidance. As Errington astutely writes, the developing post-war American society “was a yardstick which Upper Canadians frequently used to measure their own success.”⁶⁶

⁶² Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Knopf, 2011). Jasanoff investigates the stories of people throughout British North America such as Joseph Brant and the Mohawk Nation, African slaves, as well as white Protestant men and women, discussing their differing motivations for remaining loyal to the British. Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011). Taylor also shows that during the War of 1812, some Upper Canadians felt only those who settled Niagara immediately after the American Revolution could be considered “true Loyalists.” Many late Loyalists had admitted to coming to Upper Canada because of the cheap land and lower tax rates, while Quakers and Mennonites were pacifists that did not wish to fight for either side. Jane Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada: A Developing Colonial Ideology*, 2nd ed. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012). Errington writes about the nature of colonial societies and the influence that migrants' cultural baggage had on the ways in which they tried to shape their “new” world. She argues there was no such thing as a typical “Upper Canadian” or “Loyalist.”

⁶³ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 56.

⁶⁴ Taylor, 57. Taylor says: “Most of the newcomers lacked ideological commitment to either the empire or the republic. Neither good royalists nor republican vipers, most were bargain hunters.”

⁶⁵ Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada*, 21.

⁶⁶ Errington, 36.

In Niagara, the first wave of refugees from the 1780s was composed of people with different ethnicities, sexes and political ideologies who identified as “Loyalists.” These differences affected the ways in which they were viewed by the government, and at the same time people’s varying motivations for seeking refuge in Upper Canada affected their economic choices and attitudes towards the government during settlement. For example, Niagara’s first settlers were from the disbanded Butler’s Rangers, Scottish merchants and members of the Haudenosaunee. Most of the Butler’s Rangers families came from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania and arrived in Niagara with pre-existing relationships amongst one another. They were a diverse group comprised of American-born men with German, Dutch and Anglo ancestry along with their wives, children and at least seventeen Black slaves, as well as Mohawk warriors and a handful of formerly enslaved Black men with their families.⁶⁷ The Haudenosaunee, a united alliance of Haudenosaunee, had also experienced rifts during the revolution. Some Oneida and Tuscarora chose to support the Americans, and had to make delicate post-war decisions regarding re-settlement and how to repair their place within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.⁶⁸ The Haudenosaunee agreed to settle along the Grand River on a reservation of land in Haldimand county situated opposite the southwestern border of Niagara district.

System of Land Grants

The most valuable aid the government gave the Loyalists was rent-free land after the war. The lands east of the Niagara river were ceded as American territory, and many Loyalists knew

⁶⁷ “Hamilton’s note to Quebec RE settlers.”

⁶⁸ Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of*, 134. Some Oneida chose to stay in their homelands, and some chose to move to their western hunting grounds at the Grand River.

they would not be welcomed back in their old homes.⁶⁹ By the spring of 1784, the lands on the north-western banks of the Niagara River were home to 46 families with 700 acres of cleared land.⁷⁰ Canadian historian Bruce Wilson estimates between 800-1000 white Loyalists living in the whole Niagara peninsula including disbanded Butler's Rangers, and members of the local Indian Department from Fort Niagara.⁷¹ In New York's Tryon county where many of Niagara's Loyalists came from, the citizens passed a resolution on May 9, 1783 that said returning Loyalists "shall not live in this district on any pretense whatever; and as for those who have washed their faces from Indian paint, and their hands from the innocent blood of our dear ones, and have returned either openly or covertly, we hereby warn them to leave this district before the 20th of June next, or they may expect to feel the just resentment of an injured and determined people."⁷² Some Loyalists were able to go back to their homes and gather their belongings before beginning new lives in Niagara, but most were unable to do so in the first few years. Some Loyalists stated that they would rather "go to Japan than go among the Americans where they could never live in peace."⁷³

British administrators offered land titles to farmers already in Niagara and to any refugees who wished to take the oath of loyalty and settle there, even though the 1764 and 1781

⁶⁹ **Turn on GIS layer entitled "1783 Survey of White Niagara Settlement."** This historic map is poor quality, but a transcribed version is available in Hughes, "The Early Surveys of Township No. 1 and the Niagara Peninsula" 217.

⁷⁰ Hughes, 219. There were 46 families, or 242 total people living north of the escarpment between the Niagara River and the Four Mile Creek in 1784.

⁷¹ Bruce Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton: a study of wealth and influence in early Upper Canada, 1776-1812*. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1983), 4.

⁷² Doyle, "Loyalism, Patronage, and Enterprise: The Servos Family in British North America 1726-1942," 151.

⁷³ Library and Archives Canada, Haldimand Papers, R11231-0-1-E, "Letters from Officers commanding at Niagara, n.d, 1782-1784," MG 21, add. mss. 21763, microfilm reel H-1447, (B-103), page 121. Accessed from: http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_h1447/648?r=0&s=4

treaties did not allow permanent settlement. To keep the peace with the Mississaugas, the remainder of the region and additional lands beyond Burlington were officially purchased in 1784, selling for less than £1200 worth of trade goods.⁷⁴ Land was drawn by lots and distributed according to military rank, meaning higher ranking officers were promised between 2000-3000 acres, while non-commissioned officers were given 200-900 acres.”⁷⁵ Combined with the fact that many higher-commissioned officers also used slave or hired labour meant that immediately there was a differentiation of classes within the group of ex-military Loyalist farmers. This initial distribution of resources created visible divisions, as those with more land and labourers grew marketable surpluses of wheat while the rest remained at a subsistence level. By investing further in resources like tools, labour, and land, they built assets that were passed on to future generations, again entrenching the wealth disparity.

The GIS analysis reveals the locations of Loyalist farmers and their crops, also showing how large swathes of land remained uncultivated in this decade, belonging to high-ranking officers and their offspring in Niagara and Grantham townships.⁷⁶ Similar to narrative histories, the things that go unmentioned, or gaps in the data, can hold meaning. There is a clear gap between the border of Grantham and Newark wherein none of the inhabitants of those farms had any interaction with the King’s Mills. When the Francis Hall map layer is overlaid onto the point data, it shows the existence of a “Black Swamp,” suggesting that the land impacted farmers’

⁷⁴ Smith, “The Dispossession of the Mississauga Indians,” 31.

⁷⁵ Archives of Ontario. Crown Lands Department, RG 1, C-I-p, Vol 3., “A Return by Augustus Jones, Deputy Surveyor, of Lands Granted,” Nassau, July 2, 1792. Accessed from: <https://dr.library.brocku.ca/bitstream/handle/10464/9246/Volume4Edited.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>.

⁷⁶ **Turn on GIS layer entitled “Flour Sales 1785-89.”** This layer displays the location of individuals and families who received flour from the King’s Mills in the 1780s, the quantity in lbs. also indicated by the size of the marker. Most of those receiving flour had initially brought the wheat from their farms to the King’s Mills to be milled. Clicking on the points reveals information such as the name of the farmer, the township they lived in, the quantity and value of flour sold, and relevant source notes.

ability to produce wheat surpluses.⁷⁷ The majority of people interacting with the King's Mills in the 1780s lived near the Four Mile Creek and the Twelve Mile Creek. Thus, proximity to water and access to good farmland prove higher production and better avenues of transportation. Such discoveries support the argument that Niagara's physical features shaped the direction of trade in the Loyalist era, and impacted one's potential for commercial success.

Alternately, the Upper Canada Land Petitions contain hundreds of letters from non-commissioned officers and families living on unsurveyed lands who were promised property, but did not receive it right away.⁷⁸ Many of these people squatted on the land, clearing it and producing crops while waiting for government titles as promised, feeling frustrated and uneasy about their futures. Surveys of the district were sketched within this short period of time, but were messy, incomplete, and left hundreds of new settlers worried they might be relocated in future years.⁷⁹ Some border disputes remained contentious for generations and required legal mediation.

Thus, while the government attempted to regulate land distribution during the first decade of Loyalist settlement, farmers asserted personal agency by ignoring rules and regulations when it did not suit their economic goals. Causing further resentment in Niagara was the fact that after the 1784 Mississauga purchase the government gave land titles to people but they still had no

⁷⁷ **Turn on the "Niagara Peninsula (Francis Hall) (1818)" layer.** Hall, Sidney & Hall, Francis (1818). The Niagara Frontier. Retrieved from "Historical Maps of Niagara." Brock University Archives & Special Collections.

⁷⁸ Crown land grants were given to families who applied to the governing Executive Council during the Loyalist era. Those given approval could claim 200 acres, plus additional lands for claimants with family members or of a certain military rank. A list of Upper Canada Land Petitions can be found online, transcribed by Robert R. Mutrie at: <https://sites.google.com/site/niagarasettlers/upper-canada-land-petitions>.

⁷⁹ Hughes, "The Early Surveys of Township No. 1 and the Niagara Peninsula", 225. By 1786, there were 150 people living on unsurveyed lands in Fort Erie, and the full survey of Niagara township was not completed until 1787.

clear ownership of their farms.⁸⁰ Throughout the 1780s the farmers and merchants of Niagara petitioned the government to allow them to own their farms, finally achieving tenure on their lands by 1791 when the seigneurial system was abolished.

Haudenosaunee Re-settlement

Government attitudes towards appeasing their Haudenosaunee allies were different than those towards white Loyalists. The Haudenosaunee were also upset about losing their traditional hunting grounds and homes when they chose to relocate to the Grand River, and at first the number of Indigenous people living around the Niagara peninsula post-war far outweighed the white population. In fact, a total of only 6000 white Loyalists lived between the cities of Montreal and Detroit by 1784.⁸¹ Closer to the Niagara peninsula there lived 1,843 Haudenosaunee and refugee Delawares on the Grand River and 1,000 Mississaugas around the northern and western shores of Lake Ontario.⁸² Along Buffalo Creek opposite Fort Erie there were clusters of villages home to the Seneca and Chippewa, adding 2,100 more people to Niagara's surrounding Indigenous population.⁸³

Because of this, British administrators feared a potential Indigenous rebellion.⁸⁴ This fear was exemplified in a letter from Brig. Gen. Allan Maclean to Haldimand in May of 1783 just as the war was ending, expressing concern regarding Mohawk chief Aaron Hill's desire to meet

⁸⁰ Hughes, "The Early Surveys of Township No. 1 and the Niagara Peninsula," 224.

⁸¹ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 23.

⁸² Hill *The Clay we are Made of*, 146, quotes Brig. Gen Allan Maclean's report that "a Number of Delawares" left Buffalo Creek for the Grand River in 1783. Smith, "The Dispossession of the Mississauga Indians," 30, lists the number of Mississauga, and Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 285, lists the number of Haudenosaunee.

⁸³ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 26.

⁸⁴ Taylor, 36.

with the “Western Indians” in Ohio. Maclean told Haldimand that “steps may be taken to Prevent if possible such conferences as something may be hatched that might be very detrimental to the King’s Service at this crisis.”⁸⁵ Similar attempts to control Indigenous relationships happened with the Mississaugas.⁸⁶ Communications to and from Niagara in the spring of 1783 show the government’s attempts to appease the Haudenosaunee, Mississaugas, and white Loyalists. For example, Col. Butler received shipments of blankets, linens, ribbon, knives, rings, broaches, armbands and gorgets for the chiefs in Niagara.⁸⁷ Brig. Gen. Maclean constantly asked Haldimand to send more rum since he was “convinced that one puncheon of rum will have more Effect on the Haudenosaunee than all the abilities of Sir John Johnson joined with every other assistance we shall be able to give him.”⁸⁸ As Superintendent of Indian Affairs, the Haudenosaunee trusted Johnson and would not negotiate peace terms unless he was present.⁸⁹

The Haudenosaunee at the Grand River were promised rations, farm implements and help beginning schools, churches and farms. As with the white Loyalists, they spent the first years clearing land and building homes, enduring food and seed shortages that made adaptation to life in their new homelands very difficult.⁹⁰ Isolation and an inability to produce crops beyond

⁸⁵ Library and Archives Canada, Haldimand Papers, R11231-0-1-E, “Letters from Officers commanding at Niagara, n.d, 1782-1784,” MG 21, add. mss. 21763, microfilm reel H-1447, (B-103), page 162-163, accessed from: http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_h1447/694?r=0&s=3

⁸⁶ Smith, “The Dispossession of the Mississauga Indians,” 39. Peter Russell, the Upper Canadian politician who filled in for Graves Simcoe during a leave of absence in the late 1790s, wrote to Indian Department officials at Niagara and York, telling them to “do everything in [their] power (without exposing the object of this Policy to Suspicion) to foment any existing Jealousy between the Chippewas & the Haudenosaunee; and to prevent as far as possible any Junction or good understanding between those two Tribes.”

⁸⁷ Library and Archives Canada, Haldimand Papers, page 146, accessed from: http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_h1447/675?r=0&s=3

⁸⁸ Library and Archives Canada, Haldimand Papers, page 218. Accessed from: http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_h1447/751?r=0&s=3

⁸⁹ Hill, *The Clay we are Made of*, 114.

⁹⁰ Hill, 142.

subsistence caused the Grand River settlement much hardship in the following years.⁹¹ To Mohawk leader Joseph Brant, the attraction of resettling at the Grand River was not simply the land. Instead, he saw the potential for a new Indian confederacy around the Great Lakes which would connect them with other nations to the west.⁹² His dreams did not become reality; the isolation kept the Haudenosaunee weak and semi-dependent on provisions. Motivations for resettlement varied within the community. For example, Brant's sister Molly based her decisions on personal connections to the administration, anti-settler animosity and self-interest, preferring to settle in Kingston than return to the Mohawk valley.⁹³

Government goals for aiding the Haudenosaunee Loyalists were to prevent rebellion that might result from dissatisfaction regarding broken promises about land concessions. During the revolution the Crown had promised land to the Haudenosaunee once the war was over, in recognition of their loyalty, but the 1783 Treaty of Paris did not include any such language.⁹⁴ The colonial administration through the work of the Indian Department in Niagara wanted to eventually integrate the people of the Grand River settlement into British society by building an Anglican church, a school, and offering gifts.⁹⁵ Their intention for white Loyalists was for them to develop into a successful, British, agricultural society for purposes of ideological unification and dominance over internal trade. They imagined Niagara and the rest of Upper Canada

⁹¹ Hill, *The Clay we are Made of*, 174. Hill mentions that “these hard times were not reflective of the Haudenosaunee failure to plan for the future, but rather indicated the fragile economy of the territory.”

⁹² Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 189.

⁹³ Jasanoff, 189.

⁹⁴ Hill, *The Clay we are Made of*, 136.

⁹⁵ Patrick Campbell, *Travels in the interior inhabited parts of North America: in the years 1791 and 1792*, (Edinburgh: J. Guthrie, 1793), 210-11, accessed from the Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/details/travelsininterio00camp/page/n10/mode/2up> He lists saddles, bridles, kettles, cloth, blankets, tomahawks and tobacco pipes.

becoming the centre of British influence on the continent, strategically developed as a sort of “Loyalist America” which was meant to exemplify the superiority of the British over republican American ideals. This is why there were tight restrictions on land ownership, construction of capital assets, cross-border trade, private shipping and private sales. A few immigrants to Niagara even said that they purposely waited a few years to move there because they were not convinced that the area was controlled by a civil government.⁹⁶ Although the conversation is nuanced, initial postwar settlement was generally characterized by government attempts to pacify while retaining control over the settlements for ideological purposes.

The broader lens of post-revolutionary transitions in colonial Canada reveal that the government’s imperial focus ranged beyond Niagara, on the battles raging in the Ohio River Valley between their allies of the Western Nations against American encroachment. While Niagara’s internal economy was in its infancy, the portage played a vital role in the British trans-Atlantic trade system as a transshipment point that connected the ports of Detroit and Kingston. Transferring supplies for the military and Indian Department kickstarted Niagara’s local economy and cemented the region as a key point of communication. External economic inputs in terms of rations, seeds and farm tools as well as war loss claims and free land were key stimulators that helped farmers and merchants lay the foundations of the region’s underlying socio-economic structures.

⁹⁶ John Ogden, *A tour through Upper and Lower Canada by a Citizen of the United States*, (Printed at Litchfield, according to Act of Congress, 1799), 105, accessed from: https://archive.org/details/cihm_20852/page/n5/mode/2up The Americans were of the opinion that the settlement at Niagara was “entirely under controul [sic] of the military, few emigrants bent their course this way, til they were convinced of the civil government, being well established, and upon a constitution happily adapted to the minds of the people, since which numbers of respectable inhabitants have come in from the different States.”

Establishing Farms and Mills

A diverse agricultural class of farmers and tradesmen established themselves in Niagara during the 1780s. A class divide existed between high-ranking soldiers from the disbanded Butler's Rangers, and non-commissioned officers who were offered less initial land and resources. The higher class produced both raw and manufactured goods on a small-scale creating wealth for themselves and their families by building capital assets within the region's debt economy. The lower class did the same, but produced crops at a subsistence level, performing multiple types of labour while relying on government paternalism to make it through the first few years of life in Niagara. A racial divide also existed, as white, Black, and Indigenous people participated in the new Niagara economy in different ways. While benefitting from government paternalism in the form of provisions, free land and war loss claims, the farming class made decisions to oppose certain government regulations to better themselves financially. In the personal choices they made regarding milling and land ownership, the people formed a network of socio-economic connections throughout the region that was shaped by the natural landscape.

Despite British efforts to carefully regulate the settlement process, many Loyalist settlers established their own directions. One of the ways they did this was by constructing saw and grist mills without government permission. In addition to enforcing the seigneurial system throughout the 1780s and forbidding Loyalists from directly purchasing land, the people required permission from the authorities if they wanted to build a mill. The first mills built on the west side of the Niagara River were the government funded sawmill and gristmill on the Four Mile Creek, built by government contracted millwright Lt. David Brass and his two workers in 1783, the lumber cut beforehand by Butler's Rangers stationed in Niagara.⁹⁷ However, the materials required for

⁹⁷ **Turn on GIS layer entitled "King's Mills 1783."** Library and Archives Canada, Haldimand Papers, microfilm reel H-1447, (B-103), 22, accessed from: http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_h1447/545?r=0&s=5

completion took around a year to arrive from Montreal, despite countless letters sent from settlers begging the administrators to hurry.⁹⁸ Due to the unreliable nature of the authorities, half of the mills in this first decade of Loyalist settlement were built without permission, constructing millstones out of the limestone that appeared abundantly in Niagara. There were 14 sawmills and 10 gristmills in the peninsula by 1792, rising to 25 gristmills and 37 sawmills by 1805.⁹⁹

Communities in Niagara were centered around saw and grist mills as an economic junction where production and consumption took place. Such sites were critical nodes in early settler communities, drawing on a broad cross-section of local people. Much as historian Joshua MacFadyen demonstrates for the 19th century flax industry, a mill was “a place where former slave owners, Unionists, and escaped slaves worked together, not equally, and not exactly cheek by jowl, but together.”¹⁰⁰ The accounts of Niagara miller Daniel Servos show a similar union of people from all walks of life; ex-slaves like Peter Long, widowed women like “Mrs. Pickard” and merchants like Samuel Street and Robert Hamilton intersected at the King’s Mills, forming a web of social and material interactions. In Loyalist-era Niagara, the lives of white and Indigenous people were intertwined in matters of trade, politics, and social life.

In this analysis the ArcGIS map suggests that farmers were impacted by their location both on a large and small scale. The developments in local milling indicated settler agency as

⁹⁸ Haldimand Papers, 227, accessed from: http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_h1447/760?r=0&s=5

⁹⁹ **Turn on GIS layer entitled “All Niagara Mills 1783-92.”** Ernest Cruikshank lists the mills in Niagara by 1792, copied from the returns compiled by Surveyor General D. W. Smith in *Notes on the history of the district of Niagara, 1791-1793*, (Welland: Welland Tribune Print, 1914), 49, accessed from Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/notesonhistoryof26crui/page/n6/mode/2up>. The numbers from 1805 come from Library and Archives Canada, Upper Canada and Canada West: Returns of Populations and Assessment, RG5 B26 vol 4, “A General Account of all the Rateable Property in the District of Niagara from the 4th Day of March 1805 to the 3rd Day of March 1806 Inclusive,” microfilm reel H-1175, page 774, accessed from http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_h1175/250?r=0&s=4

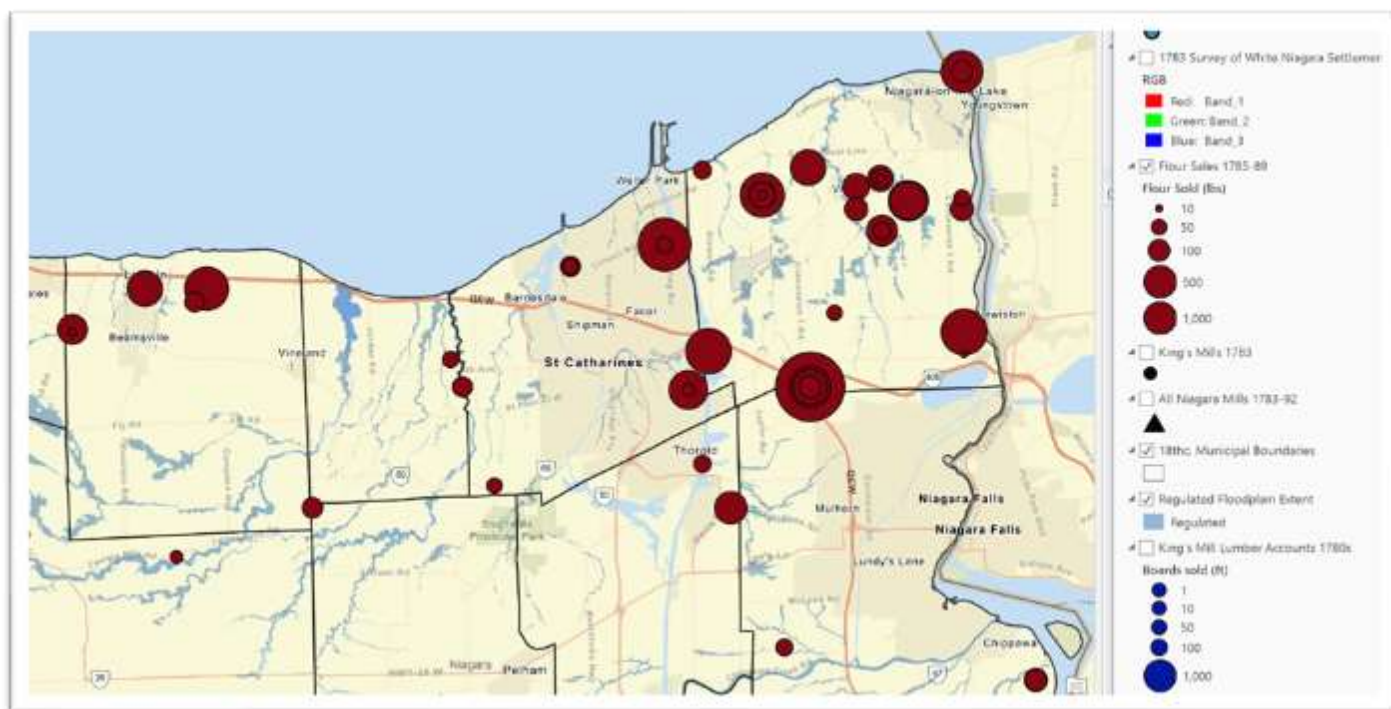
¹⁰⁰ MacFadyen, *Flax Americana*, 35.

Loyalists chose who to trade and work with, made land improvements and developed capital assets. They saw the potential that Niagara had to offer including the gravitational benefits of the escarpment, a moderate climate and plenty of space for growth. Initial settlement gathered along waterways, specifically the Niagara River, Chippewa Creek, Black Creek, the Twelve and Twenty-Mile Creeks atop the escarpment, and the shorelines of Lakes Erie and Ontario. Above the escarpment, Chippewa Creek created a natural boundary that surveyors followed when determining township borders. Stamford, Thorold, Pelham, Gainsborough and Caistor were located north of the Chippewa Creek with Willoughby, Crowland, Wainfleet and Humberstone on the other border. This creek was the meeting place for people where they gathered to bring their product to be milled and to exchange goods. Since surveyors were laying out township boundaries at the same time as post-war Loyalist settlement took place, this means that people who were given land near a main waterway or the escarpment had an advantage over those living in the interior of a township.¹⁰¹ Living near water was not a new pattern, but this visualization is valuable in confirming Loyalists' reliance on main waterways for early commercial success. Overlaying flour sales from the first few decades shows that the families living on these main waterways were indeed the ones engaging in trade at the King's Mills.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ **Turn on GIS layers entitled "18thc. Municipal Boundaries" and "Regulated Floodplain Extent."** Notice how the waterways shown in the floodplain map line up with municipal boundary lines from the late 1700s. Thus, surveyors were influenced by the choices settlers had already made with regards to the delineation of townships.

¹⁰² **Turn on GIS layer entitled "Flour Sales 1785-89" once again to see the individuals trading with Servos.**

Figure 1: Connecting Agricultural Production to Farm Location



Milling was one of the most important industries in Niagara during the Loyalist era. The GIS shows that for the first few years of settlement, some Loyalists had to make a 2-3-day journey to mill their grains. In total, 35% of the 179 people that used the King's Mills on the Four Mile Creek in the 1780s lived more than 10 miles away from the mills, spanning as far south as Fort Erie. At first, travelling this far was out of necessity. The map shows that in the years 1784-1789, Servos had customers come to the Four Mile Creek from Clinton and Grimsby Townships, but they stopped coming by 1790. Early settlers had no other options. Once the mills on the Thirty and Forty-Mile Creeks were built in 1789, Servos no longer saw those customers. Following the first decade of settlement, the wheat and flour sales at the King's Mills became gradually more localized.

The King's Mills initially brought together people from different townships within the Niagara district, forming social connections that crossed regional boundaries. When Grimsby

farmer Jacob Glover came to Servos with wheat and corn, he left with a milled product but also brown sugar and rum.¹⁰³ Servos also charged him for one night's lodging, making rent income a by-product of his milling enterprise. People who brought pine logs to Servos would leave the mills having also bought flour for their families. The exchanges in these early days show the formation of a greater community in the Niagara peninsula. As mills were built and merchant shops begun in other townships, people formed tighter connections within their own villages, investing in local industry largely due to the challenges brought by regional travel. The GIS shows that sawmills were limited to much more local customers. In fact, 89% of those who had lumber milled at the King's sawmill lived below the escarpment within a 10-mile radius of the mills. Many who brought lumber to this mill lived along the Four Mile Creek, the GIS revealing the creek as the central point within the data, indicating how most of Servos' customers either used the creek itself to transport felled logs or else formed a more permanent path alongside it.¹⁰⁴ The map forces one to think of these people spatially and consider the unique transportation challenges many faced. By bringing the attention to the land and understanding where the lumber was coming from, one can understand once again how access to manufacturing points affected a family's ability to engage in rural markets and develop assets and personal connections. Those who had access to the sawmill were in a better position to build houses, barns, and other structures than did those who lived further away or outside of main transportation lines.

¹⁰³ "Account Book Volume I 1785-1795". *Daniel Servos Records 1779-1826*. No. 42. MS 538. Archives of Ontario.

¹⁰⁴ **Turn on GIS layer entitled "King's Mill Lumber Accounts 1780s." Turn on GIS layer entitled "All Niagara Mills 1783-92" once again.**

Figure 2: The Four Mile Creek as the Central Point within Lumber Production



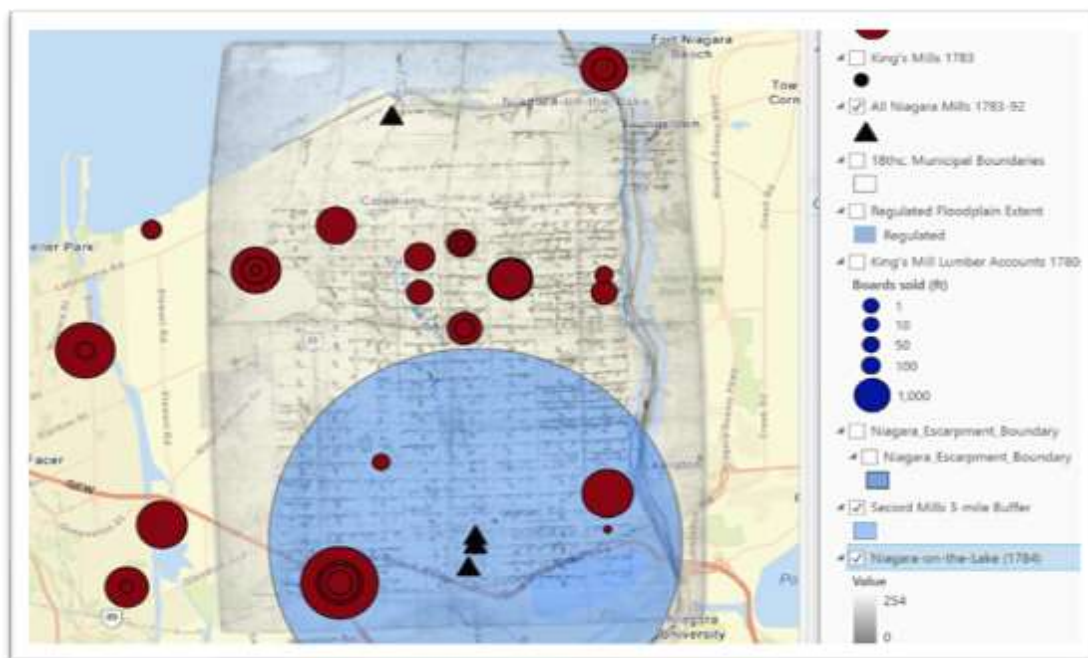
While the escarpment was in many ways an impediment to transport, the settlers were still able to harness its natural power to their benefit. The map's escarpment layer reveals that fifteen out of the twenty-four mills in Niagara in the early 1790s were built atop the escarpment. Each of these mills interspersed throughout the Niagara region functioned as a hub of socio-economic activity for their communities. For example, Burch's Mills at the top of Niagara Falls and built in 1786 serviced the people in Stamford and Willoughby. The GIS reveals that the King's Mills in Niagara only had two customers from those townships, even though Stamford and Niagara Township bordered one another. Both the King's Mills and Burch's Mills annually serviced the same 10-40 families within a 10-mile radius during this first decade, creating lines that formed distinct communities. The escarpment is one of the most noticeable features of the Niagara peninsula and is the reason why trade both above and below was forced in an east-west direction, rather than north-south.¹⁰⁵ The map shows how in the years 1785-89, 48% of the

¹⁰⁵ Turn on layer entitled "Niagara Escarpment Boundary."

King's Mills customers came from above the escarpment, and this number became progressively lower over time. People were willing to travel the distance when there was only one milling option, but quickly formed connections and centres of activity within their own localities. In the first decade of the 1800s the roads were still poor which solidified the community isolation that had formed, even though the population had grown.

These creeks usually had more than one mill on them, in fact the Four Mile Creeks had mills run by three separate families already built by 1792: the King's Mills, the Secord Mills and the Lutes sawmill. Having multiple options for milling in these communities fostered competition, exemplified in Niagara Township. The map shows that the northern half of the Niagara district interacted with the King's Mills more so than the lower half.¹⁰⁶

Figure 3: Multiple Milling Options in Niagara Township, 1780s



This indicates that the Secord Mills were taking those customers after their construction in 1787. After 1787, eighty percent of the King's Mill customers came from the northern half of

¹⁰⁶ Turn on the layers entitled "Secord Mills 3-mile buffer" and "1784 Niagara-on-the-Lake (1784)." Turn on GIS layers entitled "Flour Sales 1785-89" and "All Niagara Mills 1783-92" once again.

Niagara township. Servos' accounts show between 11-44 customers using the King's Mills annually during the first decade of settlement. This does not seem like many people, especially since some of them only came to the mill once or twice in a year, but the Secord Mills could have been getting the same number of annual customers which would mean there was actually a lot more business going on in Niagara at this time than the Servos account books suggest. There are no Secord account books in existence to support this hypothesis, so the assumption is made through the map projection that they provided a significant contribution to the settlement at Niagara, especially for a few years when the King's sawmill was out of commission. Having three different millers operate in this small area within the period of a decade shows that the population grew at a rapid pace, requiring multiple millers to process the wheat, corn, and lumber being brought in. This competition pushed millers to produce the best quality outputs and offer fair prices to consumers. While external geographical factors like the seasonality of Great Lakes shipping isolated people in Niagara from the outside world, its internal features such as access to multiple sources of water and the milling potential of the escarpment provided the opportunity to build successful communities.

Niagara's Debt Economy and Reciprocal Labour

Yet, many problems remained, one of which was Niagara's debt economy. In the 1780s the flow of cash was limited, and people paid for items and services mostly through exchange of goods and labour.¹⁰⁷ Government aid was promised and partially fulfilled in the first few years; Loyalists were promised restitution from war loss claims, half-pay as officers in the military, and continuation of payment for those in the Indian Department throughout this transition period. However, these promises took years to fulfill. Some of the people who owed Servos money took

¹⁰⁷ For example, William Reid paid off 10% of his £13.5 milling debt in 1786 by working 6.5 days of unspecified labour for Daniel Servos @ 4 shillings per day. "Account Book Volume I 1785-1795" Account No. 10.

five or more years to make their payments. This made life difficult for him as a middling-status miller, until he could access the cash owed him and start investing it into building small-scale commercial enterprises. Working towards building capital assets over a long period of time rather than accumulating income meant stability for the future despite market fluctuations of staple exports.

For much of the decade following the revolution, most settlers in Niagara participated in multiple forms of labour. Most farmers in this decade cleared land, grew crops, milled grains and cut lumber. To pay merchant and miller debts they worked small jobs fixing wagons or harvesting wheat, or else they traded domestic goods like butter and bread. A local market was created by internal interactions between farmers who helped each other with planting and harvesting and accessed goods and services via local millers. For example, Daniel Servos' farm was one of the Niagara settlement's top producers of wheat in 1787, but he also milled flour and timber for the people of Niagara from the King's Mills.¹⁰⁸ He built a shop and exchanged mostly raw goods at first such as flour, corn, bran, and oats, but also manufactured goods like candles, butter, bread, and small amounts of imported goods like tobacco and sugar. He also rented his teams of horses and oxen to people to carry loads away from the mills, and rented land to people for animals to pasture. He operated a blacksmith shop, and built items like sleighs, ploughs and farm implements, and made bags and shirts, meaning he provided weaving and sewing services as well. These were clearly all family ventures, as women and children participated in this work and were vital to family success. The jobs of women in the 1780s varied according to their personal circumstances. As refugees at Fort Niagara in December 1783, women washed the clothes of the soldiers in the 34th and King's Regiments, but some women were also listed as a

¹⁰⁸ Doyle, "Loyalism, Patronage, and Enterprise: The Servos Family in British North America 1726-1942," 183.

“Nurse to the Hospital” or a “Schoolmistress.”¹⁰⁹ As white Loyalist women became settled in Niagara they mostly worked on their family farms raising animals and vegetable gardens to provide for their families, but hired labour was expensive.¹¹⁰ In 1792, Secretary of Upper Canada William Jarvis while travelling to Niagara paid his two female servant girls seven dollars per month. In comparison, a male servant was paid approximately eight dollars per month including food and board.¹¹¹ By the early 1800s, women’s wages were already much lower, closer to \$3.75 per month for housework or \$3.60 per month for spinning wool.¹¹²

Servos did not always record how his accounts were settled, but in the forty-eight times that he did record customers’ form of payment from 1784-89, 36.5% were cash payments, 36.5% were settled through labour, 15% with raw goods like flour, wheat and bran, and 12% with manufactured goods like bricks, nails, shoes and finished clothing like overalls and jackets.¹¹³ This means families either kept food for their own families, traded it with neighbours, or with merchants along the Niagara River. It also shows that settlers took raw materials and turned them into surplus marketable products to pay for services they could not do themselves. Once farms became better established in the 1790s, people more commonly paid for milling with farm goods.

¹⁰⁹ Library and Archives Canada, Haldimand Papers, R11231-0-1-E, “Correspondence with Officers at Niagara and Papers, n.d., 1777-1784,” MG 21, add. mss. 21765, microfilm reel H-1448, (B-105 and B-105a), page 400 accessed from: http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/occihm.lac_reel_h1448/316?r=0&s=5

¹¹⁰ Library and Archives Canada, Memorandum from April 3, 1792, Francis Goring fonds [textual record]. In Niagara, Mrs. Goring sold fowl, beets and eggs in exchange for salt and linens. Her husband Francis took care of tending the fields and producing larger crops of wheat, corn and potatoes.

¹¹¹ Seven dollars was equal to 56 shillings (\$1 = 8s). The Niagara Historical Society no. 8., M. A. FitzGibbon, *The Jarvis Letters*, (W.H.S. Toronto, 1901), accessed from <http://nhsm.ca/media/NHS8Family%20Histories%20of%20the%20U.E.L.s.pdf>

¹¹² Listed as 7.5 shillings per week for housework or 7.25s per week for spinning. Multiplied by four to determine the monthly rate. Robert Gourlay, *Statistical account of Upper Canada: compiled with a view to a grand system of emigration*, (London, Simpkin & Marshall, 1822), 488, accessed from: https://archive.org/details/cihm_35937/page/n497/mode/2up.

¹¹³ For example, Jacob Walker paid his debt to Daniel Servos in 1785 by paying £5 cash. “Account Book Volume I 1785-1795” Account No. 16.

The labour performed by Indigenous people in Niagara was different than that of settler labour. Some Mississauga traveled with elite white families on multi-day trips, hired to kill fowl for food along the way.¹¹⁴ They were also the primary fishermen in Niagara, catching salmon and whitefish in their canoes on Lake Ontario and the lower Niagara River. Loyalists purchased and stocked their cellars with the fish as well as items like cranberries and maple sugar which they traded for loaves of bread and alcohol.¹¹⁵

Free labour, specifically free *Black* labour, was directly tied to successful farming in Niagara during the 1780s.¹¹⁶ This statement is based on an analysis of the 1787 census of Niagara, which lists a total of seventeen slaves living in Niagara, enslaved by six different families all living in Niagara Township between the Four Mile Creek and the Niagara River.¹¹⁷ These families were officers in the disbanded Butler's Rangers, including Col. Butler, Captain Peter TenBroeck, Captain Elijah Phelps, Lieutenant David Secord, Corporal Henry Diel, and merchant Samuel Street. The census also mentions two families with "servants", specifically Peter TenBroeck with two "indentured servants," William May with one "servant," and Bernard Frey with one "hired servant." The races of these servants are unspecified.

¹¹⁴ Memoirs of Colonel John Clark," *Ontario Historical Society Paper and Records* Vol 7, (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1906), 162, accessed from the Internet Archive. <https://archive.org/details/ontariohistory01ontauoft/page/n3>.

¹¹⁵ Isaac Weld, *Travels through the States of North America, and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, During the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797*. By Isaac Weld, Junior. Third Edition. Illustrated and Embellished with Sixteen Plates. In Two Volumes. Vol. 1. (London: printed for John Stockdale [by Luke Hansard], Piccadilly, 1800) 68.

¹¹⁶ "Hamilton's note to Quebec RE settlers." Hamilton took a census of the 241 families in Niagara below the escarpment on September 17, 1787, listing the number of people in their household, the number of acres cleared, and the number of bushels of wheat that were sown in the autumn of 1786.

¹¹⁷ "Hamilton's note to Quebec RE settlers." The 1787 census of Niagara township included seventeen "negroes". Seven were enslaved by Col Butler, one by Henry Diel, three by Elijah Phelps, one by David Secord, three by Samuel Street, and two by Peter Tenbroeck.

Of the 241 land-owning farms living below the escarpment, the top four wheat producers were Elijah Phelps who had sown 60 bushels of wheat in 1786, David Secord who had also sown 60, Samuel Street who had sown 42, and Peter TenBroeck who had also sown 42 bushels. Henry Diel had 13 bushels of winter wheat sown, and Col. Butler had 10 bushels sown. Most of the farmers in this census sowed between 3-9 bushels of wheat the previous fall, so these slave-owning men were far more developed agriculturally than the majority of the Loyalist population.

Table 1: Top Ten Niagara Wheat Producers 1787

	Name	Bushels of Wheat Sown in 1786
1	Elijah Phelps*	60
2	David Secord*	60
3	Samuel Street*	42
4	Peter TenBroeck*	42
5	¹¹⁸ Colin McNab*	30
6	John Secord Sr.	30
7	Christian Stephens	26
8	¹¹⁹ Daniel Servos*	25
9	John Chisholm	25
10	¹²⁰ Adam Chrysler*	24

* *Slave Owners*

American historian Robin Winks estimated in his 1997 work *Blacks in Canada: A History* that by 1791, nearly three hundred Black slaves inhabited the Niagara district.¹²¹ In the 1780s, slavery was still legal in British North America. In 1790 it was the law that children born of slaves became freed once they turned twenty-five, and Governor Simcoe passed laws in 1793

¹¹⁸ “Account no. 12 with Collin McNabb” in “Account Book Volume II 1799”, *Daniel Servos Records 1779-1826*. MS 538. Archives of Ontario. Servos also reveals that Captain Colin McNab of Grantham had a Black slave when he debited on February 15, 1798 one pound of bohea tea to McNab’s “Negro boy”.

¹¹⁹ A Black man named Robert Jupiter worked for Daniel Servos, and is mentioned frequently throughout the miller’s accounts. Servos refers to him as “Bobb the Negro”, having items “Delivered by Bobb” and “Delivered by my Negro.”

¹²⁰ Adam Chrysler purchased a slave in 1792 named Tom, who was emancipated in 1800. Blair, Fred. *The Coloured Corps and Corps of Artificers History and Muster Roll At the Time of the War of 1812*. 2nd ed. (2017), 4. Trafalgar Township Historical Society, accessed from: <http://images.ourontario.ca/TrafalgarTownship/3333772/data?n=>

¹²¹ Robin Winks. *Blacks in Canada: A History* (McGill-Queens Press, 1997), 34.

that gradually banned slavery in Upper Canada, but slavery was not abolished in the British colonies until 1833.

This is important because it shows the value of Black labour in Niagara's Loyalist era economic development. Black labour helped a handful of white Loyalists achieve economic success through marketable surplus wheat in 1787. Free Black labour was a common denominator amongst those families that rose above subsistence in the first years of settlement. Assuming the Black slaves were made to work on farms clearing land, removing tree stumps, plowing the ground, and planting and harvesting wheat, they were performing the most valuable commodity at the time which was manual labour. Those who had the most capital resources of land and labour produced the greatest crops, putting the profits from these sales towards other capital ventures, and thus enhancing their standing both politically and economically.

Not all Black people in Niagara were Loyalists. The term "Black Loyalist" applies more so to free Black men like Richard Pierpoint of Butler's Rangers who chose to join the Rangers during the Revolution and settled on 200 acres in Grantham when they disbanded.¹²² Enslaved labourers in the 1780s improved land that was not their own and did not have any promises of future land ownership to look forward to, living in communities alongside freed Blacks. Economic motivations for Black people in Niagara differed from the motivations of white settlers and Indigenous peoples, but "Black labour" appeared in multiple forms. Black slaves worked without compensation, free Black men and women worked throughout the year as hired servants, and others like Pierpoint independently farmed land granted to them by the British government. Yet, some enslaved Black people also chose to go to Niagara. Col. Butler listed in his war loss claim that his four "Negroes" were taken by the Americans, but that "two of them

¹²² **Turn on GIS layers entitled "Grantham1791" and "Richard Pierpoint."** Joan Magee, *Loyalist Mosaic: A Multi-Ethnic Heritage*, (Toronto: Dundurn, 1984), 89.

ran away from their masters and came to him in Canada. One died soon after, and the other is now his hired servant.”¹²³ Their motivations may have been loyalty to Col. Butler, but more likely they feared re-enslavement, and this was simply the best option they had.¹²⁴

Subsistence Farming and Household Production

The 1787 census also demonstrates how the majority of farmers in Niagara during the 1780s produced wheat at only a subsistence level. A subsistence economy is a system in which farms produce only that which is necessary for the consumption needs of their own household.¹²⁵ Niagara’s economy was diverse and small-scale. Development was affected by external government expenditures, but the rations, tools and cash were not enough to establish successful farms and businesses in Niagara. Some families invested external funds into building capital in the form of mills, blacksmith shops, roads, etc., but most were focused on clearing land.

The definition of wheat “subsistence” in this paper is that the average Niagara family required thirty-six bushels of wheat annually. Canadian historian Douglas McCalla states that six bushels per person was the estimated annual consumption of Upper Canadians in the mid-19th century, and historians estimate there were six people per household in this era.¹²⁶ Using the 1787 census, the number of bushels of wheat sown can be translated into the approximate

¹²³ Great Britain. Public Record Office, Audit Office 12, Vol 21, ff 201-210; National Archives of Canada, MG 12, AO 13, microfilm reel number B-2555. Accessed from <https://dr.library.brocku.ca/bitstream/handle/10464/9246/Volume4Edited.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>.

¹²⁴ James Walker, “Myth, History and Revisionism: The Black Loyalists Revisited,” *Acadiensis* 29(1), 1999, Retrieved from <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/Acadiensis/article/view/10802>. The subject of whether or not Black people in British North America were considered Loyalists is a subject of much debate by modern Canadian historians. Nova Scotian archivist Barry Cahill argues that Black Loyalists should not be viewed as “Loyalists” because they did not see themselves as such, and were also not regarded as such by the other white Loyalists, British administrators, or Americans. University of Waterloo history professor James Walker refutes this, stating that these different groups actually did recognize Black people as Loyalists in British North America after the revolution.

¹²⁵ Marvin McInnis, "Marketable Surpluses in Ontario Farming, 1860," *Social Science History* 8, no. 4 (1984): 395, accessed July 13, 2020. doi:10.2307/1171098.

¹²⁶ McCalla, *Planting the Province*, 73.

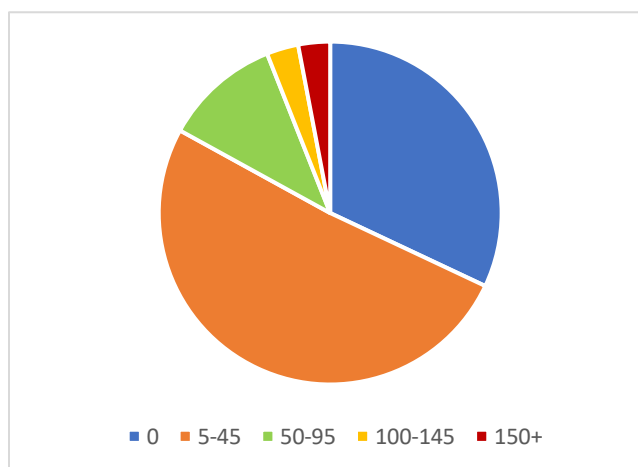
number of bushels of wheat harvested. The growing conditions that season are unknown, but assuming this was a normal growing season with a healthy crop of wheat, it is estimated that one bushel sown would have produced five bushels of wheat.¹²⁷ McCalla uses this 1:5 ratio in his research on Upper Canadian farm production in 1803, based on the research of T. J. A. LeGoff in his work on early 19th century wheat production in Lower Canada.¹²⁸ In addition to wheat, families required an estimated annual 84 bushels of potatoes, 375 lbs. of beef, 570 lbs. of pork, 20 lbs. of mutton, and 312 lbs. of butter, cheese & milk (as butter).¹²⁹

Table 2: Wheat Production by Niagara Farms in 1787

Bushels Harvested*	0	5-45	50-95	100-145	150+
Number of Farms per Category	62	98	21	6	6
Number of Farms as % of Total	32%	51%	11%	3%	3%

*The number of bushels of wheat sown in 1786, multiplied by five for a 1:5 plant to yield ratio.

Figure 4: Wheat Production per Niagara Farm in 1787



¹²⁷ Farmers and merchants frequently mentioned whenever they experienced poor crop yields due to weather or infestation. For example, the hunger winter of 1788-89 is mentioned throughout multiple first-hand accounts.

¹²⁸ McCalla, *Planting the Province*, 252. Other sources show higher harvest ratios, Albany in 1775 producing ten to twenty bushels per acre.

¹²⁹ According to McInnis, "Marketable Surpluses in Ontario Farming, 1860," 405, this food would annually sustain the average human male. The amounts have been multiplied by 6 to estimate values per family.

Using McCalla's estimates, the average number of bushels of wheat produced for each of the 193 families living below the Niagara escarpment in 1787 are thus estimated in Table 2. If thirty-six bushels per family is the annual amount of wheat needed for subsistence, then these figures show that approximately 83% of families produced just enough for subsistence, or less. The government stopped handing out rations by 1787 so those who did not grow winter wheat either had to rely on their other crops, or purchase wheat and flour from local merchants in exchange for cash, labour, or goods. For the 17% that produced more than what was necessary for subsistence, the excess went towards providing seed for the next planting season. McCalla estimates that in 1803, Upper Canadian farmers consumed 46% of their annual wheat harvest, put 20% towards seed requirements, 16% was distilled, 16% exported to Montreal, and 3% purchased by the British army.¹³⁰ These percentages are different for Niagara in the 1780s since wheat was not yet being exported to Montreal, and the percentage that was distilled in this decade is unknown. Whiskey was produced in abundance in Niagara by 1804, home to 54 of the 167 total whiskey stills in all of Upper Canada with 4203 gallons distilled.¹³¹ However, there is a glaring absence of whiskey trade in the Servos accounts during the 1780s, only becoming more visible by the 1790s. With McCalla's percentages in mind, for those who produced more than subsistence, they put aside 20% of the total seed for the next year and the rest was sold to the British army for the nearby garrisons of Fort Niagara and Fort Erie. Table 3 provides examples of different levels of production as seen in the 1787 census, and how wheat was distributed.¹³²

¹³⁰ McCalla, *Planting the Province*, 252.

¹³¹ "Account of stills in the Province of Upper Canada for the year ending the 5th of April," Richard Cartwright copied letterbooks, Cartwright family fonds, Series F 24-3, box MU 513, Archives of Ontario.

¹³² Numbers are determined based on McCalla's estimates of 36 bushels required per household, 20% of outputs being put towards seed, and the other two categories non-applicable, thus the remainder was for army purchases.

Table 3: Examples of Wheat Production in 1787

	Elijah Phelps	Colin McNab	Peter Hare	Joseph Clement	Jacob Culp
Bushels Sown	60	30	15	10	5
Bushels Harvested ¹³³	300	150	75	50	25
Household Consumption	36	36	36	36	36
Seed Requirements	60	30	15	15	--
Army Purchases	204	84	24	--	--

In 1787, wheat sold in Niagara for 8 shillings a bushel, or 40 shillings per cwt of flour, meaning that Phelps as the highest producer had the potential to make £82 in annual sales of wheat, or £90 in flour.¹³⁴ Only 17% of Niagara's population were able to make a profit on their wheat sales, those with servants and slaves in the best position to make cash that year. This supports the argument that one of the most important commodities at that time was labour. These men needed manual labour to continue developing land and producing crops. Hired help was expensive, costing between four and twelve shillings per day depending on the work, and most people were busy attending their own farms during the busy harvest season.

Niagara: A Staple Economy?

Niagara did not have a staple economy; it was not developed in response to a lateral movement of staple products from the continent over to Britain. McCalla argues that because western districts like Niagara did not export wheat to Montreal until after 1800, it could not have been a staple economy.¹³⁵ Niagara farmers in the 1780s did not yet have steady annual supplies of one surplus export commodity because it took at least ten years for a farm to become truly established.¹³⁶ In fact, wheat was not even the main crop grown at first. The first detailed record

¹³³ Wheat harvest figures estimated based on McCalla's 1:5 production ratio as seen in *Planting the Province*, 252.

¹³⁴ Estimating 4 bushels wheat = 1 cwt flour. $(204 \div 4)40 \div 20 = £102 - 12\% \text{ for milling} = £89.76$.

¹³⁵ Douglas McCalla, "The "Loyalist" Economy of Upper Canada, 1784-1806," *Social History / Histoire Sociale* 16 no. 32, 1983, 280.

¹³⁶ McCalla, 280.

of farm production in Niagara in 1782 shows that of the 1808 bushels of vegetables harvested, 51% of it was corn, 35% potatoes, 11% wheat, and 3% oats. These numbers grew substantially throughout the decade, and there was twice as much corn produced the following year.¹³⁷

Niagara's production was diverse and small-scale for most of the farmers in the immediate post-war years, mainly growing corn and wheat by the mid 1780s, and producing smaller amounts of other crops like oats, bran, buckwheat, and potatoes. The 17% of farmers that produced more than fifty bushels of wheat in 1787 drove Niagara's nascent economy in different ways, selling to the British garrisons which lessened the burden of the British military suppliers, and investing in local capital ventures like milling. In this decade Niagara produced agriculturally at a lower level than Kingston and the Eastern districts, but was more developed than the Detroit settlements.¹³⁸

One of the most common crops grown in the region at first was corn or "maize", which they would grind into cornmeal either by paying millers like Servos or doing it themselves in a hollowed out tree stump.¹³⁹ One example of corn being sold as a surplus commodity came from the records of Robert Nelles who lived on the Grand River in the mid-1780s. A small group of white Loyalist families had been granted land illegally by Joseph Brant in Haudenosaunee territory along the Grand River. Previously members of the Indian Department, they had close ties to the community and were there in part to help them cultivate prosperous farms. In 1786, a

¹³⁷ Janet Carnochan, *Names only but much more* (Niagara Historical Society, 1915), 1. Carnochan lists the first census of Niagara from August 25, 1782.

¹³⁸ Library and Archives Canada, Haldimand Papers, R11231-0-1-E, "Letters from Various Persons to Gen. Haldimand after his appointment as Governor of Quebec, 1788-1791," MG 21, add. mss. 21737, microfilm reel H-1441, (B-77-1), page 103, accessed from: http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_h1441/769?r=0&s=4 Major Robert Matthews in his travels to Detroit in 1788 said that the settlements between Kingston and Niagara were "thickly settled, finely cleared, and many excellent houses built. Some of the farmers have sold 500 bushels of wheat this season," and that the settlement at Detroit "will in a very few years meet that of Niagara."

¹³⁹ "Memoirs of Colonel John Clark," 172.

young Robert Nelles sold 47.75 bushels of corn to Col. John Butler, Deputy Superintendent of the Haudenosaunee Indian Department and they were sent directly to their Haudenosaunee neighbours along the Grand River. Nelles sold them 100 bushels the following year.¹⁴⁰ Corn remained an important crop for the Haudenosaunee in future years, exemplified in American traveller John Ogden's writings about the large quantities of corn kept in the houses of the Haudenosaunee along the Grand River during his visit in 1799.¹⁴¹

Niagara's growing economy in the 1780s was facilitated by stratified layers of people from different classes, ethnicities and backgrounds. Farmers performed multiple types of labour within a debt economy, interacting with a supportive yet controlling British administration in Montreal to assert their independence in small but significant ways. Eventually, a diverse network of production and consumption developed along natural boundaries formed by waterways and the escarpment, laying the foundation for future decades of farming.

The Fur Trade in Niagara

Between 1783-89, merchants relied on the fur trade and the portage to create deeper ties in Niagara, communicating with people in Detroit, Kingston and Montreal to better their position locally so they could enter the 1790s with more established enterprises. They connected farmers with supplies from Montreal and invested in the local economy through land improvement and milling endeavours but were also subject to heavy government regulations. Those with wartime

¹⁴⁰ "Robert Nelles Account with Street & Butler in Niagara, 1785-1788" Item 17 Folder 6, transcript from the Robert Nelles fonds, Nelles Manor Museum, Grimsby, Ontario, Canada. Nelles received £30 for 100 bushels of corn sold in 1787 and purchased £32-3-9.5 worth of goods from Street & Butler between 1785-1788.

¹⁴¹ Ogden, *A tour through Upper and Lower Canada by a Citizen of the United States*, 211. As Ogden traveled eastward along the Grand River, he passed through villages of white and Indigenous peoples in alternation, the native groups being Mohawk, Cherokee, Tuscarora and Mississauga. He wrote: "The inhabitants have large quantities of Indian corn in every house a-drying, and suspended in the roofs, and every corner of them."

connections to Great Lakes trade were able to make it through this transition period and become profitable during the Loyalist era while many others failed.

Niagara merchants relied on the fur trade and trans-shipping economy as a bridge to a broader economy by the early 1800s. The portage remained a crucial transshipment point post-war, and traffic through the Niagara River did not slow down just because the revolution had ended. The fur trade was important to merchants at the portage as a revenue generator in Niagara's post-Revolutionary economy, and as the facilitator of relationships connecting fur trade merchants to other business opportunities in Niagara outside the fur trade.¹⁴² A handful of well-connected merchants in Niagara used the furs of the North West Company that came through the portage in the 1780s as a key part of their success.

The fur trade in British North America went through a period of transition when the American Revolution ended as officials in London evaluated how to continue making a profit off the lucrative market while ceding a large portion of territory to the new American colonies. Although the Niagara portage was a cheaper route for Michilimackinac's furs, the British did not like to send goods through Lake Erie for fear of merchant smuggling, especially rum, in and out of the United States.¹⁴³ During the war the majority of the furs that came to Montreal from Michilimackinac and the North West travelled through the Grand Portage, or the Ottawa River. To understand Niagara's financial role in the North American fur trade after the war, it is helpful to look at the number of furs exported from Quebec in the 1780s. Throughout the 1780s Quebec exported an annual average of 600,000 furs for the North West Company (NWC). Headquartered

¹⁴² Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 72.

¹⁴³ Aisling Macquarrie, "Running the Rivers: The North West Company and the Creation of a Global Enterprise, 1778-1821," PhD diss., (University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom, 2014) 125, accessed from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1780251758/>

in Montreal, NWC merchants estimated the fur trade for this decade to be valued at £200,000 each year.¹⁴⁴ Although the British lost its important western fur trading posts after the revolution, this did not negatively affect the fur trade because traders in America moved to Montreal and became involved in the NWC, continuing the south-west trade in Ohio and Mississippi.¹⁴⁵ As shown in Table 4, the fur trade grew more prosperous in the immediate post-war years. A core group of NWC merchants were able to navigate the transition better than the rival Hudson's Bay Company due to their decentralized nature unfettered by subsidiary houses in London.¹⁴⁶ The furs that came through Niagara belonged to partners in the North West trade; firms like Todd & McGill, Forsyth & Richardson and others benefitted from the fluidity that the NWC offered in this post-Revolutionary era, with less regulations affected by the war.¹⁴⁷

Table 4: Total Furs Exported by the North West Company from Quebec¹⁴⁸

1780	1781	1782	1783	1784	1785	1786	1787	1788	1789
619,324	533,182	401,743	506,121	757,937	683,661	694,845	854,842	661,419	589,650

Primary sources do not mention the number of furs that passed through the Niagara portage in this decade, but estimations can be made based on other evidence. John Inglis, a Montreal merchant who was a partner in the North West Company, stated that in the 1780s 50% of the total annual furs came to Quebec from Detroit & Michilimackinac, 30% came from the

¹⁴⁴ McDonnell, *Masters of Empire*, 316. This is equal to \$20,000,000 in today's dollars.

¹⁴⁵ David Hope, "Britain and the Fur Trade: Commerce and Consumers in the North-Atlantic World, 1783-1821", PhD diss., (Northumbria University, United Kingdom, 2016), 19, accessed from http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/31598/1/hope.david_phd.pdf.

¹⁴⁶ Macquarrie, "Running the Rivers," 49.

¹⁴⁷ Macquarrie, 49.

¹⁴⁸ 1780-82 figures found in Library and Archives Canada, Great Britain. Colonial Office 42 ("Q" Series), "Exports From Quebec in 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783" MG 11 microfilm reel C-11893, vol 24 p. 62, accessed from https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c11893/1305?r=0&s=1
1783-89 figures found in Gordon Charles Davidson, *The North West Company*, (Berkeley : University of California press, 1918,) 269-271. Accessed from <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008650047>

Lower Posts below the Ottawa River, and 20% came from the North West.¹⁴⁹ In his 1790 letter to Lord Grenville, President of the Board of Trade in Britain, Inglis said: “although there is no Indian Trade of consequence at Niagara, that post is the key of the communication to the principal trade of the Upper Countries of Canada.”¹⁵⁰

Merchants in Montreal estimated in 1788 that 40% of the furs coming into Quebec passed through the Niagara portage.¹⁵¹ Inglis corroborates this and broke the numbers down, stating that of the £100,000 that Detroit and Michilimackinac brought into Quebec, £40,000 worth of furs came from Detroit and £60,000 came from Michilimackinac. Inglis did not specify how much of the £60,000 from Michilimackinac came to Quebec via the Great Lakes route. A large portion from Michilimackinac most likely travelled via the Grand Portage, which was still the main route that the NWC used to bring furs into Montreal. We can safely say then that at least 20% of the country’s furs required passage through the Niagara Portage, but the percentage is likely even higher when including a portion of the furs from Michilimackinac.¹⁵² A safe estimate then might lie at about 30 per cent.

It is also important to note the goods that were sent from east to west to supply fur traders and Indigenous people who worked as fur trappers. The distribution of Indian trade licenses reveals the percentage of goods that went to the interior from Montreal through Niagara in the 1780s. The values fluctuate, with 45% of private trade goods going through the Niagara portage in 1785, down to 25% in 1787, and back up to 30% by 1790.¹⁵³ Again, this shows that Niagara

¹⁴⁹ Davidson, *The North West Company*, 272.

¹⁵⁰ Davidson, 272.

¹⁵¹ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 69.

¹⁵² Wilson, 69.

¹⁵³ Wilson, 69.

was a significant point in the country's fur trade economy. It was significant enough to elicit comment from Inglis about its relevance, without him referencing any other locations along the communication. Niagara, therefore, saw 20 to 40 per cent of the entire value of the North West fur trade in the 1780s.

The North West fur trade indirectly affected people in the Niagara Region. Few furs were being produced in the peninsula, but the portage played a valuable economic role. The local effects of the North West fur trade can be split into two groups; the direct effects on the handful of firms involved in portaging goods, and the indirect effects on the merchants stationed in Niagara. During the Revolution those operating the portage made a substantial profit off the British government in sending goods westward to supply the military garrisons and the Indian Department in their various posts on the Great Lakes and beyond. The food and ammunition sent to Detroit from Montreal were paid for by the British because of their on-going efforts to keep the Ohio Valley Indigenous peoples strong enough to resist American settlement. The Indian Department continued to spend large amounts of money on provisions and gifts the mid-1780s in Ohio country, Michilimackinac and the North West. Post-war trade in this sense was the product of diplomacy.

Throughout the war until 1786 the sole contractor for the British government was John Stedman who made £2500 per year on portaging military goods alone.¹⁵⁴ He retired in England and passed the business on to his nephew Philip in 1782. In the immediate postwar years, the number of furs going through Niagara to Quebec increased, and the amount of supplies and

¹⁵⁴ Library and Archives Canada, Haldimand Papers, R11231-0-1-E, "Letters from Officers commanding at Niagara, n.d, 1782-1784," MG 21, add. mss. 21761, microfilm reel H-1447, (B-101), page 48 accessed from: http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_h1447/47?r=0&s=1.

presents for the Indian Department remained relatively the same.¹⁵⁵ Thus, after the Revolution, the Niagara portage remained a crucial transshipment point from a British strategic viewpoint. The fact that Philip Stedman was given the sole contract plus a three-year extension meant that he continued to enjoy the profits of the portage and the higher yields of the North West Company for the remainder of the decade.

Forming a “Shopkeeper Aristocracy”

Despite the significant amount of furs and goods coming and going through the portage in the 1780s, Niagara merchants struggled in this immediate post-war era. The number of merchant firms receiving goods at Fort Niagara dropped from eighteen in 1783 to four in 1789.¹⁵⁶ Stedman’s monopolization of the Niagara portage was harmful to most other Niagara merchants as they were forced to pay high prices for storage, portaging and batteaving services. Stedman was also accused of “playing favourites” and charging some more than others to portage their goods.¹⁵⁷ The government saw that this monopoly was also hurting their own pockets. Governor General Haldimand wrote that: “Improper preferences have been given in transporting goods to Niagara and Detroit, by which means it is represented that the Trade of these countries have fallen into a few hands, to the great detriment of many honest men equally good subjects and to the additional expense of the Government being obliged to purchase what

¹⁵⁵ Library and Archives Canada, Haldimand Papers, R11231-0-1-E, “Letters from Officers commanding at Niagara, n.d, 1779-1783,” 402, accessed from: http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_h1447/1478?r=0&s=6 “In regard to presents and provisions, no apparent diminution or change must take place until Instructions for that purpose shall be transmitted to you.”

¹⁵⁶ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 23.

¹⁵⁷ Wilson, 31. In 1786 a group of Montreal merchants pleaded with the government: “We cannot pass unnoticed the carrying place of Niagara, which for so many years past has been in the possession of an Individual, and until last Spring, bore oppressively hard upon the Trade, by the very high rate Government allowed him to exact for Carriage of Merchants Goods...”

may be wanted for publick Service from a few Individuals probably for enormous prices...”¹⁵⁸

This letter changed nothing; ten years later the Niagara Portage contracts were still limited to the one firm run by Stedman.

In 1785 the British government granted private trade licences to 43 firms existing in the Great Lakes/Upper Country, but the number quickly dwindled.¹⁵⁹ In Niagara the excessive competition and high prices at the Portage coupled with a lack of up-front capital from pre-existing partners in Montreal caused most of the smaller firms to dissolve. Yet some merchants succeeded in this era and for a handful of well-connected merchants their role in the fur trade was a key part of their success. Niagara’s most prominent merchant, for example, had pre-existing involvement in private trade with the North West Company as well as a hand in the British military and Indian Department supply. Wilson states that “The key to his [Robert Hamilton’s] success, and that of his partner Richard Cartwright, was his involvement in receiving and forwarding for the Laurentian fur trade. This was his initial postwar economic activity and it sustained him through the 1780s.”¹⁶⁰ Hamilton and Cartwright used their partners Todd & McGill in Montreal to secure the trade post at Kingston and formed agreements with merchants in Detroit so that they could have full autonomy over shipping in Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. When the government allowed private merchant vessels on the lakes, Todd & McGill funded the construction of a ship that Hamilton and Cartwright used on Lake Ontario, thus giving them an even greater advantage in local receiving and forwarding. Even though using the

¹⁵⁸ Davidson, *The North West Company*, 258.

¹⁵⁹ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 209. These trade passes were for general merchant activity, returns indicating the number of men and boats used per company, and the total value of rum, wine, fusils (muskets), powder and shot sent westward.

¹⁶⁰ Wilson, 28.

portage was not cheap, Hamilton and Cartwright made so much money in the 1780s that they were able to pay back Todd & McGill almost all their debts.¹⁶¹

Hamilton also supplied the British troops in the forts around Niagara. At first he brought these goods from Kingston and Montreal, but once the region started producing surplus goods, he used local flour, corn, peas and other items to supply the nearby garrisons which was both cheaper for him and stimulated the local economy. The financial profits of the fur trade facilitated by his good relationships with British military administrators slowly aided in Hamilton's success. Part of the profits generated from receiving and forwarding fur trade goods at the portage was put back into the Niagara economy through his other ventures in Great Lakes shipping and army garrison supply. The work of the North West Company and their subsequent improvements in the fur trade right after the war bridged the inter-war gap for some merchants at Niagara, transitioning them from the profitable Revolutionary years into the agricultural and industrial markets of the 19th century.

The most prominent merchants involved in Niagara trade like Hamilton, Cartwright, William and James Crooks, Thomas Clark, Thomas and William Dickson, were born in Scotland. Their attitudes towards trade and settlement were different than the ex-Rangers in Niagara, their education and social connections helping create what Bruce Wilson calls a "Shopkeeper Aristocracy," since they dominated trade around the Great Lakes during the Revolutionary and Loyalist periods. Hamilton had an estate worth £200,000 when he died in 1809. These men saw the economic opportunities offered by Niagara already in the 1770s, but some of them also chose to settle in the region and raise their families there. Merchants gained a foothold in the domestic economy by investing their funds from the fur trade and lucrative

¹⁶¹ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 29.

military supply into enterprises like shop keeping, milling, and land speculation. Retail trade was an important way of including Niagara's rural settlements into the broader economy, and profit margins increased as more immigrants came to the region during this decade. Robert Hamilton ran mills and a merchant shop on the Twelve Mile Creek, purchased thousands of acres in Niagara, built a tannery and distillery, hired full-time employees to build barrels for his supply of pork for the garrisons, and continued to portage and tranship goods along the Niagara River in partnership with Cartwright in Kingston. He was headquartered in Queenston where he was a member of the Land Board.

The returns of the North West Company through Niagara in the 1780s brought Philip Stedman a significant amount of money, and he, like Hamilton, was able to invest some of it back into Niagara's local economy. Records from officials at Fort Niagara state that he employed local men to run the portage, owned a farm at the top of the Falls, and built a mill in Fort Erie in 1791.¹⁶² He used the profits made from portaging to fund his farming and milling enterprises, and was granted a portion of the Grand River in a large-scale lease, so the fur trade was an important part of his ability to make this successful transformation.¹⁶³

Just as farmers showed agency in their actions that violated government regulations, so did merchants spend much of the 1780s petitioning officials in Montreal, asking them to change the rules on private shipping, and to cancel the portage monopoly. Private shipping was not allowed on the Great Lakes during the revolution and these rules remained present in post-war years. The Navigation Acts enacted by British parliament in the 17th century restricted the

¹⁶² Cruikshank, *Notes on the history of the district of Niagara*, 50. Philip Stedman, Senr is listed as having built "A Saw Mill on Black Creek, about seven miles back of Fort Erie, in the year 1791."

¹⁶³ Hill, *The Clay We are Made Of*, 160. "The grant of the portion known as Block No. 1 to Philip Stedman in 1795 makes the following allowance for Brant as an individual: 'Reserving, nevertheless, out of and from the said Tract of land, full one thousand acres, and no more, to be pitched and laid out for the use, and at the election and choice of Captain Joseph Brant of the said Grand River, five hundred acres of which to be a pinery.'"

movement of vessels in BNA to only British ships carrying colonial goods, regulating trade in and out of their colonies. These restrictions continued after the revolution as the British government in Montreal feared American trade with merchants throughout the Great Lakes and the potential loss of fur trade revenue. After frequent petitioning from merchants, the British military slowly loosened their hold on private firms, and merchant companies like Todd & McGill and Forsyth & Richardson in Montreal with their partners in Kingston and Niagara constructed private vessels to be used on Lake Ontario, providing adequate private shipping for themselves by the mid-1790s.¹⁶⁴ The struggles between private merchants of the NWC and Quebec's colonial administrators demonstrate how people in the Niagara district and elsewhere were still controlled by a disconnected, imperially driven government. Without relationships with powerful people in Montreal, merchants in Niagara could not have successfully conducted their enterprises. Niagara locals could not afford to build boats strong enough to navigate the treacherous waters of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River until at least 1797, as they cost between £1600-1900.¹⁶⁵ Merchants in Niagara forged close material connections with its neighbouring ports in the Loyalist era, but were subsidized by their Montreal partners for initial capital investments like building ships and storehouses. While the 845-kilometre distance and the dangerous waters initially excluded Niagara from the Montreal markets, they received vital injections of private external funding and extended credit that allowed them to maintain a sense of independence within their enterprises and create a foundation for success in the 19th century.

In the first years of Loyalist settlement at Niagara, farmers formed economic connections with their neighbours and merchants, influenced by the region's escarpment and waterways. The

¹⁶⁴ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 30.

¹⁶⁵ Wilson, 30.

analytical functions of GIS technology reveal that these economic centres of activity such as milling, farming and portaging were largely shaped by the presence of natural resources. Quebec's colonial government provided Loyalists with limited aid in the form of land and cash, performing a paternal role that aided them through this transition period. Farmers and millers used merchant services to access materials from Montreal, but remained relatively isolated during this first decade. Trade and commerce at the Portage did not change very much from how it ran during the war, merchants capitalizing on its potential by acquiring influential political roles to better their economic motives. The fur trade at Niagara connected the local economy to the larger transatlantic trade system through the portage. Portaging was profitable enough to provide its merchants with the funds to put back into the local economy, providing a foundation for the trade networks that underpinned Niagara's future economy.

Chapter II- Exponential Growth and Market Instability (1790-1799)

In Niagara, the last decade before the 19th century saw growth in population, agriculture and industry, but was marked by a constant instability in terms of market prices, crop harvests and political shifts. By 1790, multiple waves of Loyalists had settled in the Niagara peninsula, home to approximately 4,000 settlers spread between the fifteen townships in Lincoln and Welland counties. The ceding of British forts along the Great Lakes and the formation of Upper Canada affected the economic structure of the Niagara region and how it functioned as a British colony within a larger transatlantic trade system. The disbanded Rangers that settled immediately after the Revolution had established their farms, and more of them were producing wheat, corn and other crops beyond subsistence. However, for new immigrants of the 1790s, life was difficult as they were given no government food or seed rations as had their predecessors. These so-called “Late Loyalists” arrived from the United States and made up at least three-fifth’s of the Upper Canadian population.¹⁶⁶ Those farmers focused on becoming established and building wealth for their families, connecting with external markets through local merchants in small ways. In this chapter, historical GIS displays the locations of people and their products, revealing how geography affected reciprocal labour, shared resources, and the accessibility of cash.

Administrative Changes

The major political shifts of the 1790s in Niagara affected its economy on a both domestic level and a broader scale. These political changes were the formation of local government through the 1791 creation of Upper Canada as well as the ceding of British forts along the Great Lakes to the United States in the 1796 Jay Treaty. The relationship between the overseas British government and the Loyalists in Niagara was less paternal by the 1790s as

¹⁶⁶ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 8 applies the specific date of 1791 as the year the “Late Loyalists” began arriving.

people by this time had received their war loss compensations and were establishing themselves on the new land. The town of Niagara in the north-eastern tip of the Niagara peninsula was renamed Newark and became Upper Canada's first capital, resolving many of the communication issues between settlers and administrators that existed in the previous decade.¹⁶⁷ Both the merchant and farming classes continued to display agency throughout this decade, working alongside local government representatives to make the region prosperous. Alternatively, Haudenosaunee migrants struggled adapting to life at the Grand River away from their original homelands.

The formation of Upper and Lower Canada in 1791 was the result of issues between Anglo-British merchants who objected to the commercial limitations in the Quebec Act and non-British subjects who benefited from the French civil law.¹⁶⁸ Upper Canada was governed by a bicameral legislature in its democratically-elected Legislative Assembly, and Lieutenant Governor-appointed Legislative Council. With this decision came the creation of local government and consequent changes to Niagara's economy. Representative government gave farmers a voice in provincial legislation, and merchants used their influence to receive appointments and lobby their own interests in matters like private shipping, portaging and land ownership. It also allowed people in each township to appoint path masters, constables, and other administrative offices.¹⁶⁹ Niagara now had a closer connection to colonial authorities and access to their most recent information from outside the province.

¹⁶⁷ Newark remained the capital of Upper Canada from 1792-1797, after which the capital was moved to York, now called Toronto, where it was considered less vulnerable to American attacks.

¹⁶⁸ Elizabeth Mancke, "Early Modern Imperial Governance and the Origins of Canadian Political Culture", *Canadian Journal of Political Science* (1999) 32 no. 1, p. 15.

¹⁶⁹ Ogden, *A tour through Upper and Lower Canada by a Citizen of the United States*, 107.

John Graves Simcoe was the first Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada and foundational to the establishment of a British administration in Niagara. Simcoe had an imperial focus; to facilitate the creation of an Upper Canada that displayed British values. He was interested in facilitating trade towards the interior regions of the continent in the ultimate goal of colonial expansion, exemplified in his official correspondence from 1789-1793 which reveals more frequent communication with merchants and military leaders in Detroit than with those in Quebec or Kingston.¹⁷⁰ Immediately after he was sworn into office and settled with his family in Niagara, he began planning his trip to Detroit to scope out its level of fortification.

Establishing networks of trade and communication to the west, Simcoe also managed the sensitive relationships between British officials, Loyalist immigrants, Indigenous peoples, and their new American neighbours. As he immersed himself in his duties, Simcoe eventually became less focused on constructing political ideologies and more focused on helping the province achieve economic prosperity.¹⁷¹ His reasoning behind this was that Upper Canada would be seen by British leaders at Westminster as commercially valuable to the imperial trade system if it became a thriving centre of production of wheat and flour. He advocated for farmer and merchant causes, aligned himself with Canadian mercantilist ideals and pushed the importance of the fur trade to leaders in Britain. At the same time, he hoped that economic prosperity would encourage the citizens of Upper Canada to form connections with the imperial economy to continue building their own wealth.¹⁷² However, domestic production never

¹⁷⁰ E. A. Cruikshank, and Andrew F. Hunter, *The Correspondence of the Honourable Peter Russell : With Allied Documents Relating to His Administration of the Government of Upper Canada during the Official Term of Lieut. - Governor J. G. Simcoe, While on Leave of Absence, Volume Two*, (Toronto: The Ontario Historical Society, 1932).

¹⁷¹ S. J. R. Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers : Ontario Society and Politics, 1791-1896* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 52.

¹⁷² Clarke, *Land, Power, and Economics on the Frontier of Upper Canada*, 172.

achieved the levels Simcoe envisioned. Economic development was stifled by a deficiency of labour, geographic limitations, and power struggles between colonial leaders.

Colonial leaders deliberately gave large tracts of land to certain Loyalists and left empty lots for the Crown and clergy to establish control over the labouring classes by keeping large groups of landless labourers from gathering too closely to one another. These politically-driven decisions deterred economic development in Niagara, since cheap labour was a requirement for heightened agricultural production and large swathes of uncleared land slowed road construction.

Government Engagement in Domestic Markets

As seen in Chapter 1, the farming and merchant classes in Niagara initially relied on the markets supplied by the military posts along the lower Great Lakes. But by the 1790s they had more options available in choosing where they could sell their surplus goods. They frequently traded flour and other agricultural goods to American merchants living across the Niagara River, something that troubled British purchasing agents. These agents felt that Niagara farmers were demanding prices for their goods that were far too high, especially during the spike in 1795-1799 that almost doubled the price of wheat and flour from the first half of the decade.¹⁷³ Farmers in the late 1790s held back on selling flour to military purchasing agents like John McGill because they knew they could get a better price from the Americans.¹⁷⁴ Yet, McGill maintained that the provincial government tried to maintain their monopoly on Niagara's flour and wheat market by flooding the Upper Canadian markets with cheap flour from Quebec and forcing prices down

¹⁷³ Cruikshank & Hunter, *The Correspondence of the Honourable Peter Russell*, 127. The price suggested by Niagara farmers is not specified in the Russell Papers, but in that same month, John McGill mentioned receiving a proposal from Detroit farmers of thirty-one shillings and six pence Canada Currency per cwt in barrels, and that he felt this was outrageously high. That summer, McGill ultimately paid only 20 shillings per cwt, cask included.

¹⁷⁴ Cruikshank & Hunter, 126. Their excuse for not selling was that they anticipated a war between France and the United States, which would induce people to move from the States to Upper Canada, meaning extra demand and consequently they could raise the price.

because farmers feared they would not be able to sell at all if there was a surplus of flour available.¹⁷⁵ This tactic was successful, showing that although farmers displayed elements of individual agency, the government controlled much of the domestic flour market. By the province giving so much purchasing control to administrations like the commissary general in Montreal, farmers felt they were not getting enough of a chance to prosper or enough choice in how they made economic decisions. Merchants along the Great Lakes commented on the frustrations of the Loyalist farmers in Upper Canada. One of John Askin's correspondents reported such frustrations on the part of Loyalist farmers all along the Great Lakes.¹⁷⁶ While the people needed the military market to grow their farms and build wealth, they wanted a more open market economy like they were used to in their lives in the Mohawk Valley.

Another way in which the colonial administration promoted their imperial goals for the province was by injecting more valuable products into the agrarian economy. There was a push for farmers to grow hemp and flax because they were costly in Britain, but they were difficult to grow in Canada and were never highly produced.¹⁷⁷ They encouraged pork and beef sales as well, but in this venture too they were not as productive as leaders had hoped. In Kingston, merchant Richard Cartwright sold only enough pork and beef for local consumption, but not enough to fulfill the British army's request to produce it for the soldiers in the West Indies.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Cruikshank & Hunter, *The Correspondence of the Hon. Peter Russell*, 127. McGill suggested Quebec's military secretary James Green order "a few hundred Barrels or even a few Bateau loads of Flour" to be sent to Kingston from the Commissary General in Quebec, convinced "it would have a very good effect not only in preventing a rise in the price of this Article, but likewise induce the Farmer to bring forward his Store in proper time."

¹⁷⁶ Letter from D. W. Smith to John Askin in *The John Askin Papers Vol. II: 1796–1820*. ed. Milo M. Quaife. (Detroit: Detroit Library Commission, 1928), accessed from the Internet Archive, 501, <https://archive.org/details/JohnAskinPapersVolume1/page/n521/mode/2up>

¹⁷⁷ Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ontario 1613-1880*, 21. Jones quotes 19th c. American botanist William H. Brewer who said that the experiments of special crops in the colonial period mostly failed. MacFadyen's *Flax Americana* also provides insight into the history of flax and linen in Canada.

¹⁷⁸ Response to the "Statement of the quantities of different articles wanted in the year 1803 for victualing the troops in the West Indies, Bermuda, and Bahamas." In Richard Cartwright copied letterbooks, Archives of Ontario.

Government Relationships with the Haudenosaunee

The colonial government's relationship with Indigenous peoples in and around Niagara had also evolved by the 1790s. In the previous decade the administration focused on preventing rebellion as a result of postwar dissatisfaction. By the 1790s the Haudenosaunee's dissatisfaction remained as they had no sense of precise delineations of territory following the 1764 Treaty of Niagara, the 1781 Niagara Purchase, the 1784 Haldimand Proclamation, and the 1792 Between the Lakes Treaty. Yet, political leaders in Montreal continued to utilize their potential as allies in case of another war; as a barrier between them and the United States. In 1794, the Indian Department supplied Indigenous peoples around the Great Lakes with guns and ammunition in case of a "commencement of hostilities."¹⁷⁹ They provided goods and presents to the Haudenosaunee throughout the 1790s, some Indian Department officers complaining that those on the Grand River received more supplies than their Indigenous allies in the Ohio River Valley who were fighting encroachment of Americans onto their own territory.¹⁸⁰ The British supported this resistance because it meant the land would not fall into the hands of their increasingly powerful southern neighbours. Land purchases and trade with the Mississauga people were also considered unequal. Niagara merchant Robert Hamilton even wrote in 1792 that the sale of the Niagara peninsula was unfair towards Indigenous peoples, the sum paid for the land being far less than its value.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ M. A. FitzGibbon, *The Jarvis Letters*, 36. "If the Americans dare fight us, I think we are sure of a war with them. We have lately received orders here to supply the Indians with every kind of war-like store. -March 28th, 1794."

¹⁸⁰ In 1790, the colonial government spent over £23,000 on presents for Indigenous communities around the Great Lakes including needles, tobacco, blankets and beaver traps. "Articles wanting to compleat [sic] the supplies of Indian presents for the Upper Posts and visiting Indians for the Years 1790 & 1791" found in Library and Archives Canada, Great Britain. Colonial Office 42 ("Q" Series), "Miscellaneous Letters and Papers, 1790" MG 11 microfilm reel C-11902, vol 49 p. 45 accessed from https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/occihm.lac_reel_c11902/61?r=0&s=1

¹⁸¹ Ernest A. Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe: With Allied Documents Relating to his Administration of the Government of Upper Canada*, vol 1, (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923), 98, accessed from the Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/correspondenceof01simc/>

The colonial administrations during the Loyalist Era did not fully respect Indigenous people as human beings, but rather saw them as tools of empire or impediments to progress. While Niagara's Indigenous people were an integral part of the Loyalist era economy, their lives and contributions were portrayed in a variety of ways. For British travelers and individuals that had only brief interactions with them, Indigenous people were tokenized. They were written about like "artifacts" of a primitive society, their bodies, clothing, and habits described in detail.¹⁸² Historian Kate Fullagar in her book *Savage Visit* argues that British people were "fascinated with the so-called savages for most of the eighteenth century."¹⁸³ Government sources of men like Governor Simcoe and Peter Russell represented the Haudenosaunee and the Mississaugas as threatening the British balance of power in Upper Canada; negotiating land sovereignty, attempted placation, and interfering in their relationships with white Loyalists and other Indigenous groups. The Russell administration were especially hostile towards Joseph Brant and John Norton in the early 1800s as they pushed for the right to sell their lands on the Grand River under the terms of the Haldimand Proclamation, obstructing their petitions to officials in London.¹⁸⁴ Alternatively, white farmers and merchants in Niagara mention Indigenous people in their ledgers and accounts books in more transactional terms, recording sales and purchases, labour and services, and their roles as messengers.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Elizabeth Simcoe, David Ogden, Isaac Weld, Patrick Campbell, and John Clark wrote in this way. Campbell describes a night of dancing at the Grand River in honour of his arrival as "curious and remarkable." Campbell, *Travels in the interior inhabited parts of North America: in the years 1791 and 1792*, 190-212.

¹⁸³ Kate Fullagar, *Savage Visit* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 3.

¹⁸⁴ Cecelia Morgan, *Travellers through Empire: Indigenous Voyages from Early Canada*, (McGill-Queen's Press, 2017), 24.

¹⁸⁵ The Nelles family of Grimsby who also owned land on the Grand River were especially close with Joseph Brant, sending their children to the same school and trading goods with one another.

Milling Developments

In the 1790s, farmers in Niagara continued to build their farms and grow despite the uncertainties of early settler life. Although markets were still limited and they relied on merchants as a connection to external economies, they made strategic economic choices with the crops they grew and businesses they built. Wheat was not a staple product, but it was their main saleable commodity and so they employed very little crop rotation to make profits as quickly as possible. Niagara's commercial networks were also expanding domestically. The diverse group of people in Niagara's farming class employed multiple forms of labour, and subsequent waves of Loyalism throughout the 1790s added to the population's diversity.

Farmers became increasingly involved in small-scale milling operations; by 1792, there were 14 sawmills and 10 gristmills in Niagara.¹⁸⁶ The illustration of the Secord mills in the 1780s suggests that choices surrounding milling were made based on proximity, and this evidence extends into the 1790s. As seen in the GIS, the number of people that came to the King's Mills from more than ten miles away had decreased by the 1790s. A few outliers suggest that kinship connections also played a role in business choices. Despite new mills appearing in each Niagara township by the mid 1790s, some customers from as far as forty kilometres away continued to use the King's Mills.

As the GIS reveals, in the previous decade, 49 percent of the customers that used the King's mills lived more than 10 miles away.¹⁸⁷ In the 1790s, only 14 percent of the customers that used the King's mills lived more than 10 miles away.¹⁸⁸ Many settlers chose to use the new

¹⁸⁶ Ernest Cruikshank, *Notes on the history of the district of Niagara, 1791-1793*, 49.

¹⁸⁷ Turn on GIS layer entitled "King's Mill 10-mile buffer". Turn on GIS layers entitled "All Niagara Mills 1783-92" and "Flour Sales 1785-89" again.

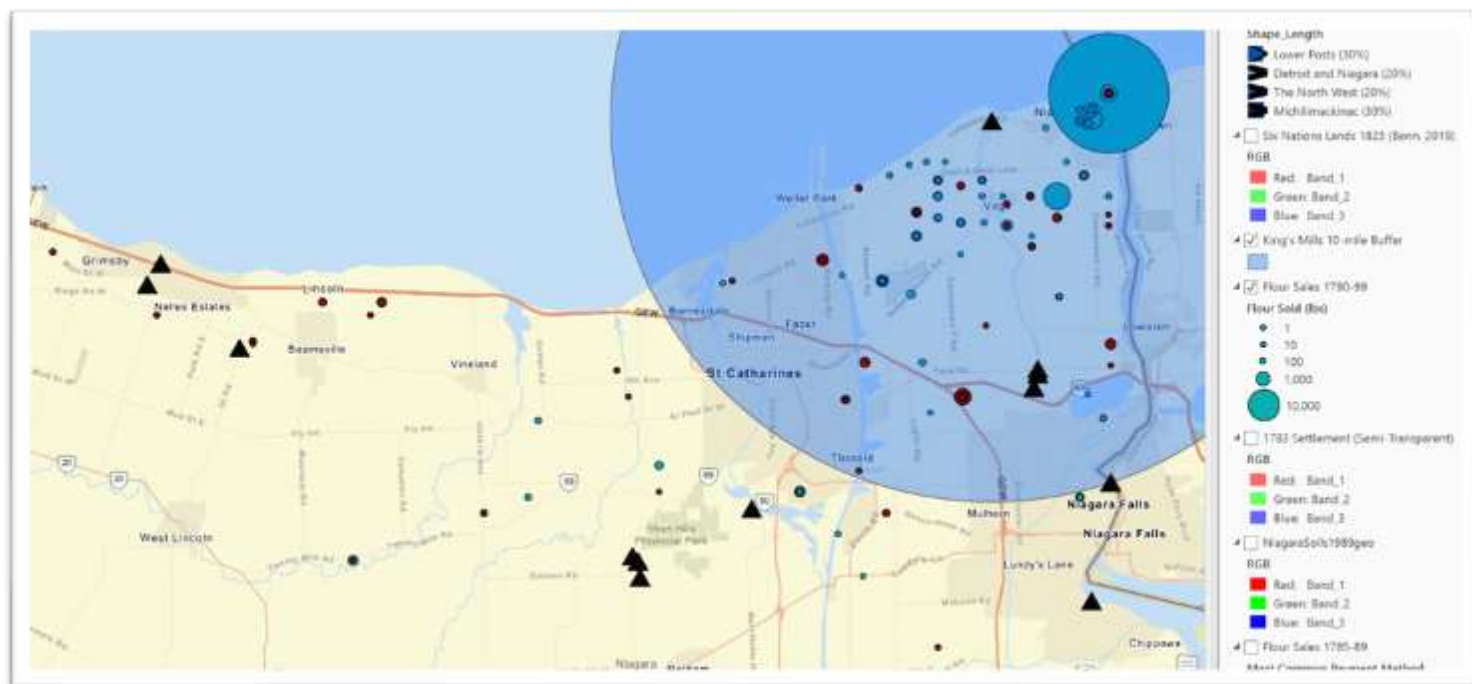
¹⁸⁸ Keep the "King's Mill 10-mile buffer" on, and also turn on GIS layer entitled "Flour Sales 1790-99."

mills that appeared in various Niagara townships. Using GIS allows for the creation of datasets like in Table 5, illustrating how proximity played a large role in determining where people met to manufacture raw materials and trade goods. These choices in turn influenced the development of social networks around those main economic centres.

Table 5: King's Grist Mill Customer Locations

	1780s	1790s	1800s
Farmer lived less than 10 miles away from King's Mills	51%	86%	89%
Farmer lived more than 10 miles away from King's Mills	49%	14%	11%

Figure 5: Milling Developments by the 1790s



Such accounts do not reveal the motivations behind why people chose to make the trek to the Four Mile Creek instead of milling closer to home. Bruce Wilson argues that kinship ties in Niagara dominated the trade system; that is, that generational connections of family or friendship encouraged trade more so than neighbourly ones.¹⁸⁹ Servos did have a lot of customers at the

¹⁸⁹ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 65, “In Upper Canada’s pioneer society, a heavy reliance on family connections to facilitate entrance into, and the conduct of, local enterprises was not unusual.”

King's Mills who were, like him, originally from Tryon county. Some were members of the military like Benjamin Hardison, William Hare, John Stoner, Isaac Swayze, Peter Ball and John Stoffel and the Indian Department like Capt. John Powell. More probable is an economic motivation, and perhaps the King's Mills produced better quality outputs than other mills. An even more likely reason for using the King's Mills was the fact that finished flour was often immediately sold to a nearby merchant like Robert Hamilton or William & James Crooks, and thus it was more convenient to get their products milled within Niagara township because it needed to be brought to the Niagara River anyway, for sale to merchants. The King's Mill account with Francis Crooks shows Niagara flour sales for "Garrison use" from 1791-93, most likely crossing over the river and then consumed by the British soldiers at Fort Niagara.¹⁹⁰

Farmers contributed to specific industries that would better their economic situation. Many chose to build mills, often in partnership with a family member and occasionally with a close neighbour. By this time, other industries such as tanneries, distilleries, potasheries, cideries, merchant shops and blacksmith shops were also more common. The King's Mills account books list the jobs associated with certain customers in the 1790s like brickmaker, doctor, blacksmith, tanner, miller, shoemaker, merchant, schoolmaster, tavern-keeper, salt-boiler and cooper. Still, Niagara was not equipped with every artisan trade, and some services required extended travel to acquire. For example, there was only one glass-maker in the entire peninsula in 1796.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Only small amounts of various goods like cornmeal, buckwheat, bran, beef, peas and corn were listed as sold "for garrison use", but one account from April 5, 1793 mentions a bulk sale of 69 barrels of flour. "Account with Francis Crooks" in *Personal Account Book 1779-1803, Daniel Servos Records 1779-1826. MS 538. Archives of Ontario.*

¹⁹¹ Traveler Isaac Weld stopped at a log house in Fort Erie in 1796, the glass missing from all three windows. He wrote "It was not likely that these windows would be speedily repaired, for no glazier was to be met with nearer than Newark, thirty-six miles distant." In Isaac Weld, *Travels through the States of North America, and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada*, 141.

Farmers in Niagara also familiarized themselves with news of what was happening outside of the region, using that information to make choices that were beneficial to their own farms and businesses. Historian Jane Errington argues that because of their previous and continuing relationships with the United States, Upper Canadians tended to pay attention to the American news more so than British.¹⁹² Her analysis of the *Kingston Gazette* from 1810-1815 reveals that 75% of its news originated from the United States. Although this is later than the scope of this chapter, American news was important already in the 1790s. Even members of the Executive Council expressed their dissatisfaction with the prominence of American news in Niagara's newspaper the *Upper Canada Gazette* throughout the 1790s.¹⁹³

While Atlantic ports like Halifax received mostly British news, Niagara's geography and better access to New York made it more connected to American news sources. This distance often caused merchants to feel isolated from the transatlantic commercial networks, despite their decades of involvement in trade around the Great Lakes. Cartwright wrote in 1797 that "every Day Events happen that are of Importance to all the World, while in this remote Corner we are of importance to No Body but ourselves."¹⁹⁴

Land Ownership in the 1790s

Farmers also continued to strategically purchase land. By the 1790s, the first Niagara settlers commonly passed down parcels of land to family members or sold them. Since many of the disbanded Rangers were given land for their military service, they had a lot of capital at their disposal, and many were able to become wealthy through the strategic purchase and sale of land.

¹⁹² Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada*, 38.

¹⁹³ Brian Tobin and Elizabeth Hulse, *The Upper Canada Gazette and Its Printers, 1793-1849* (Toronto: The Library, 1993), 11

¹⁹⁴ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 20.

Wilson observes that merchants and business owners in Niagara kept the land that they owned around the edges of the peninsula, but sold the grants they owned in the interior as “collateral or payment for goods.”¹⁹⁵ Land speculators were disliked by the government because the land they bought remained unsettled and uncultivated and therefore useless to local production.

The politics of land had become complex and contentious. Between 1789—1794, Land Boards were formed within the province to better organize the system of granting land to newcomers, passing an Order in Council that guaranteed 200 acres of land to the children of Loyalists.¹⁹⁶ Large parcels of land were bought by speculators, often from the merchant class, who until 1799 benefitted from the law that allowed creditors to seize land as payment from their debtors.¹⁹⁷ As original grantees moved west or passed away, issues arose concerning what to do with the land that had been passed on to heirs, devisees, and assignees. This led to the formation of the Heir and Devisees Commission in 1797.¹⁹⁸ Composed of men like Hamilton, Cartwright and Askin, the committee clearly benefitted merchant interests.¹⁹⁹ The commissioners heard people’s claims based on the land board certificates that had been issued between 1789-94, criticized by provincial administrators for holding a loose definition of “proof” of land ownership. By the late 1790s there was almost no more land for sale in the Niagara, Home, and Western districts.²⁰⁰ In 1793, the King’s Mill began a dozen new accounts with people that had

¹⁹⁵ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 95.

¹⁹⁶ Lillian F Gates, *Land Policies of Upper Canada*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 20.

¹⁹⁷ Wilson, 149.

¹⁹⁸ Gates, 56. These commissioners were “empowered to hear and determine claims to land brought forward by the original nominees of the Crown, their heirs, devisees, or assignees.”

¹⁹⁹ Clarke, *Land, Power, and Economics on the Frontier of Upper Canada*, 164.

²⁰⁰ Gates, 68.

just moved into Niagara, most of them with familial ties to people in the region.²⁰¹ They did not stay for long because there was no farmland left in Niagara township, and they eventually chose permanent residence further west in Burlington Bay, Norfolk, and York. Niagara's local elites blamed the long-term negative effects of land speculation on the provincial government favouring these merchants and other regional administrators by offering them such influential positions. Upper Canadian settlers produced an array of certificates that they felt entitled them to certain pieces of land, and thus a second commission was begun in 1802. These commissioners heard claims based on various types of certificates, including "Haldimand's certificates, magistrates' certificates, certificates of the Surveyor General's Department, Treasury tickets, and orders-in-council."²⁰² In 1806, Lieutenant-Governor Francis Gore inherited a disorganized system that had been treated with numerous temporary solutions by his predecessors.

These developments provide insight into why being a "Loyalist" was important to so many Canadians. This title was not merely a symbol of status; it was legally binding terminology that held long-term repercussions. Upon his appointment as Lieutenant Governor in 1806, Francis Gore issued a proclamation that allowed more people to add their names to the official list of United Empire Loyalists, since many still claimed ownership of lands in the province and thus their children were entitled to the 200 acres that had been promised over ten years prior.²⁰³ Requiring formal identification by government authorities, lists of official "Loyalists" were sent by local magistrates in the 1790s to the Executive Council.

²⁰¹ A group of families from New Brunswick came to Niagara in 1793 with the surnames Kendrick, Long, Willson Sinclair, Lawrence, Osborn, and Cobgon. There were also Captain Aeneas Shaw and Doctor John Gamble from New Brunswick who came to Niagara in 1793 after re-joining the Queen's Rangers following a visit from Governor Simcoe on his way to Upper Canada.

²⁰² Gates, *Land Policies of Upper Canada*, 59.

²⁰³ Gates, 79.

The 1790s Wheat Economy

Loyalist farmers in Niagara during the Loyalist era engaged in the strategy of “wheat mining” or growing multiple cash crops in succession to meet their short-term needs. Jarvis’ comments in 1792 show most farmers could not afford to employ composite farming techniques, writing that “All kinds of corn looks more luxuriant here than I ever saw it before. Wheat the 8th and 9th crop on the same ground without manure is a man's height and not less than 40 bushels to the acre.”²⁰⁴ Isaac Weld also commented in 1791 that “the ground is no sooner cleared of one crop, than it may be, and often is immediately plowed down and sown with another, and so on alternately without using any sort of manure. The richness of the soil and salubrity of the air make all sorts of stimulus totally unnecessary.”²⁰⁵ John Ogden said that the costs of living in Niagara were “trifling” and “when one reflects on the temperate climate, rich soil, and other natural advantages of this interior country, you anticipate a great population in a short time.”²⁰⁶

Despite it being the most popular crop grown in the 1790s, wheat in Niagara was not a staple product because it was not exported in bulk to Montreal. It stayed local to the settlement and a few military posts around Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. Production remained at a subsistence level for most farmers, but a handful of higher-ranking soldiers with Black slaves produced surpluses to sell to external markets. This pattern remained constant for the new waves of Loyalists arriving in the 1790s.²⁰⁷ The domestic economy received a boost from these new

²⁰⁴ M. A. FitzGibbon, *The Jarvis Letters*, 28, “Corn” in the 18th century often meant grain. In this case, Jarvis could have been referring to wheat and other cereal crops.

²⁰⁵ Isaac Weld, *Travels through the States of North America, and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada*, 172.

²⁰⁶ Ogden, *A tour through Upper and Lower Canada by a Citizen of the United States*, 111.

²⁰⁷ Post-master General of British North America George Heriot remarked in 1806 that immigrant families in Niagara arrived from the United States because of the good soil, low taxation, and “the mildness of the government.” George Heriot, *Travels through the Canadas*, (London: R. Phillips, 1807), 151, accessed from Heritage Canadiana: <https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.35682/10?r=0&s=2>

waves of Loyalist immigration, which increased local production and the people brought along wealth, goods, and knowledge from their homelands which they invested locally.

Subsistence and commercial agriculture were complimentary forces, not mutually exclusive. By the 1790s, the larger farms that had been established for over a decade were producing flour in higher quantities, but most farmers grew a wide variety of crops on a small scale. Niagara's farmers grew crops for their own families and traded necessities amongst neighbours, but also participated in external markets for both immediate profit to build strategic, long-term capital. Historian Daniel Vickers' arguments about colonial American economic culture are similar, saying that farming families valued propertied independence, rather than having a lack of interest in dealing for profit.²⁰⁸ In Niagara, while people were mainly focused on their own farm production, they also invested labour and capital into preserving this household independence through enterprises like cider making, sharecropping and leasing, and shoemaking. The flour market prices were unstable, and farmers were subject to massive fluctuations that affected annual sales to the British military. This was one of the main reasons why farmers did not limit themselves to one cash crop, but rather grew multiple crops while involving themselves in other forms of labour whether farm-related or non-agricultural. Historiographical arguments about the moral economy fit into this, Niagara's people choosing to protect themselves through diversification or as S. A. Smith says in his study of 19th century Russian peasants, seeking to "minimise risks to their subsistence rather than to maximise opportunities to make profit."²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Daniel Vickers. "Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (January 1, 1990): 3–29.

²⁰⁹ S. A. Smith (2011) 'MORAL ECONOMY' AND PEASANT REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA: 1861–1918, *Revolutionary Russia*, 24:2, 143. doi: [10.1080/09546545.2011.620357](https://doi.org/10.1080/09546545.2011.620357) Smith shows how agricultural improvers encouraged small-scale farmers to innovate, but such actions required risk.

The Servos accounts reflect such production patterns. Using data collected from the Servos Accounts, Goring journals and Beam ledger, it is clear that in places like Newark, wheat was still not being produced above a subsistence level.

Table 6: King's Grist Mill Annual Figures

Year	No. of Customers	Flour Sold (cwt)	Average Price per Cwt (s)	Value of Flour Sold (£)
1786	11	19.1	63.0	60.1
1787	20	27.5	36.6	50.3
1788	22	30.8	34.2	52.7
1789	18	20.5	41.7	42.7
1790	22	22.4	40.2	45.1
1791	30	63.7	32.0	101.9
1792	27	69.9	26.5	92.6
1793	31	65.0	29.0	94.3
1794	44	30.1	29.7	59.5

* The Servos sources are missing information from mid-1794 to 1799, so the figures reflect only the first half of the 1790s.

The 1787 census make it easier to understand the production happening in Niagara, but the 1790s do not contain such a census. Instead, information must be pieced together from multiple sources to gather an idea of the population and farm production at this time. As shown in Table 6, the Servos accounts saw a rise in customers to the grist mill by the early 1790s. The number of customers tripled, flour sales almost quadrupled, the price of flour each year went down and then back up, and the total value of flour sold annually increased by 50 percent. More people were farming in Niagara by the 1790s, but they produced similar amounts of flour each year instead of growing exponentially, thus the fairly steady customer to production ratio. This indicates that the average white farmer needed at least a decade to establish their farms before they could start producing and selling market surpluses. Isaac Horten's accounts provide a good example of these static production numbers over the years, as he had 355lbs of flour milled by

Servos in 1787, 394lbs in 1791, and 241lbs in 1794.²¹⁰ However, the average price column shows that the price of flour fluctuated in that period, starting high and hitting a low from 1792-95, but then rising again. Thus, although Servos milled triple the production from a decade earlier, it was not even worth twice as much in value.

Diversified Interests

Although most farmers had short-term goals for their primary grain crops, they invested in longer-term strategies elsewhere. They grew basic crops like peas, hay, buckwheat, oats, apples and potatoes in small quantities, and more obscure crops like hemp and flax to create more valuable commodities like cider, whiskey, pork, beef, and linens. Certain crops were sacrificed in the pursuit of making more money later. For example, British garrisons purchased peas from Upper Canadian settlements, but farmers would also save their surpluses to use as pig feed, since pork was more valuable. Similarly, whiskey was worth more than wheat and flour. Hemp was another product that was expensive in Britain, and government officials were “determined to give the Culture of that article every Support in their power.”²¹¹ The provincial government sent agents into Upper Canada and assigned lands to them for the purpose of teaching people how to cultivate the crop.²¹² In 1804, the government passed an act to encourage hemp growth, allotting £1000 towards the purchase of hemp from Upper Canadian farmers.²¹³

²¹⁰ Accounts with Isaac Horten, “Account Book Volume I 1785-1795”. Nos. 50, 69, 98, 114, 139. *Daniel Servos Records 1779-1826*. MS 538. Archives of Ontario.

²¹¹ Letter from Robert Nichol to John Askin in *The John Askin Papers Vol. II*, 353. Nichol in Niagara sent a book that taught how to grow and cultivate hemp to Askin who was planning to plant it in the fields near Detroit in 1801.

²¹² Hugh Gray, *Letters from Canada, Written During a Residence There in the Years 1806, 1807, and 1808* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1809), 205.

²¹³ E. A. Cruikshank, *Records of Niagara, 1805-1811*, (Niagara Historical Society, 1930), 28, accessed from <http://nhsm.ca/media/NHS42.pdf>. “An Act had been passed by the Provincial Parliament for the ‘encouragement of the growth and cultivation of Hemp within this Province, and the exportation thereof,’ and appropriating one thousand pounds for the purchase of ‘merchantable hemp’, grown in the province at the price of forty pounds per ton by commissioners to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor.

However, hemp was difficult to grow in Queenston, and this venture was not ultimately as successful as they had hoped.²¹⁴ Many farmers did not want to grow it because it was so labour intensive and they could not afford to grow risky crops with little else in their storehouses. Thus, hemp and flax were not mass produced until later in the 19th century.²¹⁵

Another example of choosing to manufacture products that were worth more than cash crops like wheat and corn was in the making of whiskey. Farmers in Niagara distilled whiskey because although the price of wheat and corn fluctuated each year, whiskey was always in demand throughout the Great Lakes; used in the place of cash to pay local labourers and British soldiers.²¹⁶ Hamilton even wrote in 1798 that he could not send extra whiskey to Detroit because he had hardly enough for his own stores in Niagara.²¹⁷ It was also used to pay Indigenous labourers and was sold to the state for use in diplomatic exchanges. Farmers distilled their poorest quality grains into whiskey and sold it to local merchants who paid more money for it than they might for wheat or flour.²¹⁸ They in turn sold it to their contacts in Montreal, the garrisons, the fur trade, and American merchants. In 1798 and 1799, purchasing agent John McGill wrote that there was a large quantity of wheat available in Niagara, but that the farmers'

²¹⁴ Charles Askin to John Askin, *The John Askin Papers Vol. II*, 596. Askin's son Charles wrote in 1808 that hemp cultivation in Queenston was going poorly. "The English farmers here do not seem to understand raising and curing of it, so well as I would have thought they did, and as the Canadians do not understand it at all, it will not be easy to get them to attempt it... The hemp of this Country is generally believed to be equal to that of Russia, but its always spoiled in curing. If we could supply the Mother Country with that article, what an advantage it would be to both it, & ourselves."

²¹⁵ Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ontario 1613-1880*, 21.

²¹⁶ Cruikshank & Hunter, *The Correspondence of the Honourable Peter Russell Vol 3*, 113 McGill said that for Niagara farmers, whiskey was "an article for which I am sorry to find he can at all times meet with a sure and ready market." The Nelles accounts reveal whiskey and flour as two of the main exports from the Forty during the 1790s.

²¹⁷ Letter from Robert Hamilton to John Askin, *The John Askin Papers Vol. II*, 148.

²¹⁸ Michael Rittenhouse Ledger, 1794-1811, accessed in March, 2018 from the Town of Lincoln Museum and Cultural Centre in Beamsville, Ontario. Rittenhouse often paid people for their labour with whiskey.

prices were too high. Because the farmers distilled so much of their grain it left a smaller amount available for sale to the military markets. Higher demand for wheat meant they could charge higher prices.²¹⁹ Accounts from Clinton miller Jacob Beam on the Thirty Mile Creek and Robert Nelles at the Forty show their investment in domestic whiskey-making, selling thousands of gallons to William and James Crooks each year.²²⁰ By 1804, Niagara was producing the most whiskey out of the eight districts of Upper Canada, home to fifty-four stills and producing thirty-two percent of the whiskey made in the entire province.²²¹

Growing fruit was a way of producing higher value products like apple cider and peach brandy.²²² Cider production was a common pursuit in Niagara and around the Great Lakes, the best method for preserving apples after a large harvest. Parts of the Niagara region have a climate and soil conducive to growing fruits; the primary fruit grown during the Loyalist era being the apple.²²³ Gourlay said in 1811 that Niagara was one of its main producers in Upper

²¹⁹ Letter from John McGill to James Green in Cruikshank & Hunter, *The Correspondence of the Honourable Peter Russell Vol 2, 100*. "The Quantity of Wheat in the settlement I am informed is considerable, and were it not for the stills, which consumes much of this article, there is great reason to believe, that the supplies required for the use of Government might be obtained upon more reasonable terms."

²²⁰ *Jacob Beam Ledger, 1790-1826*. Accessed October 9, 2019 from The Friend's of Lincoln's History archives in Vineland, Ontario. Beam sold 3,598 gallons to William and James Crooks in one year. *Robert Nelles fonds*, Nelles Manor Museum. In the autumn of 1804, the Crooks brothers bought from Nelles 1,000 gallons of whiskey @ 4.5 shillings per gallon, worth approximately £225. The whiskey could not be less than 32 or 33 proof, or enough to "sink the barrel." In 1806 James Crooks wrote to Henry Nelles while Robert was away in York attending to political duties at the Legislature. He asked Henry for 500 gallons of whiskey at the price of Robert's choice, specifying once again that the proof not be under 32.

²²¹ "Account of stills in the Province of Upper Canada for the year ending the 5th of April," Richard Cartwright copied letterbooks, 213. This 1804 provincial assessment estimates a total 159,096 gallons of whiskey produced in Upper Canada that year, 50,910 gallons produced in Niagara alone.

²²² "Account Book Volume II 1785-1795." Account no. 10 with John McNab. *Daniel Servos Records 1779-1826*. MS 538. Archives of Ontario.

²²³ Gourlay, *Statistical account of Upper Canada*, 153. "The various species of this most useful of fruits grow in all the districts; but most plentifully around Niagara, and thence westward to the Detroit, where they have been cultivated with emulation and success. No country in the world exceeds those parts of the province in this particular"

Canada, but Elizabeth Simcoe already mentions their prominence in Newark in 1792.²²⁴ In Queenston, Goring also planted twenty apple trees in 1786, and fifty-seven more by the spring of 1792.²²⁵ Peaches also grew well in Niagara because of the microclimate below the escarpment, but not other parts of Upper Canada. Peach brandy was a specialty alcohol produced in Niagara by merchants like Robert Hamilton, who had a peach orchard of his own in Queenston.²²⁶

Potash is another manufactured product that appeared in Niagara during the 1790s. Land clearing resulted in an abundance of leftover ash, and farmers sold them to be further developed into potash or pearlash, which was then exported from Niagara and sent overseas to dye fabrics or make glass, pottery, china and soap. Scarce records show that there were 68 barrels of potash exported from the Midland district in 1794, and 670 barrels exported from all of Upper Canada in 1797, but sources do not show if any of this came from Niagara.²²⁷ Servos eventually manufactured potash, but did not record its bulk shipments to Montreal markets until 1799.²²⁸

The inconsistent nature of the harvests and market prices in the 1790s forced farmers in Niagara to diversify their interests in these ways, since there was safety in diversity. In 1793, Richard Cartwright in Kingston wrote that merchant Richard Beasley at the Head-of-the-Lake owed him £1650 Halifax Currency, and that he needed to pay his debts because the growing

²²⁴ “The diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe, wife of the first lieutenant-governor of the province of Upper Canada, 1792-6,” ed. J. Ross Robertson, (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1911), 136-139, accessed through Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/diaryofmrsjohngr00simcuoft/page/318/mode/2up>.

²²⁵ LAC, Memorandum from April 3, 1792, Francis Goring fonds [textual record].

²²⁶ Letter from Robert Hamilton to John Askin, *The John Askin Papers Vol. II*, 447. “We also made forty Barrels of Cyder; & what I believe you have not yet thought of, 250 Gallons peach Brandy from my own Orchard.”

²²⁷ McCalla, *Planting the Province*, 251.

²²⁸ “Memorandum of Potash sent to Montreal, October 24th, 1799” in *Personal Account Book 1779-1803, Daniel Servos Records 1779-1826. MS 538. Archives of Ontario*. In 1799, Servos began selling potash to William and James Crooks who were partners in both of his potasheries at the Four Mile Creek and the Fifteen Mile Falls. On October 24th they shipped seven barrels containing a total of 2494lbs of potash to Montreal.

season was so unpredictable.²²⁹ Goring's journals exemplify these issues; having had a good harvest of thirty bushels of potatoes in 1791, he planted double for the following year. However, on September 19th he recorded "A Severe Frost which kill'd my Buck wheat before it was ripe, and potatoe vines & Tobacco." Two months later he harvested only thirty-six bushels of potatoes.²³⁰ This is average production when compared with some of the outputs from a decade earlier. In the Niagara census of 1782, twelve out of sixteen families produced between ten and forty bushels of potatoes, the families of Peter and John Secord each producing seventy bushels.²³¹ Using GIS, one can determine the role that soil had in farming success. In this case, it provides insight that suggests how in Niagara township, proximity to manufacturing and shipping points, and labour capacity had a larger impact on agricultural production than soil type. Goring lived on silty clay soil which is not ideal for potato growth, but the GIS suggests that soil type did not affect the production of early crops like potatoes, grown for their simplicity and nutritional value. A few farms along the Niagara River had fine, sandy loam soil, but the farming families living on those 100-acre plots did not produce substantial surpluses.²³²

²²⁹ "Letter from Richard Cartwright to Richard Beasley, Sept 24, 1793," Richard Cartwright original letterbook, Cartwright Family fonds F24-2, Archives of Ontario. Cartwright wrote that "the weather of the seasons are not under our control, yet on these depend the fruitful or [illegible] harvest, and if the Farmer loses his crop, what resource has he for the payment of his debt?" Two days later he wrote to his business partner Robert Hamilton in Niagara that the credit extended to Beasley at the Head-of-the-Lake, now known as Burlington, was "a very considerable sum in these times and in the disposal of which I have entreated him to give as little credit as possible in which I dare say you will second me."

²³⁰ Entry from September 19, 1792. LAC, Memorandum from April 3, 1792, Francis Goring fonds [textual record].

²³¹ "A Survey of the Settlement at Niagara, 25th August, 1782" in Cruikshank, *Ten Years of The Colony of Niagara 1780 – 1790* (Welland: Niagara Historical Society, 1908), 41. Accessed from Internet Archive <https://archive.org/details/tenyearsofcolony1718crui/mode/2up>

²³² Carnochan, *Names only but much more*, 1. In 1782, Michael Showers produced 15 bushels, George Fields 30, and George Stewart 30. **Turn on GIS layers entitled "Niagara Soils 1989" and "1783 Settlement (Semi-Transparent).**" Notice how these three farms were located on a sandy patch near Queenston, indicated in beige.

The Sharing Economy and Domestic Labour

Household production was one of the pillars of Niagara's Loyalist era economy, labour inputs affected by stratifications of class, gender, and ethnicity. Female labour of all classes was primarily centred around the household. On the farm, female responsibilities included preparing meals, caring for the children, washing and mending clothes, gardening vegetables and medicinal herbs, and tending to the farm animals, as well as assisting the men with their shops or farm work as the family's main revenue-stream. An example of this is shown in the Goring accounts as both Francis and Lucy Goring helped harvest wheat and buckwheat at the Lambert and Collard farms in 1791, Francis working for 8.75 days and Lucy for 5.75 days. Francis threshed and cleaned the wheat, and worked three days more than his wife. Lucy appears elsewhere in the accounts, selling butchered fowl and eggs from the farm in town along with a few beets, trading them for salt and linens and to pay off their merchant debt.²³³ Francis recorded planting corn, wheat, buckwheat, potatoes and turnips, but never beets. This means that the beets were Lucy's priority in her own garden apart from the field, and a separate method of contributing to the family's income. In addition to being key members of the farming family production unit, women in Niagara also owned and sold land, subject to the same rewards of two hundred acres as the children of Loyalists.

Errington writes that women also often aided their neighbours with similar tasks through an informal exchange of services in a community, which is one of the main reasons why women's work is not seen as prominently in our sources.²³⁴ Despite their textual invisibility, women's work had socio-economic value, and the wide variety of activities as wives, mothers,

²³³ Library and Archives Canada, *Francis Goring fonds*.

²³⁴ Jane Errington, *Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790-1840*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 83.

sisters, and good neighbours helped shape their communities. The occasional appearance of women in rural Niagara accounts re-enforce Errington's assertions, such as the work done for Clinton miller and farmer Jacob Beam by Clinton resident Hannah McGaw.²³⁵ It was common at this time for women in Niagara to travel to other homes and stay there for a few weeks to spin and sew. Spinning was a necessary skill since finished materials imported from Montreal were expensive. Fanny Secord spun wool at the Goring residence in 1792, staying at their home for twelve days, and McGaw on another occasion spun wool at the Beam's for twenty-five days.²³⁶ Because labour was so expensive, some argued that the time and money it took to make clothes in Niagara were not worth the effort. Gourlay wrote: "I have often heard my neighbours assert that it was full as cheap to go to the store and buy English broad cloth as to make homespun, for this obvious reason, that by the time it went through the hands of the carder, the spinner, the weaver, the fuller and the dyer, it cost him more per yard than the English, and generally of inferior quality."²³⁷ This shows the importance of wives and daughters fulfilling such labour within the household, by transforming such raw goods into higher value commodities.²³⁸

Women were usually mentioned in account books and ledgers only in connection to the head male in the family, sometimes mentioned by name, but also usually written as "Mrs." or "Widow." Single women appeared more often. For example, Duncan Murray was an entrepreneur in Niagara entitled to two thousand acres of land and was in the process of building

²³⁵ Jacob Beam Ledger, 039, December 1804 - April, 1805. She earned three dollars in a month for her unspecified labour. Accounts books are not always specific about the type and amount of labour performed, so it is difficult to determine what monthly wages were based upon. McGaw could have only worked part time. She could have been doing spinning work in this instance because later that year she spun wool for 3.5 weeks at a dollar per week.

²³⁶ Jacob Beam Ledger, 039, December 1804 - April, 1805 and Francis Goring fonds, entry from June 18, 1792.

²³⁷ Robert Gourlay, *Statistical account of Upper Canada*, 439.

²³⁸ Jackson, *St. Catharines Ontario: Its Early Years*, 74. The Dittrick family provides another example as the father grew flax and the mother sewed clothes from it, using the spinning wheel that her husband built.

a mill on the Twelve Mile Creek when he died in 1787. His wife Isabella inherited his assets and appeared on a number of land surveys, land petitions, and had a long account with Daniel Servos.²³⁹ Widowed women ran their farms with their children, like the Pickett family who lived just west of Servos in Niagara. “Widow Pickard,” as she was frequently referred to, held a long account with Servos. Her sons Benjamin and William eventually took over many of the duties she performed, and her account was renamed “Widow Pickard and Sons.” Sometimes, women’s work can be inferred in family accounts when credits like spinning wool and weaving linen are listed alongside credits like cutting wheat or fixing a wagon.²⁴⁰

Upper class Niagara women’s lives were also primarily centred around the household, but in a different way. Historian Cecelia Morgan argues that white women in Upper Canada involved themselves in the public sphere by the 19th century, femininity defined in temperance parades and church bazaars as well as in their homes.²⁴¹ This was not yet the case for most women in Niagara as its rural society was not developed enough to allow their inclusion in such activities. Yet, some upper class women like Elizabeth Simcoe and Catherine Hamilton attended high society parties in Niagara in the 1790s, playing chess and card games at night with the wives of Governor Simcoe’s friends and colleagues.²⁴² Genteel women married to merchants and administrators in Niagara were very different from Loyalist women who farmed for a living. The two classes rarely interacted and Elizabeth Simcoe valued Niagara’s working women in terms of

²³⁹ “Account no. 10 with Isabella Murray,” in “Account Book Volume II 1799,” *Daniel Servos Records 1779-1826*. MS 538. She purchased items like coffee, tobacco, tea, slippers, mugs and a coffee pot in 1797-98.

²⁴⁰ “Account no. 117 with Jesse Holly in “Account Book Volume III 1798-1816,” *Daniel Servos Records 1779-1826*. MS 538. Archives of Ontario. Holly was credited for his “work in the mill” and for carding 96lbs. of wool.

²⁴¹ Cecelia Morgan, *Public Men and Virtuous Women: The Gendered Languages of Religion and Politics in Upper Canada, 1791-1850*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. Cecelia Morgan). Morgan’s gendered history shows a broader development of power dynamics within a white, colonial, middle class.

²⁴² *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 151.

what they could do for her. For example, she lamented the lack of servants, saying that “The worst of people do you a favour if they merely wash dishes for twenty shillings a month. The sergent’s wife I took with me [to Navy Hall] I am happy to keep her in my house, for she is a very steady person, remarkably fond of the children, and attentive to them, and a good worker.”²⁴³ In Niagara’s members lists for the town’s library, churches, agricultural society, law society, and Freemasons, women are rarely listed as members before the War of 1812.²⁴⁴ Even by the mid-1800s very few Upper Canadian women had the lifestyle of someone like Catherine Hamilton or Elizabeth Simcoe.²⁴⁵

It was common for people in Niagara to share labour as a resource in the Loyalist era, and reciprocal work became one of the pillars of the Loyalist era economy. In Niagara, farmers could clear a few acres for a crop of wheat or corn, but when working alone and often interrupted by other tasks on the farm the first parts cleared could already be overgrown with weeds by the time he was ready to begin planting. McCalla argues that the most important product in Upper Canada was the farm itself, as cleared land and buildings made the land worth five times as much as uncleared land.²⁴⁶ Goring’s notebooks show that he and Lucy had reciprocal work relationships with their neighbours Collard and Lambert. They helped one another mostly with planting and harvesting crops cancelling out each others’ debts through mutual labour.²⁴⁷

²⁴³ *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 151.

²⁴⁴ Carnochan, *Names only but much more*, (Niagara Historical Society, 1915), accessed from http://nhsm.ca/media/NHS27_000.pdf

²⁴⁵ Jane Errington, *Working Women in Upper Canada*, 6.

²⁴⁶ McCalla, *Planting the Province*, 438.

²⁴⁷ *Francis Goring fonds*, entries from July 23 - August 2, 1792, On July 23, 1792, Goring worked one day harvesting corn for Cornelius Lambert. From July 25-27, Goring worked harvesting corn for Elijah Collard, and on July 30th & August 2nd, both Lambert and Collard helped Goring harvest his wheat crop.

One example of reciprocal labour that became especially common in the 19th century was the work bee; a mutual sharing of labour and resources. A barn raising is a common example of a work bee, also known as a frolic. Men would pool their labour and different skillsets to build a barn in a short amount of time, and women contributed to the activity by preparing food for everyone, showing how work bees were both essential in building physical resources, but also in forming social connections between neighbours. Niagara's Loyalists engaged in work bees, Jesse Page holding a "Frolick clearing land" on December 1st, 1791, and Elias Smith holding the same a few days later.²⁴⁸

In addition to shared work, it was common for people in Niagara to share resources such as pasturelands and work animals. Rather than allowing livestock to forage in the forest, pasturing them prevented predator attack and was also more nutritious, producing better quality animals and animal by-products. Historian Bettye Hobbs Pruitt writes that in colonial Massachusetts, "farms were often incomplete – lacking one or more elements essential to subsistence."²⁴⁹ She lists a few main necessities for a self-sufficient farm to exist, including pasturelands for livestock and oxen or horses as work animals.²⁵⁰ Unlike grain farming, setting aside a clear space and seeding it with clover or timothy seed for livestock to graze was not a venture that yielded immediate profits. For this reason, many farmers in Niagara during the 1790s shared pasturelands. The accounts of farmers like Servos, Beam and Hamilton show frequent reference to the sharing of this resource, used to pay a debt in the place of cash or

²⁴⁸ *Francis Goring fonds*, entries from December 1 and December 6, 1791.

²⁴⁹ Pruitt, "Self-Sufficiency and the Agricultural Economy of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," 338.

²⁵⁰ Pruitt, 338, "Consider the criteria for a truly self-sufficient farm. At the most basic level, production of the family's food would require both livestock and land: pigs or cattle for meat; a cow for dairy; oxen or horses for draught; tillage to produce grain; pasture and hay land to support the animals. Lacking any of these elements, the farm would be dependent in some degree on the external economy."

labour, and lasting for periods from one month to an entire season.²⁵¹ In addition, Goring between 1791-94 used the oxen teams of Elijah Collard and Cornelius Lambert each time he needed to harrow the ground for seeding a crop. He worked closely with Collard & Lambert, exchanging labour like clearing land, plowing the ground, planting seed, cutting, hauling and stacking wheat, and harvesting other crops like corn, hay, buckwheat and turnips.

The Evolution of Exchange

By the 1790s, Niagara's Loyalists traded higher value, manufactured goods for sale to local millers and merchants. In the King's Mill accounts from the 1780s it was more common for farmers to trade raw goods like wheat, corn and potatoes for milling services. However, after the first 5-10 years of settlement, people began to trade more frequently using manufactured items like bricks, shingles, nails, iron works, shoes, clothing, tallow and butter. Table 7 shows such changes in Niagara's society, the amount of cash being used as payment decreasing and the labour percentage remaining the same.

Table 7: Forms of Payment in the King's Mill Accounts

	Cash	Labour/Services	Raw Goods	Manufactured Goods
1780s	36.5%	36.5%	15.0%	12.0%
1790s	9.5%	36.5%	12.7%	41.3%

Cash was scarce for the average farmer. A GIS analysis of payment methods at the King's Mills shows that cash was the most common form of payment for many living in the centre Town of Newark during the 1790s.²⁵² Those using cash were mostly merchants like Samuel Street and James Clark, and upper-class men with previously established wealth like William Jarvis and Dr. Robert Kerr. Niagara experienced substantial infrastructural growth

²⁵¹ Doyle, "Loyalism, Patronage, and Enterprise," 187.

²⁵² **Turn on the two "Payment Method" GIS layers for the 1780s and 1790s.**

during this decade and by the late 1790s there were seventy houses in Newark including a jail, almost all of them having been built within the previous five years.²⁵³ The slave-owning, top wheat producers like Peter TenBroek also paid their accounts in cash. The connections that merchants and other elite members of Niagara society had to external markets gave them easier access to cash. Middle to lower class farmers occasionally paid their debts with cash but they often did not pay it themselves. Instead, these payments were made by merchants and wealthier individuals. For example, farmer George Upper's account was "paid by Mr. Street cash." Farmer John Hill also had his account "Paid by Mr. Hamelton." Molly Johnson's account similarly was "Paid by Robert Kerr" and Widow Guthrie's account was "Paid by Mr. Bradt". These entries suggest another level of exchange happening between Niagara's citizens, and the importance of the King's Mills as a common denominator and point of connection for people in the community. Debts could also be paid by the family member or acquaintance of an indebted person. However, these transactions became complicated when involving a third or fourth party, such as when Herman Hosteder owed Servos for buying items from his merchant shop at the Four Mile Creek. He paid his debt on March 19, 1798 by sending a man named Jonathan Jones who owed Hosteder himself a debt, with four dozen eggs.²⁵⁴ This constant cycle of debits and credits placed on people's accounts formed an interconnected web of economic activity.

Connecting payment methods to the land allows for an analysis of how location affected engagement in trade. One's proximity to the mills impacted how people paid their debts; those living further away most commonly offered reciprocal labour in exchange for goods. They would

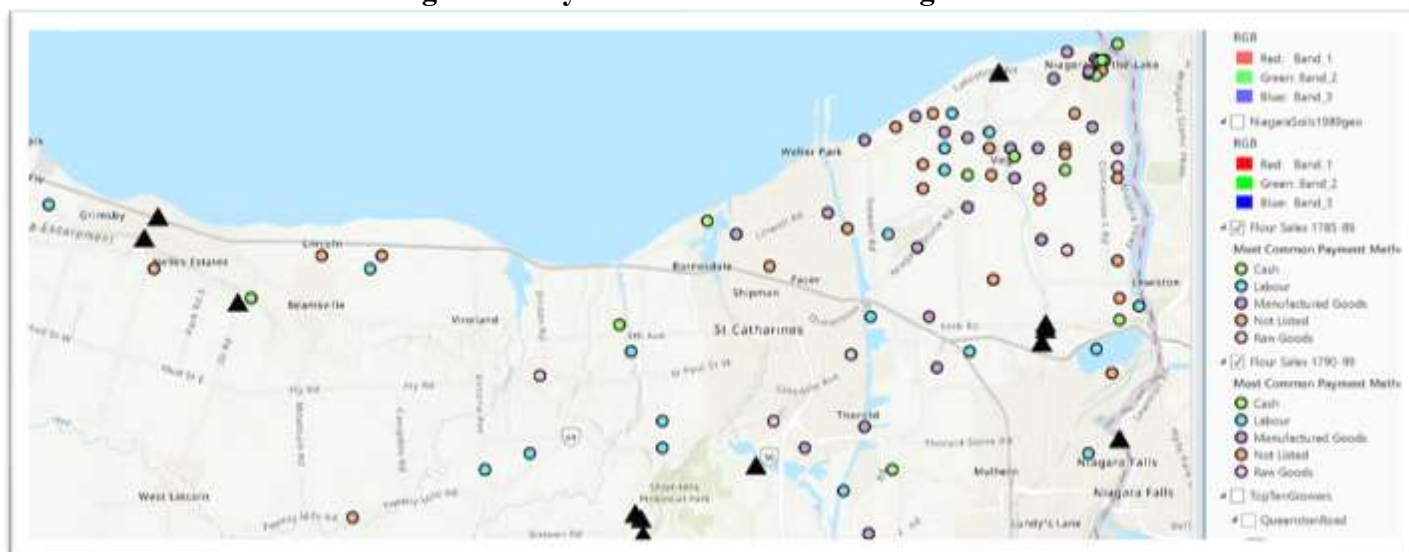
²⁵³ Isaac Weld, *Travels through the States of North America, and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada*, 90. Local administrators and merchants lived in new wooden houses in town, separate from the farmers who lived in their assigned lots throughout the region.

²⁵⁴ "Account no. 24 with Herman Hosteter" in "Account Book Volume II 1799," *Daniel Servos Records 1779-1826*. MS 538. Archives of Ontario.

work two or three days harvesting wheat, cutting logs, or spinning thread often staying overnight to complete their tasks. This made payment and exchange a time-consuming process, taking attention away from their own farms and giving it to Servos, slowing down potential development of their own farmland. Those living closer to the King's Mills used cash and labour as well, but they also sold Servos raw and manufactured goods. This suggests that people living in townships farther away from the Niagara River held onto the goods at their own farms that were required for subsistence, or traded them with their neighbours. They may have also been producing crops and manufactured goods at a slower rate due to their distance from merchants and millers in Niagara, Grantham, and Stamford townships, and the consequent reduced access to resources and markets.

The GIS displays how as time went on, this pattern shifted. Those living more than ten miles away continued to pay for goods with labour, but more began to pay with raw and manufactured goods. This suggests that those living far away had developed their farms to the point where they were now producing goods at a surplus and could afford to part with these items. They had generated the resources and capital required for growing and transforming goods, such as cleared land, farm tools and animals. Returning to McCalla's argument that local production for household consumption was just as valid to the economy as were exports, these payment visualizations display the importance of producing raw and manufactured goods for people living in the interior parts of the peninsula.

Figure 6: Payment Methods at the King's Mills



Black Labour

In the 1780s, Black labour was essential for farms to produce market surpluses of wheat. Governor Simcoe voiced a strong disapproval of slavery in Upper Canada and under his leadership the *Act Against Slavery* was passed in 1793 at Navy Hall on the shores of the Niagara River, making it so that Black children born in Upper Canada were free as well as any future Black refugees. The Act placed limits of future of slavery in the new colony, but existing slaves remained the property of their masters, ensuring that a slave population would continue to exist for at least two more decades. Children already living in Upper Canada were to become free at age 25, but the approximately 300 slaves already living in the province were to remain enslaved until death.²⁵⁵ Thus, despite the passing of this act limiting slavery, there were no immediate repercussions for slave-holding Niagara farmers.

²⁵⁵ Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 51. At least six out of the sixteen members of the Legislative Assembly owned slaves, and the only way this bill was passed was because they reached a compromise that did not ban slavery outright. Taylor calls this an example of Simcoe's devotion to "rational liberty" in contrast with the Americans who "celebrated an almost unlimited freedom for white men, including the right to hold Blacks in slavery."

This Act was not well-received by those in the community who relied on slave labour for their commercial success. Black labour was essential to surplus producers in Niagara's Loyalist-era economy. The top wheat producing farms from 1787 continued to grow throughout the 1790s, most of whom employed slave labour. The two key determinants that unified Niagara's top wheat producers was this access to free labour as well as proximity to manufacturing and sale points in the flour supply chain. Factors such as previous wealth and personal connections could have also enhanced their commercial success in Niagara. Yet, while those from the Mohawk Valley like the TenBroeck, Servos and Crysler families were previously wealthy, they could not rely on their established assets like mills, barns and commercial connections once in Niagara.²⁵⁶ These families and individuals came from a variety of backgrounds in the thirteen colonies, the majority by the mid-1790s having received a comparatively moderate amount of land for their service in Butler's Rangers or the Indian Department.²⁵⁷

These surplus producing farmers from the 1780s accumulated capital throughout the 1790s, aided by the profits from their wheat mining operations, which were enhanced through the use of free labour. However, there is a second important factor indicated in the geospatial patterns that shaped flour production at this time. One's proximity to other points in the flour supply chain also affected production. The GIS layer containing the location of these top ten wheat growers reveals how they all lived near the main transportation routes in Niagara,

²⁵⁶ Peter TenBroeck married into the prominent Herkimer family of the Mohawk Valley, while Daniel Servos and Adam Crysler inherited generational assets. In their revolutionary war loss claims, Servos and Crysler listed their families' losses being worth £2151-11-0 and £1301-4-0 respectively. A list of Revolutionary War claims for losses have been compiled by Robert R. Mutrie at: <https://sites.google.com/site/niagarasettlers/revolutionary-war-claims>

²⁵⁷ In this case, a "moderate amount" means anywhere between 200-900 acres per head of family. According to a summary of Niagara land grants completed in 1792 by Deputy Surveyor Augustus Jones, Captains and Lieutenants had received between 500-2000 acres, non-commissioned officers 300-500 acres, and rank & file or volunteer soldiers between 0-300 acres. These records are found in: Archives of Ontario. Crown Lands Department, RG 1, C-I-p, Vol 3., "A Return by Augustus Jones, Deputy Surveyor, of Lands Granted," Nassau, July 2, 1792. Accessed from: <https://dr.library.brocku.ca/bitstream/handle/10464/9246/Volume4Edited.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>.

established along main geographical features like waterways and the escarpment.²⁵⁸ When viewing the “Top Ten Wheat Producers” layer, notice in particular the proximity of Phelps, Street, Chisholm, D. Secord, and Chrysler to the Secord mills on the Four Mile Creek and the central shipping point at the Landing in Queenston. This small stretch of land along the escarpment between the Four Mile Creek and the Niagara River was a valuable transportation route for many of the township’s top growers. In fact, a petition from a group of thirty Niagara farmers for improvements to this section was signed in 1792, indicating the importance of this roadway.²⁵⁹

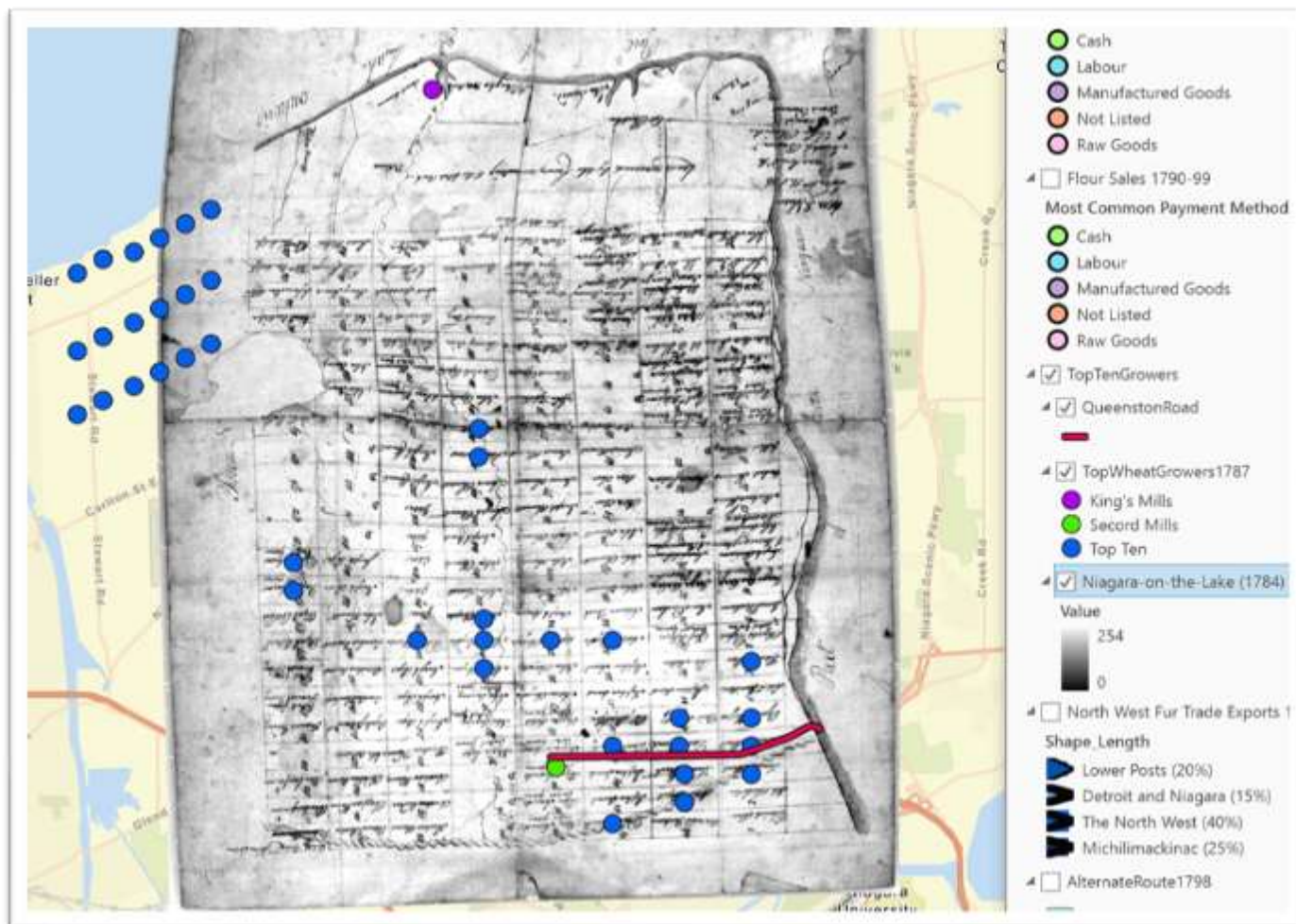
Thus, one’s geographical connection to the flour supply chain as well as their access to free labour affected agricultural production. Families with multiple grown sons, single brothers or elderly fathers on adjacent property achieved higher rates of production. Yet, the 1787 census shows that most of the top producers did not have large families to aid with surplus production. Instead, as Table 8 shows, they relied on the free labour of their enslaved Black workers. Labour in Niagara during the 1790s was still expensive; it cost between four to eight shillings per day to harvest wheat.²⁶⁰ This placed slave-owners in a category few others could reach.

²⁵⁸ Turn on GIS layers entitled “Queenston Road” and “Top Wheat Growers 1787” and turn on “Niagara-on-the-Lake (1784)” again.

²⁵⁹ *The Memorial of the Inhabitants living near the foot of the Mountain on Nov 20, 1792* was a petition from the residents at the foot of the escarpment in Niagara Township for a road from Queenston to the Four Mile Creek. A list of Upper Canada Land Petitions can be found online, transcribed by Robert R. Mutrie at: <https://sites.google.com/site/niagarasettlers/upper-canada-land-petitions/petitions-s/petitions-seager-to-secord>

²⁶⁰ In account no. 114 with Isaac Horten Servos charges 8 shillings per day and in account no. 127 with John Stoffel he charges 4 shillings per day. “Account Book Volume I 1785-1795”. *Daniel Servos Records 1779-1826*. MS 538. Archives of Ontario.

Figure 7: Supply Chain Proximity & Wheat Production



261 Table 8: Top Ten Niagara Wheat Producers' Family Statistics 1787

Head of Family	Males Above 16	Males Under 16	Females in Family	Males above 60	Black Slaves	Acres of Land Cleared	Winter Grain Sowed 1786
E. Phelps			2		3	112	60
D. Secord			4		1	25	60
S. Street					3	100	42
P. TenBroeck	2	1	5		2	100	42
C. MacNab*			2			60	30
J. Secord			1			60	30
C. Stephens	3		2			40	26
D. Servos*		2	2			50	25
J. Chisholm		1	1			39	25
A. Crysler*		1	2			30	24

* The slaves owned by these individuals are not listed in this census but appear in other sources.

261 These figures were copied from "Hamilton's note to Quebec RE settlers."

These surplus producing farmers from the 1780s accumulated capital throughout the 1790s, aided by the profits from their wheat mining operations. By the 1800s, the assets and status belonging to these families were rooted in the Black labour-driven surplus flour production of the 1780s. Loyalists were entitled to funds from their war loss claims as well as army half pay, but this money was not immediately available.²⁶² For example, Daniel Servos was promised £533 in war loss claims, but did not receive them until 1788. Until he could acquire some of this cash and begin investing it in building small-scale enterprises, free slave labour was one of the factors that increased his potential for commercial success in post-war Niagara.

Most of these individuals achieved some form of economic or political success. By 1812, David Secord was a miller, shopkeeper, owned three houses and a blacksmith shop. He was also commissioned a Justice of the Peace in 1796 and elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1809.²⁶³ The assets of the Servos farm were worth over £2000 by the mid-19th century, Daniel dying in 1803 and the farming and milling operations continued by his son John Dease Servos.²⁶⁴ Samuel Street was one of Niagara's most influential merchants, starting his own mills on the Fifteen Mile Creek in 1789, and establishing a home farm in Willoughby township near Niagara Falls.²⁶⁵ While prior wealth and kinship or commercial connections were important aspects of economic success in the Loyalist era, census data and GIS tools reveal slave labour and geographic location as two key aspects of wealth accumulation in the initial years of post-war settlement.

²⁶² Doyle, "Loyalism, Patronage, and Enterprise," 222.

²⁶³ Bruce G. Wilson, "SECORD, DAVID," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 25, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/secord_david_7E.html

²⁶⁴ Doyle, "Loyalism, Patronage, and Enterprise," 262.

²⁶⁵ In collaboration with Bruce A. Parker, "STREET, SAMUEL (1753-1815)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 25, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/street_samuel_1753_1815_5E.html.

Indigenous Labour

Indigenous labour was also a key part of Niagara's economic development in the 1790s. The Mississauga people were a large producer of fish in Niagara, catching them from canoes along the shores of Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, the Niagara River, and various creeks and ponds. Fish fed local families, stored over the winter in salted barrels, but they also fed soldiers at the Niagara garrisons and were sold into the Montreal market after 1800.²⁶⁶ The British took advantage of the natural supply too, some soldiers of the 5th Regiment at Fort Niagara catching "100 sturgeon (6 ft long) and 600 whitefish in a day in nets."²⁶⁷ Fishing could have become a lucrative market for the white Loyalists if attempted, but there was not enough labour available to begin such a venture.²⁶⁸ Instead, fishing remained mainly a Mississauga operation, since they rarely grew crops but rather lived off the land by fishing and hunting.²⁶⁹ Haudenosaunee and Mississauga people were also hired to kill fowl and other game for white Loyalists.²⁷⁰ In addition to fishing and hunting, some Haudenosaunee and Mississauga people played a valuable communication role in Niagara as messengers.²⁷¹ For example, Elizabeth Simcoe mentioned in

²⁶⁶ Ogden, *A tour through Upper and Lower Canada by a Citizen of the United States*, 98. Ogden said in 1799 that new settlers would store six or more barrels of fish each winter.

²⁶⁷ J. Ross Robertson ed., "The diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe," 139.

²⁶⁸ Isaac Weld, *Travels through the States of North America, and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada*, 86-87. Weld said that salmon fishing in the St. Lawrence could be a profitable market, suggesting boldly that it could even be more profitable than the fur trade.

²⁶⁹ Patrick Campbell, *Travels in the interior inhabited parts of North America: in the years 1791 and 1792*, 182. "The Mississauga Nation of Indians rarely cultivate any land, and wholly subsist by fishing and hunting, at which they are more expert than their neighbours, with whom they frequently as well as with the white inhabitants, barter fish and venison for other provisions."

²⁷⁰ "Memoirs of Colonel John Clark," 162. "My father employed an Indian hunter to supply his table with wild fowl." Also J. Ross Robertson ed., "The diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe," 161. "They brought with them an Indian to build huts and shoot partridges and ducks."

²⁷¹ A journal entry on February 5th, 1793 by Major E. B. Littlehales in Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 288, "Upon arriving at the 40 Mile Creek, an express arrived from Kingston, brought by two Mississaga Indians."

1793 that “Jacob and Aaron (Mohawks) came express from Detroit in eight days; they walked 56 miles this day.” She was referring to Jacob Lewis and Mohawk chief Aaron Hill.

The Indigenous populations in Niagara’s surrounding areas injected themselves into the white Loyalist economy in these particular ways, but at the same time kept distant. Mississauga groups camped along the northeast shores of Lake Ontario and passed through the peninsula throughout the 1790s; parties of Seneca were commonly spotted near Fort Erie. The Seneca lived on the east side of the Niagara River along Buffalo Creek, but would often cross over to hunt squirrels.²⁷² The Mississaugas bartered with the Loyalists, offering fish, venison, cranberries and maple sugar for other provisions like loaves of bread and rum.²⁷³ They also frequently brought fruit, flowers and animals to Elizabeth Simcoe and other officials in Niagara.²⁷⁴ Yet, historian Donald Smith shows that the 1790s saw resentment from the Mississaugas who began to realize that land possession was not understood by both parties in the same way.²⁷⁵ Mississaugas raided a Loyalist farm near York in 1793, and a few years later a chief named Wabikinine was killed in York by a settler.²⁷⁶ A Mississauga rebellion never happened, much to the relief of the British, but economic relationships were strained by these politically-charged occurrences.²⁷⁷

²⁷² Isaac Weld, *Travels through the States of North America*, 143. “In our rambles we used frequently to fall in with parties of the Seneca [sic] Indians, from the opposite side of the lake, that were amusing themselves with hunting and shooting these animals. They shot them principally with bows and blow guns, at the use of which last the Senekas are wonderfully expert. The blow-gun is a narrow tube, commonly about six feet in length, made of cane reed or of some pithy wood, through which they drive short slender arrows by the force of the breath.”

²⁷³ Weld, 86. “The Mississaguis [sic] keep the inhabitants of Kingston, of Niagara, and of the different towns on the lake, well supplied with fish and game, the value of which is estimated by bottles of rum and loaves of bread.” Also, *Memoirs of John Clark*, 169. “The Indians brought us cranberries and maple sugar in barter for other commodities.”

²⁷⁴ J. Ross Robertson ed., “The diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe,” 276.

²⁷⁵ Smith, “The Dispossession of the Mississauga Indians,” 34.

²⁷⁶ Weld, 85. He was referred to in this account as “Wompakanon.”

²⁷⁷ Smith, “The Dispossession of the Mississauga Indians,” 39, argues that the Mississaugas did not retaliate because their numbers had been drastically reduced by a smallpox epidemic in 1793, the New Credit only numbering 330 people by 1798.

The Mississaugas relationship in the 1790s evolved with not only white Loyalists, but also with Indigenous Loyalists. The Haudenosaunee and Mississaugas were long-time enemies but formed an alliance out of necessity when the British began purchasing land around Lake Ontario.²⁷⁸ In 1784, Mississaugas acknowledged the Niagara peninsula as shared territory, as historian Susan Hill says, “recalling the mutual responsibilities between themselves and the Haudenosaunee based within older treaty relationships.”²⁷⁹ However, British officials in Niagara and York were told to “do everything in [their] power (without exposing the object of this Policy to Suspicion) to foment any existing Jealousy between the Chippewas & the Haudenosaunee; and to prevent as far as possible any Junction or good understanding between those two Tribes.”²⁸⁰ The Haudenosaunee became dependent on British gifts and by the late 1790s the importing of wares became a key part of their culture until the mid-19th century.²⁸¹ This was the result of continued confusion following the Haldimand Proclamation; being told the British might not keep their promises deterred people from planting crops right away.²⁸² The Haudenosaunee needed a clear deed to the Grand River lands before settling down like the white Loyalists in Niagara had done, but contradictory news from the succeeding administrations

²⁷⁸ Smith, “The Dispossession of the Mississauga Indians,” 38.

²⁷⁹ Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of*, 144. In 1784, Mississauga Chief Pokquan said to Col. John Butler and Haudenosaunee representatives: “we are Indians, and consider ourselves and the Haudenosaunee to be one and the same people, and agreeable to a former and mutual agreement, we are bound to help each other.”

²⁸⁰ Smith, 39. In this case “Chippewas” refers to Mississaugas. Historian John Hagopian explains that British leaders often counted Mississaugas as a tribe within the Chippewas, using the example of when Peter Russell wrote in 1798: “Captain Claus informs me that the five Nations and the Chippewas are at present on the most friendly footing with each other . particularly the Messissague [*sic*] Tribe, who have thrown themselves in a manner under the direction of Captain Joseph Brant...” in John Hagopian “Joseph Brant vs. Peter Russell: A Re-examination of the Haudenosaunee Land Transactions in the Grand River Valley.” *Social History / Histoire Sociale* 30 no. 60 (1997): 326.

²⁸¹ Smith, “The Dispossession of the Mississauga Indians,” 40. McCalla, *Planting the Province*, 85, says that government presents ended in 1858.

²⁸² Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of*, 146.

continued and the survey of the Grand River lands was not even completed until 1791. McCalla asserts that although the Haudenosaunee relocated at the same time as white settlers, it was this higher level of scrutiny, or the agenda of an “unsympathetic government” that held them back during and after the Loyalist era.²⁸³ Yet, he also argues that despite their hardships, communities gradually grew their own farms and engaged in external markets by selling small amounts of furs and produce, renting out property, and hiring themselves out as labourers during harvest season.

Continuation of Merchant Power

In the 1790s, merchants became more deeply invested in Niagara’s domestic economy by purchasing land and expanding their commercial ventures. The ceding of British forts in 1796, the changes in governance from Quebec to Newark to York within the span of five years, and the establishment of local government required flexibility and adaptation for survival. Merchants continued to dominate Niagara’s socio-economic life, much to the ire of farmers. The fur trade and new American markets remained lucrative prospects, although market access and demand fluctuated greatly throughout the decade.

The lives of Niagara farmers were governed in large part by local merchants like Robert Hamilton. He was the main wholesaler of domestic grain as well as the main supplier of imported goods, and he bought and sold approximately 80,000 acres of land before his death in 1809, half of that in the Niagara peninsula alone.²⁸⁴ Merchants dominated society in part because Niagara was mostly composed of hard-working, lower class farmers. The peninsula’s lack of what Taylor calls “civil society”, or wealthier individuals with money to invest in innkeeping,

²⁸³ McCalla, *Planting the Province*, 87.

²⁸⁴ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 182.

milling, and commercial farming, left a gap in local governance that was filled by merchants like Hamilton.²⁸⁵

Merchants were the key facilitators of products that circulated within the local economy, as well as those that were exported to external markets. Niagara's export supply chain began with the producers of raw materials like farmers that grew wheat and corn, and Indigenous peoples that supplied fish and furs. These goods were then sold straight to merchants for further processing, or grains and wood could also travel to the local miller to be converted into more profitable products like flour and lumber. Small-town merchant millers like Robert Nelles, Jacob Beam and Daniel Servos performed these functions for their neighbours as manufacturers and subsequent links in the supply chain. They collected flour from their customers and sold it in bulk to larger merchant firms that operated along the Niagara River that were eventually termed a "Shopkeeper Aristocracy." This term was coined in 1806 by Robert Thorpe, a judge for the Court of King's Bench for Upper Canada.²⁸⁶ These merchant companies ranged from small to large scale, Hamilton being the most prominent, but rural milling accounts show local engagement with many merchant firms.²⁸⁷ The capital and resources that these merchants required were provided by their private creditors in Montreal, well-established firms involved in the fur trade and military supply like Todd & McGill, Auldjo & Maitland, Forsyth & Richardson. They imported British goods and sent barrels of flour and other commodities in return, realizing the agricultural potential that Upper and Lower Canada offered.

²⁸⁵ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 61. Newark contained the most middle to upper class folk, while Niagara's more western districts contained mainly farmers.

²⁸⁶ Taylor, 97.

²⁸⁷ Firms like William & James Crooks, Thomas Clark & Samuel Street, Thomas Cummings and John McKay appear frequently.

Montreal merchants had a distinct interest in local Niagara trade and its potential for supplying other posts along the Great Lakes. In 1794, Hamilton hired a professional cooper to come to Niagara from Ireland to work for him, building barrels for the storage of pork to send to the garrisons along the Great Lakes.²⁸⁸ The cooper's wages were funded by Hamilton's Montreal partners Todd & McGill; this example reflects the importance of his capital connections. A local wealthy merchant could use his broader merchant network who in turn access their transatlantic network to enhance their collective investment in imperial markets. This is something that very few individuals in Niagara could achieve at that point in time.

The Simcoe administration also had issues with Upper Canadian merchants in the early 1790s. Wilson succinctly states: "The early Simcoe years can be interpreted as an attack by a nascent political elite upon established commercial hegemony in a bid to control the pioneer society."²⁸⁹ However, in the latter half of the decade the local government changed their mind on issues like immigration and cross-border trade and came to agreements with merchants along the Great Lakes, realizing the need for growing private commercial enterprises if the province was going to become a successful agricultural production zone.

Yet, transportation and communication between Niagara and Montreal were still unreliable in the 1790s. As immigration increased, there was a greater need for ships as many families made the move with their belongings across Lake Ontario to York and the surrounding

²⁸⁸ Letter from Isaac Todd to John Askin, 1794 in *The John Askin Papers Vol. I*, 502. "I have been employd since last fall writing to Cork To procure a man a compleat Cooper and curer of provisions and after much trouble I have hired one as high as £70 per annum with maintenance and his advances & expenses will be above £50, which is lost if an accident happens him. He is for Mr. Hamilton at Niagara who expects that Settlement will have a quantity of Pork, and to cure it well is of more use than your assemblies' representations- perhaps they may think Mr. Hamilton has no right to do this."

²⁸⁹ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 106.

area. The lack of boats was frequently mentioned in primary source accounts.²⁹⁰ At this time there were government ships functioning on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River, but they were old, small, and in poor condition. There were only two private, merchant-owned schooners available and they were more concerned about their products and sales than other matters like taking people from Niagara to York.

The Fur Trade in the 1790s

Although the furs travelling through the Niagara portage diminished slightly in the early 1790s, the North West fur trade remained a worthwhile venture for Niagara merchants. The political connections that fur trade partners in Montreal offered Niagara merchants also remained beneficial throughout the 1790s. Fur trade statistics for the North West Company in the 1790s are even more scarce than they are for the 1780s. Figures of annual fur exports from Quebec in Gordon Davidson's volume end with 1789, picking up again in 1801.²⁹¹ It is possible to piece together an estimate of what the 1790s fur trade looked like based on a combination of other sources. According to the correspondence of merchant John Askin, the fur trade in Detroit was doing poorly in 1792-93. He wrote that the beaver population was declining, and that "furs that used to get 19s or 20s were now only getting 13s or 14s."²⁹² Scant figures from the papers of Richard Cartwright in Kingston support evidence of these losses at Detroit as he recorded the

²⁹⁰ Collins' Report, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 254. Peter Russell to Robert Prescott Aug 19, 1797. Russell, who was appointed to fill in for Simcoe during a leave of absence, asked Canada's Governor General Robert Prescott for more vessels. "We become every day more and more sensible of the inconveniences and difficulties which we encounter at York from the want of vessels on this lake to support the water communication. At present there are only the *Mohawk* and the gun boat afloat and I am informed that their utmost exertions will be scarcely sufficient to complete the necessary transport before the close of navigation.... The only two schooners employed in merchant services have too much business of their own to allow themselves to be hired to transport people and baggage from Niagara to York."

²⁹¹ Davidson, *The North West Company*,

²⁹² Letter from William Robertson to John Askin, *The John Askin Papers Vol. I*, 464. "s" means shillings.

number of pelts sent to Quebec from Detroit and Michilimackinac in the years 1796-98. His “Value of the returns in pelteries [sic] from the American territory” is shown below in Table 9.

Table 9: Cartwright Papers: Furs sent to Quebec 1796-98

	1796	1797	1798
Furs Exported over Niagara Portage from Detroit to Quebec	1910 packs	2616 packs	2704 packs
Value of Furs Exported over Niagara Portage from Detroit to Quebec	£28,650	£39,240	£40,560
Furs Exported from Michilimackinac to Quebec*		3210 packs	
Value of Furs from Michilimackinac to Quebec*		£48,150	

*Cartwright noted here: “The packs from Michelemacanac [sic] cannot be for these different years so easily ascertained as many of them are sent by the Grand River.”²⁹³ The Grand River in this context is the Ottawa River.

There are contrary indications in the sources regarding the value of the Detroit fur trade. Recall how in the 1780s the value of furs coming over the portage from Detroit hovered around £40,000. Cartwright’s note from 1796 shows a slight decrease in the number and value of furs going over the Niagara Portage from Detroit, which could also support Askin’s complaints of a decline in the value of the Detroit trade in the early 1790s. Yet while Detroit struggled, Todd & McGill in Montreal estimated the total value of the North West fur trade to be £250,000 from 1790-94, an increase from the previous decade.²⁹⁴ If the value of the fur trade really did grow even though Detroit’s sales were low, then the growth must have stemmed from the Canadian North West and via the Grand Portage, Ottawa River route. Todd & McGill stated in 1794 that number of furs arriving in Quebec from North West had indeed more than doubled. The chart below shows how the percentage of the total value of the fur trade changed over time.

²⁹³ “Account of merchandise which passed the Niagara portage consigned to merchants residing on American side of river 1797,” *Richard Cartwright copied letterbooks*.

²⁹⁴ Davidson, *The North West Company*, 277.

Table 10: Percentage of the Total Value of the North West Fur Trade

1780-89 ²⁹⁵	1790-94 ²⁹⁶
The North West = 20%	The North West = 40%
²⁹⁷ Lower Posts = 30%	Lower Posts = 20%
Detroit = 20%	Detroit = 15%
Michilimackinac = 30%	Michilimackinac = 25%
Total Value: £200,000	Total Value: £250,000

In Niagara, primary sources regarding the importance of the fur trade in the peninsula offer contradictory narratives. Todd & McGill wrote in 1794 that “there was very little Indian trade at Niagara,” while Isaac Weld said in 1796 while traveling through North America that “the quantity of furs collected at Niagara is considerable.”²⁹⁸ Since Todd & McGill were merchants directly involved in the fur trade, their statement is likely more accurate. What may have seemed numerous to Weld as an outsider was in reality only a small portion of Quebec’s net exports, therefore seen as insubstantial by Montreal merchants. Still, in other parts of British North America the fur trade was of great importance. Merchant William Robertson referred to furs as a

²⁹⁵ The figures from the 1780s have been calculated as follows. John Inglis, a Montreal merchant who was a partner in the North West Company, stated that in the 1780s 50% of the total annual furs came to Quebec from Detroit & Michilimackinac, 30% came from the Lower Posts, and 20% came from the North West. (Davidson, *The North West Company*, 272.) Merchants in Montreal estimated in 1788 that 40% of the furs coming into Quebec passed through the Niagara portage. Inglis corroborates this and broke the numbers down, stating that of the £100,000 that Detroit and Michilimackinac brought into Quebec, £40,000 worth of furs came from Detroit and £60,000 came from Michilimackinac. (Davidson, *The North West Company*, 273.)

²⁹⁶ The figures from the 1790s have been calculated as follows. Todd & McGill state in Davidson, *The North West Company*, 279, that the value of furs imported from Canada were worth £250,000 by 1794. They state that the North West produced £100,000, or 40 percent of the total furs in Canada. They say that another £100,000 came from Detroit and Michilimackinac. The remaining £50,000, or 20 percent is attributed then to the Lower Posts only through the process of elimination, as sources do not state this explicitly. Cartwright’s figures from 1796-98 show the value of Detroit furs hovering around £40,000 still, which is 15 percent of £250,000. Thus, the other £60,000 must have come from Michilimackinac, or 25 percent of the total value of Canada’s fur exports.

²⁹⁷ Davidson, *The North West Company*, 272. The “Lower Posts” refers to “the whole Country and posts below Montreal” and “The Grand River – The North side of the Lakes Ontario, Huron and Superior.”

²⁹⁸ Davidson, 272, and Isaac Weld, *Travels through the States of North America*, 102.

“Canadian staple” in 1793, worried about how the French Revolution would impact sales in the colony as the price of beaver and deer skins continued to fall.²⁹⁹

Although Niagara’s collected furs were few and the amount of furs travelling through the Niagara portage diminished slightly in the early 1790s, the North West fur trade remained a worthwhile venture for Niagara merchants financially. The political connections that fur trade partners in Montreal offered Niagara merchants also remained beneficial throughout the 1790s. Hamilton & Cartwright became members of the first Upper Canadian Legislative Council in 1792, lobbying for merchant causes like the retaining of British posts around the Great Lakes and fewer restrictions on private shipping. By 1793 they received the sole contract for the supply of the garrisons, an enterprise previously handled by the British military.³⁰⁰ Hamilton’s connections with the fur trade and military gave him the relationships and offices he needed to be in the right position when the time came for a political appointment and military contracts.

By 1791 the merchants in Niagara were offered yet another substantial revenue stream. During the war there was only one portage route on the east side of the Niagara river, but a new one was built on the west side in 1791 after the British realized they were going to have to cede the land as part of their losses. The government continued to offer contracts for the Niagara Portage to only one firm and in 1791 awarded the three-year portage contract to a group of Niagara merchants with powerful partners in Montreal.³⁰¹ A group of four merchants bid for this new contract, two of whom had pre-existing connections to the fur trade. Long-time portage operator Stedman had also made a separate bid for the western portage contract. His years of

²⁹⁹ Cruikshank & Hunter, *The Correspondence of the Honourable Peter Russell* Vol I, 464. Letter from William Robertson to John Askin, January 31, 1793.

³⁰⁰ However, this only lasted one year, and by 1794 a new contract was drawn up that ended government favouritism. Leung, Brock University Archives & Special Collections, Alan Hughes Collection, Box 6 Folder 9, 22.

³⁰¹ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 32.

experience were a huge asset, but the Niagara merchants' personal networks made via the fur trade and the political power that their partners held in Montreal swayed the government in their favour. Moving private fur trade goods and military and Indian Department goods being sent to Detroit brought Hamilton profits of around £1,700 each year between 1791-93, and he bragged to his contacts in Detroit about how easy it was to make money with this new venture.³⁰²

Niagara's British-American Border

One of the most important aspects of Niagara's Loyalist era economy was its proximity to the state of New York, manifested differently before and after the terms of the Jay Treaty in 1796. Before the border was truly enforced, goods flowed more freely over the Niagara River. After 1796 though, Niagara's economy became isolated from Americans on the east side. When Fort Niagara was ceded, all the merchants moved to the British side so even though the Americans captured the fort, they did not capture the trade.³⁰³ In addition, the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee would not trade with merchants in New York because of the lingering resentment from the Revolution.³⁰⁴

However, Canadian historians of this era argue that American importation into Upper Canada was substantial by the 1800s, supplying fur traders and new Loyalist settlements.³⁰⁵

Errington argues that American trade was "One of the most important sources of prosperity to

³⁰² He wrote to William Robertson in 1791: "[Mr. Todd] will inform you that we have obtained for the Settlement the Portage of Government Effects at 1/8 York per Quintal [112 pounds]. Low as the Price is Compared with that of the Former Contractor, still so the Labour of the Settlers will be very well Compensated...to convince you of the Facility with which the Business can be done I have only to mention that I have frequently this Summer loaded Twenty-four Wagons in one day each drawn by 4 excellent oxen. They transferred nearly 30 Tons of Merchandize." Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 73. "Profits were in the range of £5,000 for the three year or about £1,700 per annum."

³⁰³ Isaac Weld, *Travels through the States of North America, and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada*, 103.

³⁰⁴ Weld, 103.

³⁰⁵ McCallum, *Unequal Beginnings: Agriculture and Economic Development in Quebec and Ontario Until 1870*, 10.

the colony.”³⁰⁶ Sources from Niagara mostly support her argument; while political differences existed, Niagara’s new settlers recognized the value that American trade offered. After the military posts in Niagara, Detroit and Michilimackinac were ceded, Canadian goods were sold to supplement their struggling storehouses.³⁰⁷ American purchasing agents for Fort Niagara and other US military storehouses sometimes offered better prices for Canadian flour, corn and peas, to the chagrin of John McGill and the British military suppliers. American offers were advertised in local newspapers like the *Niagara Herald*.³⁰⁸ While these sales benefitted Niagara’s domestic economy, in British eyes it somewhat defeated the purpose of building Loyalist settlements around the Great Lakes, as flour still needed to be shipped from Montreal to feed British soldiers.

Niagara’s Loyalist economy by the close of the century had evolved since initial post-Revolutionary settlement. The population continued to grow, and the diverse groups had begun to form a network of domestic trade and commerce on the verge of expanding into Montreal markets. Spatial analyses of flour production, payment methods, and trade routes in Niagara show how economic development was in many ways shaped by the availability of natural resources. At the same time, the farming classes engaged in production for subsistence while strategically producing and manufacturing goods that benefitted their household’s ability to thrive in emerging rural markets. Farmers and merchants maneuvered the political and economic changes of this decade, many setting themselves up with capital assets and network connections that prepared them for the new century and its accompanying economic changes.

³⁰⁶ Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada*, 37.

³⁰⁷ Errington, 37.

³⁰⁸ Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ontario 1613-1880*, 26.

Chapter III: Industry & Export (1800-1812)

The first few years of the 19th century brought a whole new level of productivity and change to the Niagara peninsula. People were offered greater opportunities than they had seen before as new waves of immigrants arrived, small businesses grew, agricultural production increased and diversified, and Montreal markets finally became available to the average farmer. Merchants and local elites vied for positions in the legislature to gain political power within the community. Changes in governance on local and provincial scales at this time brought about policy shifts that impacted Niagara's economic development. The complicated network of evolving relationships between people of different classes, ethnicities, and government authorities in Niagara and beyond formed a unique foundation for Niagara's economy. At the same time, the British government overseas became embroiled in war with the French empire led by Napoleon Bonaparte, the effects of which were felt in Niagara as people feared another war with the United States.

Local Governance

By 1800, opposition in Niagara had risen against the merchant class and their increasing land speculation, the rising debts being incurred on merchant accounts, and their monopoly on trade and transportation facilities along the Niagara River. Wilson argues that the imposition of tolls along the Niagara River was one of the main sources of contention for voters in Niagara's 1801 election.³⁰⁹ Merchant interests became frequently reflected in government policies as the

³⁰⁹ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 150. Robert Hamilton and fellow Scottish merchants Thomas Clarke and George Forsyth proposed improving the Niagara portage road between Queenston and Fort Erie by creating both a tow road and a canal, offering to pay for it themselves but with the condition that they be allowed to collect tolls of 4d per cwt for the next twenty-one years. While tolls were to be waived for locally produced goods passing through the portage for consumption within Lincoln county, those living in adjacent Norfolk and Haldimand counties, including the Haudenosaunee settlers along the Grand River, would be subject to the tolls. Since they still did not have grist mills of their own in places like Long Point, this would greatly affect their profit margins.

shopkeeper aristocracy's influence continued. The first two elections of district representatives into the Upper Canadian Legislative Assembly in the 1790s saw the beginnings of local opposition against the merchant class. By the election of 1801, upper class farmers and elites with a past as commissioned officers in the military or Indian Department, who now owned small merchant businesses and large grants of land, assembled to elect men that would represent their interests. Assembly representatives Isaac Swayze and Ralfe Clench were chosen that year to represent concerns of farmers, small merchants and local administrators in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Lincoln ridings, which constituted the majority of the Niagara district. However, major change in Niagara was not made until the 1809 election when even more radical opposition to the Shopkeeper Aristocracy arose in the form of Robert Thorpe and Joseph Willcocks.³¹⁰ Representative for the 1st Lincoln & Haldimand riding, Willcocks was eventually seen by many as too radical, encouraging people to speak against a government that he felt was too powerful, and attacking some of the very elites and office holders that elected him.³¹¹

Assembly representatives elected in the first decade of the 1800s could now influence legislation that would benefit their businesses. Small town merchants within Niagara such as David Secord, Richard Beasley and Robert Nelles represented their ridings to benefit their small interests within the district's various townships. The influence of these representatives sometimes negatively impacted merchants. When the Assembly supported a tax on liquor imports from the United States, merchants like Hamilton complained of being required to pay a percentage to the government in duties. Niagara's merchants at the ports of Fort Erie, Chippawa, Queenston, and Niagara paid a collective total of £717-18-11 in taxes on goods imported from

³¹⁰ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 157.

³¹¹ Wilson, 161. Willcocks chastised some of Niagara's administrators for collecting government salaries yet failing to improve local transportation facilities and small businesses.

the United States in 1803, which equalled seventy-eight percent of the total revenue gathered from the eleven ports of entry in Upper Canada.³¹²

Separating themselves from the merchants along the Niagara river, leaders from the white Loyalist communities actively worked to better their socio-economic situations. For example, they built a diagonal road through Niagara township that connected Newark and the Twelve Mile Creek, choosing to bypass the escarpment trade route straight into Queenston that had been monopolized by Hamilton and other merchants.³¹³ In 1805, nineteen residents from different Niagara townships petitioned once again for the improvement of public roads, an issue that remained constant ever since initial post-revolutionary settlement.³¹⁴ Not only did people exhibit agency in attempting to better their socio-economic situations, but they also fought for what they felt they were entitled to. That same year, over sixty men from Stamford township signed a petition to make it legal to purchase liquor from local distillers.³¹⁵

Willcocks stood at the centre of a political contest between Niagara's established merchant elite and the increasing numbers of settlers. The conflict that arose between the two groups was spurred in part by the arrival of the late Loyalists who were not believed to have immigrated out of any sort of loyalty to the British government.³¹⁶ According to Taylor, one of

³¹² "Provincial Revenue arising from duties collected on goods imported from the United States of America under Acts of the Provincial Parliament from 1st January to 31st Dec. 1803 including duties not before stated." *Richard Cartwright copied letterbooks*.

³¹³ Wilson, 149. **Turn on the GIS layer "Alternate trade route, 1798."**

³¹⁴ Cruikshank, *Records of Niagara, 1805-1811*, 4.

³¹⁵ Cruikshank, 4. The legal minimum purchase in 1805 was three gallons, a number beneficial for innkeepers and retailers, but the average person wished to lower the minimum to a more practical one gallon. They were upset that they were being "prevented from receiving those comforts of the country to which their hard labour entitles them."

³¹⁶ George Heriot, *Travels through the Canadas*, (London: R. Phillips, 1807), 151. Post-master General of British North America George Heriot remarked in 1806 that immigrant families in Niagara arrived from the United States because of the good soil, low taxation, and "the mildness of the government." Accessed from Heritage Canadiana: <https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.35682/10?r=0&s=2>

the main distinguishing points between British colonists and American citizens was their relationship with their government, and that citizens of Upper Canada experienced relatively less political conflict than their southern neighbours.³¹⁷ Some of these late Loyalists, an alignment of poorer settlers resisting merchant control, supported Willcocks. Many of these supporters were religious minorities from states like New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania who were familiar with American ideals of liberty and individualism that Willcocks promoted.³¹⁸

Provincial leaders feared internal subversions from men like Willcocks, knowing that it could affect the loyalties of their already slim Upper Canadian military. The government was in a dangerous ideological position. They needed to recruit more immigrants to the province to enhance agricultural development and increase its status as the ideological centre of British North America. However, the arrival of late Loyalists also meant that those who came north were not arriving with the same political mentality that many of the initial Loyalists held. Ultimately, they ended up somewhere in the middle. As Taylor writes, Simcoe “had enticed families who did not particularly care for the republic... and had not attracted people who cared deeply for the empire.”³¹⁹

Grand River Land Development

Battles for Indigenous autonomy over the Haldimand tract of land transformed as Upper Canadian administrations changed. Between 1804-06 conflict intensified over the Haudenosaunee right to sell part of their Grand River lands. Superintendent of Indian Affairs

³¹⁷ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 71. Upper Canadians did not deal with the same issues of “land jobbing, Indian warfare, African slavery, republican electioneering, libelous newspapers, majoritarian intolerance, and mob violence that blighted the republic.” Portions of this statement are debatable, but the *scale* of conflict was lesser in UC.

³¹⁸ Taylor, 68. One of these late Loyalists in Niagara said: “An American can have but little chance, let his abilities be what they may, to succeed in his application for preferment” in reference to the appointment of district officials.

³¹⁹ Taylor, 72.

William Claus would not allow them to sell portions of their own land, based on his interpretation of the 1763 Royal Proclamation which he said prohibited such sales. After months of failed negotiations, Joseph Brant and John Norton as representatives of the people traveled overseas to London with their petition.³²⁰ Niagara merchants supported Claus, and a divide resulted between them and Brant, Norton, and their anti-merchant, anti-government, supporters. Their request was ultimately unsuccessful, the Crown listening to the concerns of Claus via Lieut. Gov. Hunter who undermined Norton's authority and claimed his petition was not fully supported by all members of the Haudenosaunee.³²¹

Throughout the late 1790s and early 1800s, government policies were no longer in line with what had originally been promised to the Haudenosaunee. In 1793, Simcoe created a new land deed that only included two thirds of what the Haudenosaunee were promised, stating that they were not allowed to sell any of it.³²² Each subsequent governor refused to waver on the question of control over the Grand River tract, Brant's exasperation demonstrated in his 1797 letter to military secretary James Green when he said: "They seemingly intended to forbid us any other use of the lands than that of sitting down or walking on them. It plainly appears by this that their motives can be no other than to tie us down in such a manner, as to have us entirely at their disposal for what services they may in future want from us, and in case we should be warned out

³²⁰ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 157.

³²¹ Carl Benn, *A Mohawk Memoir from the War of 1812: John Norton – Teyoninhokarawen*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 55-56. Claus sabotaged Norton's petition in London by attacking his character and organizing a small coalition of Brant and Norton's political opponents to validate his exaggerated claims that disapproval of their agenda was "general" within the Haudenosaunee community.

³²² Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of*, 151.

& obliged to remove, the lands would then fall to them with our improvements & labour.”³²³

Indeed, later 19th century leaders like Hunter, Grant, and Gore continued to disappoint.³²⁴

Business-oriented local politicians cared more for land development and economic concerns than imperial relationships, despite the fact that another war was likely and they needed the Haudenosaunee to remain allies.³²⁵ Yet, historians argue that the British relationship with the Haudenosaunee at the Grand River did not become a key concern until the 1807 Chesapeake affair.³²⁶ Provincial leaders believed that if war were to happen, Indigenous peoples in Niagara and elsewhere in Upper Canada would side with the British because of their hatred towards Americans.³²⁷ Were the Haudenosaunee to ally themselves with the United States, their fates would be worse than if they remained autonomous within British territory. As Taylor asserts, they would be absorbed into American society and converted from warriors to farmers.³²⁸

In addition, provincial leaders knew that through this prolonged isolation on the Grand River away from other Indigenous groups they were becoming weaker.³²⁹ The lack of space

³²³ Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of*, 157.

³²⁴ Benn, *A Mohawk Memoir from the War of 1812*, 64-65. Brant wrote in 1805 after the administrative appointment of Alexander Grant that “the old council, principally composed of men influenced by an insatiable avarice for lands, have so prejudiced His Excellency against us as to disappoint what otherwise might have been expected from the innate benevolence of the King’s representative.”

³²⁵ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 113. He says that in 1807, “Anticipating an American invasion of Canada, British officials felt exposed for want of troops.” Only 400 regular soldiers were stationed in Upper Canada that year.

³²⁶ Reginald Horsman, “British Indian Policy in the Northwest, 1807-1812.” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45, no. 1 (1958): 51, accessed October 15, 2020. doi:10.2307/1886695.

³²⁷ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 125. Around the Great Lakes, American pioneers continued to push their new settlements into Indigenous territory.

³²⁸ Taylor, 126.

³²⁹ Hill, 73. She writes that: “the difficult realities of a greatly decreased land base became full-blown in the early 1800s.” Cruikshank, *Records of Niagara, 1805-1811*, 17. English Quaker and merchant Robert Sutcliffe in his 1805-07 travels through Niagara wrote: “Many thousand pounds per annum are expended in presents to the Indians to ensure their friendship in time of War; and that the greatest part of these presents are exchanged for spiritous liquors, which they use to great excess, many times to the loss of their lives, and always at the expense of their health.”

greatly diminished their ability to produce agricultural goods and hunt game at a level that they once had done. Simultaneously, Haudenosaunee society bore the marks of societal shifts in their new lives on the Grand River tract. Multi-generational, matrilineal long houses were suddenly replaced with frame houses. While the women maintained their roles and continued to farm as they had previously, the men had to change their lifestyles which took away their confidence as hunters and providers, compelled to undertake what was traditionally “women’s work.”³³⁰ There were also issues of overcrowding, the different nations of the Haudenosaunee forced to live close to one another on the Grand River, which they had never done before. The stress of these factors caused internal rifts and led to the excessive use of alcohol, which the women assert had caused “many misfortunes in this place.”³³¹

Other Indigenous peoples also sometimes required government assistance. In the late summer of 1808, approximately 160 Indigenous peoples gathered at Fort George with requests for help. Some were Haudenosaunee from the Grand River, some lived on Buffalo Creek in American territory, and some were Mississaugas looking for payment for the land they sold in 1805 around York region.³³² The Mississauga’s language reflects an attitude of defeat: “Now Father you want another piece of Land — we cannot say no; but we will explain ourselves before we say any more.... I speak for all the Chiefs and they wish to be under your protection as formerly. But it is hard for us to give away more Land: The Young Men and Women have found fault with so much having been sold before, if it is true we are poor, and the Women say we will be worse if we part with any more; but we will tell you what we mean to do.”³³³ Ultimately,

³³⁰ Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of*, 157, 76.

³³¹ Hill, 74. Haudenosaunee women spoke these words to their chiefs on May 22, 1802.

³³² Cruikshank, *Records of Niagara, 1805-1811*, 45.

³³³ Smith, “The Dispossession of the Mississauga Indians,” 42. A message from Mississauga speaker Quinipeno.

Indigenous peoples in Niagara did not have access to a supportive governing structure to the same degree as did white settlers.

The distance that separated the Haudenosaunee from decision-makers in places like Niagara, York, and Montreal heightened their isolation from the Loyalist economy. The Haudenosaunee sought autonomy in their position on the Grand River, but that did not mean they were opposed to external relationships. They still desired a measure of access to commercial liaisons and materials that would have benefitted their place in the developing economy. In fact, Norton suggested in 1808 that a representative from the Indian Department be put on the Grand River to live among the people, rather than remain one hundred miles away in Newark as Claus had done.³³⁴ He also continued to promote agricultural production at the Grand River, writing: “The Mohawks are improving rapidly, there are several so much agriculturalists as to raise three or four hundred bushels of Wheat in the Year; those who suppose that the being farmers will debilitate them from being Hunters are mistaken. The most industrious at the plough, generally shew themselves the most persevering at the Chase when in winter they throw aside the hoe and take up the gun...”³³⁵ Sources like this suggest that the Mohawk people showed the most promise out of all Haudenosaunee in contributing to the province’s agricultural export economy in the early 19th century, prior accounts from the 1780s and 90s mentioning mostly subsistence farming of corn. McCalla offers figures on Indigenous agriculture in Upper Canada during the mid-19th century, writing that people at the Grand River had cleared 3.3 acres per capita by 1843. Unfortunately, he does not offer any information about their agricultural surpluses, so it is difficult to know to what degree the Haudenosaunee were able to build the foundations of

³³⁴ Cruikshank, *Records of Niagara, 1805-1811*, 47.

³³⁵ Cruikshank, 66. Norton wrote this in a letter that was read by Peter Hunter to leaders in the Colonial Office.

surplus agricultural production during the Loyalist era. He does list the production figures for the Mississaugas from the Credit River who moved to the Grand River in 1847, showing that they annually produced 16.7 bushels of wheat per person.³³⁶

Nineteenth Century Natural Obstacles and Benefits

Niagara's Loyalist Era economy was greatly affected by the position of the peninsula within the province of Upper Canada, as well as the geographical features that existed within the region itself, such as the existence of numerous rivers, swamplands, a towering escarpment and the magnificent Niagara Falls. Natural barriers forced relocation and settlement into semi-isolated townships, stimulating inter-regional competition that offered more individual agency but slowed progress due to a want of cheap labour. GIS has been central in determining the role of these different factors, showing how they affected trade and product movement.

In some ways, physical barriers slowed the growth and development of trade in Upper Canada. By the 1800s, Niagara's merchants were sending large quantities of flour, potash, and other goods to Montreal for export to British markets. The bulk shipment of agricultural products was advantageous by the 19th century because costs of shipping down the St. Lawrence had decreased and there was simultaneously a high demand for wheat in Montreal due to shortages in Great Britain.³³⁷ The eastern regions of Upper Canada shipped goods to Montreal already by 1794, and according to McCallum, the conditions in Britain kept Montreal wheat prices high until 1812.³³⁸ However, impediments such as the St. Lawrence rapids near Lachine and Coteau

³³⁶ McCalla, *Planting the Province*, 273.

³³⁷ Edwin C. Guillet. *Early Life in Upper Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1933), 28. He argues that the combination of these two factors made shipment of goods to Montreal a profitable venture.

³³⁸ McCallum, *Unequal Beginnings*, 12.

du Lac, the seasonality of Great Lakes shipping, and Niagara Falls were all factors impeding the flow of goods and information. When Upper Canada was formed in 1791, the Eastern districts had an advantage over Niagara and the Western districts because their proximity to Montreal allowed merchants to export products more often and at lower rates. One farmer in Williamsburg evaded the costs of shipping and storage altogether, using a raft to carry down 3000 bushels of wheat in 1802.³³⁹

Niagara Falls posed a financial loss to both merchants and contract holders; the rapids both above and below posed dangers to vessels and many lost their lives in the Niagara River. Winter weather caused delays too, and boats that came to Fort Erie from Detroit were sometimes stranded until the ice cleared and they could enter the mouth of the Niagara River. The ice usually cleared up around April 15th, but some years had extra-long winters and it could take until mid-May for the ice to completely melt.³⁴⁰ These delays further hindered Niagara and Detroit's access to external markets. To rectify this problem, colonial administrators in 1797 considered cutting a canal from the Chippewa River to Queenston since goods were often stored at both of these places.³⁴¹ This was just one of the suggested canal routes proposed in this era. French officials had also suggested one decades before British occupation. In the 1820s the Niagara portage became obsolete as the Welland Canal made passage from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie much easier.

³³⁹ "Recapitulation of articles exported to Lower Canada from Kingston in the year 1802 viz. (besides some small quantities of staves and timber not ascertained)" Richard Cartwright copied letterbooks, 182. Cartwright family fonds, Series F 24-3, box MU 513, Archives of Ontario.

³⁴⁰ "Letter from Robert Nichol to John Askin May 28, 1799" in *The John Askin Papers Vol. II: 1796–1820* Vol 1, 211. "The Ice is not yet entirely out of the River here, and it was only yesterday the *Nancy* got in, having laid upwards of a fortnight in Port Ebona [Abino]."

³⁴¹ One traveler wrote that the farmhouses in Chippewa were used to store excess goods waiting to go down the portage. Weld, *Travels through the States of North America, and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada*, 137.

Niagara merchants by this time were familiar with the hazards associated with Montreal trade. Shipping across the Great Lakes meant there was a danger of being shipwrecked or spoiling goods with water damage or from excessive shaking on board.³⁴² John Askin in Detroit also mentioned barrels of cider spoiling a number of times in his correspondence with trade partners in Niagara, saying in 1804 that: “it is not at all unusual for Cyder [sic] to come down in bad order. The working of the vessels increases the fermentation of the Cyder & very often not only lessens that Quantity but injures the Quality.”³⁴³ Farmers in Niagara were told by merchants to take precautions when packing and storing their flour, the Crooks brothers advising villagers at the Forty in 1803 to “keep all you possibly can of the flour under cover, as the present unsettled weather may damage it very considerably.”³⁴⁴

People with access to Niagara’s freshwater resources had an advantage when it came to building capital wealth in the Loyalist era. Grain mills, lumber mills and potasheries were some of the main industries on Niagara’s waterways, but saltworks, tanyards, distilleries and mills for textile manufacturing were also in operation by the early 1800s. There were 25 gristmills and 37 sawmills in the district by 1805, some of them much more elaborate than those that had been built in the first decade of settlement.³⁴⁵ Millers in Niagara naturally became small-town merchants, taking a percentage of the product milled and trading it in small quantities with local

³⁴² “Wreck of the *Annette* at Long Point” in *The John Askin Papers Vol. II*, 174 and “Wreck of the *Harlequin*” in *The John Askin Papers Vol. II*, 360. The *Annette* was wrecked at Long Point in 1799, and the *Harlequin* at Port Abino in 1801. Both of these shipwrecks happened on Lake Erie.

³⁴³ Letter from John Askin to Robert Nichol in *The John Askin Papers Vol. II*, 445.

³⁴⁴ “Letter from William & James Crooks to Robert Nelles at the Forty Mile Creek, May 7, 1803” Item 14 Folder 4, transcript from the *Robert Nelles fonds*, Nelles Manor Museum, Grimsby, Ontario, Canada.

³⁴⁵ Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ontario 1613-1880*, 28. Jones writes that some mills in Niagara were built by farmers, and others were constructed by professionals. In 1806 the mills below St. Johns, were four and a half stories high with two pairs of millstones, fanning mills, conveyors and elevators.

buyers or selling it in bulk to more prominent merchants near the Niagara River in exchange for material goods like fabrics, dishes, tea, rum, and other items that were not locally produced.

Many small industries in Niagara developed as a direct result of larger industries like saw and grist milling which was facilitated by the abundance of mill sites throughout the region.

In addition to creating centres of industrial production, creeks and rivers were important for regional communications. The Chippawa Creek, its tributary Lyon's Creek and the Grand River in the southern part of the peninsula were common routes of inland navigation, farmers, millers and merchants using them to transport goods to mills and iron works on the Niagara River. Rafts full of timber were sent eastward down the Chippawa Creek, known today as the Welland River. They ended up at Bridgewater mills where they were sawn into planks, boards, scantling, and charcoal to supply the forge built adjacent to the mill. These rafts also frequently carried wheat, grains, and bog iron ore collected in the marshes further downriver.³⁴⁶ Shortly after the War of 1812, people in Grimsby proposed to build a canal to connect the Forty Mile Creek with the Chippawa Creek, a distance of approximately nine miles.³⁴⁷ They could then also connect the Chippawa to the Grand River which was another six miles south, thus gaining access to Lake Erie. The commercial advantages, they believed, "would be the opening a short and safe route for the produce of the country west of the Grand river and the upper parts of lake Erie into lake Ontario."³⁴⁸ Bypassing the Niagara portage route in this way would allow more autonomy to the average farmer and businessperson living in the more rural areas of Niagara. While external

³⁴⁶ E. A. Cruikshank, "A Country Merchant in Upper Canada 1800-1812", *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records* 25 (1929): 154. **Turn on GIS layers "Niagara Falls- Chippawa (1797)" and "Chippawa (1807)."**

³⁴⁷ **Turn on GIS layer "Map of the Proposed Canal."**

³⁴⁸ Gourlay, *Statistical account of Upper Canada*, 436-437. A report from Grimsby detailed how this would work, listing the commercial and political benefits. Still affected by memories of the War of 1812, the supporters of this project argued that it would offer a safer route for commercial transport away from the Niagara River in the event of another war.

geographical factors like the seasonality of Great Lakes shipping isolated people in Niagara from the outside world, its internal features such as access to multiple sources of water and the milling potential of the escarpment provided or denied the opportunity to build successful communities.

Soil type is another geographical factor that affected economic development. Modern soil maps of Niagara provide another dimension to this study, allowing an analysis of whether the quality of farmland affected settlement and trade. There are a multitude of soil types in the Niagara peninsula ranging from sand to hard clay, but as a whole the land is extremely fertile. However, there are parts of the region that have heavy clay soil, like the Haldimand clay plain and along the Lake Erie shoreline that made crop growth more difficult.³⁴⁹ The scarcity of sources from this period limit this project's dataset and do not allow for an adequate GIS investigation of these heavier clay portions in the southern part of the peninsula. However, what the data can show is that the customers who sold wheat to the King's Mills in Niagara, mostly around and below the escarpment, did not have their production affected by the type of soil on their farms. Instead, topographical factors like water retention, proximity to the escarpment, and distance from the Niagara River, as well as socio-economic factors like the access to labour, made the biggest impacts on production. The first Loyalists in Niagara had the best farmland and the best situation within the district to allow them to become economically prosperous. It was more difficult to build successful enterprises for those who settled further west, away from the merchants and businesses that ran along the Niagara River.

Transportation and Communication

Using the natural flow of the creeks to transport goods from one place to another was one of the ways in which Niagara's settlers used the topography to their advantage. The labourers at

³⁴⁹ Alan Hughes, "The Early Surveys of Township No. 1 and the Niagara Peninsula," 180.

Bridgewater Mills in Stamford used the Niagara River to guide logs to their sawmill near the Dufferin Islands, drawing astonishment from military officer David William Smyth in 1799.³⁵⁰ While creeks and rivers were often used by millers in Niagara to aid their industry, they were not completely reliable. There were issues with steady water supply, and mills would not function when the creeks were dry.³⁵¹ The opposite also happened where an abundance of water, particularly with spring snowmelts, could wash out a mill and destroy it beyond repair.

Some parts of Niagara were so swampy that they deterred settlement, forcing relocation and affecting local trade patterns. Elizabeth Simcoe referred to the land around Chippewa as “a dull, muddy river running through a flat, swampy country,”³⁵² the Iroquois trail was “a most terrible road... full of swamps, fallen trees, etc.”³⁵³ and Jarvis said that the land in Queenston was so soft it could “receive a wheel of a chair halfway to the axletree.”³⁵⁴ These shared obstacles in many ways leveled access to the domestic economy. Farmers did not have the ability to move freely around the region year-round because some sections were impassable by wagon,

³⁵⁰ David William Smyth, *A Short Topographical Description of His Majesty's Province of Upper Canada, in North America*, (East Ardsley: S. R. Publishers, 1970), 29-30. “The saw logs are conveyed to this mill in a remarkable manner; they are cut upon the banks of the river Welland, or Chippewa, and floated down to its mouth, where there is a reservoir made to contain them by a chain of hognpens. From hence it is very dangerous to go in a boat to the mills, on account of the great rapid, and the probability of being sucked into the vast vortex of the falls: to avoid this, small poles have been fixed together from the reservoir to the mill (upwards of a mile) and floating about the distance of eighteen or twenty feet from the shore; they are kept off the shore in their places by poles projecting from the shore; and thus the chain of poles, rising and falling with the waters, and always floating on the surface, make a kind of canal, into which the logs are launched one by one, and so carried from the reservoir to the mill.”

³⁵¹ Cruikshank & Hunter, *The Correspondence of the Honourable Peter Russell Vol III, 112*. “Letter from John McGill to James Green, February 18, 1799.” The amount of wheat harvested the previous fall was the same as in 1797, but the lack of rain slowed down milling, and the lack of snow made it difficult to transport wheat or flour to mill or market, resulting in a lesser amount of available flour. Another example is found in: “Account with Mr. W. Groves, July-October 1800” in “Account Book Volume IV 1799-1801,” *Daniel Servos Records 1779-1826*. MS 538. Archives of Ontario, p 78. On September 30, 1800, William Groves could not boil ash because there was no water running at the Fifteen Mile Falls potashery.

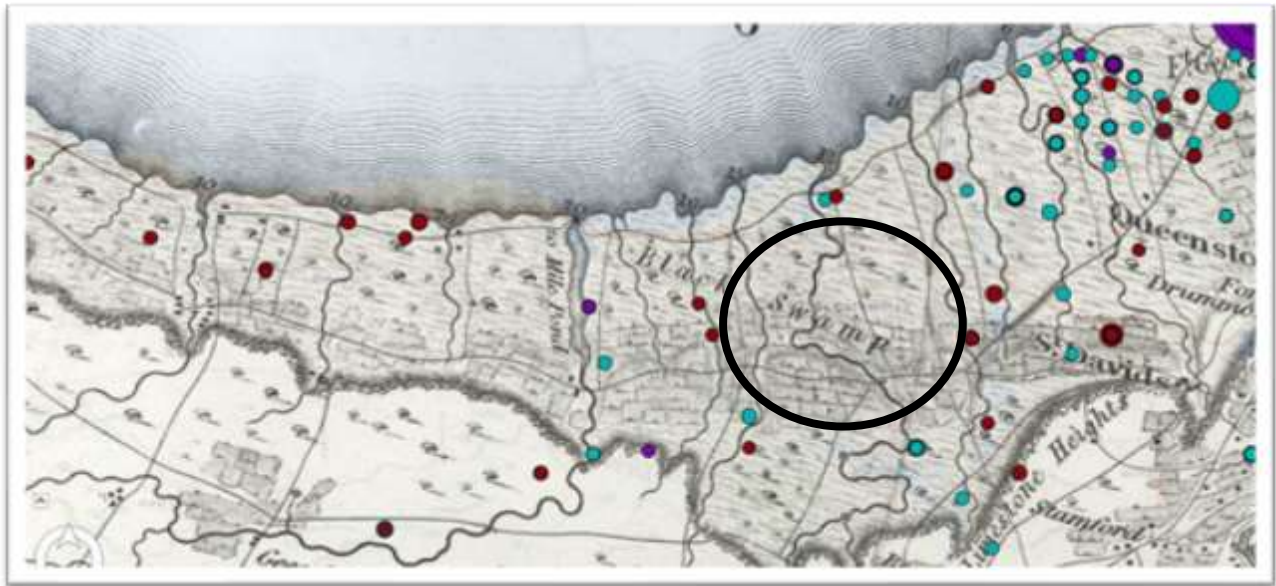
³⁵² J. Ross Robertson ed., “The diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe,” 128.

³⁵³ “The diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe,” 319.

³⁵⁴ M. A. FitzGibbon, *The Jarvis Letters*, 24.

forcing them to build capital assets early on within their own communities and centred around their local creek. According to the GIS, there was a distinct lack of customers at the King's Mills from certain swampy areas throughout the entire Loyalist period.³⁵⁵ Such gaps suggest that the land was deeded to absentee landowners, or the farmers were so poor that they did not have marketable products.

Figure 8: Water Retention in Grantham



Information management is key to creating successful societies, so the poorer the road conditions, the longer it took to establish reliable communication routes, and the less efficient the economy remained. Niagara's early 19th century road system remained severely underdeveloped, according to its inhabitants. Such feelings were shown in a 1796 letter to the editor in the *Upper Canada Gazette* from a Grimsby man who considered Niagara's roads some of the worst in the world.³⁵⁶ Since initial settlement, it took at least fifteen years to achieve a steady communication

³⁵⁵ **Turn on all three Flour Sales layers and the "Niagara Peninsula (Francis Hall) (1818)" layer.** Notice the lack of customers from central Grantham, between the Ten and Sixteen Mile Creeks.

³⁵⁶ Brian Tobin and Elizabeth Hulse, *The Upper Canada Gazette and Its Printers, 1793-1849* (Toronto: The Library, 1993), 8. "People have long complained of the roads in this province; strangers, in particular, who come from places in the world where roads are considered as convenient to interest and pleasure, have not hesitated to declare them the worst in the world."

route in Niagara along the Portage road, and it took even longer for internal lines to develop throughout the peninsula. In 1801, the first official mail route was created along the Niagara River as post offices were established in Queenston, Chippawa, and Fort Erie.³⁵⁷ This route could be travelled in one day and was primarily used by British army officers stationed at Forts George, Chippawa, and Erie, as well as local merchants. The first mail stage and post offices in other Niagara townships were not established until after the War of 1812.³⁵⁸ Even mail traveling short distances from Queenston to townships only twelve miles away was “frequently miscarried”.³⁵⁹ Overland public transport depended on stagecoaches, which required reliable roadways. Large empty lots of land and miscommunication were two of the main reasons why road construction was an issue. Local elites appointed as surveyors and keepers of roadways were sometimes not even aware that they were appointed as such.³⁶⁰ Land-owners were required by British law to work for three unpaid days per year on the roads in their district, but this government statute of labour was not well-enforced.³⁶¹ Joseph Willcocks attributed incompetence and laziness as a contributing factor as well, believing local administrators were

³⁵⁷ The Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario, *Tales of the Twenty*, vol. 7 (Campbellcroft, ON: Homeward Bound Books, 1979), 127.

³⁵⁸ Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, 127. In 1816, the first mail stage traveled from Niagara to York, coming down the Iroquois Trail and in 1817, post offices opened in St Catharines and Grimsby.

³⁵⁹ The Ontario Genealogical Society, Niagara Peninsula Branch, *The Francis Goring Journals*. (St. Catharines, ON: OGS, 1975), 4. This was according to Francis Goring who had sent statements to those indebted to his employer, Robert Hamilton, between 1800-02. The letters could have been “miscarried”, but it is also possible that people were simply dodging debt collection.

³⁶⁰ “Letter from Robert Nelles in Grimsby to John McGill, Inspector General of Public Provincial Accounts, January 5, 1811” Item 2 Folder 6, transcript from the *Robert Nelles fonds*. Nelles wrote that he was asked to “make a full Statement of the Several Sums of Money received by me, subsequent to the year 1809, which have been appropriated by the Legislature for amending and repairing the public Highways and Roads, and laying out and opening new Roads and building of bridges in the Several Districts of this Province: and the manner in which such Monies received by me have been applied.” However, he followed this by saying: “I must state, that I have not received any part of that money: neither did I understand that His Excellency hath been pleased to appoint me one of the Commissioners for the aforesaid purposes.”

³⁶¹ Gourlay, *Statistical account of Upper Canada*, 419.

eager to accept payment for such titles, but were not quick to actually oversee their completion.³⁶²

Wilson argues that the growth of Niagara's enterprises was stunted by the distance between townships, exacerbated by these issues with local transportation, stating: "Inadequate local communications, limited markets, fluctuating prices and low returns made it so that most first-generation merchants artisans and millers could not rise much above the social level of their agrarian clientele."³⁶³ Francis Goring, Robert Hamilton's clerk in Queenston, used rural roads when collecting debts from his customers between 1800-1808. At first, he only traveled as far as the Twelve Mile Creek and any mail beyond that was "sent in packets to someone in the different neighbourhoods to be distributed."³⁶⁴ Frustrated by the fact that his letters were not being read, Goring decided to deliver them himself on foot in the winter months. It took him six weeks to deliver 500-600 letters, saying "I have on one Winter traversed over Twenty-two Townships, and have traversed to Ancaster twice in one Winter."³⁶⁵ He had to travel to farmhouses in the most rural parts of Niagara, taking him off the beaten path for most of his journey.³⁶⁶ The fact that the employee of the wealthiest man in Niagara was made to travel over one hundred miles on foot each winter to deliver these messages suggests that the state of the

³⁶² Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 161. Leading up to the 1808 election, Wilson writes that Willcocks "strongly and constantly attacked all varieties of local office-holders: magistrates, sheriffs, coroners, and even militia officers, claiming those officials with salaries constituted an excessive drain on underdeveloped areas like his riding, while the appointed officials were incompetent and self-interested and took little interest in affairs beyond the Niagara River front where they were concentrated."

³⁶³ Wilson, 179.

³⁶⁴ OGS, *The Francis Goring Journals*, 4.

³⁶⁵ *The Francis Goring Journals*, 4.

³⁶⁶ *The Francis Goring Journals*, 4. "I say traversed, for I was seldom on the direct road."

roads remained extremely poor in the early 1800s. This was no doubt a deterrent to economic growth and inter-community relations, especially during the muddy winter and spring months.

One method of bypassing these issues was to use water transportation. The Lake Ontario and Lake Erie shorelines were some of the first pieces of Niagara to be settled during the Loyalist era, but the large ships that sailed these lakes were initially unable to stop anywhere along them because the water was too shallow. By the 19th century, farmers wanting easier access to the external markets had built docks near the mouth of the main creek in their community, sending goods from farms down to the lake. In 1804, the Crooks brothers chartered a vessel to bring flour to their warehouses in Niagara from the villagers at the Forty. They wrote ahead of time to Robert Nelles, a miller and shopkeeper on the Forty Mile Creek, asking him to let the other miller in town know that they were coming with the boat in two days and to start bringing their flour down to the lake so it could be ready upon arrival.³⁶⁷ Communities were forced to pool their agricultural goods for export. In 1795, the British garrisons would not accept a shipment of less than fifty barrels of flour, an amount that required at least four farmers one year to produce.³⁶⁸ Around the same time, merchant Samuel Thompson sent the *Governor Simcoe*, a private merchant vessel, to the Forty to pick up thirty-six more barrels of flour, asking Nelles to bring his barrels down to the lakeshore in advance.³⁶⁹

Industrial and Social Networks Formed Along Geographical Lines

GIS analyses of trade in Niagara reveal the formation of community networks as farmers worked to build local capital yet used resources from throughout the region to improve their own

³⁶⁷ “Letter from William Crooks to Robert Nelles, May 28, 1804,” Item 13 Folder 4, transcript from the *Robert Nelles fonds*. The other miller was John Green, who had built the first mill at the Forty in 1789.

³⁶⁸ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 79.

³⁶⁹ “Letter from Capt. Samuel Thompson to Robert Nelles, May 29, 1804,” Item 8 Folder 1, transcript from the *Robert Nelles fonds*. Thirty barrels were from Nelles’ stores, and six from farmer and town clerk Andrew Pettit.

farms and businesses. Thus, while independent trade networks between farmers, millers and other enterprises functioned within each individual community, each one remained connected to the others in the Niagara district. One defining feature of Niagara's Loyalist era economy was the establishment of industrial centres at the intersection of the escarpment and the creeks. A GIS analysis of a potash manufactory on the border of Pelham and Louth exemplifies this assertion.

When clearing land, Niagara households would save the ashes from burnt wood to manufacture it themselves into soap for family use. Leftover ash was then sold to potash manufacturers who paid approximately ten pence per bushel to further develop it into potash or pearlash, which was then exported to Montreal. The "house" or "field" ashes were collected and put into large wooden vats with small holes in the bottom, and then soaked with boiling water that filtered through the holes.³⁷⁰ This process deprived the ashes of their salts. The resulting alkali solution was then boiled in large kettles to produce the salts, which at that point were termed "potash." They could be heated to process them further into what was called pearlash.

Daniel Servos was involved in the operation of two potash manufactories; one near his farm on the Four Mile Creek, and another near the escarpment on the Fifteen Mile Creek where Rockway Glen is today. Partnering with merchants William and James Crooks and acting as a site manager, Servos hired individuals to bring wagonloads of limestone, empty barrels, cords of firewood and provisions for the labourers at the Fifteen Mile. Bushels of ashes were locally sourced from families around the potashery, and the completed product was brought back to Newark. The Crooks brothers would then ship it in barrels to their Montreal trade partners Auldjo & Maitland.³⁷¹

³⁷⁰ Gray, *Letters from Canada*, 216.

³⁷¹ These operations have been deduced from the information found in "Account Book Volume IV 1799-1801," *Daniel Servos Records 1779-1826*. MS 538. Archives of Ontario.

The community's distance from Servos and Crooks at the Four Mile Creek and Newark was an isolating factor because travel back and forth was costly. Servos records that each round trip from the Four Mile Creek to the Fifteen Mile Falls cost between 12-20 shillings depending on the load, meaning that it was crucial to transport goods as efficiently as possible. The wagons could not carry much weight; those that went back with potash only carried three or four barrels at a time.³⁷² While the lime and wood came from Niagara, Servos was able to procure the bushels of ashes locally. In this way, he cut his own costs while providing another burgeoning community with a market for the ashes they produced when land clearing.

Using data from the Servos accounts from 1800-01, the GIS reveals that an industrial centre was formed around the Fifteen Mile potashery as it provided a market for local ashes, an opportunity for people to perform labour and purchase goods, and was a source of production for a valuable export commodity. The industrial centre formed on the Fifteen held numerous ties to the King's Mills since Servos operated a second potashery near his farm on the Four Mile Creek. The two manufactories were connected by the labourers who traveled back and forth with food and supplies. Servos also collected cords of wood from customers in Niagara district as payment at his mills and forwarded the wood to the Fifteen Mile Creek for use in the ash boiling ovens.³⁷³

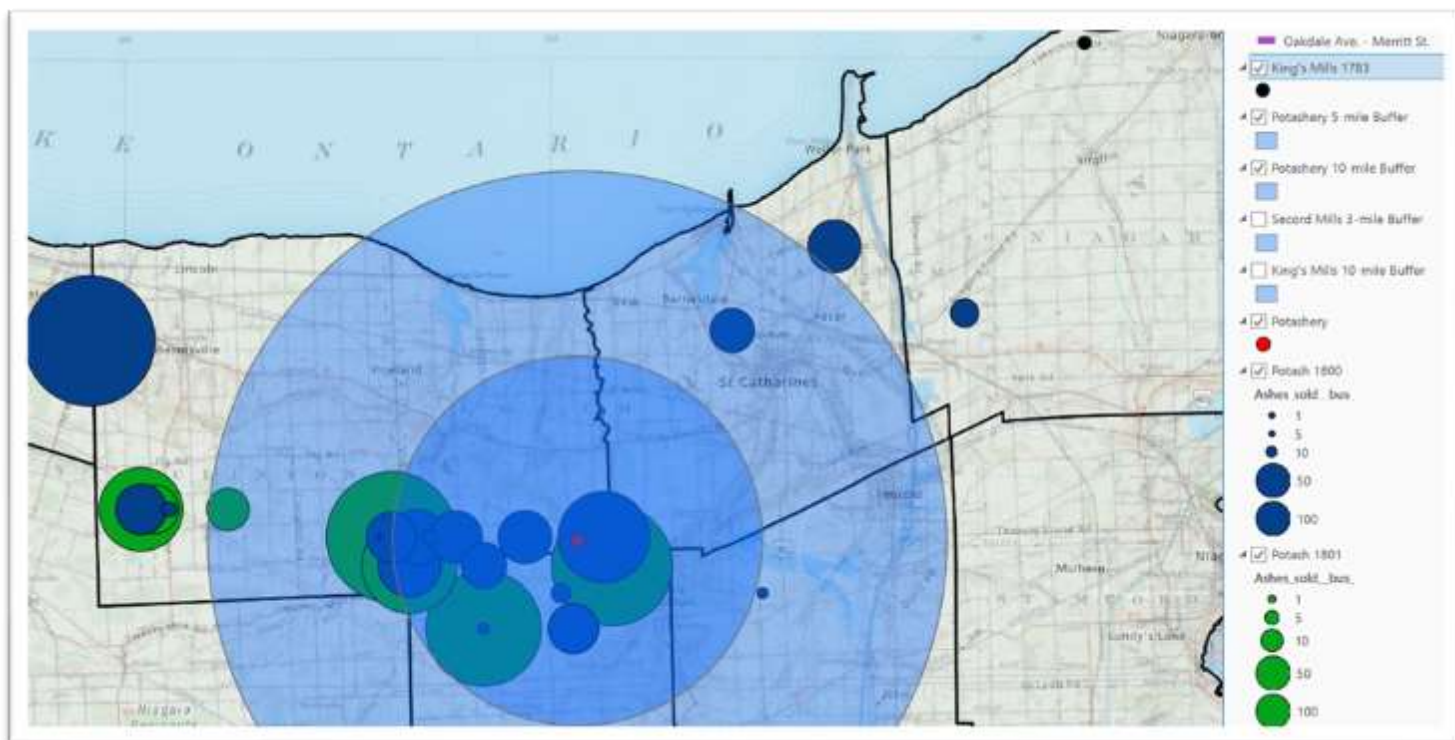
The families providing bushels of ashes lived near the Fifteen Mile Falls, meaning that labour inputs were local. They put money back into their rural economies by bettering their own farms and trading goods with neighbours. Many of these farmers in Louth and Pelham not only

³⁷² A barrel of potash weighed almost twice as much as a barrel of flour. The Servos accounts do not specify the weight of the barrels, aside from one note that recorded a transfer of seven barrels to the Crooks brothers, each containing approximately 350lbs of potash. Gray, *Letters from Canada*, 180, notes that importation of potash from America into the St. John's customs house of Lower Canada in 1806 recorded each barrel as weighing 336lbs.

³⁷³ **Turn on GIS layers entitled "Fifteen Mile Potashery," "Ash Sales 1800" and "Ash Sales 1801."** These layers show the locations of families that sold their potash to Servos to be manufactured into potash. Notice how they are mostly located around the Fifteen Mile Falls, as opposed to the flour and lumber mill account holders who are mostly located in Niagara township.

sold ashes, but they also worked at the potashery or salt works as payment for their purchases of household items like linen and tea from Servos. The accounts show that they chopped wood, repaired wagons, and built troughs and vats for Servos a couple of days per year. The use of ashes and labourers from Pelham and cords of wood and limestone from Niagara means that although natural barriers like the escarpment forced settlement into semi-isolated townships, there was still inter-regional trade happening. This reinforces the notion of individual agency by Loyalist farmers and entrepreneurs and the prevalence of using natural resources for local use instead of solely for export.

Figure 9: The Fifteen Mile Potashery



In this analysis, the GIS displays how eighty-three percent of farmers either selling to or working at the potashery lived on or above the escarpment, even though the work was done below, at the base of the falls. The escarpment played an important role as the dividing factor between who participated in the local economy and who did not. While surveyors laid out

township perimeters in the 1780s according to natural boundaries such as the escarpment and the Welland River, the communities that formed were centred around the junctions between the Niagara's escarpment and creeks.³⁷⁴ Thus, the foundations of local industry in the Loyalist period often rested upon such natural intersections. For the Mississaugas too, natural features denoted boundaries between lands. They called the Twelve Mile the "Es Que Sink" or "The Last Creek."³⁷⁵ Suggesting the Twelve Mile Creek was the "last" indicates its significance as a boundary likely forming the westernmost perimeter of what was the Niagara River's sphere of influence for those inhabiting the lands nearby.

Bulk shipments of potash to Montreal began after 1800. While flour was the biggest export, it was unreliable, which is why people engaged in other endeavours. In 1802, the amount of flour exported was less than half of the previous year, but merchants note that "deficiency has been fully compensated by the excess on the pot ash."³⁷⁶ Chippawa merchant Thomas Cummings and his partner John Muirhead, a prominent magistrate and collector of customs in town, ran a potashery in the early 1790s.³⁷⁷ Cummings owned half of the business and his creditors Auldjo & Maitland financed some of the required materials. However, letters from A & M show that production was poor throughout the early 1800s.³⁷⁸ For six years they urged Cummings to produce more potash and compared his production to that of Hamilton in Queenston and others

³⁷⁴ **Once again, turn on GIS layer entitled "18th c. Municipal Boundaries."** The majority of those producing ash for the Fifteen Mile Potashery were located along the escarpment, between Louth and Pelham townships.

³⁷⁵ Jackson, *St. Catharines Ontario: Its Early Years*, 48.

³⁷⁶ Cartwright copied letterbooks, 190.

³⁷⁷ E. A. Cruikshank, "A Country Merchant in Upper Canada 1800-1812," 146.

³⁷⁸ Cruikshank, 163. "We approve of the Sale of your provisions-you say nothing as to Potash, we have often urged, especially at this time a prosecution of that business while ye prices continue high of which there is still a prospect; ye expense of kettles & ye erecting ye works being now incurred, it would be wrong to drop it."

in the peninsula, writing “we see no reason why you cannot make as much as your Friends at Niagara do.”³⁷⁹ Merchants and farmers alike were not all successful in its large-scale manufacturing before the War of 1812. The lack of production was attributed to having “too many irons in ye fire”, but others like Gray asserted that potash manufacturing was not as big of an industry as it had the potential to be because people were, essentially, lazy.³⁸⁰

More than half of the potash that was exported from Quebec in the early 1800s actually came from the United States. In 1807, 11,007 cwt was imported into Quebec at the port of St. Johns.³⁸¹ The average annual amount of potash exported from Quebec between 1800-05 was 22,084 cwt. According to Cartwright, the potash produced from the Midland district and west, comprised eight per cent of the total quantity exported from Quebec in 1803.³⁸² Two percent of that was produced in Niagara. Niagara’s contributions came mostly from producers like Hamilton, but it is impossible to know his exact contributions since none of those records exist. Cartwright’s figures provide some insight, showing that potash exports from Niagara increased each year after 1800 from 27 barrels, to 96 barrels in 1802, and 157 barrels in 1803.³⁸³

The Pillars of Prosperity

Communities in Niagara were formed along geographical lines, but other factors such as ethnicity and class played a role in economic development and people’s potential for success as

³⁷⁹ Cruikshank, “A Country Merchant in Upper Canada 1800-1812,” 165.

³⁸⁰ Cruikshank, 165. A&M told Cummings it would be better to do a few things well than to do many things poorly. Gray, *Letters from Canada*, 215: “There can be no doubt that their time is not fully occupied in the management of their farms; and were they more industrious, it would make up in some measure for the want of population.”

³⁸¹ Gray, 180. The equivalent of 3669 barrels @ 3 cwt. per barrel.

³⁸² Figures for 1803 are found in *Cartwright copied letterbooks*, 206 & 209. $20242.2 \text{ cwt} \div 3 = 6747$ barrels shipped from Quebec. $529 \div 6747 = 8\%$ came from the Midland district. $151 \div 6747 = 2\%$ came from Niagara.

³⁸³ *Cartwright copied letterbooks*, 138, 182 & 206.

the district's population evolved. Rather than being a place of new beginnings in the post-war Loyalist era, it was the case for many that Niagara allowed a continuation of prior class structures, kinship connections, and commercial enterprises. One's level of success in the Loyalist-era economy was affected by factors like the year they arrived in Niagara, who they had previous working relationships with, what kinship network they were born or married into, their position in the British military or Indian Department, their access to free or cheap labour, as well as their race and gender.

This building of community organizations fits into historian Daniel Samson's arguments about Nova Scotia's "improvers" who existed above the farming class but below administrators, creating an elite-led society founded in agricultural societies and other groups that allowed them to connect and discuss ideas.³⁸⁴ In Niagara, those wealthier people were members of the Masonic Lodge, appointed to administrative positions on the Land Board, or as judges and town wardens, and belonged to the same local Anglican church. An agricultural society was formed in 1792 of which Gov. Simcoe served as president. The group possessed a library of fifty valuable works by 1800. Individuals like Hamilton, McNab, Crooks, Nelles, Kerr, Street, and Butler, some of Niagara's largest landowners and most influential figures find their names on the society's list from 1792-1805.³⁸⁵ They were Niagara's version of "improvers" in society, claiming their place above other farmers and showing how economic capacity, status, and political connections strengthened one's wealth-building potential. Such higher-class individuals were not all from the same background. Yet, their lives quickly became connected through the socio-political development of Loyalist society. Some had backgrounds in the military and Indian Department

³⁸⁴ Daniel Samson, *The Spirit of Industry and Improvement: Liberal Government and Rural-Industrial Society, Nova Scotia, 1790-1862*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 2008), 270.

³⁸⁵ Carnochan, *Names only but much more*, 9.

as officers, had been given hundreds of acres, and appointed for administrative titles as judges and town wardens. Some had kinship connections from their homes in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, many ex-Rangers originating from the Mohawk Valley.

One's year of arrival greatly impacted their economic status. Most late Loyalists did not have the prior connections that the first settlers did, making it harder to earn money during their first decade of settlement. Since by 1800 the majority of Niagara was settled by new middle to lower class farmers, the initial Loyalists with money and connections became an even smaller minority, continuing to hold most of the power in the region. Successful first-generation entrepreneurs formed close-knit family networks by amalgamating land and owning multiple capital assets that were critical production centres in the community such as mills, tanyards, potasheries and iron-works. They left behind physical resources and kinship connections for their children to continue using throughout the 19th century, the wealth disparity becoming entrenched. Once capital accumulation had begun, people could continue building connections, knowledge, and inventory. Merchant millers, for example, evolved into roles as traders, shippers, storekeepers and even innkeepers.³⁸⁶ Robert Hamilton is a key example of this evolution, using his positions as a judge, justice of the peace, and member of the Legislative Assembly to gain influence in the Upper Canadian economy.³⁸⁷ Goring used his unique skills as well, earning roles in Niagara as a land agent, a schoolteacher, and a consultant of sorts, his diary showing a few instances of composing official documents including a will, a bill of sale, a deputy lieutenant's commission and a petition.

³⁸⁶ J. K. Johnson. *Becoming Prominent: Leadership in Upper Canada, 1791-1841*. (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 59. This Canadian historian connects wealth accumulation to mercantile activity, saying: "that wealth was very likely the result of a combination of activities which could include non-business activities such as public office; that Scots seem to have been better equipped than other nationalities to successfully acquire wealth; and that it was best to arrive early in the province and then to stay in one advantageous spot."

³⁸⁷ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 42.

In studies of 19th century rural Nova Scotian communities, similar patterns emerge. Historian Rusty Bittermann argues that settlement was differentiated, and the initial distribution of resources created divisions that just became deeper throughout the lives of subsequent generations.³⁸⁸ In the case of Niagara, it was not so much an initial distribution of resources, but an initial settlement of wealthier individuals who used their prior connections to build capital and form community organizations that benefitting their interests. Bittermann also argues that earlier immigrants had more wealth to invest in resources like land, tools and labour, and thus created capital assets that could be passed on to future generations, entrenching the wealth disparity. The first wave of settlers in Niagara similarly accumulated greater family capital because they had more time to make purchases and investments.

Land ownership was an important facet of one's ability to participate in the economy. Historians have debated the role of land ownership in wealth accumulation, some saying that having land was equal to owning power, while others argue this is a false equivalency.³⁸⁹ Niagara's top land-owning families in the early 1800s were major merchants like Robert Hamilton, William Dickson, Samuel Street, or were Loyalist merchant millers with multiple family members that had been granted substantial acreage, like the Ball and Nelles families.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁸ Rusty Bittermann, "The Hierarchy of the Soil: Land and Labour in a 19th Century Cape Breton Community" *Acadiensis* 18, no. 1 (1988): 34, accessed February 25, 2019, <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/Acadiensis/article/view/12258/0>.

³⁸⁹ Clarke, *Land, Power, and Economics on the Frontier of Upper Canada*. Clarke argues in his study of settlement in western Ontario that land ownership combined with good education created a base of men that led the community. J. K. Johnson. *Becoming Prominent: Leadership in Upper Canada, 1791-1841*, 59. Johnson does not include land ownership in his argument that wealth was associated with mercantile activity in combination with non-commercial activities such as holding public office.

³⁹⁰ Land allowance found in Archives of Ontario. Crown Lands Department, RG 1, C-I-p, Vol 3., "A Return by Augustus Jones, Deputy Surveyor, of Lands Granted," Nassau, July 2, 1792. Accessed from: <https://dr.library.brocku.ca/bitstream/handle/10464/9246/Volume4Edited.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>. Henrick and Robert Nelles were given a collective 5,300 acres in crown land grants, although they were not located in the same townships. Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 182. Jacob and Peter Ball were given a collective 5,300 acres. This was before they bought or sold land, both families acquiring even more land by the 19th century.

Wilson argues that the goal of land ownership was viewed differently by these different groups of people.³⁹¹ For example, the Loyalist families tended to amalgamate their land purchases so that they could live near one another and group their assets.³⁹² At first they diversified their interests, and then consolidated based on which area provided the best chance for long-term success for them and their heirs. Hamilton and other speculators saw land not as a resource, but like an investment to remain unimproved and sold for profit at a later date.

Starting over on a new frontier equalized people of the middle and lower classes. Most United Empire Loyalists arrived in Niagara with nothing, land impartially allotted by the instruction of General Haldimand post-revolution. However, a group of loyalist officers including Sir John Johnson of the Indian Department convinced the Surveyor General to assign lots according to the desires of the officers.³⁹³ Thus, a class disparity was immediately clear in Niagara, as field officers, captains and subalterns received between 5000-2000 acres each, some even able to choose the general area they wished to inhabit.

People were not bound by the limitations of their physical location. Humans still made decisions regarding where to live, what to build, what to grow, and who to work and trade with, all of which affected their futures. One's class, gender, and ethnicity also affected how they engaged in the economy through their inputs of labour. Further, those with the privilege of choice had a better chance of becoming successful in their new lives on the Niagara frontier. Some Loyalists had more options available to them than others; Indigenous peoples and Black men and women were not all given the same opportunities as white settlers.

³⁹¹ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 98.

³⁹² Wilson, 182. The Nelleses had consolidated 4,200 acres in Grimsby by 1809.

³⁹³ Gates, *Land Policies of Upper Canada*, 16.

Commercial success often depended on relationships established through marriage. This then raises the question of whether a woman was only valued as a commodity — the acquiring of a partner also securing the potential to raise the status of the man — or if she had more agency than that. Based on these sources, upper class women fit the above narrative, but working-class women contributed to society in different ways. Gender mattered in the colonial household. Molly Brant, for example, was an important negotiator and liaison for the Mohawk people. Yet, her experiences are not typical of a Mohawk woman, and offer a rich view of elite women in colonial society. Though Mokawk, Brant was wealthy and very well protected, the sister of renowned Mohawk Chief Joseph Brant and married to Superintendent of Indian Affairs General Sir William Johnson. Her life as a refugee was made easier by her social connections and her wealth – sufficient wealth to own two homes and several slaves.³⁹⁴

By the 1800s, the Haudenosaunee at the Grand River continued to work their land, but the lack of hunting grounds and the isolation led to a deeper dependence on British goods.³⁹⁵ Haudenosaunee farming practices were different than white Loyalist farming, in that although they used some Western technologies in their agriculture, “basic values and family practices continued.”³⁹⁶ At the Grand River, primary sources show the presence of what Hill calls “nation-based” farming, much of it inter-national as the Cayugas, Mohawks, and Oneidas shared planting

³⁹⁴ Steve Pitt, *To Stand and Fight Together: Richard Pierpoint and the Coloured Corps of Upper Canada*, (Toronto: Dundurn, 2008), 55. Her home in Kingston was “sometimes boasting more than a dozen slaves or indentured servants.”

³⁹⁵ Campbell, *Travels in the interior inhabited parts of North America*, 210-11. “The church in the village is elegant, the school house commodious, both built by the British government, who annually order a great many presents to be distributed among the natives; ammunition and warlike stores of all the necessary kinds; saddles; bridles, kettles, cloth, blankets, tomahawks, with tobacco pipes in the end of them; other things, and trinkets innumerable, provisions and stores; so that they may live, and really be, as the saying is, happy as the day is long.”

³⁹⁶ Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of*, 173.

grounds.³⁹⁷ Carl Benn provides a useful map in his recent work *A Mohawk Memoir from the War of 1812: John Norton – Teyoninhokarawen*, showing the location of these nations along the Grand River after the War of 1812, where one can imagine such sharing of land and resources.³⁹⁸

The Grand River settlement produced large quantities of corn during the Loyalist era, although sources do not always specify if the producers were Indigenous or white.³⁹⁹ By the 1817, there were an estimated 2,260 people living on the Grand River. Thirty were people were Black (1%), 430 were white (19%) and 1800 were Indigenous (80%).⁴⁰⁰ The intermarriage of Haudenosaunee people with settler families altered the Grand River settlement's economic development by the early 1800s.⁴⁰¹ By the 1800s, intermarriage became an issue for local elites and those on Niagara's land boards regarding who maintained title to the lands in the future. Hill gives examples of men like John Dochsteder and John Huff who died in the early 1800s, their mixed children receiving the right to land as Haudenosaunee citizens. Eventually by the 1830s, the Mohawk council asserted that inheritors could not "have it both ways".⁴⁰²

Some of the Black people mentioned in 1817 were likely the same people or even descendants of those enslaved by Joseph Brant in the 1790s, described in Patrick Campbell's

³⁹⁷ Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of*, 173. Hill's examples of the inter-nation communal farming of the Haudenosaunee include: "The survey diary of Augustus Jones refers to planting grounds shared by the Mohawks and Cayugas in 1797. When the Crown in 1829 suggested that the Haudenosaunee divide their remaining lands into six tracts, one for each nation, Mohawk Royaner Isaac Locke responded that it would be too difficult because of shared cornfields between the Mohawks, Cayugas, and Oneidas. An 1808 provincial government report references Seneca cornfields along the lower part of the river on a tract that was to be ceded to the Crown."

³⁹⁸ Benn, *A Mohawk Memoir from the War of 1812*: xii.

³⁹⁹ Cruikshank & Hunter, *The Correspondence of the Honourable Peter Russell*, 284. Purchasing agent John McGill purchased corn from the Grand River in 1796.

⁴⁰⁰ Gourlay, *Statistical account of Upper Canada*, 385.

⁴⁰¹ Campbell, *Travels in the interior*, 210. Campbell describes the Haudenosaunee's living situation in 1791, saying: "the habitations of the Indians are pretty close on each side of the river as far as I could see, with a very few white people interspersed among them, married to squaws and others of the half blood, their offspring."

⁴⁰² Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of*, 166.

visit wherein he described two slaves wearing elegant attire serving the table of Indigenous and non-Indigenous guests.⁴⁰³ Black labour remained a key part of Niagara's economy in the early 19th century. There were free Black families living in Niagara during the Loyalist era as well. The King's Mill records include a small account with a Black man named Peter Long in 1793 who was entitled to 300 acres for his military service.⁴⁰⁴ In the late 1790s, free Black men like John Barker, Peter Martin, Richard Martin, and John Prince petitioned the Upper Canadian government for land they were entitled to in Niagara.⁴⁰⁵ Peter Martin had previously involved himself in the district's political matters, appearing before the Legislative Council in 1793 to protest the treatment of Black people in Niagara, using the example of Chloe Cooley.⁴⁰⁶ Free and enslaved Black people worked alongside one another in the fully populated township of Niagara.

Free Black Loyalists faced additional obstacles to economic and social advancement. Lands granted to Loyalists required improvement before people could gain official title to them. They had to clear five acres, put a fence around it, build a house and a road connecting to his

⁴⁰³ Campbell, *Travels in the interior inhabited parts of North America*, 195. "Two slaves attended the table, the one in scarlet, the other in coloured clothes, with silver buckles in their shoes, and ruffles, and every other part of their apparel in proportion."

⁴⁰⁴ Long was listed as entitled to land as a rank & file soldier under the "List of Reduced Officers and Privates of Different Corps Settled in the District of Nassau, Specifying the Number of Acres of Land Entitled to, the Number of Acres Received and what Remains Due, Inclusive of Their Family Lands, &c." in Archives of Ontario. Crown Lands Department, RG 1, C-I-p, Vol 3., "A Return by Augustus Jones, Deputy Surveyor, of Lands Granted," Nassau, July 2, 1792. Accessed from: <https://dr.library.brocku.ca/bitstream/handle/10464/9246/Volume4Edited.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>.

⁴⁰⁵ A list of Upper Canada Land Petitions can be found online, transcribed by Robert R. Mutrie at: <https://sites.google.com/site/niagarasettlers/upper-canada-land-petitions>.

⁴⁰⁶ An excerpt from Simcoe's correspondence on March 21, 1793 in Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 304: "Peter Martin a negro (in the service of Colonel Butler) attended the Board for the purpose of informing them of a violent outrage committed by one Fromond [Vrooman], an Inhabitant of this Province, residing near Queenston (or the west landing) on the person of Chloe Cooley, a negro girl in his service by binding her and violently and forcibly transporting her across the river, and delivering her against her will to certain persons unknown, to prove the truth of his allegation he produced William Grisley (or Crisley)."

neighbour within the first two years of settlement.⁴⁰⁷ Historian Steven Pitt notes examples of free Black men living in Niagara who were given land grants as Loyalists, but were unable to develop those properties because lacked family support because their wives and children were still enslaved in the American colonies.⁴⁰⁸ Further, if a free Black man married a Black female slave of a white Loyalist, his children would still belong to the master. Domestic production and access to key markets in Niagara depended on the labour of the family unit, and thus it was extremely difficult for them to legally gain title to their land. To solve this problem, in 1794, nineteen Black Loyalists in Niagara delivered a petition to Governor Simcoe. They asked for a tract of land with lots adjacent to one another so that they could group their labour and have a better chance of farming successfully, rather than continuing in isolation.⁴⁰⁹ One of the signees was Richard Pierpoint, who later helped create the Coloured Corps during the War of 1812.⁴¹⁰ He and the others were denied their petition to settle in adjacent lands, and by 1806 some records show that Pierpoint had sold his land in Niagara, others having him listed as living with other Black people in the township of Grantham.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁷ Pitt, *To Stand and Fight Together*, 52.

⁴⁰⁸ Pitt, 51.

⁴⁰⁹ Pat Mestern, *Fergus: A Scottish Town By Birthright*. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2008), 16. This *Petition of Free Negroes* read: "That there are a number of Negroes in this part of the Country many of whom have been Soldiers during the late ware between Great Britain and America, and others who were born free with a few who have come into Canada since the peace, -Your Petitioners are desirous of settling adjacent to each other that they may be enabled to give assistance (in work) to those amongst them who may most want it. Your Petitioners therefore humbly Pray that their situation may be taken into consideration, and if your Excellency should see fit to allow them a Tract of Country to settle on, separate from the white Settlers, your Petitioners hope their behaviour will be such as to shew, that Negroes are capable of being industrious, and in loyalty to the Crown they are not deficient."

⁴¹⁰ Ontario Historical Society. Papers and Records (Toronto, 1922), pp 144-145. Accessed from: <https://dr.library.brocku.ca/bitstream/handle/10464/9246/Volume4Edited.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>.

⁴¹¹ Mestern, 17.

Victims of the socio-economic state of early 19th century Niagara, many Black men were forced as individuals to continue performing labour to generate income and acquire necessities. The mill accounts of men like Servos and Hamilton show brief interactions with Black farmers, often accepting them as labourers in exchange for goods and services. For example, a man named James Southard had an account with the King's Mills in 1803, purchasing shoes and cloth and working for more than two months for Servos.⁴¹² Similarly, Hamilton employed a man he called "Black Tom" in 1808-09 as a labourer for one month for nine dollars.⁴¹³ Thus, a trend appears showing Black men in Niagara working more often as general labourers than farmers.

Not only Black men, but single white men who arrived in Niagara with few or no kinship connections worked for months as hired labourers. Because general labour was rare, people were paid well. In fact, Hamilton's daybook shows that hired Black men earned the same income as hired white men. In the winter of 1808, a man referred to as "Frenchman" worked for him at the same the same rate as Tom, for three months.⁴¹⁴ Hamilton specifies that nine dollars per month was equal to working for 24 days at three shillings per day. This means that for people working on a monthly basis, there were only six or seven scattered days that they had to themselves. Even if they owned a farm and wanted to clear or work the land on those days, they could not use that time to work on their farms because they were boarding at their place of employment.

⁴¹² "Account Book Volume III 1798-1816," *Daniel Servos Records 1779-1826*. No. 74. MS 538. Archives of Ontario. The words "Negro man" are scribbled under his name. Southard worked from Feb. 17 to April 26, 1803.

⁴¹³ Nine dollars was Equal to £3-16-0. White men working for Hamilton earned 8-10 dollars per month, so he was earning the same as a white man in Hamilton's employ.

⁴¹⁴ Robert Hamilton Daybook in Library and Archives Canada, Alexander Hamilton and family fonds, Family correspondence and estate records [textual record] MG 24 I 26 Volume 24. He mentions the "Frenchman" on page 10 and lists Tom's wages on the very last page.

The Fur Trade in the 1800s

In the early 1800s, the original shopkeeper aristocracy of merchants in Upper Canada began to be replaced by a new generation of merchants. Daniel Servos died in 1803, Joseph Brant in 1807, along with prominent Montreal fur traders and financiers. In fact, shortly after the death of Robert Hamilton in 1809, Montreal fur trader Alexander Henry wrote nostalgically to Askin, both of whom had been involved in Great Lakes trade since the Seven Years War.⁴¹⁵ He lamented the perceived laziness of the new generation and their disregard for the wisdom offered by himself and fur trade magnates Todd, McGill and Frobisher, all in their late 60s and early 70s.

These changes in relationships between Detroit, Niagara, Kingston and Montreal shifted the direction of Great Lakes trade. In Niagara, a new generation of Loyalists had grown up and taken charge of their family enterprises. In some cases, the takeover was successful and in others, the businesses crumbled. Hamilton's sons took over his businesses unsuccessfully and Wilson attributes their decline to the fall in fur trade and military provisioning along with the destruction commercial facilities in the War of 1812.⁴¹⁶

During the early 1800s, the North West Company competed against the HBC and the new XY Company, and their rivalries intensified with the declining beaver population. Although the average annual value of the fur trade remained similar to that of the 1780s and 90s, worth

⁴¹⁵ *The John Askin Papers Vol II*, 625. "There is only us four old friends alive, all the new North westards are a parcel of Boys and upstarts, who where not born in our time, and suposes [sic] they know much more of the Indian trade than any before them. I am very much hurt of the death of our worthy friend Mr. Hamilton, it must be hard for him to leave this World when just arrived at independence, when other poor fellows who has nothing, must remain & rut thro life, in their old days, and experience the vexation of being forgotten and neglected. Montreal is much changed since your time, I meet twenty young men in the Street in a day that I do not know, the Country is over run with Scotchmen, you wish I would send you a Canadian, you will observe that every lasey Idle vagabond in the Country who is to lazey to work, becomes Soldiers, and those who will be industrious can get half a dollor per day."

⁴¹⁶ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 166. Wilson believes the education Hamilton gave his sons was "not a realistic grounding for the management of a complex and fragile enterprise under demanding Upper Canadian conditions."

around £250,000, the number of exported beaver pelts had gradually diminished while doubling in value.⁴¹⁷ Furs from the North West continued to make up for the deficiencies experienced in Detroit and the lower Great Lakes. John Askin said in 1800 and 1806 that in Detroit: “the appearances are realy [sic] bad.”⁴¹⁸ Cartwright in Kingston said in 1802 that: “Never since I have been in Carrying Business have I had a worse Prospect of Returns.” Thus, the early 1800s confronted Niagara’s merchants with a new economic hurdle as the fur trade was not as profitable as it had once been.

Niagara merchants felt the results of Detroit’s losses. The portage in 1804 made only £475 in profits from the North West Company, down to £142 by 1809.⁴¹⁹ Hamilton’s daybook shows a brief interaction with the fur trade in 1808, recording that he portaged 296 packs of furs on two separate days.⁴²⁰ The portaging revenue from these two days would have been only £24-13-4 at the rate of 1.66 shillings per pack of furs. Hamilton had multiple ledgers and daybooks for his different operations along the Niagara portage and this is likely not a full account of his fur trade portaging operations. Hamilton and others tried to draw from the local economy offset the losses from portaging, receiving and forwarding, but it was not enough to substitute for the losses experienced by Niagara merchants in this decade.⁴²¹

Recall how in the previous decade the value of the fur trade had risen by 25 per cent, but the growth stemmed from the Canadian North West and via the Grand Portage-Ottawa River

⁴¹⁷ Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 264. In 1784 a beaver pelt was worth 8.5 shillings and in 1801 they were worth 14 shillings.

⁴¹⁸ *The John Askin Papers Vol II*, 292.

⁴¹⁹ Wilson, *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*, 87.

⁴²⁰ Robert Hamilton Daybook, 19. On Aug. 5 he portaged 192 packs for the North West Company, and on Aug. 20 he portaged 104 packs for three other merchant companies including himself, Thomas Clark, and John Muirhead.

⁴²¹ Wilson, 87.

route, not from Detroit. The North West fur trade helped merchants at Niagara bridge the precarious inter-war period of political and economic change. Niagara's role in transporting fur trade goods shows that it was clearly an important part of the larger trans-Atlantic empire, not yet as a point of production, but as a communication link, a lifeline to Detroit and its environs, a hotbed of political connections and a hub of enterprise. It was the door to the continental interior that Simcoe so badly wanted. By the early 1800s, merchants knew that reliance on the unpredictable fur trade alone was unwise, and that they needed to adapt to the market changes that came with increasing settlement around the Great Lakes.

1800s Wheat Economy

Niagara's farmers entered the 19th century with a history of producing small surpluses of flour for a constantly fluctuating wheat market, willing to sell to whichever market offered them the highest returns. The British garrisons provided a ready market for Niagara's flour, peas, corn, pork, and beef, but farmers and merchants would also sell to American buyers if offered higher prices.⁴²² They would negotiate prices with British purchasing agents, often waiting months to sell because they anticipated a rise in price later in the year.⁴²³ After 1800 this pattern continued, with the biggest change being the opening of the Montreal market. As Niagara's population grew, government pressure to produce large market surpluses of flour and other goods for export

⁴²² McCalla, *Planting the Province*, 250. McCalla estimates the annual expenditures for British army food provisions in Upper Canada were between £5000-£8000 from 1795-1805.

⁴²³ Cruikshank & Hunter, *The Correspondence of the Honourable Peter Russell*, 127. Wheat prices fluctuated month by month, spurred by rumours of war that could induce people to move from the States to Upper Canada, meaning there would be extra demand so they could charge higher prices. Even without such rumours, the fact that if the government was reaching year end and did not have their flour quota filled, farmers knew they could charge more money. McGill's letters to Military Secretary James Green in 1797 and 1798 reveal that it was often a waiting game.

also increased.⁴²⁴ A larger number of lower to middle class farmers produced small, irregular flour surpluses that were collected and sent to Montreal. Ultimately, Niagara was not a main contributor of the province's flour exports before the War of 1812. Most of the wheat grown in Upper Canada was consumed within the province itself. In fact, because so much of the flour sent to Montreal was consumed in Lower Canada, McCalla argues that "in the perspective of the larger Canadian economy, they were not really exports at all."⁴²⁵

According to McCalla, people focused on generating wealth as opposed to income; a long-term goal that required years of steady capital accumulation in combination with income generation.⁴²⁶ Capital accumulation meant that manufacturing and small-scale processing developed by the 19th century. Early 1800s retail payments reflect an array of raw and manufactured domestic products circulating Niagara markets. Hamilton's store records from 1806-12 show that approximately 25% of annual credits to his account came in the form of wheat and flour, 12% in pork, 10% in cash, 21% by a third party, 11% in promissory notes, and the last 29% credit types unrecorded.⁴²⁷

Niagara's pre-wheat economy was not a hiatus between the end of the fur trade and the beginning of mass wheat exports. Rather, the decline of the fur trade happened simultaneous to the rise in the production and export of raw goods in Upper Canada such as flour, lumber, and

⁴²⁴ McCalla, *Planting the Province*, 249. By 1805, Upper Canada with 46,000 people had approximately 179,000 acres under culture. This was about 3.9 acres cultivated per person, a figure that remained approximately the same until the 1860s as the population increased to 1 million people. Niagara had approximately 11,000 people by 1805.

⁴²⁵ McCalla, 67.

⁴²⁶ McCalla, "The "Loyalist" Economy of Upper Canada, 1784-1806," 303.

⁴²⁷ McCalla, *Planting the Province*, 269.

potash. After furs, flour was the province's most produced commodity by 1800.⁴²⁸ The eastern districts of Upper Canada had begun shipping agricultural goods to Montreal already before 1800, but it was not yet profitable for Niagara merchants to do so.⁴²⁹ The balances were finally tipped by a combination of war in France, poor crop growth in Great Britain, and a diminished access to supplies of wheat from the Baltics due to the Corn Laws restricting the import of grain into Great Britain from outside the country.⁴³⁰ Wheat was the most considerable Canadian export, the average annual quantity of wheat exported from Quebec between 1800-05 being 345,499 bushels, along with 19,822 barrels of flour.⁴³¹ The quality of Upper Canadian wheat was believed to be superior to that produced in Lower Canada.⁴³² However, the export figures of wheat and flour in this period were inconsistent. Provincial flour exports from Quebec in 1803 were cut down to almost a third of the amount exported in 1801.⁴³³

In 1800, Niagara's contributions of 476 barrels to the provincial flour market comprised less than ten percent of the total amount produced in the province.⁴³⁴ The year 1801 recorded ten times more flour exported from the Midland and Western districts, Niagara's contribution to this

⁴²⁸ McCalla, "The "Loyalist" Economy of Upper Canada, 1784-1806," 294.

⁴²⁹ Leung, Brock University Archives and Special Collections, Alan Hughes Collection, Box 6 Folder 9, 22. Kingston's access to Montreal was less restricted by geography, and they shipped for the first time in 1794, sending 896 barrels of flour, 83 barrels of middlings, and over 12,000 bushels of grain. Barrels being sold to the British government had to contain 200lbs of flour net and be guaranteed to last for a year.

⁴³⁰ Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ontario 1613-1880*, 28.

⁴³¹ Gray, *Letters from Canada*, 172.

⁴³² Gray, 210. Also *Richard Cartwright copied letterbooks*, 190. Cartwright notes in 1802 that the flour from Upper Canada and "particularly from Niagara, sold equal to the best American."

⁴³³ Gray, 197.

⁴³⁴ *Richard Cartwright copied letterbooks*, 137-138. Kingston exported a total of 4720 barrels of flour to Quebec from the Midland and Western districts. Niagara contributed 476 barrels of flour and 500 bushels of wheat to that number.

total also ten times what it had been the previous year, at approximately 5,000 barrels.⁴³⁵ After 1801, wheat and flour exports from Quebec decreased by thirty-five percent. However, the amount of flour contributed by Niagara remained constant.⁴³⁶ In 1803, the number of exports from Quebec drastically decreased once again, but Niagara's contributions increased.⁴³⁷ The fact that Quebec exports decreased does not mean that Upper Canadians produced less flour in those years. Niagara's increasing production from 1800-03 is proof that people were producing market surpluses every year. Historians note the reason for declining exports out of Canada was mostly due to the drop in flour prices between 1802-1804. These drastic price changes would not just occur from year to year, but from month to month.⁴³⁸

Niagara's wheat market was not driven by external factors such as the price of wheat and flour in Great Britain. Although the incentive of Niagara farmers and merchants to export flour to Quebec was lower when prices were down, wheat and flour were still consumed domestically in Upper Canada and sold to the military garrisons.⁴³⁹ In fact, in the low-export, low-value year

⁴³⁵ *Richard Cartwright copied letterbooks*, 176. 38,146 barrels of flour were exported from Quebec in 1801. Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ontario 1613-1880*, 27 states that in 1801, 14,285 barrels of flour of various qualities were shipped from Kingston to Montreal. Letter from Robert Nichol in Queenston to John Askin, June 15, 1801," in *The John Askin Papers Vol II*, 343 shows that Niagara sent 5,000 barrels in 1801, an amount that "for the first Year is really very great." However, part of the 5,000 may have come from the Detroit region, as Nichol does not specify if the shipment originated in total from Niagara district. Jones, 27, says that Detroit did supply 2489 barrels of the 14,285 barrels exported from Kingston. If the 5,000 barrels Nichol refers to were all produced in Niagara, this would mean that in 1801, Niagara contributed approximately 36% of the total flour exported to Montreal from the middle and western portions of the province. If only 2511 barrels were produced in Niagara (5000 - 2489), that would mean that Niagara contributed approximately 18% of the total flour exported.

⁴³⁶ *Richard Cartwright copied letterbooks*, 188. 28,301 barrels of flour were exported from Quebec in 1802. On page 182 Cartwright says that 4161 barrels of flour were exported from Niagara in 1802.

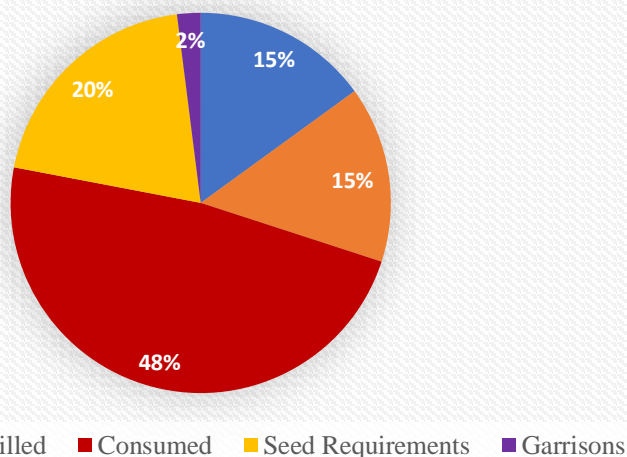
⁴³⁷ *Richard Cartwright copied letterbooks*, 209. 14,984 barrels of flour were exported from Quebec in 1803. On page 206 Cartwright says that 6406 barrels of flour were exported from Niagara in 1803.

⁴³⁸ Askin 1804 shows that flour in Detroit would fetch 20 shillings/cwt one month and 40 shillings/cwt the next. This instability was a constant factor in Niagara's early economy.

⁴³⁹ *Richard Cartwright copied letterbooks*, 208. 2812 barrels of flour were purchased by the government in 1803 to furnish the military posts at York, Fort George, Amherstburg and Kingston.

1803, McCalla records that fifteen percent of the total 511,000 bushels of wheat produced in Upper Canada was exported, forty-eight percent was consumed, twenty percent used for seed, two percent for garrison purchase, and fifteen percent distilled.⁴⁴⁰ If 14,000 bushels of Upper Canadian wheat went towards garrison purchases in 1803, this means that Niagara producers that year had grown more than twice the amount required for garrison purchases in the province.⁴⁴¹ The value of regional histories is made clear in this instance, as the staples thesis does not apply to Niagara's economy as they entered the Montreal flour markets. McCalla's other calculations suggest that in the early 1800s, forty-five percent of the land under culture in Upper Canada was for wheat.⁴⁴² In comparison, thirty-nine percent of the land under culture in Upper Canada in 1817 was for wheat.⁴⁴³ Thus, early 19th century production was already wheat-centric before the major exporting of the mid-19th century began.

Figure 10: Wheat Distribution in Upper Canada, 1803 (McCalla)



⁴⁴⁰ Figures taken from Table 5 "Estimated Wheat Output for Upper Canada, c. 1803" in McCalla, "The "Loyalist" Economy of Upper Canada, 1784-1806," 296.

⁴⁴¹ McCalla 296. In 1803, 14,000 bushels of wheat produced in Upper Canada went towards army purchases. Richard Cartwright copied letterbooks, 206, says that 6406 barrels of flour were exported from Niagara in 1803. Historians estimate 5-6 bushels of wheat made one barrel of flour, meaning that (6406 x 5 =) 32,030 bushels of wheat were produced in Niagara in 1803.

⁴⁴² McCalla, "The "Loyalist" Economy of Upper Canada, 1784-1806," 298.

⁴⁴³ McCalla, *Planting the Province*, 255.

The movement of flour from farm to market was a nuanced system in Niagara, but patterns emerge regarding supply and demand between links in the long-credit chain. No matter the size of the merchant firm, they were all subject to a long-credit system wherein farmers were indebted to merchants who owed their creditors in Montreal who subsequently owed import/export firms in London. Generally, Montreal merchants would tell their indebted consignees to purchase flour around the Great Lakes. Merchants had key contacts in townships throughout the peninsula, usually with the millers and prominent business-owners. They would then contact such individuals and form agreements regarding the quantity and price of flour to be sold. The miller had collected in his stores flour belonging to himself and other townspeople, and could estimate how much could be sold as market surpluses. The millers would then bring their flour to the point of shipment, and it would be shipped in bulk.

This is a general depiction of how merchants acquired Niagara's flour, but these relationships existed in all different forms. Sometimes, farmers skipped the town merchant millers and took directly to the larger Niagara merchant with their requests. For example, Robert Nelles had "declined any thing to do with trade" in the winter of 1803, so the Crooks brothers as Nelles' usual suppliers instead sent merchant Thomas Butler to live in Grimsby for the season to sell British goods and purchase local grain.⁴⁴⁴ Similarly, Niagara consignees encountered issues with unanticipated surpluses or shortfalls. For example, after already purchasing flour at a high price in Niagara and expecting to sell it in Montreal, merchant Thomas Cummings was told by his creditors Auldjo & Maitland in 1807 that there was little demand for flour, and that they even had the previous year's unsold flour sitting in their stores.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁴ "Letter from William & James Crooks to Robert Nelles at the Forty Mile Creek, September 9, 1803" Item 12 Folder 4, transcript from the *Robert Nelles fonds*.

⁴⁴⁵ Cruikshank, "A Country Merchant in Upper Canada 1800-1812", 166.

Due to the relationships between creditors in Montreal and merchants in Niagara, local manufacturing did not function in isolation from external markets. Various levels of merchant enterprises facilitated the movement of goods along the main trade routes throughout the peninsula.⁴⁴⁶ Although more prominent firms like Hamilton and Cartwright existed, there was not a monopoly hold of one merchant group over the entire Niagara market. Production of goods like whiskey and potash in many cases required the inputs of creditors for their start-up. The Crooks brothers funded part of the Fifteen Mile potashery, supplying wages and supplies for its workers, and also paid for the distillation supplies used by Nelles to make whiskey in Grimsby. Crooks would sell Nelles' whiskey to places around the Great Lakes, including military garrisons and to their creditors Auldjo & Maitland in Montreal.

Relationship with the United States (1800s)

Niagara had some of the highest numbers of cross-border trade in the province in the early 1800s, contributing to provincial tax revenues through regular collection of border tariffs. There were four customs ports along the Niagara river by 1801, and approximately half of the imported wine and spirits that entered Upper Canada from the United States between 1801-04 entered via these Niagara ports of Fort Erie, Chippawa, Queenston and Niagara.⁴⁴⁷ At this time Niagara made up only twenty-four percent of the province's population, so they were producing and consuming far more than the other ports in places like Sandwich, Kingston and Gananoque.

By the 1800s, Niagara also imported large amounts of salt from the United States. The Onondaga Salt Springs in New York produced most of the salt that Niagara merchants imported,

⁴⁴⁶ Gourlay, *Statistical account of Upper Canada*, 224. Gourlay states: "Such an exchange constitutes the natural trade of the province. It is negotiated by the merchants who receive and market the productions of the country, and introduce and sell such goods, wares, and merchandise, as the inhabitants want for their consumption."

⁴⁴⁷ *Cartwright copied letterbooks*, 294.

offered at a cheaper price than what was brought in from overseas.⁴⁴⁸ According to Gourlay, the Onondaga Salt Springs supplied Upper Canada together with “Michilimackinac, Detroit and the northern coast of Ohio, Pennsylvania, and those parts of the state of New York adjacent to Lakes Erie and Ontario.”⁴⁴⁹ The Niagara district actually imported some of the largest quantities of salt in the entire province, receiving twenty percent of the province’s salt imports in 1802, and forty-seven percent in 1804.⁴⁵⁰ Yet, government authorities in Niagara believed that Niagara held potential for large-scale production of salt, pushing its production already during the 1780s and 90s so that less importation might be required.⁴⁵¹ Niagara’s rivers and creeks carried salt, sources mentioning it at the Twelve, Fifteen, and Twenty Mile Creeks, along the Niagara River, and the Grand River.⁴⁵² There were also salt springs in Haldimand county that local merchants felt could have produced salt in quantities equivalent to that which was being produced in the Onondaga salt springs.⁴⁵³ Some entrepreneurs tried to gather these natural resources, but it in many cases the people did not fully taken advantage of them until later in the 19th century. This was because

⁴⁴⁸ Samuel Street Papers, Series F-547, MS 500 Reel 1, Archives of Ontario. In 1804, Queenston merchant Thomas Clark bought 11 barrels of salt from Onondaga Salt Springs.

⁴⁴⁹ Gourlay, *Statistical account of Upper Canada*, 101.

⁴⁵⁰ *Cartwright copied letterbooks*, 180. From July 1801 to December 1802, Niagara imported 2,431 bushels of salt from the United States at the Niagara border.

⁴⁵¹ Gourlay, *Statistical account of Upper Canada*, 146. “One [saltworks] in the township of Saltfleet [Stoney Creek] wrought only on a small scale, has produced a barrel of salt in a day, and it is thought it might be made to produce a much larger quantity...” Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 196. Deputy Surveyor General John Collins’ report in 1792 mentioned a saltworks in Niagara as a local supply point for the province.

⁴⁵² Gourlay, 427. During Gourlay’s meeting in 1818 with some of the inhabitants of Louth township, they stated that on the Fifteen and Twenty Mile Creeks there were springs yielding small amounts of salt and “if they were rightly managed, a sufficiency of salt might be made for the use of the township from that spring alone.” “Memoirs of Colonel John Clark,” 165: Clarke says there was a salt-works in operation at Louth in the early 1800s.

⁴⁵³ Gourlay, *Statistical account of Upper Canada*, 386.

in 1788, while a bushel of salt was worth 2.5 shillings in Montreal, it was worth 15 shillings in Kingston and 40 in Detroit because of shipping costs.⁴⁵⁴

In addition to salt, alcohol, flour, and other goods frequently exchanged between the two countries at the Niagara river, merchants also sold furs to American buyers when they could not get the prices they wanted from the British. Until 1800, Britain was the first choice for Canadian fur exports, but in years when prices were low, they looked south.⁴⁵⁵ Since many of the Great Lakes merchants were also involved in politics, international relations were heavily influenced by market trends. Some British administrators in Niagara tried to limit the amount of interaction between the two countries, surveyor D. W. Smith claiming that the politicians in the Legislative Assembly were acting “way too Republican”.⁴⁵⁶

Even the mere anticipation of political and economic developments in the United States affected Niagara’s economy. For example, many people saw how conflict in the Ohio River Valley indicated potential for another large-scale war. As a result, British administrators in Niagara were ordered to supply the Haudenosaunee with guns and ammunition.⁴⁵⁷ Three years later, whispers of war between America and France caused Niagara farmers to store flour in their barns, preparing for an influx of refugees that may require feeding, and thus a rise in the value of that commodity.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁴ Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 159.

⁴⁵⁵ *The John Askin Papers Vol. II*, 275. In a letter from Todd & McGill in Montreal to Askin in Detroit in 1800 they say: “The yankees will trade rum for racoons.” The fur trade in England was not doing well that year.

⁴⁵⁶ *The John Askin Papers Vol. II*,

⁴⁵⁷ M. A. FitzGibbon, *The Jarvis Letters*, 36. Jarvis wrote on March 28, 1794: “If the Americans dare fight us, I think we are sure of a war with them. We have lately received orders here to supply the Indians with every kind of war-like store” and that “Great preparations are making with us in case of a case of commencement of hostilities.”

⁴⁵⁸ Letter from John McGill to James Green 1798 in Cruikshank & Hunter, *The Correspondence of the Honourable Peter Russell Vol II*, 157

The political actions of the British government overseas had direct economic impacts on people in Niagara during the first decade of the 19th century. Beginning in 1803, the British empire was at war with the French, led by Napoleon Bonaparte. This conflict went on until 1815 and had a negative impact on the British relationship with the United States, threatening yet another war. British embargoes on American ships in the Atlantic propelled Americans in the Northwest areas of Ohio and Indiana to push trade and settlement further, creating renewed conflict with Indigenous peoples. In Niagara, the conflict was manifested in the American seizure of a British merchant ship with goods intended for the Indian Department in May of 1808.⁴⁵⁹ Hamilton, as one of the merchants affected, informed Lieutenant-Governor Gore of this seizure of property, blaming it on the colonial government's embargo enacted that spring. That same month, goods from American territory belonging to the Mackinac Company were not allowed over the border and if kept would result in a £200,000 loss. This resulted in issues with the Indigenous population, rebellion breaking out in Detroit and Gore forced to go there in person to dissolve the tension.⁴⁶⁰ By 1810, the province of Upper Canada had shifted, as Errington writes, from a "wilderness frontier to a settled and increasingly prosperous province."⁴⁶¹ However, tensions on the Niagara border finally erupted in 1812, and the War of 1812 changed the lives of Niagara's people once again.

⁴⁵⁹ Cruikshank, *Records of Niagara, 1805-1811*, 32. In 1808, Robert Nichol wrote to Brig. Gen. Isaac Brock to tell him that twenty boats belonging to the NWC and SWC were fired on by Americans at Fort Niagara, seventeen captured and three escaping to the Canadian side. £50,000 worth of goods

⁴⁶⁰ Cruikshank, 36.

⁴⁶¹ Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada*, 3. She quotes Richard Cartwright who said in 1810 that "Twenty-six years ago, this province was... a howling wilderness, little known and less cultivated." He commented on how this had changed: "I have seen the wilderness...converted into fruitful fields, and covered with comfortable habitations. I have seen about me thousands, who without any other funds than their personal labour, begin to denude the soil of its primaeval forests, in possession of extensive and well cultivated farms and abounding in all substantial comforts of life." This statement is a fitting reflection on the scope of this study, beginning with initial Loyalist settlement and ending approximately thirty years later.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Niagara region moved after the American Revolution from its role as a transshipment point in the Laurentian trade system into a productive agrarian economy by the early 19th century. Combining aspects of traditional, regional, and social histories of the developing Canadian economy with spatial investigations has resulted in a unique framework by which to explore the history of trade and commerce in Loyalist era Niagara. Administrators, merchants and farmers all navigated post-war life in different ways, broken down further by factors of race, gender, and class. Organizing the analysis by decade reveals these gradual changes over time and the patterns of commercialization. Although 18th century Niagara was not particularly valuable to the provincial economy, a closer look at the region shows the formation of all sorts of farms and small-scale business, some of which took off by the 1800s.

Using digital mapping tools has allowed for a deeper study of certain areas of economic development. Niagara's physical features in many ways shaped the rural markets that formed at this time, but human agency is an important part of the story that also needs to be addressed. By using GIS, this project provided insight into the relationship between the land and its people over time. Such analyses supported or contradicted a number of pervasive economic theories in Canadian history such as the staples thesis and broader conversations regarding environmental determinism. Ultimately, such theories were determined to be unsuitable for this study, a regional focus allowing a closer look at the nuances of Niagara's economic development.

The GIS displays trade patterns in Niagara by pointing to the centres of production, manufacturing, and consumption, often formed along natural intersections. Such visualizations aid in understanding the strategic participation of farmers and merchants into various rural markets. It also reveals how socio-political factors such as access to labour, or one's status

affected their ability to establish wealth early on. Black slaves and Indigenous peoples in Niagara were not given an equal chance to succeed, but as seen in the GIS, Black labour was essential to the success of certain white families. Spatial technology can offer insight into social histories in this way. By viewing the movement of flour and potash, and the methods of exchange employed over time, this thesis shows that families worked towards accumulating capital by sharing labour and resources, diversifying commercial interests, and strategically engaging in profitable markets.

This study situates itself within a broader framework of colonial exchange. Examining Niagara's place in the fur trade led to the conclusion that by transporting furs over the portage, the region was an important part of the trans-Atlantic empire in its communication role. This re-interpretation of primary sources using spatial tools has led to the conclusion that Niagara was an important colonial region into which the British government poured significant funds for its strategic position and market potential. Exposing its commercial development completed from a spatial lens provides a tangible contribution to this important part of Canadian history.

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