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In ***The Canadian Historical Review***, Vol. 84, no 3, September 2003, pp. 355-393. Toronto University Press.

Professeur d’anthropologie à l’Université de Montréal, M. Verdon nous a accordé le 15 août 2015 son autorisation de diffuser en accès libre ses notes de cours dans Les Classiques des sciences sociales.

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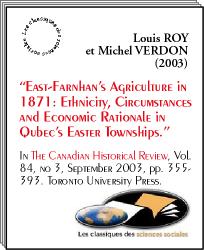
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Par exemple, [1] correspond au début de la page 1 de l’édition papier numérisée.

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Introduction

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Until recently, historians of nineteenth-century Quebec agriculture sketched the divergent paths of French- and English-speaking agricultural producers against the backdrop of both Eastern Canadian agriculture and a number of stereotypes, such as the supremacy of Ontario’s agriculture over that of Quebec and the Maritimes, the traditionalism and peasant mentality of the Quebec habitants and of some English-speaking immigrants in the Maritimes, and the efficacy and dynamic outlook of anglophone farmers in Ontario and Quebec. [[1]](#footnote-1) Described as enlightened producers sensitive to market signals, Ontario’s and Quebec’s English Canadian farmers were seen as quick to commercialize, unlike the peasant French Canadian habitants stubbornly clinging to their outdated agricultural techniques. [[2]](#footnote-2) Ethnicity and “economic rationality” neatly overlapped, explaining the producers” economic behaviour. The reaction to this ethnic characterization was slow. Partly initiated by Fernand Ouellet, it reached its peak in the works of Gilles Paquet and Jean-Pierre Wallot, who argued within the perspective of neoclassical [356] economics. [[3]](#footnote-3) Neoclassical economics recognizes only one economic rationality, a “commercial” one, and interprets lack of commercialization in terms of market imperfections. In this perspective, ethnicity loses most of its explanatory value. [[4]](#footnote-4)

In a symmetrical but inverse way, recent historians have virtually demoted most of the erstwhile “commercialized” farmers of Ontario and anglophone Quebec to the status of traditional, subsistence producers, [[5]](#footnote-5) also portraying an agriculture that is culture blind. Over the last decade, some agricultural historians of Quebec have explicitly ignored ethnic diversity, deeming it irrelevant to understand Quebec agriculture in the nineteenth century, [[6]](#footnote-6) when it still remains an important focus of study elsewhere. [[7]](#footnote-7)

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Paradoxically, apart from John Little, historians have either abusively evoked ethnicity or discarded it without seriously researching it, since most of them treat anglophone farmers as a monolithic ethnic category. [[8]](#footnote-8) Over the last decade, no academic historian has to our knowledge studied the ethnic diversity of agricultural practices among Quebec’s anglophone group. The general regional histories of Jean-Pierre Kesteman and colleagues and of Mario Gendron and colleagues, both dealing with Quebec’s Eastern Townships, recently surveyed areas mostly populated by anglophone farmers in the nineteenth century. Both volumes neglected ethnic diversity within anglophone agricultural communities ; [[9]](#footnote-9) worse still, Kesteman and colleagues actually focused on the Americans and, among the latter, highlighted the performance of large breeders, once again glorifying the contribution of English-speaking elite producers and implicitly wedding ethnicity to economic rationality. [[10]](#footnote-10)

This article re-examines the relationships between ethnicity and economic rationality in the light of a new conceptual framework. To start with, we dissociate agricultural choices (the particular mix of productions a farmer chooses) from disparities in size between producers. Like most historians, we assume that both are greatly influenced by circumstantial factors, such as markets, length of settlement, location, type of soil, and demographic fortune, to name but the most obvious.

Let us initially focus on the link between ethnicity and choices. Different farmers with comparable circumstantial assets will obviously select different mixes of products. If this diversity is not random but displays observable trends, we can legitimately assume that farmers also decide on their productions on the basis of what they are intimately familiar with because of the ethnic groups they belong to - in other words, because of "cultural" preferences. We will surmise that these preferences can influence choices. When examining the relationship between ethnicity and wealth, we will discover another trend - that anglophone farmers greatly outproduced the habitants. Ethnicity alone cannot explain this trend, but different economic rationalities could (“commercially minded” anglophone farmers outperforming “peasant” French Canadians). This finding would inevitably bring back to life the old, recurring, discriminatory association between ethnicity and economic [358] rationality, and it calls for serious considerations about economic rationality.

Economic rationality comes in binary packages. We either postulate that economic agents behave in qualitatively different ways (and therefore write of different economic "rationalities") or deny it. In the historiography of Quebec agriculture, those who deny it either posit that all agricultural producers are “naturally” endowed with a commercial rationality (neoclassical assumption) or squarely refuse the very idea of any economic rationality and write of differential “efficiency” (however measured). Advocates of both theses admit only to quantitative differences. Others uphold that all divergences in agricultural behaviours cannot be reduced to mere differences in scale and seek to capture the distinction between a "commercial" (some say “capitalist”) and a “noncommercial” production (variously called “subsistence,” “peasant,” “household”, or “domestic”). We side with the latter group in this debate.

In the wake of Michael Merrill and those he inspired, many Canadian historians have stressed the importance of analyzing our agriculture before the twentieth century within a theoretical framework anchored in the household, a stance that recently culminated in Gerard Bouchard’s theory of "co-integration." [[11]](#footnote-11) We share their conviction and many of their ideas but submit that they have failed to contrast this household production to a “commercial” one, because of their uncritical use of "commercialization."

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Indeed, both the qualitative and quantitative theses are predicated on a shared, often implicit, definition of a so-called commercial agriculture which, in one way or another, denotes a “market-oriented” or “market-driven” agriculture (except where authors argue exclusively in terms of efficiency). In the final analysis, this market orientation is usually assessed according to the proportion of one’s production which sees its way to the market. Unfortunately, this definition measures purely quantitative differences and contradicts the very project of grasping the qualitative differences between commercial and non-commercial productions. We must understand more clearly what “commercialization” means if we are to define satisfactorily a “non-commercial” production.

QUESTIONING “COMMERCIALIZATION”

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Indeed, the “proportion of the production sold on the market” should not define “commercialization,” but “monetization.” This confusion is only the first of a long list. On closer investigation, we found that “commercialization” abusively designates a host of other phenomena, [[12]](#footnote-12) such as the fact that some residential producers might wish to monetize further and privilege one or two cultures (specialization) ; the adoption of a new technology or mechanization ; the fact that farmers increase their productivity on a small scale by accepting some new techniques without remodelling their relationship to factors of production (modernization) ; the fact that some farmers increase their productivity on a large scale in ways that involve investments so heavy as to force the less wealthy producers into severe indebtedness (restructuring) ; and the fact that, at some times and in some places, some land-owners have appropriated vast expanses of land which they exploited mostly, if not exclusively, through salaried agricultural workers or slaves (“latifundia production”). [[13]](#footnote-13) Confronted by [360] such polysemy and confusion, we decided to discard the concept of commercialization altogether and to treat those various aspects separately.

Like many historians, we also want to delineate qualitatively distinct rationalities and wish to do so by defining a production’s “rationale” [[14]](#footnote-14) in terms of the producers” social organization of production and of their relationship to the factors of production (land, tools, labour, and knowledge). [[15]](#footnote-15) To different types of social organizations of production or relationships to factors of production would correspond qualitatively different economic rationales, each with its specific economic objectives. If we assume that social actors resist transformations in these organizational features, we should then find that the transition from one rationale to another will be somewhat discontinuous. Many historians have documented such resistances without integrating the notion into their theoretical frameworks ;” [[16]](#footnote-16) this incorporation, we believe, ought to be done. Indeed, if resistances speak of discontinuities, they speak of qualitative differences. Hence the new question : What did agricultural producers resist ?

The history of agriculture in the Western world clearly suggests that if monetization, specialization, or mechanization are not imposed by extra-residential powers and do not entail organizational transformations (and, until recently in Quebec, they rarely did), household producers will not oppose them.” [[17]](#footnote-17) Moreover, they may show more inertia than resistance to modernization but will object to restructuring and to latifundia production, both of which involve deep changes.” [[18]](#footnote-18) There are long spans of [361] continuity in residential production, in that residential producers can vary to a large extent in their degree of monetization, specialization, and mechanization while always operating within a “residential rationale.” [[19]](#footnote-19) Having excluded both the concepts of capitalism and commercialization from our terminology, how shall we rechristen the old “commercial rationale” ?

To answer this question, let us look at recent developments in agricultural production in Quebec, at true transformations in the social organization of production. In recent years a new type of farmer, known as “integrateurs,” have emerged. They are true entrepreneurs who own numerous farms worked by salaried farmers and who control production both up- and downstream. In their case, we can talk explicitly of a true “entrepreneurial rationale.” [[20]](#footnote-20) Between 1850 and 1980, however, modernization occurred without restructuring the social organization of production ; the farm family remained the main group of production. Requiring little change in the traditional savoir-faire in the beginning, this modernization was more ignored than opposed. Over time, however, it gathered momentum and transformed the relationship to the factors of production in that farmers eventually had to borrow vast sums of money to buy land and equipment to increase their productivity. At first they resisted, but in the end they had to give in. We would therefore introduce at least a third type of rationale between the residential and the entrepreneurial ones - a “residential entrepreneurial rationale” ; the timing of its emergence is certainly a moot point and we are not claiming to solve it. In this article, we wish to argue that it certainly had not occurred by 1871 in the township we studied and was not about to start in earnest by then.

This point takes us to our project. Despite the improved image of the once-demeaned habitant, the English-speaking community in recent general histories of Quebec agriculture still occupies a position not unlike the one it enjoyed before the work of Frank Lewis and Marvin Mclnnis. [[21]](#footnote-21) The better to re-evaluate this debate, we will have to ascertain [362] whether cultural preferences oriented agricultural practices and whether such preferences stemmed from a different economic rationality. To do so, we will focus on French Canadians and all English-speaking ethnic groups represented in a given township in the second half of the nineteenth century. If we find that cultural preferences did have an influence, we will then be able to dissociate them from circumstantial factors and to clear the ground so as to assess differently the question of economic rationale across ethnic groups (Did the anglophone farmers have a different rationale from the habitants ?) and between producers of various sizes (Did large farmers owe their wealth to a different economic rationale ?).

SOME METHODOLOGICAL DETAILS

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We could not study the commercialization of agriculture and ethnic diversity in rural Quebec in the nineteenth century without integrating the question of timber production. [[22]](#footnote-22) Both topics could be usefully analyzed only from nominative enumerations. Unfortunately, only the 1871 census provides significant information on timber production for the second half of the century.

We looked for a community with a fair representation of the main ethnic groups, and East-Farnham, located in Brome County in the Eastern Townships, met our needs. Although not particularly representative of the county, it was the only township in Brome exhibiting the desired ethnic profile in 1871.

We believe that cultural preferences in agricultural choices, before the twentieth century, stand out most clearly in situations where various ethnic groups co-exist within a community or a small region. [[23]](#footnote-23) It therefore appeared methodologically desirable, if not imperative, to study the whole township, and it made little sense to swell our numbers by adding households from other townships. Adding a second township would have required comparisons that would easily fill a small book. This rationale explains our choice and our necessarily small sample at the regional level, albeit not at the local level, since we included everyone in [363] the township - a township with three villages, many hamlets, and a total population of 2066 inhabitants in 1871.

We have organized our data according to the national origins of agricultural producers. [[24]](#footnote-24) Among the British immigrants (referring here to the Great Britain of the 1850s) we dissociated the Scots from the Irish, distinguished the Protestant from the Catholic among the latter, and dissociated all three from the Americans. [[25]](#footnote-25)

Not to confuse the agricultural with the rural sector, we further segregated individuals who contributed significantly to local farm outputs from those who skewed averages because of their extremely meagre production. Since most farms of less than 10 acres were nothing but large gardens belonging to families earning their living mostly outside agriculture, we have included in our study only farmers owning more than 9 acres of improved land (that is, of land cleared). This definition yielded 219 households (of the 301 listed in the census) whose agricultural practices were examined through census listings. We further sought to avoid confusing the prevalence of a culture (the percentage of farmers practicing it) with its volume (or output), and thus we dissociated effective producers from non-producers and estimated our means on the basis of the outputs of effective producers only. [[26]](#footnote-26)

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For any given type of production we further wished to identify farmers with noticeably greater outputs, and initially we isolated large effective producers in various productions (whose agricultural outputs or herds were at least double that of the township’s average). [[27]](#footnote-27) This classification brought to the fore farmers who figured as large effective producers in two or more productions. In the wake of Thomas Acheson, Beatrice Craig, and Sheila Andrew, we chose them as our point of reference, defining as “large producers” or “large farmers” those who ranked as large effective producers in at least two of the three following types of productive activities : animal husbandry, cereal cultivation (all cereals included), and the production of hay. [[28]](#footnote-28) Having singled out our large producers, we then lumped all others in the residual category of “small and middle-sized producers.” [[29]](#footnote-29) If we lose sight of the variability among individual small and middle-sized producers, we get a better basis to compare their strategies to those of large producers. [[30]](#footnote-30)

We elected not to assess the size of surpluses or the monetary value of outputs, and we described only raw data. These limits may reduce the scope of our conclusions, but we find that such estimations raise extremely serious methodological problems. [[31]](#footnote-31) Like Acheson, we believe it [365] possible to identify several kinds of farms and, by inference, several kinds of agriculture, merely by measuring the outputs of individual farms. [[32]](#footnote-32)

THE AREA STUDIED : EAST-FARNHAM

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The township of East-Farnham lies halfway between Montreal and Sherbrooke, in the southeastern part of Quebec, where the Eastern Townships begin. It was first surveyed in 1798 and, in 1799, the Crown gave its eastern part to twenty-three associates, a minority of whom settled on the land ; the others sold their shares to farmers in search of new lands, mostly Quakers. The original Loyalists were few in number but rich, and they could buy tracts of land large enough for some of their descendants to benefit two and even three generations down the line.

Around 1820 more families from Vermont, New Hampshire, or Massachusetts moved in, true rural dwellers, unlike their predecessors, who mostly hailed from towns. Slowly, small hamlets cropped up and, in 1831, East-Farnham boasted of a population of 835 inhabitants, two churches, six schools, three distilleries, three shops, one doctor, one notary, eighteen artisans, and forty different mills. [[33]](#footnote-33)

Around the same period, Scottish and Irish immigrants started filtering in. Unlike most American pioneers, they started life with a financial handicap, having spent most of their savings on the trip over. The 1842 census returns suggest that the Protestant Irish arrived first, followed by the Catholic Irish, with the Scots coming soon after. By the 1840s the anglophones were by far the most numerous, although the French Canadians had started infiltrating East-Farnham from neighboring counties. From i860 onward, population movements changed. The British immigration stopped, and some English-speaking individuals and families even started leaving the area, while French Canadian immigration accelerated.

Around the 1850s the efforts of some rich “Americans” gave the local economy an important boost, and three of the many hamlets grew into villages - Adamsville, Brigham, and East-Farnham (East-Farnham is both a small village and a township). In 1870 the anglophones still vastly outnumbered the French Canadians, who made up close to a quarter of the population. By then, the road and urban networks were more or less what they are now. Although the first cheese factory in Quebec started in [366] nearby Dunham only in 1866, the township of East-Farnham counted four by 1871, employing a total of eleven labourers and operating approximately four-and-a-half months a year. [[34]](#footnote-34) By 1890 most of the township was occupied, despite the low demographic density and the amount of land still in timber.

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF FARNHAM’S SMALL- AND MEDIUM-SIZED PRODUCERS [[35]](#footnote-35)

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Can we infer cultural preferences in agricultural choices from census data ? The question is formidable. Ideally, a quantitative answer would rely on at least three sets of indicators - the percentage of effective producers for a given crop (its prevalence), the volume of production (outputs), and the measure of productivity (or yields). Combined outputs and yields would reveal the production’s “intensity,” and prevalence coupled with intensity would give a good approximation of a production’s “popularity.” Unfortunately, yields are impossible to calculate from our tables, but the census mentions them for two crops - wheat and hay - and these yields vary little across our ethnic groups. Consequently, we cannot evaluate intensity and, for the purposes of this article, will call “popularity” the combination of prevalence and output, supposing that popularity within an ethnic group expresses cultural preferences. Our “popularity index” delineates three major ethnic profiles among the anglophones - that of the Americans, the Catholic Irish, and the Scots - in stark contrast to the French Canadians. Interestingly, the Protestant Irish seem to blend with the Americans in most of their agricultural practices.

In 1870 nearly half of the township’s farms belonged to Americans (107/219), a quarter to French Canadians (57), and another quarter to British farmers, be they Protestant Irish (20), Catholic Irish (15), or Scots (20). Of these 219 farms, 189 fall within our category of smaller producers : [367] 86 among Americans, 16 among Scots, 17 among Protestant Irish, 14 among Catholic Irish, and 56 among French Canadians (table 1). Most modest farmers owned their land (93%), and the few tenants often rented from their own father (table 2).

Of this category of producers, the Americans owned the largest exploitations and had cleared the greatest number of acres. Overall, their agricultural practices reproduced very closely those of their compatriots in Chelsea, Vermont, or Concord, New Hampshire, in the first half of the nineteenth century. [[36]](#footnote-36) As in New England, grasses (either hay or pastures) dominated their cultures (largest acreages for both, although their yields for hay were ordinary), a fact most likely related to the number of animals they bred (table 3). Their herds were mostly composed of milch cows and beef cattle (more than any other group), few of them showing much interest for the rearing of sheep, and our calculations suggest that they took much of their milk to cheese factories. [[37]](#footnote-37) ? They were also clearly partial to corn (to feed animals) and especially to maple sugar - two North American products - and were more involved than the British in timber production. Interestingly, the proportion of households declaring wool production was greater than that owning sheep (57% versus 43%), a very likely indication that many households bought other sheep producers” wool to card and spin (again, only the Protestant Irish did the same). A product of culture or of the demographic composition of the household ? We could not say, but these figures tell eloquently of inter-households exchanges, monetary or not. Apart from the areas of lands they owned and of the woodlots they possessed, the Protestant Irish diverged from the Americans only by their lack of interest for beef cattle (a known American predilection) and their taste for domestic butter, for which the Irish are also famous.

Among the anglophones, all cereals and hay were least popular among the Catholic Irish. However, all of them cultivated potatoes and

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TABLE I

Distribution of Households by Ethnic Origins and Types of Producers

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | East-Farnham’s Households | | Households Excluded : 9 Acres and Less Improved | | Households Studied : 10 Acres and Plus Improved | | Modest Producers | | Large Producers | | Large Timbermen | |
|  | Number | % In Township | Number | % of All | Number | % of All | Number | % of Studied | Number | % of Studied | Number | % of Studied |
| Americans | 146 | 48 | 39 | 27 | 107 | 73 | 86 | 80 | 21 | 20 | 11 | 10 |
| Scots | 26 | 9 | 6 | 23 | 20 | 77 | 16 | 80 | 4 | 20 | 0 | 0 |
| Protestant Irish | 25 | 8 | 5 | 20 | 20 | 80 | 17 | S5 | 3 | 15 | 0 | 0 |
| Catholic Irish | 21 | 7 | 6 | 29 | 15 | 71 | 14 | 93 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 0.06 |
| French Canadians | 83 | 28 | 26 | 31 | 57 | 69 | 56 | 98 | 1 | 2 | 13 | 23 |
| East-Farnham | 301 | 100 | 82 | 27 | 219 | 73 | 189 | 86 | 30 | 14 | 25 | 11 |

Source : 1871 census returns

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TABLE 2

Distribution of Farm Exploitations, Commercial Buildings and Number of Houses  
Owned by Types of Producers and Ethnic Origins of Modest Producers

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Farms Exploited | | Farm Owners | | Farm Tenants | | Types of Soil Occupied | | | Owners of a Commercial Building | | Owners of More than One House | |
| Number | % in Township | Number | % by Type | Number | % by Type | Class 3 % | Class 4 % | Class 5 % | Number | % by Type | Number | % by Type |
| East-Farnham | 219 | 100 | 205 | 94 | 14 | 6 | 31 | 47 | 22 | 28 | 13 | 46 | 21 |
| Large producers | 30 | 14 | 29 | 97 | 1 | 3 | 24 | 53 | 23 | 8 | 27 | 13 | 43 |
| All modest producers | 189 | 86 | 176 | 9 3 | 13 | 7 | 3 3 | 45 | 22 | 20 | 11 | 33 | 17 |
| Urge timbermen | 25 | n | 25 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 5 6 | 28 | 4 | 16 | 9 | 36 |
| Modest producers | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Americans | 86 | 3 9 | 79 | 92 | 7 | 8 | 27 | 5 6 | 17 | 15 | 17 | 19 | 22 |
| Scots | 16 | 7 | 15 | 94 | 1 | 6 | 38 | 5 6 | 6 | 3 | 19 | 2 | 13 |
| Protestant Irish | 17 | 8 | 17 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 44 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| Catholic Irish | 14 | 6 | 14 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 33 | 47 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 14 |
| French Canadians | 56 | 26 | 51 | 91 | 5 | 9 | 35 | 26 | 39 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 16 |

Source : 1871 census returns

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TABLE 3

Percentages of Effective Owners of Farmstock by Types of Producers  
and Ethnic Origins of Modest Producers

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | All Farmstock | | Milch Cows | | Beef Cattle | | Sheep | | Pigs | | Horses | |
| Effective Owners % | Size of Herds | Effective Owners % | Size of Herds | Effective Owners % | Size of Herds | Effective Owners % | Size of Herds | Effective Owners % | Size of Herds | Effective Owners % | Size of Herds |
| East-Farnham | 98 | 19 | 97 | 8 | 67 | 4 | 54 | 7 | 74 | 2.1 | 92 | 2.2. |
| Large producers | 100 | 44 | 100 | 23 | 93 | 7 | 63 | 10 | 97 | 4 | 100 | 4 |
| All modest producers | 97 | 15 | 97 | **6** | 63 | 3 | 52 | 6 | 70 | 1.7 | 91 | 1.9 |
| Large timbermen | 100 | 21 | 100 | 10 | 72 | 3 | 60 | 6 | 72 | 2.1 | 96 | 2.3 |
| Modest producers |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Americans | 97 | 17 | 97 | 8 | 65 | 4 | 43 | 7 | 69 | 1.4 | 93 | 2.1 |
| Scots | 100 | 15 | 94 | 6 | 69 | 2 | 75 | 6 | SI | 1.9 | 94 | 1.4 |
| Protestant Irish | 100 | 14 | 100 | 6 | 4 7 | 3 | 41 | 5 | 82 | 1.4 | 100 | 1.9 |
| Catholic Irish | 100 | 19 | 100 | 7 | 64 | 4 | 100 | 6 | 100 | 1.5 | 86 | 1.5 |
| French Canadians | 96 | 11 | 96 | 3 | 63 | 2 | 52 | 5 | 59 | 1.7 | 86 | 1.9 |

Source : 1871 census returns

[371]

turned out the largest outputs for that crop (table 4). They were the keenest breeders, although their animal husbandry was the least specialized (highest or close to highest prevalence for all animals, horses excepted). All, except one, also made domestic butter, outproducing all others in this area (table 5).

In their land use, the Scots preferred grain to hay (although reaching the highest yields in the production of hay – table 4). All grew cereals and produced the largest outputs (all cereals combined), being the most partial to oats and wheat (oats being a famed cultural predilection ; it was also used to feed animals, perhaps accounting partly for their lesser interest in hay and pastures). With fewer animals than the Catholic Irish, they nonetheless displayed a similar lack of specialization and a strong interest in the breeding of sheep and the production of domestic wool (highest outputs). The number of milch cows they owned seem to indicate a lesser interest in domestic butter. Like the Americans, they presumably sent a greater part of their milk to local cheese factories.

In agriculture and animal husbandry, the habitants fared badly. Collectively, modest anglophone farmers owned more livestock and twice as many milch cows as the French Canadians ; they harvested much more hay and cereals and practised a more diversified agriculture. When contrasted globally to their English-speaking neighbours, our habitants spontaneously fit in the old binary opposition that pervades so much of Quebec’s agricultural history. Their crops were less diversified ; fewer grew cereals, hay, and potatoes ; and, in all those cultures, they displayed the lowest outputs, although their yields for wheat and hay were standard (table 4). They also manifested the least interest, and by far, in the ownership of milch cows (table 3). Shall we yet again describe them as mediocre producers ? It is difficult to conclude in the affirmative if we take timber production into account.

Indeed, they outranked everyone in cut timber, outdoing their British neighbours by far, with the Americans standing midway, and performed stunningly in the production of logs (greatest prevalence, highest outputs, and greatest number of large producers) and squared timber, which attracted very few anglophones (table 6). [[38]](#footnote-38)

The habitants” production spontaneously points to circumstantial factors. Collectively the last to colonize, they would have improved fewer acres and would have neglected agriculture and animal husbandry to clear more land. The length of settlement certainly played an important role, but can all French Canadian economic choices be reduced to necessity ? We believe not.

[372]

TABLE 4

Percentages of Effective Producers and Outputs for Some Crops  
by Types of Producers and Ethnic Origins of Modest Producers

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | All Cereals | | Oats | | | Com | | Wheat | | |
| Effective Producers % | Output (bushels) | Effective Producers % | Output (bushels) | Effective Producers % | | Output (bushels) | Effective Producers % | Output (bushels) | Yield buss./acre) |
| East-Famham | 95 | 152 | 89 | 97 | 74 | | 51 | 50 | 20 | 14 |
| Large producers | 100 | 367 | 100 | 221 | 100 | | 100 | 87 | 29 | 15 |
| All modest producers | 94 | 115 | 87 | 75 | 70 | | 40 | 44 | 17 | 13 |
| Large timbermen | 02 | 147 | 92 | 90 | 76 | | 38 | 52 | 21 | 15 |
| Modest producers |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |
| Americans | 97 | 129 | 86 | 80 | 84 | | 46 | 51 | 17 | 13 |
| Scots | 100 | 164 | 100 | 108 | SI | | 36 | 69 | 25 | 15 |
| Protestant Irish | 94 | 107 | 94 | 59 | 82 | | 34 | 41 | 21 | 13 |
| Catholic Irish | 93 | 112 | 86 | 78 | 75 | | 31 | 36 | 15 | 14 |
| French Canadians | 88 | 78 | 82 | 59 | 39 | | 28 | 30 | 13 | 13 |

Table continued on next page.

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TABLE 4 continued

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Buckwheat | | Hay | | | Potatoes | |
| Effective Producers % | Output (bushels) | Effective Producers % | Output (tons) | Yield (t./acre) | Effective Producers % | Output (bushels) |
| East-Farnham | 35 | 20 | 94 | 23 | 1.06 | 95 | 125 |
| Large producers | 37 | 35 | 100 | 60 | 1.15 | 100 | 225 |
| All modest producers | 35 | 18 | 93 | 17 | 1.02 | 93 | 109 |
| Large timbermen | 20 | 10 | 84 | 26 | 1.13 | 92 | 108 |
| Modest producers |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Americans | 41 | 19 | 99 | 23 | 1.04 | 97 | 123 |
| Scots | 43 | 15 | 100 | 16 | 1.25 | 100 | 117 |
| Protestant Irish | 41 | 19 | 100 | 14 | 1.03 | 94 | 103 |
| Catholic Irish | 29 | 22 | 93 | IS | 0.86 | 100 | 136 |
| French Canadians | 23 | 15 | 80 | 10 | 0.91 | 84 | 75 |

Source : 1871 census returns

[374]

TABLE 5

Percentages of Effective Breeders and Number of Beef Cattle Raised for Sale or Slaughter as well as Effective Producers and Outputs of Domestic Products by Types of Producers and Ethnic Origins of Modest Producers

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Cattle killed or sold | | | Domestic Butter | | | Domestic Wool | | | Maple Sugar | |
| Effective Breeders % | Number of Animals | Effective Producers % | | Output (pounds) | Pounds per cow | | Effective Producers % | Output (pounds) | Effective Producers % | Output (pounds) |
| East-Farnham | 48 | 3 | 83 | | 509 | 55 | | 60 | 30 | 53 | 742 |
| Large producers | 90 | 6 | 100 | | 973 | 42 | | 67 | 49 | 83 | 1,294 |
| All modest producers | 41 | 3 | 83 | | 420 | 63 | | 50 | 27 | 48 | 597 |
| Large timbermen | 44 | 3 | 84 | | 751 |  | | 44 | 25 | 40 | 643 |
| Modest producers |  |  |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |
| Americans | 58 | 3 | 88 | | 439 | 55 | | 57 | 27 | 69 | 703 |
| Scots | 3 0 | 2 | 82 | | 280 | 45 | | 75 | 35 | 19 | 377 |
| Protestant Irish | 41 | 2 | 100 | | 468 | 74 | | 71 | 22 | 53 | 350 |
| Catholic Irish | 43 | 2 | 93 | | 673 | 96 | | 93 | 24 | 21 | 850 |
| French Canadians | 13 | 1 | 66 | | 326 | 74 | | 45 | 26 | 30 | 316 |

Source : 1871 census returns

[375]

TABLE 6

Percentages of Effective Producers and Outputs of Main Timber Products by Types of Producers and Ethnic Origins of Modest Producers

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Firewood | | Logs | | | Tanning Bark | | Squared Timber | |
| Effective Producers % | Output (cords) | Effective Producers % | Output (logs) | Effective Producers % | | Output (cords) | Effective Producers % | Output (cubic feet) |
| East-Farnham | 44 | 45 | 37 | 674 | 29 | | 38 | 12 | 2,469 |
| Large producers | 73 | 66 | 5 0 | 214 | 33 | | 31 | 7 | 3,870 |
| All modest producers | S$ | 39 | 34 | 739 | 29 | | 39 | 13 | 2,357 |
| Large timbermen | 68 | 97 | 100 | 1.593 | 1,92 | | 74 | 64 | 3,911 |
| Modest producers |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |
| Americans | 36 | 37 | 31 | 785 | 27 | | 44 | 8 | 1,879 |
| Scots | 44 | 16 | 13 | 113 | 31 | | 33 | 6 | 700 |
| Protestant Irish | 47 | 20 | 24 | 231 | 29 | | 8 | 6 | 210 |
| Catholic Irish | 43 | 31 | 21 | 282 | 14 | | 64 | 7 | 6,450 |
| French Canadians | 39 | 57 | 48 | 894 | 34 | | 40 | 27 | 2,560 |
| Large timbermen |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |
| Americans | 55 | 87 | 100 | 800 | 100 | | 87 | 38 | 2,105 |
| French Canadians | 77 | 103 | 100 | 1,573 | 1,85 | | 57 | *77* | 4,588 |
| Catholic Irish | 100 | 90 | 100 | 1,666 | 1,100 | | 126 | 100 | 6,450 |

Source : 1871 census returns

[376]

In fact, it appears that the habitants had cleared a reasonable number of acres when compared to the British smaller producers, an acreage that cannot conveniently be reduced to time of arrival (table 7). [[39]](#footnote-39) They put less of their lands in pastures than British farmers did and, together with the Scots, sowed less of their lands in hay. This neglect of hay might tell of a lesser involvement in animal production.

Why raise fewer animals, especially milch cows ? - Would it be because they were located farthest from the cheese factories ? The evidence does not support such a contention. From the distribution of farms we have plotted, all houses were linked to a road and within easy reach of a local market and, therefore, of a cheese factory. Furthermore, the Irish herded as many milch cows as the Scots but obviously chose to consume or sell their animal production as much in domestic butter as in milk, a likely result of cultural preferences. If the Irish chose not to sell their milk to cheese factories, then the Scots chose to sell theirs, and we may similarly argue that the French Canadians chose not to invest in a similar level of animal production. [[40]](#footnote-40)

Again, we could argue that it is not necessarily so if they bought the cheapest lands and if the cheapest lands had the lowest agricultural potential. We do not know if the price of land varied significantly in time and space and if the French Canadians bought cheaper lands or not, but we do know something about the influence of soil quality.

According to Rusty Bitterman and colleagues, among others, the time of arrival influenced positively the choice of lands. [[41]](#footnote-41) The first settlers were deemed the lucky ones who could monopolize the better lands and produce more. Recent research challenges this common wisdom, showing that frontier immigrants chose land on sites they felt would provide the best opportunity for success, determined mostly by physical access, the soil’s features, and the presence of supportive neighbours, normally from similar ethnic origins. [[42]](#footnote-42) The relative weight of these factors in their [377] choice often depended on the time of their arrival. After the first wave of immigration, it seems that the attraction of friendly neighbourhoods outweighed considerations about surface deposits, and our maps show such a trend : settlers of the same ethnic background tended to cluster together and, consequently, the proximity of compatriots proved to be certainly as important as the features of the soil in the choice of sites. Also, East-Farnham’s large producers were not established exclusively on the best lands (table 2) ; 24 per cent occupied the finest lands (class 3 soils ; neither class 1 or 2 were to be found in East-Farnham), but 23 per cent settled on lands now deemed the worst (class 5 soils).

In fact, let us look at the habitants” timber production more closely. Table 6 includes a new category of producers, the large timbermen. [[43]](#footnote-43) When excluded from our calculations (table 8), a case could still be made that the French Canadians were much more involved in timber production because of their more recent settlement. But when we examine the large timbermen, the cultural thesis cannot be easily dismissed. Indeed, if East-Farnham’s large farmers were all anglophones but one, large timbermen were overrepresented among the francophones. Of the twenty-five identified, no fewer than thirteen (52%) were French Canadians ; put differently, nearly a quarter of East-Farnham French-speaking modest farmers (thirteen out of fifty-six, or 23%) ranked as large timber producers. And their general economic profile adds to the enigma.

First, the French Canadians among them owned on average 169 acres of land (table 9). Second, the French Canadian large timber producers” agricultural and animal outputs rivalled those of the county’s less-substantial producers, especially those of the other habitants : they had improved 67 acres of land on average, produced 16 tons of hay and 129 bushels of grains, bred eighteen animals, and churned 794 pounds of domestic butter (table 9). There was nothing small about them. [[44]](#footnote-44) These [378]

TABLE 7

Size of Holdings and Percentages of Lands Improved, in Timber, Pasture, Crops, and Hay by Types of Producers and Ethnic Origins of Modest Producers

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Size of Holdings | Land Improved | | Land in Timber | | | Lands in Pasture | | |
| Acres Occupied | Acres Occupied | Over Occupied % | Farms with Woodlots | Acres in Timber | Over Occupied % | *Farms with Pasture %* | Acres in Pasture | Over Improved % |
| East-Farnham | 124 | 68 | 54 | 94 | 60 | 45 | 93 | 36 | 52 |
| Large producers | 253 | 152 | 60 | 100 | 101 | 40 | 100 | *77* | 30 |
| All modest producers | 103 | 54 | 52 | 93 | 53 | 49 | 92 | *29* | 51 |
| Large timbermen | 180 | 84 | 47 | 100 | 96 | 53 | 88 | 44 | 47 |
| Modest producers |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Americans | 118 | 69 | 58 | 92 | 53 | 43 | 95 | 38 | 53 |
| Scots | 70 | 48 | 69 | 88 | 26 | 35 | 88 | 23 | 44 |
| Protestant Irish | 69 | 44 | 64 | 94 | 27 | 37 | 100 | *22* | 49 |
| Catholic Irish | 73 | 47 | 64 | 86 | 30 | 40 | 93 | 25 | 51 |
| French Canadians | 109 | 38 | 35 | 96 | 76 | 67 | 84 | 20 | 49 |

[379]

Table 7 continued

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Lands in Crops | | | Lands in Hay | | | |
| Effective Producers % | Acres in Crops | Over  Improved % | Effective Producers % | Acres in Hay | Over in Crops | Over  Improved % |
| East-Farnham | 99 | 34 | 51 | 94 | 22 | 63 | 31 |
| Large producers | 100 | 75 | 49 | 100 | 52 | 69 | 34 |
| All modest producers | 99 | 28 | 5 2 | 93 | 17 | 5 9 | 30 |
| Large timbermen | 100 | 43 | 51 | 84 | 23 | 50 | 25 |
| Modest producers |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Americans | 99 | 33 | 48 | 99 | 22 | 66 | 32 |
| Scots | 100 | 28 | 58 | 100 | 13 | 46 | 27 |
| Protestant Irish | 100 | 23 | 51 | 100 | 14 | 60 | 31 |
| Catholic Irish | 100 | 24 | 50 | 93 | 17 | 69 | 34 |
| French Canadians | 98 | 22 | 58 | 80 | 11 | 47 | 26 |

Source : 1871 census returns

[380]

TABLE 8

Percentages of Effective Producers and Outputs of Main Timber Products  
among Modest Producers, Distributed by Ethnic Origins  
(Large Timbermen Excluded)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Firewood | | | Logs | | Tanning Bark | | | | Squared Timber | |
| Effective Producers % | Output (cords) | Effective  Producers % | | Output (logs) | | Effective  Producers % | Output (cords) | Effective  Producers % | | Output (cubic feet) |
| Modest producers |  |  |  | |  | |  |  |  | |  |
| Americans | 33 | 30 | 26 | | 199 | | 19 | 14 | 3 | | 1.312 |
| Scots | 44 | 16 | 13 | | 113 | | 31 | 33 | 6 | | 700 |
| Protestant Irish | 47 | 20 | 24 | | 231 | | 29 | 8 | 6 | | 210 |
| Catholic Irish | 38 | 19 | 15 | | 23 | | 8 | 2 | 0 | | 0 |
| French Canadians | 27 | 52 | 36 | | 259 | | 20 | 26 | 14 | | 647 |

Source : 1871 census returns

[381]

were modest “substantial” farmers who, instead of increasing their acreages in hay, pastures, or cereals, or the number of their milch cows or beef cattle to sell on the market, seem to have chosen to intensify their timber production to get their cash. They did not get timber licences to exploit Crown lands but exploited private woodlots. [[45]](#footnote-45) Furthermore, there is no evidence whatsoever that timber companies had already emptied these lots of their best trees. [[46]](#footnote-46) We can safely conclude that we are dealing with a virgin forest and, in such a forest, their production could have easily lasted at the same rate for eight to ten years. [[47]](#footnote-47)

Furthermore, local histories mention that in Farnham (west of the township) the flow of timber products to the saw mills did not start relenting before the beginning of the 1890s. [[48]](#footnote-48) We know from the census figures that the number of small saw mills had increased by 1881 and then diminished by 1891. In 1871 we do not appear to be dealing with the Saguenay, New Brunswick, or northern Ontario lumbermen who almost lived off the forest [[49]](#footnote-49) but with real farmers with a greater interest in forest products as a different way to monetize. After all, as Little stressed, timber is the “cash crop” par excellence. [[50]](#footnote-50)

In his study of ethnic diversity in agricultural practices, Little concluded that settlers” farming practices have been much more influenced by cultural background than has been suggested by most historians. [[51]](#footnote-51) Among anglophone farmers in East-Farnham in 1871 we also find

[382]

TABLE 9

Large Timbermen”s Agricultural Profile

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Farms Exploited | | Size of Holdings | Lands Improved | | Lands in timber | | Lands in Crops | |
| Number | % of Large Timbermen | Acres  Occupied | Acres  Improved | Over  Occupied % | Acres in Timber | Over  Occupied % | Acres in Crops | Over  Improved % |
| East-Farnham | 219 |  | 124 | 68 | 54 | 60 | 45 | 34 | 51 |
| Large producers | 30 |  | 253 | 152 | 60 | 101 | 4 0 | 75 | 49 |
| All modest producers | 189 |  | 103 | 54 | 52 | 53 | 49 | 28 | 52 |
| All large timbermen | 25 | 100 | 180 | 84 | 47 | 96 | 53 | 43 | 51 |
| Large timbermen |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Americans | 11 | 44 | 193 | 109 | 57 | 84 | 44 | 53 | 49 |
| French Canadians | 13 | 52 | 169 | 67 | 39 | 102 | 60 | 36 | 54 |
| Catholic Irish | 1 | 4 | 172 | 40 | 23 | 132 | 77 | 12 | 30 |

Source : 1871 census returns

[383]

TABLE 9

Large Timbermen’s Agricultural Profile

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Hqy | | All Cereals | | All Farmstock | | Milch Cows | | Domestic Butter | |
| Effective Producers % | Output (tons) | Effective Producers % | Output (bushels) | Effective Owners % | Size of Herds | Effective Owners % | Size of Herds | Effective Producers % | Output (pounds) |
| East-Farnham | 94 | 23 | 95 | 152 | 98 | 19 | 97 | 8 | 85 | 509 |
| Large producers | 100 | 60 | 100 | 367 | 100 | 44 | 100 | 23 | 100 | 973 |
| All modest producers | 93 | 17 | 94 | 115 | 97 | 15 | 97 | 6 | 83 | 420 |
| All large timbermen | 84 | 26 | 92 | 147 | 100 | 21 | 100 | 10 | 84 | 770 |
| Large timbermen |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Americans | 100 | 36 | 100 | 153 | 100 | 25 | 100 | 14 | 100 | 815 |
| French Canadians | 69 | 16 | 85 | 129 | 100 | 18 | 100 | 7 | 69 | 794 |
| Catholic Irish | 100 | 1 | 100 | 216 | 100 | 10 | 100 | 3 | 100 | 150 |

Source : 1871 census returns

[384]

choices that seem not to stem solely from circumstances or the random distribution of psychological preferences : the Scots clearly appeared to prefer cereals to hay (and brought over their love of oats), and three-quarters of them bred sheep, a cultural proclivity according to Little, as seems to be the importance the Catholic Irish gave to butter and potatoes, as well as to lamb and mutton in their diet. [[52]](#footnote-52) The Americans were very partial to beef cattle, milch cows, and hay ; it is well known they had emigrated from the United States with their cattle. Also, settled in North America for much longer, they favoured types of production more exclusively linked to the New World, such as corn, the making of maple sugar, and even timber production.

We could deny that our figures speak of cultural divergences and leave these variations unexplained or evoke various circumstances, although we cannot think of any convincing one. If, on the contrary, we accept that they point to cultural preferences, why, then, should the habitants be without cultural predilections ? If culture works for some, it works for all, and we can presuppose the same cultural proclivity when dealing with the habitants” involvement in timber production. In this, we assume ethnicity (or, more specifically, “cultural preferences in agricultural practices”) to have only some limited explanatory value, as we utterly reject culturalism ; nor do we pretend or wish to explain these preferences. Beyond the trite observation that they have been acquired through transmission of knowledge and the special expertise that goes with it, we merely want to document them, to see if they throw some light on differences that otherwise might remain unexplained. [[53]](#footnote-53)

Circumstances and cultural preferences, however, are mute about producers” underlying rationale. Among East-Farnham’s modest producers in 1871, what was it ? We can only conjecture, for our sources provide no hard data on most topics.

Ethnographers, and nowadays many historians, assume that the habitants in 1871 were what we call “residential producers.” They hired farm workers only when compelled to, tried not to borrow money, cultivated a wide array of products, used traditional techniques, and produced yields that told of extensive methods of cultivation. They did [385] not do otherwise in East-Farnham. But what about their American and British neighbours ? Did they act in a qualitatively different way ?

Although nothing in the 1871 census returns can prove that their manpower was exclusively residential, enough patronymic clues suggest that anglophone farmers recruited their labour almost entirely from their own residential groups. [[54]](#footnote-54) Their land use shows an agriculture as extensive as that of the habitants, with outputs increasing arithmetically in proportion to areas of land improved. Indeed, if we ranked the various groups according to the number of acres improved and cultivated, as well as according to the cereal and hay output, we would find an almost perfect match : the more improved acres, the more cultivated acres, and the larger the outputs. [[55]](#footnote-55) Like the habitants, the spread of their activities also indicates a low degree of specialization, despite a definite involvement in dairy production. The size of their lands rules out latifundia production, and their outputs for hay and wheat suggest that their production was still mainly geared to residential consumption. [[56]](#footnote-56)

[386]

What about their surpluses ? We did not measure them, but Leon Genn gives us a clue for a much later period (late 1890s). [[57]](#footnote-57) Farmers have always lived in conditions of perpetual risks, mostly related to climatic conditions, and wielded various strategies against such hazards. Above all, they had to sow as if the following year was to yield a bad harvest. If their harvests in bad years hardly satisfied their residential consumption, we could write of “positive” surpluses for smaller farmers in relatively good years only. Otherwise they did not create surpluses by producing above their needs but through enforced savings, by reducing their residential consumption (“negative surpluses,” so to speak). [[58]](#footnote-58) We will call this type of surplus “residential.”

In contrast, some farmers produced on such a scale as to be cushioned off from most threats of climatic hazards. Their surpluses, much larger, were mostly sold on the market to acquire cash, not simply goods they did not make ; we will call such surpluses “extra-residential.” Is there any evidence that our modest anglophone producers regularly generated extra-residential surpluses ? They undoubtedly exchanged part of their products, but all the evidence suggests that their surpluses remained residential.

What about their level of monetization ? Very little can be said about it, but if they generated mostly residential surpluses, their level of monetization must have been relatively modest ; nothing in their agricultural profile evinces anything remotely resembling those presumed “capitalist” farmers described by Kesteman and colleagues. [[59]](#footnote-59)

Finally, what of mechanization ? In 1870 it had barely begun in earnest, and only large farmers had mechanized significantly more (table 10). Whether anglophone or francophone, all smaller producers were very poorly mechanized. Among these producers, be they habitants or English-speaking, the technology was still rudimentary and confined to a few.

Overall, East-Farnham’s modest anglophone farmers cannot be said to exhibit a residential entrepreneurial rationale. Furthermore, the four local cheese factories operated only four and a half months a year, a clear indication that they neither produced milk all year round nor heeded the advice of contemporary agronomist reformers. With a poorly mechanized technology and seemingly not yet engaged in modernization, nothing appears to demarcate them from their French-Canadian homologues,

[387]

TABLE 10

Percentages of Effective Owners of Farm Implements and Number of Implements Owned by Types of Producers and Ethnic Origins of Modest Producers

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Ploughs and Cultivators | | Reapers and Mowers | Horse Rakes | Threshing Machines | Fanning Mills |
| Effective Owners % | Numbers Owned | Effective Owners % | Effective  Owners % | Effective  Owners % | Effective  Owners % |
| East-Farnham | 87 | 2.4 | 18 | 31 | 2 | 16 |
| Large producers | 100 | 3.6 | 73 | 80 | 7 | 53 |
| All modest producers | 85 | 2.2 | 9 | 23 | 0.05 | 10 |
| Modest producers |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Americans | 88 | 2.4 | 17 | 33 | 0 | 10 |
| Scots | 81 | 1.7 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 19 |
| Protestant Irish | 82 | 2 | 12 | 29 | 0 | 12 |
| Catholic Irish | 100 | 2.2 | 0 | 21 | 0 | 7 |
| French Canadians | 79 | 2.1 | 0 | 11 | 2 | 7 |

Source : 1871 census returns

[388]

except perhaps the size of their exploitations (they were plausibly the largest among that category of producers, and partly because of the length of settlement) : all appear to have been middling residential producers. Admittedly, this conclusion does not apply to large farmers, our reference category, whose contribution to the local economy seemed outstanding. Who were they, and what was their economic rationale ?

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING  
OF EAST-FARNHAM’S LARGE PRODUCERS

[Retour à la table des matières](#tdm)

Of the 219 farms surveyed, thirty (14%) belonged to our category of “large farmers.” These large farmers owned generous tracts of land (253 acres on average) and had cleared nearly three times as many acres as smaller producers (table 7). They supplied over one-third of the county’s output in every type of production (sheep raising and domestic butter excepted), owned nearly 40 per cent of milch cows, and produced the same percentage of hay ; furthermore, thirteen of them (43%) actually ranked as large effective producers in all three types of productive activities (cereals, hay, and animals). They were truly large and, in our opinion, corresponded to those celebrated anglophone “elite farmers” of Quebec’s rural history, as, indeed, they were almost exclusively English speaking (twenty-one Americans, four Scots, three Protestant Irish, one Catholic Irish, and only one French Canadian). [[60]](#footnote-60)

A typical large farm would have boasted of 152 acres of improved land, 77 of which were in pastures, 52 in hay, and 23 in cereals and other crops (table 7). In contrast, our typical modest farmers would have improved 54 acres of their land : 29 for pastures, 17 for hay, and 8 for cereals and other crops. East-Farnham’s large farmers were also more diversified. They cultivated hay above all (productivity not out of the ordinary), probably because of the number of animals they reared. They herded three times as many animals as smaller producers, but almost four times as many milch cows (with herds averaging twenty-three heads ; six among the smaller ones - table 3) ; they had obviously started specializing seriously in dairy production, with beef cattle playing a lesser role in their animal husbandry. They all made domestic butter, and markedly more than anyone else. When we calculate the pounds of domestic butter/cow ratio, however, they exhibit the lowest figures (42 lbs/cow, compared to 96 among modest Catholic Irish producers), an indication that great [389] amounts of their milk saw its way to one of the four local cheese factories. [[61]](#footnote-61) These large farmers thus contributed disproportionately to the local economy, and their presence completely skews the calculation of averages, as Gendron and colleagues remark and as our own calculations expressively show. [[62]](#footnote-62) They thus deserve separate treatment.

These farmers were large indeed and, overall, much wealthier than most of their neighbours. Thirteen (43%) of them, for instance, owned more than one house (table 2). They were much more specialized (milch cows and dairy products), [[63]](#footnote-63) undoubtedly generated regular extra-residential surpluses, and were certainly highly monetized. They were also much more mechanized. Does this roster add up to a different economic rationale ?

What quantitative indication could there be of modernization ? At this stage, there is little else than increases in productivity. Would the level of mechanization tell of such increases ? We doubt it, for a mechanization that does not require severe indebtedness is quite compatible with residential production. Indeed, other sources indicate that, well into the twentieth century, new equipment was often purchased to shorten the time spent harvesting and threshing, mainly in order to use residential manpower more fully and to free the farmers from hiring seasonal agricultural workers. To our knowledge, equipment was rarely, if ever, acquired then to increase the productivity of the land.

Furthermore, where yields are available (in the cases of wheat and hay), the large farmers do not fare better. When compared to American smaller farmers (to contrast like groups, since most large producers were Americans), large producers had improved 2.2 times more land, dedicated 2.2 times more land to crop cultivation, but produced 2.8 times as many bushels of cereals. Could this record be read as evidence of greater productivity ? Disputably so, since they also produced 2.8 times as many bushels of oats as smaller American producers ; in the nineteenth century, [390] one acre of land would yield twice as many bushels of oats as it would of wheat, buckwheat, or corn, for instance. Furthermore, they also cultivated 2.6 times as much hay. Since most farmers (save the Scots) fed mostly oats and hay to their animals, and large producers owned three times as many animals, what could be interpreted as an increase in productivity is again better understood as an increase in the production of hay and oats to feed herds three times larger. As with smaller producers, this output speaks of arithmetic increases, and therefore of an extensive agriculture. The discrepancies, if discrepancies there really were, point at best to the timid beginnings of modernization, and little else.

More acres of improved lands required larger labour inputs. Did they hire agricultural labourers in large numbers and on a permanent basis ? The question is difficult to answer because the census was taken in April and because census returns are notoriously hard to interpret on this matter. We can nonetheless identify two categories among our large producers. On the one hand, many of them lived in large households (table 11) : seventeen (57%) declared more than one “farmer” in the household (and three or more in eight of these cases), and all but one of these co-residing farmers shared the same surname and were presumably related. In fact, five of these seventeen farms declared two families living together under one roof (the family of the father, and that of a married son). Also, smaller producers declared an average of 1.7 males aged twelve and above in the household (assuming that a twelve year old is almost an “adult producer”), and large farmers, an average of 2.5 (table 11). They were blessed with more male labour power, while being also more mechanized than smaller producers. Given economies of scale and the greater labour power, they could increase the size of their production.

On the other hand, eight large farmers (27%) also declared owning a commercial building, acting simultaneously as merchants (table 2) [[64]](#footnote-64)Which way did things develop ? From agriculture to trade, or the other way around ? Our sources are mute on the topic, but if we take our clues from Little, it could have evolved both ways. In the townships he studied, some farmers added a trade, bought a mill, and most tradesmen also

[391]

TABLE II

Household Profiles by Types of Producers  
and Ethnic Origins of Modest Producers

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Age of Household Heads | Size of Household | Extended Households | | Males Aged 12 Years + | More than One Resident Family Farmer | | Farm Labourers | |
| Years | Number of Residents | Number | % by Type | Number by Farm | Number | % by Type | Number | % by Type |
| East-Farnham | 44 | 5.7 | 32 | 15 | 1.8 | 66 | 30 | 9 | 4 |
| Large producers | 49 | 6 | 5 | 17 | 2.5 | 17 | 57 | 2 | 7 |
| All modest producers | 44 | 5.7 | 27 | 14 | 1.7 | 49 | 25 | 7 | 4 |
| Large timbermen | 38 | 5.8 | 2 | 8 | 2.1 | 6 | 24 | 1 | 4 |
| Modest producers |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Americans | 43 | 5.2 | 17 | 20 | 1.7 | 17 | 20 | 4 | 5 |
| Scots | 50 | 6.1 | 1 | 6 | 2.3 | 8 | 50 | 2 | 13 |
| Protestant Irish | 43 | 5.5 | 0 | 0 | 1.8 | 6 | 3 5 | 1 | 6 |
| Catholic Irish | 49 | 5.9 | 0 | 0 | 1.7 | 6 | 43 | 0 | 0 |
| French Canadians | 42 | 6.3 | 9 | 16 | 1.5 | 12 | 21 | 0 | 0 |

Source : 1871 census returns

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kept a farm, often a large one. [[65]](#footnote-65) Why ? Two reasons spring to mind. First, they might have done so to diversify. Second, unable to foresee establishing more than one or two sons in trade, they might have kept large farming operations to settle other sons. [[66]](#footnote-66)

These traders with large farms had improved as many acres as our first category of large producers, were not more mechanized, but had declared an average manpower. Thus, they most likely relied on salaried seasonal agricultural workers more than other large producers. There is neither direct nor indirect evidence that they modernized more than others, be it in agriculture or animal production. They were arguably more “business-minded,” diversifying out of agriculture into trade, or vice versa. For the last seven cases, information is too scant to draw reliable conclusions.

Admittedly, the very size of those large farmers” estates and harvests had important repercussions. Elsewhere in the Townships, for instance, there is evidence that very rich farmers possibly experimented but, in the latter case, the causal sequence goes against common wisdom. The “experimenters” did not enlarge their estates because of their innovative ventures but tried out new ways because they were rich, cushioned from the worst hazards through their extra-residential surpluses. Ironically, these rare innovators were the ones who actually faced some financial difficulties because of their very audacity. [[67]](#footnote-67)

Also, the scale of their operations had some organizational implications, such as the hiring of more salaried workers on a seasonal basis among some or diversification out of agriculture among others. Their greater mechanization increased the areas under cultivation, and their greater diversification actually made them more self-sufficient, enabling them to sell more of their products for cash. This additional wealth certainly led to a self-sustaining accumulation among some, since cash made it possible to make the most of sudden bargains, to buy without having to borrow, or to lend money and grab the land if the borrower defaulted. This accumulation, however, seems to have translated mostly into higher levels of immediate and deferred consumption, and into ostentatious consumption among the richest ; in other words, into an “economics of consumption” to be expected from residential production.

These large farmers were truly bigger but, even though specialized in dairy production, they could not keep the cheese factories going for five [393] months a year. Their agriculture was clearly extensive, and there is no evidence that those who had begun modernizing had done so on a significant scale. They certainly were wealthy, with all the implications that this wealth means, but, overall, the evidence in favour of those commonly described as “commercial” or “capitalist” producers - of producers whose economic behaviour was qualitatively different from those of modest residential producers - is so thin as to be non-existent. McInnis did not conclude otherwise from his study of large farms in Canada West. [[68]](#footnote-68)

Why were they so large, then ? If not because of a different economic rationality, then because of circumstantial factors : having inherited large estates because they were descended from the original rich Loyalists ; having enjoyed two or three generations of numerous, healthy sons ; or even having specialized in the right productions at the right place and the right time. The possible circumstances are quite numerous, but, in the end, they alone seem to account for those disparities in size.

CONCLUSION

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In this study we distinguished decisions affecting the particular blend of productions observed from those stemming from a general economic rationale. When analyzing agricultural profiles, we strove to separate circumstances from the possible influence of cultural preferences. Ironically, this distinction resurrected an old cliche of Quebec agricultural history - the image of the “forest-eating” habitants who neglected animal husbandry and agricultural production. The cliche soon vanished to reveal the greatest timber involvement among substantial farmers, who seem to have chosen to monetize this way. Finally, under the ethnic diversity and disparities in the size of exploitations (smaller versus much larger producers), we discerned a single economic rationale. True, all large farmers but one were anglophones, and they must clearly have stood out from the masses. Their presence goes a long way to explain how and why they mesmerized both their contemporaries and historians ever since, appearing to chroniclers as some kind of economic locomotive. In the end, however, nothing proves that they did not operate within the framework of a residential rationale.

Abstract

Attempts to re-examines the relationships between ethnicity and economic rationality in the township of East-Farnham and other agricultural eastern townships in Quebec in 1871 in the light of the new conceptual framework. Dissociation of agricultural choices from disparities in size between producers; Circumstantial factors; Link between ethnicity and choice; Influence of cultural preferences on choice; Finding that anglophone farmers greatly outproduced the habitants; Commercialization; Monetization; Mechanization; Specialization.

Fin du texte

1. Marvin McInnis, "Perspectives on Ontario Agriculture, 1815-1930, *Canadian Papers in Rural History* 8 (1992) : 17-127 ; Ruth Wells Sandwell. "Rural Reconstruction : Towards a New Synthesis in Canadian History", *Histoire sociale/Social History,* 27 (May 1994) : 1-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See, for instance, George V. Haythorn and Leonard C. Marsh, *Land and Labor : A Social Survey of Agriculture and the Farm Market in Central Canada* (Toronto : Oxford University Press 1941) ; Robert L Jones. "French-Canadian Agriculture : The St-Lawrence Valley, 1815-1850," *Agricultural History* 16 (July 1942) : 137-48 ; Arthur R.M. Lower, "Two Ways of Life : The Primary Antithesis of Canadian History," Canadian Historical Association. *Papers* 1 (1943) : 5-18 ; R.L. Jones, "Agricultural Development of Lower-Canada, 1850-1867", *Agricultural History,* 29 (Oct. 1945) : 212-224 and more recently, Fernand Ouellet, *Histoire économique et sociale du Québec, 1700-1850* (Montréal : Fides 1960) ; Jean Hamelin and Fernand Ouellet, "Les rendements agricoles dans les seigneuries et les cantons du Québec, 1700-1850," in Claude Galarneau and Elzéar Lavoie, *France et Canada français du l6e au 20e siècle* (Quebec : Les Presses de l”Universite Laval 1966), 81-120 ; John Isbester, "Agriculture, Balanced Growth and Social Change in Central Canada since 1850 : An Interpretation," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 25 (July 1977) : 673-697. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Gilles Paquet and Jean-Pierre Wallot, "Crise agricole et tensions socio-ethniques dans le Bas-Canada, 1802-1812 : elements pour une ré-interpretation," *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique francaise* 26, 2 (1972) : 185-237 ; "Stratégie foncière de l’habitant : Québec (1790-1835)," *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* 39,4 (1986) : 551-481. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See Serge Courville, "La Crise agricole du Bas-Canada. Elements d’une réflexion géographique." *Cahiers de geographic du Quebec* 24 (décembre 1980) : 385-428 ; S. Courville, "Le marché des subsistences. L’exemple de la plaine de Montréal au début des années 1830," *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* 42, 2 (1988) : 193-239 ; Frank Lewis and Marvin McInnis, "The Efficiency of the French-Canadian Farmer in the 19th century," *Journal of Economic History* 40, 3 (1980) : 497-525 ; F. Lewis and M. McInnis, "Agricultural Output and Efficiency in Lower Canada, 1851", *Research in Economic History* 9 (1984) : 45-87 ; John McCallum, *Unequal Beginnings : Agriculture and Economic Development in Quebec and Ontario before 1870* (Toronto : University of Toronto Press 1980). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Lewis and Mclnnis, "Agricultural Output," 69. Also Chad Gaffield, *Language, Schooling and Cultural Conflict : The Origins of the French-Language Controversy in Ontario* (Kingston : McGill-Queen”s University Press 1987), and Nicole Casteran, "Les strategies agricoles du paysan canadien-francais de l’est ontarien (1870)." *Revue d”histoire de l”Amérique française,* 41*,*1 (1987) : 23-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In their historical atlas, Courville et al. have recently jettisoned ethnic categories altogether. S. Courville, Jean-Claude Robert, and Normand Seguin, *Le pays laurentien au 19e siècle* (Ste-Foy : Les Presses de l’Université Laval 1995) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In English Canada and the United States, more precisely. See, for instance, John W. Bennett and Seena B. Kohl, *Settling the Canadian-American West, 1890-1915 : Pioneer Adaptation and Community Building - An Anthropological History* (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press 1995) ; Steven J. Keilor, "Agricultural Change and Cross-Cultural Exchange : Danes, Americans, and Dairying, 1880-1930," *Agricultural History* 67,4 (1993) : 58-79 ; John C. Lehr, "Peopling the Prairies with Ukrainians," in Gerald Tulchinsky, ed., *Immigration in Canada* (Toronto : Copp Clark Longman 1994), 177-202 ; Royden Loewen, "The Mennonites of Waterloo, Ontario, and Hanover, Manitoba, 1890s," *Canadian Papers in Rural History* 9 (1994) : 187-209 ; Sonya Salamon, "Ethnic Communities and the Structure of Agriculture," *Rural Sociology* 50, 3 (1985) : 323-340 ; David G. Sommers and Ted L. Napier, "Comparison of Amish and Non-Amish Farmers : A Diffusion/Farm-Structure Perspective," *Rural Sociology,* 58,1 (1993) : 130-145. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. John I. Little, *Nationalism, Capitalism and Colonization in 19th Century Quebec : The Upper St. Francis District* (Montreal and Kingston : McGill-Queen’s University Press 1989) ; J.I. Little, *Crofters and Habitants : Settlers Society and Culture in a Quebec Township, 1848-1881* (Montreal and Kingston : McGill-Queen’s University Press 1991) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Mario Gendron et al., *Histoire du Piémont des Appalaches* (Quebec : Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1999) ; Jean-Pierre Kesteman. Peter Southam, and Diane St-Pierre. *Histoire des Cantons de l’Est* (Québec : Les Presses de l’Université Laval 1998) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Kesteman, Southam, and St-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons.* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Michael Merill, “Cash is Good to Eat : Self-Sufficiency and Exchange in the Rural Economy of the United States,” *Radical History Review,* 4(winter 1977) : 42-71 ; Thomas Wermuth, “Were Early Americans Capitalists ? An Overview of the Development of Capitalist Values and Beliefs in Early America," *Mid-America* 74,1 (1992) : 85-97 ; Allan Kulikoff, “Households and Markets : Toward a New Synthesis of American Agrarian History,” *William and Mary Quarterly,* 50, 2 (1993) : 342-355 ; Sand-well, “Rural Reconstruction” : Gerard Bouchard, “Co-intégration et reproduction de la societé rurale. Pour un modèle saguenayen de la marginalité,” *Recherches socio-graphiques* 29, 2-3 (1988) : 283-310 ; G. Bouchard, “Sur un démarrage raté. Industrie laitière et co-intégration au Saguenay (1990-1940),” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* 45,1 (1991) : 73-100 ; G. Bouchard, *Quelques arpents d’Amérique. Population, économie, famille au Saguenay, 1838-1871* (Montreal : Boréal 1996) ; G. Bouchard and Regis Thibault, “Change and Continuity in the Saguenay Agriculture : The Evolution of Production and Yields (1852-1971),” *Canadian Papers in Rural History* 8 (1991) : 231-259 ; Alan Greer, *Peasant, Lord, and Merchant : Rural Society in Three Quebec Parishes,* 1740-1850 (Toronto : University of Toronto Press 1985) ; Michel Verdon, "La production paysanne. Éléments pour une nouvelle économique,” *Éudes rurale,* 107-108 (1987) : 215-242 ; M. Verdon and Louis Roy, “Les grandes fresques dichotomiques de l’histoire rurale québécoise. Une réflexion anthropologique,” *Anthropologie et sociétés* 18, 2 (1994) : 145-172. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Verdon and Roy, “Les grandes fresques dichotomiques”. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. We originally wrote of "capitalist production" but, on further thinking, realized we were repeating the mistakes we wished to avoid, as one of Michael Merrill’s articles testifies. Indicting others for their failure to dissociate capitalism from commercialization, he ends up stating that “capitalism ... is a market economy ruled by, or in the interest of, capitalists.” M. Merrill, “Putting Capitalism in Its Place : A Review of Recent Literature,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 52, 2 (1995) : 315-26. But what are capitalists ? Are they simply people who have managed to accumulate vast amounts of productive property and rely on salaried workers to exploit it, or are they people exhibiting a “capitalist rationality” ? He does not answer the question. Unable to define a “capitalist rationality,” as we had specified a “commercial” one, we prefer to speak of "latifundia production." By “latifundia” we specifically refer to the fact that some individuals own immense tracts of land, which were not acquired for deferred consumption and which required extra-residential manpower for their exploitation (by farmers, sharecroppers, agricultural labourers, or slaves). This term has nothing to do with either “entrepreneurial” or “residential entrepreneurial” production and, to our knowledge, such latifundia, if they ever existed in Canada, have vanished. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. We chose “rationale” over “rationality” because “rationality” may be understood quantitatively. One could argue that all economic actions vary along a continuum from nil (irrational) to completely rational. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. We assume that qualitative differences are more likely to stem from those organizations ; for instance, Verdon has derived an economics of ”residential production” from considerations about the social organizational of the farm family exclusively. Verdon, “La production paysanne.” [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Maurice Aymard, “Autoconsommation et marchés : Chayanov, Labrousse ou Le Roy Ladurie ?” *Annaks E.S.C.,* 38. 6 (1983) : 1392-1410, and Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, “Self-sufficiency and the Agricultural Economy of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts,” *William and Mary Quarterly,* 41, 3 (1984) : 333-64. among others. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. On this matter, Bouchard’s and Greer’s works are unequivocal. It is possible to change without significantly modifying the social organization of the farm. Bouchard. *Quelques Arpents,* and Greer, *Peasant, Lord, and Merchant.* [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. They will resist the fact that, if some accumulate so much land that they need to hire labour, others, namely themselves, will be dispossessed and will have to sell their labour. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. We chose to call “residential” a type of rationale derived from the social organization of production and the relationship to the factors of production of the farm family as known in Western Europe and the northern part of North America. Other economic rationales could be derived from different organizational premises, as in the cases of latifundia or slave production, but none of these really emerged in nineteenth-century Quebec. One might consider the “seigneuries” as a special case of latifundia production, however. Again, for details, see Verdon, “La production paysanne.” [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Bruno Jean, *Territoire d’avenir. Pour une sociologie de la ruralité* (Ste-Foy : Les Presses de l’Université du Québec 1997) ; Michel Morisset, *L’agriculture familiale au Québec* (Paris : L’Harmattan 1987) ; Bernard Vachon, *Le Quebec rural dans tous ses états* (Montreal : Boréal 1991) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Lewis and McInnis, “The Efficiency”. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. In his studies of Ontario agriculture. McInnis stresses equally the importance of including the exploitation of woodlots for a proper assessment of agricultural outputs. McInnis, “Perspectives on Ontario,” 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Over a large and ethnically homogeneous area, farmers would specialize for reasons having much more to do with circumstances ; when farmers from diverse ethnic backgrounds settle near one another, they are more likely to specialize according to circumstances and cultural preferences. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Irish or Scottish immigrants differed in their agricultural practices. In Quebec, as elsewhere in Canada, cultural preferences gave Canadian agriculture a particular flavour : Casteian, “Les strategies agricoles” ; Stephen Hornsby, “Scottish Emigration and Settlement in Early 19th Century Cape Breton,” in Kenneth J. Donavan, ed.. *The Island : New Perspectives on Cape Breton History, 1713-1975* (Sydney, NS : Acadiensis Press 1990), 49-69 ; Little, “Crofters and Habitants” ; Alan MacNeil, “Cultural Stereotypes and Highland Farming in Eastern Nova Scotia, 1827-1851.” *Social History* 19 (May 1986) : 39-56 ; John J. Mannion, *Irish Settlement in Eastern Canada* (Toronto : University of Toronto Press 1974) ; J. J. Mannion, “Point Lance in Transition.” in Graeme Wynn, ed., *People, Places, Patterns, Processes* (Toronto : Copp Clark Pitman 1990), 301-328. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Most historians do not normally give the Americans a separate identity but treat them simply as “English Canadians” ; Little and Kesteman nevertheless emphasize the American origins of many “English Canadian" practices and insist on calling these farmers “Americans.” J.I Little, Évolution *ethnoculturelle et identité régionale des Cantons de l’Est* (Ottawa : Société historique du Canada 1989) ; Kesteman et al., *Histoire des Cantons.* We have followed their lead in this matter. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. This distinction explains discrepancies when adding up numbers. In table 7. for instance, if we add up areas under pasture and crops (making up “improved lands”) among American farmers, we get the figure of 71 acres. If we look at the size of improved lands among American farmers, however, we find 69 acres only. The difference between the two figures stems from the fact that we have selected only effective producers to calculate areas or outputs. We believe that our aim fully justifies this methodological procedure but nonetheless recognize that this method makes it almost impossible to compare our figures with those obtained for the same period, except those of Courville et al, who. like us, have based some of their calculations on what they call “declarants” (our “effective producers”). Courville, *Le pays Laurentien.* [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. We are aware of the arbitrariness of any set of definitions, but these examples closely parallel those of Beatrice Craig, “Le développement agricole dans la haute vallée de la rivière St-Jean,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Associaction* (1992) : 13-26, and Thomas S. Acheson, “New Brunswick Agriculture at the End of the Colonial Era : A Reassessment,” *Acadiensis,* 32. 2 (1993) : 5-26. They are not unlike a combination of Courville’s “gros” and “très gros exploitants.” See Courville, *Lepays Laurentien.* [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Sheila Andrew’s study makes it clear that elite farmers were typically large producers in many productions. S.M. Andrew, *The Development of Bites in Acadian New Brunswick, 1861-1881* (Montreal and Kingston : McGill-Queen’s University Press 1998) [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. To avoid repetition, we shall refer to these farmers as “smaller” or “modest” farmers in the rest of the text. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. It might be argued that we could distort ethnic profiles by removing large producers from our calculations, but we have calculated the profiles for modest farmers alone and for all producers merged, and we observed the same profiles. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. We do not measure surpluses for three major reasons. First, surpluses can be generated through controlling the level of consumption, and such surpluses are impossible to assess. Second, Thomas Wermuth showed how precarious it can be to evaluate the amount of products invested in social relationships, let alone evaluate the fraction of surpluses bartered. T.S. Wermuth, “New York Farmers and the Market Revolution : Economic Behavior in the Mid-Hudson Valley, 1780-1830,” *Journal of Social History* 32 (fall 1998) : 179-96. Finally, as McInnis has pointed out, the method commonly used to estimate these surpluses needs to be precise, and such precision cannot be achieved in the context of nineteenth-century agriculture. McInnis. “Perspectives on Ontario”. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Acheson, “New Brunswick Agriculture.” 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Stanislaw A. Zielinski, *The Story of the Farnham Meeting : A Quaker Meeting in Allen’s Corner, East-Farnham Township, Brome County, Province of Quebec (1820-1902)* (Fulford 1961). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. In addition to six sawmills (total forty-three employees, opened seven months a year), three carriage manufacturers (total of fourteen employees), two tanning factories (total twenty-five employees), two sash factories (total of three employees) and two blacksmiths. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. When considered globally, most of the township’s households in 1871, be they French- or English-speaking, belonged to the category of smaller producers. Given the acreages cleared and the levels of output, these producers more or less correspond to Acheson’s average farmers. In terms of the average acreage of land they possessed, they also seem to correspond to Gordon Darroch’s “independent producers.” Acheson, “New Brunswick Agriculture,” and G. Darroch, “Scanty Fortunes and Rural Middle-Class Formation in Nineteenth-Century Central Ontario,” *Canadian Historical Review,* 79, 4 (1998) : 621-659. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Hal S. Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind : Rural Society in 19th Century New England* (New York : Cambridge University Press 1984) ; Robert A. Gross, “Culture and Cultivation : Agriculture and Society in Thoreau’s Concord,” *Journal of American History* 69 (June 1982) : 42-61. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. According to Lewis and McInnis, milch cows produced on average 92 pounds of butter a year. “Agricultural Output,” 73. On this basis, it stands to reason that East-Farnham’s American farmers took a fraction of their butter to cheese factories. Indeed, large farmers excluded, our modest American farmers owned eight cows and should, therefore, have produced 736 pounds of domestic butter ; in fact, they made only 439 pounds. The difference was plausibly taken to cheese factories. When we consider the Catholic Irish, however, we reach the opposite conclusions. With an average of seven milch cows, they should have produced 644 pounds of domestic butter ; in the census, they are shown as having made 673 pounds (table 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. There is only one Catholic Irish large timber man. and his output was truly exceptional. If he were excluded from the calculations, the complete supremacy of the habitants in this type of activity would be even more remarkable. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. At a first glance they had improved an average of 38 acres, and the British farmers, between 44 and 48 acres (between 6 to 10 acres difference). When we exclude pastures, however, the divergences get smaller ; the habitants had 22 acres in crops, and the British, between 23 and 28 (only 1 to 6 acres difference). And the results are more spectacular when we compare them with the American fanners. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. In fact, unlike the Americans, the French Canadians had little expertise in cattle raising, known not to be one of their “traditions.” [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Rusty Bitterman, Robet A. Madrinnon, and Graeme Wynn. “Of Inequality and Interdependence in the Nova Scotian Countryside, 1850-1870,” *Canadian Historical Review,* 74,1 (1993) : 1-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Louis Roy, Sylvain Paquette, and Gerald Domon, “Settlement Patterns, Environmental Factors, and Ethnic Background on a Southwestern Quebec Frontier (1795-1842),” *Canadian Geographer,* 46, 2 (2002) : 144-159. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. We included among “large timbermen” modest and large farmers who produced substantially more than the township’s average in at least two types of forest productions. In fact, the majority of the large timbermen thus identified outperformed others in at least three of the four activities examined. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. All but one of the remaining large timber producers (eleven) were American. True, the latter stood towards the “large” end of the smaller producers (109 acres of land improved. 36 tons of hay and 153 bushels of grain produced, as well as twenty-five animals reared, of which fourteen were milch cows - table 9) because three of them were simultaneously large producers. When this group is excluded from the calculations, the averages drop significantly : 84 acres of cleared lands, 26 tons of hay, 147 bushels of grain, and twenty-one animals owned. Once again, if the Americans were first on the scene, they should have cleared their woodlots of most of its marketable wood, according to the argument relating the extent of timber production to the time of arrival. Yet they were much more involved in timber production than the British, who immigrated much later. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Kesteman et al., *Histoire des Cantons,* 307-308. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. No map of the township, however old, shows any trace of those “lumber roads” typical of industrial timber production, and neither regional histories of the Piémont, or of East-Farnham in particular, mention that lands were conceded to timber companies. Finally, the train had not reached East-Farnham in 1871, an indication that lumber companies would have operated with great difficulty, if at all. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. In a forest already “mined” by timber companies, the outputs of these large timber producers is not even considered exceptional. Guy Gaudreau, personal communication, April 2002. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Kesteman et al., *Histoire des Cantons,* 311-312. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Guy Gaudreau, “Les activités forestières dans deux communautés agricoles du Nouvel-Ontario, 1900-1920,” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* 69, 4 (2001) : 501-529 ; Jean Martin. “Colonisation et commerce des produits forestiers : l’exemple du canton de Bagot au Saguenay au milieu du XIXe siecle,” *Histoire Sociale / Social History,* 50 (novembre 1992) : 359-377. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Little, *Crofters and Habitants,* 156. “Quel qu’en fut le débouché, l’exploitation domestique des boisés des agriculteurs à des fins commerciales demeura un complément d’importance et souvent une activité essentielle à l’économie rurale.” Rene Hardy and Normand Seguin. *Forêt et société en Mauricie* (Montréal : Boreal 1984). 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Little, *Crofters and Habitants,* 153 ; see also Brian Cannon, “Immigrants in American Agriculture,” *Agricultural History* 65,1 (1991) : 17-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Little, *Crofters and Habitants,* 141 ; Mannion, “Point Lance,” 317 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Incidentally, to acknowledge the existence of cultural preferences does not imply that new cultural preferences do not arise in new environments and that others do not disappear. Over three generations, people can easily gain new expertise that they pass on to their descendants, as the Protestant Irish seemed to have already done with maple sugar. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. In April 1871 only eight household heads declared a farm labourer as part of their household. Moreover, all over the township, very few household heads declared themselves farm labourers. Even according to the criteria used by Kesteman et al., these farms can be considered family farms. Since they had cleared only 54 acres on average, we can safely assume that the majority of them did not have to resort to salaried labour. *Histoire des Cantons,* 287. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. This pattern calls for some caution. Let us examine “lands in crops” : the Scots would appear first (28 acres), the Catholic Irish second (24 acres), and the Protestant Irish last (23 acres). If we matched with bushels produced, we would find similar ratings : Scots first (164 bushels), Catholic Irish second (112 bushels), and Protestant Irish last (107 bushels). The difference between the Irish, both Catholic and Protestant, could be reduced to differences in areas cultivated. But what of the Scots ? Merely 5 acres more in cultivation than the Protestant Irish (1.2 times more), but 57 bushels more (1.53 times more). When we look at the volume of oat production and ponder our averages by the fact that oats yield twice as many bushels per acre as wheat or buckwheat, we find that itemized outputs suggest cultural preferences, despite the fact that overall figures tell of a type of agriculture (extensive or not). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Acheson estimates that horned cattle consumed annually 1.5 tons of hay, whereas pigs and sheep ate only 0.15 tons. “New Brunswick Agriculture,” 14. On that basis, it would seem that most of it was eaten by the animal population. Indeed, let us take American modest farmers ; their twelve horned cattle and eight sheep and pigs combined would have needed 19 tons of hay and their production was 23 tons. The discrepancy is smaller among the Scots (13 and 16, respectively) and almost nil among the Protestant Irish. Similarly, Mclnnis calculated an annual consumption of 7 bushels of wheat per male adult equivalent ; once more, given wheat outputs varying between 13 and 25 bushels and household sizes between 5.2 and 6.3 (table 11), we can conclude that all the wheat was consumed residentially. M. McInnis, “Marketable Surpluses in Ontario Farming, 1860,” *Social Science History,* 8. 4 (1984) : 396-424. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Léon Gérin, [*L’habitant de St-Justin. Mémoire de la Société royale du Canada*](http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/Gerin_leon/habitant_de_Saint_justin/habitant_de_Saint_justin.html)*,* 4 (1898) : 139-216. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. This situation is admirably described through the values of frugality brought out in such stark relief in Germ’s masterly monograph : Gérin, [*L’habitant dc Saint-Justin*](http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/Gerin_leon/habitant_de_Saint_justin/habitant_de_Saint_justin.html)*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Kesteman et al., *Histoire des Cantons.* [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. For clear evidence of their existence and their weight in the economy and the general orientation of Piemont towards dairy production, see in particular Gendron et al. *Histoire du Piémont,* 155, 158, 163, 166 : Kesteman et al.. *Histoire des Cantons,* 90, 92, 291-292, 307. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. “Les plus gros éleveurs du Piemont... dans 60% des cas sont les principaux fournisseurs. Les 25 patrons de la fromagerie de Dunham possèdent une trentaine de vaches en moyenne [twenty-three for our large producers], chiffres qui s’écartent largement des conditions régionales ou provinciales.” Gendron et al., *Histoire du Piemont,* 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. *Ibid*., 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Our very definition of large producers means that they had to be large effective producers in two of three productions (cereals, hay, or animals). It is hardly astonishing to find that twenty-nine of them (out of thirty) ranked as large animal breeders. When we itemize their effective size by type of animal, however, their specialization clearly stands out. Twenty-nine were large milk producers, but only nine rated as large sheep or beef cattle breeders. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Three have already been included among operations declaring more than one farmer. It was impossible to trace the exact employment of these merchants, but two owned a cheese factory, one a store-cum-post office, one a furniture and chair factory, and another a carriage factory. As David Weiman suggests, “households heads with dual occupations have ... larger wealth holdings. A second occupation may have enabled these household heads to accumulate more wealth than other farmers.” D.F. Weiman, “Families, Farms and Rural Society in Preindustrial America.” *Research in Economic History,* Supplement, 5 (1989) : 255-277. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Little, *Crofters and Habitants.* [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. As Andrew suggests, they probably “used their labour resources, land, and capital to take advantage of changes and to provide for all children.” *Elites in Acadian New Brunswick,* 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. For more information, see Kesteman et al., *Histoire des Cantons.* [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. “For the most part, large farms were not very different from standard farms. There are few characteristics that would mark them as structurally differentiated. Mainly, they were more diversified ; they tended to produce more things.” Marvin McInnis, “The Size Structure of Farming, Canada West, 1861,” *Research in Economic History,* Supplement 5 (1989) : 313-329. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)