AN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF CAPE BRETON
ISLAND IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

By

STEPHEN JOHN HORNSBY
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to the required standard

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Department of GEOGRAPHY

The University of British Columbia
2075 Wesbrook Place
Vancouver, Canada
V6T 1W5

Date 25 SEPTEMBER 1986
Abstract

This thesis is an historical geography of Cape Breton Island in the nineteenth century. It aims to provide a geographical synthesis of the Island over a hundred years, elucidating the changing relationship between the Island’s population and their environment. The Island is considered as a region and the scale of enquiry is at the regional level. The patterns of population, settlement, economy, and society are identified, and the processes that created them are discussed. Finally, the wider relevance of the Cape Breton experience is suggested.

Three distinct and largely separate patterns of settlement, economy, and society coexisted in early nineteenth century Cape Breton: the old commercial staple trade of the cod fishery, semi-subsistent family-farms, and industrial coal mining. After the end of the French regime on the Island, British and Nova Scotian capital was invested in the inshore cod fishery, creating specialised fishing settlements, a fishing population, and an economy tied to distant, international markets. Superimposed upon this staple trade in the 1820’s was a fee-simple empire of family-farms. Agricultural changes in Western Scotland displaced thousands of people, many of whom fetched up on Cape Breton - among the cheapest of overseas destinations. By mid-century, these immigrants had occupied all the good land and considerable areas of poorer backland. After years
of backbreaking work, the settlers had created semi-
subsistent farms on relatively cheap land far from markets.
About the same time as the Scots arrived, British industrial
capital exploited the Island's coal reserves, introducing
skilled British labour and steam-technology to win coal for
external markets.

Until the final decades of the century, the fishery
changed little. The cod fishery, organised and supplied by
Channel Island and resident merchants, remained dominant.
Only in the 1870's was it augmented by the rapid rise of the
lobster fishery. Both farming and mining, however, were
transformed in the years after 1850. As the agricultural
population grew, largely by natural increase, settlement
expanded farther onto backland, and growing numbers of
subsistent farmers combined agriculture with seasonal work
in the coal mines and in Boston. Under the successive
stimuli of Reciprocity and the National Policy, the coal
industry expanded, attracting more companies, increasing
output, and employing more men accommodated in several new
settlements. Yet these three economies remained essentially
separate. Agriculture supplied some produce and seasonal
labour to the fishery and the mines, but the two staples —
exploiting different resources and tied to different sources
of capital and markets — had no contact. With limited
capacity to generate multipliers, a larger, more mature
economy did not develop on Cape Breton. Faced with limited
land and uncertain returns from the staple industries, many
Islanders emigrated to the burgeoning towns and cities of
New England. This cycle of immigration, population growth, and emigration, set against an economic background of staple industries and semi-subsistent farming, was common to much of settled Canada in the nineteenth century.
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This thesis began as a study of Scottish immigration and settlement on Cape Breton Island in the nineteenth century. To an eager student with a degree from a Scottish university, fond memories of several hiking tours in the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and a developing interest in new world settlement, such a study appeared to make a good deal of sense. But as I immersed myself in the records and got to know Cape Breton better, it became increasingly clear that the Island was not only of interest because of the Scots, but also because the developments that occurred there seemed to encapsulate much of what happened elsewhere in Canada during the nineteenth century. Apart from being an agricultural haven for emigrant crofters, Cape Breton also had a centuries-old staple trade (the cod fishery), and coal mines that were among the earliest enterprises to be industrialised in Canada. Moreover, a great demographic cycle of immigration, population growth, and emigration worked itself out on the Island during the nineteenth century. These developments had close parallels in other parts of Canada. As a result, the study was
broadened to chart the evolution of the staple trades and the unfolding of the demographic cycle, and to suggest their wider relevance.

As in many another regional historical geography, the methodology employed combines cross-sectional accounts of the patterns of settlement and economy at specific times, and vertical themes that discuss the processes of change. The study begins with an assessment of Cape Breton in 1800. With the population and economic geography of the Island established, the remaining chapters seek to account for the changes in population, settlement, and economy that occurred in the nineteenth century. Chapter 2 considers the changing circumstances in Western Scotland during the early nineteenth century which propelled many Scots to Cape Breton. The social and economic background of the immigrants is identified to allow comparison with subsequent developments on Cape Breton, and the nature of the migration is outlined because of its relevance to the process of settlement on the Island. The spread of settlement and the growth of agriculture on Cape Breton is the subject of Chapter 3. Chapter 4 deals with the two staple trades - the cod fishery and the new industrial staple of coal mining - and charts their evolution during the early nineteenth century. Acting as a hinge between the chapters that deal with Cape Breton in the early and late nineteenth century, Chapter 5 focusses on the potato famine that occurred between 1845-1849. This is a convenient centre-point for this study. The famine put an end to significant
immigration and precipitated an emigration from the Island that was to run into the twentieth century. The potato famine on Cape Breton, like that in Western Scotland and Ireland, was an event of singular importance.

The continued growth of population, the spread of settlement, and the growing agricultural crisis on Cape Breton in the late nineteenth century are examined in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 considers later developments in the cod fishery and the expansion of the mines after 1858. Both Chapters 6 and 7 deal with Cape Breton up to 1891, a logical point to end the study. In the early 1890's, a branch of the Intercolonial railway was built across Cape Breton linking the industrial towns of eastern Cape Breton County with the mainland, and providing an improved market connection for Island farmers. More importantly, the takeover of most of the coal mines by the Dominion Coal Company in 1893 and the building of a steelworks ushered in an expansion of the coal industry so massive that the migrations of Cape Bretoners were to some extent reoriented away from Boston towards the mining towns of eastern Cape Breton County. Essentially, the twentieth-century history of Cape Breton begins in the early 1890's. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 outline the causes for the emigration from Cape Breton in the late nineteenth century which is dealt with in Chapter 8. Rather than conclude the study with a cross-section of Cape Breton in 1891, Chapter 9 draws the various themes together, discusses their interrelations, and suggests some possible connections between Cape Breton and...
other parts of Canada in the nineteenth century.

Research for this thesis has taken me from Ottawa to Edinburgh via Halifax and Cape Breton, and I would like to thank the staffs of the following institutions for their assistance: the Public Archives of Canada, the National Library of Canada, and the Department of Labour Library, Ottawa; the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Halifax; the Beaton Institute, Cape Breton; the Scottish Record Office and the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh. I am grateful to Victoria Hornsby for her energetic help in correlating literally thousands of land grants with the Crown Land Index maps of Cape Breton, and to my wife, Kathleen, who helped in innumerable ways to expedite the completion of this thesis. Ray Harris of the Cartography Unit, Department of Geography, University of Edinburgh, is also thanked for speedily transforming my rough drafts into clear maps.

The Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship Committee brought me to Canada, and provided generous support for four years in the doctoral programme at the University of British Columbia; they also made available funds for travel to Ottawa, Halifax, and Cape Breton, and for a considerable part of the thesis cartography.

My final words of thanks are reserved for Professor Graeme Wynn, who closely read an earlier draft and made many useful suggestions, and for my supervisor, Professor Cole Harris, whose work first interested me in the historical
geography of Canada and who, in many helpful letters, guided this thesis from afar.
Cape Breton at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century

Situated on the eastern rim of the North American continent at the mouth of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Cape Breton Island came to European attention in the late fifteenth century when explorers were searching for a sea-route to Asia. John Cabot’s landfall in 1497 on what he thought was the coast of "Cathay" or northern China may well have been the rocky shore of Cape Breton. A few years later, Portuguese mariners, exploring along the north-eastern seaboard, probably charted the Island’s Atlantic coast and fixed it in relation to the southern shores of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. In the 1530’s, as a result of Cartier’s voyages in the Gulf, the northern coastline was also established. By 1536, Cape Breton was firmly located in the European cartography of the New World.

Although a mid-latitude environment, much of Cape Breton must have appeared discouragingly bleak. More than half of the Island is rough, glaciated upland, part of the old, worn-down Appalachian mountain range (Fig. 1.1). Composed of pre-Cambrian igneous and metamorphic rocks, this upland comprises a plateau that occupies much of the
Figure 1.1 Main heights of land and rivers of Cape Breton.

After map in D.B. Cann, J.I. MacDougall, and J.D. Hilchey, Soil Survey of Cape Breton Island Nova Scotia p.18.
northern half of Cape Breton and a series of parallel hills that border the Bras d’Or Lake. Along the northern and southern flanks of the plateau, glaciers and, more recently, rivers have eroded narrow valleys or intervales, the only natural routeways through the mountains. The rest of the Island consists of gently rolling lowland. Made up of softer carboniferous rocks, the lowland has been scoured by glaciation, leaving it pockmarked with innumerable lakes and marshes. In the centre of the Island, virtually bisecting the upland and lowland halves, is the Bras d’Or Lake. Open to the sea on the east coast, the Bras d’Or makes much of the interior easily accessible. No part of Cape Breton is more than ten miles from either the Bras d’Or or the coast.

Much of Cape Breton is blanketed with glacial till and glaciofluvial deposits. The upland plateau and most of the lowland are covered with a readily permeable, reddish-brown or grayish-brown sandy loam till, while the rest of the lowland is covered with a moderately to slowly permeable, reddish-brown or dark-gray clay loam or gravelly clay loam till. There are also glaciofluvial sands and gravels scattered throughout the Island, and more recent alluvial sediments on the intervale flood-plains. Many small peat bogs are found on poorly drained sites, particularly on the uplands. Often close to the surface, these various deposits provide a meagre foundation for soils. On the porous till and outwash deposits are well-drained, nutrient-leached podzols; while on the wetter boulder clays, are water-logged
gleysoils. Immature regosols are found on the alluvial flats. In general, the Island's soils are thin, stony, and acidic.

Although ameliorated to some extent by a maritime location, Cape Breton's winters are markedly continental. They are frequently bitterly cold (January temperatures average \(-5.5^\circ\) C. at Sydney) and the snowfall heavy (5 feet per annum). Snow is common in May and ice can linger along the coast until early June. The cold Labrador current which sweeps the Atlantic coast keeps the Island cool during the summer (July temperatures average \(17.6^\circ\) C. at Sydney) and shortens the growing season (156 days at Cheticamp on the north coast, 62 days at Margaree ten miles inland, and even less at higher elevations). Along the coasts, fog is a frequent hazard during summer when warm air moves off-shore and condenses over the cold sea-currents.

At the time of European discovery, virtually the entire Island was covered with a mixed coniferous and deciduous forest. Along the Atlantic coast, this forest was mainly spruce and balsam, although white spruce was common close to the shore and larch thrived on poorly drained sites (Fig. 1.2). Around the Bras d'Or Lake and along the hillsides on the east and west coasts, grew sugar maple, hemlock, and pine. The slopes and valley bottoms were dominated by conifers (balsam fir, white spruce, black spruce, and white pine) although on river terraces, elm grew "very fine large and in great quantities." On higher, better drained slopes were found hemlock and deciduous varieties (beech, sugar
Figure 1.2 Forest zones of Cape Breton.

After O.L. Loucks 'A Forest Classification for the Maritime Provinces.'
maple, and a few yellow birch); but above 500 feet elevation, these species thinned as red maple, balsam fir, white spruce, and scattered red spruce appeared. In the Cape Breton Highlands, the frequently shallow soils supported balsam fir, white birch, and spruce with beech and sugar maple on the warmer, western slopes. Dwarf conifers, some white birch and mountain ash grew on the plateau summit.

The Island's mineral deposits included gypsum and coal. The small gypsum deposits were scattered near the Gut of Canso and at Mabou; while the broad bands of bituminous coal outcropped along the eastern side of the Island, from Boularderie through Sydney to Mira Bay, with lesser deposits on the north coast near Mabou, Inverness, and Margaree Harbour. Gently folded and between three and six feet thick, the twelve main seams constituted the largest coalfield in eastern Canada and the most accessible along the entire eastern seaboard of North America.

Yet the resource that first drew Europeans across the Atlantic to Cape Breton lay off-shore. The Island's coasts, like those of the Gulf, Newfoundland, and Labrador, are the seasonal feeding grounds of large numbers of cod. After the cod have spawned during April on the banks along the continental shelf, they migrate inshore to feed on herring, mackerel, and capelin spawning in shallow waters. Although the exact time varies from place to place, the cod usually arrive around the coasts of Cape Breton in early May and
stay until mid-December when they return to deep-water. The best months for fishing are June, July, and August when the cod are plentiful, fresh bait available, and the weather usually fine.

John Cabot reportedly found the seas off Cape Breton and Newfoundland so swarming with cod that the ship's crew could catch them in weighted baskets and within a few years of his voyage, these virtually inexhaustible stocks had been connected to the burgeoning European market by a migratory fishery. Each year, in the spring, thousands of fishermen from ports from Bristol to Cadiz set out to fish for cod along the coasts of Labrador, Newfoundland, and Cape Breton, returning with their catch in the fall. At first, their contact with the New World was slight, confined to the summer fishing season. Vessels anchored in sheltered harbours, supplies and boats were unloaded, and temporary shore stations constructed. Fishing was done close to the shore from boats and catches were processed on land. Cod were headed, split, lightly salted, and dried on cobble beaches and wooden platforms or 'flakes' until they were sufficiently cured for the return voyage. Later, a few of the fishermen over-wintered to secure fishing sites or 'rooms' for the following season, but none stayed for more than a few years. The deep-sea, bank fishery, which developed from the 1550's, had no contact with land, for the fish were caught from the vessels, processed on-board, and heavily salted to preserve them until they could be dried in Europe.
Much of the Cape Breton fishery was in the hands of French fishermen. During the early 1600's, vessels from Olonne, La Rochelle, and the Basque ports were recorded using Cape Breton harbours, particularly those at St. Peter's, Louisbourg, Ingonish, and perhaps Cape North and Chéticamp. Even so, there was no permanent European settlement on the Island during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the fishery remained a subordinate part of the much larger French fishery prosecuted along the coasts of southern Newfoundland, the Petit Nord, and the Gaspé. Then, in 1713, as a result of the Treaty of Utrecht, France lost mainland Nova Scotia and her substantial fisheries in southern Newfoundland and decided to turn Cape Breton into a base for both residential and migratory fisheries and an outer-bastion of New France. Louisbourg, an ice-free harbour on the Atlantic coast, was developed as a fortified, garrison town, a base for warships patrolling the vulnerable shipping lanes to Quebec, and soon a major entrepot of French trade in the North Atlantic. By the 1730's, the resident fishery on Cape Breton had surpassed the migratory fishery and employed many of the Island's nearly 4,000 inhabitants. In some years, cod exports from Cape Breton were more valuable than fur exports from Quebec. By 1752, there were nearly 6,000 residents on the Island, two-thirds of them at Louisbourg, plus, in summer, a sizeable migratory population. Yet within a few years, war destroyed Louisbourg and the French fishery on
Cape Breton. As a prelude to capturing Quebec, Louisbourg was taken by the British in 1758, most of its inhabitants deported, and its fortifications razed. The Island was annexed to Nova Scotia and in 1763, formally ceded along with the rest of New France to Britain.

Soon after the fall of Louisbourg, the resident fishery on Cape Breton began to reform. A few French fishermen were left at fishing stations along the south coast and in the 1760's and 1770's they were joined by Acadian fishermen returning from exile on the Magdalen Islands and the French-islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. Irish fishermen from Newfoundland also drifted into the Island, settling at Main à Dieu and Louisbourg. By the early 1760's these resident fishermen were being outfitted by a Newfoundland merchant based at Louisbourg and in 1765, merchants from the Channel Islands opened a fishing station at Arichat on Isle Madame and, a few years later, another at Cheticamp on the northwest coast. By the late 1760's, the Island's fishery had been reconnected to the North Atlantic commercial world.

Cape Breton remained a thinly populated fishing station until the early 1780's when several thousand Loyalist refugees from the United States spilled into British North America. Although most went to Quebec, Nova Scotia, and the newly created colony of New Brunswick, some 3-400 arrived on Cape Breton. As a result, the administration of the Island was separated from Nova Scotia and a new colonial government, dominated by Loyalists, was formed. A capital was founded beside a bay on the east coast, and both harbour
and settlement were obsequiously named Sydney after the Colonial Secretary. A few settlers took government office; most became semi-subsistent farmers. Some also worked in the small coal mine that the government had opened on the north side of Sydney Harbour in 1785 to provide it with some revenue. Then, in the last years of the century, a few Highland Scots also arrived on the Island, an overflow from the settlements on Prince Edward Island and in Pictou County, Nova Scotia, and settled along the Straits of Canso and around Mabou Harbour. By the 1790's, a feeble colony and a nascent agricultural economy had been grafted onto an island economy that still depended overwhelmingly on fishing.

Cape Breton in 1800

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Cape Breton was sparsely settled, forested, and undeveloped. Barely 2,500 people lived on the Island, less than half of its French population in the early 1750's. Most of them dwelt in a few settlements dispersed around the coast: some 800 at Sydney and along the shores of Sydney Harbour, almost 200 at Gabarus and Louisbourg, and about 1,500 split between Arichat and the northwest coast (Fig. 1.3). Perhaps half the population were French-speaking Acadians, concentrated mainly on Isle Madame and at Chéticamp; most of the rest
Figure 1.3 Population of Cape Breton, 1801.

Data from population return enclosed in Despard to Hobart, 24 December 1801, CO/CB/A/22.
were Loyalists, settled at Sydney, Baddeck River, and some of the south coast outports. The small remainder were Irish, inhabiting the coves on the southeast coast, or Gaelic-speaking Highland Scots dispersed along the west coast.

The leading sector of the Cape Breton economy was still the cod fishery. It supported about two-thirds of the population, attracted British capital and skilled labour, and tied the colony into a highly commercial North Atlantic trading system. Coal mining, the Island's other staple industry, was small, employed relatively few people, and fed into a more local, regional economy: exports of coal rarely went beyond Halifax or St. John's. Farming, employing most of the remaining population, was largely subsistent for Cape Breton was far from markets and only occasional sales of produce were made to the fishery. Fishing and mining were organised by British and resident merchants, the intermediaries that linked Cape Breton fishermen and miners to North Atlantic markets. They purchased the Island's staple products, supplied the population with imported manufactures and foodstuffs, and kept many people in debt. Most fishermen, coal miners, and farmers lived close to subsistence, their lives pre-occupied with the daily struggle to survive. To lessen their dependence upon the merchants, resident fishermen kept kitchen gardens; miners had farms; and a few farmers did some seasonal fishing or mining. For many, occupational pluralism was a way of life.
Tagged onto this economic structure was the colonial regime at Sydney, which supported barely 200 people and hardly extended beyond the town.

The Staple Industries: The Cod Fishery

In 1800 the cod fishery of Cape Breton comprised two elements: first, a migratory fishery based on the Channel Islands; and second, a resident fishery organised by local merchants and employing Island labour. In terms of exports, the migratory fishery was the more important, handling more than half of the annual trade. In 1796, for example, the three British firms involved in Cape Breton exported 13,059 qtls. or 63% of total cod exports, and dominated dried fish production at Arichat and Chéticamp.

The migratory fishery was financed and organised on the Channel Islands, principally on Jersey. From there, companies ran a highly integrated and self-contained business, controlling all aspects of production, transportation, and marketing. Each year, in the spring, they sent out, on company vessels, information on prices and markets to their agents resident on Cape Breton, skilled labour for curing the cod, and most of the supplies required at the fishing stations. Among these supplies, drawn from all around the North Atlantic, were salt for preserving the cod; rum, tea, tobacco, sugar, beef, pork, and lard for provisioning the fishery; bar-iron, lead, canvas, and cordage for ship-building and fishing; and soap, candles,
indigo, and earthenware for retailing to the local population. After the season's fishing, in the fall, the company vessels carried the dried fish to market in Southern Europe and returned the workforce to Jersey as well as the fish-books, ledgers, and agents' reports for inspection. Agents or caretakers were left to over-winter on the Island to look-after the company premises.

In 1800 three Channel Island companies participated in the migratory fishery to Cape Breton. By far the largest, in terms of exports, was the Janvrin Company which in 1796 exported 7,409 qtls.; followed by Remon & Co., 2,884 qtls.; and Philip Robin, 2,766 qtls. These companies were either family-owned businesses or partnerships, and several were linked by marriage or joint-directorships (at least two of the companies involved in Cape Breton, Robin and Janvrin, were soon to be connected in these ways). Management, too, frequently drew on different members of a family, at least in the years before successful firms grew too large for such management; fathers, sons, and brothers were often found captaining vessels or manning fishing rooms on Cape Breton.

The Channel Island companies were highly specialised, producing "prime merchantable" dried fish for export to the lucrative markets of Italy, Spain, and Portugal; indeed, the Robin mark was to become synonymous with high grade fish. By far the best dried fish came from the inshore fishery, and while we cannot be sure of the situation in 1800 later
practice suggests that the Channel Islanders were almost exclusively involved in this fishery. They had little interest in the deep-sea, bank fishery, which produced heavily-salted, 'wet cure' fish.

The techniques and technology of the inshore cod fishery, well developed over the centuries, were not modified by the Channel Islanders. Each fishing station had a number of shallops, the ubiquitous craft of coastal waters, for cod fishing and short-distance trading. Descriptions of Cape Breton shallops at the end of the eighteenth century have not survived, but probably they were similar to the shallops of the French regime (French methods of boat building having been maintained by Acadian fishermen) and the whale-boat used later in the century. They were usually undecked or partially decked rowing boats with a mast that could be stepped or unstepped as necessary. They were probably clinker built, fifteen to twenty feet long, and tapered from the middle to each end. Generally rigged with two sprit- or gaff-sails, they could be fitted with a schooner rig for deep sea voyages. A three man crew was capable of handling the shallop in the roughest of seas, as one writer observed: "... they are often out in heavy gales, in which they make, according to the sailor's phrase, good weather of it, and they are scarcely ever shipwrecked."

Fishing was done with hook and line. Each fishermen was equipped with four lines for shallow water (less than ten fathoms) and two for deeper water. Each line had a lead
sinker, weighing from two to four pounds according to the depth of the water and strength of the current, and a double hook baited with fresh herring, mackerel or cod offal. If the fish were biting, as many as three or four quintals of cod could be taken by each fishermen in a day. Usually, the fishermen were out on the grounds from dawn until late afternoon, although a freshening wind or a lack of bait could shorten the day's fishing.

After the catch had been landed and weighed, with each fisherman's tally recorded in the company ledgers, it was headed, gutted, split, and washed before it had time to heat or soften. The fish would then be ready for curing; a long, complex, and difficult task on which the fortunes and reputation of the company depended. The fish were first salted for four to eight days, then washed again to remove any blood and visceral matter, and stacked to dry, usually on the stage. A day or two later and providing the weather was fine, the fish were spread out to dry, flesh side up on the flakes. After the first day's drying, the fish were turned over, skin side up, to protect them from dew during the night; but thereafter, they were collected up every evening and made into piles of twenty to thirty each and laid out again the next morning. During the day, care had to be taken that they did not become wet or sunburnt and although repeated turning and covering with branches or 'dinnage' offered some protection, the fish were taken indoors at the first sign of rain. Obviously the weather
was critical to the success of the cure. A west wind bringing warm, dry air off the continent was the best drying weather, but too often winds from the east or southeast brought rain, damp, or in the words of a Robin agent, "our usually constant friend the fog." After the fish had spent several days drying, they were collected up into large round piles containing as much as 100 qtls. each, covered with birch bark or canvas, and pressed with heavy stones. This process aimed to squeeze out the last remaining moisture. They were then housed in the dry fish store until a fine day just before loading when they were taken outside, spread on the ground and covered with fine gravel, and given a 'last sunning' or 'parting-sun.'

Apart from the cod fishery, the Channel Island firms were involved in the pickled fish trade. Good runs of herring and mackerel sweep the coasts of Cape Breton, particularly in late summer when the fish are migrating from their feeding grounds in the Gulf to deep water in the Atlantic, and can be intercepted easily along the Straits of Canso and off the east coast. The fish were caught inshore, usually using gill-nets set overnight. After they had been landed, the fish were gutted ('gibbed') and pickled in barrels between layers of salt. The processing was done either by the individual fisherman who sold his fish to the Channel Island companies, or by the skilled men working at the fishing stations. The main market was the West Indies; in 1796, Janvrin exported 660 barrels of pickled fish to Barbados.
The migratory fishery also exploited two other local resources: salmon and seals. The salmon fishery was prosecuted mainly around the Island's coasts, particularly at river mouths where the fish could be caught as they migrated upstream; Margaree was perhaps the most important salmon fishery on Cape Breton. The fish were caught in nets and then split and salted in barrels. In the migratory fishery most of the pickled salmon was exported overseas; in 1796, Janvrin shipped 102 barrels to Portugal and 35 barrels to Ireland. Sealing took place along the west coast of Newfoundland and around the Magdalen Islands each March when the harp seal pups were still on the ice-flows. Most likely the Channel Island merchants were not directly involved in the seal hunt - an expensive and risky business - but purchased seal skins from resident fishermen. In 1796, Robin exported 3 puncheons of seal skins to Halifax and 425 skins to Jersey, while Janvrin also exported 100 skins to Jersey. As these relatively small amounts show, the pickled fishery and sealing were minor activities compared to the cod fishery.

The Channel Islanders had fishing rooms on Cape Breton at three, widely-dispersed locations: Arichat on Isle Madame, just off the southwest coast; Chéticamp on the northwest coast; and Sydney on the east coast. Arichat was by far the most important, serving as the regional headquarters of the migratory fishery, as a centre for fishing around Isle Madame, and as one of two custom's
ports in the colony. Most of the Island's fishing supplies and cod exports passed through it; in 1796, the port handled 81% of the dried fish trade. The fishing room at Chéticamp, established as an out-station of Arichat, was usually operated during the summer and closed for the winter when the caretaker and shallops returned to Isle Madame. Sydney was even less important, and probably was used only intermittently.

The fishing stations were large, highly functional settlements completely oriented to the production of dried fish. The Robin company owned 150 acres at Arichat and at least 2,440 acres at Chéticamp, while Janvrin's 1,000 acres at Arichat covered virtually an entire island. Such extensive properties provided space not only for buildings and drying flakes, but also for woodlots and a farm for supplying fresh provisions to the fishing crews. Clustered by the foreshore, the company buildings were, to all intents and purposes, a fish-processing factory. Among these buildings were a long deep-water stage for the unloading of fishing boats and supply vessels; covered sheds for splitting and salting the catch; drying flakes, often covering several acres of beach; dried fish and salt stores; rigging and sail lofts; blacksmith, joiner, and cooper shops; separate cookhouses for Jersey and Acadian workers; bunkhouses for the seasonal fishermen; an agent's residence; a retail outlet for supplying settlers; and perhaps a shipyard consisting of launchways, a covered saw-pit, and sheds.
Fishing, like other pre-industrial tasks, was labour intensive. As Cape Breton had a relatively large fishing population, the Channel Island companies did not need to bring many fishermen across the Atlantic. Instead, they outfitted several hundred resident fishermen at Arichat and Cheticamp. The processing of cod, though, was still done by skilled men from the Channel Islands. In the mid-1790's, a government official reckoned that there were "above 100 Jersey men attending the curing of fish who spend but six months in the year in the Island." Apart from those recruited around the dockside in St. Hellier, Jersey, they came from rural, small-holdings on the Channel Islands, signing on for seasonal employment. They left wives and families to maintain the plots during the summer, and returned in late November in time for potato digging, ploughing, and sowing. As labour costs were generally higher in the New World, companies discouraged their employees from settling on Cape Breton. Wages were paid in the Channel Islands, wives and families were left behind, and agents were not permitted to marry overseas.

Occupations at the fishing stations were specialised to ensure efficient, large-scale production and a consistently high-quality product. The skilled men recruited in the Channel Islands were divided into fishing and curing crews, and within each there were well-defined jobs. As one Channel Islander explained in 1837,
When arriving at the fishing stations, a division of work takes place, whereby much more work is done, and better done. Some men are employed solely in the catching of the codfish, and in bringing it ashore; others in the carrying it to the spot where one person is employed in cutting off the heads, and another in ripping and gutting them, and some in salting the fish. Others are engaged in the transporting of it to be dried, and, at the least symptom of dampness in the atmosphere, in storing it.37

Fishing crews comprised shallop masters, fishermen, and stowers, while those on shore included cut-throats, headers, splitters, and salters. Supervising shore operations, especially the critically important curing, were foremen, beach masters, and assistants. Support staff - clerks, book-keepers, store-keepers, carpenters, blacksmiths, shipwrights, and cooks - maintained and facilitated the daily running of the fishing station. In command of the whole workforce was the company agent who was in frequent contact by letter with headquarters in Jersey. Although not themselves industrial, these stratified and occupationally specialised workplaces bore many of the hallmarks of the factory system in Britain.

The resident fishery was based on Cape Breton and tied to Halifax. Virtually all the resident fishery's exports went to Halifax (in 1796, the port took 8,209 qtls. or 96% of the total output) from where the fish were re-exported, mostly to the West Indies. The exports of Nicholas Paint Junior, a merchant at Port Hawkesbury and a former agent of the Janvrin Company, illustrate this pattern. In 1823, he collected 1,834 qtls. of merchantable dried cod from "sundry fishermen" along the Straits of Canso and shipped them to
I.G. Creighton in Halifax who loaded them on Paint's 131 ton brig "Unity" bound, in this case, for Valencia and Gibraltar. In return, Halifax houses supplied merchants like Paint with supplies for the fishery: salt, beef, lard, rum, tobacco, and manufactured items. As Cape Breton merchants only occasionally exported directly to overseas markets, the resident fishery was effectively subordinated to Halifax, the regional metropolis.

The resident fishery on Cape Breton was considerably more diverse than the migratory fishery, and comprised three main groups of people. First, there were the merchants engaged in the purchase and export of dried fish, in the financing of fishing through the advance of supplies and credit, and to a lesser extent in the hiring of fishermen. In 1796, there were probably only three resident merchants of any importance: Kavanagh at St. Peter's, Lawrence at Arichat, and the partnership of Tremain & Stout at Sydney. In total, they handled 54% of the cod exports of the resident fishery. Second, there were the 'planters' or small merchant-fishermen, who owned their fishing rooms, one or more boats or small vessels and hired a few men as crew. They were usually supplied by local merchants and sold their catch in return. Some planters also dealt with Halifax houses. In 1796, 25 planters handled 46% of the dried fish exports of the resident fishery on Cape Breton with individual cargoes ranging from 20 to 350 qtls. No doubt, some of these planters had sold fish to merchants based on
Cape Breton or to the Channel Island firms. Third, there were the fishermen, the most numerous group, who lacked the means of fishing. Basically labourers, they were supplied with fishing gear by a merchant in return for fish, or hired on shares by a planter. Because of the availability of labour in the Island, there is no evidence of a possible fourth group, migrant fishermen from Europe employed by local merchants.

The resident fishery, like the migratory, pursued the inshore cod fishery and used the same techniques and technology as the Channel Island companies. However, the economies of scale and the quality control common in the migratory fishery were not often achieved. The unit of production in the resident fishery was either the fisherman's family or the planter's crew, and with these small, relatively unspecialised workforces quality was bound to be uneven. For this reason, much of the resident fishery's exports were destined for the West Indies, the principal market for inferior fish.

Like the migratory fishery, the resident fishery also participated in the pickled fishery and sealing. In 1796, resident merchants and planters shipped 582 barrels of pickled fish along the coast to Halifax, 277 barrels to other ports in Nova Scotia, and 100 barrels to New Brunswick. In addition, 598 barrels of pickled salmon were exported to Halifax. While resident fishermen could catch herring, mackerel, and salmon in nets, planters with their decked shallops were involved in the seal hunt. Although
there is no data for 1800, later practice suggests that most of these planters were based along the northwest shore, particularly at Margaree Harbour and Cheticamp, ports easily accessible to the Gulf ice-flows. In 1796, the resident fishery exported 340 seal skins to Halifax.

In terms of men employed, the resident fishery was much larger than the migratory fishery and more dispersed. Of the settlements involved in the resident fishery, Arichat, by far the biggest place on Cape Breton, had some 350 inhabitants (including those in neighbouring West Arichat and Upper Arichat), while elsewhere on Isle Madame there were about 150 people at Petit de Grat and a similar number at D’Escousse. On the opposite, mainland shore of Cape Breton, some 100 people were shared between River Bourgoise and St. Peter’s, and another 100 lived at nearby L’Ardoise. Farther east, there were about 50 people at Gabarus and Louisbourg, and another 50 at Main à Dieu. Chéticamp, the only other important settlement connected with the resident fishery, had about 200 inhabitants.

The physical structure of these fishing settlements was in marked contrast to those of the migratory fishery. Property rights were not always clearly drawn. Merchants, such as Kavanagh, and some planters had grants but the majority of fishermen were squatters. In 1793, the governor reported that
there are some French Acadian Inhabitants on the Isle Madame or Richmond Island and in the neighbourhood thereof, who are in good circumstances feeding large herds of cattle upon the Crown Lands, but seem by no means desirous to obtain grants, or to fear any power of a Governor over the Lands of the Crown.47

Other "Native Acadians" relied "on the faith and justice of Government ... that they shall never loose the lands they improved because they were not able to pay the fees for grants whilst they were industriously striving to cultivate them and maintain their families ...." Such squatting was probably common to all the outports. With no legal title to their land, the squatter's holdings had not been surveyed; boundary lines were often irregular and subject to dispute. By the second decade of the century, some families had been settled in Cape Breton for at least fifty years and the "right of property [was] becoming difficult to ascertain" according to one government official, "by reason of the heedless manner in which the younger branches of families have placed cabins and fenced their gardens ...." 48

Buildings, too, differed from those of the Channel Island fishing stations. Cape Breton merchants, involved primarily in trade rather than production, had no need of complex fishing rooms and their establishments consisted of a house, retail store (perhaps in the same building), wharf, and dried fish store. Planters' fishing rooms, although in principle the same as those in the migratory fishery, were much smaller; instead of a number of buildings each with its own function, they had a shed on the stage for processing the fish, a few flakes, and another shed for
storage. Fishermen had little more than a log cabin, roofed with bark or turf, and a shed for fishing gear.

Demographically these settlements were considerably more stable and balanced than the fishing stations of the migratory fishery. Merchants, planters, and fishermen had wives and families, and over the years consanguineous communities had developed. Among the Acadian population of Arichat 12.5% of families had the most common surname and 56.25% had one of the seven most common names (Table 1.1). Conceivably, these familial ties had survived the Acadian expulsion from Nova Scotia in 1755 and were many generations old. Certainly, there was more stability and inter-marriage in the Acadian fishing settlements on Cape Breton than among the old French seigneurial settlements along the lower St. Lawrence. Although the data are lacking, the Irish settlements at Louisbourg and Main à Dieu, settled since the 1760's, were probably also relatively stable and most families interrelated. For such fishermen Cape Breton was home.

Almost all the people in these settlements depended on the fishery (Table 1.2). The 1811 census for the southwest of the Island, the strong-hold of the resident fishery, shows that most heads of households were either fishermen or mariners (planters). Apart from one merchant, Lawrence Kavanagh, living at St. Peter's, all those employed in secondary and tertiary activities lived at Arichat. But although the fishery provided the main work, there was some
Table 1.1  **Surnames in Arichat, 1811**

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<th>Other</th>
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<td>No. of families</td>
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<td>% of families with one of the 7 most common surnames</td>
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<td>% of families with a unique surname</td>
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Based on the nominal census of Arichat, 1811, RG/333/84-98 PANS.
### Table 1.2 Occupation of heads of households at Arichat and neighbouring fishing settlements, 1811

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<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
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<th>W.Arichat</th>
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<td>56</td>
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<tr>
<td>yeoman</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Based on the nominal census of Arichat, Little Arichat, Upper Arichat, Barrachois, Petit de Grat, D'Escousse, Grand Digue, River Bourgoise, St. Peter's, and L'Ardoise, 1811, RG1/333/84-98 PANS.
other employment. Fish merchants participated in the local carrying trade, particularly of coal to Halifax, supplied Island farmers with seed and stock, and invested in shipbuilding. Tremain & Stout, "the principle and indeed the only respectable merchants in Sydney," ran the coal mines, exported coal, sold dried fish to Halifax, and supplied Sydney with most of its dry goods and provisions. They were general, all-purpose merchants with fishing as one interest among others. Planters, too, were involved in the carrying trade and many must have acted as small merchants, exporting cod to Halifax and returning with flour, molasses, rum, and other articles for sale on Cape Breton. Fishermen were often part-farmers, cultivating a rock-bound acre or two of potatoes and pasturing a few livestock on the rough ground that surrounded the settlements. No doubt, many also hunted and trapped game in the nearby forest.

The resident fishery, like the migratory, was sharply stratified. At the top of the hierarchy were the merchants, the facilitators of trade and the greatest investors in the fishery. Lawrence Kavanagh, probably the most important merchant resident on Cape Breton, exported almost 3,300 qtls. of cod in 1796 (second only to the Janvrin Company), owned an ocean-going vessel, possessed a "magnificent estate" at St.Peter's, and would become the first Roman Catholic to take a seat in the Nova Scotia legislature. Planters, midway between merchants and fishermen, had some capital, usually tied up in fishing boats which gave them
some independence and power over their fishing crews. Fishermen had little or no capital and depended on Channel Island or local merchants for their fishing outfit. Rather like the putting-out system of cloth manufacture in England, merchants supplied fishermen with what they needed at the start of fishing and collected payment in the form of dried fish at the end of the season. With specie scarce, this system of production depended on credit or "truck." Fishermen bought supplies on the credit of their future catch. Inevitably, many found themselves in arrears after a poor season and sank further in debt for provisions needed to carry them through the winter and following summer. At best, the fishermen were rarely in a position to argue effectively about the price of fish or supplies and they lost all power when in debt. As a priest newly appointed to Arichat in 1819 observed: "Most of the people are deep in the books of the merchants, who treat them with horrible tyranny ...."

Yet the 'putting-out' method of production, in contrast to the factory-like fishing stations of the migratory fishery, allowed the fishermen considerable independence, which probably helped diffuse tension generated by the truck system. Work was less rigorously supervised. Although planters must have kept a close eye on their fishing crews, merchants had little direct control of the fishermen they outfitted beyond the threat of financial penalties if equipment was lost or damaged. As a result, fishermen worked as they pleased, conforming to no routine laid down
by a merchant and supervised by an overseer. 'Work' was not separated from 'life' as it was in the migratory fishery. Jobs, too, were not demarcated. Because the unit of production was small, often the family, individuals had to do a variety of tasks that would have been the sole responsibility of one or two skilled men in the much larger fishing stations of the migratory fishery. Sons helped fathers handline, land the catch, and process it. Wives and daughters helped lay the fish out to dry and tended them during the day when the men were out fishing. In these families, 'work' was a 'way of life,' rather than a contractual employment.

Economic differences in the outports were reflected in social divisions. The merchants, along with the few government officials and professionals, were mostly British or Loyalists and Protestant. The fishermen, including the planters, were either Acadian or Irish and Roman Catholic (Table 1.3). Although churches were absent, the social worlds of these two groups probably rarely overlapped. Merchants knew each other and officials in the colonial capitals of Halifax and Sydney. Apart from the occasional trading voyage to Halifax and mass celebrated by an itinerant missionary from Quebec, the fishing population probably had few contacts beyond their village. Shut out from positions of power by ethnicity, religion, in many cases language, and especially by poverty, the Acadian and Irish fishermen folded in on their families and friends, the
<table>
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<th>Others</th>
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Based on the nominal census of Arichat, Little Arichat, Upper Arichat, Barrachois, Petit de Grat, D'Escousse, Grand Digue, River Bourgoise, St. Peter's, and L'Ardoise, 1811, RG1/333/84-98 PANS.
most basic support networks on Cape Breton. When merchants, planters, and fishermen met in the work-place, the terms of engagement were extremely unequal.

The Staple Industries: Coal Mining

The French had mined coal on the north side of Sydney Harbour in the early eighteenth century, and after the establishment of Sydney the mine was reopened to supply the garrisons and naval yards at Halifax and St. John's. As the coal deposits were claimed by the Crown, the colonial government at first ran the mine, but in 1788 began leasing it to local entrepreneurs. Rent from the mine, consisting of royalties on coal sales, provided the government with its main source of revenue. Yet although Tremain & Stout, the tenants between 1791-99, raised the annual output from a little over 2,000 to almost 9,000 tons, the mine was not profitable and at the end of their lease, the government had to take over the operation.

Essentially, the coal trade suffered from high production costs and small markets. Wage costs, comprising four-fifths of the total expense, were considered "extravagant" and the lack of return freights raised the price of shipping. The Island was distant from major markets, relying instead on minor, local demand (Halifax consumed about three-quarters of output and St. John's much of the rest) which one observer thought had "attained its
medium...." Even in these nearby markets, the high price of Sydney coal made it barely competitive against British coal shipped to North America as ballast.

With a trifling and scarcely profitable coal trade, Sydney Mines had not attracted much capital. The colliery remained small, primitive, and pre-industrial. Adits driven from the beach gave access to the seams and drained off excess water, while shafts sunk from the surface shortened underground haulage and provided a draught. Rooms or 'bords' were cut into the coal and 'pillars' were left to support the roof. Coal was cut with picks and shovels, and dragged in tubs to the shaft-bottom. There, it was raised to the surface by a double-horse gin, tipped into horse-drawn waggons and transported to the shipping wharf. Such mining was simple and rudimentary, dependent on the muscle of men and animals and on an easily accessible technology.

In 1800 the settlement at Sydney Mines consisted of two log barracks or cookhouses, half a dozen log and sod huts, a framehouse, a couple of sheds and stables, and a hay barrack. The miners were accommodated in the cookhouses: bunk-beds lined the walls and a fire occupied a central grate. Washing facilities were non-existent and in the summer many men slept outside. The agent lived in the framehouse, which was considerably damaged by local subsidence. Beyond a burnt-over area around the buildings lay the forest; the mining camp backed straight into wilderness.

About 50 men worked at Sydney Mines. Some had wives.
and families living in cabins away from the camp, but probably most were young and single, either Irish from Newfoundland or sons of local Loyalists. Employment was temporary, confined to the summer shipping season. Men had other work, usually farming, which they attended to in spring and fall. Even during the summer, work in the mine was intermittent, dependent on the arrival of vessels and on orders. Some men worked thirty days per month, others less than a week, and a few only part-days.

The workforce was not particularly specialised. Coal-cutters hauled tubs and timbered the levels. Between 25 September and 24 October 1807, one James Cann earned 4/4 1/2 for cutting 2.5 chaldrons of coal, 2/6 for hauling, and £2.11.6 for 25.75 days work. In the same period, another cutter, George Long, earned £1.4.6 for cutting 14 chaldrons, 13/6 for hauling 13.5 chaldrons, £1.16. for "water work," and 2/- for 2 days work. Surface labourers also did several jobs, transporting coal to the wharf and loading vessels. There was an "overseer on the surface," a "conductor of pits" underground, a carpenter, and a cook. But even these men were not particularly skilled; the overseer was said to have been "bred a blacksmith near a coalery in England...."

Wages were paid at piece-rates and varied from job to job, but some estimate of a workman's earnings can be made. In 1794, the wages of a "common labourer" were $8 per month or about 32/- stlg.; those of a cutter between $8 to $10,
sometimes $12 or about 40/- stlg. In 1807, the monthly wage was about 48/- stlg. Although James Miller, an English mining engineer, considered these wages high, largely because of the shortage of labour and high cost of living, the truck system operated by the colliery tenants left few miners with much income. With no alternative retail outlet, the miners depended upon Tremain & Stout for their supplies and were allowed "to have a running account in the stores until the time of settlement; when, notwithstanding their high wages ... little remains due to them." The large premium Tremain & Stout charged on imported goods recouped much of the money they paid out in wages. James Miller was assured by

Several of the colliers...[that] they would be contented with one fourth less allowance, were they to be paid regularly in cash, to buy their necessaries where they please, & be permitted to maintain themselves.71

Yet, given the merchant-employer monopoly, such independence was unobtainable and no doubt many men were tied by debt to the mine summer after summer.

Agriculture on Cape Breton

Apart from the Loyalist plantation, farming had developed somewhat inadvertently on Cape Breton. In 1800, perhaps 750 people, a third of the Island's population, depended primarily on farming, and many of them worked seasonally in the mine or the fishery. The main agricultural concentration was around Sydney Harbour, where
there were 80-100 Loyalist farms. Perhaps there were another 10 at Baddeck River (Fig. 1.3). There were also some Acadian farmers at Margaree Harbour and along the Cheticamp shore, probably encouraged by a market nearby in the fishery; and the Highland Scots settled along the west coast of Cape Breton were farmers, as they had been before arriving on the Island.

On Cape Breton, climate, terrain, and soils limited the potential farmland to the intervales and some parts of the coast (Fig. 1.4). Even there, much of the land was suitable only for rough pasture and hay. For more demanding crops, liming was needed to counteract the natural acidity of the soil. The range of possible crops was limited to hardy varieties from northern Europe: hay, coarse grains, potatoes, turnips, and some vegetables. Cattle, sheep, and pigs needed not only summer pasture but large quantities of fodder for the seven months they were housed during the winter. For that period, a milch cow required about three tons of hay.

Markets, too, were limited. Cape Breton was distant from export markets and local ones were small. In 1796, only 100 bushels of potatoes, 4 oxen, and 80 sheep were shipped to Halifax and 64 bushels of potatoes to St. John's. There were no other agricultural exports. Within Cape Breton, the principal markets were the fishing settlements and Sydney, but many fishermen and townspeople in these small settlements grew their own root crops and
Figure 1.4 Distribution of agricultural land on Cape Breton.

After map in D.B. Cann, J.I. MacDougall, and J.D. Hilchey, Soil Survey of Cape Breton Island Nova Scotia p.57.
kept dairy cows.

Crown Land regulations further discouraged agriculture. Grants in fee simple were only available to fish merchants, bona fide Loyalists, and soldiers demobilised after the American War. Loyalists and soldiers were entitled to 100 acres for each family head and a further 50 acres for each member of the household. Additional land was also available to commissioned and non-commissioned officers according to their rank. Other settlers, however, could only lease land from the Crown and were liable to eviction "at will." A government report noted in 1814 that tenants...

...finding they can neither dispose of, or bequeath [land], with their families, have become careless in their cultivation, and are not inclined to labor, but for a mere subsistence. Few wanted to improve land that did not belong to them.

In these circumstances, most farms on Cape Breton were primarily subsistent. A few Loyalists close to Sydney and some Acadians at Chéticamp, known for their "raising of cattle" and growing of grain, had farms that produced a regular, commercial surplus, most likely salted beef, butter, lard, and oats; but the majority of farmers had only occasional surpluses. Essentially their farms produced food for a family. Clearances on these farms were small - an average of nine to thirteen acres according to an estimate made in 1813 - and combined arable and pasture. Perhaps an acre or two were sown in potatoes and vegetables, several acres in oats, barley, and on fertile, new burnt land, wheat. An area roughly equivalent to the arable was
in grass. Probably there were six cattle, a dozen sheep, a pig, and a horse. In addition, game, fish, and berries were taken from nearby forest and stream.

Agricultural processing industries were few and far between. In the larger outports, the local market had encouraged merchants and farmers to invest in grist mills; Chéticamp had three mills. Elsewhere, subsistent farming hardly justified such services. In 1801, the governor complained that

The want of grist mills is ... [a] grievance to the cultivator of the soil, the general poverty of the country having hitherto deprived the settlers of these essential conveniences, and there not being any provincial revenue to supply the defect. Most farmers probably ground their grain by hand rather than pay the high cost of shipping it to a distant grist mill.

Agricultural settlements consisted of straggling lines of dispersed farms. Given the availability of land and the weakness of the market, there was no need for clustered, nucleated settlements. Where land had been granted and surveyed, as around Sydney Harbour, settlements consisted of parallel lots, rectangular in shape and between 100-200 acres in size, running back from the shore or river bank. On most lots stood a farmhouse, separate from its neighbours by several hundred yards and perhaps by uncleared bush. Squatter settlements, such as those along the Straits of Canso were less orderly, just ragged patches of cleared land amid the forest.

Farmhouses varied in construction, style, and comfort.
Pioneer shanties, common among the Highland Scots, were usually constructed from round logs cross notched at the corners, their single-slope roofs from battens covered with turf or bark. The one-room interior had a dirt floor and minimal furnishings. In the Loyalist settlements, more substantial, second-generation houses were probably numerous. They were more likely to be constructed from squared logs, dovetailed at the corners and to have gable- roofs covered with shingles. Inside such a house there would usually be a root cellar, two or three rooms on the ground floor and further accommodation in the attic. A few farm houses might even have been of frame construction with shingle or clapboard sides and a pediment over the central door. Certainly, several such frame-houses had been built in Sydney by the 1790's.

Economic differentiation was not marked in these communities. To be sure, pioneer squatters had not achieved as much as more established settlers, but among the relatively long-settled Loyalists and Acadians a rough parity probably prevailed. Subsistence farming hardly attracted wealth or supported it. Social differences were more marked. Distance and forest isolated groups of settlers, preventing the intermingling common on many frontiers, and encouraged the preservation of French among the Acadians and Gaelic among the Scots. Within these settlements, social institutions were few. Churches had not been built and missionaries were infrequent visitors to the
Island. The only resident clergyman, an Anglican, lived in Sydney. Local government was significant by its absence: no taxes appear to have been raised and with no House of Assembly in the colony there was no political representation. The settler's world must have revolved around family and close neighbours. By 1800, close ties were forming among Loyalist families, as they had already among the Acadians. No doubt the same was true of the Highland Scots. Although most farmers lived closely bounded lives, the constraints had more to do with the demands of everyday subsistence in forest-bound, isolated environments than with pressures from government or merchants.

Colonial Cape Breton

The administrative superstructure of colonial Cape Breton had little bearing on the Island's staple economies or subsistent agriculture. The cod trade, largely international and highly commercial, appears to have been unaffected by local politics; trade policies fashioned in London were far more relevant. Coal exports were taxed and colliery tenants lobbied for lower charges, but the shortcomings of the mines had more to do with their location than with fiscal impositions. Though some settlers were discouraged from improving farms by decisions in the Colonial Office that were relayed through the Island's administration, squatting continued and officials in Sydney were almost powerless to stop it. The low value of the land
hardly justified the cost of eviction. Overall, the sway of the colonial government rarely reached beyond its peninsular capital; in 1801, a survey of the Island for submission to the Colonial Office was held up because "the intercourse with the out settlements [was] so difficult & precarious owing to the total want of roads ...."

Sydney depended on its role as colonial capital. In 1795, the town had about 120 inhabitants of whom 50 had "only salaries to depend upon for subsistence." Officials included the governor, chief justice, auditor, clerk of crown, and clerk of council. With little commercial trade (Sydney Mines was ten miles away on the opposite shore), few were employed in business and service occupations: two or three merchants, a carpenter, two blacksmiths, two shoemakers, a baker, a butcher, two publicans, and a brothel-owner. In 1796, several of them were threatening to emigrate to the United States.

The town itself, sited on a defensible neck of land jutting out into Sydney Harbour, was laid out in 1785 according to an ambitious, formal plan drawn up by the first governor (Fig. 1.5). A series of wide avenues intersected cross-streets bearing such grandiloquent names as Great George Street and Prince William Henry Street. Sydney was to be a classical revival, planned town akin to the New Town of Edinburgh with the hallmark of royalty stamped over it. Ten years later, only two streets kept to the original layout. Elsewhere, birch forest covered proposed city
Figure 1.5 Sydney, 1795.

After 'Map of the Town of Sydney, 10 July 1795.' H3/240/Sydney/1795 PAC.
blocks and a cattle track distorted what were to have been straight-lined avenues.

According to one visitor to Sydney, there were more ruined and deserted than inhabited houses. Public buildings, paid for by British money, built by the army, and reflecting European architectural styles, were the most impressive buildings in the town and on the Island. The governor's residence was a classical design of fifteen bays with a central, five bay block surmounted by a pediment. The garrison church, also in the prevailing classical style, consisted of a nave about sixty feet long, lit by six round-headed side-windows and a venetian window at the east end. It was constructed from rough-stone and ashlar salvaged from the ruined fortress at Louisbourg. A few New England frame-houses also lent some dignity to an otherwise forsaken town.

Society, such as it was, revolved around the Governor. His sedan carried guests over the "Great thaw of deep mud" to Government House where balls, dances, and dinner parties were held within sight of uncleared forest. When a garrison was stationed in the town, the army added to the population and expanded the social circle. Officers' wives affected provincial fashions: "Charlotte call'd & brought home my lace cap after altering it" one lady noted in her diary, "- it was old point once my poor mother's that had long lain useless in my drawers but now by the variation of fashion is metamorphosed into a handsome head dress."
Such self-sufficiency reflected the isolation of the town. 2,500 miles from Britain, several days from Halifax, hemmed in by forest and winter ice, Sydney appeared detached and insular to many of its inhabitants. Self-important officials bickered and army officers grew morose. One soldier, recently arrived in 1789, reflected that having "passed a great part of my life in America and been in many unpleasant and disagreeable situations ... I so declare without exaggeration that I think Sydney by far the worst ...." Strategically unimportant and peripheral to the fishing economy of the Island, Sydney in 1800 was an enclave of government amid the bush.
In 1802, the Treaty of Amiens ended the war between Britain and France. The North Atlantic was again safely open to shipping, and within a few weeks of the peace vessels were leaving the West Coast of Scotland carrying emigrants from the Highlands to British North America. Although before the war Highlanders had been emigrating to eastern Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, they had largely passed Cape Breton by, deterred by the restrictions on the granting of land. In August 1802, however, the emigrant ship, 'Northern Friends,' with 340 Highland passengers onboard, arrived in Sydney Harbour, the first direct sailing from Scotland to the Colony. Over the next forty years, approximately 20,000 Highlanders would arrive on the Island, a fragment of the massive movement of British people overseas, but quite enough to transform Cape Breton. When the first Scots disembarked, there were fewer than 3,000 people in the colony; when the last trickled in during the early 1840's, there were almost 55,000. Immigration and subsequent natural increase had rapidly enlarged the Island's population and changed its ethnic composition. Perhaps Scots made up a majority of the population by the
1820's. By 1871 50,000 of the 75,000 Islanders were of Scottish origin, outnumbering by two to one the descendants of Acadian, Irish, and Loyalist families who had settled on Cape Breton before 1800.

The Place of Origin

Throughout the period of immigration, officials on Cape Breton reported that the settlers came from the "Western Highlands of Scotland" and the "Western Islands." Such observations are confirmed by genealogical records of 510 male settlers in Inverness County and tombstone inscriptions of 301 male and female settlers on Cape Breton, which show that most immigrants came from northwest Argyll, western Inverness-shire, Wester Ross, and the Hebrides (Fig. 2.1). More specifically, those from the mainland left the coastal parishes between Loch Linnhe in Argyle and Loch Torridon in Wester Ross: Ardnurmurchan, Arisaig, Moidart, Glenelg, Kintail, Loch Alsh, Loch Carron, and Applecross. Those from the islands came mainly from Coll, Tiree, Rhum, Eigg, Muck, Canna, Skye, and Raasay in the Inner Hebrides, and Barra, the Uists, Benbecula, Harris, and Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. A few others came from adjacent areas such as the island of Mull, Gairloch, and the central Highland valleys of Glengarry, Strath Glass, and Glen Orchy; but virtually none came from Sutherland or from Lorne to the south of Loch Linnhe. The distribution was remarkably confined to a
Male emigrants to Inverness County
510 out of 529 cases shown

Male and Female emigrants to Cape Breton
301 out of 364 cases shown

--- Lochaber district

Figure 2.1 Origin of Scottish Immigrants to Cape Breton.

Data from J.L. MacDougall, History of Inverness County and Ferguson Mss. BI.
triangular wedge of territory that had its eastern point at Fort William in Lochaber, its south-western at Barra and its north-western at Lewis.

Economic and Social Background

Scottish immigrants to Cape Breton were from an overwhelmingly rural society huddled on some of the worst agricultural land in the British Isles. In 1821, about 85,000 people lived in the Western Highlands and Islands, most settled on thin coastal margins squeezed between rough, glaciated upland and the sea. Densities of thirty or forty people per square mile were common, although they could be much higher in some island parishes where land was especially limited. There were 66 people per square mile on Barra, 63 in Kilmuir on Skye, and 139 on Tiree, the most densely settled parish in the Hebrides. Within these congested coastal settlements, much land was unsuitable for agriculture. Considerable areas of bare rock had been exposed by glaciation, and peat bog and acidic soils were common. Only along the sandy machairs (shell-sand dunes) of the Atlantic coasts of the islands and the mainland was there land of reasonable fertility. Although summers are warm and the Gulf Stream keeps winters mild, depressions tracking in from the Atlantic frequently bring wet and cloudy weather; the rainfall along the mainland coast exceeds 60 inches per annum. People lived at the very
margin of arable cultivation. The few crops that did well were potatoes, oats, barley, and hardy roots.

In such conditions land, the key to wealth and status, was at a particular premium. A handful of hereditary clan chiefs owned the entire area; their vast estates often encompassed an island or two, while the largest, belonging to Macdonald of Clan Ranald, comprised several islands and a couple of mainland parishes. Although some land was let to 'tacksmen,' old clan lieutenants who sub-let it to lesser tenants, most was let to large sheep farmers or to 'crofters' (small-holders). The crofters, in turn, sub-let portions of their holdings to 'cotters,' the landless poor who made up between 30 and 70% of the population of a parish. Apart from the sheep farmers, few if any of the tenants had written leases and tenants without leases were subject to eviction "at will."

Almost all Scottish emigrants to Cape Breton came from the ranks of the crofters and cotters. They had been settled in coastal crofting townships laid out by the landlords between 1790 and 1820 to replace old 'runrig' or open-field settlements, the traditional agricultural settlements in the Highlands and Islands. The runrig townships consisted of an irregular grouping of stone and turf hovels set among a permanently cultivated infield, a partially cultivated outfield, and surrounding commons which included distant hill-grazings, or sheilings. Tenants had shares in both the arable and pasture, and these rights were protected by collective rules and practices. Both the
infield and outfield were divided into strips and allotted to tenants according to their individual share-holding. The strips covered a variety of terrain and soils, and by lotting them tenants were assured of some good land. Each tenant also had the right to pasture livestock on the commons according to his share. From the open-fields, the farmers raised subsistence crops of barley, oats, and potatoes; on the commons they kept black cattle and sold them to southern drovers—the market connection that paid the rent.

Nevertheless, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, landlords in the Western Highlands and Islands, seeking higher rents from their estates and influenced by the agricultural improvers in the Lowlands, moved to reform their properties. Instead of drawing an income from the black cattle economy, they cleared the runrig townships in the interior valleys to make way for large, more profitable sheep farms, while those with coastal properties began to encourage the kelp industry. Kelping, the gathering and processing of seaweed to produce alkali, expanded rapidly during the 1790's when foreign supplies of alkali were cut off by the war with France, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century large shipments were sent south to manufacturers of soap and glass. As kelping was labour-intensive, landlords needed a large, cheap workforce and attempted to retain the tenants displaced from the runrig townships. Following the advice of agricultural
improvers, who stressed the value of individual holdings, they consolidated the scattered arable strips of the open-fields and divided the land into small individual farms or crofts for their dispossessed tenants. The old common pastures and hill grazings survived (Fig. 2.2).

Individual crofts were usually rectangular and up to five or six acres in size (Fig. 2.3). Their regular layout rarely bore any relation to the terrain. At Harrapool, a crofting township laid out in Strath on Skye for Lord MacDonald in the early 1800's, long, thin lots were superimposed upon moss (peat bog), arable, and hill pasture (Fig. 2.2). Some crofts were composed almost entirely of bog, while much of the old runrig arable was turned over to pasture. Where the soil was especially wet, arable strips were reduced to 'lazy-beds' (corrugated ridges and drainage ditches). The beds were built-up from the earth removed from the ditches and were commonly about four feet wide and of varying length. Apart from an earth baulk between the fields, few if any of the crofts were enclosed, and for purposes such as fallow grazing still constituted an open-field. A stone 'dyke' or wall divided the township arable from the common pastures. On the arable strips the traditional crops of the Highlands were cultivated: oats, barley, and potatoes. The relative proportions of each crop grown varied from township to township according to soil quality and terrain. More barley tended to be grown on the light, sandy soils of the Outer Hebrides than on the heavy
Figure 2.2 Crofting Township at Harrapool, Skye.
After Plan of Harraple RHP 5998/16 SRO.
Figure 2.3 Croft at Harrapool, Skye, 1854.

After Sketch of Lots 1 and 13 Harraple - Broadford 1854 RHP 5998/18 SRO.
clay and peat soils of the mainland. In general, however, potatoes gradually displaced grains as their nutritional value was recognised and as crofts became smaller. By the 1840's, many crofts in the Western Highlands and Islands had at least half of their ground in potatoes; the crop had become the buttress of the crofter's existence.

The strips were usually cultivated year after year with only an occasional fallow rotation. Intensive manuring was required to maintain soil fertility; byre muck, sea-shells, and old thatch were all spread on the fields before ploughing. In addition, livestock were pastured on the strips after harvesting and before planting, adding their dung to the soil. Labour was intensive. Although the crofters were responsible for their own strips and family members did much of the weeding, digging, ploughing, planting, and harvesting were frequently done in cooperation with others in the township. Given the variable weather in spring and fall, planting and reaping had to be done quickly and required many hands. As well, crofters usually had to share to assemble a plough-team, for few families owned the necessary horses. In areas unsuitable for ploughing, spades were used - either the cas dhireach (straight spade) or the caschrom (crooked spade) - and spadework, too, was often done in teams. Twelve men using caschroms could till an acre a day. Intensive agriculture could be extremely productive. Potato patches, the most labour-intensive part of most crofts, often produced higher yields than on improved farms in the Lowlands. Eight or
nine barrels for one sown were common. Grains received less effort and fertilizer, and yields were pitifully small: usually two or three seeds for one sown.

According to the size of his arable holding, each crofter was entitled to a share of the common pasture. In general, this share worked out to roughly one cow or its equivalent per arable acre, about half a dozen livestock per croft. On South Uist, for example, the average livestock holdings in 1827 were 3 ponies, 3 cows and 2 or 3 young cattle, usually year olds. More prosperous crofters, who paid £10-12 rent, usually had 3 ponies, 4 or 5 cows, and 3 or 4 young cattle; while poorer tenants, who paid £4-5 rent, had 2 ponies, 2 cows and a young beast or two. Some of these livestock, however, belonged to landless cotters who purchased pasturage rights from the crofters. The ponies, milch cows, horned cattle, sheep, and goats belonging to crofters and cotters were usually of indeterminate breed, under-fed, and scraggy. Common pasturing hardly allowed pure breeding and a perennial shortage of winter fodder ensured that animals were never fully fattened. Cattle housed indoors through the winter were often so weak by spring that they had to be carried out. Of those left outside to gnaw the stubble "to the quick," one in five died in a normal winter.

Living on tiny farms in a marginal agricultural environment, crofters exploited local resources to the full. Natural grasses were cut from green meadow to provide winter
livestock fodder; reeds and heather were used for thatch; peat was dried for fuel; lakes, rivers and streams were fished for salmon and trout; beaches were scoured for shellfish; and cliff-top nests were raided for eggs and seabirds. Seaweed, a possible source of fertiliser, was reserved for the kelp industry and stiff fines were levied on crofters who applied it to their fields - a serious constraint especially when potatoes were being grown on the same plot year after year.

Kelping itself was labour-intensive, employing men, women, and children from early May to the end of August. Growing weed was preferred to that thrown up on the beaches by Atlantic storms, so it had to be cut from tidal sounds or rocky islets, a bitterly-cold and often dangerous task. After cutting, the kelp was spread on the beach to dry, and then taken by carts or creels to the kilns, long, low constructions of loose stone, built on the beach. There, it was burnt until reduced to an ash, which was collected for export to one of the southern ports. While this work was going on, farming was often neglected: fields became choked with weeds, unattended cattle made depredations on the crops, and tasks such as cutting peat, making hay, building folds for cattle, repairing thatch and walls had to be hurried in the autumn when the weather was often poor. Although the landlords had designed crofting as an adjunct of kelping, the two activities were barely compatible.

Wages from kelping, sales of cattle, and the produce of subsistence farming, enabled crofters to obtain a meagre
living. Most of their income went out in rent, although rents were usually less than £5 a year. On South Uist in 1827 481 crofters paid rents between £4 and £13 with an average of about £6.10/-.

Essentially these rents were paid from kelp earnings rather than farming. As Clan Ranald's factor on South Uist explained,

> If the kelp is given up small tenants cannot continue to pay the present rents because the work they got enabled them to pay rents for portions of ground so small that they could pay nothing from the produce.

Although tithes were not levied, landlords stipulated that tenants use the estate mill and charged heavy milling fees. Anyone found using a hand-quern was fined and the stone dumped into the sea. In good years, crofters had sufficient income after these exactions to get by, but in bad years, when the price of kelp or cattle fell, many found themselves in debt, facing the confiscation of possessions and the loss of land. Clearly, the crofters lived on the edge of destitution. Most of their spare income was spent on imported meal and salt, but diet was generally poor: usually some combination of milk, cheese, oatmeal, potatoes, and fish. Red meat was rarely eaten, except when calves or lambs had to be killed because there was a lack of milk to rear them. Scurvy was a constant threat; visitors to the Highlands noted that people were small and underfed.

Crofters' houses - the "blackhouses" - were unadorned shelters about 40 or 50 feet in length, 10 to 12 feet wide inside, and not much more than a man's height.
construction made the most of local resources and was often minutely adjusted to the physical conditions of the area. The dry-stone walls of the house were usually double-skinned with an intervening earth core to provide insulation and were often rounded at each end to lessen wind resistance. Couples, made from driftwood, rested on the inner wall and supported the roof members which were covered with overlapping slabs of turf or thatch made of rushes, ferns, heather, or straw. The roof was lashed down by heather ropes fastened to stones. Inside, there was a living room where the family ate and slept; a byre for cattle, pigs, and poultry; and a barn at the rear for storing oats, barley, potatoes, salted food, and threshed fodder. One door gave access to these various compartments and there were few, if any, windows. The floor usually sloped to help drain away slops and byre muck. The few furnishings were functional and easy to remove if the lease suddenly ended. Beds were often fitted into the walls to save space and the mattresses were made of straw, ferns or heather. Several members of the family would sleep in one bed. There would be a few chairs, stools, and benches; a table; a cooking pot and utensils; a spinning wheel; wool-basket; and chests. The crofter would also have a few agricultural implements - a crooked spade, a straight spade, a scythe, a sickle, a rake, and a flail - some fishing gear - handlines, nets, and sheepskin buoys - and creels for carrying kelp and potatoes. Few had much more than these scanty, utilitarian possessions.
Yet the crofters were relatively well off compared to the cotters who had "no means of subsistence but what they derive from the tenants their relatives." In return for a patch of soil to grow potatoes and the right to pasture a cow on a grass border, cotters paid rents in the form of labour (weeding, ploughing, and kelping), money, or kind (a few fowls, a sheep). They also derived some income from kelping; harvesting on Lowland farms; begging, scavaging, and knitting sweaters for sale. Their diet must have been less nutritious than that of the crofters'; scarcely more than milk, potatoes, oatmeal, and shell-fish. Their housing, too, was considerably less substantial. With no firm hold on land, they lived in hurriedly-constructed earth and stone hovels, partly burrowed into the ground, with roofs made of driftwood, covered with heather and turf. Cotters were hardly better off than beggars.

Although firmly within the "Celtic fringe," the nuclear family appears to have been the most basic unit of crofting society. Parents and children formed the majority of households, while the remainder comprised nuclear groups that included grandparents and newly married children. Within crowded townships, crofting families struggled to maintain their holdings and their rights to the commons. According to the minister of North Uist, their "chief earthly anxiety was to pay their rents, retain their small possessions and keep their families about them." To ensure this, families depended on the rules governing the
collective use of the commons. A township constable was elected to protect crofters' rights, and he rigorously checked over-stocking of the grazings and the cutting of peat on the commons.

Beyond the nuclear family, crofters could count on the support of larger kin groups. Families had become linked over the generations and consanguineous communities had developed. One or two surnames would account for most of the population in such a community. Although mutual aid and assistance between relatives was common, the personal bonds between clan chief and his tenants had long-since vanished. Almost all the chiefs were absentee landlords who were represented on their estates by a factor, often a Lowlander, who had no intimate personal connections with the people. Most of the few tacksmen were poor and probably detested by their tenants.

In the late eighteenth century Roman Catholic priests took considerable interest in their pastoral charges, and in the face of landlord hostility frequently encouraged their congregations to emigrate. Presbyterian ministers, for the most part, were on the side of laird and factor, rather than crofter. They frequently depended on the landlords for financial support and some, at least in Skye in the 1820's and 1830's, acted as estate factors and ran sheep farms. According to a statement to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1824, the clergy of the northwest Highlands were in general "inattentive to the interests of religion" and often lacked a working knowledge of Gaelic.
Evangelicals exploited the lack of interest of the Established Church by preaching in the townships and circulating Gaelic Bibles. They at least offered some moral and spiritual support to a people struggling to eke out a livelihood.

The Clearances

There were two periods of Scottish emigration to Cape Breton. The first, between 1802 and 1827, comprised tenants from old runrig townships who were leaving, mostly of their own volition, before the wind of agricultural change blew colder. The second, between 1827 and 1845, was much larger and consisted mainly of destitute crofters and cotters cleared from the land, often emigrating because their passage had been paid by the landlord.

The first period of emigration began with the treaty of Amiens and closed with the collapse of the kelp industry in 1827. In general, this emigration can be characterised as the "people's clearance," for Highlanders were consciously deciding to leave rather than being pushed off by the landlords. Many of those leaving were reacting to the switch from runrig agriculture to crofting and kelping, and feared they would lose land and rights in the transition. On Lord MacDonald's estate on Skye, for example, the surveyor responsible for laying out the new crofts reported in 1799 that the tenants' "adherence to inveterate opinions
and old uncorrected customs operates powerfully against
improvements or even alterations." Similarly, on North
Uist, they were "equally averse to settle in situations for
villages or to take moor crofts for improvements." In
1802, one Highland clergyman concluded that

This plan of improvement has put the whole
Highlands into commotion. They who are deprived
of their possessions ... feel a reluctance in
settling anywhere else, conceive a disgust at
their country, and therefore prefer leaving it ...
and the connection once broken they care not where
they go.40

Most of those early, voluntary emigrants left between
1802 and 1803 when the full onslaught of agricultural change
was affecting the Western Highlands and Islands and before
the outbreak of war in 1803. In two years, nearly 7,000
Highlanders sailed for British North America. Landlords
were so alarmed that their estates would be depopulated and
cheap labour for the kelp industry disappear that they
joined humanitarians to lobby for an act to improve
conditions on emigrant ships. Stricter regulations on the
emigrant trade would, of course, raise the price of a berth
and so stem the exodus. Although the Passenger Act was
passed in May 1803, the outbreak of renewed hostilities with
France in the same month probably did more to curtail the
outflow. The disruption of shipping, army recruiting, and
the kelp boom reduced the emigrant flow to a trickle;
between 1803 and 1812 only about 2,500 people left the
Highlands for British North America. After the end of the
war, emigration resumed again with several thousand sailing
across the Atlantic (Fig. 2.4).
Many of those who left during this first period arrived in eastern Nova Scotia, especially Pictou and Antigonish, and in Prince Edward Island. Some, like those onboard the 'Northern Friends,' arrived in Cape Breton, but numbers are difficult to estimate. Perhaps no more than 5,000 Highlanders reached Cape Breton before 1827 and some of those who came before 1817, when restrictive land regulations were in force, soon left.

Many of the emigrants must have had some capital in Scotland, especially those coming after 1803 when the Passenger Acts were in force; then a family of five needed about £30 or £40 just to cross the Atlantic. In 1817, the 382 passengers from Barra who arrived at Sydney onboard the 'Hope' and 'William Tell' had paid 8 guineas for each adult and 6 guineas for each child under the age of 7. Contemporary comment further suggests that the relatively prosperous rather than the destitute were leaving. In 1827, just before the mass clearances began, the factor of the Seaforth estate on Lewis feared that "several of the best tenants" would emigrate unless they got "tenures of a fixed duration," and concluded that "the evil of ... emigration is that the best & most active tenants go & leave the poor & weak behind." That same year, similar sentiments were expressed by Clan Ranald's factor on South Uist who thought that if emigration was sponsored by the government, the proprietors should have the right to select the emigrants otherwise "the most wealthy and industrious of our
Figure 2.4 Immigration to Nova Scotia and Cape Breton from Scottish ports, 1815-1850.

Data from J.S. Martell 'Immigration to and Emigration from Nova Scotia 1815-1838' and R.G. Flewwelling Appendix II to 'Immigration to and Emigration from Nova Scotia 1839-1851' (Mss. in PANS).
population will emigrate, and we will be left with the
dregs."

The second emigration depended much more directly on
the landlords. The kelp industry, the underpinning of the
crofting economy in the Western Highlands and Islands,
collapsed in the 1820's. Kelp prices had been declining
since 1808 when they reached an all-time high of £20 per
ton, then plummeted in the late 1820's. After 1813 glass
and soap manufacturers had been campaigning for a lowering
of tariffs on foreign alkali, and as salt became
increasingly used in the making of alkali, they also
petitioned for the abolition of the salt tax. In the early
1820's, import duties were lowered and in 1825 the salt tax
was abolished. The effect on kelp prices was swift and
dramatic. Kelp that brought £9.4/- per ton in 1823 fell to
£6.16/- in 1826, £4.14/- in 1827, and £3.13/- in 1828. In
1827, the price was lower than the cost of production and
transport, and throughout the West Coast and islands the
industry failed. That year, Clan Ranald's factor on South
Uist reported:

owing to the fall in the price of kelp it would
be convenient to discontinue the manufacture of
that inferior kelp for a season ... inferior kelp
will not again be saleable at any price.49

By 1830, production had stopped in the kelp areas along the
West Coast - Ardnamurchan, Sunart, and Morvern - and only
the highest grades were being produced on the islands.

During those same years, prices for cattle, the
crofters' other main staple, were also falling. In line
with the general agricultural depression that had seized Britain since the end of the Napoleonic War, cattle prices had fallen from £6 for a three year old in 1810 to about £3.10/- in the 1830's. "Had the prices continued as high as formerly" one factor reported in 1823, "it is likely that no great sums of arrears would have been lost." As it was, the cattle trade could not take up the slack created by the collapse of the kelp industry.

All the while rents remained stable, set at their inflated war-time levels. South Uist, for example, was rented at £2,408 in 1811 and £3,000 in 1830. Few landlords wished to jeopardise their standard of living by lowering rents; "It is impossible I can forego the present rent" complained Lord MacDonald in 1817, "without extreme inconvenience to my affairs." Yet increasingly, as time went by and tenants fell into arrears, these rents became fictitious. Some tenants lost property, while others paid off their debts by improving the roads, bridges, and drains on the estate. Such work could only go on for so long.

As landlord finances began to crumble, moves were made to reorganise the estates and put them on a sound financial footing. Clan Ranald's factor on South Uist reported in 1827 that it was "absolutely necessary to arrange [the] ... estates so as to draw a revenue from the lands altogether independent of kelp;" and to the north, on Lord MacDonald's estate, the factor had reached the same conclusion by 1839: "The fall in the value of kelp renders ... a change in the management of the North Uist estate
There was little alternative but to turn to sheep. Sheep farming, which had reached the borders of the Western Highlands and Islands in the early 1800's, swept into the region in the 1820's and 1830's.

With the coming of sheep, people were evicted throughout the region. On South Uist, the process began when the central and northern townships were cleared in the late 1820's and continued on the rest of the Island and on Benbecula in the early 1830's. Similar evictions occurred on Lewis where about 28 settlements were removed in the 1820's and 1830's, while on Harris some 13 settlements along the west coast of the Island were cleared. By 1837, according to the estate factor, the population had "in a great measure been removed from the west coast of Harris and other arrangements [were] in contemplation by which what remains of the population [were] very likely soon to be removed." Meanwhile on Skye, the clearances, begun in the first two decades of the century, continued unabated. Large areas of the Dunvegan estate, especially the parts of it within the parish of Bracadale, were let to sheep farmers. In 1821, Bracadale's population was 2,103; a decade later, it was 1,769 and the decrease, reported the parish minister, was "solely to be ascribed to the system of farming which has for some time been adopted, viz. throwing a number of farms into one large tack [lease] for sheep grazing and dispossessing and setting adrift the small tenants." Similar occurrences were taking place on Barra, Coll, and.
the coastal parishes of the mainland.

Some of those evicted were resettled on new crofts laid out on rocky moorland; others trudged south to the Lowlands, often to join an industrial labour force and live in the tenements of Glasgow, Hamilton, or Paisley. Many emigrated overseas. Since 1815, concern had been mounting in the rest of Britain over unemployment, pauperism, and civil unrest, and by the 1820's emigration was being advocated as a cure for "overpopulation." In the early 1820's, the government diffused tension in Lowland textile towns by helping unemployed weavers to emigrate to British North America, and a few years later provided similar assistance to Irish small-holders after the failure of the potato crop. In 1827, the Passenger Act was repealed. With the timber trade established between Britain and her North American colonies, cheap passages across the Atlantic could be had on timber ships returning in ballast. And with the collapse of the kelp industry, emigration was seen by most landlords in the Western Highlands and Islands as the only option for their tenantry.

Few crofters had the ready cash to emigrate, but many landlords, keen to clear their estates, abolished rent arrears to allow tenants to raise some capital from the sale of livestock and equipment. Clan Ranald's factor on South Uist thought that most of those about to be evicted "would emigrate on their arrears being given up indeed it is believed the whole would emigrate on these conditions." On Eigg, the "Tenants are very much in arrears and the
recovery of these arrears is in many instances hopeless" reported the factor in 1827, but "the tenants have presented a memorial to the Trustees [of Clan Ranald's estate] proposing to emigrate on being allowed to retain the arrears due by them." Abatements to cover the cost of the passage were often implemented.

Some tenants were so destitute that even when arrears had been waived they lacked sufficient possessions to sell. On Sanday, for example, the tenants were reported to be "even in a worse condition than those of Cliadel on Eig;" were their arrears cancelled, "they would still be unable to emigrate." In such circumstances, landlord assistance was the only recourse. In 1831, one Nova Scotian newspaper reported that "A great number of those who have come out this season have been sent to our shores at the expense of the landed proprietors, as the most economical means of getting rid of a pauper population." In 1826, MacLean of Coll had about 300 people shipped from his Rhum estate to British North America, paying £5.14/- for each adult passage. The Island was re-let as a single sheep-farm for £800 per annum, an increase of about £500. Elsewhere, on North Uist, Lord MacDonald helped about 1,300 people to emigrate between 1838 and 1843, and some of those on South Uist and Benbecula were also assisted by the proprietor.

The numbers leaving were considerable. Between 1826 and 1827, about 1,300 people left Skye for British North America; the following year over 600 left North Uist and 6-
There were also substantial emigrations from South Uist and Barra at the same time. As Figure 2.4 shows, many of these emigrants were arriving in Nova Scotia, particularly on Cape Breton. Between 1827 and 1832, the Custom House in Sydney recorded the arrival of 7,300 Scottish passengers; in 1828 alone, 2,600 arrived. These numbers considerably underestimated the inflow, for as the customs officers admitted in 1831,

... several vessels arrive annually and land their passengers on the Western shore of this Island, the Masters neglecting to make any report of the number, in consequence of an officer not being stationed at Ship Harbour [Port Hawkesbury].

After 1832, numbers declined considerably although there were further large influxes in the late 1830's and early 1840's. Immigration virtually ceased in 1845 when the potato blight produced near famine conditions on Cape Breton, as it was soon to do in the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

The Condition of Migration

Probably most immigrants to Cape Breton left the Highlands and Islands in families. When a landlord removed the people from a township and paid for their passage overseas, families and extended kin groups embarked together on the charted vessels. In the summer of 1828, the Leith-registered 'St. Lawrence' carried 208 passengers from Rhum—probably the last inhabitants to be cleared from that island—to Port Hawkesbury. Of 13 surnames listed, 4 (McKinnon,
McLean, McKay, and McMillan) accounted for 170 people, 81% of the total. 65 of the passengers were 15 years of age or under and 20 were 60 or over.

Even when wholesale clearance did not occur, family migration was probably common. As one contemporary observed,

The following very prudent plan has long prevailed in Scotland .... When a family, or a few families, determine on emigrating, some of the sons or relations that are grown up, are sent forward to prepare for the reception of the families, who are to follow afterwards. It often occurs that the young men thus sent to America have, for two or three years, to earn money, which they remit to pay the passages of their friends.71

After witnessing a large emigration from Knoydart in the 1780's, Mrs. Macdonell of Glenmeddle, Morar reckoned that the "people, when once they settle in Canada, will encourage others, as they are now encouraged by some friends before them. They will form a chain of emigration." Family ties help direct the migration stream towards Cape Breton. One settler, who probably had arrived on the Island in the late 1820's, wrote in 1830 to his brother-in-law in the congested township on the Aird of Tong: "I wish you would still think of coming when I know it would be better for you than being at Tunk [Tong] or any other part of Lewis or Harris." Clan Ranald's factor on South Uist must have taken note of such links when he was preparing the emigration of many of the estate's tenants: "the people from this country will all go to Cape Breton, and no where else if they can help it." Even those emigrants carried beyond Cape Breton by
timber ships returning to Halifax, Saint John, or the Miramichi struggled back to the Island to settle with friends and relatives.  

During the first period of immigration to Cape Breton, there is little reference to destitution among the passengers; possibly many still retained some capital to purchase land and supplies on the Island. Even in the second period, one newspaper reported that 568 passengers landed at Sydney in 1832, "appeared to be persons in comfortable circumstances ...," although from 1827 onwards such arrivals were a rarity. With the passenger regulations relaxed after 1827, emigrant ships were usually crowded, under-provisioned, and unsanitary; small-pox and ship-fever took their toll; and many passengers were dropped in isolated coves miles from their intended destinations. Poor to start with, many were destitute when they reached Cape Breton. Frequently those in "great poverty & distress" were "thrown on shore ... incapable of procuring their own subsistence." Some were supported by friends and relatives; others by government relief; but no doubt many had no one to help them on their arrival. So great was the Nova Scotia government's expenditure on aid, that in 1832 it instituted a head-tax on immigrants to recoup some of its outlay. This exacerbated the poverty of the immigrants as the tax was usually passed on to the passengers. Arguing for the Act's repeal, one Cape Breton member of the House of Assembly declared that he had seen
... the bedding sold from under a poor woman, to raise the money to pay back to the shipmaster the amount of that tax — and he had seen poor children begging through the streets of Sydney for the means of paying that exaction to which they become liable, by venturing from one part of the Empire to another.79

Similar scenes of destitution continued until the end of the period of immigration. In 1842, for example, Justices of the Peace at Sydney applied for government aid "to erect a building ... for the relief of newly arrived emigrants, and shipwrecked seamen and passengers." In the spring of 1844, "300 odd poor emigrants from the Highlands of Scotland," who had arrived with no means of purchasing seed potatoes and oats "without which their occupying wilderness lands, would be unavailing," petitioned the government for relief. They were among the last such cases; the following year the potato crop failed and destitute emigrants from Scotland were directed elsewhere.

The immigrants to Cape Breton during the early nineteenth century had been uprooted by agricultural changes implemented by the landlords on their estates. A few immigrants had left before the changes had been carried through, hoping to preserve their way of life in a new setting overseas; but most lacked sufficient means to exercise that choice. They were cleared from the land and "shovelled out" to the New World, their passages often paid from the profits landlords had made from sheep farming. Almost the nearest North American landfall to Europe and on the route of returning timber ships, Cape Breton was a cheap destination. By 1829, as the immigration of destitute
people was at its peak, contemporaries recognised that Cape Breton had become "a refuge for the poor."
Agricultural Settlement in the Early Nineteenth Century

The population of Cape Breton increased rapidly during the early nineteenth century. From 2,500 in 1801, it grew to nearly 19,000 in 1827-30. By 1838, it was more than 35,000, and in 1851 was almost 55,000. Immigration accounted for much of this growth. Some 20,000 crofters and cotters had arrived from Western Scotland, and perhaps a thousand Irish labourers had drifted in from Newfoundland. Virtually all of the Scots were farmers and quickly took up the vacant agricultural land on the Island. By the 1820's they had enveloped the Loyalist communities at Baddeck and Sydney, and established a dominant position in rural Cape Breton. Some of the Irish were farmers and settled among the Scots, but many worked at Sydney Mines and others augmented the existing Irish fishing populations at Louisbourg and Main à Dieu. With relatively few settlers interested in the fishery, the Acadians were left almost untouched by the influx and continued to maintain their separate enclaves on the Atlantic and Gulf shores. But they were no longer the largest ethnic group. By the second decade of the century, Scots were probably the dominant
group on Cape Breton, and farming had displaced the fishery as the Island's main economic activity.

The first wave of Scottish settlers arrived between 1802 and 1827 and occupied much of the Island's best agricultural land. Consisting of rich intervale or meadow land along the major river valleys and gently rolling frontland around the coasts, this land was accessible and easy to cultivate. Soils are relatively deep, moderately textured, largely free of stones, and usually well-drained. Only the intervalles, which are subject to seasonal flooding, needed dyking and drainage. Arriving with some capital, the early settlers quickly took out grants. By 1820, land had been granted along much of the west coast between Chéticamp and Inhabitants Bay, and on the east coast around the arms of Sydney Harbour (Fig. 3.1). Pockets of granted land also existed on the east coast at Cape North, Lingan, and Mira Bay. Away from the coasts, land had been granted along much of the Inhabitants, Mabou, Margaree, Baddeck, and Mira river valleys, and there were smaller patches at East Bay and McNab's Cove on the Bras d'Or Lake. In the next decade, much more of the intervale was alienated. By 1830, the area of granted land extended farther along the Mabou and Margaree rivers, and into the broad, previously untouched valley of Middle River. Many of the gaps along the west coast were also granted. Much of the best land on the Island was now taken.
Figure 3.1. Crown land grants on Cape Breton, 1786-1820.

The second wave of Scottish immigrants, consisting largely of destitute crofters and cotters, arrived between 1827 and 1845 and occupied the remaining good land and extensive areas of poorer backland. Because many of these settlers squatted on Crown land and often did not obtain a grant until the second half of the century, Figure 3.2 considerably underestimates the extent of settlement. The fertile tracts that were settled lay mainly around the Bras d'Or Lake and along minor river valleys. At the west end of the Bras d'Or, land was granted at the head of West Bay, St. George's Channel, Malagawatch, and along parts of River Denys Basin and Whycocomagh Bay. At the east end of the Lake, grants were taken out along both sides of East Bay and St. Andrew's Channel as well as at Grand Narrows, Washabuck Bridge, Baddeck, and Boularderie. There was little frontland left along the Gulf coast, but settlers took up land along Grand Anse River at Pleasant Bay to the north of Chéticamp. The east coast was still relatively untouched, and land was granted along Aspy River at Cape North, Dundas Brook at Ingonish, North Shore, along North River, St. Ann's, Bridgeport, and Port Morien. Much of the south coast was too rocky for agricultural settlement. Inland, settlers pushed into the farthest reaches of the intervales, taking up land at Kingross at the head of the Northwest Margaree and along the O'Law Brook which flows into Middle River. Land was also granted along the intervales of Grand River and River Denys.
Figure 3.2 Crown land grants on Cape Breton, 1786-1850.

When these relatively fertile areas had been occupied, settlers were forced onto backland behind the first range of lots. Backland topography varies from the rocky, glaciated lowlands in the south of the Island to the hillsides and plateau summits of the uplands in the north. Soils are thin and stony, and either erode quickly or are too wet to drain. Much of the land is best suited to rough pasture or forestry. Nevertheless, many of the later immigrants were settled on backland by mid-century, a measure of the scale of the influx and meagreness of agricultural land on Cape Breton. The main areas of settlement were in Cape Breton County on the Boisdale and Coxheath Hills overlooking Frenchvale Brook, and along Salmon River between Mira Lake and Lake Uist. In Richmond County, settlement occurred on the knobby and lake-strewn land behind Framboise, between Red Islands and Loch Lomond, along the Lewis Cove Road, and on South Mountain. To the north, in Inverness County, settlement took place on the thin strip between West Bay and North Mountain, on the Creignish Hills overlooking River Denys, along Skye Glen, and around parts of Lake Ainslie. There were many other small patches of backland settlement on the Island, usually clustered along stream valleys where some alluvial soil was available.

Land Policy

Although large numbers of immigrants began arriving on Cape Breton after 1802, settlement was officially
discouraged until 1817. During that period, the restraining order on the granting of land, issued in 1790, remained in force: land could only be granted in fee simple to bona fide Loyalists and disbanded soldiers, or leased to tenants at will. Many settlers, however, simply ignored the regulations and squatted; the government was almost powerless to stop them. But few were satisfied with the situation. Squatters and tenants lobbied the Governing Council for permanent grants, and government officials warned the Colonial Office of the drift of dissatisfied settlers to the United States.

Eventually, the regulations were loosened. After 1815, the British government, worried by economic difficulties and social unrest at home, looked to the colonies as "a safety valve" for the country's surplus population and began to encourage emigration and overseas settlement. In 1817, the Colonial Office in London instructed the government of Cape Breton to adopt the more flexible land regulations of the neighbouring colonies and issue grants in fee simple. After paying £3-5 to the Crown Lands Office for filing the grant and surveying the lot, a settler could acquire 200 acres subject to an annual quit-rent of 2/- per 100 acres payable after two years of occupation. The settler also had to erect a house, clear and cultivate 3 of every 50 acres, and place 3 neat cattle on the land within three years. In 1820, when Nova Scotia resumed jurisdiction over Cape Breton, joint grants to three, four, or five applicants were
permitted to reduce the cost of survey and so make settlement "as easy as possible to poor settlers." Although fees were a few pounds, quit-rents were never collected and, in effect, a forested 200 acre lot was available for less than £5.

For relatively prosperous Scottish crofters arriving on Cape Breton between 1817 and 1827 when more stringent regulations were introduced, land was there almost for the taking. A 200 acre lot could be purchased for about the same amount as the annual rent of a 5 acre croft in the Highlands. Many settlers quickly took out land grants. By 1820, 541 grants comprising 229,220 acres had been issued, most of them on the best intervale land on the Island. Considerably more money would be needed to carry the settler through his first few years on Cape Breton and to improve his farm; but with some savings and perhaps seasonal employment in the mines or on other farms, many of these early settlers became successfully established.

In 1827 new regulations were introduced. In an attempt to standardise the dispersal of Crown land in the British colonies and to encourage settlers with capital, the Colonial Office replaced the ineffectual system of quit-rents and free grants with a system of land sales at public auction. A reserve or upset price of between 2/3 and 2/6 per acre was set, pushing up the price of a 200 acre lot from about £5 to £25, a five-fold increase. The purchase-money was paid in four equal installments, the first at the time of sale and the rest at yearly intervals. Although
this gave poorer settlers some chance of buying land, this was completely dashed in 1837 when the Colonial Office ordered that 10% of the purchase money had to be paid on the day of sale and the balance within fourteen days.

The new regulations severely restricted the opportunity of those with little capital to buy land, and this was soon obvious on Cape Breton. In 1827, thousands of poverty-stricken immigrants began arriving on the Island, many of them too poor to support themselves let alone purchase land at the new rate. As a result, H.W. Crawley, the Surveyor General of Cape Breton, continued to allow settlement under the old regulations. It was not until 1832 that the Colonial Office caught up with the situation on the Island and ordered Crawley to comply with the new directive. A few hundred grants were issued during those years (Fig. 3.3), but there were hardly any after the purchase regulations were changed in 1837. Fewer than 60 were made in 1839 and only 22 the following year. Unable to afford land, the overwhelming majority of immigrants became squatters. In 1837, Crawley estimated that 20,000 people or about half the Island's population were squatting on Crown land. Seven years later, one army officer, granted 500 acres, found it impossible to find a complete tract of land because "the country is overspread with persons who have, without permission obtained ... or chosen for themselves all the vacant Crown Lands."
Figure 3.3 Number and acreage of Crown Land Grants on Cape Breton, 1828-1850.

Data from Annual Nova Scotia Blue Books and Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia.
There was little the Crown Lands Office could do to prevent squatting. The few sales of land hardly covered the salaries of the surveyors and with the government unwilling to provide extra monies, Crown land lay practically unprotected. In effect, the regulations had foundered on the huge expense of policing vast areas of virtually worthless land. As a result, the law was flouted on a massive scale. "Every body is against protecting the Crown Lands" Crawley complained in 1844,

all being interested, in some way, in the plunder. The lawyers are no exception - Mr. Dodd himself [the Island's Chief Justice] has openly advertised and sold lots of the Crown Lands, and I have no doubt has executed many a conveyance for persons whose only claim was illegal possession.17

With the Island's law officers participating in the scramble for land, it was hardly surprising that

people learn to look upon the orders of the Govt. as mere matters of form, and conclude that they may do as they please, and that the surest way of obtaining land is to take it, without the delay of asking leave, and to plunder at pleasure.18

The surveyors were almost powerless. In 1840, the surveyor for Richmond County, while marking out the boundaries of lot 9 at Red Islands for a new owner, was confronted by a squatter, "armed with a bludgeon," who warned that "the first person who would enter ... his fenced fields, for the purpose of making a survey, would never leave these fields alive." The surveyor, earnestly advised by a gaggle of neighbours that the squatter had "fire arms concealed and a party ready to make use of them, and that a renounter would certainly be attended with fatal
consequences," hastily withdrew to make his report. The same surveyor had no more success a few years later when laying out lots at Aspy Bay, Victoria County. There, he encountered another squatter who "made use of no ill language to me or any threats beyond respectfully yet firmly assuring me that nothing but physical force would enable me to make a survey ...." Although the surveyor requested help from the local magistrates, they declined to assist, saying the dispute was beyond their jurisdiction.

With the forces of law and order reluctant, or unable to intervene in matters as important as ownership of property, legitimate settlers often had no defence against trespassers. In many areas Crawley observed, "the strongest helps himself and the weak takes what is left him." The case of Samuel Campbell is illustrative. Born in 1754, probably in Skye, Campbell enlisted in the 76th Regiment of Foot when he was 21, and sailed for the Thirteen Colonies. There, he spent five and a half years fighting the Americans and a year and a half as a prisoner of war in Virginia. At the end of the War, he returned to Scotland and was discharged from the army. He probably spent his middle years crofting on Skye for in 1830, when he was 76, he left the island with his family for Cape Breton. Given a letter of recommendation from the War Office authorising a free grant of land, Campbell petitioned for 200 acres, and settled beside the Kempt Road in Richmond County. Three years elapsed before a Crown Surveyor marked out the front of the lot and a small part of each side. Soon after,
trespassers began to strip the lot of its valuable timber. First, one Alan McDonald with a gang of eight men logged the rear of the property; then one Murdoch McLeod with five men took away more timber. Another two men, Malcolm McDonald and Archibald McLelland, began preparing the stump-strewn land for cultivation. Although Campbell managed to warn off McDonald, McLelland stayed put, built a house, and was joined by "a tribe of ignorant Romancatholiks called the McCormicks cousins of his own." Faced with two families of squatters on his land, Campbell petitioned Lieutenant Governor Campbell in August 1836, for a complete survey of the lot, and this was completed in April the following year. Within Campbell's lot, McLelland had fenced seven acres while his wife's uncle, Dugald McFarland, held another parcel. Aged 83, Campbell felt, no doubt correctly, that the squatters were waiting for him to die and would then take possession of the rest of his lot. With land his only credit in a law-suit, Campbell complained to the Lieutenant Governor in June 1837, "that the inhabitants of this Island are more kept under by the quirk of lawyers and surveyors than by the frost and the decay in the potatoes," and that although he would employ a lawyer, he had "nothing to give him but one milk cow the only support I have to keep myself and my aged wife alive." He asked, therefore, for the Government's consideration.

Squatters, too, were often threatened by encroaching neighbours, as the situation of one John McPherson in
Inverness County makes clear. Born in Inverness-shire, McPherson served as a private in the 51st Regiment of Foot and emigrated to Cape Breton in 1831. Arriving with "a weake and helpless family ... all lying in the small pox" and "being poor and destitute of money," McPherson squatted on backland near the head of the South East branch of the Mabou River; his 100 acre lot lay between the holdings of one Archibald MacDonald and his son, John. After four years labour, he had improved about 15 acres, enough for himself and family to subsist on. In 1835, however, John MacDonald, within months of getting married, began intimidating McPherson, "in the hopes," neighbours' conjectured, "of adding more to his lot." MacDonald began destroying "Fine woods and fence polls" on MacPherson's land, as well as planting crops. With "Poor Mr. McPherson and Family ... treated barbarously by the said John McDonald," the local magistrate clearly regarded McPherson's claim worthier than that of McDonald's, and asked the government for a grant to confirm McPherson's holding.

Faced with widespread lawlessness and sympathetic to the settler who "ought to be encouraged, and not molested," the Nova Scotia legislature attempted to bring the regulations closer to the realities of settlement in the colony. In 1840, they moved to reduce the minimum price of land, but their suggestion of 1/- per acre was rejected by the Colonial Office who insisted on 2/6. By early the following year, no one had applied for land on Cape Breton and only 44 applications had been made in the rest of Nova
26 Scotia. It was becoming increasingly clear that the regulations were unworkable, and in 1842 the Lieutenant-Governor proposed to the Colonial Office that sale by auction should be dispensed with, the upset price fixed at 1/9 per acre, and payment made at the time of sale. The acceptance of these proposals by the Imperial Government marked the beginning of the transfer of power to Nova Scotia which culminated in the winning of responsible government in 1848.

Another way of acquiring land on Cape Breton was to purchase Crown land that had been alienated. This was usually more expensive than buying Crown land, especially if the land had been improved. Dyked or cleared intervale, for example, was valued at £1-5 an acre in 1850, and a frontland farm with 50 cleared acres could cost £50-75, perhaps more. In other words, immigrants who arrived in the 1830's after the best agricultural land had been granted, needed considerable capital to settle in a frontland district.

Agricultural Markets

Although Cape Breton offered most settlers a meagre agricultural opportunity, markets for produce were relatively small. The domestic market comprised the towns, the fishery, and the farms. Of these, the fishery was probably the most important. Although few vessels were
fitted out for long voyages to the Banks, the fishing population provided a market for salted beef and pork, oatmeal, and potatoes. In 1842, the Richmond Agricultural Society reported that the demand was

more than our farmers can furnish, so that a comparatively large amount of flour, pork, etc is annually imported by our merchants - also many cargoes of potatoes etc from Prince E. Island are sold every season in Arichat and the adjacent fishing stations.29

Those best placed to benefit from the fishery were the farmers in Southwest Richmond County and along the Inverness coast near Chéticamp. The urban market was smaller for not more than a thousand people lived in Baddeck, Sydney, and North Sydney, the principal towns on the Island, and many had kitchen gardens, pigs, and milch cows. Nevertheless, some farmers near Baddeck and around Sydney Harbour probably sold produce in these markets. Backland farmers were another outlet. They were often short of hay, potatoes, oats, and livestock products which were usually in surplus on frontland farms. One frontland farmer near North Sydney, for example, sold a large part of his surplus hay, straw, oats, oatmeal, barley, barley flour, potatoes, turnips, butter, and veal to other farmers and tradesmen. In return, they either paid cash, or worked for him.

Beyond Cape Breton, markets were few and far between. In the early nineteenth century, wheat was virtually the only crop able to bear the costs of long-distance transport, but it was grown with only moderate success on Cape Breton and never became an important export commodity. The
Island's principal crops, oats, potatoes, and hay, were low value, bulk items confined to local markets around the Gulf of St. Lawrence. More valuable butter and livestock, which might have withstood high shipping costs, frequently perished on long voyages. As a result, a large amount of produce was shipped to mainland Nova Scotia, while more than 80% of the Island's agricultural exports outside of the province went to the neighbouring colonies. Much of the rest went to the French islands in the Gulf (Table 3.1).

But these outlets were limited. Prince Edward Island and the farming districts of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia produced sufficient oats, potatoes, hay, butter, and livestock for their own needs and on occasion supplied Cape Breton. Only the cities of Halifax and St. John's, the lumber camps of northern New Brunswick, and the fisheries of St. Pierre and Miquelon provided Cape Breton farmers with small export markets. Yet competition from mainland and Prince Edward Island produce must have kept prices low.

The principal exports from Cape Breton were livestock and dairy products: cattle and sheep, salted beef and pork, butter (Table 3.1). These products made up 96.5% of all agricultural exports outside Nova Scotia in 1843, and 90% ten years later. Probably most of the trade to mainland Nova Scotia entered Halifax, while much of that outside the province went to St. John's. In 1814, for example, 7 barrels of beef and pork, 43 kegs and 1,000 lbs. of butter, 1,050 bushels of potatoes, 585 bushels of oats and barley were shipped to Halifax, and 232 cattle, 95 sheep, 8 horses,
400 bushels of oats, and 500 bushels of potatoes were sent to St. John's. In addition, 51 barrels of beef and pork, and 29 kegs of butter were shipped, probably as fishing supplies, to the Magdalen Islands, the Gaspe, and Chaleur Bay. Although after 1820 records of exports to Halifax were subsumed in the coastwise trade of the Province, shipments of cattle, sheep, potatoes, oats, and butter most likely continued. Certainly, the trade to St. John's increased. The population of Newfoundland grew rapidly during the first half of the century, while agricultural production on Cape Breton expanded. In August, September, and October 1828, for example, St. John's received 173 cattle and 185 sheep from Arichat; 122 cattle and 100 sheep from Sydney; 45 cattle and 34 sheep from Port Hood; and 32 cattle and 5 sheep from Margaree Harbour. Between 1842 and 1848, an average of nearly 1,500 cattle, nearly 1,400 sheep, and a considerable quantity of pork in barrels were shipped to Newfoundland each year (Table 3.2). Nevertheless, even if these amounts are generously doubled to include exports to Halifax, the per capita trade was inconsiderable. With nearly 6,000 farmers at mid-century, the average exported from each farm was about one animal.
Table 3.1 Agricultural Exports outside Nova Scotia, 1843 and 1853

1843

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<th>West Indies</th>
<th>British N.America</th>
<th>U.S.A.</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tr>
<td>£ stlg.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>239</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,693</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13,955</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>156</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>167</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>211</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,256</td>
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1853

<table>
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<th>British N.America</th>
<th>U.S.A.</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>£ stlg.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef &amp; Pork</td>
<td>999</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
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<td></td>
<td>222</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>294</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
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Data from Annual Nova Scotia Blue Books and Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia.
Table 3.2 Exports of Cattle, Sheep, and Butter outside Nova Scotia, 1842-1848

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cattle</th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>£ stlg.</td>
<td>£ stlg.</td>
<td>£ stlg.</td>
<td>£ stlg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>750 head</td>
<td>4,850</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,416</td>
<td>13,955</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,111</td>
<td>8,714</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,206</td>
<td>5,556</td>
<td>125</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1,290</td>
<td>5,940</td>
<td>413</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,303</td>
<td>6,274</td>
<td>150</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1,246</td>
<td>4,983</td>
<td>303</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

|       | Sheep           |                |                |                |                |
| 1842  | 663 head        | 358            | 30             |
| 3     | 1,966           | 1,256          | 18             |
| 4     | 1,781           | 975            | 26             |
| 5     | 1,126           | 654            | 10             |
| 6     | 1,599           | 788            | 66             |
| 7     | 1,587           | 756            | 31             |
| 8     | 1,004           | 456            |                |

|       | Butter          |                |                |                |                |
| 1842  | 715 tubs 36    | 1,617          | 48             |
| 3     | 1,894 10       | 3,693          |                |
| 4     | 2,653 5        | 5,261          | 50             |
| 5     | 2,887 12 5     | 5,685          | 60             |
| 6     | 3,725 19       | 7,204          | 34             |
| 7     | 1,665 326      | 3,265          | 46             |
| 8     | 1,615 3,011    | 3,011          | 49             |

Data from Annual Nova Scotia Blue Books.
The Developing Frontlands

Those most able to exploit the local and regional markets were the settlers on frontland. Not only were they on relatively good land, but they were also close to water-transport. At mid-century there were some 1,600 frontland farmers, about 450 of them on prime intervale. By then, many had made substantial improvements. According to the census of 1851, most clearance had taken place on frontland around the Bras d'Or Lake, particularly at East Bay, Washabuck, and Baddeck, and along the intervale of Inverness County, especially the Mabou and Margaree Rivers (Fig. 3.5). These were among the oldest agricultural settlements on the Island, occupying some of the best land. Because the census sub-districts include both frontland and backland, and the data for land clearance and occupiers are in summary form, only estimates can be made of the amount of land cleared on frontland farms. The intervale farms in Inverness County probably had the most cleared land, at least 37.5 acres (Fig. 3.5), whereas along the west coast and around the Bras d'Or Lake clearances were smaller, ranging from 12.6-37.5 acres, a reflection of the poorer land and the recency of settlement around the Lake. Although impossible to verify from the census, clearances of 40-50 acres were probably common around Sydney Harbour where land was good and markets were accessible.

Market demand and the problems of growing cereals on Cape Breton encouraged frontland farmers to specialise in
Figure 3.4 Census districts on Cape Breton, 1851.
Figure 3.5 Improved land on Cape Breton, 1851.
Data from the Census of 1851, RG 1/453 PANS.
livestock raising. Cattle, sheep, and butter were the main cash products, and much of the improved land was in pasture and grass. Uncleared woodland at the back of the farm provided extra forage. The principal areas of livestock raising were the intervales and the Bras d'Or Lake (Fig. 3.6). Intervale farms had the best pastures and supported the most stock. They usually had more than 10 cattle and a similar number of sheep. Around the Bras d'Or Lake pastures were less good and clearings smaller; farmers had an average of 2.6-5 cattle and 6-10 sheep. Frontland farmers also had one or two horses, two or three pigs, and a variety of fowl.

Measured against improved breeds, the quality of livestock on frontland farms was not especially high. The shortage of winter fodder and the common pasturing of animals on rough land meant that most livestock were scraggy and of mixed breed. But the market hardly encouraged intensive breeding. Returns from the Newfoundland trade were low, and many consignments to St. John's were so weakened by the long sea-voyage, that they had to be fattened on local farms before they were in a marketable condition.

Yet by the 1840's some attempt was being made by the more prosperous farmers to improve their stock. Through the Provincial Board of Agriculture in Halifax and local agricultural societies, improved breeds were imported from Prince Edward Island and the Canadas to cross with local
Figure 3.6  Distribution of livestock on Cape Breton, 1851.
Data from the Census of 1851, RG 1/453 PANS.
livestock. In 1841, the Cape Breton Agricultural Society imported three South Down rams and three large New Leicester rams, crossed them with the best of the local variety to produce "a very fine stock...," and pronounced the suitability of the South Downs and Cheviots for Upland Pastures, and the New Leicesters, for the rich Intervales - The two former are by nature hardy, can thrive well upon short herbage and travel far for Food, yielding a superior description of wool and finely flavoured meat - The Leicesters produce an immense carcass, and a heavy (Long Wool'd) Fleece - but require a rich bite, always close at hand-.41

In 1845, the agricultural society at Broad Cove reported that "the off spring of the [imported] durham bull the size and beauty of the yearling steers & heifers showed the benefit of the change of stock ...." But such experiments were limited, and most frontland farmers had scrub cattle and sheep.

Butter was the other main cash product. In 1851, the most important butter producers were those around Lake Ainslie, along Broad Cove Intervale, and especially through the Mabou and Margaree Valleys (Fig. '3.7). But like the cattle trade, the market was too small to support large-scale, good-quality production. Probably most frontland farmers produced less than 1,000 lbs. of butter and quality varied enormously. With the limited demand, few merchants paid according to quality and most butter was left unsorted. Tubs were often sent to market containing a variety of grades.
Figure 3.7 Distribution of butter production on Cape Breton, 1851.

Data from the Census of 1851, RG 1/453 PANS.
Hay was the most important crop grown on frontland farms, often determining the number of animals that could be supported through the seven-month winter. A farm with four milch cows and six horned cattle, for example, would need about 20-25 tons of winter fodder. Even prime intervale farms were stretched to meet such a requirement. Shortages of hay during a late spring appear to have been common; the Board of Agriculture considered it "an axiom that ... surplus hay will be required every fourth or fifth year ...," and warned farmers about carrying too many cattle. Clover and timothy grasses were sown on many frontland farms, and the highest yields were on the intervales, particularly those at Mabou, Broad Cove, Margaree, Middle River, and Black River.

The other crops grown on frontland farms consisted of oats, barley, wheat, turnips, and potatoes. The roots supplemented the hay crop, often being fed to livestock during the winter, and were also an important part of the family diet. Oats and barley provided coarse flour, and some farmers attempted to grow wheat. During the 1820's, Nova Scotian agricultural improver John Young urged the cultivation of wheat so that dependence on imported American flour could be lessened. In that decade, wheat was exported from Cape Breton. But early frosts, inclement harvest weather, and the depredations of the fly soon tempered the enthusiasm for wheat. At mid-century, wheat accounted for only 6% of crops by volume (excluding hay).
Kitchen gardens supplied the farmer with a variety of vegetables - peas, beans, cabbage, carrots, parsnips, beets, and onions - and apple trees were often planted along lakeshores and south-facing slopes. Farmers also picked berries, made maple sugar, hunted game, and fished.

Compared to Western Scotland, frontland farms were extensively cultivated. With land relatively abundant and labour in short-supply, the labour-intensive cultivation common in the Highlands was dispensed with; farm labour was more usefully applied to clearing land. Many frontland farmers practised a form of convertible husbandry. Fertile, new burnt land initially produced high yields and was cropped continually year after year until the soil became exhausted. It was then left fallow and a new clearing planted. Manure was not usually applied; livestock were left to browse in the woods, while liming, needed to counter-act the acidity of soil, was probably not common in the early years of cultivation. Although the agricultural society at Sydney offered a prize of £2.10/- in 1822 to encourage the use of lime, it was not offered two years later "principally because [it] had excited little or no competition ...." A prize for summer fallow was also discontinued.

Nevertheless, by the 1840's, when much of the potential arable land had been cleared on frontland farms and yields were possibly in decline, more intensive practices began to be introduced. According to Hiram Blanchard, the Secretary
of the Port Hood Agricultural Society, farmers had noted the advantages to be derived from a judicious rotation of crops, particularly the now frequent ploughing of grass lands, which were formerly mowed as long as any hay could be obtained from them, frequently for 14 or 15 years successively.54

Rotations and fallow periods became common. Although the data are lacking on the precise rotations used, farmers probably planted oats and barley, followed by clover, and afterwards left the land in pasture for a year or two. More attention was also paid to manuring, particularly the application of lime. In 1846, the Annual Report of the Broad Cove Agricultural Society observed that "lime proves to be the best manure to suit the soil of this place." Some farmers were also starting to drain swamps and other wet land, "formerly ... thought useless," to provide "fertile fields yielding best of crops & hay ...."

In the early years of settlement, the tools used on frontland farms were rudimentary. Locally made spades, forks, hoes, sickles, scythes, and flails were ubiquitous, some of them perhaps based on Scottish antecedents. Wooden ploughs with iron-plated mould boards, such as Small's Plough, were probably also common. But as farmers accumulated capital and the use of improved implements became widespread elsewhere, new tools were introduced. During the 1840's, forks and scythes were imported from Pictou, and more sophisticated implements, such as cast-iron double mould board ploughs, winnowing machines, and harrows, were shipped in from Boston. Often these imports served
as prototypes for the fabrication of duplicates by local craftsmen. Apart from horse-drawn ploughs and a few horse-rakes, labour-saving devices were rare on frontland farms during the early nineteenth century; most tasks were still done by hand. Much of the labour was supplied by the farm-family. A farmer with help from his wife and children could plant about 10-12 acres. Extra hands were needed for a larger area, and were usually hired on a seasonal or part-time basis; very few farmers employed labourers throughout the year.

Frontland settlements were much more dispersed than the crofting townships of Western Scotland. Because of the availability of land, farms were much larger, usually 200 acres, the standard allocation to married men. There were also a few lots of 500 acres, the maximum permitted amount, that had been granted to retired army officers, and some 100 acre lots that had been granted to single men. Virtually all the lots were rectangular (usually with a ratio of width to length of about 1:5), and fronted a coast, lakeshore, river, or road (Fig. 3.8). Where roads did not exist, a reservation was left alongside a river or shore-line.

Every 400 yards or so along the front range of lots was a farmhouse and associated farm-buildings. These were considerably more substantial and comfortable than the blackhouses of Western Scotland, mainly because more building materials were available, farmers were better off, and had secure tenure. The first house—a rough, quickly
Figure 3.8 Hypothetical pattern of frontland settlement on Cape Breton.
made, log shanty - was soon replaced by a larger and more comfortable dwelling. Of one and a half stories, the walls of the house were usually made from squared logs dove-tailed at the corners, and the gable roof covered with shingles. Inside, there might be two or three rooms with boarded floors and an attic. By mid-century, many frontland settlers had built a more finished house that was similar to the Cape Cod house-type of New England. It, too, was of one and a half stories, but was built from battens covered with clapboard or shingles. Inside, the rooms were disposed around a large, central chimney. At the front were two living rooms, while at the back were two or three rooms comprising a kitchen and bedrooms. A tight box staircase beside the chimney gave access to the attic which was usually divided between a store-room and another bedroom. A later variant of this house-type that appeared in the 1840's had a chimney placed on either side wall and a central corridor running from the front to the back of the house. A dormer window was frequently inserted to open up the roof space. Most houses also had a cellar for storing root crops. Furnishings consisted of tables, chairs, settle, dresser, trunks, box-beds, and a spinning-wheel, perhaps brought from Scotland.

Livestock were housed in a separate building, commonly a two-bay or 'English' barn. Built from round logs notched at the corners, or from sawn-timber and shingles,
the two-bay barn was rectangular with central doors at the front and back large enough to take carts. Inside, there was a bay either side of a central threshing floor which were used for storing hay, grain, implements, or livestock. Animal pens were usually built against a partition separating the bay from the threshing floor and were accessible by a small door in the corner of the barn. 'English' barns were ideally suited to the mixed farms on frontland.

By mid-century, after at least twenty years of effort, most frontland settlers were established on well-cleared and stocked farms. The sale of two or three cattle, half a dozen sheep, some butter, oats, potatoes, vegetables, and timber each year provided most of the farmer's income. He might also earn some money from labouring, and a few retired army officers had half-pay pensions. Unlike Scotland, where much of the crofters' income went out in rent and other exactions, the farmer on Cape Breton had no rent or taxes to pay. Virtually all the settlers were free-holders, and the Crown's quit-rents were never collected. When the Colonial Office attempted to collect the rents during the 1820's, the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia reported that "the people are so unaccustomed to pay rents of any kind or even most trifling taxes, that ... the collection of the Quit Rents will occasion endless litigation and a great irritation ...."

With more disposable income, the frontland farmer enjoyed a higher standard of living than in Western Scotland. Living conditions were superior, and diet was
better. Besides oatmeal (the staff of life in the Highlands), flour was common and probably replaced oatmeal in the homes of wealthier farmers. Vegetables were more varied, and fruit was more accessible. Red meat was less of a luxury and game, no longer guarded by a keeper, was freely available. In addition, fuel, so carefully regulated in Scotland, was plentiful. Such improvements were the attraction that drew emigrants from Scotland to Cape Breton. "Thank God I am well pleased for coming to this country" wrote one settler in 1830 to a relative on Lewis, as I find myself quite easy, having occupied land called my own free from all burdens whatsoever. I go out and in at my pleasure, no soul living forces me to do a turn against my will, no laird, no factor, having no rent, nor any toilsome work but what I do myself.64

After years of back-breaking work, settlers had a farm, a home for a family. "I did not in the least envy even your larger possessions at home" wrote one Captain Donald McNeil to his brother on North Uist, "as my property was improving apace, all my own, and to pass to my kins & successors for ever; such was my consolation, with a living, in comfort, tho' not in luxury."65

Compared to Western Scotland, the economic range was not marked in frontland communities. The availability of land and the weakness of markets discouraged large landowners as much as it encouraged small family-farms. Nearly all the frontland settlers were free-holders and most owned less than 500 acres. To be sure, a few farmers, particularly those on intervale, probably had at least 100
acres of cleared land and sizeable herds by 1850, but they were much less wealthy than tenant sheep-farmers in Scotland or merchants engaged in the Island's codfishery. Overall, frontland farmers had a comfortable sufficiency, but few were very wealthy.

Such an economic structure had considerable implications for frontland society. While there was no economic support for the Scottish estate system, established church, or township constable, there was support, in the form of available land, for crofting families. As a result, the bottom layer of crofting society was transferred successfully to Cape Breton, but not the overpowering hierarchy above. Frontland settlements consisted of nuclear families, often enmeshed in a web of kin, and new institutions that had developed on the Island. Most households were comprised of the parent-child group, and a minority included elderly grandparents and newly-wed children. Beyond the nuclear family, ties with relatives were often close, particularly among the Scottish settlers. Many interrelated families had left Scotland together and where land was available on Cape Breton, settled side by side. In 1817, John Mathewson, Farquhar Mathewson, William Corbet, David Corbet, and Robert McCoy petitioned for 300 acres each along Grand River so "that Petitioners having left Scotland together and wishing to settle near one another would be tempted to endeavour to make a good settlement in said place ...." Settlers sent letters back
to Scotland to encourage relatives to join them. Donald Campbell, a settler on the north side of the Bras d'Or Lake, regretted that his brother-in-law had not sailed with him "as you would have lands near me but now occupied by others," and offered part of his own land as an inducement to emigrate: "If you come I will give you a house and part of what I have till you find a place to your wish or should you stop upon my land for ever you are quite welcome." Where related families settled together, highly distinctive clusterings emerged. In the late 1820's, the settlement along the Southwest Margaree of Gillises, MacLellans, and MacDonalda, all Roman Catholics from Morar and Moidart, produced a series of related kin groups (Fig. 3.9). Even where related settlers had not managed to occupy contiguous lots, they were often settled nearby. Along the Gulf shore, between McKinnon's Point and Judique, 27% of Scottish families had the most common surname (McDonald), and 68% had one of the seven most common names (Table 3.3). At Broad Cove, 32.5% had the most common surname (McIsaac), and 70% one of the three most common names. Similar high figures occurred at McNab's Cove on the Bras d'Or Lake. None of these settlements were more than a generation old, and some of the settlers had been on the Island for less than a year.

Interspersed among these Scottish settlers were individual Irish families. Virtually all the "other" settlers listed in Table 3.3 were Irish and the majority had a unique surname. At McNab's Cove, for example, 66% of the
Figure 3.9 Settlement along the S.W. Margaree River, Inverness County, showing land granted, 1831-36, and the name and place of origin of the settlers.

Data from Records of the Crown Lands Office, 1738 to 1962, RG 20/A/3 PANS; Crown Land Index Sheets 114-15 Dept. of Lands and Forests, Nova Scotia; and J.L. MacDougall History of Inverness County, pp.385-420.
Table 3.3  Surnames on Cape Breton, 1818

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>McKinnon's Pt. to G. Judique</th>
<th>Broad Cove</th>
<th>McNab's Cove</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scots Other</td>
<td>Scots Other</td>
<td>Scots Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of families</td>
<td>160 6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>63 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of different surnames</td>
<td>25 3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of families with the most common name</td>
<td>27 32.5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of families with one of the 7 most common surnames</td>
<td>68 70 (3 names)</td>
<td>76 14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of families with unique surname</td>
<td>5 50</td>
<td>11.5 11 66.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Irish families had a unique surname. The Irish had probably left Newfoundland as individuals or in nuclear families, and settled in small groups on Cape Breton. Extensive family ties had not been transferred to the Island; they were being forged by the first generation of settlers.

Apart from the extended family, there were few social institutions in frontland communities for much of the early nineteenth century. Formal organisations, such as local government and the church, were either very weak or entirely absent. One missionary, sent to Cape Breton in 1837 by the Glasgow Colonial Society, reported meeting

\[\text{many persons grown up to be men and women who never saw the face of a clergyman before. Multitudes even of adults were unbaptized, and thousands to whom the sacred rite had been administered sunk in the most deplorable state.} \]

With few official bodies to turn to, settlers had formed their own compensating groups. The work "bee" or "frolic," where settlers got together to help one another clear land and erect buildings, was probably the most common. One missionary observed that "...when a house was erected, trees to fell and burn, the neighbours collected to assist, and would have a frolic before parting ... dancing and drinking rum being the entertainment." There were also 'spinning' and 'tucking' frolics where women met to spin thread, beat cloth, and swap gossip; and informal "house churches" where settlers congregated to worship, sing psalms, and read scripture.

The formal organisations that developed reflected the social and economic order of the frontland settlements.
With no gentry to support the established church, the Church of Scotland had little sway on Cape Breton. Instead, churches that had scarcely any recognition from Scottish landlords but were the spiritual support of many crofters flourished. The Roman Catholic Church was successfully transferred to Cape Breton; so, too, was evangelical presbyterianism. Some settlers had experienced the evangelical revivals in the Western Highlands during the 1820's and 1830's, while others, after the material hardships of pioneering, were perhaps attracted by the ascetism of Calvinism. Certainly, the evangelical church took hold. By the late 1830's and early 1840's, open-air services were attracting hundreds of people and in 1843, when the disruption occurred, most presbyterians on Cape Breton joined the Free Church. By 1850, there were five Presbyterian ministers on the Island, each with several churches to attend to.

Agricultural societies, the preserve of wealthy sheep farmers in Western Scotland, were organised by frontland farmers. As early as the 1820's, in response to initiatives and grants from the Nova Scotia Board of Agriculture, societies had been formed at Sydney, Mabou, Arichat, Judique, and Port Hood. Although they probably collapsed in 1825, when government support was withdrawn, many reformed in the 1840's when the Central Board was revived. Societies opened at Richmond, Port Hood, and Broad Cove in 1841; Margaree in 1843; the Gut of Canso and Middle River in
1845; Baddeck in 1848; and North Sydney in 1854. To qualify for the government grant, each society had to put up £10 per annum, usually collected from membership subscriptions - an effective bar to backland farmers. Most members were relatively well-off. As the Secretary of the Arichat branch of the Richmond Agricultural Society put it in 1841, "many of the most influential farmers, throughout the Country, were among the first to become members and Office Bearers of this Society, and their example and influence has been felt and appreciated." Among the Society's vice-presidents were several of the most prominent merchants on Isle Madame: DeCarteret, Janvrin, Belam, and Blymer. Such societies were probably the first institutions on Cape Breton that reflected the differentiation in wealth between frontland and backland farmers.

There was also more opportunity on Cape Breton than in Western Scotland to be involved in local government. With the estate structure and established church absent, wealthier farmers ran for local office and became tax assessors, school inspectors, census takers, and magistrates. In Scotland, few crofters attained such positions. Overall, the settlement of Cape Breton released individual initiative and allowed voluntary associations to flourish, but stifled some of the more formal institutions of Western Scotland.

The relatively small number of frontland farmers and the weakness of the agricultural economy discouraged rural manufacturing and services. In 1851 there were 1,046
mechanics and about 300 people in service occupations on the Island (Table 3.4). If the fishing and coal-mining settlements are excluded from the total, there were about 400 mechanics and nearly 220 people in services. Most of the mechanics were engaged in small trades such as carpentry, smithing, and milling; while those in service occupations were mostly traders and merchants, with a few doctors and clergy. Virtually all these people lived in frontland settlements.

At the hub of the local economy were the merchants or country storekeepers, the organisers and facilitators of trade. They were the middle-men, importing goods to be retailed to the settlers and exporting produce to be wholesaled in the markets of Halifax and St. John's. Because the trade in any one commodity was small and intermittent, they sold a wide range of goods and purchased a variety of country produce. The stock of a typical country store included clothes, millinery, bed-linen, haberdashery, hardware, drugs, and groceries. The merchant collected the small agricultural surpluses (a bushel of oats or potatoes, a firkin of butter, a cow or sheep); quantities of wood (spars and timber); and fish (a barrel of herring or mackerel, a half quintal of dried cod). Although some transactions were in cash, the shortage of specie made barter the most acceptable form of payment. Most of the produce came from within a day's overland journey of the store, although water transport often expanded a merchant's
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Cape Breton Total</th>
<th>Farming Districts Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>5,884</td>
<td>5,229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishermen</td>
<td>2,669</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumberers</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>1,046</td>
<td>804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seamen</td>
<td>1,054</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergymen</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctors</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchants &amp; Traders</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from Census of 1851, RGl/453 PANS.
influence. Some produce might be consumed locally, particularly if the store were close to a town or fishing settlement, but most was shipped by sea to a main centre of demand. There, it was consigned to the merchant’s wholesale supplier, or to a commission agent. In addition to his store, the merchant often owned the local grist mill, saw mill, or livery stable, and acted as banker for farmers. In a frequently marginal trading environment, his interests had to be varied and general.

Malcolm MacDougall, a merchant at Christmas Island, exemplifies the typical country storekeeper. He entered business at Christmas Island in the 1830’s, at first retailing goods supplied by merchants in Arichat and then later, when he was established, dealing with Halifax firms on his own account. Much of his export trade, though, was to St. John’s, Newfoundland. By 1880, he described himself as an "Importer and Dealer of Flour and Meal, Dry Goods, Groceries, Hardware, Stationery, Readymade Clothing, Boots and Shoes, Hats and Caps, Crockeryware, Country Produce, etc., etc.," - the typical mix of trade of a country storekeeper. That year, his ledger records $4,403 worth of purchases; $3,041.66 or 69% of it in barter, $787.81 or 18% in cash, and $574.33 or 13% in work. Of the bartered goods, 87% consisted of livestock or livestock products (horned cattle, steers, milch cows, and heifers made up 79% of the livestock total, followed by horses and foals, sheep, butter, and pork); and much of the rest consisted of hay, the most important fodder crop. Among the jobs done for
MacDougall were hauling, repairing a barn, butchering, shoemaking, ploughing, and driving cattle to North Sydney. Most of the produce came from around Christmas Island, although water transport allowed farmers to ship from other parts of the Bras d'Or Lake, particularly from Malagawatch and East Bay. From Christmas Island, the produce was forwarded either to Cape Breton towns or to St. John's and Halifax.

Apart from the local store, there were a few processing industries (Table 3.5). The livestock trade gave some work to tanners; in 1851, there were fourteen tanneries on Cape Breton employing twenty-three men. Three tanneries supplied boots, jackets, and leather pulleys to Sydney Mines; two served Sydney; three processed hides in the Margaree Valley, one of the principal cattle raising districts on the Island; and the rest were distributed among the Gut of Canso, Port Hood, Mabou, and the North Shore. As most settlers had spinning wheels and hand-looms for spinning wool to make "home-spun" clothing, there was little demand for weavers; in 1851, there were only six weaving and carding mills on the Island, employing seven people.

Although most farmers grew oats, few had sufficient capital until the 1820's to invest in flour mills. In 1824, the inhabitants of Sydney petitioned the government for aid to build grist mills, stating
Table 3.5 Manufacturing Establishments on Cape Breton, 1851

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Value £</th>
<th>Hands Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanneries</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1,576</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grist Mills</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12,012</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaving &amp; Carding Mills</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saw Mills</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2,741</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Factories</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>976</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from Census of 1851, RGl/453 PANS.
That throughout the ... County [Island of Cape Breton] much inconvenience is experienced from the want of grist mills, there being many settlements where the inhabitants are obliged to transport their grain, the quantity of which is every year increasing, a distance of fifty miles, or more ... to the mill, where also, in consequence of the quantities of grain brought, and the insufficiency of the ... miller, the people are kept waiting an unreasonable time, to their great loss and injury.79

The petition claimed that after the destruction of a mill by flood waters, "there is not a single grist mill in operation ... in a circuit of about two hundred miles" around the Bras d'Or Lake. Nevertheless, attempts were being made to build mills, even "by persons whose limited resources ... prevented their completion." Other frontland farmers lobbied the government for financial assistance. In 1824, James Doyle, the Secretary of the Mabou Agricultural Society, wrote to John Young, Secretary of the Central Board, explaining that "nothing would facilitate our agricultural pursuits more than the erection of oat mills ... and till we can manufacture oats it is in vain to encourage the growth of that useful grain." A similar letter was sent to Young from the Port Hood Society, pointing out that farmers "instead of selling [oats and wheat] for one shilling per bushel to traders here" could get their grain "converted into flour, and sold in Arichat, which would in part prevent the French from drawing so much of the same article from Halifax." In 1824, the House of Assembly, bowing to such pressure, granted £20 to each county for the erection of oat mills and
a couple of years later, two were being built on Cape Breton.

Further government aid was provided during the late 1840's when the potato blight forced many settlers to grow more oats. The sum of £30 was granted to each county for the building of oat mills and kilns, and from government accounts it appears that much of this money was spent in frontland districts. Among areas to benefit were Broad Cove, River Denys, River Inhabitants, and the Northeast branches of the Mabou and Margaree Rivers in Inverness County; Middle River and Baddeck in Victoria County; and Cow Bay and Mira River in Cape Breton County. Despite this building programme, however, there were only 75 oat and grist mills on Cape Breton in 1851, or one for every eighty farmers, a reflection of the weakness of the agricultural economy.

Frontland settlements supported a few other manufacturing industries. Thirty small saw mills handled the day-to-day milling requirements of settlers for boards, planks, and shingles, and occasionally processed squared logs into deals for the export market. Six other factories listed in the 1851 census made simple agricultural implements, carriages, furniture, soap and candles. The small market and the competition from overseas manufacturers hardly encouraged more diverse consumer industries. The greatest single capital investment in manufacturing on the Island was the foundry at Lingan which supplied ironwork to the coal mines.
All these various establishments - flour mills, saw mills, tanneries, the foundry - were small-scale, employing few men, making only a limited number of items, and attracting little capital investment. Most were family-owned businesses, perhaps set up by a frontland farmer with spare capital or by a merchant. Few had more than £200 invested, the average value of a cleared frontland farm. The largest manufacturing enterprise on the Island was a saw mill at St. Peter's, Richmond County, which employed 20 men and was valued at £850; a business considerably smaller than the Jersey fishing stations on nearby Isle Madame. Other businesses employed fewer men, often a father and one or two grown sons and a couple of hired hands. Even then, employment was intermittent, tied to the seasons and market demand. Saw mills, for example, dependent on water-power, were closed during the winter-freeze. Production runs were extremely small. Many enterprises only worked when they had specific orders or sufficient material. Shoemakers made boots to order, carriage-makers turned out one or two carts and buggies each year; production was extremely sensitive to local demand.

Most of these industries depended on water-power and located by a stream or river. Tracks and then roads connected them to the surrounding countryside and, in time and with market demand, other services grew up nearby. Often these included a merchant's store, a blacksmith's shop, perhaps a tannery, and a livery stable. Eventually, a
church and school might be built. There was no formal planning to these settlements, just a thickening of buildings along a farm road where tradesmen had purchased small lots from the neighbouring farmers and built their premises. By 1850, there were many such small service centres on Cape Breton and some were beginning to emerge as dominant. Sydney, North Sydney, Baddeck, Arichat, Port Hawkesbury, Port Hood, and Mabou were the most prominent centres. They were all ports and depended for their success on the import-export trade as well as servicing the local farmers; some also had important fisheries and shipbuilding.

Few merchants or manufacturers gained much wealth from frontland trade. One or two merchants, such as William McKeen of Mabou, were among the most prosperous men on the Island, but they scarcely rivalled the merchants engaged in the staple industries. In general, the small merchants, millers, and other tradesmen, were comparable to the wealthier frontland farmers. They were probably staunch supporters of the local church, perhaps contributing funds to its building, and members of the local agricultural society. Compared to the well-developed social and economic hierarchy of the fishery and coal-mines, there was little that separated or marked out frontland tradesmen from neighbouring farmers.
The Struggling Backlands

During the late 1820's and early 1830's, the backlands of Cape Breton bore the full brunt of settlement and by 1850, they supported some 4,200 farmers, about 72% of all farmers on the Island. Most of these farmers had small, subsistent operations. At mid-century, clearances of ten to twenty acres were common. An average of fourteen acres had been improved on the slopes of the Boisdale Hills in the Ball's Bridge district near North Sydney; eleven acres on the hillside farms around St. Ann's Harbour and overlooking the Great Bras d'Or; and fourteen acres in the rocky Red Islands district of Richmond County (Fig. 3.5). Such farms had a mixed arable and pastoral land-use, reflecting the subsistence needs of the settler. Perhaps half the cleared ground was in rough pasture, a quarter was sown in grass, and the remaining quarter in crops. The woods were also used for forage.

With sparser pasture and poorer hay crops, livestock holdings were considerably smaller than on frontland farms. Backland farmers usually had one or two milch cows, three or four horned cattle, and six to eight sheep. In 1851, the average holdings were four cattle and seven sheep at Ball's Bridge; nine cattle and seven sheep at St. Ann's; and four cattle and seven sheep at Red Islands (Fig. 3.6). Grazed on rocky pastures during the summer and barely kept alive in the winter by scanty feeds of hay and potatoes, livestock were usually small and undernourished.
Only the hardiest crops could be grown on backland farms. Wheat, barley, turnips, and many types of vegetable were unsuitable, and most farmers depended on oats, the only alternative to expensive American flour, and potatoes, the staple crop of backland areas. According to farmers settled on the blazed trail from Little Narrows to Lake Ainslie in the mid-1840's,

it is a well known fact the potatoe is the only article on which a poor man and family have to live upon for years on new back land farms in the Island of Cape Breton.91

Essentially, backland settlers were subsisting on the same crops as those grown in Western Scotland.

Farming appeared rough and ready to observers. Crops were not rotated, manure applied, or fields left in fallow; extensive farming prevailed. Oats and hay were sown on the same patch of land until yields declined, and then a new cleared patch was sown. Farmers had a few basic tools: a spade for cultivating potatoes, a sickle and flail for cutting and threshing oats, and a scythe for mowing hay. There might also be a primitive wooden plough for scratching the stony soil. Improved implements, such as those found on frontland farms, were virtually unknown. At St.Patrick's Channel, a backland settlement in Victoria County, a surveyor reported in the early 1840's that there was

a want of improved agricultural implements; such a thing as a good harrow, plough, cart, etc ... is not to be seen; whilst a drill machine, horse hoe, double moulded plough, and the implements of the most obvious utility, are not even known by name.93
Much of the labour on these small, subsistent farms was provided by the family with help from neighbours at harvest.

Few backland farmers had legal title to their land by 1850, and most holdings remained unsurveyed. The pattern of settlement consisted of dispersed farmsteads on irregular patches of land cleared from the forest. Some settlers had hired unofficial surveyors to mark out their holdings, blazing illegal markers on boundary trees, in the hope of deterring trespassers and impressing the Crown surveyors, but such ruses were usually ineffectual. For most backland settlers, boundary lines depended on mutual agreement with neighbours.

Although there is virtually no data on backland houses, the houses were probably much smaller and less substantial than those on frontland. Log shanties were probably still common at mid-century. They were built from round logs cross-notched at the corners and caulked with clay or dry moss, and roofed with rafters covered with birch or spruce bark. If the shanty had a chimney, it was built from locally available field-stone. The one-room interior was small and spartan; there was a dirt floor, perhaps a window to let in some light, and a few rough-hewn furnishings. A few settlers probably had larger, more comfortable dwellings. These were probably built from round rather than squared logs and caulked with clay, and had a gable roof covered with shingles. The interior was most likely divided by a partition between living and sleeping quarters. Although livestock were housed in a separate shanty, these
log dwellings were hardly an improvement on the blackhouses of Western Scotland.

After they had cleared a small subsistence farm, many backland farmers left their family to tend it during the summer and looked for other work. Frontland farms probably offered most employment, particularly at planting and harvest. In the early 1840's, a farm labourer might expect an average wage of 2/9 stlg. per day in spring and 3/6 in the fall, or 2/- and 3/- respectively if board and lodging were included. These payments, though, were generally made in produce at cash prices. The workings of this local labour market can be clearly seen in the transactions of John Belcher Moore, a frontland farmer near North Sydney. In 1856, he sold surplus produce to numerous farmers and three, listed as coming from "back land," paid partly in cash and partly by work on the farm. In May, Neil McKay purchased 4 cwt. of straw, 23 bushels of potatoes, and 2 bushels of oats, and paid mostly by work. In June and early September, Murdoch Ferguson worked for several days to pay off 9/9, the value of 57 lbs. of barleyflour; while John Beaton worked to pay off 8/9, the cost of 1/4 barrel of oatmeal and 2 dozen herring. Through such casual work, backland farmers supplemented the produce of their own farms.

Fishing and coal mining offered further employment. As settlement expanded around the coasts, many farmers combined fishing with part-time farming. After the failure of the
potato crop in the late 1840's, the surveyor for Richmond County thought it "very doubtful whether a settler on a new woodland farm could possibly exist, particularly at any distance from the sea." With little security, few backland farmers could purchase fishing gear on credit from a local merchant, and probably most worked as hands at the fishing stations or on the inshore shallops. Perhaps a few were employed on American mackerel schooners in the Gulf. Labouring work was also available in the coal mines, particularly after the industry expanded in the 1830's. Some two to three hundred labourers found work hauling coal to the heaps or shipping wharves and when trade was busy, hewing underground.

There was also some work available in the Island's small timber trade. In 1818, the first export of timber to Liverpool was recorded and within a few years, several ships were calling each year at harbours around the Bras d'Or Lake to pick up cargoes of timber, deals, and boards for the British market. Most likely, squatters had stripped much of this timber off unprotected Crown land. In 1837, Crawley reported that "the depredations on the Crown Lands and timber are openly carried on to an extent that threatens shortly to leave nothing to plunder." Even settlers with grants found it difficult to guard their timber; one complaint from L'Ardoise in 1851, which can stand for many to the Crown Lands Office, spoke of "persons ... every day trespassing ... and destroying all the wood...." Few squatters were ever convicted of
trespassing, for once the timber had been cut and removed, it was virtually impossible to identify logs taken from Crown land or a settler's lot. Such depredations provided the backland lumberers with a few pounds in cash or store-credit.

Settlers also scratched around for odd-jobs. John Ferguson, for example, a backland farmer at Little Lake near L'Archeveque, Richmond County worked for John McKay, a local merchant, in return for supplies and provisions. In February 1844, Ferguson did 5 days labouring at 1/3 and 2 days at 1/8. The following month, he worked for 2 days at 2/-. His next dealing with McKay came in August, when he sold codfish and cod oil, as well as 12 lbs. of potatoes and a wooden block. He also laboured for a day at 2/- along with his son, Angus, who earned 3/-. Another son, John, shipped timber for 4 days with Ferguson himself hauling 3 tons. Ferguson finished the month by 2 1/2 days work splitting and salting a catch of haddock. Despite this intermittent employment, Ferguson still owed McKay £7.15.5 1/4 at the end of the year.

Although travellers to Cape Breton chastised settlers for their "mixed employment of agriculture, fishing, and lumbering" which relegated farming to "a secondary place," the need for additional work was a measure of the economic insecurity of backland farmers. Even with extra employment, the annual income of many farmers must have been paltry; most of them must have seen no cash from one year to
Debt was widespread, and many families were almost destitute. Few backland settlers owned their land, many lived in shanties, and their diet was often extremely meagre. A missionary at West Bay, Inverness County reported in 1834 that he had lived on nothing but gaspereaux and potatoes for a week; but considered himself fortunate, for a week earlier the family he was staying with "could have offered me only milk." Elsewhere, the missionary had "seen dwellings where six or eight of a family lived for five weeks on the milk of a cow, without any other food." Starvation was a constant threat and became a reality in years of harvest failure. The early 1830's were particularly bad, and left many recent settlers completely destitute. The experience of backland settlers at St.George's Channel, Richmond County was probably typical. In 1829, they arrived "destitute of money or clothing ... from Scotland" and settled in a "remote place" about four miles from the sea. After "many things to encounter in supporting [them]selves", they managed to raise a few crops only to see them wither in the fall of 1833, leaving at least twenty families "poor and indigent without means of subsistence." Indian meal, rye, flour, and cash had to be distributed by the government to some parts of Cape Breton that year. In July 1836, a severe frost almost completely destroyed the potato and grain crop, leaving recent settlers without supplies for the winter. By the following spring, there was widespread "distress among the settlers." James Frazer, a missionary who had spent time
in some of the most congested crofting townships, reckoned that he had "never witnessed such destitution in any part of Scotland."

With most backland farmers living at subsistence level, there was little distinction according to wealth. Rural manufacturing and services were virtually non-existent and farmers, if they needed grain ground or supplies from the local store, had to make their way to the frontland settlements, often a long and laborious journey. Although the data are lacking, probably most households consisted of nuclear families perhaps with relatives settled close by. Institutions such as the church were largely absent although missionaries traversed the backland areas. Compared to the frontland settlers, the backland farmer lived a more isolated life, detached from much community activity by terrain, distance, and poverty.

**Perspective**

Located close to the main shipping lanes from Britain to her North American colonies, Cape Breton was almost the first land sighted by returning timber ships and a cheap destination for poor emigrants. As emigration gathered pace after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the Island was settled quickly, mainly by displaced Highlanders. The settlers found themselves on an island where land was relatively abundant but agricultural markets were small and distant; a
setting that hardly attracted wealth or supported it. As a result, land was cheap; so cheap, in fact, that the government refused to invest sufficient money to protect it. Many settlers were left to squat on Crown land untroubled by authority. Private investors, too, were discouraged from putting their money in land and few settlers owned more than 500 acres.

Yet although land was relatively plentiful, poor soils, a short growing season, and distant markets limited its agricultural potential. If the market demand had been sufficient, the physical handicaps might have been overcome. In Western Scotland, market demand had been strong enough to turn the remote and rugged land of the Highlands into highly specialised sheep ranches, but no such comparable market existed on Cape Breton. Markets were small and costly to reach.

Nevertheless, Cape Breton offered the few early settlers considerably more opportunity than existed in the crofting townships of Western Scotland. Relatively fertile frontland was available and in time a farm could be created that through sales of livestock and butter produced a modest standard of living. No-one made much money from farming on the Island, but it at least offered support for a family. But once the meagre amount of frontland had been taken, agricultural opportunities became drastically curtailed. Destitute settlers on backland found that they had exchanged factors and baliffs for acidic soils, rock, and seven month winters. They had a toe-hold in the New World, but nothing
more. They fell back on the means of subsistence that supported them in Scotland: potatoes, a meagre crop of oats, a cow, and whatever additional employment was available. The purchase of land was beyond their scanty means, and in some years, when the harvest failed, subsistence quickly turned to starvation. For many backland settlers a trans-Atlantic migration had changed little; their material conditions were hardly different to those of the poorest crofters and cotters.
The expansion of agriculture on Cape Breton in the early nineteenth century did not undermine the older staple industries of fishing and coal mining. British and Nova Scotian capital continued to be invested to extract, process, and market the Island's staples, and more than a quarter of the Island's workforce were still employed in fishing and mining at mid-century (Table 3.4). In the fishery, mercantile capital maintained its dominant position, organising the production, transportation, and sale of dried and pickled fish in markets around the North Atlantic rim. In the mining industry, however, there was considerable change. In the late 1820's, the mercantile capital that had been involved in the mines gave way to industrial capital from Britain. Among the earliest industrial enterprises in British North America, the Cape Breton mines were restructured using the new technologies, working patterns, and forms of capital investment of industrialism. By the third decade of the century, the industrial staple of coal was firmly established alongside the old commercial staple of the cod fishery and an
extensive, agricultural empire of semi-subsistent family farms.

The Cod Fishery

In the early nineteenth century, the cod fishery of Cape Breton continued to depend upon both migratory and resident fisheries. Although the Napoleonic Wars ended the migratory fishery on Newfoundland, on Cape Breton Channel Island firms managed to weather the war and maintain their dominant position. Remon & Co. appear to have withdrawn from Sydney by 1814, perhaps a victim of the war, but the Robin and Janvrin companies stayed in business. They were joined on Isle Madame by DeCarteret & LeVesconte, another Jersey firm, who opened an establishment at D’Escousse in the early 1800’s. By mid-century, the company was probably second only to Robin as an exporter of dried fish. Thoume Moullin & Co., a Guernsey firm, also operated in the Isle Madame area during the early 1830’s, but sold out to a resident merchant in 1836. In addition, Robertson, Forsyth & Co, from Greenock, Scotland appear to have had a fishing station at Arichat during the second decade of the century. In 1814, the last year that complete export data are available, the three British companies (Janvrin, Robin, and Forsyth, Robertson & Co.) exported 57% of Cape Breton’s dried fish: 16,589 qtls. to Spain and 300 qtls. to Jersey.

The well-established patterns of the Cape Breton migratory fishery hardly changed during the early nineteenth
century. Companies based on the Channel Islands continued to send supplies, capital, and skilled labour to their fishing stations on the island each year, and to export dried fish directly to markets in Southern Europe, the West Indies, and, from the 1820's, to Brazil. Links were also developed with Halifax and Montreal, the metropolises at either end of the Gulf. Dried and pickled fish were exported to both places in return for flour and other items that were cheaper to buy in North America.

The dealings of DeCarteret & LeVesconte well exemplify this pattern of trade. Each spring, the Jersey supply ship arrived at D'Escousse with salt, provisions, iron, nails, cordage, and crockery to fit out the fishing boats and shallops and retail to the fishermen. Further supplies were bought from Creighton and Grassie in Halifax; on 22 April 1842, DeCarteret ordered:

30 Kegs Hogshead, 1 Hhd. Rice, 1 Dz. oiled Jackets & Trousers, 2 Dz. Common Southwesterners Hats for fishermen, 2 dz. Wool Cards, 25 Pepper, 1 Hhd. lime, 6 dz. Tin Pints, 2 Keg Tobacco, 2 Chest Tea ... to supply forty or fifty Shallops to go a fishing.9

In return, he promised 500-600 qtls. of dried cod. At the same time, he dealt with Donald Frazer, a commission agent in Montreal, sending him cargoes of pickled fish in the summer and fall to pay for shipments of fine flour received in the spring. The firm also traded with local merchants, such as Nicholas Paint and Joseph Wilson at Port Hawkesbury, buying fish for export and timber for shipbuilding.

DeCarteret & LeVesconte’s main commerce, however, was
with the Caribbean, South America, and Southern Europe. Every fall, two or three ships loaded with the season's dried and pickled fish were despatched to each of these various markets, hopefully arriving before the influx of fish from Halifax, St. John's, and the Gaspe lowered prices. At each port, the firm dealt with a commission agent who arranged to sell the fish and find a return freight. During the 1840's, these agents included McCulmot & Co. in Pernambuco, Muller & Co. in Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, Aguire and Borando in Bilbao, Arnot & Co. in Barbados, and Graham & Taylor in Liverpool. In the West Indies and South America, the ships loaded sugar, molasses, and rum for either the European market or for Cape Breton. In Southern Europe, ships took on a cargo of salt or sailed in ballast to Jersey where they picked up supplies for Cape Breton. Such trans-Atlantic movements had to be carefully synchronized to ensure that at least one vessel was at D'Escousse by late August to carry the first fish to market.

The resident fishery continued to be organised by local merchants dependent upon larger Halifax houses for their supplies and market connection. Dried and pickled fish, seal skins, country produce, and the occasional vessel were all shipped to Halifax to pay for salt, flour, provisions, and manufactured goods. The commerce of Port Hawkesbury merchant, Joseph Wilson, illustrates the pattern. After an unsuccessful business partnership in Halifax, Wilson moved to Cape Breton in 1836 and settled at Port Hawkesbury,
probably purchasing a fishing station from the Guernsey merchants, Thoume, Moullin & Co. Situated half way along the Strait of Canso, Wilson was well placed to supply the resident fishermen of Inverness County, Cape Breton and neighbouring Nova Scotia, as well as American schooners passing through the Strait to fish in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Certainly, he dealt with fishermen who lived as far apart as Cape Mabou and Isle Madame, while farther afield he traded with merchant-wholesalers in Halifax and St. John's.

In Halifax, William Pryor and Sons supplied Wilson with provisions (flour, meal, molasses, sugar, rum, and tea); dry merchandise (earthenware, glass, and cloth); fishing gear (hooks, lines, and nets); and shipbuilding materials (putty, turpentine, pitch, pumps, and rigging). Pryor also acted as an underwriter - insuring Wilson's cargoes, fishing vessels, and ships under construction - and his principal creditor. They supplied merchandise in the spring on the credit of fall fish and provided extra cash for shipbuilding. In return, Wilson sent dried and pickled fish, fish oil, lumber, and ships to be sold in Halifax.

In St. John's, he dealt with Stewart & Co., sending them shipments of cattle and butter. Locally, he fitted out fishermen for the boat and vessel fishery (in August 1842 he had the 'Perseverence,' a 40 ton pink-stered vessel, insured for a two month fishing voyage in the Gulf) and received fish in return. With his country trade and his
shipbuilding interests, Wilson had a busy and varied business, pivotal to the commerce of the area, and typical of many outport merchants on Cape Breton.

Cod, the principal interest of both the migratory and resident fisheries, continued to be caught and cured in the traditional way. More than three-quarters of all fishermen fished from boats and many of the rest from small shallops and schooners; in 1851, there were some 1,400 boats and 2,500 boat fishermen (Table 4.1). Handlines were still used, and most of the catch came from inshore waters; in 1851, the largest catches were made around Isle Madame and off Chéticamp, with smaller hauls at Gabarus, Louisbourg, and Howley's Ferry (Fig. 4.1). A minor cod fishery had also developed in the Bras d'Or Lake. After the catch was landed, the fish were headed, gutted, lightly salted, and dried on flakes for several days until they were hard and dry. There were also 194 vessels, mostly less than 25 tons each and with crews of about four men, which were used in the inshore cod fishery and for coastal trading (Table 4.1). Several merchants, including Robin and DeCarteret, also outfitted a few vessels for the small bank fishery in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, particularly around the Magdalen Islands, off Anticosti Island, and along the North Shore. An occasional voyage was also made through the Straits of Belle Isle to Labrador. Such trips had only mixed success; in 1853, J.W. Robin reported that "The deep sea fishery on the coast of Cape Breton is not flourishing, we keep two decked shallops at Chéticam more to collect our
### Table 4.1 Boats and vessels on Cape Breton, 1851

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Boats</th>
<th>Vessels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverness</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Breton &amp; Victoria</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>1,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,423</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,537</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from the Census of 1851, RG 1/453 PANS.
Figure 4.1 Production of dried and pickled fish on Cape Breton, 1851.

Data from the Census of 1851, RG1/453 PANS.
fish than the good they do a fishing ...."

On banking trips, the fish were processed onboard and heavily salted to preserve them until the ship docked. They were then thoroughly washed and laid out to dry.

Both the migratory and resident fisheries were still involved in the pickled fish trade. Some herring were caught around the Magdalen Islands and in St. George's Bay on the southwest coast of Newfoundland, while around Cape Breton the largest catches of herring and mackerel were taken along the Strait of Canso and off eastern Cape Breton where the fish trimmed the coast as they migrated to deep water. A small pickled fishery was also prosecuted in the Bras d'Or. Salmon continued to be caught by boat fishermen using nets, and the largest hauls were at Margaree Harbour, Main à Dieu, and Gabarus. In the migratory fishery, the pickled herring and mackerel were exported to the West Indies and, increasingly, to Montreal for the expanding domestic market. The resident fishery sent most of its pickled fish, including salmon, to Halifax for re-export.

Sealing, too, still attracted interest, particularly during the 1830's and 1840's when it was encouraged by government bounties. Most of the investment came from merchants and planters resident at Cheticamp and Margaree Harbour, although some merchants at Arichat and Sydney were also involved. The sealing ships were usually small, less than 40 tons, and used in the summer for the cod fishery. In 1835, 15 Cape Breton ships, ranging in size from 26 to 43
tons (average 36 tons), received £269 in bounties. In 1842, a Sydney merchant outfitted a ship on the "Newfoundland scale" and made £14,000 from a three week voyage. Encouraged by his success, 22 ships went to the ice the following year and caught nearly 10,000 seals, an ample return. By 1845, 25 ships, with 4 over 50 tons, were pursuing the seal hunt. But in subsequent years it appears that disasters at sea, the high cost of outfit, and the withdrawal of the bounty caused the seal fishery to contract.

Many fishermen also turned to the American fishery for supplies and employment. American schooners had been fishing close to Nova Scotia since the eighteenth century and their numbers increased dramatically as the mackerel fishery developed in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in the early 1830's. In 1843, it was estimated that there were between 700 and 800 American vessels in the Gulf, many manned by fishermen from Cape Breton. In 1851, there were "upwards of 200 men on board ... from the Straits of Canso alone." Probably many more traded bait, fish, barrels, salt, and vegetables with the Americans for tobacco, spirits, clothing, boots and shoes, and sometimes money. Such smuggling helped Cape Breton fishermen and their families to subsist.

In the early nineteenth century, shipbuilding developed into a major industry on the Island. Several hundred schooners, brigs, brigantines, and barques were launched; in 1851, 216 ships were on the stocks totalling 14,316 tons.
Although shipyards could be found on most creeks and inlets, the industry was concentrated overwhelmingly on Isle Madame and the Gut of Canso; in 1851, shipyards in the area were building 73% of the tonnage under construction on Cape Breton. Some of the larger vessels were built for export and sale in the Liverpool market, but most were used for local coasting (particularly in the coal trade), fishing, and ocean-going trade. Both the Channel Island and Cape Breton merchants invested in the industry, sometimes in close co-operation. In the spring of 1840, for example, Peter DeCarteret began the building of the 149 ton brig 'Lady Falkland,' contracting with Joseph Wilson of Port Hawkesbury for the timber. Trees were cut from the backland forests around River Inhabitants, sawn into planks, and shipped across to DeCarteret's shipyard at D'Escousse on Isle Madame. The keel was laid in August 1841 and, with four carpenters at work, DeCarteret expected to have the vessel ready for the following fall. In a letter to his partner, Peter LeVesconte in Jersey, he reckoned that "She will answer us for the West Indies trade ...." Like many vessels built by the Channel Island companies, she was later transferred to Jersey. The shipbuilding industry — the most important backward linkage of the fishery — obviously provided considerable opportunities to local and foreign merchants and gave employment to lumberers, sawmillers, carpenters, and shipwrights.

Throughout the first part of the century, the Channel
Island companies maintained their fishing stations on Isle Madame and at Chéticamp. The stations still consisted of a range of specialised buildings: stages, dried fish stores, pickled fish stores, salt stores, rigging and sail lofts, carpenter and blacksmith shops, and bunkhouses for the migratory fishermen. The stations were staffed by resident agents and, during the summer, by seasonal labour from Jersey. In 1837, there were 180 migrant workers on Cape Breton, employed in fishing, processing, and shipbuilding. In addition, some 660 resident fishermen (most of the Acadian workforce of Isle Madame and Chéticamp) were outfitted by the Channel Island companies.

The number of resident fishermen on Cape Breton increased from about 400 in 1800 to some 2,700 in 1851, and the population dependent upon the fishery from about 2,000 to 13,500. Most of these fishermen were settled in outports established in the late eighteenth century; in 1851, 58% of all fishermen lived at Chéticamp, Isle Madame, and the other outports along the south shore (Fig. 4.2). Arichat continued to be the most populous place engaged in the fishery. Of the remaining fishermen, the majority were settled in outports established since 1800, such as Port Hood, Broad Cove, and Howley’s Ferry. The fishermen at Baddeck, Washabuck, Ball’s Bridge, and East Bay were probably also farmers, for they appear to have made only small catches of cod, herring, and mackerel (Fig. 4.1).

The outports were loose, straggling settlements, consisting of houses, outbuildings, wharfs, and flakes.
Figure 4.2 Distribution of fishermen on Cape Breton, 1851.
Data from the Census of 1851, RG 1/453 PANS.
dispersed around sheltered harbours or coves. Many fishermen had small 'gardens' in which they grew hay, oats, and potatoes - the staple crop. They also had 1-5 cattle and 6-10 sheep pastured on their improved land or left to browse the forest fringe (Fig. 3.6). These crops and animals were for subsistence use, supplying the fisherman and his family with vegetables, oatmeal, milk, butter, cheese, some red meat, and wool for spinning. Many fishermen also trapped and hunted game in the nearby forest, picked berries, and cut timber for fuel and building.

Economic stratification in the outports remained marked. The Channel Island merchants were the most powerful, dominating the Isle Madame area and the Chéticamp coast. With their considerable capital, they could ride out the periodic depressions in trade and continue to extend credit to fishermen. The small, local merchants had insufficient capital to carry such a burden and frequently withdrew credit in a downturn. In 1842, DeCarteret reported to his partner in Jersey that the fishermen "in these bad times ... cannot go to any other person for supplies so that they have to come to us." At that time, DeCarteret & LeVesconte were "the only house [at D'Escousse] that have to supply the fisherman [sic] in full ...." Left in a monopoly position, the Channel Island companies controlled much of the fish trade; in 1839, a traveller who had spent two months at Arichat noted that of the £80,000 worth of business done there each year, "a considerable part ... is drawn away to be spent elsewhere, by merchants
residing in Jersey, who arrive in the spring and depart in the fall with the fruit of the fisherman's labour." Charged high prices for their supplies and paid low prices for their fish, many fishermen were left indebted and poverty-stricken. Lorenzo Sabine, one of the most knowledgeable commentators on the American east coast fishery, considered Cape Breton to be "the poorest part of British America" and knew American captains who had seen families covered with scurvy, applying for medicine, and although they obtained it, were informed by the doctor that it was fresh and wholesome provisions they wanted most; at which time one of the parties admitted that his stock was reduced to some herrings and a few potatoes.47

Such destitution, Sabine reckoned, was "general among the fishermen of Cape Breton."

In general, the influx of Scots had not disturbed the older ethnic distribution in the outports. Acadians continued to dominate Isle Madame, River Bourgoise, L'Ardoise, and Chéticamp, and the Irish and Loyalist communities at Gabarus, Louisbourg, and Main à Dieu were still important. Elsewhere, at Gut of Canso, Creignish, Port Hood, Broad Cove, North Shore, Howley's Ferry, Sydney, and around the Bras d'Or, Scots were the overwhelming majority. By mid-century, the Acadians, Loyalists, and Irish had been on Cape Breton for three generations or more, and many of the Scots for at least a generation. With immigration largely over by the 1830's, there was little new blood coming into the fishing villages and most families
were becoming increasingly inter-related.

As the population increased, many outports were able to support a resident priest or minister, and to build a church. Catholic churches served the Acadian population at Arichat, River Bourgoise, L’Ardoise, and Chéticamp, and the Highland Scots at Creignish, Port Hood, Broad Cove, and Margaree. The Free Church was well entrenched among the Presbyterian Scots at Grand River, Howley’s Ferry, North Shore, and Gabarus. At Main à Dieu and Louisbourg, where the population was more diverse, there were Catholic, Presbyterian, and Anglican churches. Clergy were often community leaders and sometimes arbitrated local disputes; in 1829, Father Courteau at Chéticamp intervened on behalf of fishermen who had fished ‘on shares’ with planters but had been deprived of their share of the government bounty on cod. With friends and relatives, the clergy offered some support to fishermen in economic need.

During the early nineteenth century, Cape Breton’s fishing economy had expanded considerably. The number of fishermen had multiplied more than five-fold, fishing settlements had spread around much of the coast, and shipbuilding had developed into a major industry. Even so, the wealth generated by the staple was still distributed highly unequally. Economic power remained in the hands of the Channel Island companies and to a lesser extent, in those of resident merchants. Most of the fishing population lived at subsistence level, and with little prospect of
improvement on Cape Breton, a growing number slipped away to the United States.

The Establishment of an Industrial Staple: Coal Mining, 1827-1857

Until the late 1820's, there was little change in the mining operation at Sydney Mines. Local entrepreneurs continued to run the mine on short leases, investing sufficient capital to keep the diggings going but not to develop them further. No more than 13,000 tons were raised in any one year, and apart from one or two annual shipments to New England, exports remained limited to Halifax and St. John's. No attempt was made to mine the other seams that outcropped between Sydney Harbour and Mira Bay, although fishermen and farmers dug small amounts for domestic use and for sale to American traders. Mining remained pre-industrial and small scale: simple pick and shovel operations with horses turning winding gear and pulling waggons to the shipping wharf. Probably no more than 50 miners were employed each summer, many of them Irish, and the rest Loyalists and Highland Scots. Mostly young and single, the men continued to be accommodated in dilapidated bunkhouses.

In 1827 the coalfield entered a new phase of development. The lease of the mine and rights to exploit the rest of the coalfield were taken over by a British-based company, the General Mining Association. Within a few years
and after massive investment, production at Sydney Mines had been greatly expanded, a new mine opened at Bridgeport, railways and wharves constructed, a mining village laid out, a larger, highly skilled workforce recruited from Britain, and steam-power introduced. This, the largest investment of industrial capital in Nova Scotia, brought the industrial revolution to Cape Breton, a portent of future developments on the Island.

The involvement of British industrial capital in the coal mines of Cape Breton was somewhat inadvertent. In 1826, George IV by royal prerogative gave his brother, the Duke of York, a 60-year lease of all unworked mineral resources in Nova Scotia. The Duke sub-let the rights to his creditors, the London jewellery firm of Rundell, Bridge, and Rundell. After the nature and extent of the mineral resources had been established, Rundell, Bridge, and Rundell set up a joint-stock company, the General Mining Association, to develop the coal reserves. As some of the best seams were already being worked and thus not included in the Duke's grant, the G.M.A. purchased the leases as they came up for renewal. By 1828, the Association had a monopoly of all mineral development in Nova Scotia. Experienced British managers were hired and sent out to oversee the development and operation of the mines. Richard Smith, the G.M.A. agent in Nova Scotia, supervised the developments in Pictou County, while Richard Brown, a young mining engineer, re-organised Sydney Mines. After Smith's return to England in 1834, Samuel Cunard, rising merchant-
prince of the Maritimes and a failed bidder for the coal leases, was appointed provincial agent and a company director. By 1846, the G.M.A. had spent some £300,000 developing the mines on Cape Breton and the coalfield at Pictou.

The "chief object" of the G.M.A. was to develop an extensive trade with the United States. Sydney coal was best fitted for domestic, household use, and Boston, New York, and Philadelphia were easily accessible by sea. Nevertheless, as the G.M.A. was beginning to develop its mines, American tariffs were introduced to cancel out the cost advantage of water transport and protect the emerging coal industry in Pennsylvania. Although the G.M.A. attempted to circumvent the tariffs by price-cutting, it suffered considerable losses. Market demand, too, was lessening as consumers switched from the smoky bituminous coal from Cape Breton to the cleaner, longer burning anthracite from Pennsylvania. As a result, between 1830 and 1854, only about a third of exports went to the American market, with annual shipments averaging 22,000 tons (Fig. 4.3). Although exports increased after the Reciprocity Treaty was signed in 1854, shipments were mainly of gas-coal for use by city gas-manufacturers, rather than bituminous for domestic consumption.

The failure to penetrate the New England market successfully, forced the company to sell to small, local markets, principally in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.
Figure 4.3  Production and export of coal from Cape Breton, 1827-1857.

Data from R. Brown The Coal Fields and Coal Trade of the Island of Cape Breton, p.76.
Most of the coal went to Halifax and St. John's for use by householders, small industries, and the garrisons. Prices were kept low to stimulate demand, and with the populations of the two cities rising rapidly in the 1830's and 1840's, shipments increased markedly (Fig. 4.3). Even so, supply far outstripped demand; with the unremunerative trade to the United States, the G.M.A. barely covered its costs. In 1842, Samuel Cunard, while lobbying the government for a reduction in the royalties charged on coal sales, stated that "no interest or return has ever yet been paid." By the late 1840's, the company shares were trading at 65% of their original value, and in 1853, before a select committee on the Coal Industry, Richard Brown reported that "the association have expended an enormous sum of money, and have reaped no adequate return, in consequence of the demand never having as yet been nearly equal to their ability to supply."

As the mines were being developed in the late 1820's and 1830's, output rose from 12,000 tons in 1827 to 68,000 tons in 1837 (Fig. 4.3). Over the next 16 years, annual production remained roughly stable at around 70,000 tons, but when the Reciprocity Treaty opened the American market, production picked up again and reached 126,000 tons in 1857. Much of the output during those years came from Sydney Mines, the focus of most investment (Fig. 4.4). Between 1827 and 1829, the triennial average annual output of Sydney Mines was 13,425 tons. By 1837-39, it was 49,700 tons; and by 1847-49, 75,493 tons. Although other mines were opened
between 1830 and 1857, Sydney Mines remained the G.M.A.'s principal colliery on Cape Breton. There were four other mines: the works at Little Bras d'Or and Point Aconi were exploratory and only produced a few hundred tons of coal each year; Bridgeport, a mine near Indian Bay, was considerably more productive and during the 1830's and early 1840's was the G.M.A.'s other major mine; Lingan, a gas-coal mine, was opened in 1854 in anticipation of free-trade and supplied all the G.M.A.'s gas-coal to the United States (Figs. 4.4 and 4.5).

At Sydney Mines, the old adits, shafts, and tunnels were rationalised. A series of new shafts were sunk at progressively greater depths: 200 feet in 1830, 320 feet in 1834, and 400 feet in 1854. At the bottom of each shaft, a pair of levels were driven in either direction along the seam’s dip, one for haulage and the other for miners' access. Every 60 to 200 yards, the levels were connected by gate or horse roads driven at right-angles. The blocks of coal were then mined on the up-side of the road, creating a worked-out space or bord. Although pillar and bord mining had been used in the earlier diggings, it was more organised and safer in the G.M.A. pits.

As underground workings became deeper and more extensive, more efficient methods of drainage, ventilation, and haulage were needed. Steam-engines were introduced at Sydney Mines and Lingan for pumping and winding, although the small Bridgeport mine was drained by an adit.
Figure 4.4 Coal production at the principal mines on Cape Breton, 1827-1857.

Data from R. Brown The Coal Fields and Coal Trade of the Island of Cape Breton, p. 76.
Figure 4.5 Distribution of coal mines on Cape Breton and their maximum output, 1827-1857.

Data from R. Brown The Coal Fields and Coal Trade of the Island of Cape Breton, p.76.
Ventilation was assisted by furnaces. Positioned at the base of an upcast shaft, the furnace drew air from the downcast shaft and around the levels. Partitions of sackcloth stretched over wooden frames ('bratticing') deflected the air into the workspaces. Ponies were introduced underground to haul tubs along the levels, while on the surface, tramways linked mines to wharves. Horses continued to haul the coal waggons until 1853, when two steam locomotives were imported from England. Coal wharves, too, were improved. In 1835, a new wharf was built at North Bar to serve Sydney Mines with facilities for direct loading into the ships' holds. Similar wharves were built at Bridgeport and Lingan.

As the bituminous coal mined from Sydney Mines was highly friable and liable to shatter into small pieces, the G.M.A. introduced screening at the pit-head. After the coal had been raised, it was passed over iron screens or gratings which separated out the small coal or slack from the large or round coal. The large coal was stored or 'banked' ready for sale, while the slack was divided into nut coal for the miners' domestic use and dust which was carried to the "duff heap" and allowed to take fire spontaneously.

As production expanded, the workforce was enlarged. In 1832, the G.M.A. employed 174 men at Sydney Mines; by September 1838, there were 372 men and 37 boys at Sydney Mines, and 143 men and 13 boys at Bridgeport. With the steady trade, the workforce remained roughly the same size.
for the next twenty years; in December 1858, there were 323 men and 70 boys at Sydney Mines and about 50 men during the summer at Lingan. This workforce had also become more specialised (Table 4.2). An underground hierarchy was formed with about half the workers serving the face-workers, the hewers or colliers. A hewer and his butty were assigned to each bord and left responsible for the cutting and grading or riddling of the coal. Loaders or fillers transferred the coal to the tubs which were then pulled along the roads to the main levels by haulers or putters. There, the tubs were collected by drivers and their ponies and taken to the shaft bottom or along the slope to the surface. Door keepers or trappers operated the ventilation doors between the roads and levels as the drivers and their ponies passed through. Boys as young as nine or ten were employed as trappers, and teenagers worked as drivers. The timbering and throughways were maintained by road makers. On the surface, the workforce was divided between unskilled labourers and mechanics or "wise men." Most labourers were employed hauling and storing coal, filling the coal waggons, and doing odd-jobs around the coal yard. At the pit-head, banksmen operated the winding-gear and off-loaded the coal tubs from the cage. A company official weighed the tubs and entered the amount against each miner's tally; an operation that in the late nineteenth century (and possibly earlier) was supervised by a checkweighman employed by the miners to ensure fair play. Before the introduction of steam-traction, drivers took the horse-hauled waggons to the
Table 4.2  Workforce employed at Sydney Mines and Bridgeport, September 1838

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sydney Mines</th>
<th>Bridgeport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colliers</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal Fillers</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; Haulers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse Drivers (Boys)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door Keepers (Boys)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road Makers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; Wastemen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On setters</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banksmen</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wharf Builders</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightermen</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Agent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmiths</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawyers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masons</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron Moulders</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ostlers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilots</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from Statement of Men, Horses, and Machinery, employed at Sydney Mines and Bridgeport Mines in September 1838, RG 1/463/32-33 PANS.
wharf where lightermen or trimmers loaded the vessels. The "wise men" included carpenters, sawyers, masons, blacksmiths, and iron moulders who were responsible for the maintenance of the pit, tramways, waggons, wharves, and buildings. There were also engineers who looked after the pumps and winches, and ostlers who stabled the ponies and horses. Supervising this workforce and ensuring the efficient running of the colliery was the management, the overmen and deputies, who were responsible to Richard Brown, the company agent.

As few, if any, Cape Breton miners before 1827 were particularly skilled, the G.M.A. had to recruit experienced miners in Britain. Men from the tin-mines of Cornwall and the coalfields of northern England and South Wales were brought out to Cape Breton to form a cadre of skilled miners. During the 1830's, more men were hired from the "distressed districts" of England, although later immigrants came from Scotland. By 1850, the majority of miners were from Scotland, some from the north of England, and a few from other parts of Britain. By then, the immigration of skilled men had been reduced to a trickle. "A few emigrants are understood to arrive each year from Great Britain" reported an American mining engineer, "but I did not learn that much effort was made by the Association to introduce them." By recruiting skilled men from Britain, the G.M.A. had created a specialised, full-time mining workforce. The former ties between the mines and the surrounding
countryside had been loosened. No longer could settlers expect to combine part-time farming with hewing; instead, they competed for low-paid labouring jobs available in the summer. When they moved into more skilled positions, augmenting the numbers of immigrant hewers, they joined the ranks of a full-time mining proletariat and their links with rural Cape Breton diminished.

In the late nineteenth century, the mines operated for about 200 days each year; most likely they worked for a similar period in the 1830's and 1840's. Certainly, mining was a highly seasonal activity. Unlike Britain where production peaked with the winter demand for fuel, the busy season on Cape Breton was during the summer. In the winter months, particularly January and February, little or no mining was done because the shipping wharves were blocked with ice. Some men were probably employed repairing pit-gear, tramways, and wharves, and cutting timber from company woodlots for pit-props, buildings, and tubs; but most men were laid off. If the market looked promising, mining usually began in late February or early March with the coal banked for summer shipment; if trade was depressed, mining did not start until the opening of navigation in late May or early June. At this time, unskilled labourers from the country were hired, most of them working until harvest in late July and August. Mining usually stopped in late December or early January.

When the mines were fully operational, men worked five or six days a week, and the G.M.A. expected regular time-
keeping to ensure uninterrupted production. Irregular working and unscheduled stoppages were discouraged. When the G.M.A. took-over the mines, they found that the Catholic Scots and Irish miners were used to taking time off for religious holidays. On 16th March 1830, an overseer at Sydney Mines reported that coal was raised "from Pillar and Gin pits until 3 o'clock - when the men left off on account of the morrow being St. Patricks." On the following day, "none of the men at work except the sawyers and some of the carpenters." By the day after, "The greater part of the colliers and all the mechanics" were back at work. Faced with further stoppages for other Saint's Days as well as Christmas until the "twelfth day," Easter Day, and Ascension Day, the G.M.A. threatened miners with dismissal. In 1830, R. B[rown]. being informed that Saturday next would be kept as a holy day by the men informed them that every man who did not attend his work on the day should be discharged. August 17, Monday. Several of the men having been idle on Saturday contrary to orders 9 diggers and 4 haulers were discharged this morning but 2 of the latter were allowed to go to work on account of having reasonable excuses for absence.

The imposition of work-discipline went hand in hand with the introduction of the new productive system.

The mining villages at Sydney Mines, Bridgeport, and Lingan were larger, more elaborate settlements than the earlier workcamp. After the expense of recruiting skilled colliers from Britain, the G.M.A. was keen to retain them and provided relatively comfortable accommodation around the mines. Although built by the G.M.A. on its own land, the
villages had no formal plan (Fig. 4.6). Rows of houses were laid out either along a road leading to the mine, or by the side of the colliery railway. The availability of land allowed the rows to be more dispersed than was common among the pit villages in Britain, although the plan and construction of the houses followed British practice. Probably because Richard Brown and the imported craftsmen had no experience of timber-frame construction, the houses were built in brick and laid out in terraces, exactly as they would have been in England. The exteriors were uniformly plain, while the interiors were small, usually one room and a kitchen, perhaps two or three rooms, a kitchen, and sleeping space in the attic. Most houses had an earth closet, and a garden attached at the back.

The rest of the mining village consisted of service buildings for the mine or for the mining population. Around the pit-head clustered the furnace shaft and chimney, pump and winding engine-houses, stables, foreman's office, and blacksmith's shop. Elsewhere, the company had a powder magazine and a retail store. There was also a school-house and Roman Catholic and Presbyterian churches for the Scottish and Irish miners, and a Methodist chapel for non-conformists from northern England and South Wales. Only those employed at the mines lived in the company village; with scrub forest around the settlement, the mining population was both physically and socially isolated.
Figure 4.6 The General Mining Association's village and pits at Sydney Mines, Cape Breton County, c.1864.

After A.F. Church Topographical township map of Cape Breton County Nova Scotia.
Demographically, the mining villages were more balanced than the earlier workcamp. Probably a majority of miners were married men with families. With people drawn from Cornwall, South Wales, northern England, and the Lowlands of Scotland, as well as from rural Cape Breton, the population of the Cape Breton mining villages was much more varied than in the mining villages of Britain. Perhaps the routines and terms of the Lanarkshire coalfield survived longer in mines where most of the men were from Scotland, but there were no exact British equivalents of the pit villages on Cape Breton Island.

In an industry where most miners were full-time employees, economic differences between masters and men were clearly drawn. In 1850, it was reported that a former agent of the G.M.A. had been paid a salary of £800 stlg.; most likely Richard Brown drew such a salary. Overseers could expect about £144 stlg., including a house and fuel; while overmen were paid about £72 stlg. with the same additional benefits. Miners were paid by the piece, but an average daily wage was about 5/- stlg. (but could be as much as 8/-), making their annual gross earnings about £50 stlg. Charges for lights, powder, doctor, and schooling would reduce that sum to about £40 stlg., but fuel and housing were free. Compared to the wages in the Lanarkshire coalfield, the average earnings in Cape Breton were at least half as much again, no doubt a reflection of the shortage of skilled men on the Island. Labourers could expect about
2/6 stlg. per day, making their seasonal earnings about £11 or £12 - not enough to live on for the whole year to be sure, but a useful supplement for subsistence farmers.

Although wages were higher on Cape Breton than in Scotland, the cost of living probably made up the difference. Most of the miner's staple foodstuffs had to be imported and were sold through the company store on credit, usually at high prices. Probably most miners got by, though with little enough to spare. In 1835, one miner declared "Our wages have been tolerable; and we have a well stored house with flour, beef, bacon, sugar, and other victualling commodities." Some of these items would have been drawn from the miner's well-tended garden where a cow, chickens, a pig, and potatoes were raised. Yet without work during the winter, miners depended on the company store for credit and in a poor summer could easily fail to pay off their arrears. Some were in debt year after year and were effectively tied to the company.

Working in a large group in a sharply stratified industry, and faced with the dominance of the G.M.A., many miners turned to collective action to improve their conditions. "We met with cross looks and angry words from the Master" one miner wrote in 1835, "and he told us plainly that he believed we were all combined against him. He also told us that the greater part of the men on the concern was in debt ... This has made a great complaining among the men ...." Strikes appear to have been common. In 1830, Richard Brown reported that "several of the cutters remained
idle owing to their being charged with rent & fuel." A year later, all the miners "except sinkers, smiths in new forge and two sawyers at the whf." stood out for an increase in wages, but although the strike lasted for twenty-three weeks, it was broken by contractors with scab labour. In 1849, one observer reported that "'strikes' and other irregularities, have sometimes occurred" at the mines.

Emigration was probably the miner's more effective recourse. In a time-book for 1832, a G.M.A. official recorded the emigration of Newfoundland Irish, writing terse comments alongside names such as Cahilly, Conway, Donovan, Maghan, and Nowlan: "left the mines," "absent the whole month," "gone to Halifax." Some men absconded, leaving debts at the company store and risking arrest. In 1832, the G.M.A. agent at Halifax was instructed to look out for three Welsh miners, Thomas Jones, David Lewis, and James Davis, who had left debts of £38.19.1. currency. These men were later spotted "on the land," but most - born to a life of mining - looked for similar work in the United States. This is well illustrated by a letter written by a hewer at Sydney Mines in 1835 to his brother-in-law who had just moved to Pennsylvania:

it made our hearts glad to hear you were doing so well in the mines, and that times were so prosperous about Pittsville and vicinity.
- Since I last wrote severall have left this place for the United States .... Indeed the Mines is thin of people to what it used to be. There is only about 12 houses that pay rent occupied. And some of the shantees are deserted. Letters has been recived from most of them, and they all send good accounts. Peppet and Wilson has both
gone to Boston. Most of the others went to Boston. James Andrews and Richard Richards is working at a tunnel 6 miles from New York at 1 dollar and half per day and 30 more men is wanted. A letter has been recievfed from Isaac Brown he is at a place called Semples Landing in Ohio 1d. 1/4 per day. John Hay is at Pittsburgh, also David Flowers John Davies and Bason and John James. Henry Anderson is gone to the Messouree Territory. - You will persieve from these things that great changes has taken place at Sydney Mines. And it is likely that numbers more will leave in the spring. Mr. Brown is growing a hard master, he is pinching of at every end.

In 1850, a visiting American mining engineer was asked "several times ... by laboring men, miners, and others, if ... working people could get a 'chance' now 'in the States,' meaning of course good wages." Another observer reported that "of a number of families that were recently brought to the mines at the cost of the Association only a few have remained in the country. The greater number embarked for the United States ...." Very few miners ever returned to Cape Breton.

By 1857, the beach-head of British industrial capitalism along the shores of eastern Cape Breton County had not expanded very far. Unable to hitch the coal staple to the burgeoning economy of the United States, the coal industry limped along by supplying small colonial markets. Less than 5% of the Island's workforce were employed at the mines and most of them had been specially imported. Traders had little access to miners' wages tied up in the company store, and the wharves and railways, built at considerable expense, carried nothing but coal. All in all, the coal industry had not contributed much to the economy of the Island. Nevertheless, an industrial system had been
established, and with the Reciprocity Treaty and the termination of the G.M.A. monopoly in 1857, the coal industry was on the verge of massive expansion.
The Potato Famine, 1845-1849

By the mid-1840's, the tide of Scottish emigration was ebbing away from Cape Breton and the rest of the Maritimes towards the Canadas and Australia. An open frontier for settlement at the beginning of the century was now virtually closed. The best land on Cape Breton had long been taken and was becoming increasingly difficult to buy as land prices rose. Most farmers were struggling to survive on backland at the very margin of arable cultivation; the crop failures of the 1830's had already shown how precarious such farming could be. The potato blight that began in 1845 was to reduce many farmers to a level of destitution that ironically had its closest parallel in Western Scotland, and start, this time from Cape Breton, another round of emigration.

First observed in 1843, the potato blight (phytophthora infestans) is one of the most serious plant diseases in the northern hemisphere. Now recognised as a fungus, it can spread rapidly, especially in the right weather conditions. Warm, moist breezes can disperse the spores over fields of potato plants in minutes; the first tell-tale signs of the disease appear as dark brown - black stains on the leaves.
and stems. If the tops of the plants are cut and burnt, the spread of the disease may be checked, leaving the tubers unharmed. But once the fungus has taken hold, the potatoes turn mushy and brown, usually rotting in the ground before they are raised. A notable effect of the disease is the overpowering stench; fields of rotting plants produced a smell so "sickening" that many commented on it.

Potato blight appeared on Cape Breton in late August 1845. In the humid days of late summer, the disease spread quickly from the Gut of Canso, the nearest point to the mainland, along the coasts and into the interior. At Port Hood, the potato crop suffered severely; farther along the coast at Broad Cove, it was a total failure; while in Margaree, three-quarters of the crop was lost. Inland, at Middle River, the potatoes were completely destroyed, and farther east in Cape Breton County, only half the crop was raised. No one had much idea about the cause. One farmer observed: "The richer the ground the worst - Highlands not as bad as Intervale." Others thought that the disease "cannot be accounted for by any reference to the description of seed - peculiarity of the soil or nature of cultivation - all where the disease had made its appearance having suffered alike ...." Some even saw it as the "direct interference of the Almighty ... a punishment inflicted upon man for his presumption in attempting to introduce disorder into the economy of Nature by giving undue prominence to the potato ...."
Frontland farmers weathered such "punishment" lightly. Apart from the loss of their potatoes, they enjoyed a relatively good harvest: in Margaree, there was an average crop of oats and an above average crop of hay; at Port Hood, the harvest was "uncommonly good." Cattle, the staple product of frontland farms, were unaffected by the disease, although some died in Margaree after they had been fed diseased potatoes. The fall sales of stock to Newfoundland left frontland farmers well-prepared for winter, and a few, "happily for themselves removed above the consequences" of the blight, bought up sound potatoes to sell at high prices in the spring.

Fishermen and backland farmers, who depended almost completely upon potatoes and would bear the brunt of any speculation in the crop, were in far more difficult straits. They unsuccessfully petitioned the government for an embargo on potato exports, and soon were struggling to find enough to eat. They had few other crops and little money to buy potato seed and provisions. After the failure of the summer herring and fall mackerel fisheries, fishermen at St. Peter's and Red Islands had no income at all. Few had land grants that could be offered to merchants as security for winter credit, and many were loathe to part with their cattle, virtually their last resource.

As fall turned to winter and the January snows fell, backland settlers rapidly ran out of food. In Broad Cove, the "poorer class" were reported to be in "a deplorable condition," while on the south side of St. Patrick's
Channel, settlers expected to be starving by summer. In response to petitions for aid, the government made money available for relief. Largely drawn from each county's annual road grant, the money was placed in the hands of specially appointed commissioners, usually local clergy and magistrates, who purchased rye flour and cornmeal for distribution to needy settlers. The recipients were expected to repay the government by working on the roads during the summer. That year, Inverness County drew £500, the largest provincial share; Cape Breton County, £486; and Richmond County, £233. Relief saved many from starvation, and although it provided only a meagre subsistence, many settlers and government officials were optimistic that the blight was over and that further relief would not be needed.

Such was not to be. Later that year, brown smudges reappeared on the potato plants and within days entire fields were destroyed. In Broad Cove, the crop was a total failure; in Margaree, the potatoes rotted in the ground, not even yielding the seed; in Middle River, the crop was completely lost; while around Sydney, only half a crop was raised. Not all the potatoes were blighted, however, and from Sydney and other ports "considerable quantities" were shipped to Halifax. Other crops were also good. In Cape Breton County, there was an average crop of hay, an above average crop of oats, and a very large crop of wheat. In Middle River, the "crops of grain [were] as good as usual." Frontland farmers again avoided the full brunt of
the disease which fell, as before, on backland farmers.

By the end of the year, many backland settlers had run out of food. In late January 1847, 110 families at the front and rear of St. Patrick's Channel required aid. In early February, 28 families - "all new settlers on woodland farms" - along the new road from Little Narrows to Lake Ainslie complained that they had missed the previous season's allocation of provisions and were now in a "deplorable state." Later that month, settlers around Loch Lomond expected to be destitute by spring, and had no seed potatoes or grain of any kind to put in the ground.

The situation of backland settlers would grow worse yet. Spring was late in arriving: at L'Ardoise, Arthur Brymer, MPP for Richmond County, reported on 8 April that "The winter has been so severe that the oldest inhabitants does not recollect even to have seen the winter so severe and long. There is still three feet of snow on the ground ...." By the first week of May, two feet of snow still remained on the uplands. Cattle, usually half-starved by that time of year, could not be put out to forage and were only being kept alive by feeding on the last seed potatoes; many were to die before summer. At Whycocomagh, River Denys, and Malagawatch, "great numbers of the beasts" starved to death; while at the south end of Lake Ainslie, "a considerable number of sheep and cattle" were also lost.

By the second week of May, some 500 cattle had died at Whycocomagh, Lake Ainslie, and Skye Glen, wiping out the capital of many farmers.
Without cattle as security, farmers could not obtain credit from merchants for winter supplies and consequently, faced starvation. At L’Ardoise, some 200 families were destitute of food and seed potatoes, while another 200 had seed but nothing to eat. At Whycocomagh, River Denys, and Malagawatch, Justices of the Peace, freeholders, and other inhabitants met in late April to petition the government for relief "to avert the calamity of a threatened famine ...."

Some 300 families required seed and 100 were "literally suffering in a state of gradual starvation." Around Lake Ainslie, a survey carried out in early May by merchants, magistrates, and other inhabitants found 300 families completely destitute. Relief was needed immediately "to avert the progress of actual starvation, of which ... one death, at least, has already been the effect ...."

At Arichat, the magistrates, headed by leading fish merchant John Janvrin, unanimously resolved to spend the monies allocated by the government for road and bridge repair on provisions and seed. "Altho this will give assistance, it will only be scantily" explained Janvrin to the Provincial Secretary:

the distress is very great and the calls are most urgent, many families are in a state of starvation, their accounts of their sufferings are indescribable, daily the back land settlers arrive here in numbers of 20 and more, demanding assistance ... you may suppose the distress must be great, when these poor individuals travel from their homes the distance of 40 to 50 miles to obtain 1/4 or 1/2 barrel flour.

In the second week of May, Justices of the Peace in
Inverness County also petitioned for aid. "In many of the new settlements" they declared, "the people are now without provisions or seed their cattle dying and no prospect by which they can be sustained." Among the areas in greatest need were the back settlements of the Strait of Canso, the River Denys road, the country around New Canada and Campbell Mountain, Skye Glen, Whycocomagh, Lake Ainslie, Broad Cove, the head of the Southeast branch of the Mabou River, Cape Mabou, and the back settlement of Margaree River. After receiving reports from the "leading men" of Inverness County, William Young MPP wrote to Lieutenant-Governor Harvey in support of the petitions, "convinced that the picture of absolute destitution both of provisions and seed, though it may appear at distance to be highly coloured, is not overcharged." "The people must not be allowed to starve" he continued, and "seed ought at all hazards to be provided for the ensuing crop."

In Halifax, the government was becoming increasingly concerned. Meeting in March, the Committee for the Relief of Distressed Settlers was in no doubt that destitution and suffering was widespread in the province, but the Committee members, concerned about the cost of relief, felt that they could not recommend aid except "where distress had pervaded the whole settlement, where it prevails to an extent almost universal, and in a manner that renders the ordinary modes of relief ineffective." Such conditions were judged to exist on Cape Breton and the Committee proposed that £600 should be set aside for relief in Cape Breton County, £350...
for Inverness County, and £300 for Richmond County.

On Cape Breton the Commissioners began ordering relief supplies from Halifax. Late in April, the magistrates at Arichat ordered 200 barrels of corn meal from Messrs. Fairbanks and Alison to be "forwarded immediately," and soon requested a further 50 barrels of rye flour. When the supplies arrived in May, "so eager and so urgent [were] the wants of the poor" reported Janvrin, that "we had to use force to prevent their seizing forceably upon it." Such provisions were soon exhausted. At Loch Lomond, most of the oats and Indian meal sent from Arichat in late May were gone by the second week of June and many families were subsisting on the few potatoes set aside for seed. "They cannot now plant these potatoes" the settlers' declared, "without plunging themselves into a state of immediate and hopeless destitution." They were thus reduced to "choosing between the horrors of immediate want, or the appaling and almost certain prospect of starvation during the rigours of a Cape Breton winter." As potatoes could be planted up to the first week of July, they petitioned for Indian meal or other food so that the potatoes could be used for seed. Elsewhere, supplies were also running out. By mid-June, the 200 barrels of flour and meal supplied to the settlers at Whycocomagh, River Denys, Malagawatch, Indian Rear, and Skye Glen were exhausted. Each family had received only a quarter of a barrel (49 lbs.) of meal which was soon consumed. As they looked forward "to the length of time
before us, ere we receive succour for the fruit of our toils," they could see "nothing but death awfully staring us in the face ...." Most cattle and sheep had died and the few surviving livestock were in "such a feeble state, as to yield ... little or no milk, nor is it likely they will do so this season." With only one scanty meal a day, the settlers petitioned the government for aid, stating that they "would be most thankful to receive any thing eatable ...."

In late summer the potato blight struck again. In Margaree, much of the crop was lost; around Sydney, only potatoes sown on new burnt land survived; while in Middle River, the crop was far below average and with the rot spreading through the stored potatoes, there was insufficient to last until the spring. Moreover, other crops had been damaged by heavy rain: wheat had been flattened; oats, grown from seed issued as relief, were very light; while barley had not matured on the poor upland soils.

Hopes were dashed and the government was forced to admit that "poverty, wretchedness and misery have spread through the Island of Cape Breton ... to an alarming degree." In late November, the magistrates and minister of Middle River reported that the failure is more extensive & some of the poor people settled on rear lots have not a bushel of potatoes in their possession at this time .... We called a meeting of those who were really in need last week where forty five heads of families came forward some declaring that they had no potatoes at all - others only a few bushels & the
rest not so much as would keep their families alive till May. These dear Sir are chiefly new settlers who have very little grain & neither cash nor produce nor credit to procure provisions otherwise.38

Their petition for aid joined many others: 300 families were in need at Grand Narrows, upwards of 100 families at Cape North, 49 families at Ingonish, and 48 families at Gabarus and Grand Mira. 39

More government aid was made available. In addition to the sums already granted, Inverness County drew £3,879; Richmond County £1,800; while Cape Breton County made do with the £600 previously provided. Among the supplies ordered, 850 barrels of meal - enough for between 1,700 and 3,400 families - were distributed at St. Ann's, Boulerardie, Grand Narrows, Little Narrows, Baddeck, Middle River, East Bay, and Sydney. Yet the Committee for Distressed Settlers was becoming increasingly concerned about repayment. No returns of labour performed on the roads had been submitted, leading the Committee to deprecate a system of free welfare.

On Cape Breton, Charles Harrington, MPP for Richmond County, held a similar view. In December, he reported to the Provincial Secretary "that the vigilant charity of the Government was last season abused shamefully ... many individuals sought and obtained the public relief, who had abundance at home." During the summer and fall, he had taken it upon himself to warn people that they had to help themselves, rather than rely on the government. He went on to suggest that two competent individuals be appointed to inspect the homes of those claiming relief and make a
return, verifying the number of people, livestock, and provisions. This task was not to be entrusted to the magistrates or John Janvrin, who, he advised, should not again control public funds or provisions. He further proposed that no relief should be distributed before 1st. March or April, a potentially disastrous suggestion. Later that month, Harrington travelled through the greatest part of the County to ascertain the situation. In some areas he "discouraged to [the] upmost any application for provisions ..." and felt that several districts that had received government relief would now get by "altho' by partial suffering." Yet in spite of his zeal in rooting out the "infamous villainy" of applying for unneeded relief, Harrington had to admit that destitution existed, particularly in the lower part of St. Peter's, the backlands of the Bras d'Or Lake, and the Isle Petabe settlement on Isle Madame. These areas required "immediate relief." In the family of one Edward Carter at St. Peter's, a 20 year old daughter had died of the "effects of privation;" while the inhabitants of Isle Petabe, in several instances, "had to kill their dogs and eat them - others have lived for some time past on fresh codfish only - without bread or potatoe - ." Harrington went on to request 300 barrels of Indian meal to be warehoused and distributed to the needy, after "the strictest enquiry" by three Justices of the Peace (Peter DeCarteret, Simon Donovan, and Hector McDonald). The large number of barrels ordered - enough for between 600 and
1,200 families (35% to 70% of the population of the county) - suggests that the extent of destitution was far greater than Harrington was at first prepared to admit.

As the new year arrived and winter intensified, requests for aid continued to descend on Halifax. In late January 1848, the freeholders and other inhabitants of the east side of Lake Ainslie reported that 36 families, most of them on rear lots, were destitute. Many of them had subsisted on government relief since the fall and needed further aid to carry them through till spring. The petitioners pointed out that "had we money we could procure in mills and among thriving farmers what would prevent starvation till summer," and in a letter accompanying the petition, blessed Providence "that the majority of us who reside on the first concession of lots of the east side are not so badly of this year ... as the surrounding people ...." Clearly, the blight affected settlers on backland much more than those on frontland.

By late February the 100 barrels of meal distributed to the destitute settlers around Baddeck had been exhausted and further relief, particularly oat, wheat, and potato seed, was needed. Just over three weeks later, in mid-March, Alexander Farquharson, the minister of Middle River, and James Frazer, the minister of Boularderie, reported that the poor people ... having consumed all the provision they could get, have now almost or altogether slaughtered their cattle & sheep. Starvation stares them in the face ... and, what is to be done in the meantime, to bring them through till the summer breaks in, we cannot tell.45
They went on to plead for more supplies: "The existing destitution imperatively calls for immediate & extraordinary exertions; without which, famine & pestilence will have done their last work." At St. Ann's, the Reverend Norman McLeod, complained to Lieutenant-Governor Harvey that the 50 barrels of Indian Meal sent as relief had been insufficient and that without further supplies many newcomers, as well as more established settlers, would face "dismal suffering and starvation." At Little Baddeck, the secretary of the local agricultural society reported in mid-April, "Times are very dull in this quarter - moreso that I have ever known them before starvation is staring many in the face ...."

Farther north in Margaree, an area that had not previously petitioned for assistance, the local Baptist minister, at the request of some of the inhabitants, reported that many families were without food and that provisions as well as oats, barley, wheat, and potato seed were required. "If there is not something done" he concluded, "death must be the consequence as their neighbours cannot supply them."

In April, the Government moved to avert a disaster. It placed at the disposal of Lieutenant-Governor Harvey a sum of £1,700 to be distributed in £100 amounts to each county for the purchase of seed. It also appropriated any agricultural monies in the Treasury or in the Central Board and placed them with Harvey "to be at once expended in the purchase of seed, to be distributed among distressed settlers." Richmond and Inverness Counties drew £41.13.6 and £50 respectively from the Agricultural Grant for the
purchase of seed.

In August 1848, the blight reappeared for the fourth consecutive year. In Margaree, the potatoes appeared sound at digging time but soon started to rot in the root cellars; at Baddeck, the crop was a complete failure; while at Middle River, the disease attacked the potatoes very early and destroyed much of the crop. Other crops were affected by poor weather and disease: wheat was damaged by rust, oats were slight, hay was about average, and green crops were very indifferent.

The government appears to have been prepared for this failure, for only one petition for aid arrived in Halifax from Cape Breton. In early January 1849, the clergy, magistrates, and other "respectable inhabitants" of St. Andrews (Grand Narrows) requested relief supplies for 77 destitute families. Elsewhere, supplies must have been getting through and certainly, large sums were still being spent on provisions. The government renewed the special grant of £1,700, appropriated the Agricultural Grant, and set aside half the annual school grant for the three Cape Breton counties. During 1849, each county spent £150 drawn from the special and agricultural grants, while Inverness and Cape Breton counties also spent £438.10/- and £250 respectively from the school grant. Such relief tided settlers over until harvest when, for the first time in five years, the potatoes were reported free from disease. Some areas were still affected but generally the crop was sound.
The Central Board of Agriculture concluded in its annual report that "confidence in the potato crop is sufficiently restored to induce a speedy return to extended culture." Although small outbreaks of the disease reoccurred in the early 1850's, the blight was over.

Although contemporaries likened the famine on Cape Breton to that on Ireland, it was much less severe and very few people had died. The government had acted swiftly, despite reservations about large-scale relief funding, and had provided sufficient food to prevent mass starvation and death. In addition, settlers had scratched enough food to keep themselves alive. Along the coasts, families had fished, scoured beaches for shellfish, and probably hunted birds and collected eggs. A few cod combined with vegetables at least provided some nutrition. Inland, settlers were worse off. There was some game and a few freshwater fish, but an occasional rabbit and trout would not keep families going for several years. It was from these areas that most petitions for aid were sent and where relief was most needed.

Undoubtedly the impact of the famine had been selective. Frontland farmers had emerged from the crisis relatively unscathed - no petitions were ever sent from intervale settlements - and no doubt many profited from rising grain prices. But on the backlands the limits of arable agriculture had been starkly exposed, not only by the overwhelming reliance on the potato, but also by the failure to raise other crops such as oats and barley. Despite
grants to build oat mills (more used by frontland than backland farmers) and encouragements to grow more grain, harvests dependent on thin soils and a short growing season would always be precarious. Moreover, the blight had frequently wiped out the work of ten to twenty years of pioneering. Livestock had died, land had been mortgaged, and many settlers struggled to pay off loans from merchants during the years of famine. One contemporary noted that they were often in debt "so deep that there [sic] lands have, or must go to liquidate them." Between 1849 and 1852, William McKeen, principal merchant at Mabou, took over ten farms totalling 1,757 acres for outstanding debts. For families cleared from crofts, it was another crushing blow: as the Commissioners organising relief in Inverness County reflected in June 1847,

The prospects of emigrants [from Scotland] were that at last they should triumph and rest even in a foreign grave, thereafter their successors to reflect of the vast field held before them for industry and cultivation - Alas' they are now nearly discouraged - Times have failed.

After losing their land, there was little alternative but to emigrate once more.
Agricultural Settlement in the Late Nineteenth Century

Although the potato famine marked the beginning of extensive emigration from Cape Breton, the Island's population continued to increase during the late nineteenth century. From 55,000 people in 1851, it rose to 75,000 in 1871, and to 87,000 in 1891. With immigration largely over by the mid-1840's, virtually all of this growth was accounted for by a high rate of natural increase, swelling the proportion of native-born people. By 1871, 87% of the Island's population had been born in Nova Scotia. Although personal ties with Scotland had loosened, most of the population were of Scottish origin; the rest consisted of Acadians, Irish, and families of Loyalist descent (Fig. 6.1). The Scots occupied much of rural Cape Breton, especially in Inverness and Victoria Counties where they comprised more than 75% of the population. They also formed the largest group in the towns and mining villages in eastern Cape Breton County. Most of the Acadians lived in the southwest corner of the Island at Isle Madame, River Bourgoise, and L'Ardoise, as well as on the northwest coast at Chéticamp, Belle Côte, and the north side of Margaree
Figure 6.1 Origin of population of Cape Breton, 1871.

Data from Census of Canada, 1871, Canada Dept. of Agriculture.
Harbour. There were also a few Acadians at Little Bras d'Or and Sydney Mines. The Irish, although outnumbered by Scottish settlers at Main à Dieu, were still dominant at Louisbourg and had carved out niches among the Acadians, particularly at Rocky Bay on Isle Madame, and among the Scots at Margaree Forks, East Lake Ainslie, and Port Hood. Important Irish settlements also existed at Ingonish and Neil's Harbour, peopled by immigrants from Newfoundland. In the mining villages, the Irish formed the second largest ethnic group after the Scots. Loyalist families still lived at Sydney, Baddeck, and some of the outports.

Although the towns and mining villages of eastern Cape Breton grew rapidly during the late nineteenth century, the urban population comprised less than 20% of the total population in 1891. The Island's population continued to be overwhelmingly rural and dependent upon farming; in 1881, some 14,000 people, 55% of the workforce, were farmers and several thousand more people were farm-servants, labourers, and country tradesmen (Table 6.1). Perhaps a third of this rural population was settled on frontland, the rest eked out a living on the backlands.

Since the late 1820's, frontland farmers had faced a growing shortage of agricultural land and by the late nineteenth century, the situation was acute. There was simply no frontland left to accommodate the rising population, and improved land was expensive to buy. In the early 1860's, intervale land sold for £1-3 an acre, and a
Table 6.1  Principal Occupations on Cape Breton, 1881

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>14,536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishermen</td>
<td>3,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miners</td>
<td>1,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmiths</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boot &amp; Shoe makers</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carders &amp; Weavers</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters &amp; Joiners</td>
<td>648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coopers</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressmakers &amp; Milliners</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineers &amp; Machinists</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millers</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship-builders</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone masons</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailors &amp; Clothiers</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy men</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial clerks</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealers &amp; Traders</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government employees</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariners</td>
<td>1,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servants</td>
<td>1,243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopkeepers</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamsters &amp; Drivers</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from *Census of Canada, 1881*, Canada Dept. of Agriculture.
partially cleared farm of 100 acres on reasonably fertile soil cost £50-75. New farmers could be accommodated only by subdividing existing holdings. In Middle River, for example, the number of occupiers increased from 141 to 161 between 1871 and 1891, whereas the area of occupied land expanded by only 205 acres, enough for perhaps two farms. Several farms were subdivided to accommodate the increase in occupiers, causing the average farm size to fall from 208 to 184 acres. In Inverness County, the most important farming area on Cape Breton, the average farm size in most agricultural districts fell between 1871 and 1891 (Table 6.2). By 1891, 56% of holdings in the County were less than 100 acres, and 22% less than 50 acres.

On the backlands there was still room for expansion. The total area of occupied land on Cape Breton increased from perhaps 1,000,000 acres in 1851 to nearly 1,128,000 acres in 1871, and to 1,184,000 acres in 1891. Virtually all of this expansion occurred behind existing settlements (Fig. 6.2). There were also some squatter settlements (not shown on Fig. 6.2) along Mira River, behind East Bay, around Loch Lomond and Lake Uist, and on South Mountain and the Creignish Hills. The Cape Breton Highlands and Gairloch Mountain between Lake Ainslie and Middle River, too high for agricultural settlement, were left largely untouched.

Almost all of this newly-settled land was wretchedly bad. As early as 1861, H.W. Crawley, retired from the Department of Crown Lands for over a decade but with a
Table 6.2 Landholdings in Inverness County, 1871-1891

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Occupiers</th>
<th>Acres Occupied</th>
<th>Acres per Occupier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R. Inhabitants</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>20,508</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>30,021</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Mountain</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>20,318</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>21,179</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Denys</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>31,074</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>32,794</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judique</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>35,918</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>32,946</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Lake Ainslie</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>8,772</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>8,530</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Lake Ainslie</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>16,986</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>15,558</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad Cove</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>26,783</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervale</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>25,153</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad Cove</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>18,488</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>15,880</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaree</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>25,958</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>22,864</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.E. Margaree</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>22,232</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>30,208</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.W. Margaree</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>22,961</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>22,864</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whycocomaghe</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>52,340</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>80,527</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from Census of Canada, 1871 and Census of Canada, 1891, Canada Dept. of Agriculture.
Figure 6.2 Crown land grants on Cape Breton, 1786-1880.

lifetime of experience of settlement on Cape Breton, reckoned that "little or no good land remains unoccupied." Crown surveyors considered available land to be completely "barren." It was thin soiled, stony, and often excessively wet. On high ground, these shortcomings were compounded by a very short growing season. When attempts were made to settle the uplands, they invariably failed. In the late 1880's, an attempt was made to colonize the plateau lying about 1,200 feet above sea-level between St. Ann's and Margaree. Roads were driven into the area from either side and 200 acre lots laid off. "We may here state that the farmers both in Margaree and Baddeck are writing to there [sic] sons who are at present in the United States to return and build up our own country" wrote one official in 1888, "and the prospects are that a number of them will come back and occupy the fertile valleys of the Fielding Colony." But by 1892, the realities of settlement had dissipated such optimism: "many of those who were most enthusiastic a short time ago" explained the Commissioner of Crown Lands, "have grown weary of the effort and removed from the scene." Agricultural settlement on Cape Breton had reached its physical limit.

Land Policy

Many of these new settlers and a considerable number of earlier backland settlers continued to squat on Crown land,
too poor to pay for a grant. In 1857 Crown surveyors reckoned that there were 752 squatter families in Inverness County (approximately a quarter of the population), and "not less than 1500 families" squatting in Cape Breton County (about two-thirds of the population). Most likely similar proportions existed in Richmond and Victoria Counties as well. Three years later, in 1860, the Committee on Crown Property estimated that 500,000 acres — at least half of all occupied land on Cape Breton — was held by squatters. For government and squatter alike, the situation was hardly satisfactory. The government's legal authority was still being flouted on a massive scale, while the squatter, unprotected by law, had no defence against trespassers and could not legally bequeath his improvements to his successors. With little permanent stake on the Island, squatters were easily tempted to emigrate.

With the winning of responsible government in 1848 and full control over the price of land in 1851, the Nova Scotia Legislature began to tackle the squatter problem. In 1850, an Act was passed confirming in fee simple all leases and other titles issued during the colonial regime on Cape Breton. Four years later, another Act was passed settling titles on the Island. Settlers in possession of land, who had applied for grants and paid the fees, were entitled to grants without further charge for a survey. In 1859, the Department of Crown Lands was instructed to survey all the occupied holdings on the Island. Commissioners were appointed in each county to assess claims to Crown land,
settle lot lines, and refer all disputes to the Commissioner of Crown Lands for adjudication by the Governor-in-Council. After holdings had been surveyed, squatters were requested to take out grants at a price of 1/9 per acre payable within a year.

Yet even though many squatters were willing to pay for grants, few could find the full amount within the allotted time. Deposits were sent to Halifax, often accompanied by pathetic notes. "I am a very poor man" wrote one Donald McDonald of Catalone in March 1867,

with a large and helpless family consisting of eight children nearly all girls and am at present unable to make up the price of the Grant. However I send enclosed eight dollars $8.00, and in the spring as soon as some of my cattle are in order to dispose of, I will make up the difference. You will very much oblige me by accepting this sum at present, and I will be punctual to send the balance early next summer as possible, as, if I lose my land, myself and family will be utterly ruined. And I fear I will never again regain my loss.18

Very often the balances were never paid. In 1867, 2,075 people still owed $55,706 on their land. Many had given up the payments entirely, while others, faced with "the utter hopelessness of being able to make the payments," made no effort at all, putting their faith, according to one Cape Breton surveyor, in "the exertions of their political friends to free them from any payments whatever."19

Such pressure soon began to tell. In 1870 an Act was passed reducing the price of Crown land for a limited period. Provided the land was purchased before 31 December 1871, the settler paid only 20 cents an acre, a
considerable reduction on the regular price of 44 cents. After that date, the price rose progressively: 25 cents in 1872, 30 cents in 1873, 35 cents in 1874, and 44 cents thereafter. This tactic appears at first to have worked for a large number of grants were made out between 1870 and 1872, although not as many as the Department of Crown Lands expected (Fig. 6.3). Yet after 1872, as the world-wide trade depression began to take hold on Cape Breton, the number of new grants plummeted and considerable sums remained outstanding. "Of the large sum ... due in the Island of Cape Breton" wrote the Attorney General in 1879,

> it is impossible to make speedy collection; the claims are mostly of long standing - the settlers who owe these arrears are, in very many cases, poor, and in numerous instances the original applicants have died and left widows and children who occupy the land, but of whom it is useless to seek money.23

That year another attempt was made to encourage squatters to take out grants. Provided the money was paid before 1 May 1880, land that had been occupied for more than 15 years could be purchased for 20 cents an acre. This reduction combined with the "energetic efforts which were used to induce the settlers to avail themselves of the provisions of the Act" led to another surge in applications and grants (Fig. 6.3). In 1880, the restriction on length of occupation was reduced to 2 years and the Act was extended for a further year. After the Act lapsed in 1881, new regulations were introduced the following year whereby any settler who had occupied land for more than 5 years, paid
Figure 6.3 Number and acreage of Crown Land Grants on Cape Breton, 1850-1890.

Data from Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia.
only 20 cents an acre. But despite all these special inducements and the lowering of the price of land, the numbers of grants issued each year remained small (Fig. 6.3). As the Commissioner of Crown Lands admitted in 1887, granting of land "is being accomplished very slowly, the people only seeking the patent or grant for their lands when some incident happens which puts their holdings in jeopardy." The prevalence of squatting, even in the early 1890's, was a measure of the continuing poverty of much of rural Cape Breton.

**Agricultural Markets**

Island farmers faced a growing shortage of fertile land, small markets for their produce, and, from the late 1860's, increasing competition from American producers. The domestic market was still limited to the towns, the fishery, and backland settlers. The urban market, concentrated at Arichat, Baddeck, Port Hawkesbury, Port Hood, the Sydneys, and the mining villages, comprised some 17,000 people in 1891, and absorbed quantities of dairy produce, oats, and vegetables. Cattle were also driven overland from places as far away as Broad Cove and Christmas Island for sale in North Sydney or for shipment to the Newfoundland market. Backland settlers still needed hay and oats, while the fishery provided an outlet for butter, lard, and salted beef and pork. In addition, farmers close to the Straits of Canso supplied the American mackerel fleet.
with fresh produce until the decline of the mackerel fishery in the late 1860's.

Beyond the Island, Halifax, St. John's, and St. Pierre consumed the principal exports of cattle, butter, sheep, swine, oats, and barley (Table 6.3). Cape Breton farmers continued to compete in these markets with produce from other parts of Nova Scotia, from Prince Edward Island, and from the Codroy Valley on Newfoundland. After the end of the American Civil War in 1865, they competed with beef from the American West. The competition of Western beef with one of Cape Breton's two principal agricultural exports was particularly disastrous. By 1890 cattle raising was reported "to be paralized by low prices," forcing farmers on the Island, like others in the east, to specialise in dairying. Although distance largely insulated Cape Breton from American butter and milk, local markets for them were limited to the small urban population. All in all, the opening of the West and the increasing regional specialisation of agriculture combined to squeeze the already restricted commercial sector of the Cape Breton agricultural economy. In 1893, one observer reported that "farmers are everywhere complaining that local markets are too small and unimportant for their products; and as a consequence, that industry is languishing all over the island - dragging out a dying existence."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>N. B'swick</th>
<th>Nfld.</th>
<th>St. Pierre</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef &amp;</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>4,044</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1865</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3,040</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td>6,103</td>
<td>50,542</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1865</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>33,827</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>4,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter &amp;</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td>5,916</td>
<td>37,741</td>
<td>2,928</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lard</td>
<td>1865</td>
<td>7,021</td>
<td>33,812</td>
<td>1,460</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1865</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>1,360</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1865</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td></td>
<td>740</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1865</td>
<td></td>
<td>436</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; Turnips</td>
<td>1865</td>
<td>888</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>255</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep &amp;</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td>1,329</td>
<td>4,641</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swine</td>
<td>1865</td>
<td>1,045</td>
<td>6,022</td>
<td>570</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from *Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia.*
The Commercial Frontlands

Small markets continued to hamper the development of commercial agriculture on the Island. The few commercial farmers were still concentrated on the intervales, favourable frontland along the coast, and good land close to the Sydneys, the most important local market. In these areas, at least 35% of the occupied land was cleared by 1891 (Table 6.4). Apart from the densely populated fishing settlements on Isle Madame and the mining villages in eastern Cape Breton County, most clearance had taken place along Mabou intervale, on the frontlands at Boularderie, New Campbellton, and Grand Narrows, and around the towns of Port Hood, Sydney, and North Sydney. At Grand Narrows, more than half of all occupied land had been cleared by 1891. Individual occupiers had at least 37.6 acres of land cleared and some had more than 50 acres (Fig. 6.5). The nominal census of 1871 shows that along the Southwest Margaree River 12 farmers (11% of the total) had more than 100 acres of cleared land and 4 had more than 200 acres (Table 6.5). These were among the best farms on Cape Breton.

Livestock continued to be the Island's main agricultural export, and the major cash product of frontland farms. Most farmers had at least 10 cattle, and some had much larger herds (Fig. 6.6). Along the Southwest Margaree in 1871, farmers with clearances of more than 100 acres had an average of 26 cattle, and a few owned 30-40 animals. Nevertheless, American competition was putting these farmers
under severe pressure. Moreover, many frontland farmers were so far from urban markets that they could not abandon beef for dairy cattle. Along the intervales of Inverness and Victoria Counties, beef cattle formed at least 55% of the herds in 1891 (Table 6.6). Only in eastern Cape Breton was there sufficient market demand for dairy farming; there, many farmers switched to dairying. Faced with such limited markets, few frontland farmers bothered to improve their stock and most cattle were scrub animals. The small number of improved breeds on the Island had been imported by the agricultural societies, usually with a considerable government subsidy. In 1892 there were 143 registered thorough-breds, mostly Short-Horns, Ayrshires, and Jerseys. In addition to cattle, most frontland farmers continued to keep sheep (Fig. 6.6). Flocks averaged 20-30 sheep, although some intervale farmers had as many as 60-70 animals. Like other livestock, few sheep were pure-bred, but improved strains, such as New Leicesters, Cotswolds, Shropshires, and South Downs, were found on some farms.

Butter, the Island's other main agricultural export, was also in demand in eastern Cape Breton. It was a particularly important product of farms on intervale and frontland around Sydney (Fig. 6.7) and in these areas, farmers produced on average at least 500 lbs. These quantities were still small; by 1890 no one on the Island had invested in a creamery. As a result, the quality of the butter was difficult to control, much was greasy and
hardly fit for consumption.

Most cleared land was in rough pasture and hay meadow (Table 6.7). At Broad Cove, Northeast and Southwest Margaree, River Inhabitants, and Middle River at least 80% of all improved land was in pasture or grass in 1891. The remainder of the land was in oats, barley, spring wheat, potatoes, turnips, and vegetables, grown mostly for farm consumption. Extensive farming techniques were still common, although more care was taken over the grasslands. Timothy and Clover were sown, and the grass "top-dressed" with lime, swamp muck, and stable manure.

Apart from the drift to dairying, the greatest change on frontland farms during the late nineteenth century was mechanisation. Many commercial farmers, either individually or in conjunction with their agricultural society, invested in horse-drawn machinery to improve productivity. By 1871, there were 29 reapers and mowers, 123 horse-rakes, 56 threshing mills, and 528 fanning mills on the Island. The saving in labour was considerable. A horse-drawn mower, for example, could cut an acre of grass in four hours, whereas a man took twenty-one hours. As implements purchased by an agricultural society were passed from one member to another, a horse-rake, mower, or threshing machine could be used by as many as 50 farmers in a season. Probably all the commercial farmers on the Island had access to improved machines by the last quarter of the century. Fewer backland farmers helped with the harvest on frontland farms, and the
Table 6.4  Improved land on Cape Breton, 1891

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County District</th>
<th>Improved Land as a % of Occupied Land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaister Cove</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Inhabitants</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Mountain</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Denys</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judique</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Hood</td>
<td>48.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mabou</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Lake Ainslie</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad Cove Intervale</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad Cove District</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaree</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chéticamp</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast Margaree</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young's Bridge</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Lake Ainslie</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whycocomag</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Narrows</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Narrows</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle River</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baddeck</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boularderie</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Campbellton</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Englishtown &amp; N. River</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Gut</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shore</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingonish</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape North</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay St. Lawrence</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 6.4 continued:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County District</th>
<th>Improved Land as a % of Occupied Land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Breton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boularderie</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Sydney</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball's Creek</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boisdale</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Narrows</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Bay</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Forks</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgeport, Lingan &amp; Glace Bay</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cow Bay</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mira</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main à Dieu</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisbourg</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabarus</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loch Lomond</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framboise</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loch Lomond</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Islands</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand River</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L'Ardoise</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Peter's</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black River</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Inhabitants</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Bourgoise</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D'Escousse &amp; Petit de Grat</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arichat</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from Census of Canada, 1891 Canada Dept. of Agriculture.
Table 6.5  Distribution of improved land and average holdings of livestock in Southwest Margaree and Red Islands, 1871

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improved Acreage</th>
<th>Southwest Margaree</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>Milch Cows</td>
<td>Horned Cattle</td>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>Swine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-25 acs.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-50</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-100</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101+</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>9.25</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 0-25             | 71                 | 1.0      | 3.1      | 2.2       | 8.5       | 0.8      |
| 26-50            | 20                 | 1.3      | 4.3      | 3.1       | 11.6      | 1.8      |

Data from Census of Canada, 1871 Canada Dept. of Agriculture.
Table 6.6  Numbers of livestock in selected districts, 1891

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Number of Milch Cows</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Number of Horned Cattle</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broad Cove</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.E. Margaree</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>1,142</td>
<td>56.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.W. Margaree</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>1,101</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Inhabitants</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>1,044</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle River</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>1,130</td>
<td>60.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boularderie (Victoria Co.)</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boularderie (Cape Breton Co.)</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgeport</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cow Bay</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Sydney</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Town</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Forks</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Mines</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from Census of Canada, 1891 Canada Dept. of Agriculture.
### Table 6.7 Arable, pasture, and hay land in selected districts, 1891

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Pasture Acreage</th>
<th>Pasture %</th>
<th>Arable Acreage</th>
<th>Arable %</th>
<th>Hay Acreage</th>
<th>Hay %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broad Cove</td>
<td>2,635</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3,064</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1,920</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.E. Margaree</td>
<td>5,067</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4,611</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2,965</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.W. Margaree</td>
<td>2,377</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3,145</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1,811</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Inhabitants</td>
<td>2,767</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3,773</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2,513</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle River</td>
<td>4,539</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4,165</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3,078</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boularderie (V.C.)</td>
<td>3,202</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6,031</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1,454</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boularderie (C.B.C.)</td>
<td>4,410</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>2,851</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1,272</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from Census of Canada 1891, Canada Dept. of Agriculture.
Figure 6.4 Census districts on Cape Breton, 1891.
Figure 6.5 Improved land on Cape Breton, 1891.

Data from Census of Canada 1891, Canada Dept. of Agriculture.
Figure 6.6 Distribution of livestock on Cape Breton, 1891.

Data from the Census of Canada 1891, Canada Dept. of Agriculture.
Figure 6.7 Distribution of butter production on Cape Breton, 1891.

Data from Census of Canada 1891, Canada Dept. of Agriculture.
wages frontland farmers saved were used to pay off the cost of the machine. An increasingly efficient harvest also allowed the commercial farmer to put much more land under grass.

With the forest pushed well back and post and rail fences separating fields and farms, the frontlands had taken on a settled appearance by the late nineteenth century. As the population grew and frontland farms were subdivided, the density of settlement increased. Although sub-division was never as extreme as in the long-settled seigneuries along the lower St. Lawrence, houses became more numerous along road and river frontages and the distance between neighbours lessened (Fig. 6.8). Most frontland farmers now lived in modest but comfortable farmhouses. The 'Maritime vernacular house,' built in the first half of the century, was widespread and still being built, often with dormer windows inserted into the roof. The 'temple' house, introduced into Nova Scotia from the United States in the late 1830's, was also becoming common. A rectangular, two-storey structure, its gable-end or 'temple-front' usually faced the road. On the groundfloor was a hall, parlour, dining-room, and kitchen, while on the first floor were bedrooms. Like other houses on the Island, it was of balloon-frame construction covered with either shingles or clapboard. Few houses displayed Gothic trim or gingerbread, but some farmers in the 1870's and 1880's did replace hip and gable roofs with the Second Empire 'mansard.'
Figure 6.8 Hypothetical pattern of frontland and backland settlement on Cape Breton.
Although few frontland farmers were making much money, the combination of a good farm and access to modest markets still provided a living for a family in the late nineteenth century. Take a farmer with 50 cleared acres (three-quarters of them in pasture and grass), 6 milch cows, 7 horned cattle, and about 23 sheep. If 2 beef cattle, 1 cow, 6 sheep, and 50 lbs. of butter were sold off the farm each year in the early 1880's, the farmer's income would be about $62.50. Sales of crops, vegetables, milk, and timber would bring perhaps a further $10-20, making a total of $70-80. Although such a farm produced at least 100 bushels of oats, wheat was rarely grown and flour had to be purchased, usually the major outlay of most families. Assuming a family size of six (two parents and four children), the farmer would need about six barrels of flour per year, costing approximately $50. After that expenditure, some $20-30 would be left to buy other essential foodstuffs, manufactured items, seed, and stock. Such farmers rarely had enough income to buy land for their children.

The few more prosperous commercial farmers lived either on good intervale land or close to local markets. Typical of those who benefitted from local markets was John Belcher Moore (1823-1897), a third-generation farmer who lived two miles southwest of North Sydney at Jacksonville overlooking the North West Arm of Sydney Harbour. When Moore took over the farm in 1853, the property had been in the family's possession for 60 years. Moore's grandfather, Adam, had
come to the predominantly Loyalist farming community after emigrating from Aberdeenshire in the early 1790's. At that time, settlement around Sydney Harbour was no more than a decade old and with fewer than 800 people in the area, good, accessible land was still available. In 1794, Adam Moore was granted an 80 acre lot that faced southeast and ran back from the foreshore to Pottle's Lake, about 100 feet above sea-level. Its soil was a moderately stony, well drained sandy-loam till. With the colony's capital across the Harbour, Sydney Mines five miles along the coast, and neighbouring North Sydney destined to grow, the Island's principal markets were easily accessible. Combined with these locational and physical advantages was careful family management: when John Belcher inherited after his father's death, the lot, house, barn, and outbuildings were valued at £300, three times the Island average. In addition, he received 50 acres of a 200 acre woodlot at George's River, three miles away, and purchased the remainder from his four sisters. That lot was valued at £50. Personal property included livestock worth £64.14/-, house-hold furniture worth £40, farming implements worth £15, and blacksmith's tools also worth £15. By this inheritance, Moore, then 30, acquired a relatively secure and independent living; it was a patrimony that he improved considerably.

By 1871, Moore had added a further 70 acres to the home farm. At that date, 50 acres were improved: 32 acres of pasture and 12 acres of hay land supported 7 milch cows, 5 neat cattle, 4 sheep, 2 horses, and a pig. The census also
records that 2 cattle, 12 sheep, and 2 pigs had been slaughtered or sold for export. The rest of the improved land consisted of 1.5 acres in spring wheat, another 1.5 acres in potatoes, and the remaining 3 acres divided among barley, oats, and vegetables. Although the farm had a small arable component, the commercial orientation was clearly towards livestock. In 1871, the farm produced 600 lbs. of butter and no doubt much of it, along with milk and cheese, was sold in nearby North Sydney. Moore’s cattle were probably sent for sale in Newfoundland. Small quantities of wheat, oats, oatmeal, barley, barleyflour, turnips, potatoes, hay, straw, veal, and hides, were also sold to numerous local farmers and tradesmen, such as John and William Moore, merchants and relatives, who lived in North Sydney.

After buying the everyday necessities, Moore had enough income to finance mortgages and purchase land. Ten years after taking over the farm, Moore had lent £380 to four mortgagees to be repaid with due interest within three to nine years; and between 1862 and 1890, he lent a further $1,740 to five mortgagees. The interest payments provided a steady and secure income, but it was his land transactions that produced the greater profit. In 1866, for example, he paid one John Gibson $716 for land beside the road from North Sydney to Sydney Mines and sold it, nine years later, to Vooght Brothers, the North Sydney merchants, for $2,775. A tax assessment for 1862 records Moore’s total taxable
wealth at $2,064: double the average for North Sydney's number 1 assessment district and 5th highest of 63 taxpayers. Thirty-five years later, his real estate had increased in value from $1,400 to $2,550 and his personal property from $664 to $2,284. When he died, Moore owned the home farm, neighbouring land called "The Point," and two water lots in North Sydney. In monetary terms, he had more than doubled his patrimony. Clearly, John Belcher Moore was a man of consequence - "a man of standing" - in the local community.

By the late nineteenth century, many frontland communities were a thick weave of kith and kin. The settlement of related families from Scotland, the passing of the first, second, and even the third generations, and the lack of further immigration, had produced close ties between frontland families. Along the Southwest Margaree in 1871, three of the Island's four main ethnic groups were present, and within each group many families were related (Table 6.8). Of the 97 Scottish families, 19 were Gillises, and 53 families were either Gillises, McLellans, McDonalds, McDougalls, or McDonells. More than a quarter of the Irish families were Coadys, and a third of the Acadians were Whites. Of 12 Acadian surnames, 5 accounted for 82% of the Acadian population. Endogamous marriages helped preserve ethnic and religious identities. The Scottish and Acadian settlements were usually large enough to provide a pool of marriage partners which helped maintain each group's separate identity. In two or three settlements this was
also true for the Irish, but in general, the Irish and Loyalist populations were so small and dispersed that intermarriage and assimilation with the larger ethnic groups became inevitable. Such unions usually followed religious lines: Catholic Irish married Catholic Scots or Acadians; Protestant Loyalists married Protestant Scots. The denominational divide between Catholic and Presbyterian Scots was also respected. As a result, many communities were either completely Catholic or Protestant (Fig. 6.9).

These farming communities were intensely local, even in the last decades of the century. The Intercolonial railway did not reach the Island until the early 1890's, and it was a good day's journey by ferry and stage coach from Port Hawkesbury to Halifax. Most Cape Bretoners did not make such a journey from one year to the next. For most farmers the extent of their travels were occasional visits to the local market town - Arichat, Port Hood, Baddeck, the Sydneys - to sell produce and buy supplies. Underemployed farmers' sons travelled more, often working a season in the coal mines in eastern Cape Breton or farther afield, in the "Boston States." For families who had sons and daughters working away from home, horizons could be both very near and very far. "Where does that road go to ...?" asked an American traveller of a Cape Breton girl in 1885. "It goes to the Strait of Canso, sir, and on to Montana - that's where my brother John is workin' on a ranch - and I don't know where else it goes", she replied.
### Table 6.8 Surnames in Southwest Margaree and Red Islands, 1871

**Southwest Margaree**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Other</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of families with 1 of 5 most common names</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>65</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of families with unique name</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35</td>
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**Red Islands**

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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
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<td>100</td>
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</table>

Data from *Census of Canada 1871* Canada Dept. of Agriculture.
Figure 6.9 Religious denomination of population of Cape Breton, 1871.

Data from Census of Canada 1871, Canada Dept. of Agriculture.
Detached from the wider world, the lives of most inhabitants revolved around the everyday realities of family and farm, business with the local storekeeper, and the traditional institutions of church and agricultural society. Most frontland families had access to a church by the late nineteenth century, and religion played a large part in most lives. Churches seating at least a thousand were common, and camp revivals still occurred. In 1874, one visitor to the Island observed that two to three thousand Presbyterians attended an open-air service at Baddeck to celebrate the annual Holy Communion. Agricultural societies struggled on, scarcely attracting more members than they had in 1850. In 1890 there were 13 societies with 548 members, nearly all found in frontland settlements: Sydney, Sydney Mines, Margaree Forks, Strathlorne, Mabou and Port Hood, Middle River, Baddeck, and Arichat. In isolated, close-knit communities, gaelic was still widely used, often with an accent that betrayed a family's origin on a particular island or strath in Western Scotland. Oral tradition, folk-medicine, and handicrafts from the Highlands were also preserved. Only when young sons and daughters, displaced from the land, emigrated to the mining villages, and more importantly, the "Boston States," was the gaelic language and folk-culture threatened.

As the rural population increased, demand grew for services. Merchants became more numerous, most of them running small businesses. They continued to collect a
variety of produce and retail a range of goods and provisions. Barter was the chief means of exchange, and credit was still common. Most merchants had less than $2,000 invested in their businesses, but a few, who owned mills or outfitted fishermen, had larger operations, worth about $5,000. They were part of the small, rural elite on Cape Breton.

Rural industry also expanded (Table 6.9). Some 500 hands were employed in rural industry in 1851; 1,136 in 1871; and 2,385 in 1891. The greatest growth was in small trades: blacksmithing, carpentry and joinery, coopering, dress making, tailoring, and weaving. In part this reflected the growing demand for services from a larger population, and also an increasing supply of people, unable to acquire land, who had taken up small trades. Most of these tradesmen required little capital to set up, and often operated their businesses from a roadside house or store. There was also some growth in the larger industries. More saw mills were built to supply the growing demand for sawn lumber, particularly from the expanding towns and coal mines, and additional lime kilns were constructed to provide lime for frontland farmers. But other industries contracted. Flour milling declined considerably, particularly between 1871 and 1891, as American and Canadian flour penetrated the local market.

Although the number and range of rural industries had increased with the rise in population, rural manufacturing
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Hands Employed</th>
<th>Value of Articles Produced</th>
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<td>Blacksmithing</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>221</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>276</td>
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<td>124</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>413</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Data from Census of Canada 1871 and 1891 Canada Dept. of Agriculture.
and processing remained essentially small-scale and pre-industrial. Apart from the occasional shipment of sawn lumber, manufactured items were not exported; production served limited local markets. Water provided the motive-power, capital investment was restricted, and most, if not all, of these enterprises were family-owned. Fathers and sons worked together in mills, tanneries, and coopering sheds; wives and daughters helped with weaving, and provided much of the labour for dressmaking and millinery.

With the growth of rural trades and industry, service centres increased in size and number during the late nineteenth century. West Bay in Inverness county was typical of many frontland villages (Fig. 6.10). Although small, it provided several services: a saw mill, two blacksmith's shops, several stores, a livery stable, a church, and a school. Slightly larger settlements such as Baddeck, Port Hawkesbury, and Port Hood - the main outlets of frontland trade - also had shipbuilding and some inshore fishing. Rarely laid out with formal plans, most of these settlements spread along farm roads, haphazard collections of stores, houses, and barns. Many dwellings were two-storey, frame structures, often with a gable-roof and a hint of the classical, New England-style. One or two of the larger stores had mansard roofs. Not more than two or three hundred people lived in these villages, most of them labourers, tradesmen, and merchants, with two or three clergy and a doctor. The population was more mixed than in
Figure 6.10 West Bay, Inverness County, 1864.

After A.F. Church Topographical township map of Inverness County Nova Scotia.
the farm communities. Scots predominated, but there were also some people of Loyalist and Irish descent (Fig. 6.1). The social and economic range was not marked. No one employed more than four or five hands, and few people had much wealth. Apart from Baddeck, which was beginning to attract summer tourists from the United States, there was little prospect of further development in these settlements unless the agricultural economy improved.

The Subsistent Backlands

Poor land and weak markets ensured that backland farms remained overwhelmingly subsistent. Farmers cleared enough land to supply their needs and then stopped. As a result, clearances were generally small (Fig. 6.5). Along the Southwest Margaree, an area of valley bottom and hillside, some 32% of farmers in 1871 had 26-50 acres of land improved, and 33% had fewer than 25 acres improved. In Red Islands, a predominantly backland area, no farmer had more than 50 acres of cleared land, and 78% had fewer than 25 acres (Table 6.5). Such tiny backland clearings were usually hemmed in by forest; in 1891 almost 75% of occupied land on North Mountain was still in forest, and 81% around Loch Lomond (Table 6.3).

Most backland farms continued to be a subsistence mix of pastoral and arable agriculture. The larger farms had 6-10 cattle, at least 10 sheep, a horse, 2-3 pigs, and fowl;
smaller farms had fewer than 6 cattle, 6-10 sheep, a horse, pig, and fowl (Table 6.5). Livestock were mainly scrub animals, raised for domestic use and consumption. Most of the improved land was in hay and rough pasture, the rest in oats, potatoes, and vegetables. On high farms, oats would not ripen. Little or no attention was paid to rotations or manuring, and the thin, acidic soils were quickly exhausted. Apart from a plough, horse-drawn implements were rare and most mowing, reaping, threshing, and winnowing was done by hand. Labour was supplied by the farmer and his family and, at busy times of the year, by neighbours in return for help on their farms.

With the surveying of lots after 1859, the pattern of backland settlement becomes clearer (Fig. 6.8). Crown surveyors realised that the long-lots laid out on frontland were unsuitable to the broken and rugged terrain of backland, and that the imposition of regular, uniform lots on the irregular holdings of the squatters would lead to endless dispute. Instead, they followed the boundaries claimed by the squatters, and where disputes arose with neighbouring landowners referred the case to the county commissioner. Some holdings were never completely surveyed, leaving a legacy of claim and counter-claim to the present day. The end result of surveying the backlands was a patchwork cadastral pattern that contrasts markedly with the uniformity of the frontland lots.

There is little information about backland houses in the late nineteenth century. Simple log structures still
survived, but probably were being replaced by small, one-
storey frame houses covered with clapboard or shingles.
On the ground floor of such a house was a kitchen-parlour
and two bedrooms, while under the gable-roof the attic was
used for storage and another bedroom. The old log house was
often made over to a barn.

The larger backland farms produced a small, annual
surplus: a cow, a couple of sheep, perhaps some oats and
potatoes—in all worth only about $20, not enough to buy a
year's supply of flour. Oatmeal must have been consumed
more than flour, and there can have been little money for
other purchases. Even these more substantial of backland
farmers had to find extra employment in order to take out a
land grant. Smaller farms produced a meagre subsistence,
little else. Milk, cheese, butter, some red meat, oatmeal,
and potatoes made up most of the family's diet. To purchase
other essential foodstuffs, as well as manufactured goods,
off-the-farm employment was essential. The rural poor
provided a growing pool of cheap labour for the Island's
staple industries.

Typical of the better-off backland farmers was Donald
Murray, who emigrated from Scotland to Cape Breton, possibly
in the late 1840's, and settled at Oban near South Mountain,
Richmond County after purchasing 100 acres from a
squatter. Murray's lot was situated between 100 and 200
feet above sea-level on gently rolling land straddling a
stream. Its soil, composed from glacial till, was poorly
drained and sufficiently stony to make ploughing difficult. The land was best suited to rough pasture. Yet by 1849, Murray had "planted both oats and potatoes and fenced in about four acres ...." Two decades later, 31 acres had been improved: 20 were in pasture and grass, 8 in oats, 2 in potatoes, and perhaps 1 in vegetables. Although no neat cattle were recorded in the 1871 census, 5 milch cows produced 300 lbs. of butter, and there were also 9 sheep, a pig, and 2 horses. Murray's was a mixed, semi-subsistential family farm, producing small surpluses of butter, oats, potatoes, sheep, and fowl which were sold, probably, at St. Peter's five miles distant. With insufficient income to purchase his land, Murray had to wait until 1873 when his son Duncan went "to Halifax at the Water Works for the express purpose of obtaining money to get out a Grant."

James Ross, "newly come from the old country" in the early 1860's and settled on Skye Mountain near Whycocomagh, was considerably poorer. His lot had fallen in such "an uncomfortable position" high on the mountain, that it was almost impossible to farm. "In all low places," he explained to the Department of Crown Lands, "the seed will be in the ground before we can hardly travel here with dry shod with snow melting & winter's frost and late sowing will always be late ripening ...." Although Ross had two sons whom he "kept about ... hoping that times would turn better," they "saw that there was no prospect of getting better ... [and] went away to work to a coal mine to Sidney." Apparently they would only return if Ross settled
near the shore at Whycocomagh. Ross managed to find a lakeside lot of some 8-10 acres, but as he explained to the local surveyor, even for that amount of land "one thing sure, I could not pay it at once." Like other backland farmers, he depended on other sources of income, and hoped that his sons "would make more eager in laying by their money" if he was granted the land.

In the early part of the century, extra employment was available on frontland farms, planting crops and bringing in the harvest, but with the introduction of horse-drawn mowers and rakes in the 1860's and 1870's, such work began to disappear. Mechanisation of frontland agriculture knocked away one of the main buttresses of backland farming. Some backland farmers found work as carpenters and coopers and a few worked in local grist and saw mills. Most men had to look farther afield, which inevitably meant separation from wife and family, and the costs of accommodation at the place of work.

Coal mines, the fishery, and coasting trade provided the main alternative employment on Cape Breton, creating what the *North Sydney Herald* called "a hybrid race - half farmer, half miner or half fishermen." Such employment fluctuated with the external demand for the Island's staple products. The coal trade expanded in the early 1860's, in 1871-72, and again in the 1880's, drawing men from the country to the mines. "The force of men employed now is larger than it was" reported a miner at the International
Colliery in 1882, "some folks say, that the whole of the Little Narrows' has removed to Bridgeport [Mine]." The following year, at Reserve Mines: "The pit is crowded with men, all Mira, not to speak of the Grand Narrows, have left the peaceful shores of the 'Mira' and taken up their dwelling place (temporary) here ...." Employed in unskilled, labouring jobs, these summer workers were paid 90 cents a day or about $100 for five months work. A large portion of that money was spent on room and board, but $20-30 allowed a family to survive on a subsistence farm.

The fishery was probably a less important source of employment. Without the security of a land grant, many backland farmers must have found it difficult to obtain fishing gear and a boat on credit, and could only be employed as hands on a fishing or trading vessel. But the Island's vessel fishery was small, and the once large American mackerel fishery in the Gulf was declining by the late 1860's. The Island's fishing and trading vessels were more likely to transport men to Halifax or Boston than to employ them.

Beyond Cape Breton, there was work available in shipbuilding, retailing, factories, and domestic service in Halifax and more especially, Boston. In 1857, the surveyor for Cape Breton County noted that "All the tradesmen and young men of the county go to the States for employment in the summer as there is no work for them at home." A few years later, a traveller to the Island reckoned that "It [was] difficult to find a house in Cape Breton from which
one to half a dozen of its members are not in New England." Some sent back money to help families subsist and to pay debts. "I am sending you 3 dollars against the count" explained one Betsey McKinnon of 27, Liberty Street, Gloucester, Massachusetts to merchant Malcolm McDougall, and "let me know how is the Account write to me soon."

By the late nineteenth century, close ties had developed among many backland families and also between frontland and backland communities as sons and daughters of frontland farmers moved onto backland. In Red Islands in 1871, 27 of the 104 Scottish families were MacDonalds, and 82 families were either MacDonalds, McNabs, Johnstons, Campbells, or McMullins (Table 6.8). The three Irish families were all Cashes. Although often closely related, farmers on backland were considerably more isolated than those on frontland. While surveying the farms around Catalone Lake in eastern Cape Breton County, a Crown surveyor reported in 1863 that the farmers suffered "sad inconveniences" from the want of roads. The farms, settled since the late 1820's, were about a quarter of a mile apart and connected by a bridle path so narrow that it was impassable for carts. Many backland farmers were several miles from a mill or store, and few communities could support a church. No doubt many backland farmers went to church only at Christmas. James Ross on Skye Mountain complained that he had "no connection with any society of whatever character or denomination ...." Apart from close
family connections, backland farmers had virtually no institutional support as they faced the predicament of farming on Cape Breton.

Clearly, by the late nineteenth century Cape Breton’s population had overrun its landed resources. The frontlands had long been settled and the backlands, where land was available, barely admitted arable farming. The dichotomy between front and backland farmers, established in the early nineteenth century, remained marked. A few frontland farmers benefitted from expanding markets, particularly in eastern Cape Breton, and many more continued to subsist. On the backlands, settlers struggled to survive. Even so, the extreme social and economic stratification of Western Scotland was not recreated on the Island. Market demand was never sufficient to encourage investment in large, specialised farms, and the availability of work in the staple industries and New England ensured that the landless always had an alternative to tenant farming. Emigration rather than tenancy was the fate of second and third generation settlers on Cape Breton Island.
The Staple Industries in the Late Nineteenth Century

As the agricultural crisis unfolded on Cape Breton during the late nineteenth century, the fishery and the coal mines continued to expand. Capital was invested, new technology introduced, and larger workforces recruited. Fishing settlements spread around much of the Island's coast, while mining villages increasingly dominated eastern Cape Breton County. Although some of the growing mass of agricultural poor looked for work in the fishery, the collieries offered more employment. However unremunerative, many farmers gave up an independent living on the land during the late nineteenth century for wage-labour in the mines.

The Fishery

The cod fishery remained the backbone of the Cape Breton fishery, yielding about half the catch (by value). Cod were still caught and cured principally by boat fishermen operating in inshore waters, and exported by large Jersey companies and Halifax shippers to markets around the North Atlantic. The subsidiary fisheries were more
changeable. Although pickled herring was still important, the export of pickled mackerel declined during the last quarter of the century, and the salmon fishery remained relatively minor. The lobster fishery developed at this time, and by the early 1890's lobster was the second export of the Cape Breton fishery.

Much of the investment in the cod fishery continued to be provided by Channel Island merchants. Philip Robin & Co. and DeCarteret & LeVesconte, probably the only Jersey firms left on Cape Breton, were the largest companies involved in the island's fishery. In the early 1870's, the Robin empire was capitalised at well over $1,000,000. Both companies remained based on Jersey, sending out supplies, capital, and a few shoremen - a small fraction of the number in the first half of the century - to Cape Breton each season. About 20 shoremen - agents, clerks, beach-masters, and foremen - were still sent to the Robin establishments at Arichat and Cheticamp. Salt and manufactured goods were also shipped across the Atlantic, but by the late nineteenth century an increasing proportion of supplies came from North American sources: sugar, rice, oat meal, pot barley, ground coffee, round peas, raisins, rolled bacon, hams, beef, and pickle from merchants in Halifax; stoves and deck irons from manufacturers in Yarmouth; pork and lard from Charlottetown; cotton warp and kerosene oil from Saint John; hats and tea from Montreal; tar, pitch, pork, and flour from Boston.

As the cod fishery expanded during the late nineteenth
century, more resident merchants became involved in the industry. One or two such dealers were to be found in each outport, most according to the credit rating agency, Dun, Wiman & Co., with a capitalisation of less than $2,000. They still drew their supplies from Halifax wholesalers, often selling them cheaper than the Jersey companies. At Cheticamp, for example, the local Robin agent reported to his superiors in July 1889 that "Our neighbours sell flour $8.00 and molasses 65c. & 70c. In fact they sell all their goods cheaper than us. This interferes with our trade very much." Most likely, the resident traders were able to undercut the Channel Island firms because they extended relatively little credit; the Jersey companies, outfitting numerous fishermen, had to charge higher to cover their bad debts.

Although data are scarce, the general pattern of exports appears to have changed little since the early nineteenth century. The Jersey companies continued to ship prime merchantable dried fish to markets in Southern Europe and fish of lesser quality to Brazil and the West Indies. In 1865, for example, the Cape Breton fishery exported 4,907 qtls. to Italy, 1,040 qtls. to Spain, and 221 qtls. to Portugal. A further 3,112 qtls. went to Jersey, perhaps for re-export to the Mediterranean. Another 2,474 qtls. were shipped to Brazil. By the 1890's the Brazil market appears to have become more important. Philip Robin's shipments from Chéticamp in 1894 comprised 8,646 qtls. sent to Santos and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, 306 qtls. sent to Jamaica, and
219 qtls. sent to Havana, Cuba. No fish was exported to Southern Europe that year. Smaller merchants still shipped virtually all their fish to Halifax for re-export.

Apart from the depressed years of the late 1870's, production in the cod fishery rose steadily from 65,500 qtls. in 1851 to more than 180,000 qtls. in the late 1880's (Fig 7.1). Much of this fish came from the traditional inshore grounds off Isle Madame, Chéticamp, Main à Dieu, Louisbourg, and Gabarus (Fig. 7.2); in 1891, they accounted for 54% of total dried fish production. A considerable part of the remaining fish came from fishing grounds along the northeast coast, particularly at Ingonish, Neil's Harbour, and Cape North; in 1891, they contributed a further 21% to the total. By then, the inshore fishery had expanded around the Island as far as it could.

Most fishermen fished from shallops and other small boats; in 1891, 92% of fishermen used boats (Table 7.1). In addition to the boat fishery, a ship fishery continued on a small scale. According to the Fish Bounty records of 1891, ship owners collected $3,915 of the $30,121 paid to Cape Breton fishermen. That year there were 95 fishing ships (totalling 2,783 tons) engaged in the cod fishery, many of them in inshore waters. Only a few ships fished the banks, mostly in the Gulf of St. Lawrence around Anticosti, the Magdalen Islands, and off Natashquan on the North shore. In 1877, a Fishery Protection officer noted 12 Cape Breton ships, ranging in size from 19-62 tons and with crews of
Figure 7.1 Three-year moving averages of dried and pickled fish production.

Data from Sessional Papers.
Figure 7.2 Distribution and production of dried and pickled fish on Cape Breton, 1891.

Data from Sessional Papers, No 11A, 1892.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Vessels</th>
<th>Boats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Tonnage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2,122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverness</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Breton</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>2,783</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Data from *Sessional Papers*, No 11A, 1892.
6-10 men, fishing around the Magdalen Islands. The smaller ships caught some 200-300 qtls. each trip, and generally made three voyages during the season. Each of the larger ships caught about 1,000 qtls. during a voyage of four weeks. In the last quarter of the century, William LeVesconte outfitted three of these larger ships for bank fishing.

Much of the technology of the cod fishery remained unchanged. Inshore fishermen still used handlines, headed and gutted their catch on shore, and dried the fish on flakes. Yet in the 1860's handlining was supplemented by the "bultow" or trawl, a French invention that increased productivity enormously. Consisting of a long line with numerous shorter hook-lines or "snoods" attached at regular intervals, the trawl was fixed to the seabed by anchors while buoys held the line in position and marked its location on the surface. Usually the baited lines were set in the water for six to eight hours, sometimes longer if bad weather prevented the fishermen from getting out. Catches were large; the Island's fishery officer, A.C. Bertram, claimed that the trawl was "exceedingly destructive to the codfishery of the coast," but the charge that the trawl led to overfishing was never proved.

Trawls were also used in the ship fishery, and were set from dories, small, flat-bottomed boats, crewed by two men. The dories were 'nested' on the deck until the ship got to the fishing grounds and then launched each day for
fishing. Although the combination of trawls and dories greatly increased production on the banks, dory-fishing was a risky venture and fishermen were easily lost and drowned in a fog or 'blow.'

Until the rise of the lobster industry in the early 1870's, the rest of the Island's fishery was for herring, mackerel, and salmon. Both resident and migratory merchants were involved in the pickled fishery, outfitting fishermen, buying their catch, and shipping it to market. The herring fishery was probably the most important part of the pickled fishery; one observer thought the herring fishery to be second only to the cod fishery on Canada's east coast.

With a market in the Caribbean and growing demand in Quebec and Ontario, herring production rose from 12,000 barrels in 1851 to nearly 50,000 barrels in the early 1880's, falling back to 30-40,000 barrels later in the decade (Fig. 7.1). Herring continued to be caught around much of the Island's coastline, but the largest catches were along the Strait of Canso, a migration route between the Gulf and the Atlantic (Fig. 7.2).

The fortunes of the mackerel fishery were more mixed. In the third quarter of the century, production fell from some 30,000 barrels in 1851 to almost half that ten years later, only to rebound in the early 1870's (Fig. 7.1). After that brief recovery, production gradually declined until only 11,000 barrels were produced in 1890. Most of the pickled mackerel produced during those years was exported to the American market. Between 1862 and 1865,
during Reciprocity, 97% of the pickled mackerel exported directly from Cape Breton went to the United States. Although Reciprocity ended in 1865 and tariffs on Nova Scotian fish were reimposed, free access to the American market was assured by the Treaty of Washington in 1871. Nevertheless, the trade depression of the 1870's and the growing American preference for fresh fish affected sales. By the late 1880's, the mackerel fishery on Cape Breton had lost much of its former importance.

Production in the salmon fishery fluctuated considerably, increasing from 579 barrels in 1851 to 1,171 barrels in 1871, but decreasing to 383 barrels ten years later. By 1891, salmon was being exported in ice and cans, as well as in salt; of the salmon produced that year, some 71,662 lbs. were packed in ice, 9,560 lbs. were canned, and 228 barrels were put up. Most of the fish were caught in the river mouths at Margaree Harbour, Grand River, and Ingonish, and exported to the United States.

Herring, mackerel, and salmon continued to be caught in inshore waters by nets, but offshore the technology of fishing changed radically. In the ship fishery for mackerel, handlining was introduced in the early 1850's. First used by the Americans in the Gulf, the handline technique was similar to that in the cod fishery, and allowed vessels to follow the shoals of mackerel rather than wait for the fish to be trapped in nets. In 1851, the Provincial Government encouraged use of the new method by
paying bounties, but out of 75 vessels entered for bounties, only 6 were from Cape Breton. The offshore mackerel fishery was probably never an important part of the Cape Breton fishery; some ships combined a summer cod fishing voyage with a fall trip for mackerel. Large, expensive seine nets were also used in the mackerel and herring fishery. When a shoal of mackerel or herring was spotted close to the shore, the seine boat was launched and the net let out as the boat encircled the fish. The trapped fish were then pulled out with a "spiller" or small bag-net, and landed on shore. As many as 800 barrels of fish could be taken in a single sweep.

The most dramatic development in the Island's fishery was the rapid growth of the lobster industry in the early 1870's. Before the advent of canning, lobster was virtually worthless and ignored by the fishermen, but with the introduction of canning, lobster could be preserved for export, principally to the United States, the main centre of demand. In the early years of the industry much of the investment came from New England entrepreneurs attracted by an undeveloped resource. In later years, local tinsmiths, ex-employees of the larger American companies, and Island storekeepers invested in the industry, few successfully. The first canneries were opened in Richmond County in 1872, and then in Inverness and Cape Breton Counties in the following year. By 1874, canneries were open in all four counties. In 1891, there were 32 canneries on the Island, 13 of them in Richmond County. Production increased from
144,000 cans in 1872 to a peak of 2,078,906 cans in 1890 (Fig. 7.3). The best lobster grounds — at Port Hood, Judique, Isle Madame, Fourchu, L'Archeveque, Point Michaud, St. Peter's Island, Gabarus, and Ingonish — were readily accessible to most inshore fishermen, and the traps and pots needed to catch the shellfish were easily made. The fishermen sold the lobster to the canners, usually at cash prices. The canneries also gave work during the six-month lobster season to men, women, and children. By 1891, there were some 950 people employed. A single firm could employ as many as 200-250 men and women, and about 15 boys. Working from 1st. May to 1st. October, men could earn $25-40 a month with board and lodging, and women and boys about $12 without lodging. The commercial exploitation of lobster was a massive fillip for the fishing communities, providing much-needed cash for fishermen and their families.

The American fishery also continued to provide employment. In 1878, one Roderick MacDonald, a fisherman at Low Point overlooking the Strait of Canso, estimated that about half of our fishermen from Cape Breton and on the Nova Scotian side of the Strait of Canso find employment in American fishing vessels and if they were not so employed they would have very hard times.28

Merchant William Levesconte of D'Escousse reckoned that 200 men on average left Isle Madame each year for the American fishery. They usually shipped to Boston or Gloucester in April or May and hired "on shares" on a codfishing ship for the season. In a voyage of three months a man could earn
Figure 7.3 Lobster production on Cape Breton, 1872-1891. Data from Sessional Papers.
$120-150. Many of these men returned to their homes on Cape Breton in the fall; an Arichat fisherman noted laconically in his diary on 18 November 1885: "Most of crew back from Boston." Yet each year some stayed in the United States, and a handful never made it back to either a Canadian or an American port. At the end of each fishing season the North Sydney Herald reprinted a list from the Cape Ann Advertiser of Gloucester recording the Cape Bretoners lost from American ships. During 1889, for example, the Island lost the following:

Simon Sampson, of Arichat, one of the crew of the schr. J.J. Clark, fell overboard off Cape Sable. Peter Landry, a native of Arichat, C.B., about 38 years of age, a widower with one child, was washed overboard from schooner J.H. Carey on the Banks, March 9. William Babineau, 38 years old, married, and Samuel Vineau, 25, single, both of Arichat, C.B., fishing from schooner Senator Frye, were capsized from a dory and drowned at Cape North, May 9th.

Until the decline of the American mackerel fishery in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in the late 1860's, American vessels continued to provide a large demand for salt, ice, barrels, bait, provisions, and fresh vegetables from Cape Breton merchants and fishermen. Indeed, several merchants along the Strait of Canso advertised their goods in the Cape Ann Advertiser. With American skippers each spending $700 on average to outfit their ships, it was hardly surprising that "money circulated freely" among the communities along the west coast of Cape Breton and that, to the chagrin of Royal Navy officers on Fishery Protection service, "The sympathies of the inhabitants [were] entirely with the
Many merchants engaged in the fishery continued to be involved in related activities. They participated in the local coasting trade, shipping fish, cattle, and butter to Halifax and St. John's and returning with supplies. A few also built shallops and schooners for the fishery, but the shipbuilding industry was in decline (Fig. 7.4). Thirty ships totalling 3,992 tons were built in 1854, but only seven totalling 165 tons in 1891. During that time, the iron steamship had supplanted the wooden sailing ship, and Cape Breton ships, like others constructed in the Maritimes, were no longer in demand. Merchants who had invested in shipbuilding often switched their capital to the coal industry. For example, Thomas Dickson Archibald, a leading merchant at North Sydney, was heavily involved in shipbuilding and the shipping trades during the 1850's but after investing in the Gowrie coal mine in 1858, he gradually withdrew from the shipping industry. By 1881, shipbuilding at North Sydney, formerly prosecuted "to quite an extent," was "one of the waning industries." The few ships built on the Island during the last years of the century were probably sold locally for the coasting trade.

The expansion of the fishery led to a steady growth in the fishing population. The number of fishermen increased from about 2,600 in 1851 to 8,200 in 1891, and the population dependent on the fishery from about 13,500 to 41,000. Most of these people were concentrated in the...
Figure 7.4 Shipbuilding on Cape Breton, 1854-1891.
Data from *Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia*.
Figure 7.5 Distribution of fishermen on Cape Breton, 1891.
Data from Sessional Papers, No 11A, 1892.
traditional centres of the fishery: Isle Madame, Port Malcolm, River Bourgoise, and L'Ardoise in the southwest corner of the Island; Gabarus, Louisbourg, and Main à Dieu along the south shore; Chéticamp and Port Hood on the northwest coast (Fig. 7.5). The outports along the northeast coast had also expanded, and new fishing stations such as New Haven and White Point had been established. There were also many farmers living along the east and northwest coasts and around the Bras d’Or Lake who fished.

There was a growing shortage of land in the older fishing settlements by the late nineteenth century. Virtually all the land had been granted on Isle Madame, and around River Bourgoise, L'Ardoise, Main à Dieu, and Port Hood. Only rocky backland was available at Gabarus and Louisbourg, and steep hillsides behind Ingonish and Chéticamp. Even the new outports had little room for expansion. Most of these were located on steep, rocky parts of the coast, close to good fishing grounds but not to accessible land.

As a result, the growing population was accommodated on existing land-holdings. Fishermen divided their lots among their sons, thereby increasing the number of small-holdings and the density of population. On Isle Madame, where the number of occupiers increased from 667 in 1871 to 876 in 1891, the percentage of holdings smaller than 10 acres rose from 64.5% to 73%. On Petit de Grat, the eastern peninsula of Isle Madame, 612 people lived on 650 acres. At the newer
settlements of Neil's Harbour and New Haven, 41 of the 47 holdings in 1891 were smaller than 10 acres, and 429 people lived on one-and-a-quarter square miles.

As the population density increased, houses crowded together, often forming a continuous street village, somewhat like those along the lower St. Lawrence (Fig. 7.6). In the larger settlements, such as Arichat, a second street parallel to the first one along the waterfront was laid out to accommodate the increase in population. At Neil's Harbour and New Haven, the houses clustered together, forming nucleated villages (Fig. 7.7). Behind the houses were long, thin strips or gardens, usually enclosed by post and wire fences. Many fishermen also had a shingled barn and chicken coop back of the house. Along the harbour-front were the merchant premises. These were usually large properties, often dominating the surrounding settlement. At D'Escousse, the fishing room owned by William LeVesconte comprised 150 acres in 1871, and contained numerous warehouses, stores, shops, barns, and stables (Fig. 7.6). At Arichat and Chéticamp, Philip Robin & Co. maintained similar establishments. Overshadowing the fishermen's houses, the merchant's house and outbuildings were a constant reminder of his economic power.

Much of the occupied land in the fishing villages was cleared and cultivated. In 1891, 65% of occupied land at Neil's Harbour was improved, and as much as 83% at Petit de Grat on Isle Madame. A considerable portion of this cleared land continued to be in hay or pasture, and the rest
Figure 7.6 D'Escousse, Isle Madame, Richmond County, 1864.

After A.F. Church Topographical township map of Richmond County Nova Scotia.
Figure 7.7 Neil's Harbour and New Haven, Victoria County, 1864.

After A.F. Church *Topographical township map of Victoria County Nova Scotia.*
in potatoes, oats, barley, and hardy vegetables. As pressure on land increased, these plots became more intensively cultivated, often cropped year after year. To maintain soil fertility, the fishermen, like the crofters of Western Scotland, collected kelp from the shore to spread on the fields, dragged muck from marshland, and shovelled out barn-manure over the soil. In October 1884, Dougald Boyle, a fisherman at West Arichat, reminded himself to "get enough kelp or shells to manure the best part of the island. I must have a big manure pile annually or my hay crop will be slight." Stones and rocks were picked off the land, weeds rooted out, and marshes drained to provide rich soil. In August 1883, Boyle noted in his diary:

In P.M. nearly finished draining pond - the remaining being only through mud. Except in centre there is about a foot of rich vegetable loam on top of stiff clay. It is certainly a mine and will obviate any necessity on my part to gather kelp or muzzle mud for manure. A good many envious of the result.

Such work was extremely labour-intensive, requiring the fisherman's family and, often, hired help.

Although in many outports fishermen still trekked inland to hunt, trap, pick berries, and remove timber, in some densely settled villages such resources were in short supply by the late nineteenth century. On Isle Madame many fishermen no longer had access to woodland, an important source of fuel, building materials, and cattle fodder. At West Arichat, Dougald Boyle had to burn coal in his grate, order fence poles from a local timber merchant, and confine
his cow and heifers to a few acres of pasture. Available resources were harvested intensively. Some fishermen, such as Boyle, spent summer evenings eeling in local marshes, and many scoured beaches for shellfish. Such scavaging was a measure of poverty.

Apart from the handful of single men who looked after the Jersey fishing stations and returned to the Channel Islands for the winter, the population of the fishing villages was stable and deeply rooted. Many families had lived in the same outport for generations, their endogamous marriages preserving ethnic patterns established in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The French-speaking Acadians still clung together at Isle Madame, River Bourgoise, L'Ardoise, and Chéticamp; Irish families still lived at Louisbourg, Main à Dieu, and Ingonish; and Scots in many of the other outports. Although the economy and material conditions of life were much the same from outport to outport, ethnic differences, as revealed by diet, lore, language, and dialect, remained striking.

The socio-economic stratification of outport life, marked in the early nineteenth century, may well have increased as the decline of agriculture and shipbuilding made people even more dependent on the fishery. Dependence on local merchants for outfits and winter supplies probably grew. Many fishermen failed to clear their arrears during the summer and remained in debt year after year. In March 1880, the Arichat News Budget reported that "even with the greatest success it is barely possible for the fishermen to
pay their advances and live during the time they are employed. After a bad season, many merchants refused to extend further credit, leaving the fishermen to face a seven-month winter without supplies. Destitution would follow and several communities were forced to appeal to the government for relief. In the spring of 1880, relief supplies were distributed on Isle Madame to the poor.

In general, fishermen had little power to alter their economic situation, but they occasionally benefitted from competition between merchants or from collective action. When fish were in short supply and merchants had contracts to fill, the fishermen were in a relatively strong position. Dougald Boyle wrote in his diary on 5 June 1884 that Bosdet, a West Arichat merchant, was "giving miserable prices and charging scandalously." As a result, Boyle rowed over to Arichat with his catch and "Agreed to sell P. Campbell all my herring. He will give me $3.50 at cash prices, by which I will make a dollar per barrel more than by selling to Bosdet." Fishermen also played the Jersey houses off against the Halifax-supplied merchants. In May 1889, the Robin agent at Chéticamp reported that

We drove in the afternoon to Chéticamp and in the evening the fishermen congregated on the Room to know the price of Green fish. They first asked same price as last year $1.35 per 100 lbs. then came down to $1.20 which we refused to entertain and offered $1.10 which is even too high in proportion to the price of dry in Halifax, this the fishermen would not accept & as a compromise we offered to divide the difference & to pay $1.15 and we now wait to see what they will do as some of them threatened to take their fish elsewhere so we
may have to give the $1.20 rather than lose the fish, but will wait to see what the other merchants will do.51

During that summer, many Chéticamp fishermen formed a "combination" and refused to sell to Philip Robin & Co. until the Company improved its prices. When the Company pressed charges against debtors, the Robin agent observed that there was "a little commotion and serious talk amongst the hard crowd they threaten to fire our Buildings etc have not paid any attention to it on the contrary will add more pressure." Such distrust and bitterness frequently characterised the relationship between fishermen and merchants.

To some extent economic relations were cushioned by the growth of community and the influence of the church. By the late nineteenth century, the fishing settlements were a maze of blood relations; some families had been on the Island for at least five generations. Such connections helped tie the community together and provided support for individual fishermen. The Church, too, increasingly underpinned community life. Churches had been built in most outports by 1850 and the clergy were firmly entrenched by the late nineteenth century. Such was the importance of the Catholic community at Arichat that the Bishop's See for Eastern Nova Scotia was located there from 1844 until 1866 when it was transferred to Antigonish on the Nova Scotian mainland. The Catholic Church also opened a convent at Arichat in 1856, and another at West Arichat in 1863. For many fishermen, life was measured as surely by the religious
calendar as by the rhythms of wind, tide, and fish. Moreover, religion offered spiritual support for those in economic distress. Faced with the daily task of providing for his family, Dougald Boyle, a devout Roman Catholic, was probably not alone when he admitted to

suffering terrible anxieties of mind, fearful that I won't be able to make both ends meet, but God will not allow an industrious person to starve, for He has said "Take no thought of the morrow": therefore I put all trust in His providing for self and family.54

Although the fishing economy had expanded during the late nineteenth century, most fishermen and their families continued to live at a bare subsistence level. Attempts to improve their economic situation by organising the workforce probably never went very far. The fisherman's most effective action was to withdraw his labour and emigrate. By the last quarter of the century, the outports of Cape Breton were losing population to the United States at an unprecedented rate.

The Coal Industry

From its founding in 1828, the General Mining Association held a monopoly, greatly resented by local businessmen and Assemblymen, of all mineral reserves in Nova Scotia. After a protracted struggle, the G.M.A. gave up its rights in 1858 in return for a rent-free lease of its existing mines and reduced royalty payments. With the Reciprocity Treaty with the United States signed, the way
was open for the exploration and development of the rest of the coal deposits on Cape Breton.

Across Cape Breton's eastern coalfield, prospectors moved in, obtained exploratory leases, sank adits, and when they found a workable seam, obtained a license to mine. Many prospectors, however, lacked the capital to develop a mine and sold out to provincial and foreign companies. Most investors were Americans, attracted by the quick profits to be made during Reciprocity, but some were Halifax businessmen and a few were Central Canadians. By 1866, after the initial rush of exploration had passed, there were some eight mining companies working the eastern coalfield.

While the Civil War was in progress New England industries worked at full capacity and generated a sizeable demand for Cape Breton coal. By 1863 more than half the coal produced on Cape Breton was sold to the United States (Fig. 7.8). Two years later, exports to the United States reached three-quarters of total output, 320,610 tons. This was the "harvest time" for the coal companies and many investors saw a quick return on capital. Yet the boom was not to last. In 1866, the Reciprocity Treaty was abrogated and American tariffs on Nova Scotian coal were reimposed. Sales to the United States collapsed, by 1869, to 147,381 tons, half the total output. There were few alternative markets. The G.M.A. dominated the Maritime market; Ohio coal was sold in Ontario; and British coal, shipped across the Atlantic as ballast, supplied Quebec and Montreal.
Figure 7.8 Production and export of coal from Cape Breton, 1858-1891.

Data from *Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia*. 
For the new mines, the outlook was bleak, although temporary respite came in 1873 when strikes curtailed coal exports from Britain at a time when coal stocks were low in the United States. Cape Breton collieries stepped in to meet the shortfall in supply, and exported a record 520,777 tons, almost half of it to the United States. But the recovery of the British coal trade and the onset of world depression curtailed further exports. By 1874, output had fallen 35% to 341,602 tons, and less than a third of exports went to the United States. Two years later, exports were almost half what they were in 1873.

Faced with American tariffs, British competition in the St. Lawrence market, and small Maritime demand, the Nova Scotia Coal Owners Association lobbied the Dominion Government for protection. The Association claimed that a tariff on American coal sold in Ontario would "create within the Dominion a coal trade that will be equivalent for that with the United States." In 1878, the Conservative government of Sir John A. MacDonald was elected, committed to protecting nascent Canadian industry. Under the guidelines of the National Policy, a tariff of 50 cents per ton was placed on American coal in 1879, and raised to 60 cents the following year. Even so, pressure from Ontario consumers for cheap coal ensured that the tariff would not cover the cost of transporting Maritime coal beyond Montreal, leaving the valuable Toronto-Hamilton market in the hands of American companies. Nevertheless, Nova Scotian
producers now had a new, secure market. Coal was shipped by steamer to Quebec City and Montreal, in return for flour and manufactured goods.

Exports of Cape Breton coal increased from 385,066 tons in 1880 to 982,582 tons in 1891 (Fig. 7.8). Sales to Quebec accounted for much of this growth, increasing from 164,151 tons in 1880 to 703,897 tons in 1891, 71% of total output. At least three-quarters of the coal was shipped to Montreal, the rest to Sorel, Trois-Rivieres, and Quebec City. At the same time, new industries of the Maritimes pushed up local demand from 112,802 tons to 258,483 tons. The American trade, meanwhile, slumped from 108,113 tons to an insignificant 20,202 tons. The National Policy had successfully reoriented the coal trade of Cape Breton Island towards Central Canada, virtually ending the industry's dependence on intermittent American markets, and lessening its dependence on small, Maritime markets.

Much of the coal produced during the late nineteenth century came from the independent collieries. In 1865-66, at the height of Reciprocity, there were seven major collieries on the Island: the two G.M.A. pits at Sydney Mines and Lingan, and five new pits located in the south of the coalfield close to the sea (Fig. 7.9). These new mines produced 55% of total output that year with the Blockhouse and Glace Bay mines each producing more than 60,000 tons. After the G.M.A. closed its Lingan mine in 1886, the independents expanded their share of output. By 1890, they produced 83% of the coal mined on Cape Breton. Much of it
Figure 7.9  Distribution and output of principal coal mines on Cape Breton, 1865-1866.

Data from Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia.
Figure 7.10 Distribution and output of principal coal mines on Cape Breton, 1890.

Data from Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia.
Figure 7.11 Colliery railways on Cape Breton.

After A.F. Church *Topographical township map of Cape Breton County Nova Scotia*. 

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came from the Gowrie, Glace Bay, Reserve, International, and Caledonia mines which each produced more than 100,000 tons that year (Fig. 7.10). Although Sydney Mines was still the largest single colliery on the Island, the G.M.A. had lost its former dominance.

In the early 1860's, the technology in the new mines was often pre-industrial. Seams were tapped by adits driven through the sea-cliffs, and the coal was hauled out by men. Water drained out along the adits, and the circulation of air was generally poor. As production increased and shafts replaced adits, more efficient means of haulage, drainage, and ventilation were needed. Steam-power was introduced, taking over the more arduous haulage from men and improving the drainage. By 1866, seven of the new mines had installed 13 steam-engines, totalling 266 h.p. The G.M.A. had also improved its engines; Richard Brown considered the 240 h.p. Cornish pumping engine and the 160 h.p. winding engine built at Sydney Mines in the 1860's to be "beyond all doubt the most perfect and most powerful that have been erected for mining purposes in British America." Underground haulage was also mechanised. Although ponies were still used in the 1890's, stationary engines were installed in several pits to haul tubs along the levels. By means of an endless rope moving in one direction and passed around a powered pulley at either end of the level, tubs were pulled along the tracks to the shaft bottom or up the slope to the surface. Ventilation, too, was mechanised.
Furnaces had never been very efficient, particularly in the larger mines, and in the 1870's mechanical fans were introduced. A Guibal fan at Sydney Mines was claimed to pass 67,000 cubic feet of air per minute compared to the 20-50,000 cubic feet of furnace systems.

On the surface new railways and shipping facilities were constructed. Most railways were short spur lines of one to three miles connecting colliery to coast, but longer lines were built to the best shipping ports (Fig. 7.11). The G.M.A. opened a railway to North Sydney to use the better harbour facilities, and similar lines were built to connect the Reserve, International, and Bridgeport mines with two new piers at Sydney. A more ambitious railway was constructed from the coalfield to Louisbourg to take advantage of its ice-free harbour, but the line closed during the depression of the 1870's.

Although steam-power was harnessed to many tasks, coal-cutting remained unmechanised and labour-intensive. As production expanded, more men were taken on, particularly at boom-periods (Fig. 7.12). In 1865-66, some 1,800 men and boys were employed at the mines: 442 men and 107 boys at Sydney Mines; 314 men and 62 boys at the Blockhouse; 204 men and 17 boys at Gowrie; and 161 men and 27 boys at Glace Bay. Apart from the brief boom of 1872-73 when some 2,600 men and boys were hired, labour was laid off during the depressed years of the late 1860's and 1870's; only 1,156 men and 266 boys worked at the mines in 1879. But as production picked up during the 1880's, more miners were employed and by 1890,
Figure 7.12 Men and boys employed at the coal mines in Cape Breton County, 1866-1891.

Data from Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia.
there were some 2,500 men and boys at work. That year, there were 444 men and 160 boys at Sydney Mines; 249 men and 63 boys at Reserve; 224 men and 50 boys at Caledonia; and 259 men and 58 boys at International. These were by far the largest individual workforces on Cape Breton.

Since the 1840's a growing proportion of the miners were from Cape Breton and by 1871, they formed a majority. A sample of 330 miners drawn from Sydney Mines and the Gowrie, Blockhouse, and Schooner Pond mines near Glace Bay shows that 201 men, 60% of the total, were from Nova Scotia. Another 86 men, 26% of the total, were from Scotland, and the remainder from England and Ireland. In 1889, R.H. Brown, the G.M.A. manager, in testimony to the Royal Commission on Labour, reckoned that the "great majority of our men" were born on Cape Breton.

As most of the workforce was drawn from the largely pre-industrial worlds of farming and fishing on Cape Breton, colliery management continued to inculcate 'time-thrift' and 'regularity.' Superstitious belief - which often led to stoppages - was curbed. In 1881, for example, the men laid off work at Sydney Mines after a disaster had been prophesised. The G.M.A. management visited the Presbyterian and Roman Catholic clergy and urged them to speak to their respective congregations. After sermons "about absurdity of laying idle on strength of predictions ....," the men returned to work. Drunkenness was also attacked. The monthly pay day was usually "celebrated" by the miners for
several days, leading to widespread absenteeism. In 1889, R.H. Brown, before the Royal Commission, argued against fortnightly pay because "there are men who get drunk regularly every pay night ... these men would get drunk once a fortnight if they were paid in that way." In 1881 an Act was passed prohibiting the sale of liquor around the mines.

Management also attempted to regulate the workplace. Traditionally, the hewer had considerable 'independence' at work. He was paid by the piece and set his own hours and output; for example, John McNeil, a hewer at Sydney Mines in the 1880's, "... quit [work] as I think proper," while another hewer, Alexander McLellan, left "at three or four o'clock and sometimes later" depending "... when I am tired." According to Union-leader Robert Drummond, "The miner is his own master." But although hewers had considerable leeway over their hours and output, overseers carefully monitored the driving of bords and imposed fines on men who exceeded the permitted dimensions. Fines also discouraged hewers from sending up too much stone or slack coal in their tubs: at Sydney Mines, a hewer could forfeit 1,000 lbs. of coal from his tally if his tub contained 8-10 lbs. of stone, or lose half a ton if it had more than 200 lbs. of slack. Unskilled men also found their routine organised. Paid by the day, their shifts were measured by whistles and their tasks assigned by overseers: "Such imposition" complained one labourer at Sydney Mines, "was hardly carried on among the slaves in olden times."
As the new mines developed, company villages were established to accommodate the permanent mining workforce. By the 1880's, there was a string of mining settlements around the east coast of Cape Breton County - Sydney Mines, Victoria, Bridgeport, Reserve, Glace Bay, Caledonia, Blockhouse, and Gowrie - each entirely dependent upon its local colliery. Most had about 700-1,000 inhabitants, but the largest - Sydney Mines and Glace Bay - had some 2,400 people each in 1891. Colliery villages were laid out much like the earlier G.M.A. settlements: parallel rows of one-storey, semi-detached houses built on company land close to the pit-head (Fig. 7.13). Living conditions were often cramped and at some of the new mines, unsanitary. At Little Glace Bay mine, the only privy, located on the pit premises, served 30-40 families. Communal wells were frequently contaminated, and there were some outbreaks of diptheria. Like those in G.M.A. rows, most houses had a garden where miners kept a pig, some chickens, perhaps a cow, and raised potatoes and vegetables. The rest of the village comprised the pit buildings, the manager's house, the company store, a school, several churches, and, off company land, the bars and independent stores.

Compared to any part of rural Cape Breton, the mining population was markedly diverse. Most of the miners were from different parts of the Island, and brought different ethnic and religious backgrounds to the mines. About half of the population was of Scottish descent, a quarter Irish,
Figure 7.13 The Blockhouse and Gowrie villages at Cow Bay, Cape Breton County, c.1864.

After A.F. Church *Topographical township map of Cape Breton County Nova Scotia*. 

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and the rest divided among Acadians and English. Most of the miners were either Roman Catholic or Presbyterian, the remainder Anglicans, Methodists, and Baptists. Although English was the dominant language, Gaelic and French were spoken underground and in many homes. Yet the conditions of work cut across ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences. Men lived in similar company housing, worked in the same mine, were paid standard rates, and joined the same union. Ethnicity was often less a way of life than a symbolic attachment. Scottish miners had pipe-bands; the Irish celebrated St. Patrick's Day. Yet even some religious holidays succumbed to the demands of work. In 1883, the Roman Catholic clergy, under pressure from the companies, agreed to exempt the men from mass on saint's days in return for the collection of church dues at the pay office.

There is no evidence that the miners' standard of living had improved since the early nineteenth century. Because of the availability of cheap, rural labour, the mines were usually "overstocked" with men during the summer, reducing the amount of work available for full-time miners and depressing their wages. In a working year of about 200 days, a hewer might earn approximately $300 in the 1880's. Deductions for rent, coal, powder, oil, school, doctor, and tally might claim $50-60, leaving about $250 for food, clothing, furniture, taxes, and dues. If work was steady from one year to the next most miners earned enough to live, though few had money set aside. A Sydney miner, in
evidence to the Royal Commission on Labour, reckoned that "Not many of them [have any money ahead]. There may be an odd one who has not a family to keep who has a little money." Yet working sons were an asset, contributing, at least for a few years, to the family income. A Bridgeport miner explained in 1891 that

A few years ago myself an' son could only make three hundred dollars a year, an' that I thought was not so bad. Last year meself an' two boys made over nine hundred. I have a nest egg in the Co-operative Store. My family is well rigged fer the winter. I have plenty of grub laid by fer the next three months.

Yet long winters could easily erase summer savings. Like the fishermen, miners depended upon credit from the company store to carry them through the winter, and used their summer earnings to pay off their arrears. A poor season could leave men in debt, facing further advances for the coming winter, and many miners were continually in debt to the company. At Sydney Mines, for example, 162 men owed $9,422 in July 1862 and 66 of them still owed $2,833 in March 1868. Indebtedness cost men their freedom to move, and increased company control over them. In particularly bad years, men were laid off, often with few savings to carry them through the idle months. Some attempted to eke out a living from their vegetable patches and fishing, but many fell dependent upon public support. During the winter of 1876 the provincial government provided relief for destitute miners.

Collective action to improve pay and working conditions had little success during the depressed years of the 1860's.
and 1870's. In 1876, a long, bitter strike at Sydney Mines ended when 'scab' labour was hired and the strikers were evicted from company housing. But as trade improved in the early 1880's, the miners regrouped. During a strike at Springhill Mines on the Nova Scotian mainland in 1879, the local miners formed the Provincial Workmen's Association - the first province-wide labour organisation in Canada - and soon organised the Cape Breton men. Despite considerable management hostility, the first P.W.A. lodge on Cape Breton was opened in July 1881, and a further eight lodges with nearly a thousand members were opened by September (Fig. 7.14). In its first year, the P.W.A. attracted some 67% of the mining workforce, although in later years it struggled to hold a majority. Probably most of the permanent miners were union members.

Even though visions of a new social order often inspired editorials and letters in the union newspaper, the aims of the P.W.A. were practical and pragmatic. Union-leader Robert Drummond wanted "mutual concession between employers and employed to seek to have the work carried on to the advantage of both," and managed to have a series of reform measures implemented. Amendments to the Mines Regulation Act during the 1880's and early 1890's introduced fortnightly pay; improved colliery safety; and raised the level of competency of mine officials, shot-firers, and miners. By insisting that men have one year's experience in the mine before being allowed to cut coal, the union
Figure 7.14 Union membership among Cape Breton miners, August 1881-December 1884.

Data from Lodge membership rolls, Provincial Workmen's Association Miscellaneous Publications, Dept. of Labour, Ottawa.
managed to restrict the inflow of cheap, rural labour and preserve work for full-time miners. The union also provided a measure of social support for its members, organising dances, picnics, regular lodge meetings, and celebratory marches with pipe bands, regalia, and banners bearing the motto "Unity, Equity, and Progress." The union arranged collections for the injured, and fought compensation cases. Funds were made available for the funerals of miners, and for their dependents. Co-operative stores were encouraged. The *Trades Journal*, the union newspaper edited by Drummond, was a voice for the working man and tried to instill a sense of self-respect and brotherhood among the men. Miners were "brothers" and union-members were "true men." But after the initial enthusiasm, the P.W.A. faced a constant struggle to recruit men as they signed on for work each spring. "An effort is being made to rouse the members of 'Equity' to a sense of duty" reported one lodge secretary in March 1885, "A pretty hard thing to accomplish. Some from whom better things might be expected are only half hearted, good Union men only when any personal end is to be served." Union-levies were often ignored; eight months into a strike at Lingan mine in 1882 - the longest strike to that date in Canada - less than half of the Cape Breton lodges had contributed to the strike-fund.

Although the union had improved the conditions of work and partially slowed the influx of cheap labour, it had
probably not managed to raise the miners' standard of living. Many miners lived a hand-to-mouth existence. During the 1870's and 1880's, hardship in the Cape Breton mines and the lure of higher wages in the Pennsylvania coalfields and the hardrock mines of the Cordillera led many men to leave the Island. Their places were quickly taken by farmers from the backlands of Cape Breton.

The coal companies, too, were struggling to survive. Although coal exports increased rapidly during the 1880's, the duplication of management, workshops, railways, and harbours kept production costs high, while intense competition among Maritime producers depressed prices. Sales usually covered the high costs of production, provided an occasional dividend, but allowed for little capital improvement. Undercapitalised, and relatively small producers, the mines were ripe for take-over, and in 1893 all the important mines with the exception of Sydney Mines were purchased by the Dominion Coal Company, a Boston-based syndicate. The second period of industrial development on Cape Breton had ended.
The Exodus

Soon after the great immigration from the Highlands, people were leaving Cape Breton. In an attempt to dissuade the Colonial Office from directing more destitute immigrants to Nova Scotia, Lieutenant-Governor Maitland stated in 1831 that "considerable numbers" of emigrants were "continually leaving the Province in search of employment, which they cannot find here ...." A few years later, in 1838, the price of land and the cost of clearance was claimed to "have deterred hundreds of young men from attempting to [take] up Land under the present system, some of whom have abandoned their native Province ...." During the 1820's, Acadians from the Chéticamp-Margaree coast began to move across the Cabot Strait to settle the west coast of Newfoundland, particularly around St. George's Bay and on the Port-au-Port Peninsula. They were followed in the early 1840's by Scots and a few Irish drawn to the unsettled Codroy Valley from the Broad Cove-Margaree area. These first, tentative emigrations were to be dwarfed by the great exodus in the second half of the century.

The potato blight marked its beginning. Although most of the population had been on the Island for only about
twenty years, the widespread destitution caused by the blight encouraged many settlers to leave if they could. Often, however, like Captain Donald McNeil of Mira River, they were too poor to emigrate:

I have a grant of five hundred acres & would I get for it as much money as would bring us up to Canada and purchase a small farm then I would not hesitate to try the chance but under the present circumstances that is entirely out of the question.5

Others petitioned the government to aid them leave the Island. Sixteen families from St. Ann’s petitioned Lieutenant-Governor Harvey in 1849, explaining

That your petitioners are British subjects natives of Sutherland and Rosshire in the North of Scotland that some of your petitioners are younger branches of families that emigrated to this Island about twenty years ago and who could not get land fit for supporting them after becoming of years, and others ... have only emigrated from the Highlands in later years when all the good lots were also occupied, this keeping your petitioners in a constant state of dependence.

That the chief part of your petitioners have large families, and owing to the failure of the crops for years past found it difficult to get means of subsistence, and from the experience of the past, dread the future and to obviate their poverty petitioners are anxious to remove to the Canadas, but their circumscribed circumstances not permitting them transition ....6

Within a few years, several hundred families would leave the St. Ann’s district. After receiving favourable accounts from his son in Australia, the Reverend Norman McLeod, preacher and community leader at St. Ann’s, organised a mass emigration of families affected by the blight. Between 1851 and 1859, 6 ships left Cape Breton for the Antipodes carrying 876 people, mostly from the St. Ann’s, Boularderie,
Baddeck, and Middle River area. A "great number of persons" from other parts of Cape Breton were also reported to have left for the United States and the Canadas in 1853, and "a still greater exodus of our population" was expected to leave the following year. Although by the late 1850's, the Island had recovered from the potato blight - "the chief cause of the young men leaving home to seek employment elsewhere" - the Crown surveyor of Victoria County reported in 1857 that tradesmen, labourers, "as well as others" were still "leaving ... as fast as their means will enable them .... Hundreds are said to have gone away during the past year."

In the 1860's, the exodus continued. Although employment in the coal mines grew during the Reciprocity years, it did not stem the outflow. In 1865, the Acadian Recorder claimed that in spite of free trade, "the bone and sinew of the land" had annually left Nova Scotia for the past ten or fifteen years. Certainly, many must have left after Reciprocity was abrogated. In the coal industry, for example, 400 men lost their jobs between 1867-71, and without alternative employment many must have emigrated. In 1869, it was reported that "the inhabitants of Cape Breton ... are flocking across the [American] border by scores ...." Between 1871 and 1881, some 5,000 people left the Island, 59 emigrants per 1,000 inhabitants (Table 8.1). The decadal growth rate slowed to 11.9%, lower, for the first time in the century, than the rate of natural increase (Table 8.2). In the mines, some 1,200 men lost
their jobs between 1873 and 1880; while elsewhere, more and more families trying to eke out a living from farming and fishing were finding that ends could not be met. Many left. In April 1872, the Acadian Recorder observed "Now that spring is opening, we already see the commencement of that annual exodus of people from this Province which we have been accustomed to see for several years past." In 1879, the same newspaper noted that "week after week, the tide of emigration set from our shores with greater impetus," while the Port Hood Eastern Beacon spoke of "the weekly leave-taking of so many Cape Bretoners for the United States by every Boston-bound steamer, as well as by Gloucester and Boston sailing vessels, from this port ...."

In the 1880's almost 9,000 people emigrated, 103 of every 1,000 inhabitants (Table 8.1). The growth rate slowed to only 2.8%, and in Richmond and Victoria Counties the population decreased (Table 8.2). Contemporaries were aware of the greater outflow. The New Glasgow Eastern Chronicle reported in April 1882 that "The exodus goes on increasing week after week ... Every train from the east for some four weeks past may be said to be an emigrant train." Many aboard were from Cape Breton, for in the same month the Chignecto Post recorded that "One hundred and fifty persons passed through last night [on the train] .... One hundred were Cape Bretoners." Later that year, in October when seasonal migrants usually returned, the Port Hood Referee
### Table 8.1 Total Net Migration from Cape Breton, 1871-1891

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Total Migrants</th>
<th>Migrants per 1000 head of population</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inverness</td>
<td>1768.0</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>800.4</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Breton</td>
<td>1178.6</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>1233.8</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Breton Is.</td>
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<td>59</td>
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**1881-1891**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Total Migrants</th>
<th>Migrants per 1000 head of population</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inverness</td>
<td>3027.1</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>1445.3</td>
<td>116</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cape Breton</td>
<td>1880.9</td>
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<td>Richmond</td>
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<td>212</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cape Breton Is.</td>
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### Table 8.2 Percentage Change of Population, 1851-1891

<table>
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<th>1861-71</th>
<th>1871-81</th>
<th>1881-91</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inverness</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Breton</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
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<td>15.1</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Data from Census of 1851, RG 1/453 PANS; Census of 1861, RG 12/21 PANS; and Census of Canada 1871 and 1891, Canada Dept, of Agriculture.
reported a continued outflow:

The emigration from this part of Cape Breton is becoming greater and more alarming every succeeding week .... From this electoral district alone the emigrants within the past three weeks can be counted by hundreds. Among these no fewer than seven whole families have left this small town for the United States.18

The National Policy and the expansion of the coal industry failed to stop the continuing haemorrhage of population from Cape Breton during these years.

Most of the emigrants were young, usually in their twenties and thirties, and often single. In 1881, it was calculated that of the passengers onboard the steamers leaving Halifax for Boston, "three fourths at least were individuals, mostly the young ...." Newspapers searched for remedies to "cure our young people of the 'foreign fever'," and lamented that the "bone and sinew" of the country was leaving. Roughly the same numbers of men and women emigrated, although during the 1880's most emigrants from the mining communities were women, probably leaving home because of the lack of suitable local employment. The Trades Journal observed in October 1885 that the "young men grumble a good deal at this."

Between 1871 and 1891, the largest proportion of migrants were from Richmond County, suggesting a considerable outlow of fishermen and backland farmers (Table 8.1). Victoria and Inverness, both predominantly farming and fishing counties, also had high proportions of migrants. Cape Breton County had the lowest proportion, mainly because its large number of emigrants were replaced by people from

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the other counties moving to the mines. Small tradesmen, unable to make a living in a stagnating rural economy, were also leaving.

Indeed, emigrants were drawn from all major occupations on the Island. The Acadian Recorder noted in 1872 that "young farmers - ay, and old ones too [are] selling off their lands, their cattle, the means of a life-long independence for themselves and a comfortable inheritance for their children after them ...." and leaving the province. A Louisbourg fisherman, questioned by an American traveller, replied that his two sons, aged 11 and 13, who helped him fish from a dory, "... won't be with me many years ... all our boys go to the States just as they get old enough." At the mines, men were leaving, especially during the depressed years of the late 1860's, 1870's, and 1880's. In October 1881, a Sydney miner reported to the Trades Journal that

The exodus at present threatens to be the largest that has been known for years, in this locality. Among the working class, especially the colliers, the question is heard passing from lip to lip. "Are you going to the States this fall?" and the answer "Well, I don't know, but believe me, if I could raise money enough I would not stay long here." This is the 'cry' among young and old, married and single.

The reason for the exodus, according to this correspondent, was the "same reason in a manner, that the Scotchman and Irishman have left their native shores, viz: to try and procure a better living for themselves and families." In April the following year, the Trades
Journal reported another Sydney miner who claimed that "the miners ... have been miserably paid and are greatly dissatisfied .... They will likely be a big exodus from here during the course of the summer." In the 1880's, "B.C. fever" gripped the mining population. In May 1884, a miner at Little Glace Bay expected "quite an exodus" at the end of the month because all the "young men" intended to go "out west." In November 1887, more "able bodied young men" left for British Columbia, many to work in the coal mines at Nanaimo, Vancouver Island. The following year, at the start of the season in May, "a crowd" left Sydney Mines, again for B.C., and it was reported that a "great many more would follow if their means would allow them." After working that summer, many had earned enough to emigrate and in October a Sydney miner reported that "The place is being fast depopulated of its best workmen. Of late a large number of men, with their families, in some instances, have left for British Columbia, and there are more to follow." The emigration continued. In March 1889, a Bridgeport miner remarked sardonically that "A few winters like this as regards work, and we will all be forced to go West ...." Again many left at the end of that summer, for in October a miner reported that "Cow Bay is fast becoming a 'one-horse' place, and a broken-winded horse at that." With colliers earning less than two-thirds of the wages of the previous year, "An emigration fever has consequently seized our young men" the miner went on, "and several are making preparations to go West."
Yet the most common Canadian destination was another part of the Maritimes. Of the Nova Scotians who moved to other parts of Canada, some 60% were in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island in 1881, and 42% in 1891 (Table 8.3). A survey of 208 emigrant obituaries published in the North Sydney Herald between 1880 and 1893 shows that 51 people, 24% of the total, remained in Nova Scotia and neighbouring New Brunswick (Fig. 8.1). At least three-quarters of these emigrants moved to Halifax and most of the rest to the new industrial towns of Pictou County. For many, this change of residence was associated with industrial employment. The traditional Maritime economy based upon "wood, wind and sail" was giving way in the 1880's and 1890's to a new one based upon "iron, coal and rail." Protected by National Policy tariffs and connected to Central Canadian markets by the Intercolonial railway, new industries developed in the Maritimes, drawing rural labour to the expanding towns and cities. With a population of about 40,000 during these years, Halifax added new manufacturing to its old commercial economy, and became Canada's largest producer of rope, second largest refiner of sugar, as well as a considerable manufacturer of cotton, confectionary, paint, and lamps. Meanwhile in Pictou County, New Glasgow emerged as one of the foremost industrial towns in the province. Located on the Pictou coalfield, the town was a suitable site for heavy manufacturing and with the formation of the Nova Scotia Forge Company in 1889 became the largest producer of primary
### Table 8.3  Distribution of Nova Scotians in Canada, 1881-1891

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>PEI</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>NB</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Que.</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>6,160</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1,950</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5,527</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1,402</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ont.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Man.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>BC</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>3,799</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>4,659</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1,402</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2,656</td>
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</tr>
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</table>


### Table 8.4  Distribution of Nova Scotians in selected states and territories of the United States, 1870-1880

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>1880</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8.1 Distribution of male emigrants (top) and female emigrants (bottom) from Cape Breton by place or state/province of death, 1880-1893.

Data from obituaries in North Sydney Herald, 1880-1893.
steel in the country. With the increased demand for coal, the local mines took on more men, many of them from Cape Breton. Across the border in New Brunswick, Moncton was growing as a railway centre with workshops and factories; while at Saint John, also a town of about 40,000 people, the new industries of smelting, rope and cotton manufacture, and brass and rail production joined the old sawmilling and shipping trades. The transformation of a rural labour force into an urban industrial one was not new to Cape Bretoners: many had either worked or known friends and relatives employed in the Island's coal mines.

Few Cape Bretoners appear to have moved to Quebec or Ontario, and most of those who did apparently settled in Montreal, Toronto, or the townships along Lake Huron (Fig. 8.1). On the other hand, the completion of the C.P.R. to Winnipeg in 1883 offered Cape Bretoners a new agricultural frontier, some forty years after the meagre Codroy Valley had been settled. With its "fertile fields" and "bountiful harvests" that "almost surpass belief," the province was held up by one Cape Breton newspaper as "a remedy for the annual exodus." Manitoba offered, the paper went on,

>a new prospect ... - an opportunity, which, if seized, will lead to comparative wealth, a happy home, and, in a short time, to comparative independence of others ... 38

In 1881, the North Sydney Herald announced that 26 Cape Bretoners had given a celebratory party in Winnipeg: 22 were from Whycocomagh, 2 from West Bay, and 2 from Little Narrows. The following year, the same newspaper reported
that "some of our farmers are making preparations to leave their old homes for the Prairie Province." By the early 1890's, emigration agents such as J.C. McLean, a farmer at Manitou, Manitoba but formerly of Middle River, were recruiting on the Island. In the summer of 1892, the C.P.R. inaugurated its first "Harvest Specials," running three trains from Halifax to Prairie destinations. For $28 passengers could buy a return ticket to Moosomin; another $12 took them as far as Edmonton. For many Cape Bretoners, seasonal work on the Prairies became permanent.

Cape Bretoners had probably begun arriving in British Columbia in the late 1850's, drawn north from the California diggings by the gold rushes along the lower Fraser River and then later in the Cariboo. As the placer mines were exhausted, they probably drifted back south; it was not until the 1880's that much employment was again available in British Columbia. The coal mines at Nanaimo drew experienced men from Cape Breton and the logging industry offered some employment. A few Islanders crewed schooners that were sailed from Cape Breton around Cape Horn to Victoria; there, the vessels formed a small Cape Breton fleet that hunted for seals off Alaska in the Bering Sea.

Yet far more Cape Bretoners emigrated to the United States. In 1880-81, the only year for which statistics are available, there were 65,561 Nova Scotians outside their native province, 22% elsewhere in Canada, the remaining 78% in the United States. The survey of Cape Breton obituaries shows that 61% had crossed the international
Between 1870 and 1880, 70% of Nova Scotians in America were in the New England states, and 52% of the Cape Bretoners. Most Nova Scotians and Cape Bretoners were in Massachusetts, with lesser numbers in Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut (Table 8.4 and Fig. 8.1). In 1880, 29,307 Nova Scotians lived in the Bay State; most lived in Boston and there were no sizeable clusters west of Worcester.

The connection between Cape Breton and Boston had been close for much of the century. Since the early 1830's, Cape Breton coal companies had tried to penetrate the New England market and during Reciprocity they sold much of their output to buyers in New England. Cape Breton fishermen had hired on Massachusetts's fishing vessels, and others had sold their catch to Yankee traders. Commercial contacts were well established, and during the exodus many Islanders no doubt secured a berth to Boston on American or Maritime fishing schooners and coasters. By 1865, regular steamer services connected Halifax to Boston, offering a one-way fare for less than $10. Cape Bretoners reached Halifax easily enough, either by taking a steamer from Port Hawkesbury or by travelling overland on the stage via Antigonish, New Glasgow, and Truro. In addition, there were the many vessels coasting between the Island and the provincial capital.

Boston was a rapidly expanding city that had suitable jobs for Maritimers: fishing and shipping; retail and
domestic service; woodworking crafts such as shipbuilding, carpentry, coopering, and cabinet-making. Nova Scotian "hatchet and saw men," for example, turned from building wooden ships to wooden houses, and in 1880 comprised over 20% of all carpenters in Boston and Worcester. Within Boston the two major clusters of Nova Scotians were in East Boston, a centre of wooden shipbuilding, and in Dorchester, an expanding wooden suburb. Not surprisingly, several Cape Bretoners ended their days in these two places. The 1880 census shows that outside the city, 2,383 Nova Scotians, including several Cape Bretoners, lived in the principal fishing port of Gloucester; more than double the number of Nova Scotians living in Manitoba and B.C. There were also 193 Nova Scotians in the seafaring town of Newburyport, a few miles north of Gloucester. Significantly, relatively few of the Nova Scotians and none of the Cape Bretoners lived in the industrial mill-towns along the Merrimack River. Boston and the neighbouring port towns allowed Cape Bretoners and other Nova Scotians an opportunity to continue using traditional skills, albeit in an urban setting, rather than make the wholesale transition to factory 'hand'.

Although based on a small sample, some 80% of the women who emigrated from Cape Breton to the United States stayed in Massachusetts compared to 36% of the men (Fig. 8.1). Women were much more likely to travel shorter distances than men. A similar finding comes from a sample of 190 emigrants from Canning, King's County, Nova Scotia, in which 88% of women compared to 62% of men remained in Massachusetts.
Beyond the Bay State, some 6-7% of Nova Scotians were to be found in Maine, 3% in Rhode Island, and a few others in New Hampshire and Connecticut. Several Cape Bretoners were in these states, no doubt using their traditional skills in the ports and shipyards.

Beyond New England, some 4-5% of Nova Scotians were in New York state, probably almost all of the Cape Bretoners in New York or Brooklyn. Although relatively few Nova Scotians appear to have emigrated to Pennsylvania, the Cape Breton obituary data suggests that the State drew a disproportionate number of Islanders. Since the 1830’s, Cape Breton miners had been attracted to jobs in the anthracite mines between Scranton and Pottstown and in the bituminous mines in the Alleghenies. Farther west, 3% of the Nova Scotians in the United States were in Minnesota in 1880 and Cape Bretoners were also found in Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, and Iowa. They were probably employed in farming, lumbering, or small trades. In Stillwater, Minnesota a Cape Breton colony developed; in 1882, about 30 Islanders lived in the town, many on contiguous lots. They had arrived with "some means" and hoped to profit from judicious investment in the expanding town. These prairie states offered Cape Bretoners an opportunity in agriculture or small business much like that farther north in Manitoba.

As early as the California gold rush of 1849 Cape Bretoners had been moving to the far west, working either at the placer deposits or in hardrock mines. Later, lumbering
offered alternative employment. Between 1870-80, 4-5% of Nova Scotians were in California and Cape Bretoners were to be found in Southern California from San Diego to San Francisco Bay. Farther north, they worked in the logging camps, sawmills, and ports that were along most inlets from Eureka, Northern California, through Oregon, and into west Washington, particularly around Puget Sound. Some spilled over the international border to take similar jobs in British Columbia. Inland, Cape Bretoners, especially those from the coal mines, worked in the Cordilleran hardrock camps stretching from Colorado, through Utah and Nevada, into Idaho, Montana, and east Washington. Like the loggers, some men moved farther north, working at Nanaimo during the 1880's and in the Kootenays in the next decade.

In isolated, mountain mines, displaced Cape Breton miners continued to practise their skills, while former farmhands were initiated into a particularly extreme form of industrial employment.

Several hundred Cape Bretoners took ship to the Antipodes. Emigrants from St. Ann's went first to Australia and then moved on to New Zealand where most settled at Waipu, North Island, creating a distinct Scottish colony. A few mariners and gold seekers also fetched up in Australia. Little information about these extensive, individual migrations survives, but the careers of two Campbell brothers from Whycocomagh may be indicative. Hugh Oig and Hugh Ban left Cape Breton in 1845 and like many others, moved to Boston where they gained traditional
employment at a boat-building yard in Back Bay. With the California gold rush, the two young men joined another Cape Bretoner, Malcolm Blue from River Denys, and a MacDonald from Pictou Island, and travelled overland to the diggings. In California, Hugh Ban and the Pictou Islander died while the remaining two men joined thousands of others leaving San Francisco for the other side of the Pacific. At the Victoria diggings in 1852, they excavated gold worth $10,000 and decided to return home. A ship took them to Britain, where Hugh Oig visited relatives in Oban, Argyleshire, and then they returned to Cape Breton. No doubt few emigrants to the Antipodes ever managed to return to the Maritimes.

Hugh Oig Campbell was probably born on Cape Breton, but at least some emigrants from Western Scotland to Cape Breton eventually ended their days in the Antipodes. In 1892, the North Sydney Herald reprinted from an Auckland newspaper the obituary of one John Finlayson who had died at his home "Braemar" in Waipu. Born at Loch Alsh, Wester Ross, Finlayson had emigrated to Cape Breton in "early life" and settled at Baddeck. After raising several children, he and his family left on the 'Highland Lass' in 1852 first for Australia and then for New Zealand. Finlayson's life encapsulated the complete cycle of emigration from Western Scotland, settlement and population growth on Cape Breton, followed by renewed emigration.

Like the original Scottish emigration to Cape Breton, chain migration facilitated these trans-continental and
inter-continental movements. Frequently, a younger son emigrated first and sent back information and perhaps money for other members of his family or for friends to join him. In the migration to the Codroy Valley, for example, related Clan McIsaac families from the Margaree-Broad Cove district settled together, often on contiguous lots. Similarly, families from Canning, Nova Scotia settled close to relatives in Boston; no doubt it was the same for Cape Breton emigrants.

Although the best surviving evidence of individual migration to Boston does not include family members, it does demonstrate the close contact maintained with friends. Fisherman Dougald Boyle, originally from Glenora Falls near Mabou, spent the summer of 1872 in Boston before moving to West Arichat. After several months teaching at Mabou and making "no money, but what I barely required," Boyle, then 25, "determined to go either to Canada or the States." With no savings, he gave up his post at the end of the spring term and worked for a month to earn the passage money. On 11th July, he left Mabou "in company with big Rory McLeod, for Boston." Nevertheless, friend McLeod went only as far as Creignish, still in Inverness County; but at Port Hawkesbury, where the ferry left for the mainland, Boyle saw "Ben Hawley and others" and onboard the boat fell in with "Wm. McNeil, Gillis, Campbell and others, bound for Pictou to work." He left them at New Glasgow and when he arrived at Halifax spent most of the day with "Paddy Wallis's son from Margaree ...." So far, Boyle was in almost constant
contact with Cape Bretoners.

After a voyage during which he nearly lost his life after becoming entangled in the ship's winch, Boyle arrived in Boston and was stood lunch, "the bounty of a Lunenburger." Then he went to "Mckillop's [probably a boarding-house] where the Campbells and lots of Mabou fellows soon congregated." In the following two weeks, Boyle hired with several firms: at Glendon & Pitchers, he "found the work too heavy and its nature too hot;" at Campbell's, "the work did not suit ...;" and at Quincy, "got disappointed." At the end of July, he moved to East Cambridge with McIsaac, another Inverness man, and hired with one William Nixon. Boyle stayed with Nixon until 3 November when he joined McCuigan's. Moving from one job to another in different parts of the city, Boyle continued to meet Cape Bretoners: "Lauch. McNeil, John McDonald, Allen, Angus McDonald, Saddler, etc." No doubt he saw more at that "grand affair" in August, the Scotch Picnic. But despite the conviviality of friends, Boyle had his "fill of Boston" by October and with the outbreak of a small-pox epidemic (which took away Lauchlin McNeil "without the consolation of a priest ..."), he decided to leave for Cape Breton. Boyle "bade all friends goodbye" on 23 November, and left on the Halifax steamer "with crowds from River Inhabitants." Throughout his trip, he had been in touch with friends from Inverness County who were probably also Roman Catholics. Information about jobs, accommodation, and
acquaintances undoubtedly passed among them facilitating Boyle’s migration to Boston.

Whether in the form of letters or oral communication, information was relayed back to family and friends on Cape Breton to help them decide when and where to emigrate. Letters were avidly read, passed from hand to hand around the family and community, and occasionally published in the local newspaper. The letters from Norman McLeod’s son in Australia, for example, were read by many in St. Ann’s and would have been sent to friends in Pictou County had they been available. "I have thought to inclose my son’s letter" McLeod wrote in June 1849,

but I cannot now lay my hands on it, as it is seldom in the house; for its information is so interesting to all intending emigrants for that New Colony, that it is already in half tatters, by frequent perusal, from place to place.59

Letters published in the North Sydney Herald during the great exodus of the 1880’s usually stressed the negative features of emigration "out West" and recommended that Cape Bretoners stay home - the editorial policy of the newspaper. But occasionally, a more balanced view slipped through:

Quite a number of Cape Breton boys who have made British Columbia their home have done well and are doing well ... Men coming to this country should be good mechanics able and willing to work, men who are willing to rough it at first for a year or two ... in western parlance they are known as "rustlers." The man who is comfortably situated in Cape Breton who makes a fair living and has a family had better stay there so far as British Columbia is concerned, UNLESS thinking there is no prospect in store for his family he is willing to undergo hardships and privations for to get his boys and girls a chance in this country.
A young man free from family cares coming here can generally make a comfortable living if steady and a tradesman. Clerks, book-keepers and people looking for "soft snaps" had better stay home or go to "Boston," this is no country for such.61

Apart from news about employment, information about friends and accommodation was sent back. From Victoria, J.H. McDougall, formerly of North Sydney, reported meeting "several Cape Breton boys from the 'old sod' from Low Point to Lochlomond, from Gabarus to Judique," and recommended that those looking for lodgings in Victoria should contact "Mrs. Langley formerly of Sydney [who] is conducting a nice private boarding house on Pandora St., where all Cape Breton folks will receive a genuine welcome." Cape Bretoners, living on islands at either side of a continent, kept in touch.

Some emigrants also returned home, visiting friends and family and keeping them informed of places hundreds and perhaps thousands of miles away. In 1889, the North Sydney Herald reported that "A number of our Boularderie 'Boys' who have been for the past few years in the Western States, where they have been successful in accumulating the 'hard flint' are daily expected home." Such men were respected. "A SUCCESSFUL CAPE BRETONIAN VISITS HIS FRIENDS" proclaimed the Herald in May 1887: "Mr. Angus Campbell, of Silver City, New Mexico, U.S. is on a visit to his friends at Mabou ...." After leaving Cape Breton in 1867, Campbell had been a miner in California and Colorado before settling in New Mexico where he purchased "a large tract of land comprising 1,500,000 acres" which he stocked with 30,000
head of cattle and 500 horses. Whether or not Campbell exaggerated the size of his new operation to impress the Islanders, the newspaper was impressed: "It always gives us pleasure to note the success of Cape Bretonians abroad" and it concluded a shade pathetically, "Mr Campbell may be classed among the most successful."

More often obituaries were sent home, poignant reminders of a young son's emigration and news of his death in a far-off mine or logging-camp. The Trades Journal, for example, reported in May 1884 that

> Intelligence reached Sydney Mines ... of the death of Mr Neil McLean, a native of the former place. Mr McLean, who had worked in B.C. for a few years came home on a visit a year ago, and took back with him his brother and the other members of his family. His death was occasioned by a fall of 'till'.

The exodus of Cape Breton miners during the 1880's was so great that whole communities on the Island could be touched by a mining disaster thousands of miles away. The explosion at Nanaimo Mines in 1887 killed six from Cape Breton:

William B. Campbell, a native of Sydney Mines ... age 28 years, single. James Hoggan, native of Cape Breton, aged 21 years, single. William Hoyt, native of Sydney Mines ... aged 21 years, leaves wife and child .... Michael Corcoron, a native of County Kerry, Ireland, recently of Sydney Mines ... aged 36 years; wife and six children. Malcolm McLean, native of Sydney Mines ... aged 31 years, single. Roderick McDonald, native of Cape Breton, aged 37 years; wife and child.

Occasionally, bodies were returned, at least from Boston, for burial on Cape Breton, while family gravestones in Island cemeteries recorded those buried elsewhere.
The settlement and economic development of nineteenth century Cape Breton rested on three foundations: the old commercial staple of the cod fishery, the fee-simple empire of family-farms, and the new industrial staple of coal mining. Each gave rise to a distinctive human geography. Together they created a unique pattern. But elements of the Cape Breton experience were repeated in other areas of North America and viewed more generally, the historical geography of this small, peripheral island offers a simple, somewhat stark encapsulation of developments in Canada during the nineteenth century.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, settlement on Cape Breton was largely the product of the cod fishery. For forty years, Channel Island merchants had operated a migratory fishery to the Island; local merchants had organised a resident fishery. These merchants imported supplies, extended credit to the fishermen, and arranged the export of dried cod and some pickled fish and seal skins. Like other New World staple trades, the cod trade depended upon foreign markets, principally those in Southern Europe.
and the West Indies. Without their demand, the cod fishery on Cape Breton could not have existed. The technology of the fishery was highly specialised: cod were caught in inshore waters from boats with hooks and lines, processed onshore, and dry cured on flakes. Some of the curing was done by skilled men brought out from the Channel Islands each year, but most fishing and processing was in the hands of resident fishermen. The migrant workers were usually indentured for one or more seasons and, while they were on Cape Breton, they were completely dependent upon their merchant-employer for provisions, accommodation, and a passage home. The resident fishermen - mostly Acadians with a few Newfoundland Irish - also depended on merchants for supplies and fishing gear, and many had accumulating debts. Living in dispersed outports and with few outside contacts, the resident fishing population was stable and increasingly inbred. Although the routines and technology of the cod fishery were much the same from outport to outport, the Acadian and Irish populations spoke different languages and had different customs.

In subsequent years, this basic pattern was embellished but not substantially altered. Resident and Channel Island merchants continued to organise the fishery, importing supplies and exporting fish. Cod production increased and the subsidiary fisheries for mackerel and herring expanded. Sealing declined in the 1850’s, but the lobster fishery grew dramatically in the last quarter of the century. Despite fluctuations in demand, the main markets remained Southern
Europe, the West Indies, and South America for cod, and the
West Indies, the United States, and the Canadas for pickled
fish. Trawling for cod and handlining for mackerel were
added to earlier methods of fishing. As the resident
population expanded, the seasonal labour-force from the
Channel Islands shrank, but even at the end of the century a
few men still crossed the Atlantic to staff the fishing
stations on Cape Breton - a movement that was 400 years old.
Scottish immigration supplemented the Acadian and Irish
fishing populations, and settlement spread further around
the coast. Even so, the outports were still relatively
isolated and fishing-families increasingly interrelated.
The growth of the fishery provided a living - but almost
invariably a harsh and dangerous living - for several
generations of Cape Breton fishermen. Some of them, those
who owned their own boat and gear, enjoyed a measure of
independence. But many others - dependent on shares from
crewing the boats of kin, or working for merchants - won
only a bare and precarious subsistence living. In the
second half of the century thousands left for the United
States and wage-employment on a Gloucester or Boston fishing
schooner.

Whereas the cod fishery dominated the coast around Cape
Breton, the Island's interior was left largely untouched,
 apart from the small Loyalist and early Scottish
settlements, until the great influx of Highland settlers in
the 1820's and 1830's. For crofters and cotters dislocated
from rock-bound townships by agricultural change, Cape Breton was a haven, a place to maintain a traditional rural way life. Apart from the barren shores of Labrador and Newfoundland, the Island was the closest piece of the North American continent to Europe and among the cheapest destinations to reach from there. For the indigent and dispossessed of Western Scotland, Cape Breton was - to use Turner's terminology - a safety valve. If not, as Pennsylvania claimed to be, the "best poor man's country," it was for many the best accessible.

For a brief ten years, immigrant Scots could acquire virtually free of charge a forested lot - perhaps 40 times the size of their former crofts - along the intervales and lakeshores of the Island. Even when new regulations attempted to restrict access to land, the weakness of government institutions allowed immigrants to continue settlement. A generation of effort would eventually produce a farm, the basis of a modest independence for a family. With markets weak and costly to reach, few farmers, even those on more favourable frontland, became wealthy and most lived close to a common mean. Along the principal rivers and around the lakeshores, rectangular lots, each of about 200 acres, stretched back to uncleared forest. By mid-century, many of these lots had a similar amount of land cleared, carried a similar number of livestock, grew similar crops, and had a similar sized farmstead. As land was plentiful and labour scarce, the intensive cultivation of Highland crofts was replaced by extensive farming, while the
common pastures and the unenclosed arable strips of the crofting townships were replaced by individual, enclosed fields. With timber close to hand, the stone and turf 'blackhouses' of the Highlands were replaced by timber dwellings that owed more to New England than to Scottish prototypes. Untrammelled by factors and lairds, and owners of their own property, many frontland farmers enjoyed a higher standard of living than they had experienced in Scotland.

As immigration continued and population pressed against rocky backland, rural society became more stratified. Frontland farmers, especially those on good land and close to local markets, enlarged their clearings, kept more stock, and introduced intensive techniques. Backland farmers, unable to make a living from stony fields, combined subsistence farming with alternative employment, creating a labour-force for frontland farmers and the Island's staple industries. As the second and third generations came of age and faced clearing even more wretched land or acquiring a large sum for a frontland property, a growing number emigrated, mostly to the "Boston States" - the urban safety valve that until the opening of the Canadian Northwest late in the century substituted for the Island's missing agrarian West. There they encountered a vastly different environment of city neighbourhoods, wage-labour, and unionism.

Rural society on Cape Breton diverged, too, from that left behind in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.
Although a few Cape Breton farmers accumulated some capital, they hardly approximated the great Highland proprietors whose factors administered estates on which there were hundreds of tenants and landless cotters. Though differentiated by wealth, Cape Breton's frontland and backland settlements contained neither the ostentatious mansions with their estate buildings and walled parks, or the blackhouses and hovels of the crofting townships. Whereas more than 90% of legal-occupiers on Cape Breton were freeholders, crofters in the Highlands and Islands were still struggling late in the century to secure their rights to land. The land-wars that crofters waged against lairds in the 1880's were followed by the Napier Commission which looked into crofter grievances and laid the basis of the Crofters' Holdings Act of 1886 guaranteeing crofters' security of tenure. A meagre independence was eventually won. Clearly, the very different relations to property on Cape Breton had produced a strikingly dissimilar society to that of Western Scotland.

As the immigration of Highland Scots was reaching its peak in the late 1820's, British industrial capital was also seizing the opportunity to exploit another of the Island's resources. The expansion of the coal mines was one of the earliest industrial developments in Canada and set a new industrial staple beside the Island's commercial cod fishery and semi-subsistent family-farms. Like the fish merchants, the London-based G.M.A. hoped to supply foreign markets and invested heavily in new capacity and production techniques.
They opened more mines, introduced steam-powered machinery, and built new railways and shipping-wharfs. Skilled miners were recruited from Britain and, with their families, were accommodated in specially-built company housing. Supplied from the company store, many of these miners were indebted, effectively tied to their employer. Although the G.M.A. failed to supply the American market, they survived on small domestic demand and established the basic patterns of the single-industry company town on Cape Breton.

In the late 1850's, the dismantling of the G.M.A. monopoly led to a massive expansion of the industry, involving several new companies, more mines, railways, and wharfs. After a series of booms and depressions, the coal trade was eventually tied to the burgeoning industrial economy of Quebec. By the late nineteenth century, most of the miners were native-born, and accommodated in company villages close to the mines. Employed by a company and working in a large group, these miners developed a sense of common identity that solidified into a sense of class. In the P.W.A., they created an instrument of class defence. The individual ethos of the small farmer living on his own land that lay in the rural background of many of these miners was transformed by different terms of work into a collectivist vision.

Each of the various economies on Cape Breton tended to develop along its own lines rather than to create a larger, more mature economy. The cod fishery depended largely on
foreign capital, on foreign manufactured goods and, almost completely, on foreign markets. It drew some investment from Cape Breton merchants and consumed some agricultural produce, but most of the finance, and almost all the manufactures on which the trade depended came from the Channel Islands and Halifax. As Acadian and Irish fishermen, augmented later by Scottish settlers along the coast, provided sufficient labour for the fishery, there was little employment available for backland farmers. Other economic spin-offs were also weak. Processing of the staple was rudimentary and required no more labour than that supplied by the fisherman's family or by the Jersey crews at the fishing stations. Transporting the staple to Halifax provided work for local coasters, but the deep-sea trade was usually in the hands of Channel Island merchants who employed Jersey-registered shipping. Shipbuilding, of course, was an important linkage from the fishery, but eventually succumbed to changes in technology. Perched along the rocky edge of Cape Breton and oriented to the surrounding waters and distant sources of capital and demand, the fishery was largely detached from the agricultural and mining economies that had developed on the rest of the Island.

Like the fishery, the coal industry relied heavily on foreign capital and foreign markets. Some capital came from Nova Scotian merchants, but most came from investors in London and New York. In the early years of the G.M.A., labour, too, was from overseas, although by mid-century the
mines were an important outlet for surplus labour from the Island's farms. The mining population provided a market for agricultural produce, but other linkages did not extend very far. Coal did not need to be processed, and colliery railways were not used to carry other materials. Only in the shipment of coal to Halifax, St. John's, the United States, and Quebec was there employment for local shipping. The inhabitants of the mining villages, like those of the outports, lived close to subsistence and there was little spare income to support domestic manufacturing industry. Situated, like the fishery, on the coast, the coal mines drew labour and agricultural produce from the interior, but otherwise had little connection with the rest of the Island.

The semi-subsistent agricultural economy supported most of the farm population at a meagre level and provided small surpluses for sale in Halifax and St. John's. It had not attracted investment from capitalists in either staple trade, but had developed some links with the fishery and the mines. Fishermen and miners provided a local market for produce, and several hundred farmers had seasonal work in the mines, that was about the limit of the connection. Agriculture, itself, had generated some additional employment in rural services, small manufacturing and in the coasting trade.

Overall, the Island's economy was not well integrated. Cape Breton exported raw materials that it did not consume and imported supplies and manufactured goods that it did not
produce. The mines and fishery had no use for each other's products. Although agriculture fed into the staple industries to some extent, it did not provide much of a market for either fish or coal. Given the weak multipliers from each economy, the relative lack of capital accumulation among farmers, and the highly uneven distribution of wealth in the staple industries, there was virtually no basis for a large manufacturing or service industry. The Cape Breton economy in the nineteenth century never became more than a sum of its constituent parts. The failure to diversify, the trade cycles and poor employment of the staples, and the limitations of the land, combined to severely restrict opportunities on Cape Breton. By the late nineteenth century, many Islanders found the lure of the "Boston States" irresistible.

Ultimately, a good deal of Canadian life was worked out within the matrix of staple trades and farming adumbrated in the nineteenth century experience of Cape Breton. Harold Innis emphasized one important part of this framework when he argued that the foundations of early Canada were laid in the staple trades with Europe. This connection began in the early sixteenth century when European mercantile capital reached out across the Atlantic for fish, and, later, fur, timber, and minerals. At first this capital came from European merchants in London, Paris, Glasgow, and such ports as Poole and La Rochelle; later, additional capital was raised from merchants in regional metropolises in Canada. From these centres, merchant houses extended credit and
supplies to staple producers, organised the transportation and export of the raw material, and its sale in a foreign market. Such trade stretched over huge distances - from Hudson Bay fur posts to London fur dealers, or from Gaspé fisheries to Rio de Janeiro wholesalers - and was completely dependent upon foreign demand. As a result, the staple trades were extremely vulnerable: war, market glut, changing consumer preference, tariffs, foreign competition, high transport costs all exacted their toll. In the "timber colony" of New Brunswick, the early nineteenth century economy has been described as "a gigantic bandalore, ineluctably tied by the lines of transatlantic commerce to the rise and fall of the market for its staple product." Staple trades invariably followed a cycle of boom and bust.

As Innis demonstrated, each of the staple trades had considerable impact upon Canada's settlement, economy, and society. Indeed, Innis claimed that the country's boundaries were determined by the demands of the fur trade. Fur posts and outports depended almost completely upon their respective staple trades. When local resources were exhausted or transport and markets were disrupted, these settlements declined. Patterns of work were dominated by the seasonal routines of the staple trade, and the workforces were dominated by merchants. In the nineteenth century, steam-power increasingly determined the pace of work, while company bosses maintained work-discipline.

But Innis, struggling to provide a coherent
interpretation of the economic history of Canada, surely exaggerated the importance of staple trades. Although they played a large part in Canada’s development, agriculture, rather than the fur trade or the fishery, supported much of the early European population. Along the lower St. Lawrence in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the high costs of labour and overseas transport, and the weakness of local markets, discouraged mercantile investment in agriculture; commercial capital reaped more return from the cod fishery in the Gulf of St. Lawrence or the fur trade into the interior. With land in New France cheap and plentiful, men of small means could acquire land readily enough. In the years that it took to carve a farm from the bush, labour—family-labour—was often substituted for the capital that settlers did not have. Because of the availability of land and the slow growth of population, there was opportunity for almost two hundred years for small farmers to acquire land. Land was a means to "family centred independence" rather than commercial prosperity. When local markets improved or population increased, as it did around Montreal in the eighteenth century, land grew scarce and prices increased; the common man’s access to land became more difficult. Although some farms along the lower St. Lawrence were sub-divided to accommodate the landless population, many people emigrated to the nearest unsettled patch to clear another small family-farm.

In the nineteenth century this cycle of initial opportunity followed by restriction ran more quickly. In
Southwest Ontario, the Saint John River Valley of New Brunswick, the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia, and on Prince Edward Island, agricultural opportunities for immigrants from the British Isles were much greater than they were on Cape Breton. In general, farms in these areas were considerably more prosperous than those on the Island. Yet everywhere the influx and natural increase of population were so great and the limits of good agricultural land so finite that opportunities to acquire land were soon restricted. Within a generation of settlement the rising price of land in some lakeshore counties of Upper Canada reflected its increasing scarcity. In Peel County, where the price of land quadrupled between 1840 and 1870, the second generation of settlers found it much more difficult to acquire land than their fathers had done. By the 1850's, the County had a large landless labouring class.

In Quebec, where similar pressures on land had built up early in the century, many settlers combined farming with work in a staple trade. This allowed farms to be subdivided beyond their commercial viability. In the parish of Sorel, the habitants depended on subsistence farming and wages from the fur trade. In Petite-Nation in the Ottawa Valley, subsistence farming was combined with work in the timber trade. As on Cape Breton, such supplementary employment enabled settlers to survive on marginal agricultural land.

Emigration was another alternative. Until the opening of the Northwest in the 1880's, there was no expansive
agricultural frontier in Canada in the late nineteenth century. Settlers in search of new land soon encountered the granite edge of the Shield or the Appalachian Highlands. Although some migrants from the crowded ranges along the lower St. Lawrence or the densely settled lakeshore townships in Southern Ontario moved onto the thin-soiled uplands, many more headed south to the United States. In Quebec, seasonal workers were leaving to cut wood in Maine and bring in the harvest on Vermont farms as early as the 1830's. With the industrialisation of New England in the 1860's, this movement often became permanent. In the last three decades of the century, Quebec lost 10% of its population, mostly to the United States. By the 1870's, people were also leaving Ontario, usually to take up farms in neighbouring states; between 1875 and 1880, migrants from the backland counties along Lake Huron and overcrowded Glengarry County in the east were settling in North Dakota. Even before the great industrialisation of the late nineteenth century, opportunities were far greater in the United States. For almost three hundred years, land had been available for settlement, providing countless opportunities for immigrants and giving rise to a national sense of plenty and abundance.

Staple industries and a limited agricultural haven comprised much, but not all of the framework of early Canada. Towns and manufacturing were important, while in some areas, notably the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence Lowlands, the framework was obscured by the relative abundance of good
land, the continued economic stimulus of immigration, and the development of a wider range of multipliers. Even so, the cycle of immigration, population growth, and emigration, set against an economic background of staple industries and semi-subsistent farming, comprised a pattern that was common to much of settled Canada. On Cape Breton this pattern was so clearly revealed during the nineteenth century that it can surely stand as an epitome of Canadian experience.
NOTES

CHAPTER 1

1 For the early voyages see T.J. Oleson and W.L. Morton, 'The Northern Approaches to Canada.'

2 For the following physical description see D.B. Cann, J.I. MacDougall, and J.D. Hilchey Soil Survey of Cape Breton Island Nova Scotia; A.E. Roland Geological Background and Physiography of Nova Scotia; and I. Brookes 'Physical Geography of the Atlantic Provinces.'

3 For the following description see O.L. Loucks 'A Forest Classification for the Maritime Provinces;' also P.A. Bentley and E.C. Smith 'The Forests of Cape Breton in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.'

4 'A Sketch of Memorandums taken from Observations made in Exploring the Island of Cape Breton,' CO/CB/A/37 pp.124-50.

5 For the following description see Brookes 'Physical...,' pp.24-26; and T.F. Knight Shore and Deep Sea Fisheries of Nova Scotia.

6 For the cod fishery see H.A. Innis The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy.

7 N. Denys The Description and Natural History of the Coasts of North America (Acadia), pp.175-87.

8 For the following discussion see B.A. Balcom The Cod Fishery of Isle Royale 1714-58.

9 Lawrence Kavanagh, a Newfoundland merchant, was reported to be living at Louisbourg in 1768, and had probably been there for several years. R. Brown A History of the Island of Cape Breton, p.368.

10 MG 11/NS/A/98/ pp.50-53 PAC. For the Channel Island cod fishery see D. Lee The Robins in Gaspe, 1766 to 1825; and R.E. Ommer 'The Trade and Navigation of the Island,' 'Nouvelles de Mer: The Rise of Jersey Fishing, 1830-1840,' and 'All the Fish of the Post': Resource Property Rights and Development in a Nineteenth-Century Inshore Fishery.'


13 For the Loyalists on Cape Breton see R.J. Morgan 'The Loyalists of Cape Breton,' and Orphan Outpost: Cape Breton Colony, 1784-1820.

14 The population return is enclosed in General Despard to Lord Hobart, 24 December 1801, CO/CB/A/22.


16 For trade statistics see Shipping Returns for Arichat and Sydney, 1796, CO 221/34 pp.132, 135, 141-42.

17 For the discussion of the Channel Island cod trade see Ommer "All the Fish ..., 'Nouvelles ...,' and 'Trade ....'

18 Shipping Returns ....

19 Ommer 'Nouvelles ...,,' pp.168-71.

20 See DeCarteret and LeVesconte Family Papers MGl/257 PANS.

21 For a description of shallops in the French regime see Balcom The Cod ..., pp.34-35; and for those used in Nova Scotia in the nineteenth century see Knight Shore ..., p.39.

22 J. MacGregor Historical and Descriptive Sketches of the Maritime Colonies of British America, p.117.

23 For the following description of cod fishing and curing see I.Z. Joncas The Fisheries of Canada, and Knight Shore ..., pp.87-89.

24 E. Orange to F. Briard, 15 June 1861, CRC Letterbooks, MG 23/G 111/18 vol. 250 PAC.

25 Knight Shore ..., pp.27-31, 45-56.

26 Shipping Returns ....

27 Knight Shore ..., pp.31-33, 56-57.

28 Shipping Returns ....

29 Knight Shore ..., pp.33-35.

30 Shipping Returns ....

31 Shipping Returns ....
32 The practice of closing the Chéticamp station for the winter is recorded in Brown *A History* ..., p.381. The intermittent use of Sydney is suggested by the absence of Remon & Co. from later Shipping Returns.

33 For the land holdings of Jersey firms see Crown Land Index Sheets 111-12, 118-20.

34 Knight *Shore* ..., p.87.

35 J. Miller to the Duke of Portland, 31 October 1794, CO/CB/A/12 p.250.

36 Guernsey and Jersey *Magazine*, p.309.

37 Guernsey ..., p.311.

38 Shipping Returns ....

39 Fish Bounties, 1812-1830, RG 31/111/2 PANS.

40 Shipping Returns ....

41 Shipping Returns ....

42 This is suggested by Fish Bounty Returns. For example, Moses Martell of L'Ardoise, Master of the shallop 'Three Brothers,' caught and cured 146 qtls. of dry merchantable codfish during the season of 1830, "and that the same was sold to John Janvrin Esquire and placed to the credit of Moses Martell & Co. Act. in his books," RG 31/111/3 PANS.

43 The Robin agent at Arichat reported to his superior at Paspebiac, Gaspé in June 1844 that "... up to this time with us ... the fishery has been much as usual Haddocks pretty plenty Codfish scarce we have collected about 300 qtls. of Hadks off the knife from such as cannot be trusted to cure it ...." Edward Briard to John Hardeley, 19 June 1844, CRC Letterbooks, MG 23/G 111/18/240 PAC.

44 Shipping Returns ....

45 Shipping Returns ....

46 Calculated by comparing the distribution and numbers of people in the militia muster of 1793, cited in Brown *A History* ..., pp.406-7, with the census return of 1801.

47 W. Macarmick to H. Dundas, 28 March 1793, CO/CB/A/11 p.25.

48 Macarmick to Dundas ..., pp.23-24.

49 T. Crawley to W. Bruce, 13 January 1817, CO/CB/A/38 p.215.
50 Nominal census of Arichat, 1811, RG/333/84-98 PANS.

51 For the comparison with Quebec see R.C. Harris and J. Warkentin Canada Before Confederation, p.77.

52 W. Macarmick to H. Dundas, 6 October 1792, CO/CB/A/10 pp.125-33; and Shipping Returns.


54 "The fish continued to be chiefly taken by the poor people, who, in a manner by anticipation, mortgaged their catch, in the spring of the year to those merchants and shopkeepers in Halifax, who advanced supplies to them for that purpose." 'Memoir on the Cod and Small Fisheries of Nova Scotia,' 31 December 1817, RG 1/305/113 PANS.

55 Father Gaulin, appointed missionary to Arichat in June 1819. See Johnston A History ..., p.422.

56 For further discussion of pre-industrial work patterns see E.P. Thompson 'Time, Work Discipline and Industrial Capitalism.'

57 For the early history of the coal mines see R. Brown The Coal Fields and Coal Trade of the Island of Cape Breton, and J.S. Martell 'Early Coal Mining in Nova Scotia.'

58 Brown The Coal ..., p.55.

59 Miller to Portland ..., p.249.

60 Miller to Portland ..., p.257.

61 Brown The Coal ..., p.52.

62 Brown The Coal ..., pp.53-54.

63 Miller to Portland ..., p.250.

64 Miller to Portland ..., p.278.

65 Pay List of persons employed at His Majesty's Coal Mines, Cape Breton, for One Month from 25th September to 24th October 1807, both days inclusive, RG 21/A/1/141 PANS.

66 Pay List ....

67 Miller to Portland ..., p.252.
68 Miller to Portland ..., p.250.
69 Pay List ....
70 Miller to Portland ..., p.253.
71 Miller to Portland ..., p.254.
72 Shipping Returns ..., pp.135, 141-42.
73 General Nepean to Lord Liverpool, 8 February 1811, CO/CB/A/32 p.9.
74 General Swayne to Lord Bathurst, 1 March 1814, CO/CB/A/35 p.5.
75 'A Sketch of Memorandums ...,' p.133.
76 General Swayne to Lord Bathurst, 26 July 1814, CO/CB/A/35 pp.20-21.
77 Some estimate of average livestock holdings can be made from the nominal census of Cape Breton, 1811, RG/333/84-98 PANS.
78 'A Sketch of Memorandums ...,' p.133.
80 'Plan of Sydney River, 5 September 1788,' H3/240/ Sydney and Sydney River/1788 PAC.
81 See Nova Scotia Museum Cossit House.
82 J. Miller to the Duke of Portland, 4 December 1794, CO/CB/A/12 p.304.
83 Morgan 'The Loyalists ...,' and E.A. Jackson 'Some of North Sydney's Loyalists.'
84 Martell 'Early ....'
85 Despard to Hobart ..., p.235.
86 J. Miller to J. King, 17 July 1795, CO/CB/A/13 p.131.
87 'Map of the Town of Sydney, 10 July 1795.' H3/240/ Sydney/1795 PAC.
88 Miller to King ..., p.133, and W. Smith 'State of the Island of Cape Breton, from the year 1784 to the present time.' MG 1/1848/8 p.12 PANS.
The governor's residence is depicted by John Hames in his 'View of Sydney in the Island of Cape Breton,' 1799, C-24939 PAC.


'A Diary of someone from Sydney, Cape Breton in 1802,' RG 21/A/40/7 PANS.

'A Diary ....'

'Morgan 'The Loyalists ....'

'Letter written by a soldier newly arrived from England, 5 August 1789,' MG 23/J11 PAC.

CHAPTER 2

For the most recent treatment of Highland emigration to British North America see J.M. Bumsted The People's Clearance. For emigration to Cape Breton see D.C. Harvey 'Scottish Immigration to Cape Breton.'

It is impossible to know exactly how many Highlanders arrived on Cape Breton, but Harvey's estimate of about 20,000 must be close.

Canada, Dept. of Agriculture Census of Canada 1871. The ethnic distribution was Scots 66%, Acadians 14%, Irish 9%, and English/Loyalist 8%.

For example, see General Ainslie to Lord Bathurst, 25 November 1816, CO 217/134; and Sir James Kempt to Wilmot Horton, 14 September 1826, CO 217/146.

The genealogies are collected in J.L. MacDougall History of Inverness County, while the survey of tombstones was conducted by Sandra Ferguson and the Mss. deposited in the Beaton Institute.

The best recent accounts of Highland society are M. Gray The Highland Economy 1750-1850, and J. Hunter The Making of the Crofting Community. Much of this chapter is drawn from these two works.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Macdonald of Clan Ranald's estates included Benbecula and South Uist in the Outer Hebrides; Eigg and Canna in the Inner Hebrides; and the parishes of Arisaig and Moidart on the mainland.

Gray *The Highland ...*, p.199.

For a good description of a runrig township see W.F. Skene *Celtic Scotland: A History of Ancient Alban*, vol.3, chp.10.

For accounts of this transition see Gray *The Highland ...*, pp.66-75; and Hunter *The Making ...*, pp.15-33.

I.A. Crawford 'Feannagan Taomaidh (Lazy Beds).'

I.F. Grant *Highland Folk Ways*, p.96.

Gray *The Highland ...*, pp.207-8; and R. Salaman *The History and Social Influence of the Potato*, pp.346-85.


J. MacDonald *General View of the Agriculture of the Hebrides*, p.152.

Evidence taken by Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, vol.1, p.651.


D. Shaw to A. Hunter, 25 February 1827, GD 201/4/97 SRO.

W. Marshall *General View of the Agriculture of the Central Highlands of Scotland*, pp.37-38; and Sir J. Sinclair *General View of the Agriculture of the Northern Counties and Islands of Scotland*, p.114. On Tiree and Coll it was reported that "Crofters have no winter pasture, and the utmost they can often do is keep their cows from starving, during, the winter and the spring," *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol.7, p.213.

I.A. Crawford 'Kelp Burning.'

MacDonald *General View ...*, p.120.

Gray *The Highland ...*, pp.197-98.
24 Shaw to Hunter ....
25 Shaw to Hunter ....
26 South Uist in the *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol.14, p.189; and A. Fenton *Scottish Country Life*, chp.9.
27 Grant *Highland ...*, p.295.
28 A. Fenton *The Island Blackhouse*; and Macdonald *Lewis ...*, pp.57-62.
29 Shaw to Hunter ....
30 Macdonald *General View ...*, p.119.
31 James MacDonald in the *General View ...* reported that "many hundred families or individuals ... are tenants at will, without leases, without definite boundaries of landed possessions, without anything, excepting debts, which they call their own; and, alas! without any prospect before them but beggary and the grave," p.111.
32 Margaret Mackay, School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, deduces this from her recent research on the demography of the Island of Tiree.
34 J.M. Bumsted 'Highland Emigration to the Island of St. John and the Scottish Catholic Church, 1769-1774.'
35 J. Hunter 'The Emergence of the Crofting Community: The Religious Contribution 1798-1843.'
36 Cited in Hunter 'The Emergence ...,' p.99.
37 Although Bumsted dates The People's Clearance from 1770 to 1815, the evidence suggests that the "people's clearance" extended into the 1820's when the collapse of the kelp industry led to the landlord-initiated clearances. There was probably a shading into each period, rather than a definite divide.
38 Quoted in Hunter *The Making ...*, p.20.
40 Quoted in Hunter *The Making ...*, p.23.
41 Bumsted *The People's ...*, Appendix A, Table II.
Bumsted The People's ..., Appendix A, Table II.

General Swayne to Lord Bathurst, 1 March 1814, CO 217/132.

'A Statement relative to the treatment received by the Passengers in the Ship William Tell and Brig Hope from Greenock to this Island' enclosed in General Ainslie to Lord Bathurst, 1 October 1817, CO 217/135.

J. Adam to Lord Seaforth, 31 March 1827, GD 46/17/72 SRO.

D. Shaw to A. Hunter, 25 February 1827, GD 201/4/97 SRO.

'Quoted in Hunter The Making ..., p.35.

Factor's Report, 19 November 1827, GD 201/1/338 SRO.

Gray The Highland ..., p.158.

Gray The Highland ..., p.182.

Factor's Report, 21 April 1823, GD 201/1/352 SRO.

Particulars of the Estate of Clan Ranald, 1836 and 1837, GD 201/5/1235/16-17 SRO.

'Quoted in Hunter The Making ..., p.37.

R. Brown to A. Swinton, 16 February 1827, GD 201/5/1228/3 SRO.

Factor's Report, 19 November 1827, GD 201/1/338 SRO; and Factor's Report, 14 December 1839, GD 221/38 SRO.

Note of Leases on Clan Ranald's Estate, 29 January 1833, GD 201/5/1217/70, and Particulars of the Estate of Clan Ranald ..., SRO.

Hunter The Making ..., pp.45-47; and J.B. Caird The Isle of Harris.

Quoted in Hunter The Making ..., p.47.

Quoted in Hunter The Making ..., p.47.


Factor's Report, 19 November 1827, GD 201/1/338 SRO.

Factor's Report, 8 May 1827, GD 201/1/354 SRO.
64 Factor's Report, 8 May 1827 ....
65 Acadian Recorder, 23 July 1831.
66 Hunter The Making ..., p.46; and Brown to Swinton, 16 February 1827 ....
67 Hunter The Making ..., p.46.
68 Hunter The Making ..., p.47.
69 'A Return of Emigrants arrived in the Island of Cape Breton for the years 1821 to the present time,' enclosed in Sir Peregrine Maitland to Viscount Goderich, 24 June 1831, CO 217/152.
70 This passenger list, the only one that appears to have survived, is reprinted in MacDougall History of Inverness ..., pp.126-31.
71 J. MacGregor Observations on Emigration to British America, p.41.
72 Knoydart is in the parish of Glenelg. The quotation is from C. Fraser-Mackintosh (ed.) Letters of Two Centuries chiefly connected with Inverness and the Highlands, from 1616 to 1815, pp.311-12.
73 D. Campbell to H. McKay, 7 October 1830, reprinted in the Stornaway Gazette, 30 September 1972; also filed in MG 100/115/33 PANS. For a description of the township of Tong in the 1820's see Hunter The Making ..., p.45.
74 D. Shaw to A. Hunter, 25 February 1827, GD 201/4/97 SRO.
75 See Petition of Mary McIsaac, 9 February 1858, RG 5/P/87/102 PANS.
76 Novascotian, 11 October 1832.
78 Sir Peregrine Maitland to Viscount Goderich, 16 February 1832, CO 217/154.
79 Cited in J.S. Martell Immigration to and Emigration from Nova Scotia 1815-1838, p.27.
CHAPTER 3


2 Census return for 1838, RG 1/449 PANS; and for 1851, RG 1/453 PANS.

3 Taking account of the rapid increase of population between 1827-30 and 1851, Harvey's estimate of 20,000 Scottish immigrants must be about right. The number of Newfoundland Irish arriving on Cape Breton is more problematic. Certainly, Irish were drifting in throughout the nineteenth century, many of them moving on to Boston. Taking account of the Irish at Sydney Mines and the new settlements at Margaree, Port Hood, and Red Islands, several hundred Newfoundland Irish must have emigrated to Cape Breton before 1850. For the Irish on Cape Breton see A.A. MacKenzie The Irish in Cape Breton.

4 The following discussion of settlement is based on the land grant maps. These maps were created using the Records of the Crown Lands Office, 1738 to 1962, RG 20/A/3 PANS, and the Crown Land Index Sheets 108-12, 114-33, and 135-40, Nova Scotia Dept. of Lands and Forests. Every grant recorded between 1786 and 1850 was located on the Index Sheets and mapped. Of course, not every grant was taken up and many grants were made out years after settlement. Nevertheless, the long period covered by each map probably catches many of the settlers who delayed taking out a grant. The 1820-50 map is probably an underestimate of the extent of settlement on the Island.

5 See 'Extracts from H.M. General Instructions to the Governors of Nova Scotia, 1789,' CO/CB/A/35 p.5.
6 General Nepean to Lord Liverpool, 8 February 1811, CO/CB/A/32 p.9; and General Swayne to Lord Bathurst, 26 July 1814, CO/CB/A/35 p.5.

7 Acknowledgement of the new instructions is contained in General Ainslie to Lord Bathurst, 13 October 1818, CO/CB/A/39 pp.121-23.

8 Instructions for Captain Crawley, Surveyor General of Cape Breton, 1820, CO 217/138. See also Memoranda relative to the Grants of Crown Lands in the Province of Nova Scotia during the last twenty years, 14 November 1825, CO 217/145.

9 Although purchasers of Crown land were expected to pay an annual quit-rent, the cost of collection was too expensive and they were never collected. They were eventually abolished in 1834 after the Nova Scotia House of Assembly agreed to commute them for an annual sum of £2,000 stig. to support the Civil List. See the communication from Sir Colin Campbell, 29 December 1834, CO 217/156. For a Table of Fees for the Surveyor General’s Office see CO/CB/A/39 p.309.

10 Return of the titles of land registered in Cape Breton, 1821, printed in Haliburton An Historical ..., vol.1, p.304.

11 Sir James Kempt to Lord Bathurst, 27 April 1827, CO 217/147. For the background of the change in policy see R.G. Riddell ‘A Study in the Land Policy of the Colonial Office, 1763-1855.’

12 See the evidence of Sir Rupert George, Secretary of the Province of Nova Scotia, to Lord Durham’s Commission, British Parliamentary Papers, Canada, 2, 1839, pp.132-33.

13 Sir Peregrine Maitland to Viscount Goderich, 12 August 1831, CO 217/152.

14 The number of sales are recorded in the annual reports of the Crown Lands Office printed in the Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia. See also John Morris, Commissioner of Crown Lands, to Sir Rupert George, 1 April 1837, CO 217/163.

15 H.W. Crawley to Sir Rupert George, 5 April 1837, RG 20/C/54 PANS.

16 H.W. Crawley to Sir Rupert George, 8 May 1844, RG 20/C/56 PANS.
17 H.W. Crawley to Crown Lands Office, 17 February 1844, RG 20/C/56 PANS.

18 H.W. Crawley to Sir Rupert George, 22 January 1844, RG 20/C/56 PANS.

19 D.B. McNab to H.W. Crawley, 28 September 1840, RG 20/C/55 PANS.

20 D.B. McNab to W.A. Hendry, 30 January 1854, RG 20/C/58 PANS.


22 For the following see the Petition of Samuel Campbell residing at the Kempt Road County of Richmond Cape Breton to Sir Colin Campbell, 4 June 1837, RG 5/GP/1/85 PANS.

23 For the following see the Letter from James Hawley JP and other inhabitants on behalf of John McPherson to H.W. Crawley, 13 July 1836, RG 20/C/54 PANS.


25 For the struggle between the Legislature and the Colonial Office see the various despatches in *Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1841*, Appendix 13.


28 Average values of improved dyke land are contained in the census of 1851, RG 1/453 PANS.

29 Annual Report of the Richmond Agricultural Society, 31 December 1842, RG 8/13/22 PANS.

30 See the Farm Accounts of John B. Moore, Documents, 1848-99, MG 1/Biography PANS. The importance of the local market provided by farmers has been stressed by B.H. Pruitt 'Self-Sufficiency and the Agricultural Economy of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts.'
Regarding the lack of markets, James Doyle, Secretary of the Mabou Agricultural Society, reported to John Young, Secretary of the Central Board of Agriculture, that "... the scheme of prizes could be made more suitable to our local situation, by allowing us to give at least one half of the sum allotted us for the encouragement of the growth of wheat, our situation at a long distance from market and the present low prices, renders every other kind of produce, scarce worth the trouble and expense of exportation," Doyle to Young, 27 December 1823, RG 8/7/143 PANS. But although Doyle was optimistic about the export of wheat, the Committee on Agriculture reported a few years later that domestic wheat was not grown for export because of American competition and the lack of flour mills, Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1833-35, Appendix 41.

Cattle exported to Newfoundland sometimes arrived so weak that they had to be fattened on local farms before being butchered. See the report on cattle imports sent by Stewart & Co., St. John's, to James Wilson, merchant at Port Hawkesbury, 17 August 1847, Documents, 1814-1929, MG 1/964-976 PANS.

Shipping Returns for Arichat and Sydney, 1814, CO 221/35 pp. 83, 84, 88, 89, 90.

Reports of agricultural imports in The Newfoundlander, August, September, and October 1828. Data kindly supplied by Robert Mackinnon.

See the annual reports of the agricultural societies in the Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1846, Appendix 77; 1847, Appendix 39; 1848, Appendix 39; 1849, Appendix 100; 1850, Appendix 39.

A frontland farm is defined as a lot fronting a river, lakeshore, or coast and on land of some agricultural value. The number of frontland and intervale farms was calculated from the Crown Land Index Sheets.

A.F. Haliburton, Secretary of the Cape Breton Agricultural Society, reported to Titus Smith, Secretary of the Central Board of Agriculture: "I am sorry to say agriculture is in its infancy here ... my opinion is that this is more of a grazing county than a grain county," 16 January 1843, RG 8/13/22 PANS.

See note 32.
40 J.S. Martell 'From Central Board to Secretary of Agriculture, 1826-1885.'

41 E. Sutherland, Secretary of the Cape Breton Agricultural Society, to T. Smith, 17 May 1841, RG 8/13/22 PANS.

42 Annual Report of the Broad Cove Agricultural Society, 17 January 1845, RG 8/13/22 PANS.

43 For comments on the poor quality of butter see Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1888, Appendix 8.


45 "The general use of Red Clover seems to have opened the eyes of farmers to its value as it exhausts the land less than any kind of grass while it gives a good crop of hay," Annual Report of the Margaree Agricultural Society, 1846, RG 8/13/22 PANS. For hay yields see the Census of 1851, RG 1/453 PANS.

46 Census of 1851, RG 1/453 PANS.

47 See J.S. Martell 'The Achievements of Agricola and the Agricultural Societies, 1818-1825.'

48 J. Doyle, Secretary of the Mabou Agricultural Society, to J. Young, 27 December 1823, RG 8/7/143 PANS.

49 R. Smith to R.I. Cochran, 5 October 1833, MG 14/19/D8(a) BI; and D.B. McNab to T. Smith, 16 April 1844, RG 8/13/22 PANS.

50 Calculated from Census of 1851, RG 1/453 PANS.

51 R. MacDonald, Secretary of the Mabou Agricultural Society, wrote to John Young on 21 December 1821, requesting seed for Clover, Timothy, and Ray grass, parsnips, carrots, beets, cabbage, and onions, RG 8/7/132 PANS. A. Taylor, President of the Baddeck United Agricultural Society, made a similar request, 14 April 1848, RG 8/13/22 PANS.


53 Scheme of Agricultural Prizes for the year 1822 selected by the Agricultural Society of Sydney, Cape Breton, RG 8/7/136 PANS; and H.W. Crawley to J. Young, 24 April 1824, RG 8/7/158 PANS.
H. Blanchard to T. Smith, 15 January 1845, RG 8/13/22 PANS.

Annual Report of the Broad Cove Agricultural Society, 2 March 1846, RG 8/13/22 PANS.

Annual Report of the Broad Cove Agricultural Society, 17 February 1845, RG 8/13/22 PANS.

An account of Implements, Stock, Seeds, etc. Imported and Sold by the Inverness Agricultural Society in the Year 1842, RG 8/13/22 PANS; Annual Report of the Margaree Agricultural Society, 1846, RG 8/13/22 PANS; and Martell 'From Central Board ....'

Without the use of a horse-drawn reaper, a farmer could probably harvest about 12 acres of grain or grass. See J.A. Henretta The Evolution of American Society, 1700-1815: An Interdisciplinary Analysis, pp.15-18.

Haliburton An Historical ..., vol.1, p.259.

Memoranda relative to the Grants of Crown Lands in the Province of Nova Scotia during the last twenty years, 14 November 1825, CO 217/145.

The following discussion is based on P. Ennals and D. Holdsworth 'Vernacular Architecture and the Cultural Landscape of the Maritime Provinces - A Reconnaissance,' P. Ennals 'The Yankee Origins of Bluenose Vernacular Architecture,' and my own observations of vernacular buildings on Cape Breton.

The following discussion is based on my own observations and P. Ennals 'Nineteenth-Century Barns in Southern Ontario.'

Sir James Kempt to W. Huskisson, 2 May 1828, CO 217/148.

D. Campbell to H. Mckay, 7 October 1830, reprinted in the Stornaway Gazette, 30 September 1972; also filed in MG 100/115/33 PANS.

D. McNeil to W. McNeil, 25 June 1849, GD 403/27/2 SRO.

See the nominal census of 1871.

Petition of John Mathewson, William Corbet, David Corbet, Robert McCoy, and Farquhar Mathewson, RG 20/B/1774 PANS. For family settlement on Cape Breton see R.E. Ommer 'Highland Scots Migration to Southwestern Newfoundland: A Study of Kinship,' and 'Primitive accumulation and the Scottish clann in the Old World and the New.'
68 Campbell to Mckay ....

69 Quoted in L.M. Toward 'The Influence of Scottish Clergy on early Education in Cape Breton,' p.158.

70 Quoted in L. Stanley The Well-Watered Garden: The Presbyterian Church in Cape Breton, 1798-1860, p.35.

71 Stanley The Well-Watered ..., p.59.

72 Stanley The Well-Watered ....

73 Stanley The Well-Watered ..., p.122.

74 See Martell 'The Achievements of Agricola ..., and 'From Central Board ....'

75 Annual Report of the Richmond Agricultural Society, 31 December 1841, RG 8/13/22 PANS.

76 Annual Report of the Richmond Agricultural Society ....


78 The following discussion is based on the Census of 1851, RG 1/453 PANS.

79 Petition, 29 February 1824, RG 5/P/120/55 PANS.

80 Petition, 29 February 1824 ....

81 Petition, 29 February 1824 ....

82 J.Doyle to J. Young, 27 December 1823, RG 8/7/143 PANS.

83 J. Bull to J. Young, 8 January 1824, RG 8/7/156 PANS.

84 Martell 'The Achievements of Agricola ....'

85 Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1848 Appendix 86; 1852 Appendix 18; 1853 Appendix 11, 12, and 62.

86 Census of 1851, RG 1/453 PANS.

87 Census of 1851 ....

88 Census of 1851 ....

89 Some of William McKeen's Papers are in MG 12/109 Bl.
The number of backland farms was calculated from the Crown Land Index Sheets and the Census of 1851.

A similar petition from settlers on the front and rear of St. Patrick's Channel, Little Narrows also spoke of the "well known fact that the inland settlements about the Bras d'or Lakes are no grain country; the potatoes are almost all they have to live upon throughout the year," 25 January 1847, RG 5/P/83/67 PANS.

John Young, the leading agricultural improver in Nova Scotia during the 1820's, was a scathing critic of much agriculture in the province. See his Letters of Agricola on the principles of Vegetation and Tillage, for Nova Scotia, and published first in the Acadian Reporter.

D.B. McNab to T. Smith, 16 April 1844, RG 8/13/22 PANS.

H.W. Crawley to Sir Rupert George, 28 February 1840, RG 20/C/55 PANS.


The American mackerel fishery in the Gulf expanded rapidly from the early 1830's, often employing labour from Nova Scotia; see Innis The Cod Fisheries ..., pp.323-28.

General Ainslie to Lord Bathurst, 29 September 1818, CO 217/136 p.120. See also Haliburton An Historical ..., pp.236-37, and the 'History of Baddeck' by Robert Elmsley, c.1840's, in MG 1/1840/7 PANS.

H.W. Crawley to Sir Rupert George, 28 February 1837, RG 20/C/54 PANS.

M. McNeil to J. Morris, 16 October 1851, RG 20/C/58 PANS.

D.B. McNab to W.A. Hendry, March 1854, RG 20/C/58 PANS.
The following discussion is based on the Ledger of John McKay & Co., MG 3/8 PANS.

A. Gesner The Industrial Resources of Nova Scotia, p.310; and MacGregor Historical and Descriptive Sketches ..., p.117.

Extract of a letter written by Revd. John Stewart quoted in a 'Memorial Regarding the Religious State of the Island of Cape Breton, respectfully addressed by the Glasgow North American Colonial Society, to the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for the British Colonies,' 1835, CO 217/159.

Quoted in Stanley The Well-Watered ..., p.82

Petition, 26 January 1833, RG 5/P/80/67 PANS.


Petition, 5 December 1836, RG 5/P/18/23 PANS.

C.R. Ward et al. to Sir Rupert George, 4 April 1837, MG 6/2/1 PANS.

Quoted in Stanley The Well-Watered ..., p.100.

H.W. Crawley reckoned that on Cape Breton "A man can support himself and family, if he work himself, or attend personally to his labours - Beyond this their [sic] is seldom much profit," Information for emigrants of the labouring class, 1841, RG 1/384 PANS.

CHAPTER 4

For the end of the migratory fishery to Newfoundland see S. Ryan 'The Newfoundland Salt Cod Trade in the Nineteenth Century.'

Remon & Co. do not appear in the Shipping Returns for Sydney, 1814, CO 221/35 p.86.

For a brief history of the firm see the entry for Isaac LeVesconte in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol.10, 1871-1880.
4 Petition of Joseph Le Blanc, 2 March 1830, RG 5/P/121/89; and J. Bailleul, agent for Thoume, Moulin & Co., to Creighton & Grassie, 9 March 1836, Joseph Wilson Papers, MG 1/964-976 PANS.


6 Shipping Returns ....

7 For the development of the Brazil trade see Ryan 'The Newfoundland ...,,' pp.52-57.

8 See the Bill of Lading of the 'Shamrock,' DeCarteret & LeVesconte Business Papers, MG 3/1/156 PANS.

9 DeCarteret & LeVesconte to Creighton & Grassie, 22 April 1842, DeCarteret & LeVesconte Business Papers MG 3/5-9 PANS.

10 DeCarteret & LeVesconte to D. Frazer, 1 April 1842, DeCarteret & LeVesconte Business Papers ....

11 P. & H.N. Paint to DeCarteret & LeVesconte, 16 June 1858, DeCartaret & LeVesconte Papers, MG 1/257/289 PANS; and P. DeCartaret to J. Wilson, 29 April 1840, DeCarteret & LeVesconte Business Papers ....

12 For the agents see the Letter Book, 1839-1843, DeCarteret & LeVesconte Business Papers ....

13 For ship movements see the Letter Book, 1839-1843, DeCarteret & LeVesconte Business Papers ..., and Ommer 'Nouvelles de Mer ....' 

14 P. DeCarteret to P. LeVesconte, 3 August 1842, DeCarteret & LeVesconte Business Papers ....

15 Thoume Moulin & Co. had two fishing stations on Cape Breton, one at River Bourgoise and the other at Port Hawkesbury. It appears that Joseph Wilson first bought the River Bourgoise establishment, and then a year later moved to Port Hawkesbury where he might have purchased the second station. Both properties were advertised by Creighton & Grassie in the Novascotian, 5 November 1835, and information on Wilson’s property dealings can be gleaned from J. Bailleul to Creighton & Grassie ....

16 See the 'Invoice Sundries shipped by Wm. Pryor & Sons ...,,' 6 May 1843; and W.Pryor & Sons to J. Wilson, 5 July 1842, Joseph Wilson Papers ....

17 J. Wilson to W. Pryor & Sons, 9 December 1842, Joseph Wilson Papers ....
18 W. Pryor & Sons to J. Wilson, 20 December 1842, Joseph Wilson Papers ....

19 W. Pryor & Sons to J. Wilson, 5 July 1842, Joseph Wilson Papers ....

20 Stewart & Co. to J. Wilson, 17 August 1847, Joseph Wilson Papers ....

21 J. Wilson to W. Pryor & Sons, 26 August 1847, Joseph Wilson Papers ....

22 The Census of 1851 is confusing and contradictory on the number of fishermen on Cape Breton. Under "Nos. engaged in various Occupations" it lists 2,669 people engaged in the fisheries, but in the census of the fisheries the numbers of men on boats and vessels are much higher. Obviously, there was a considerable problem in defining a fisherman who was also a farmer or a mariner. I have used the occupational data for Table 4.1 and Figure 4.2, and the fisheries data for Table 4.2.

23 DeCarteret stopped sending ships to Labrador in 1840 "as it is expensive and the fish is bad [i.e. heavily salted] that we receive from that quarter," P. DeCarteret to P. LeVesconte, 9 June 1840, DeCarteret & LeVesconte Business Papers ....

24 J.W. Robin to Charles Robin & Co., 12 April 1853, CRC Letterbooks, MG 23/G 111/18/245 PAC.

25 Knight Shore ..., p.29; and P. DeCarteret to P. LeVesconte, 9 June 1840, DeCarteret & LeVesconte Business Papers ....

26 Census of 1851 ....

27 P. DeCarteret to P. LeVesconte, 20 November 1840; and P. DeCarteret to D. Frazer, 1 April 1842, DeCarteret & LeVesconte Business Papers ....

28 The following is based on Knight Shore ..., p.35 and Seal Bounty Returns, RG 31/111/4 PANS.


33 For the shipbuilding industry see J.P. Parker Cape Breton Ships and Men, and R. Langhout 'Alternative Opportunities: The Development of Shipping at Sydney Harbour 1842-1889.'

34 Census of 1851 ....

35 Census of 1851 ....

36 P. DeCarteret to P. LeVesconte, 27 August 1841; P. DeCarteret to J. Wilson, 29 April 1840, DeCarteret & LeVesconte Business Papers ...., and J. Wilson to P. DeCarteret, 20 March 1840, Joseph Wilson Papers ....

37 P. DeCarteret to P. LeVesconte, 27 August 1841, DeCarteret & LeVesconte Business Papers ....

38 Parker Cape Breton Ships ..., p.101.

39 Guernsey and Jersey Magazine, p.309.

40 Guernsey and Jersey Magazine ....

41 Census of 1851 ....

42 Census of 1851 ....

43 For further discussion of this point see Ommer ‘"All the Fish of the Post" ....,’ p.111.

44 P. DeCarteret to P. LeVesconte, 3 August 1842, DeCarteret & LeVesconte Business Papers ....

45 DeCarteret & LeVesconte to Creighton & Grassie, 25 June 1842, DeCarteret & LeVesconte Business Papers ....

46 Letter from 'A SON OF GRANNNAGH, ' Novascotian, 11 July 1839.


48 Sabine Report ....

49 Based on the Census of 1851 which gives the religious affiliation of the population and the Census of Canada, 1871, Canada Dept. of Agriculture.

50 For the following see Census of 1851 ....

51 Johnston A History ..., vol.2, p.54.
52 Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1852, Appendix 25.

53 The following is based on Brown *The Coal ...*, pp.47-55.

54 The best source on the G.M.A. is Brown *The Coal ...*

55 For a biography of Smith see the entry in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol.9, 1861-1870.

56 Brown *The Coal ...*, p.77.

57 For the following see Brown *The Coal ...*, pp.68-73.

58 Brown *The Coal ...*, p.72.

59 S. Cunard to Viscount Falkland, 22 December 1842, RG 1/459/104 PANS; see also S. Cunard to Earl Gray, 16 May 1848, MG 100/190/21c PANS, and S. Cunard to Sir Rupert George, 5 December 1849, RG 1/465/3 PANS.

60 W.R. Johnson *The Coal Trade of British America with researches on the characters and practical values of American and Foreign Coals*, p.44.


62 Brown *The Coal ...*, p.68.

63 Canadian Mining Review, 1894, p.142.


65 See ‘An account of the Numbers, Names and Situations of the Pits of His Majesty’s Coal Mines in Bridgeport C. Breton,’ 1 January 1837, RG 1/464/6 PANS, and Report of the Inspector of Mines ....

66 Gilpin *Coal Mining ...*, pp.16-17.

67 ‘A Brief History of the early coal hauling in Cape Breton,’ RG 21/A/39/57 PANS.

68 Novascotian, 17 September 1835.

69 W. Crawley, Memorandum respecting Gypsum Quarries Cape Breton and Coal Mine with list of Mines and Quarries in the Island of Cape Breton, 2 August 1836, RG 1/463/29 PANS.
70 Johnson The Coal Trade ..., p.25.

71 Workmen's Time Book, June 1832, RG 21/A/40/10 PANS.

72 'Statement of Men, Horses, and Machinery, employed at Sydney Mines in September 1838,' and 'Statement of Men, and Horses employed at the Bridgeport Mines in September 1838,' RG1/463/32 and 33 PANS.


74 "Wise men" was a term used in the G.M.A. Workmen's Time and Pay Books, MG 14/19/A.1 BI.


76 Petition from R. Brown, 4 June 1827, RG 1/459/11 PANS. See also the Daily Journal, 4 January 1831, MG 14/19/E.1(a) BI for a reference to Welshmen, and the Diary of a G.M.A. employee (probably R. Brown), 2 November 1829, MG 14/19/D.10(a) BI for a reference to Cornish labourers.

77 R.M. Martin History of Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, the Sable Islands, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, the Bermudas, Newfoundland, etc., etc., p.112.

78 Johnson The Coal Trade ..., p.21.

79 Johnson The Coal Trade .... p.21.

80 This is calculated from the Mines Reports published later in the century in the Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia.

81 R.H. Brown, Richard Brown's son and successor as the G.M.A. agent at Sydney Mines, describes the seasonal round in his Diary, 1881, RG 21/A/38/12 PANS.

82 For the following see the Diary of a G.M.A. employee ....

83 For discussion of this point see Thompson 'Time, Work Discipline ....'
84 See the photograph of the "Oldest Row of Houses in Existence at Sydney Mines, C.B.," The Saturday Globe, 31 August 1901. In a letter from R. Smith to J. Smith, 12 June 1833, two brick-makers from England were reported to have arrived at Sydney Mines; they may have supplied the bricks for the company housing, MG 14/19/D.8 (a) BJ.

85 The interior arrangements of G.M.A. houses are described in the Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labour ..., p.412.

86 The 1851 Census shows that Sydney Mines had 321 families out of a total population of 2,116, and does not show any imbalance in the sex or age ratio of the population.

87 The following is based on Johnson The Coal Trade ..., p.20, although his figures have been converted into sterling.

88 For wages in the Lanarkshire coalfield see A.B. Campbell The Lanarkshire Miners: A Social History of their Trade Unions, 1775-1874, p.19. The high cost of labour at the Cape Breton mines was noted by Martin History of Nova Scotia ..., p.111.

89 J. Madison to J. Stevenson, 28 December 1835, MG 100/185/17 PANS.

90 On 23 October 1829, Richard Brown "Paid off balance due to several of the men who had been discharged for their bad conduct on the 19 inst. Understanding that Alexr. Smith who was one of the party intended going in the Schr. Arichat Boudrot to Hfx. gave him notice that if he took Smith away he would render himself answerable for the debt due by Smith to the Association. R.B.[rown] having previously offered Smith work at Bridgeport until the debt should be paid off." Diary of a G.M.A. employee ....

91 Madison to Stevenson ....

92 Diary of a G.M.A. employee ....

93 Diary of a G.M.A. employee ....

94 Gesner The Industrial ..., pp.273-74.

95 Workmen's Time Book, 1832, MG 14/19/E.1 (a) BI.

96 R. Smith to A. Belcher, 6 September 1832, MG 14/19/D.8(a) BJ, and A. Belcher to R. Smith, 26 September 1832, MG 14/19/D.9(a) BJ.
CHAPTER 5

1 For details of the disease see Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1846, Appendix 77; and Salaman The History ..., pp.289-92.

2 Annual Report of the Margaree Agricultural Society, 1846, RG 8/13/22 PANS.

3 W. Ousley to J.W. Johnston, 2 January 1846, RG 8/13/22 PANS.


5 W. Ousley to W. Scott, 9 January 1847, RG 8/13/22 PANS.

6 Annual Report of the Margaree Agricultural Society, 1846 ....

7 Ousley to Johnston ....

8 Presbyterian Witness, 15 August 1851.


10 Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1846, Appendix 77.

11 Petition from Isle Madame, Richmond County, 17 January 1846, RG 5/P/124/102 PANS.

12 Petition from Isle Madame ....

13 Petition from Arichat, 10 December 1845, RG 1/278/114 PANS.

14 Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1847, Appendix 39; and Petition of the Settlers of South Side of St. Patrick's Channel, 14 January 1846, RG 5/P/53/53 PANS.

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18 Petition from Settlers on the front and rear of St. Patrick's Channel, 25 January 1847, RG 5/P/83/67 PANS.

19 Petition of the Settlers on the new Road and vicinity from Little Narrows to Lake Ainslie, 12 February 1847, RG 5/P/83/109 PANS.

20 Petition of the Inhabitants of Loch Lomond and its vicinity, 26 February 1847, RG 5/P/53/85 PANS.

21 A. Brymer to Sir Rupert George, 8 April 1847, RG 5/P/83/133 PANS.

22 Petition from Whycocomagh, River Denys, and Malagawatch, 4 May 1847, RG 5/P/83/139 PANS.

23 Petition of JPs, Merchants, Freeholders, and other Inhabitants of Whycocomagh, River Denys, and Malagawatch, 26 April 1847, MG 6/2/1 PANS; and Petition from South End of Lake Ainslie, 3 May 1847, RG 5/P/83/138 PANS.

24 Petition from the JPs for Inverness County, 12 May 1847, RG 5/P/83/141 PANS. In a petition from Lake Ainslie, settlers explained that "having lost almost the whole of their cattle, are without credit as well as means; and on that account are refused all further supplies of meal from the local merchants," 23 June 1847, RG 5/P/83/157 PANS.

25 Brymer to George ....

26 Petition of JPs, Merchants, Freeholders, and other Inhabitants of Whycocomagh, River Denys, and Malagawatch, 26 April 1847, MG 6/2/1 PANS.

27 Petition of Merchants, Magistrates, and other Inhabitants of the Township of Lake Ainslie, 5 May 1847, MG 6/2/2 PANS.

28 J. Janvrin to Sir Rupert George, 27 April 1847, RG 5/P/83/135 PANS.

29 Petition from the JPs for Inverness County, 12 May 1847, RG 5/P/83/141 PANS.
30 W. Young to Sir John Harvey, 12 May 1847, MG 6/2/1 PANS.

31 Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1847, Appendix 73.

32 Janvrin to George ..., and Petition from George Brymer et al, 29 April 1847, RG 5/P/83/135 PANS.

33 J. Janvrin to Sir Rupert George, 20 May 1847, RG 5/P/83/144 PANS.

34 Petition from Settlers on Loch Lomond, 12 June 1847, RG 5/P/83/154 PANS. See also D.B. McNab to Sir Rupert George, 12 June 1847, RG 5/P/83/153 PANS.

35 For the following see Petition of the Inhabitants of Whycocomagh, Malagawatch, River Denys, Indian Rear, Skye Glen, etc, 19 June 1847, RG 5/P/83/156 PANS.


38 K. McLeod JP, J. Campbell JP, Alex. Farquharson to J.B. Uniacke, 17 November 1847, MG 6/2/1 PANS.

39 See petitions from Grand Narrows, 12 November 1847; Cape North, 6 October 1847; Ingonish, 30 September 1847; Gabarus and Grand Mira, 1847, MG 6/2/1 PANS.

40 For the following see Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1848, Appendix 67; and for the distribution of relief supplies see J.B. Uniacke to Sir Rupert George, 13 December 1847, MG 6/2/1 PANS.

41 For the following see C.F. Harrington to Sir Rupert George, 11 December 1847, RG 5/P/83/174 PANS.

42 For the following see C.F. Harrington to Sir Rupert George, 29 December 1847, RG 5/P/83/180 PANS.

43 For the following see Petition from Freeholders and other Inhabitants of the East Section of Lake Ainslie, 27 January 1848, RG 5/P/84/19 PANS; and Letter from Freeholders and other Inhabitants of the Eastern Section of Township of Lake Ainslie to W. Young and P. Smyth, 27 January 1848, RG 5/84/19 PANS.

44 W. Jones and D. McRae to J.B. Uniacke, 21 February 1848, MG 6/2/1 PANS.

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45 J. Frazer and A. Farquharson to J.B. Uniacke, 11 March 1848, MG 6/2/1 PANS.
46 Petition from Revd. N. McLeod, and others, inhabitants of St. Ann's, 16 March 1848, RG 5/P/84/68 PANS.
47 W. Kidston to A. Scott, 18 April 1848, RG 8/13/22 PANS.
48 Petition from H. Thompson, Margaree, 22 April 1848, RG 5/GP/7/30 PANS.
50 Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1849, Appendix 100.
51 Petition of the Clergy, Magistrates, and other Respectable Inhabitants residents of the Township of St. Andrews in the County of Cape Breton, 12 January 1849, RG 5/P/53/129 PANS.
54 Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1856, Appendix 36.
56 Petition from Settlers on Loch Lomond, 12 June 1847, RG 5/P/83/154 PANS.
57 C.B. Ferguson (ed.) Uniacke's Sketches of Cape Breton, and Other Papers Relating to Cape Breton Island, p.160.
58 See the Deeds in the McKeen Papers, Mabou, 1822-1956, MG 12/109 BI.
59 Petition of the Commissioners for the distribution of provisions for the helpless and needy, County of Inverness, 8 June 1847, RG 5/P/83/151 PANS.
CHAPTER 6

1 Census of Canada 1871 and 1891, Canada Dept. of Agriculture.
2 Census of Canada 1871, Canada Dept. of Agriculture.
3 Census of Canada 1891, Canada Dept. of Agriculture.
4 The prices of land are given in the replies from county surveyors to R.G. Haliburton, 1861, reprinted in Ferguson's Uniacke's Sketches ..., Appendix H. William McKeen in his report estimated that good farm land around Mabou could be purchased for £1-3 an acre. Data on the price of land are extremely patchy and intractable, but most likely, given the increasing population and the shortage of land, the price was rising during the late nineteenth century.
5 Census of Canada 1871 and 1891 ....
6 The Census of 1851 does not give the amount of land occupied, so the figure of 1,000,000 acres is only a rough estimate. Both the Census of 1871 and 1891 give the area of occupied land.
7 The squatters in these settlements later took out land grants and these are recorded on the Crown Land Index Sheet.
8 H.W. Crawley, 10 December 1861, reprinted in Ferguson (ed.) Uniacke's Sketches ..., Appendix L.
15 An Act for Settling Titles to Land in the Island of Cape Breton, 1850, 13 Vic., Nova Scotia Statutes.
17 Instructions relating to Squatters Act, 1859, Orders in Council, 17 June 1865, RG 20/C/63 PANS.
18 D. McDonald to S.P. Fairbanks, 11 March 1867, RG 20/C/63 PANS.
20 D.B. McNab to W.A. Hendry, 4 October 1862, RG 20/C/61 PANS.
29 North Sydney Herald, 5 January 1881.
30 For Broad Cove cattle see North Sydney Herald, 16 January 1881, and for Christmas Island livestock see Malcolm McDougall’s Ledger ....

33 Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1890, Appendix 8.

34 J.M. Gow Cape Breton Illustrated, p.407.


38 The Census of Canada 1891 shows that there were no creameries on Cape Breton.


41 Census of Canada 1871 Canada Dept. of Agriculture. See also Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1856, Appendix 36.

42 See the Table of Hours and Wages by Hand and by Machine in F.A. Shannon The Farmer's Last Frontier: Agriculture, 1860-1895, p.143.

43 In 1873, the Boularderie Agricultural Society passed the following bye-law: "The Threshing Mill is at present at Henry McKinnon's. She is to follow down the north side of Little Bras d'Or and then out to the Back Lands and when the Members of the Society is done with it there it is to come up again to McKinnon's Cove and when all members are done Threshing belonging to the Society, then the said Mill is to go to any man that wants it for 6 bushels per hundred three bushels is for the man that attends the Mill and three for the Society," Minutes of Annual Meetings, together with lists of subscribers, Boularderie Agricultural Society, 1864-1885, MG 14/56 BI.

44 The following discussion is based on Ennals and Holdsworth 'Vernacular Architecture ...,' p.92.

45 The price of farm produce was calculated from Malcolm McDougall's Ledger ....
46 McDougall's Ledger ....

47 The following discussion is based on J.B. Moore, Documents, 1848-99, MG 1/Biography PANS.

48 Cann et al Soil Survey ..., Southeast sheet.

49 Will of Peter Moore, 1852, Cape Breton County, Will Book B, p.205, reel 110 PANS; and Valuation of the estate of the late Peter Moore, Cape Breton Estate Papers, 1853, N.19, reel 126 PANS.

50 Census of Canada 1871 ....

51 Farm accounts, J.B. Moore, Documents ....


53 Assessment role for the district no.1 of North Sydney November A.D. 1862, RG 34-305/A/1 PANS.

54 Valuation of the estate of J.B. Moore, Cape Breton Estate Papers, 1897, AZ 8 reel 142 PANS.

55 J.K. Galbraith uses the term "Men of standing" in The Scotch, chp.5.

56 C.H. Farnham 'Cape Breton Folk,' pp.97-98.


59 For gaelic culture on Cape Breton see C.W. Dunn Highland Settler: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Nova Scotia, and M. McDonell The Emigrant Experience: Songs of Highland Emigrants in North America, pp.57-103, and for a comparison see L. Doucette (ed.) Cultural Retention and Demographic Change: Studies of the Hebridean Scots in the Eastern Townships of Quebec.

61 Census of 1851, RG 1/453 PANS, and *Census of Canada 1871 and 1891* ....

62 Several villages are depicted in detail on the Topographical township maps of Cape Breton counties by A.F. Church.

63 Some indication of the architectural styles can be gleaned from nineteenth century photographs and field-observation.

64 A report giving a general view of the extent and character of the Crown Land in the County of Inverness, 26 January 1857, RG 20/C/59 PANS; *Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1857*, Appendix 71; and *Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1858*, Appendix 47.

65 The following discussion is based on my own observations and Ennals and Holdsworth "Vernacular Architecture ...", pp.88-91.

66 The following is based on D. Murray Jnr. to S.P. Fairbanks, 20 February 1869, RG 20/C/64 PANS, and *Census of Canada 1871* ....

67 The following is based on J. Ross to W.A. Hendry, 13 September 1864, RG 20/C/61 PANS.

68 D.B. Uniacke reported to J.B. Uniacke, 3 January 1857, that "During the long winters, labourers could find neither employment nor a home. Those that represent this class, occupy in general, Crown Lands as squatters, and by means of farming conducted by their wives and children, and going themselves during the summer season to distant parts of the Province or to the United States, they eke out the means of a scanty subsistence," RG 20/C/59 PANS.

69 *North Sydney Herald*, 11 September 1895.

70 *Trades Journal*, 16 August 1882.

71 *Trades Journal*, 31 October 1883. See also *Trades Journal*, 13 and 21 September 1882; 6 May and 10 June 1885; and 22 May and 5 June 1889.
72 Wage rates at International, Victoria, and Reserve Mines, 1875, RG 21/A/12 PANS.

73 Innis The Cod ..., pp.323-31.

74 McNab to Uniacke ....

75 Gow Cape Breton ..., p.407.

76 Note enclosed in Malcolm McDougall's Ledger ....

77 W.A. Hendry to S.P. Fairbanks, 20 August 1863, RG 20/C/61 PANS.

78 Ross to Hendry ....

CHAPTER 7

1 Sessional Papers, No 9, 1885, p.93.

2 Dun, Wiman & Co. The Mercantile Agency ..., p.519. The fish business of William LeVesconte at D'Escousse was rated at $25,000-50,000 in 1871.

3 "1889, Clerks etc., Summer Stations," 20 June 1889, CRC Letterbooks, MG 14/55/381 Bl.

4 See the CRC Letterbooks, MG 14/55/386 Bl.


8 Dry Fish Received, 1894-1899, CRC Fish Record Books, MG 14/55/152 BI.

9 Sessional Papers, No 11A, 1892, pp.132-143.

10 Acadian Recorder, 16 January 1873; and E. Orange to F. Briard, 15 June 1861, CRC Letterbooks, MG 23/G III/18/250 PAC.
11 Sessional Papers, No 1, 1878, p.79.

12 Sessional Papers, No 11A, 1892, pp.140-41; see also Diary of William LeVesconte, 1879, MG 100/175/21 PANS.

13 Acadian Recorder, 25 February 1860; see also Knight Shore ..., pp.40-41.

14 Sessional Papers, No 8, 1889, p.50.


16 Joncas The Fisheries ..., p.133.

17 Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1863-1866, Trade Returns.

18 Innis The Cod ..., p.331.

19 Census of 1851 and Census of Canada 1871 and 1881 ....


23 Sessional Papers, No 1, 1878, p.79.

24 Knight Shore ..., p.45.

25 For the following see R.H. Williams Historical Account of the Lobster Canning Industry, and the Report of the Select Committee on the causes of the Present Depression of the Manufacturing, Mining, Commercial, Shipping, Lumber, and Fishing Interests, p.69.

26 Census of Canada 1891 ....

27 Census of Canada 1891 ....


29 Award ..., p.3255.

30 Award ..., p.3214.
31 Boyle diaries, 1847-1964, MG 12 BI.
32 North Sydney Herald, 20 November 1889.
33 Award ..., vol.1, Appendix F, p.607.
34 Award ..., vol.3, Appendix M, p.3217.
35 Award ..., vol.3, Appendix M, p.3218.
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APPENDIX

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

1 Weights and Measures

Barrel: Measure of capacity both for dry goods and liquids, varying with the commodity.

Bushel: Measure of capacity used for potatoes, flour, meal, etc., containing 8 gallons. Bushels used in Cape Breton were probably the somewhat smaller Winchester measure generally used in Canada and the U.S.; 36 bushels or 25.25 hundredweight.

Chaldron (coal): 0.25 of a barrel. A firkin of butter weighed 56 lbs.

Keg: Small barrel or cask, usually containing less than 10 gallons.

Puncheon: Large cask for liquids, fish, etc. As a liquid measure it varied from 70-72 gallons.

Quintal: One hundredweight (112 lbs.).

Tub: Measure of capacity, about half a barrel.

2 Currency

Three currencies were used in Cape Breton in the nineteenth century: British Sterling and Halifax Currency used concurrently to 1860, and the decimal system thereafter. British Sterling and Halifax Currency were slightly different in value, but the records used for this thesis do not always identify which currency prices were in. It can be fairly assumed that local prices were in Halifax currency. When the prices are known to have been in Sterling, they are identified as such.
The value of the currencies is as follows:

£1 Halifax Currency = 18/- Sterling

$1 Canadian Currency = 4/- Sterling