

1.1 Settlement Research

The frontier settlement process by which forested, untamed, and isolated regions of Upper Canada evolve into heavily settled agricultural communities has been a popular subject for historical geographers on both regional and local scales (Gagan 1976, Clarke 1991, Brunger 1982, McCalla 1993, McInnis 1989, 1992, McIlwraith 1970). In settlement research most patterns and distributions are a result of a complex of variable factors or several major factors within the population. McInnis (1992) suggests that, with the wealth of census data available, the township level is particularly well-suited for analysis of settlement patterns. Russell (1989) considers township microstudies important for giving depth to regional and provincial 'norms.'

1.2 Thesis Statement

The purpose of this paper is to i) describe the pattern of early settlement within Emily Township, Ontario, ii) assess the importance of selected environmental and human factors in frontier settlement processes, iii) examine and compare the attributes of 'persistent and successful' settlers, and 'Robinson and non-Robinson' pioneers, and iv) analyse the role of the 1851 wheat economy in persistence and success. The main theme of the paper is settler persistence, - why did people settle and stay in certain locations, and what common attributes did the persisters possess?

1.3 Research Objectives

It is hoped that this thesis will add to our understanding of the frontier settlement process on a local (township) scale, identify some of the main factors behind the highly complex geographical transformation of Emily Township from a wooded, isolated state to a densely-settled agricultural community, and add to our knowledge of settler persistence on a local scale.

1.4 Research Design

The township was chosen as a subject for this thesis for both personal and practical reasons. On a personal basis, the author was raised in the township, with family members settling in the township in the early 1850's. My great-grandfather was a political and community leader, a merchant, and grist-mill owner, and dealt with many of Emily's early settlers on a day-to-day basis.

There are excellent data sources available per census and assessment records for the years of early settlement (1820-1851). Exemplary descriptions and records on village and rural life are to be found in Pammett's (1974) history of Emily Township, Williamson's (1967) chronology of Omemee, as well as the Huston Papers in the Trent University Archives. The township is also unique in the sense that it has been settled largely by two quite distinct groups of settlers, the Protestant Scots and Irish in southern concessions and the Robinson Irish Roman Catholic emigrants in the northerly tiers of the township.

1.5 Hypotheses

1. Persistent pioneers are successful farmers in terms of land clearance and (1851) wheat production.
2. There were significant differences in demographic attributes and agricultural performance between the Robinson and non-Robinson settlers.
3. Soil quality was a major determinant in land clearance and settler persistence.
4. By 1841, access to roads was a significant factor in successful farms and settler persistence.
5. Farm site, in terms of distance from a grist-mill, was significantly related with i) settler persistence, and ii) successful farms, in terms of land clearance and wheat production.

1.6 Definitions

In order to test the thesis hypotheses statistically, various arbitrary length of settlement times have been defined as representing persistence.

----- 1830 persistence - settled 1825 or earlier

----- 1841 persistence - settled 1828 or earlier

----- 1851 persistence - settled 1828 or earlier

Success - In the early 1800's the major indicator of a successful farm was the amount of land cleared, and to a lesser degree, the number of livestock a farmer possessed. For the purpose of this paper, successful farms are defined in terms of the percentage of his farm that the pioneer reported cleared.

Non-Robinson settlers - This settler group is comprised

of mainly Northern Irish and Scottish Protestants and their descendants who arrived in the township between 1820 and 1825, settling primarily in the southerly six concessions of the township. a second group of English and Scottish settlers arrived in the early 1830's, and settled mainly in the thirteenth and fourteenth concessions, north of the Robinson emigrants.

Robinson Settlers - The 1825 Peter Robinson emigrants and their descendants mainly settled to the north of the Protestant Scots and Irish of 1820-1825.

Soils - For the purpose of statistical analysis, lot soils have been divided into two groups according to the 1957 Victoria County Soil Survey distinctions: Class I to Class III good to fair agricultural soils, and Class IV to Class VI fair to non-agricultural soils.

1.7 Settlement Maps

The base map for Emily Township settlement maps has been adapted from Belden's (1881) Illustrated Atlas of the Dominion of Canada.