Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Historical Geography

It may be appropriate to begin the literature review with a brief description of the nature of historical geography. Harris (1978) contended that historical geography is primarily concerned with the past experience of people with the land and the past arrangement of people across the surface of the land. In an earlier paper, Harris (1967) complained that, up to the mid-1960's, historical geography subjects and methods had been extremely diverse, publications generally under-researched and poorly written, and there had been little attempt to relate individual studies to previous work.

There has long been controversy over the nature and role of historical geography. Boas (1887), commenting on the debate over the merits of physical and historical geography, wrote, 'One party claims that the ideal aim of science ought to be the discovery of general laws: the other maintains that it is the investigation of the phenomena themselves that is important....'. In the mid-1970's Moodie and Lehr (1976) noted that historical geography is a study of the present about the past, and that it is the temporal distance between the observer and the observed, or the scholar and his subject, that distinguishes the practice of historical geography from that of contemporary geography.

Widdis (1993) argues that historical geography is distinguished by its concern with understanding data in

context and a subsequent focus on places and processes that create them, a mode of inquiry that combines functional description with structural explanation, and a synthesis of subject and object. Butlin (1993) adds that space, place, time, and scale are critical components of a historical geographer's thinking and practice, and that in studies of the historical geography of communities an examination of the experiences of ordinary people has much to offer.

There is a considerable literature on early settlement patterns, including studies at a national level (Innis,1935; Wynn,1987), at provincial or regional levels (Phillips,1974; Cartwright,1977), and at local county or township levels (Nicholson,1953; Dahms and Hoover,1979). Frederic (1974) suggested that landscape patterns are dependent on site, situation, and human behaviour. Site is the local area that may be characterized by slope, soil type, vegetation, flood-plains, crop patterns etc., as opposed to situation, which is distinguished by relative location. Brunger (1972a) defined settlement as human presence in the area in question, for a period of time which may vary according to the degree of use made of local resources. Johnson (1974) noted that, in rural settlement geography, mapped spatial patterns of density and distribution represent distances and directions between human artifacts, transportation arteries, and fields.

Harris (1967) contended that historical geographers should always be on the lookout for information at the lowest level of generalization, i.e., information on individual farms. According to Russell (1983,1985,1989), township case micro-

studies that can follow each person, farm by farm, are important in isolating particular circumstances from general process.

2.2 Pre-Settlement Emily

Prior to 1820, Emily Township was "covered by an unbroken forest, in which the settler's axe had never echoed, and where, save the homeless Indian or adventurous hunter, the foot of man had scarcely penetrated" (Poole 1867,p.2). The first white man to glimpse the township may have been Champlain in 1615, while using the Pigeon, Buckhorn, Chemung canoe route (Pammett 1974,p.4). The Constitutional Act of 1791 created the Province of Upper Canada, which was subsequently divided into a number of districts (Craig 1979, p.18). Newcastle District, originally made up of Durham and Northumberland Counties, encompasses the future township of Emily in an area described as 'lands to the rear' (Gourlay 1974,p.84).

After the war of 1812-14, with a rising tide of immigration, the government recognized the necessity of opening up new townships for settlement, including Emily. In 1818, the chiefs of six Kawartha Mississauga Indian tribes 'surrendered' some 4000 square miles of territory comprising the modern counties of Victoria and Peterborough (Kirkconnell 1967,p.2), for an annual grant of around $3500 or ten dollars for each Indian (Pammett 1974,p.8).

In their anxiety to get the remaining colonies settled quickly and effectively following the loss of the more desirable parts of the North American empire in the 1770's,

rapid and generous dispersal of land was encouraged by colonial administrators of British North America (Wood,1992). The British government's goals in directing immigrants into the unoccupied townships to the north of Lake Ontario were i) to establish a loyal population in a strategically important area (inland waterways), ii) to pay off war-time obligations, and iii) to respond to serious problems at home including overpopulation and unemployment (Simmons,1983; Reid,1990).

2.3 Settler Location

Where immigrants settled and why have been the subject of many studies by historical geographers. Government decree, site, land quality, accessibility, and propinquity are cited as important factors in a pioneer's choice of location. Colonial land policy has been emphasized by Gates (1968, pp.24-38), Johnson (1975), Gentilcore (1972), and Brunger (1975) as being a significant factor in the settlement patterns of early Ontario. Site factors have been investigated by Brunger (1972b), who related the growth of villages and towns to i) mill sites powered by streams and ii) cross-roads sites.

Accessibility was the subject of McIlwraith's (1966) dissertation, a study of the relationship between accessibility and land utilization by pioneers, a theme which he pursued in his 1970 analysis of the importance of roads to early settlers. Kelly (1970) noted that early settlers' guides suggested immigrants locate within two miles of a developed road for access to markets and mills.

Soil quality may or may not have been important to the pioneer immigrant. Brunger (1975) suggested that little evidence supports the theory that Irish immigrants in Peterborough County sought out good land, even if they were able to recognize it. Clarke and Finnegan (1984) also questioned whether early settlers were able to distinguish quality land and good soils. On the other hand, McIlwraith (1966) suggested that early pioneers north of Toronto valued good soil above a handy market, while McAvoy (1972) argued that soil quality was a basic control in delineating settlement and abandonment patterns in Tyendinaga Township.

2.4 Persistence

A main theme of my thesis is settler persistence; were there greater numbers of persistent farm families in Emily Township, as Kirkconnell (1967) suggested? Gagan and Mays (1973) found that Protestant Irish households in Toronto Gore were no less transient than their Catholic counterparts. McQuillan (1979) concluded that for the pioneer period in Kansas it was difficult to predict who would stay or leave, but those who stayed were generally more prosperous than those who moved on, and that a major persistence value was a high standing in the eyes of the (pioneer) community by virtue of length of residence. Norris (1984) added that the true value of land for many settlers lay in family immobility, passed if possible to the next generation.

Persistence may be linked to many factors including government policy, communication, land quality, and social and sentimental reasons (Simpson-Housley,1988). One long-

time persistent farm family in Emily is the Scully family, located on the same farm since 1825. The present-day occupant, Dennis Scully, concedes that sentimental reasons play a large part in the family's persistence on the farm (Scully, 1993). The attachment of humans to a particular part of the earth's surface was a favorite theme of American geographer John K. Wright, who invented the term 'geopiety' to describe the attachment of peoples to land (Haggett 1990,p.90). Haggett (1990,p.91) suggests that many academic geographers return to themes of landscapes of childhood and youth in later life, but notes that the literature is also 'strewn with the record of man's hatred and fear of particular places.' Russell (1989) cautions that, in evaluating persistence, no assumption should be made that moving out of the township meant either success or failure; we can ask only how many stayed and analyze their performance.

2.5 Land Clearance

Land clearance rates are important as indicators of successful farmers (Harris,Raulston and DeFreitas,1975), and as a useful indicator of the extent of progress made towards completion of farms (McInnis,1992). Russell (1982, 1983,1985,1989) has studied Upper Canada clearing rates at both regional and township levels, his township level micro-studies examining many of Emily's early farmers on an individual basis. McCalla's (1993) work on the economy of Upper Canada includes regional and local figures on land clearance rates. Both Russell's and McCalla's statistics and analyses will be useful for comparison with my own

results.

2.6 Propinquity

The influence of propinquity, or the nearness of settlers having the same national origin or religious affiliation to one another, on settlement patterns has long been of geographic interest (Parkinson,1986). Brunger (1982) found that adult members of the Robinson emigration nuclear families demonstrated a strong propensity for contiguous locations. Kirkconnell (1967,p.271) suggested that the persistent nature of Emily Township's Robinson emigrants was due to the strong religious bonds of the Catholic community. Clarke (1991) cautioned that propinquity does not itself demonstrate the evidence of community, although it may be highly suggestive. Some further investigation of propinquity is warranted, for both the Catholic community and the Protestant families of southern Emily.

2.7 The Wheat Economy

The final aim of this thesis is to assess (measure) successful and persistent farms based on wheat cultivation for the 1851 census year. McInnis (1992) suggested that this census marked the end of one era (pioneer) and the beginning of another (well-developed wheat exporting).

Kelly (1970) pointed out that settlers' guides suggested that the successful wheat farmer should locate himself within two miles of a developed road for access to mills and markets. McCalla (1993,p.74) suggested that wheat output in Upper Canada was constrained by the labour that a family could do; perhaps ten acres could be cultivated without hired

help. This thesis will attempt to establish whether the factors of persistence, distance from grist-mills, and family size can be linked to the wheat production of Emily's farmers in 1851.

In summary, it would appear that there are many excellent sources of background literature on Upper Canada settlement patterns, at both a regional and local level. In reviewing the literature, it is apparent that there is much work to be done in assessing the influence of various environmental and human factors on pioneer settlement patterns, particularly at the township microstudy level.