

Note de recherche — Research Note

Emily Township: Pioneer Persistence to Equality?

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The meaning of the frontier forest for the social formation of early communities continues to be a focus of debate among North America scholars. This article contributes to that debate by showing the potential of detailed case studies which bring together evidence from a variety of routinely-generated sources such as records of tax assessment, census, land grants and land patents. While useable series of such records have not been preserved for all areas, the example of Emily Township suggests the possibilities for systematic research in thirty-eight townships of Upper Canada. Such research will certainly lead to more refined notions of equality and inequality in pioneer communities.

Le rôle de la forêt frontalière dans l'organisation sociale des premières collectivités fait toujours l'objet d'un débat dans les milieux universitaires nord-américains. Cet article vient enrichir ce débat en soulignant l'importance virtuelle des études de cas détaillées regroupant des pièces relatives à diverses questions tels les dossiers sur les cotisations d'impôt, les recensements, les concessions de terrains par les gouvernements et les titres de propriété des biens-fonds faisant partie du domaine public. Bien que ces séries de dossiers n'aient pas été conservées pour toutes les régions, l'exemple du Canton Emily donne à penser qu'il serait possible de se livrer à une étude systématique des trente-huit cantons du Haut-Canada. Cette recherche permettrait sans doute d'affiner les connaissances en matières d'égalité et d'inégalité au sein des collectivités primitives.

What proportion of those who settled on the land in Upper Canada after the War of 1812 persevered to establish viable farms? The answer to that question is part of a larger debate over the North American frontier's impact upon European class distinctions and attitudes. East of the Mississippi watershed, almost all of pre-Columbian North America was forest. Those new arrivals from Europe who dreamed of creating farms had to fell that forest. Their rate of clearing is one important measure of how close their dream was to reality.

Was the dream an illusion? Margaret Atwood's Susanna Moodie mediatively watches the field work of her husband and neighbours:

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They bend, straighten; the sun
 lights up their faces and hands, candles
 flickering in the wind against the
 unbright earth. I see them; I know
 none of them believe they are here.
 They deny the ground they stand on,
 pretend this dirt is the future.
 And they are right. If they let go
 of that illusion solid to them as a shovel,
 open their eyes even for a moment
 to these trees, to this particular sun
 they would be surrounded, stormed, broken
 in upon by branches, roots, tendrils,
 the darkside of light as I am.¹

Al Purdy in "The Country North of Belleville" describes "the country of our defeat":

A country of quiescence and still distance
 a lean land
 not fat
 with inches of black soil on
 earth's round belly —
 And where the farms are it's
 as if a man stuck
 both thumbs in the stony earth and pulled
 it apart to make room
 enough between the trees
 for a wife
 and maybe some cows and
 room for some
 of the more easily kept illusions —²

In several studies, Leo Johnson has sought to document the survival and perpetuation of a European class system in pioneer Ontario.³ These views contradict the "frontier thesis" that in their encounter with the boundless forest, Europeans were forced to adopt equalitarian practises and attitudes. A.R.M. Lower asserted:

1. Margaret Atwood, *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, Oxford University Press, Toronto, 1970, "Journal I...The Planters".

2. Al Purdy, "The Country North of Belleville" in Eli Mandel, ed., *Poets of Contemporary Canada, 1960-1970*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1972, pp. 8-9.

3. For examples, see Leo Johnson, "Land Policy, Population Growth and Social Structure in the Home District, 1793-1851" in J.K. Johnson, ed., *Historical Essays on Upper Canada*, first edition, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1975, pp. 32-57; *History of the County of Ontario, 1615-1875*, Corporation of the County of Ontario, Whitby, 1973, pp. 52, 58, 66-68, 79; "Independent Commodity Production: Mode of Production or Capitalist Class?", *Studies in Political Economy*, vol. 6, 1981, pp. 93-112. For an example of one such "man of means" who successfully transferred his economic status to the frontier, see D.H. McInnes, "The Diary of Henry Ransford", *Ontario History*, vol. 51, 1959, pp. 251-258.

...the pioneer farm was no situation for a gentleman, any more than it is today. Only the very few who had large resources or who could link a professional career to a country life remained in the countryside, and they became not yeoman farmers but a species of country gentleman. Nothing is plainer than that, in the difficult conditions of pioneer Canada, it was impossible to introduce the traditional English type of society.⁴

Was Upper Canada “the poor man’s country” where everyone had an equal chance, or did some transfer their class advantages from the Old World to the New?

Assessment and census records allow calculation of townships’ average clearing rates per farm or per adult male. Empirical studies have shown a rate of forest clearing much lower than previously assumed.⁵ The process of making a farm evidently took longer than some optimistic contemporary observers had assumed. But such averages have their limitations. They not only miss the individual, they might conceal significant patterns. Aggregated data do not distinguish between farmers clearing their own land and those same persons clearing another’s land. The pioneer may indeed have spent most of his time clearing. But did he spend it on his own land? Did the forest environment work to create equality, *à la* Frederick Jackson Turner and A.R.M. Lower? Or did the pioneer with money capital hire his poorer neighbours to clear his land — and, thus, transfer inequality to the forest frontier? To answer that question, we must move beyond township averages to measure the activities of individual settlers over time. The answer, then, requires a series of township microstudies that give depth to the regional and provincial “norms”.

Tax assessment, census, land grant and land patent records are available for thirty-eight townships in either continuous or discontinuous but useable series for 1815-1850. These allow a quantitative analysis of how many persevered to establish viable farms and what factors could account for variations

4. A.R.M. Lower, *Canadians in the Making*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1981, p. 201. Of course, the “frontierism” debate began with Turner: F.J. Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1920. Just two overviews of the very large amount written are Ellen von Nardoff, “The American Frontier as a Safety Valve: The Life, Death, Reincarnation, and Justification of a Theory”, *Agricultural History*, vol. 36, 1962, pp. 123-154; Ralph Mann, “Frontier Opportunity and the New Social History”, *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 53, 1984, pp. 463-491. For an overview of the Canadian applications of the frontier, see M.S. Cross, ed., *The Frontier Thesis and the Canadas*, Copp Clark, Toronto, 1970.

5. For the traditional view, see E.C. Guillet, *The Pioneer Farm and Backwoodsman*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1963, p. 312; Robert L. Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ontario*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1947, pp. 71-73; Kenneth Kelly, “The Agricultural Geography of Simcoe County”, unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, Toronto, pp. 34-36. For empirical studies, see Peter A. Russell, “Forest into Farmland: Upper Canadian Clearing Rates, 1822-1839”, *Agricultural History*, 1983, vol. 57, pp. 326-339; “Upper Canada: A Poor Man’s Country? Some Statistical Evidence, 1812-1842”, *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, vol. 3, 1985, pp. 129-147.

in perseverance. The results for the first of these microstudies — Emily Township in Newcastle District — show over half the initial pioneer population maintained farms for up to eighteen years, and point to the roles of oxen and the prior possession of capital in explaining variations in perseverance.

While the thirty-eight townships with the fullest records do not represent all of the province's populated area, they cover the variety of settlement situations, from the newest pioneer communities (such as Emily) to the oldest, most settled townships (such as loyalist Elizabethtown in the Johnson District). Sixteen of the thirty-eight lie on the eastern side of "old Ontario" in what were then the Ottawa and Johnson Districts; seventeen lay in the central Newcastle District; but only six in all of the south west, from Toronto to Sandwich.⁶ While it is regrettable that the Home District, the Niagara peninsula and the Lake Erie shore are not represented, it is more important for understanding the rural economy to have a number of townships in each of the various stages of settlement. It will be possible to examine each phase of occupation through several townships to isolate the general process from particular circumstances. The first of these microstudies is of Emily, a township of many particular circumstances.⁷

Table 1 Townships with Fairly Continuous Data, Listed by Districts
(those having episodic but useable data are in brackets)

Johnson District 5	Ottawa District 11	Newcastle District 17
Edwardsburgh	Alfred (Cambridge)	Cavan (Alnwick)
Augusta	Caledonia (Clarence)	Clarke (Asphodel)
Elizabethtown	Hawkesbury (Cumberland)	Cramahe (Cartwright)
Yonge	Plantagenet (Gloucester)	Darlington (Douro)
Bastard	(Lougeuil)	Hope (Emily)
	(Osgoode)	Monaghan (Ennismore)
	(Russell)	Percy (Manvers)
		(Murray)
		(Otonabee)
		(Smith)
	Western District 5	Gore District 1
	Malden (Colchester)	Trafalgar
	Mersea (Maidstone)	
	(Sandwich)	

6. In terms of the categories developed by H.W. Taylor, J. Clarke and W.R. Wightman, "Contrasting Land Development Rates in Southern Ontario to 1891", *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, vol. 5, 1987, pp. 51-72, Emily featured a high rate of land holding with an average rate of land clearing (*i.e.* H2I1). It was one of that "transitional group" that "defy generalization", p. 147. (See table 1.)

7. For a comparison of Emily with provincial "norms", see Peter A. Russell, "Rates of Clearing Land in Upper Canada: An Index of Individual Economic Success and Problems with Its Measurement", *Bulletin of Canadian Studies*, vol. 9, 1985, pp. 34-47.

Lying in the third tier of townships north of Lake Ontario in 1820, Emily had between it and the lakefront the almost entirely vacant Cavan and the more than half vacant Hope. Thus, when the first arrivals took up their grants, they were far from any other community, market or road. During 1819-1820, a road had been extended north along the eastern borders of Hope, then Cavan. However, not until 1831-1832, did the road reach into Emily.⁸ Until then, the main means of egress was the Trent-Severn Waterway.

In format, the township followed the surveyors' "standard", a rectangle 8.5 by 12 miles, 14 concessions deep, covering about 100 square miles or 69,000 acres. H.T. Pammett's local history describes its topography and soil.

...The typical bedrock was then within two to four feet of the surface, and with much limestone rubble rising through the soil. The oval drumlins still crowd together, and the intervening valleys have swampy bottoms with slow-moving streams.... The calcareous stoney grey-brown soil lends itself to contour ploughing on gentler slopes, leaving the steeper areas to pasture or forest.... Other types of imperfectly-drained thinner sandy and clay loams are found increasingly toward the north part of Emily, with a thin layer of rich organic matter often only one or two feet deep above bedrock....⁹

In his 1819 survey report, Samuel Wilmot wrote: "The quality of the land whereon there is maple, oak, elm and beech timber is exceedingly good, but the township is very much cut to pieces with bad swamps and a river...."¹⁰ The district's population pattern, the township's distance from the lakefront and Emily's internal geography combined to isolate its settlers from each other and the world outside the township.

Despite its remote location, when first opened for land granting, Emily attracted a tiny "rush" of some 54 settlers and their families as well as the attention of at least one prominent land speculator. However, after the first burst of interest in 1819-1824, when the district land board made over 250 grants, the population, by 1825, had dropped to 45 male householders. By the end of 1825, the distant township received a sudden stimulous from the arrival of Peter Robinson's assisted Irish immigrants, of which 142 families located in Emily. Whereas the "old settlers" had been predominantly Protestant Irish occupying lots in the first five southern concessions, the newcomers were mainly Roman Catholic and, for the most part, located north of the seventh

8. H.T. Pammett, *Lilies and Shamrocks: A History of Emily Township*, John Deyell Co., Lindsay, 1974, pp. 10, 42.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

10. As cited in *ibid.*, p. 11.

concession, reflecting their point of entry into the township from the Trent-Severn Waterway. A third wave began to join the two earlier sets of Irish, after 1827, as part of the general mass emigration from the United Kingdom to Upper Canada in the late 1820s and early 1830s. The number of householders assessed for property fluctuated from 54 in 1822, falling gradually to 45 in 1825, rising to 140 in 1827, 171 in 1830, and finally to 311 in 1841. Attention here will focus on the first “wave” or “cohort” of pioneers, as compared to later settlers.¹¹

Three main questions arise. Did the pioneers stay? How much did they clear? Who owned the land? These issues of perseverance, economic mobility and the roles of land speculators, tenants and squatters are the focus of this paper. Reasons for the answers to each question can be offered with varying degrees of assurance. We can only ask “Who remained in Emily?” and “How well did they do in Emily?” David Gagan wrote of Peel County’s short-term residents:

Did they perpetually move from more to less developed areas? Did they, in the process improve themselves? It is a monumental and practically impossible task to follow them from place to place.¹²

What Ian Winchester observed of Gagan’s work is also true of this study: “we shall learn very little about the detailed reasons why some prospered and rooted and others merely passed through.”¹³ The use of a life course model or reconstructed family history by contrast allows the historian to follow chains of migration through both time and space. Darrell Norris wrote of Euphrasia Township’s first farmers:

11. The empirical results cited are derived from a variety of sources from the Provincial Archives of Ontario: i) Assessment and Census Rolls, Newcastle District, Emily (microfilm: MS16, reel 6); ii) Index to Land Patents 1850, by Townships, Emily (microfilm: MS1, reel 2); iii) Ontario Land Grants Index (in machine readable format); iv) Abstract Index to Deeds; v) RG 53 Provincial Secretary’s Department, Recording Office Patent Book, Upper Canada, Newcastle District (1818-1824, I-3-B-38, vol. BB and 1833-1836, series 1, vol. CG) were consulted to resolve conflicts and apparent contradictions between other records. The greatest of these conflicts was the Index to Land Patent’s mistaken attribution of 6,800 acres to Abraham Nelles; this land was actually in Ennismore Township, which was first known as “Emily Gore”, hence, the copy clerk’s error. Clare F. Galvin, *The Holy Land — A History of Ennismore Township*, Maxwell Review Ltd., Peterborough, 1978, p. 32.

12. David Gagan, *Hopeful Travellers: Families, Land and Social Change in Mid-Victorian Peel County*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1981, p. 114.

13. Ian Winchester, “Review of the Peel County History Project and the Saguenay Project”, *Histoire sociale — Social History*, Vol. XIII, 1980, p. 198.

In their own terms, and those of the society they lived in, they were successful. Yet, **only** a reconstruction of their life course can provide a measure of that long-term achievement. Considered in isolation, the settings through which they passed between Ireland and Euphrasia would not reveal the measured progression of their lives....¹⁴

No assumption, then, should be made that moving out of the township meant either "success" or "failure". By its nature, the township microstudy can only testify to what is observed, with little capacity for inferring the experience of those who passed out of its boundaries.¹⁵ Unable to trace almost any of those who left, we can only ask how many stayed and analyse their performance.

Mere perseverance in one location is not the nub of the complex relation between geographic and economic mobility. The concern with those who stayed in Emily is whether they had succeeded in establishing viable farms. One important condition necessary for a viable farm in Upper Canada before 1841 was to have enough cleared land to support the family. Contemporaries considered that to feed a family and raise enough of cash crops to purchase necessities, a farmer needed about 20 acres.¹⁶ Of course, this could vary depending upon the quality of the land and the availability of markets. This study will take 20 acres as the threshold of the viable farm, recognizing that any line drawn is to some extent arbitrary.

To answer "how many pioneers stayed?", we need to decide what group will be considered as the pioneer cohort. The first useable assessment and census roll is that for 1822. It lists 54 male householders. If we compare the 1822 settlers with the 1841 assessment returns, we find 20 of the original 54 present. Of those 20, 18 had farms in excess of 20 cleared acres. Consequently, we could say that about one third of the initial pioneers had established what contemporaries regarded as farms of viable size. However, the rapid drop in numbers after the initial settlement is good reason to define the pioneer cohort as those listed in 1822 still present in 1825. In those first four years, 20 male

14. Darrell A. Norris, "Migration, Pioneer Settlement, and the Life Course: The First Families of an Ontario Township", *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, vol. 4, 1986, pp. 174. For reconstructed chains of migration from Tipperary in Ireland and Tیره in Scotland, respectively see Bruce Elliott, "The North Tipperary Protestants in the Canadas: A Study of Migration, 1815-1850", doctoral thesis, Carleton University, Ottawa, 1984; Margaret A. Mackay, "Poets and Pioneers: Nineteenth Century Tیره Emigrants in Canada" in B. Kay, ed., *Odyssey*, Polygon Books, Edinburgh, 1980, pp. 59-69 and "Nineteenth Century Tیره Emigrant Communities in Ontario", *Oral History*, vol. 9, 1980, pp. 49-60.

15. George Emery and Jose Igartua, "David Gagan's 'The "Critical Years" in Rural Canada West': a Critique of the Methodology and Model", *Canadian History Review*, vol. 62, 1981, pp. 188-196.

16. Jones wrote of "a small plot of [cleared] land" as necessary for successful self-sufficiency, *op. cit.*, p. 81. Contemporary observations seem to indicate 20 acres was about the right order of magnitude: John Howison, *Sketches of Upper Canada*, G.B. Whittaker, Edinburgh, 1825, pp. 34-35; John McGregor, *British America*, William Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1833, vol. 2, pp. 526-536.

householders left. If we take that pioneer cohort, then it would be 18 of 34 who had viable farms by 1841. An important factor, then, in a pioneer's likelihood to persevere over the longer term obviously was his ability to stay on the land for the first few years of the greatest difficulty.

In addition to individual male householders who persisted from 1822-1825 to 1841, there are several families that continued to hold a farm that had grown to 20 or more cleared acres. Widow Holroyd continued to occupy the farm owned by her and her husband William, who died in 1838. Edward McCall and John Thornton left farms carried on by their sons. Counting in these, the rate of perseverance climbs again from just over 50 to 60 percent. Of the two members of the pioneer cohort who stayed in Emily but did not have farms of 20 acres or more cleared, one had evidently left farming, while the other had cleared only 15 acres (despite a reasonably fast start, from 0 to 8 acres between 1823 and 1830). The most comprehensive pioneer cohort shows a persistence rate of just over 60 percent.

Emily's first settlers, thus, were closer in their behaviour to Glenn Lockwood's Montague Township than David Gagan's Peel County. Fifty-three percent of the Irish and 43 percent of the non-Irish who arrived in Montague in the period 1821-1830 stayed 20 years or more. Of Emily's 1822-1825 pioneer cohort families, over 60 percent were still present in 1841. Direct comparison with Gagan's findings is difficult as he examined a slightly later period. From 1851 to 1861, only 38.9 percent of householders remained in Peel County.¹⁷ As even Montague's tenacious Irish became less persistent and more geographically mobile after 1851, the difference in results between the two townships on the one hand and the county on the other may be due either to persistence being a stronger characteristic amongst earlier settlers (in which case we would expect Peel's townships to have higher persistence rates before 1851 than after), or to changes in attitudes towards land as the province's economy matured into the predominance of cash crops.

As well as asking what proportion of the pioneers had a given size of clearing, we can ask "What proportion of the 1841 farmers with 20 acres or more cleared had begun in the early period?" By 1841, 75 ratepayers had 20 or more acres cleared. Of these, 18 individuals (plus two families) had been in the township since 1822, while 28 individuals (and three families) had been in the township since 1822-1825. Thus, of Emily's viable farms in 1841, two fifths had been developed by those in the first settlement cohort, while three fifths of those holding the larger farms had settled after 1825. Those proportions point to a considerable number of relative late comers who established substantial farms, indicating that factors other than one's own persevering effort mattered.

17. Glenn Lockwood, "Irish Immigrants and the "Critical Years" in Eastern Ontario": The Case of Montague Township, 1821-1881", *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, vol. 4, 1986, pp. 154-178, especially pp. 161-163. Gagan, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-120.

To explain variations between the performance of different groups or individuals, we need to look at three critical factors. These factors are the possession of oxen, household size and ability to purchase a clearing, whether by hiring labour or buying cleared land.

As the colony's principle draft animals, oxen made a very considerable difference to the possible rate of clearing.¹⁸ Of the 20 households present in 1841 (counting Holroyd and Thornton) from the initial 1822 pioneers, 19 had oxen by 1826. By contrast, of the 1822 pioneers still present in 1825, but not in 1841, only 2 of 14 had oxen. However, when (between 1822 and 1826) the household got the oxen had less influence on its amount of cleared land by 1841. Thomas Mitchell and Henry Best got their oxen in 1826 and by 1841, had 61 and 50 acres cleared, respectively. Nathan Lee and David Armstrong had their oxen three years earlier, yet by 1841, had only 30 and 20 acres cleared, respectively.

The highest clearing rates do not invariably co-relate with the largest families or the most adult males, although the presence of more than one adult male meant a farm was more likely to be cleared at or near the higher rate prevailing. Forty farms (of 171) had 10 acres or more cleared in 1830, the last year of the biennial series of assessment and population data for Emily (1822-1830). Household size alone had a negligible influence on the rate of clearing. The correlation coefficient for household size in 1830 compared with the number of acres cleared between 1828 and 1830 was -0.1606. Of more significance was the composition of the household, in particular the presence of adult males (that is, males over 16). Comparing 1828 and 1830, 28 of the farms had only 1 adult male. These farms had a mean annual clearing rate of 1.8 acres. Twelve farms had more than 1 adult male in at least 1 of the 2 years, while 8 of those 12 had 2 or more adults in both 1828 and 1830. The mean annual clearing rate for the eight was 2.6 acres; for the 12, 2.5 acres. However, 5 "one-man farms" had considerably higher clearing rates, ranging from 5.5 to 6.5 acres per year per adult male. Yet, the family sizes of those 5 were between 4 and 5, which was the mean for the township in that period. Such high rates of clearing, unrelated to the number of resident adult males or farm household size, points to the probable existence of financial resources to hire labour.

From the vantage point of 1841, looking at the larger farms (20 or more acres cleared), we can see two ways in which newcomers or established farmers acquired them. They could either hire labour to assist in clearing or purchase a lot already partially cleared. Of 311 assessed farms in 1841, 75 had 20 acres or more cleared. Of those, 12 individuals had taken up "wild" land after the 1830 assessment and census and, then, cleared 20-25 acres in 11 years or less. Assuming (just to establish an upper boundary) that they all came in

18. On the crucial role of oxen in forest clearing, *see*, for example, George Forbes to John Forbes, 4 October 1851, Forbes Papers, Scottish Public Record Office, Edinburgh.

mid-1830, their clearing rates would have had to range from at least 1.8 to 2.3 acres per year. Such a consistently high rate gives clear indication that they hired labour at least part of the time. Another 6 arrivals in the 1830's cleared 30 acres or more, meaning that they probably hired labour regularly. All the latter farms were located in the first 5 concessions, in the most densely settled area of Emily. That may have meant that more labour was available for hire, than in the more thinly settled northern concessions. Fourteen settlers who had been present in 1830 had over 35 acres cleared by 1841. Their average clearing rate of 3 acres per year per farm clearly points to the regular employment of hired labour. The one exception to the pattern of the 14 was the Holroyd farm which only averaged a clearing rate of 1.1 acres. However, it had lost its only adult male householder during the decade. We may infer that farms whose land was cleared at well above the average rate, whose owners had average sized families and who had no other adult males in the household must have benefitted from hired labour. Most probably, some 32 of the 75 holdings had employed "choppers" in the 1830's, or 43 percent of the largest farms (which represented in turn, 10.3 percent of the total 1841 farm holdings).

Aside from hiring labour, money could also ease a farmer's progress by purchase of a lot already partially cleared. Of the 20 initial settlers who had left the township by 1825, several had surprisingly substantial clearings. While 6 had cleared nothing and 5 only one acre each, 7 had between 2.5 and 6 acres cleared.¹⁹ Four newcomers in the 1830's bought such lots and improved on the existing clearance. However, the cost of land seemed to take up most of their financial resources, as their average annual clearing rate was 1.5 acres; the highest being 2 acres per year. More ambiguously placed were those who bought farms that had been abandoned for some years after the initial clearing. James Storey bought a half lot in 1830, upon which the original grantee had cleared 6 acres by 1822. According to the census and assessment records for 8 years, no one occupied the lot, even though it lay next to the thriving Holroyd farm. Storey's 18 cleared acres by 1841 probably represents mainly, if not entirely, his own labour. Another, more complex, case was the prosperous farm of William Thornton. By 1830, he had 20 acres of his quarter lot grant cleared and had patented the adjacent quarter. In 1841, Thomas Crawford was in possession of Thornton's original quarter lot with only 15 acres cleared; the other quarter lot apparently had not been occupied. Given the *reduction* in cleared land, it is possible that, as in the previous case, the farm had lain abandoned for an unknown period, during which the forest reclaimed some part of the clearing.²⁰ Again, as with the others who bought cleared land, Crawford probably used most of his financial resources to obtain the beginnings of a farm.

19. Two of those entering after 1822 had left by 1825 — thus giving a total of 22 for the pioneer cohort.

20. See Kelly, *op. cit.*, p. 4, on the recolonization of cleared land by the forest.

The final question deals with land ownership. Rather unexpectedly, Emily appears from the available records to have had no squatters during its first decade of settlement. Every one of the first 54 assessed persons had a land grant. Subsequent local tax and census rolls down to 1830 show nobody on land who did not have some entitlement to settle (if not for the lot they occupied). The reason for the surprising absence would seem to be that Emily lay a long way from any population centre or port of entry. Both Hope and Cavan offered substantial amounts of vacant land before the intending settler got from Lake Ontario to Emily. Consequently, the evidence of the early settlement in Emily is not decisive against the primary or secondary sources that stress the presence of squatters.

By 1840 however, 14 percent of the assessed householders had located on land to which they had no title at any time, before or after 1840, while someone else did. From the surviving records, it is extremely difficult, amongst this group, to distinguish between squatters and transient tenants. Not included in that group are eleven settlers who occupied land in 1840 for which they subsequently obtained title. Five of these farmed Canada Company lots in 1840, which they purchased a decade or more later. It is probable that in 1840, they were tenants looking to purchase.²¹ Another five had clearings on land owned by George Strange Boulton, which they later purchased from him. Again, these were more likely to have been tenants than squatters. In some cases, a settler had title to one piece of land, but also farmed part of an adjacent lot, which he eventually purchased. As such settlers were assessed for that adjacent lot, it seems more likely that they were tenants than squatters in 1840.²² The in-filling of Emily resulted in one of every seven households farming someone else's property.

The activity of private land speculators has attracted considerable attention from both contemporaries and subsequent commentators.²³ The study of Emily shows what became of speculative holdings over 20 years. The land patents for the first three years (1822-1824) represented the initial speculative

21. Clarence Karr, *The Canada Land Company: The Early Years*, Ontario Historical Society, Toronto, 1974, pp. 106-107, on purchasing land through leases.

22. Examples of owners who were probably also renting parts of other lots in 1840 were Samuel Mitchell (who owned 1/6 south half, but also farmed land in 1/5), David Belford (who owned 1/7 north west quarter, but also had clearings on both 1/6 north east quarter and 2/7 south west quarter), and Michael McCunliff (who owned 9/20 west half, but did most of his clearing on 6/20 west half, which he finally bought from the Canada Company in 1850).

23. On speculators, see G.M. Craig, ed., *Lord Durham's Report*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1963, pp. 79, 101, 110-121; R.A. Billington, "The Origin of the Land Speculator as a Frontier Type", *Agricultural History*, vol. 19, 1945, pp. 204-222; R.W. Widdis, "Motivation and Scale: A Method of Identifying Land Speculators in Upper Canada", *Canadian Geographer*, vol. 23, 1979, pp. 337-351. On the prevalence of squatters, see J. David Wood, "The Woodland-Oak Plains Transition Zone in the Settlement of Western Upper Canada", *Canadian Geographer*, vol. 5, 1961, pp. 43-47; Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 67, 112; H. Pearson Gundy, "The Second Heir and Devisee Commission of Upper Canada, 1805-1841", *Ontario History*, vol. 66, 1974, p. 140; *Colonial Advocate*, 8 July 1824.

interest in Emily.²⁴ Of the 108 patents taken out, 40 were by persons resident in the township, usually on the lot in question or adjacent to it. Each of these patents covered a single quarter lot of 50 acres. Our attention will focus on non-resident patentees. These fall into two categories: the multitude of small holders and the two larger holders, who each patented 200 acres.

There was not much differentiation among the smallholders. Two patented half lots, and 64 patented quarter lots. Several of the latter seemed to have intended settlement, as what appear to be family groups obtained lots clustered together. Holding patented land in a remote township seems from the official records to have been a somewhat risky business due the government officials' inattention. Ten patentees lost their land when the authorities subsequently granted it to someone else, mainly Peter Robinson's assisted Irish immigrants. Another 9 were left in limbo, as the land to which they had patent was then patented to someone else. These actions do not appear to be expropriations, as the first sheriff's sale for non-payment of taxes did not occur until 1828.²⁵ Thus, 19 of the 64 smallest speculative holdings, or 30 percent, represented nothing to their "owners", but the probable loss of the patent fee.

Hiriam Ash, a lakefront merchant, was the first to patent land in Emily. He patented his full lot in 1821 and sold it the following year. Catherine Smith's 200 acre lot was granted as her entitlement as the daughter of a United Empire Loyalist. She and her husband sold it in 1822, the year after it was patented. In terms of the typology suggested by R.W. Widdis, they were both "classical speculators".

After the initial surge of interest, Emily's pre-eminent land speculator was the Canada Company. Of its 4,900 acres, over 70 percent were patented between 1830 and 1833, although as late as 1846, it patented its last 2 lots. The 18 lots for which prices have been preserved show an average price of 12 shillings per acre.²⁶ But what was remarkable about the Company's sale prices over time was their stability. The mode was 8 s. 8p., which occurred in over half of all sales. (The trimmed mean price was 11 s.) The other striking difference between the Company and smaller scale speculators is the length of time it held its land, from patent to first sale. The mean time was 13 years (the trimmed mean, 12 years). Between the Canada Company and the many small scale speculators who usually had only 100 acres or less) were a number of intermediate scale speculators who took an interest in Emily's land, from the mid-1820s on.

24. Pammett, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

26. Karr, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-107. The use of statistics in microstudies can be bedevilled by the impact of a few values far from the general trend. By providing a "trimmed mean" (for which the highest and lowest values are eliminated), my intention is to allow the reader greater confidence in the representative value of means drawn from populations that are relatively small for purposes of statistical inference.

John Burn was the earliest of these speculators. A lakefront merchant and a member of the District Land Board, he petitioned for his labour's compensation in land and, in 1826, received 800 acres in four lots in the 1st and 3rd concessions. Within a year, he had sold all 800 acres for £175, or about 4 shillings 4 pence per acre. In 1827, George S. Boulton entered the Emily land market, patenting and buying land, as well as financing mortgages. Third son of Attorney General D'Arcy Boulton, George had moved to Cobourg in 1824 upon his appointment as registrar for Durham County. He was elected to represent the county in 1824 (although the result was later voided) and again in 1830, serving until 1841.²⁷ In his own name and on behalf of his brother Henry (sometime Attorney General), George patented 600 acres. They had sold the last of that land by 1850, at prices that ranged from £2 10 shillings to 12 shillings per acre. Between 1827 and 1859, George bought and sold another 900 acres in Emily. J.S. Hughes was a prosperous farmer who entered Emily's land market relatively late. He patented 3 pieces of land in 1845, for a total of 200 acres, all of which he had sold a year later, in the very wide price range from £2 10 shillings to 8 shillings per acre. He also bought some 300 acres, selling in each case less than two years after purchase. Of these 3, Burn appears to be a "classical speculator", while Boulton was clearly a "land banker", not only in his continuous buying and selling, but also in his underwriting of mortgages. J.S. Hughes was the only one resident in the township. He hoped by timely entry and quick exit from the land market to turn a profit, one of the marks of a classical speculator.²⁸

The pattern of land prices within Emily reflects the ebb and flow of settlement, with a slight time delay. During the initial "boom", prices fluctuated around 18 shillings per acre (with a range from 4 shillings to £2 8 shillings) for potential or actual farm land. (Lands bought for non-farm purposes such as town lots or mill sights are excluded.) (See table 2.)

Table 2 Land and Price per Acre in Emily, 1823-1839

	1823-1827	1828-1831	1832-1835	1836-1839
Number of Recorded Sales	18	17	12	21
Arithmetic Mean	£18 s 6 p.	12 s	£1 8 s	15 s 6 p.
Trimmed Mean	£17 s 9 p.	12 s	£1 8 s	11 s 9 p.

27. See "George Strange Boulton" and "Henry John Boulton" in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. IX, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1976, pp. 68-72.

28. Widdis, *op. cit.*, pp. 348-349.

As people drifted out of the township in the mid-1820's, land prices fell to about 12 s., then, generally doubled with the flood of settlers into Upper Canada (and Emily) in the early 1830s. Prices, then, tended to fall back to their previous level, around 12-14 shillings.²⁹

However, within the context of these general flows, the market value of a given lot could fluctuate wildly. The south west quarter of lot 11 in the 2nd concession was bought and sold four times between 1824 and 1831. Its price went from £10 to £50, then £20, ending at £37 10 shillings. The south west quarter of lot 7 in the 1st concession was sold, in 1825, for £50 pounds, re-sold for half that two years later, finally regaining its first price only in 1833. Some people clearly lost money in land speculation, even as others made money by timely entry and departure from the land market.

Compared to the townships of David Gagan's Peel County study, Emily's land in its first two decades was seldom encumbered by debt, nor was such debt as there was, especially heavy. Only 21 of 1841's 311 assessed properties (6.4 percent) had been mortgaged before 1840. The total value recorded was £879 12 s 2 p., a mean average of only £58 9 s. Indeed, Emily's largest mortgage was for £250, compared to Toronto Gore's *average* of £240 3 s in 1841.³⁰ Emily's mortgages appear to have been chiefly a means to raise working capital to begin farming. Fourteen of the 21 were undertaken within 3 years of the owner's purchase or patent of the land mortgaged.

As a study in depth, Emily offers insight into several issues: perseverance of pioneers, economic mobility, as well as land ownership and use. Of the initial 54 settlers of 1822, only a third remained in 1841. However, the proportion nearly doubles if the pioneer cohort is considered to be those families from 1822 still present in 1825. Of those who stayed through the first and hardest years, almost all succeeded in establishing viable farms. Perseverance, as in other studies, appears an important factor in upward economic mobility.³¹

What factors seem to account for the variations in clearing rates between individual farms? Unexpectedly, total household size did not have a major impact on a farm's clearing rate. However, the presence of more than one adult male usually meant the rate would be near the highest prevailing. Success in maintaining a high clearing rate went with acquiring oxen, the colony's

29. E.C. Gray and B.E. Prentice, "Exploring the Price of Farmland in Two Ontario Localities Since Letters Patenting", *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, vol. 4, 1986, pp. 227, 236-237, question whether the Abstract Index to Deeds is "sufficiently adequate a record from which to construct a series of annual farmland prices". By the use of grouped data and provision of a trimmed mean, I have tried to establish a general trend in farm land prices within Emily.

30. David P. Gagan, "The Security of Land: Mortgaging in Toronto Gore Township, 1835-1895" in F.H. Armstrong *et al.*, eds., *Aspects of Nineteenth Century Ontario*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1974, p. 139.

31. See, for example, Gagan, *op. cit.*, p. 95; Michael Katz, *The People of Hamilton*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1975, p. 19.

principle draft animal; although, when during the period of initial years of clearing, 1822-1826, oxen were purchase had little influence on the farmer's rate of clearing. Financial resources appear the principle factor in the variation of clearing rates between one farm and another. Kelly notes that, "the majority of settlers had little capital with which to hire labour ...".³² Eighteen of the more than 250 newcomers in the 1830's seem to have had the money to employ "choppers", at least part-time. Fourteen of the 171 settlers already present in 1830 apparently did the same during that decade. Only 6 newcomers seemed to have used their money to purchase an established farm after 1830. Their subsequent clearing rates suggest that the purchase probably took most of what financial capital they had.

Emily's distance from the lakefront and the availability of good land closer to the main transportation routes explains the early absence of squatters in its first decade of settlement. Land speculation during the period of this study was made hazardous by governmental inefficiency in registering grants and patents. Emily was primarily of interest to "classical speculators", although it also attracted at least one "land banker" in George S. Boulton. The case of Emily offers a picture of substantial pioneer farm perseverance, accelerated by possession of money (brought in by newcomers or generated by the increased wealth of prospering farmers by the 1830's), with land speculation as at times an uncertain investment for those who lacked knowledge of the local land market.

The experience of Emily's pioneers was that **both** the frontier and the class models had validity in explaining **part** of the settlement process. The pioneer cohort families displayed an impressive perseverance in which most of them produced viable farms from their forest grant over a 20-year period. Yet, of those who had 20 or more acres cleared by 1841, those successful pioneers formed only 2/5 of the total. Along side the pioneers holding substantial farms were relative newcomers whose speed in clearing land can only be adequately explained by their possession of money either to buy leared land or (as seems to have been more common) to hire others to clear it with them. Inequalities could be successfully transfered to the forest frontier by the astute investor who was willing to live on his land and work it. Whether Emily's balance between the two models was general or not needs to be explored in further township microstudies.

32. Kelly, *op. cit.*, p. 2.