

# *Wage Labour Rates in Upper Canada, 1818-1840*

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*Despite the heavy influx of immigrants into Upper Canada from 1815 to 1840, wage rates remained in general surprisingly stable. On the one hand, the range of rates offered to skilled tradesmen, such as carpenters and blacksmiths, narrowed with a gradual downward trend. Fluctuation over time of farm labourers' wages was less than variation due to distance from points of entry and seasonal employment. Day labourers' wages, on the other hand, seem to have actually increased marginally. Although female servants started with lower wages and saw the rate fall over time, male servants' wages rose to the general level of unskilled men's rates. These trends point to a steadier demand for male labour as the province became more heavily populated.*

*En dépit de l'afflux massif d'immigrants venus s'établir dans le Haut-Canada entre 1815 et 1840, la plupart des taux de salaires y sont demeurés étonnamment stables. Une grande partie des ouvriers qualifiés, tels les charpentiers et les forgerons, ont connu une réduction graduelle de l'éventail des salaires offerts. Par ailleurs, les salaires des ouvriers agricoles ont varié davantage en fonction de l'éloignement des points d'arrivée et des saisons que selon le cours des années. Pour ce qui est des journaliers agricoles, leurs salaires semblent avoir augmenté de façon marginale. Quant aux gages des domestiques masculins, ils se sont élevés au niveau des salaires des ouvriers masculins non spécialisés, tandis que les gages des domestiques féminines, déjà moins élevés au point de départ, se sont détériorés avec le temps. Ces tendances laissent supposer que la demande de main-d'œuvre masculine s'est régularisée au fur et à mesure que la population augmentait.*

Studies in the development of a capitalist labour market in Canada West from the 1840s on often make assumptions about the condition of labour in the preceding period. Thus Steven Langdon, in his "Emergence of the Canadian Working Class Movement, 1845-75", states that "the emergence of an impersonal labour market, especially, generated greater inequality, unemployment and poverty in central Canada".<sup>1</sup> As the implicit comparison is to 1815-1840, it becomes vital to know as much as possible about workers' incomes in that era. A substantial portion of Upper Canada's population prior to 1840 consisted of manual labourers. While the colony was predominantly agrarian, they formed the second largest occupational group. Thus both for the period itself and for the study of subse-

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<sup>1</sup> Steven LANGDON, "The Emergence of the Canadian Working Class Movement, 1845-75", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, VIII, 2 (1973): 4. See also H. Clare PENTLAND, "The Development of the Capitalistic Labour Market in Canada", *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, XXV (November 1959): 450-61, and Leo JOHNSON, "Land Policy, Population Growth and Social Structure in the Home District, 1793-1851", in *Historical Essays on Upper Canada*, ed.: J. K. JOHNSTON (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), p. 52.

quent periods, the trend in wage rates, with what it implied about the overall economic and social position of labourers, is an important question.

The economic structure of Upper Canada from 1815 to 1840 was that of a rapidly expanding farm frontier. Before the War of 1812, it had a population of about 77,000; by 1840 it had 427,000 settlers.<sup>2</sup> After an immediate post-war spurt, immigration lagged in the 1820s, then boomed in the 1830s. Between 1824 and 1840 the population more than doubled. The overwhelming majority of these people went onto the land as farmers or labourers. Even in the Home District in 1832, the colony's largest town held only 5,505 of the district's total population of 36,663.<sup>3</sup> In rural townships most of the adult male family heads were farmers. For example, in Beverley township in 1822 there were 62 farms assessed for tax compared with 97 male heads of families reported in the census.<sup>4</sup> Besides those who came to farm, many others arrived intending to labour for wages, at least initially. In 1846 and 1853, the earliest years for which emigrant occupations are available, 54.4 and 53.5 percent respectively of those landing at Quebec and Montreal were listed as "labourers", compared to 2.3 and 4.1 percent listed as blacksmiths, tinsmiths, braziers, bricklayers, masons, carpenters or joiners.<sup>5</sup> While there was some lumbering activity, especially in the Ottawa valley, and small scale manufacturing, the basis of Upper Canada's economy was the production of wheat for export.<sup>6</sup>

Within that predominantly agrarian economy, the wage labour market tended to be localized. The major towns were mainly service centres for the farm community's needs in forwarding and transport. They provided a limited and, at times, unstable demand for wage labour, either for trades or the unskilled. Between a town and its surrounding rural area there was some communication, transportation and consequent labour mobility, but there was little between one rural area and another, or between rural and urban areas. In 1818 when impoverished emigrants had accumulated in Kingston without funds to proceed further, it required the creation of the Ernestown Compassionate Society by the farmers of the neighbouring township to divert this pool of labour to where it was needed.

Many Emigrants are in the habit of applying to the (Compassionate) Society at Kingston, for instruction, for assistance, which that Society, from its limited connection with the country may be unable to give. By establishing a Society (in the rural area)... whose members will be distributed in different parts of the Township, such a communication will be established as will ensure, not only relief to those who may be seeking employment, but will, at the same time, have

<sup>2</sup> Helen I. COWAN, *British Emigration to British North America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), pp. 185, 289. See also W. A. CARRUTHERS, *Emigration from the British Isles* (Westminster: P. S. King and Son, 1929), pp. 143, 305.

<sup>3</sup> UPPER CANADA, HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, *Journals and Appendix*, 1832-33, "Population Returns", p. 185.

<sup>4</sup> Public Archives of Canada (hereafter PAC), RG 5, B 26, vol. 1; Public Archives of Ontario (hereafter PAO), Beverly Assessment Roll, 1822.

<sup>5</sup> COWAN, *British Emigration*, p. 304.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Michael S. CROSS, "The Lumber Community of Upper Canada, 1815-1867", *Ontario History*, LII (December 1960): 213-33, and T. W. ACHESON, "The Nature and Structure of York Commerce in the 1820s", *The Canadian Historical Review*, I (December 1969): 406-28.

the effect of promoting the interest of individuals and the country generally, by removing the inconvenience which is now experienced by many places from the want of Labourers and Mechanics.<sup>7</sup>

To extend the labour market twenty miles from Kingston (with the Ontario lakeshore offering ready transportation) required a special effort at social organization, set up only in an extreme situation. Given that degree of localization one would expect to see some geographic differential in wage rates.

The category of wage labourers was not homogeneous. It was divided between the unskilled and the trades, between urban and rural, between female and male. The unskilled dealt with here are farm labourers, day labourers and servants. "Unskilled" is used to denote the absence of a trade or "craft". Farm labourers and servants had the skills appropriate to their work (for example, "the expert cradler" much in demand at harvest time). The various trades numbered in the dozens but only a few were common enough for their wage rates to be frequently noted: carpenters, blacksmiths, bricklayers and masons. Some, although much more limited, comparisons can also be made for journeymen printers, painters and tailors. The distinction made by contemporaries between farm and day labourers was not just one of locale, for farm workers often had to have certain minimal skills in clearing or harvesting while day labourers needed to have none. The occupation of servant was fundamentally divided along lines of sex, the rates for men having no relation (except for being consistently higher) to those for women. In order to describe the trend in wage labour, we turn to the rates for these eleven occupations: farm labourer, day labourer, male servant, female servant, blacksmith, bricklayer, mason, journeyman printer, painter, tailor.

Three factors influence the comparability of various rates: the type of rate, the season, and accommodation (or the workers' "overhead"). Just as one must always compare the rates of the same type of job at various times to establish a valid trend, so the type of rate being discussed must always be the same. There existed a hierarchy of pay for most occupations which ran from highest to lowest, from the most short term employment to the most secure. The highest rates were per job or for piece work. The next was day rate, then that per month, and lastly for the year. Canada Company Commissioner Fred Widder remarked, "It may be taken as a general rule, that all tradesmen working by the job, will earn from 1s. 6d. to 5s. per day more than by day-work."<sup>8</sup> Farm labourers could earn 5s. a day in harvest, but their average monthly rate was £2 10s.<sup>9</sup> A second

<sup>7</sup> *Kingston Chronicle*, 22 January 1819. The main urban centres continued to experience temporary gluts of destitute emigrants for whom relief societies were periodically organized. See, for example, *Christian Guardian*, 12 December 1829, 22 November 1837 and 29 December 1839; *Patriot*, 18 January 1833 and 10 February 1834; *Upper Canada Herald*, 25 July 1832.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas ROLPH, *The Emigrant's Manual* (London: Cunningham and Mortimer, n.d.), p. 81.

<sup>9</sup> Robert GOURLAY, *Statistical Account of Upper Canada*, ed.: S.R. MEALING (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), pp. 130, 132. Since wages were cited in at least three currencies — American dollars, United Kingdom pounds sterling and colonial pounds

factor particularly affecting farm workers was the season: summer rates per month were considerably higher than winter rates. Their annual rate was an over-all average of the two types. The third element which affected all employed labour was accommodation. If left to find their own, the labourers' wages were proportionately higher. One comprehensive table of wage rates concluded with the note, "Deducting 10s. for the towns and 1s. 6d. for the country, per week, will show the rate of wages with board and lodging".<sup>10</sup> Accommodation sometimes stretched beyond food and shelter to include "laundry" and even "mending".<sup>11</sup> A related factor for blacksmiths was the supply of iron, and occasionally other materials; the wage rate depended on whether they had to be "found" for the mechanic.<sup>12</sup> That combination of factors needs to be taken into consideration when comparing various different wage rates over time.

Table 1. — COMMODITY PRICES IN UPPER CANADA, 1818-1840  
(Prices in Pounds Currency = £.s.d.)

Item	Unit	1818	1822-1824	1840
Wheat	bu.	0.6.0	0.4.6	0.3.1 ½ to 0.5.0 <sup>a</sup>
Flour	bbl.	—	—	—
Best		—	0.30.0 <sup>b</sup>	0.20.0 to 0.21.3 <sup>c</sup>
Second		—	—	0.15.3 to 0.18.9 <sup>c</sup>
Pork	200 lb.	—	2.14.0 to 5.0.0	3.0.0
	lb.	—	0.0.6	0.0.4
Potatoes	bu.	—	0.2.0 to 0.2.6	0.1.3 to 0.1.10
Butter	lb.	0.1.4	—	0.0.8
Cheese	lb.	0.0.10	—	0.0.5

Sources: Robert GOURLAY, *Statistical Account of Upper Canada*, ed.: S. R. MEALING (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 291; John HOWISON, *Sketches of Upper Canada* (Edinburgh: Whittaker, 1825), pp. 250, 263; E. A. TALBOT, *Five Years' Residence in the Canadas* (London: Longman, 1824), vol. II, p. 181; Scottish Record Office (hereafter SRO), Gemmel Papers, John Gemmel to Mrs Gemmel, 2 March 1822; Thomas ROLPH, *The Emigrant's Manual* (London: Cunningham and Mortimer, n.d.), p. 83.

<sup>a</sup> 0.3.6 common price.

<sup>b</sup> for 196 lb.

<sup>c</sup> for 186 lb.

To see the wage rates in context, we need to be aware of the cost of living and the length of working time. As will be seen subsequently, most of

currency — for the sake of uniformity these have usually been converted to the commonest in use, that is pounds currency. Occasionally an exception is made where all values compared were cited in dollars. In 1840 Widder stated that one dollar was worth 4s. sterling or 5s. currency. Six years earlier Patrick SHIRREFF quoted one pound at 4s. 3d. currency. ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, p. 81, and P. SHIRREFF, *A Tour through North America* (Edinburgh: Balantyne, 1835), p. 111.

<sup>10</sup> ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, p. 80. See also S. W. SPRAGGE, *The John Strachan Letter Book, 1812-1834* (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1946), p. 132; John Strachan to Mr [Bowering?], 16 June 1817.

<sup>11</sup> Charles BARCLAY, ed., *Letters from the Dorking Emigrants* (London: Arch, 1833), p. 44.

<sup>12</sup> GOURLAY, *Statistical Account*, pp. 159, 164, 277.

those who worked for wages had their board and lodging supplied by their employer. Since this remained a constant feature throughout the period, farm and day labourers, in particular, were largely insulated from any fluctuation in living costs. Most tradesmen appear to have paid for their own accommodation and meals. However, even for these there was no significant trend to the erosion of earning power from a rising cost of living. While prices varied from time to time, and place to place, there was not even a mild inflationary trend.

The exception to this was the price of land which followed a steady upward path.<sup>13</sup> However, this affected wage-earners' future capacity to "escape" the labour market into farming rather than their day-to-day cost of living.

There is little direct evidence as to the length of time worked by labourers or tradesmen. Emigrants with some experience wrote home that the new land offered "plenty of good situations" with "plenty of employment".<sup>14</sup> Part of the new emigrants' problem in getting work seems to have been slow acculturation, both of attitudes and skills. In the late 1820s John MacTaggart, a British engineer on the Rideau Canal, commented,

Neither is employment readily obtained; a common labourer can find nothing to do for almost six months in the year, until he has learned how to wield the hatchet. He may then find employment in the woods (i.e. clearing land for farmers).<sup>15</sup>

As well as in picking up that rudimentary skill, MacTaggart saw barriers in the ambitions raised by the promise of new land.

Poor ignorant people, too, when they arrive in such colonies, are apt to feel themselves considerably elevated, and will not condescend to toil for mere bread until reduced to the last stage of poverty.<sup>16</sup>

Fred Widder made a similar observation in 1840:

A great error is committed by the emigrant in asking exorbitant wages on his arrival; and if they would be contented with 30s. or 40s. per month and their board, they would get abundance of opportunity to engage, but their views are generally by far too extravagant.<sup>17</sup>

The implication of these statements is that if the newcomers were willing to accept an initially lower rate while getting "on the job" training as a farm labourer, there was no shortage of work.

Tradesmen, however, were advised in the early 1820s to take up farming as a sideline. E. A. Talbot wrote to the mechanics intending to emigrate,

<sup>13</sup> Lillian GATES, *Land Policies of Upper Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), pp. 154, 226, 252. See also ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, p. 72; John HOWISON, *Sketches of Upper Canada* (Edinburgh: Whittaker, 1825), pp. 248-49; and GOURLAY, *Statistical Account*.

<sup>14</sup> Scottish Record Office (hereafter SRO), Gemmel Papers, John Gemmel to Andrew Gemmel, 21 May 1823; 8 November 1824. See also BARCLAY, *Letters*, p. 40.

<sup>15</sup> John MACTAGGART, *Three Years in Canada* (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), vol. II, p. 242.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>17</sup> ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, p. 92. See also BARCLAY, *Letters*, p. 23.

Since the population of the country is too thin to allow of his having constant employment in his peculiar calling, he may fill up the intervals by attending to his farm, and thus derive double the advantage possessed by the mere agriculturist or the mere mechanic.<sup>18</sup>

The repeated references of contemporaries to the shortage of labour seem to indicate that employment was constant except for tradesmen in rural areas. As the population became more dense with the acceleration of settlement in the 1830s, it seems probable that employment became steadier even for them, except for sharp temporary downturns as in 1836-37. The prevalence of month and week rates over day and job rates further implies that even outdoor artisans like carpenters were paid regardless of whether climatic conditions allowed them to work at full capacity.

The sources on wage rates are solidly anchored in two comprehensive lists for the beginning and the end of the period. The first is Robert Gourlay's survey of 1818. While covering only half a dozen occupations, his questionnaire was widely distributed and as a result gives the most all-inclusive comparisons of rates in different places for the same employments.<sup>19</sup> The second is a chart compiled by Fred Widder, Canada Company Commissioner, issued in November 1840. It offers rates for thirty-three trades and occupations, including such presumably scarce ones as comb-makers and quarrymen.<sup>20</sup> Both of these are supplemented by other accounts in the same or adjacent years. As well, for the early 1820s and the early 1830s there are numerous travel accounts that offer occasional evidence on wage rates. Correspondence within the colony and immigrants' letters home also provide instances of what was being paid in specific cases. It is thus possible at times to balance general statements about wage rates for the whole province against examples of what was actually being paid to individuals in various districts.

As it was the literate who have left the records, the balance of information offered is tipped towards those more educated, and probably more affluent, than the average labourer. The suspicion of bias is perhaps most acute in the case of emigration promotion books. Indeed, as will be seen from comparison with other types of sources, I have noted certain extravagant statements, as for example with reference to masons. However, there were numerous visitors and emigration promoters all publishing their views, which allowed conflicting impressions to be aired. Indeed some writers directly refuted or qualified others: E. A. Talbot criticized Dr Howison, Charles Fothergill, and Captain Charles Stuart; Patrick Shirreff disputed Adam Fergusson's account; Dr Thomas Rolph denounced Captain Allardyce Barclay and Thornton Leigh Hunt; while Mrs Susanna Moodie and John MacTaggart warned in general terms against too ready credence being given to emigration propaganda. By careful reading to see what sort of statement they are making, by checking their own qualifications on

<sup>18</sup> E. A. TALBOT, *Five Years' Residence in the Canadas* (London: Longman, 1824), vol. II, p. 247. See also SRO, Gemmel Papers, John Gemmel to Andrew Gemmel, 23 June 1823.

<sup>19</sup> GOURLAY, *Statistical Account*, pp. 10-11, 382-83.

<sup>20</sup> ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, pp. 80-81.

claims or statements made, and by setting various accounts and types of sources against each other, information of a reasonably reliable nature can be gleaned even from emigration promoters' accounts.

The place of employment, whether near or far from the water-front, was particularly important for the first occupations to be considered, those of farm and day labourers. For the trades it appears to have been somewhat less critical. In fact, except for the trades, the place where people worked could on occasion have more to do with their wage rates than which year they worked.

The occupation of farm labourer was seldom seen as a permanent one. Dr John Howison described it in some detail in the early 1820s.

But it sometimes happens the emigrants are too poor to purchase the provisions, stock, and farming utensils, that new settlers require, when commencing their labours. Persons so situated must hire themselves out, until they gain enough to make a beginning. They will be paid for their work in money, grain, cattle, or provisions; all which articles will prove equally useful and valuable to them. They will, at the same time, be acquiring a knowledge of the manners and customs of the country, the nature of the seasons, the mode of farming and various other desirable particulars... Many, who are now independent settlers, came to the province in absolute poverty; but by pursuing the plan above described were soon enabled to commence working upon their own lands, and to raise themselves beyond the reach of want.<sup>21</sup>

The Toronto *Patriot* in 1837 painted a similar picture though in more gaudy colours, characterizing the poor but healthy emigrant as a "physical gentleman".

After a few years of kind treatment from a generous and affluent master, the physical gentleman appears in the double character of *physical* and *monied* capitalist, in addition to which he has a valuable store of useful knowledge, and he then proceeds to turn landholder with the moral certainty for every scion of his stock "a plantation in a pure soil".<sup>22</sup>

The newspaper's "few years" was variously estimated from two to four.<sup>23</sup> Contemporaries regarded the farm labourer as a "yeoman" in training. That implied a degree of social equality between farmer and farm hand reflected in the ease of inter-marriage among the families of each group.<sup>24</sup> While the norm on the length of contracts was at least monthly, if not yearly, they did not entail the full "feudal" relationship which Pentland described.<sup>25</sup> The labourer was expected to be "loyal" to the employer to the extent of foregoing higher summer rates from others in return for secure winter employment, but there was nothing permanent about the

<sup>21</sup> HOWISON, *Sketches*, pp. 259-60. See also *Upper Canada Herald*, 14 March 1832.

<sup>22</sup> *Patriot*, 18 August 1837.

<sup>23</sup> Robert L. JONES, *History of Agriculture in Ontario, 1613-1880* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977; 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1946), pp. 56n, 60; SHIRREFF, *A Tour through North America*, p. 398; Andrew PICKEN, *The Canadas as they at present commend themselves* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1832), p. 28; William CATTERMOLE, *Emigration — The Advantages of Emigration to Canada* (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1831), pp. 114-15.

<sup>24</sup> JONES, *History of Agriculture*, p. 56n.

<sup>25</sup> ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, p. 94; PENTLAND, "Development of Capitalistic Labour Market", p. 453.

employer's provision of his "overhead", of accommodation and food. Each relationship of labourer to farmer was seen as medium term, a necessary preface to the former's full social and economic equality as a farmer.

The presumed transient nature of the occupation and its goal influenced the mode of payment. While wage rates were listed in money terms, in cash-poor rural Upper Canada farmers often lacked the currency to pay their workers. However, as noted previously by Howison, this need not have been a disadvantage where the labourer aimed at becoming a yeoman. Payment in provisions, livestock or even land merely facilitated the expected social and economic transition. The wage rates given for farm labourers, then, should perhaps be seen as cash equivalents rather than as invariably money incomes.<sup>26</sup>

Table 2. — WAGES FOR FARM LABOURERS IN UPPER CANADA, 1818-1840  
(Rates in Pounds Currency = £.s.d.)

<i>Employment Period</i>	1818	1820-23	1830-34	1840
Annual	25.0.0	—	18.0.0	25.0.0
Range	to 37.0.0	—	to 30.0.0	to 30.0.0
Average	28.16.0	30.0.0	30.0.0	—
Monthly				
Summer	0.4.10 to 3.0.0	—	3.0.0	3.10.0
Winter	0.1.10 to 2.0.0	—	1.5.0 to 2.0.0	2.0.0
Average	—	3.0.0	2.10.0	—
Harvest Day	0.5.2	—	0.5.0	—

Sources: GOURLAY, *Statistical Account*, pp. 130, 132, 135, 138, 186, 187, 199, 242, 259, 271, 291; TALBOT, *Five Years' Residence*, vol. II, p. 240; HOWISON, *Sketches*, p. 249; William CATTERMOLE, *Emigration — The Advantages of Emigration to Canada* (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1831), pp. 85, 98, 172; P. SHIRREFF, *A Tour through North America* (Edinburgh: Ballantyne, 1835), pp. 117-28, 182; Adam FERGUSSON, *Practical Notes Made During a Tour of Canada and a Portion of the United States* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1833), pp. 16, 161, 287-88; Charles BARCLAY, ed., *Letters from the Dorking Emigrants* (London: Arch, 1833), pp. 14, 40, 55; P.E. MALCOMSON, "The Poor in Kingston, 1815-50", in *To Preserve and Defend*, ed.: Gerald TULCHINSKY (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976), p. 282, for the day rate (around Kingston) outside harvest: 2s. to 3s.; ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, pp. 80-81.

Note: All rates except those for harvest day include boarding and lodging.

<sup>26</sup> ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, p. 93; D. H. MCINNES, "The Diary of Henry Ransford", *Ontario History*, LI, 4 (1959), p. 255.

Farm labourers' wages were commonly listed by the day (during harvest time), the month, and the year. The monthly rates varied from summer to winter, while an average monthly rate or an annual rate was also sometimes given.

The limits of the range in Gourlay's data for 1818 were clearly affected by geographic location. The highest range and the highest summer wage were offered in the townships of the Western District (Sandwich and Malden). The lower rates (for winter and summer respectively) were in lakeside townships of Gore District (East and West Flamboro' and Ancaster) and in the Johnson District (Wolford, Bastard).<sup>27</sup> Widder's figures do not allow us to explore the reasons for the range he gives. However, in 1834 Patrick Shirreff, a Scottish farmer, made a careful tour through the colony. His account notes the farm wages for different areas he visited. At Prescott he found the summer wage per month \$8. Further west, in the well-developed York and Simcoe Counties the summer rate was \$10. When he travelled back from the lake to Peterborough, the summer wage was \$12 a month, while the annual wage was \$120. Once he was as far west as the Talbot Settlement, even on the lakefront the annual wage was \$120.<sup>28</sup> The further west, and the further back from the lake or water-front, the scarcer labour became and the higher the pay. Geographic location emerges as a significant influence on the farm labourer's wage structure.

What trend appears over-all in farm labourers' wages? The range in monthly rates narrowed downward. The average summer rate for 1840 was 10s. less than the lowest offered in 1818. The annual rate range became narrower, due to the highest wages of 1818 (up to £37) no longer being offered. The bottom of the annual range in 1840 compared to that of 1818 showed no decline. The average winter rate in 1840 equalled the top winter rate of 1818. From this we might infer that labour scarcity in remoter areas and in the summer months had eased due to immigration, thus depressing the top wages offered. But the most surprising aspect is the fundamental stability of the wage rates. In spite of the enormous inflow of people, the bottom of the farm labourers' wage scale (the lowest of the annual range and the winter rates) did not decline.

Day labourers were distinguished from farm labourers as those without experience in, or perhaps even aptitude for farm work, the farm skills concerned being forest clearing and harvesting. The distinction was made quite clear by Widder in response to a question as to whether wages paid on public works projects were higher than farm wages.

The question scarcely admits of a direct answer, inasmuch as the labourers employed on the public works are raw emigrants, who are only fit on their first arrival for such description of work; and beside, having been employed in Europe solely as excavators upon canals or railways, they are ill adapted by education or habits to be so useful or so desirable as farm labourers.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> GOURLAY, *Statistical Account*, pp. 130, 132, 186, 187, 199, 259, 271.

<sup>28</sup> SHIRREFF, *A Tour through North America*, pp. 117, 125, 145, 182.

<sup>29</sup> ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, p. 93.

Would-be employers appear to have made the same distinction.<sup>30</sup> However, one should not be too rigid in differentiating these categories, as both could be referred to as "labourers".

Unfortunately neither Gourlay nor Widder gave rates for day labourers. However, there are fairly general statements about such rates for years close to the limits of this study.

Table 3. — WAGES FOR DAY LABOURERS IN UPPER CANADA, 1818-1839  
(Rates in Pounds Currency = £.s.d.)

<i>Employment Period</i>	<i>1818</i>	<i>1820-23</i>	<i>1830-34</i>	<i>1839</i>
Daily				
Range	0.2.6 to 0.3.9	—	0.2.6 to 0.6.0	—
Average	—	0.2.6 to 0.3.0	0.3.0 to 0.6.0	0.3.6 to 0.4.0
Monthly	—	[3.6.0]	2.5.0 to 3.10.0	—
Annual	—	—	40.0.0	[27.0.0 to 48.0.0]

Sources: *Upper Canada Sundries* (hereafter *UCS*), Thomas Ridout to Major Hillier, 14 April 1820; SRO, Gemmel Papers, John Gemmel to Andrew Gemmel, 30 April 1824; TALBOT, *Five Years' Residence*, vol. I, p. 357, vol. II, p. 188; National Library of Scotland, Acc. 7020, Mary McNicol to James McNicol, 2 August 1831, and John McIntosh to James McNicol, 8 May 1833; John MCGREGOR, *British America* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1833), vol. II, p. 441; Andrew PICKEN, *The Canadas as They at Present Commend Themselves* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1832), pp. XIII, 36, 299; CATTERMOLLE, *Emigration*, p. 172; MALCOLMSON, "The Poor in Kingston", p. 282.

Note: All rates shown include board and lodging. The rates in brackets are inferred, from annual to average monthly rate, or vice versa.

The range of rates for 1820 comes from a letter of the Surveyor-General setting out the costs of surveying a road to Lake Simcoe. The lower rate was for axemen, the higher rate for chain bearers; both were allowed 1s. 6d. a day for rations. That range represents the best judgement of a well-informed official as to the prevailing level of wages for at least the Home District. Unfortunately the other end of the period is not so firmly anchored. At two public works projects near Kingston labourers' wages were 3s. 6d. to 4s. The figure of 3s. 9d. per day was offered by John Strachan on an estimate of costs for work on King's College. He stated that to be "the common wages" but he was referring to Toronto. How did

<sup>30</sup> *Patriot*, 27 October 1835.

the rate relate to anything like a province-wide average? Given that it was a figure for spring and summer in the town where most immigrants were likely to land looking for work, it might be taken as low. This impression is reinforced by evidence from a farmer's letter written the following spring showing day labourers around Lake Simcoe receiving 4s. a day.<sup>31</sup> Between these two points, there appear numerous ranges in travellers' accounts and emigrants' letters — none of which goes below the base rate of 1820. In some of these the range is due to a variety of locations where the work was performed; in others it no doubt reflected the contrasting abilities of the persons hired. For example, the range of wages offered to carpenters could have reflected, in part, the variety of people called "carpenter", from master carpenter to a labourer willing to use saw and hammer. But the rates over-all demonstrate a remarkable stability. The apparent trend over time is for an increase: the top rate of 1820 becomes the "common wage" of 1839.

The third category of unskilled labour consisted of the two contrasting occupations of female and male servant. Since many of those who have left written records were in a position to hire servants, there is much discussion about servants as a class. Anna Jameson's comments are characteristic.

The want of good servants is a more serious evil ... Almost all the servants are of the lower class of Irish emigrants, in general honest, warm-hearted, and willing; but never having seen anything but want, dirt, and reckless misery at home, they are not the most eligible persons to trust with the cleanliness and comfort of one's household.<sup>32</sup>

She offers some rates for man-servants, cooks and housemaids, adding as one would expect an employer to do, "but these are lower wages than are usual for good and experienced servants, who might indeed command almost any wages here, where labour is high priced".<sup>33</sup> Like farm labourers, servants were expected to possess certain rudimentary skills, yet were clearly separate from those with a distinctive domestic "trade" skill, such as a cook. The wage trends for the two types of servants — male and female — are exactly opposite.

Female servants experienced a marked fall in their income throughout the period 1818 to 1840.

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<sup>31</sup> PAO, Strachan Papers, John Strachan to Sir George Arthur, 23 April 1839; Metropolitan Toronto Library, W. W. Baldwin Papers, Wm. B. McVity to W. W. Baldwin, 15 July 1840.

<sup>32</sup> Anna JAMESON, *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), vol. I, p. 269. See also CATTERMOLLE, *Emigration*, p. 205 and HOWISON, *Sketches*, p. 274.

<sup>33</sup> JAMESON, *Winter Studies*, vol. I, pp. 269-70.

Table 4. — WAGES FOR FEMALE SERVANTS IN UPPER CANADA, 1818-1840  
(Rates in Pounds Currency = £.s.d.)

Employment Period	1818	1820-23	1830-34	1837	1840
Daily	—	—	0.2.6	—	0.2.0
Weekly	0.5.6	—	—	—	—
Monthly	0.20.0	0.16.0	0.16.0	0.16.0	0.16.0
Range	to 0.30.0	to 0.24.0	to 0.35.0	to 0.20.0	to 0.24.0
Average	—	0.18.0	0.20.0 to 0.30.0	0.16.0	—

Sources: GOURLAY, *Statistical Account*, pp. 130, 132, 135, 138, 189, 233, 242, 259, 263, 272, 277, 291; SRO, Gemmel Papers, John Gemmel to Andrew Gemmel, 30 April 1824; HOWISON, *Sketches*, 249; PICKEN, *The Canadas*, p. 36; MCGREGOR, *British America*, vol. II, p. 441; SHIRREFF, *A Tour through North America*, p. 190; CATTERMOLLE, *Emigration*, pp. 13, 205; FERGUSSON, *Practical Notes*, pp. 61, 287, 370; MALCOLMSON, "The Poor in Kingston", p. 282; ANNA JAMESON, *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), vol. I, p. 267; vol. II, p. 169; Public Archives of Ontario (hereafter PAO), Macaulay Papers, John Macaulay to Ann Macaulay, 9 March 1837; Metropolitan Toronto Library, W.W. Baldwin Papers, Wm. M. McVity to W.W. Baldwin, 12 Decembre 1840; ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, pp. 80-81.

Note: All except daily rates include board and lodging.

Table 5. — WAGES FOR MALE SERVANTS IN UPPER CANADA, 1818-1840  
(Rates in Pounds Currency = £.s.d.)

Employment Period	1820-23	1830-34	1837	1839	1840
Monthly	0.28.0 to 0.32.0	0.30.0 to 0.50.0	0.32.0 to 0.40.0	0.36.0	0.30.0 to 0.40.0
Annual	15.0.0	24.0.0 to 30.0.0	—	—	—

Sources: PAO, Macaulay Papers, John Strachan to John Macaulay, 28 April 1823; John Macaulay to Ann Macaulay, 9 March 1839 and 11 April 1839; TALBOT, *Five Years'*, vol. II, p. 241; FERGUSSON, *Practical Notes*, pp. 287, 370; Victoria University, Toronto, United Church Archives, Stark Papers, Mark Stark to Mrs Stark, 18 August 1834; JAMESON, *Winter Studies*, vol. I, p. 269; vol. II, p. 169; ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, p. 88.

Note: All rates include board and lodging.

Location appeared to influence women's wages. Gourlay's survey shows the higher wages in the western townships (Sandwich, Malden, Raleigh, Dover), while the more eastern were lower (Haldimand, Wolford, Landsdowne, Bastard, Charlottenburgh). If employed at spinning women could make about one shilling a week extra. In fact skill was a critical factor for women employed in domestic labour. By the late 1830s, cooks could command from 24 to 32 shillings a month as well as having less extensive household duties.<sup>34</sup> By contrast the ordinary female servant's wages had fallen so far that the bottom of the 1818 range was close to the top of the 1840 range.

For male servants, the picture was just the reverse. While the evidence is less ample, the trend which emerges is clear. The top of the monthly range noted by Widder in 1840 is almost one third higher than the top of the 1823 range.

What lies behind this considerable rise is the fact that male servants' wages had been very low in the immediate post-war years. Over the period, they rose to meet the general level offered for unskilled male labour. John Strachan noted in 1823 that the availability of employment on the Erie Canal had driven up servants' wages and he hoped for a flood of immigration to drive them down again.<sup>35</sup> But increased immigration apparently brought in more servant-hiring families than men willing to be servants. As well the acceleration of settlement on the land may have drawn men away from domestic service with ambitions of becoming farmers. William Patterson was one servant with such ideas. Wrote his former commanding officer,

The bearer of this letter, was a soldier of our Regt. & has been my servant for about 2 years: — he has purchased his discharge & is now on the eve of returning to York to seek a situation as indoor Servant ... His ultimate intention is to avail himself of his military grant of land, but in order to do this in a suitable manner he is anxious to be in service for 2 or 3 years to enable him to realize a little money —.<sup>36</sup>

Cheap land opened possibilities for men that were not there for women. The expansion of the servant-holding class could not even keep their wages stable. The only employment available for unskilled women was domestic service: no competing opportunities worked to produce labour scarcity and higher wages.<sup>37</sup>

In the four prominent skilled trades — carpenter, blacksmith, mason and bricklayer — a marginal decline appears to be the over-all trend. Two of the four (carpenters and blacksmiths) show a very wide range in Gourlay's survey. That corresponds to a much narrower pair of ranges in

<sup>34</sup> JAMESON, *Winter Studies*, vol. I, p. 269; vol. II, p. 169; ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, pp. 80-81; PAO, Macaulay Papers, John Macaulay to Ann Macaulay, 28 September 1839.

<sup>35</sup> PAO, Macaulay Papers, John Strachan to John Macaulay, 28 April 1823.

<sup>36</sup> Metropolitan Toronto Library, Allan Papers, Capt. Wm. Castle to Wm. Allan, 29 June 1833.

<sup>37</sup> SRO, Hope Papers, Adam Hope to George Hope, 8 October 1849; HOWISON, *Sketches*, p. 274; CATTERMOLE, *Emigration*, p. 205.

Widder's table. In each case the lowest rate had come up, while the highest had come down. The two building trades (bricklayers and masons) show a similar decline in their average wage rates. The narrower ranges could suggest that demand for and supply of skilled labour had become more uniform throughout the colony, a trend cutting across localized labour markets. By 1840 no great scarcities of tradesmen would have driven wages up; but since demand had become more constant, neither would wages have sunk so low. Yet the stabilization trend is down, indicating in all likelihood the pressure of incoming migration in expanding the supply of skilled labour.

In contrast to farm labourers', the carpenters' wages appear less affected in Gourlay's survey by work location. The wage offered in the Western District townships was still the highest. However the range of wages offered in the easternmost township (Charlottenburgh) were just as high.

Table 6. — DAILY WAGES FOR CARPENTERS IN UPPER CANADA, 1818-1840  
(Rates in Pounds Currency = £.s.d.)<sup>a</sup>

	1818	1820-23	1830-34	1839
Range	0.5.0 to 0.10.0	— <sup>b</sup>	0.3.6 to 0.7.6	0.6.0 to 0.6.6
Average	0.7.9	0.5.0	0.5.0 to 0.8.0 <sup>c</sup>	—

Sources: GOURLAY, *Statistical Account*, pp. 130, 132, 135, 138, 148, 156, 161, 167, 242, 245, 259, 263, 277, 291; MALCOLMSON, "The Poor in Kingston", p. 282; UCS, "Estimate of the Probable Expense of Workmanship and Materials required to build a Church", 26 May 1820; TALBOT, *Five Years'*, vol. II, p. 188; CATTERMOLLE, *Emigration*, pp. 92, 94, 183; FERGUSSON, *Practical Notes*, pp. 161, 370; ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, p. 80.

<sup>a</sup> Unlike figures in previous tables, room and board are not included here.

<sup>b</sup> A specific estimate for Kingston in 1820 gives 4s. 4d. in an individual case.

<sup>c</sup> Depending on location.

The succession of ranges for 1818, 1830-34 and 1840 demonstrates the steady decline of the highest wage offered, and the small rise of the lowest wage. The result is a range in 1840 whose top is well below the 1818 average.

More than other trades, the blacksmith was likely to have his own shop, working as a master-mechanic rather than as a wage labourer.<sup>38</sup> As well when he did work for another as an employee, the terms might vary considerably, depending on whether he supplied or was supplied with tools, fuel or iron. All this makes the reading of these rates problematic.

<sup>38</sup> GOURLAY, *Statistical Account*, p. 130.

Table 7. — WAGES FOR BLACKSMITHS IN UPPER CANADA, 1818-1840  
(Rates in Pounds Currency = £.s.d.)

<i>Employment Period</i>	1818	1830-34	1840
Daily			
Range	0.3.6 to 0.10.0	0.5.0 to 0.8.6	0.6.6 to 0.7.6
Average	0.7.8	—	—
Monthly			
Range	—	2.5.0 to 4.5.0	—
Average	5.14.0	—	—

Sources: GOURLAY, *Statistical Account*, pp. 130, 132, 135, 138, 156, 159, 164, 219, 242, 245, 259, 277, 291; UCS, "Estimate of the Probable Expense", 26 May 1820; CATTERMOLÉ, *Emigration*, pp. 94, 183; FERGUSSON, *Practical Notes*, pp. 161, 287; ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, pp. 80-81.

Note: A specific estimate for Kingston in 1820 gives 4s. 6d. in an individual case.

Here the same narrowing of the range is evident, though the bottom of the range came up further and the fall from the 1818 average to the 1840 top rate was less.

Table 8. — DAILY WAGES FOR MASONS IN UPPER CANADA, 1818-1840  
(Rates in Pounds Currency = £.s.d.)

	1818	1820	1830-34	1840
Individual cases	0.10.0	0.5.0	—	—
Range	0.5.0 to 0.12.6 <sup>a</sup>	—	0.4.6 to 7.6.0	—
Average	0.8.4	—	0.10.0 <sup>b</sup>	0.7.6 to 0.12.6 <sup>c</sup>

Sources: UCS, "Estimate of the Probable Expense", 26 May 1820; GOURLAY, *Statistical Account*, pp. 130, 132, 135, 138, 156, 161, 167, 242, 249, 259, 263, 277, 291; CATTERMOLÉ, *Emigration*, p. 183 ("an extreme case"); SHIRREFF, *A Tour through North America*, pp. 117-28; FERGUSSON, *Practical Notes*, pp. 161, 370; ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, p. 81.

<sup>a</sup> The highest figure of 12s. 6d. was in Kingston, with no boarding or lodging provided.

<sup>b</sup> This estimate of an average wage is in obvious contradiction with other estimates of the range of wages in the same year.

<sup>c</sup> The first estimate is the daily rate; the second is the likely wage per day working at the job rate.

Given the predominance of wooden buildings in Upper Canada, masons would not have been numerous.<sup>39</sup> They were employed almost exclusively in large towns and on public works. Consequently they would not likely have experienced much regional wage variation.

The familiar pattern recurs of a decline in the average rate between 1818 and 1840. However, the top rates, even taking into account that they were differently based (one a day rate, the other a job rate) remained equivalent.

Gourlay's survey in 1818 produced only one township that offered a rate for bricklayers. However, this can be taken together with a specific contract from the year before at York. In that case John Strachan, rebuilding his house after a fire, commented to the tradesman, "There are numbers asking for the job every day at a much cheaper rate, but they are not known and cannot give Security for the goodness of the Chimneys".<sup>40</sup> Given that Strachan thought 8s. a day was a high wage, we may take the 7s. 6d. offered in Crowland, reported by Gourlay, as something like a general rate.

Table 9. — DAILY WAGES FOR BRICKLAYERS IN UPPER CANADA, 1818-1840  
(Rates in Pounds Currency = £.s.d.)

	1817	1818	1820-23	1830-34	1840
Individual cases	0.8.0	—	0.4.0 <sup>a</sup>	—	—
Range	—	—	—	0.4.0 to 0.8.9	0.6.3 to 0.7.6
Average	—	0.7.6	—	—	—

Sources: S. W. SPRAGGE, *The John Strachan Letter Book, 1812-1834* (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1946), p. 132, John Strachan to Mr [Bowering?], 16 June 1817; GOURLAY, *Statistical Account*, p. 233; HOWISON, *Sketches*, p. 62, 249; PICKEN, *The Canadas*, p. XLIV; CATTERMOLE, *Emigration*, p. 92; BARCLAY, *Letters*, p. 25; FERGUSSON, *Practical Notes*, p. 370; ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>a</sup> This wage was refused by the workmen.

If the Crowland township average can be taken as more general than its own region (supported by inference from Strachan's comment), then again a marginal decline occurred. The assumed average of 1818 by 1840 was the top wage.

Some scattered evidence is available for three other trades: journeymen printers, painters and tailors. Several of the references are to specific instances, not over-all provincial rates or anything that could reasonably be taken as such. A more substantial problem is that in each

<sup>39</sup> TALBOT, *Five Years'*, vol. II, pp. 246-47; SHIRREFF, *A Tour through North America*, p. 386.

<sup>40</sup> SPRAGGE, *John Strachan Letter Book*, p. 132, John Strachan to Mr [Bowering?], 16 June 1817.

occupation there is data for only two dates, allowing no comparisons of rates for intermediate years. The rates for these trades, presented with due qualifications for their ambiguities, provide some additional though fragmentary evidence on over-all wage trends for skilled labourers.

Given the prominence of newspapers as sources for Upper Canadian history, it is surprising we know so little about the wages of those who produced them. Where rates are mentioned they were, or were considered to be, exceptional. A continuing complaint of those who operated newspapers was the scarcity of "hands" and their consequent high wages and independent behaviour, as William Lyon Mackenzie remarked:

All this is bad enough, but there is one circumstance connected with a country newspaper which is still worse: namely, the slavish dependence of masters upon their journeymen ... A master printer is not like a carpenter or a shoemaker, who can at all times find abundance of working people in his calling. There are but few operatives.<sup>41</sup>

Nor was Mackenzie alone in his complaint.<sup>42</sup> The two references to printers' wages reflect these tensions. In 1816 journeymen printers were reported to earn \$9.50 a week, while in 1836 their weekly salary fell to \$7.00, the \$8.00 rate demanded by the printers' union in the unsuccessful strike in Toronto having been rejected.<sup>43</sup>

A prospective King's Printer in 1816 considered it impossible to operate without a substantial subsidy, given the high wages he had to pay. Twenty years later Mackenzie fired six of his printers for demanding a dollar a week raise. Since it was indoor work and constant employment, he regarded the printers' \$7.00 a week as the equivalent of \$8.00 or \$9.00 to carpenters who had to work outside, lost time in rainy weather, and had to supply their own tools.<sup>44</sup> Taken together these two instances show a decline in York/Toronto of the printers' rate from an immediate post-war high to a substantially lower level, even in the expanding economy of the mid-1830s.

Any comparison of painters' wages is even less firmly grounded. The early period is represented by a single case of a contract let at Kingston where a painter's daily rate was estimated at 7s. 6d. For 1840 Widder provided provincial rates ranging from 6s. 3d. to 7s. 6d.<sup>45</sup> In so far as anything can be deduced from this data, painters' rates appear to have been more or less stable over time.

The evidence for tailors' wages is somewhat better. A range of rates from 30s to 50s. per week for the years 1820-23 as recorded by a traveller can be compared to the day rate of 7s. 6d. given by Widder for 1840. Re-

<sup>41</sup> *Colonial Advocate*, 27 April 1826.

<sup>42</sup> *Upper Canada Sundries* (hereafter *UCS*). Stephen Miles to Ed MacMahon, 15 October 1814; J. M. Flindall to the Lt. Gov., 10 July 1816; *Christian Guardian*, 12 December 1829.

<sup>43</sup> *UCS*, J.M. Flindall to the Lt. Gov., 10 July 1816; *Constitution*, 26 October 1836.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *UCS*, "Estimate of the Probable Expense", 26 May 1820; ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, pp. 80-81.

membership that if hired by the week, the tailor would receive slightly less than by day rates, nonetheless we can infer a (probably high) weekly rate of 45s. from Widder's figure.<sup>46</sup> Even though the earlier year includes room and board and the latter one does not, the rate in 1840 falls well inside the range for the early period; there thus appears on this limited evidence to have been some stability in tailors' rates.

Of the seven skilled trades considered, the four principal ones suffered decline, though all were not equally affected. Carpenters faced the most severe decline. Their top rate by 1840 had fallen more than a shilling below the average for 1818. Less affected were blacksmiths and bricklayers. The former's top rate, at the period's end, was nearly the average for 1818 (7s. 6d. vs. 7s. 8d.). While it is not possible to be so precise with bricklayers, their top rate in 1840 appears to be the same as the average in 1818. Yet all three experienced a marked if marginal decline. Masons experienced the least decline. Their corresponding average rates show the least decline: less than a shilling. Moreover, it was still possible to make the top rate of 1818 in 1840. A similar pattern appears when the improvements in the lowest rates are compared. The carpenters had the least improvement, a one shilling increase. The masons' and blacksmiths' minimum rates, by contrast, came up two and three shillings respectively. No early range is available for bricklayers. The trend toward a marginal decline in rates affected the carpenters most severely at both the top and bottom of the scale, while blacksmiths and bricklayers had lesser declines, and masons the least of all.

The same mixture of marginal decline with some stability apparently characterized the three other skilled trades on which less data is available. Printers in York/Toronto experienced a reduction in wages, at least in terms of the high rates of the immediate post-war period. Painters' and tailors' rates appear to have been more stable, as far as the limited evidence shows.

Overall, then, for the trades in general, as with day- and farm-labourers, the general trend over time was a narrowing of the range of rates offered. The top wage had come down (in some occupations below or as low as the average in 1818), but the bottom one had come up. The pervasiveness of this pattern might suggest that demand for, as well as supply of, labour had become more uniform across Upper Canada. By the end of the period, due to the enormous immigration, there were seldom such scarcities of skilled or unskilled workers as would drive wages very high. At the same time, the greater density of settlement meant that demand became more constant, restricting the off-seasonal fall in wages. The exceptions to this pattern were the servants. Women servants experienced a severe fall in wages throughout the period. In contrast, men servants clearly moved up, until their wages were the equivalent of other types of unskilled male labour. In all likelihood it was the competing attractions of other types of unskilled labour (not open to women) as well as the attraction of settling on the land to farm, which produced the remarkable rise. These two instances

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<sup>46</sup> TALBOT, *Five Years'*, vol. II, p. 16; ROLPH, *Emigrant's Manual*, pp. 80-81.

aside, the pattern in wage rates was one of narrowing ranges marking a move towards a more mature labour market, marginal declines of varying degrees in the skilled trades, and a fundamental stability in the face of an influx of immigrants that more than tripled the province's population in two decades.

In his pioneering study, "The Development of a Capitalistic Labour Market in Canada", Professor H. C. Pentland described Upper Canada as possessing "the essential structure of a capitalistic market" by the 1850s.<sup>47</sup> By 1840 the three factors working for the development of that labour market had begun to emerge. First, the demand for wage labour was becoming more regular. This happened as the internal market became less localized, with improvements in communication such as the increasing number of newspapers and in transportation such as regular steamer routes and roads. As well, the denser settlement of rural areas and the substantial growth of towns stabilized employment especially for tradesmen. Second, the high volume of immigration maintained the labour pool, in spite of the considerable out-migration to farming. However, the ships that docked at Quebec brought not only wage-earners but also ready-made farmers. The latter provided a rapidly expanding market for labour which served to keep wage levels from falling as one might have expected with the enormous accessions to the potential labour pool as occurred in years such as 1831 and 1832. The third factor stressed by Pentland, the barriers against escape from the labour pool, was not much evident by 1840.

The rising price of land did signal the beginning of the scarcity of good farm land that would be endemic by the 1850s. The wholesale free grant system was long gone, and the patchwork of special free grants offered little in relation to the volume of people coming in.<sup>48</sup> Yet by 1840, most rural labourers in particular still considered their position only short term. The farm hand expected, and was expected, to have enough to begin a farm of his own in four or five years. While Pentland considered "the conditions for a capitalistic market are not well met while men can go out of the market about as easily as they came into it" because the employer had an uncertain labour supply, yet the transient nature of the employers' relation to employees made it more impersonal, and thus more like the relationships of the capitalist labour market.<sup>49</sup> There appears then to be rather less distance from the "feudal" labour market, as Pentland defined it for Upper Canada, to the capitalist one than his analysis might indicate.

As land became harder to come by through the 1840s, as transportation and communications improvements continued to broaden local labour markets, and, above all, as settlement, rural as well as urban, became more dense, the demand for labour became more regular. The range of rates offered for most occupations narrowed, while the labour pool became more fixed, the narrowing range being pressed down by an increasing proportion

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<sup>47</sup> PENTLAND, "Development of Capitalistic Labour Market", p. 455.

<sup>48</sup> GATES, *Land Policies*, pp. 153, 179, 185.

<sup>49</sup> PENTLAND, "Development of Capitalistic Labour Market", p. 459.

of labouring emigrants. Moreover, as the promise of land receded, the hopes and status of all labourers declined. Artisans and farm-hands were no longer yeoman-in-waiting, but a new factor to be reckoned with in a society ceasing to be predominantly agrarian.