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LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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— THE IRISH IN EASTERN ONTARIO
THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP
IN LANARK COUNTY, 1861-1881

by Glenn J Lockwood

Thesis presented to the School of
Graduate Studies of the University
of Ottawa as partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts.

Ottawa, Ontario, 1980

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Preface

Famine immigration from Ireland to Upper Canada in the 1840s, the largest single movement of people into the province in the nineteenth century, acquainted the inhabitants of most townships with the Irish. The heaviest concentration of Irish immigrants by 1871 was in Eastern Ontario, particularly along the length of the Rideau Canal, compared with the already heavily settled southwestern region of the province where Irish settlement was relatively light.

The impact that the Irish made on contemporary Upper Canada, later Ontario, has not been reflected either in the general or ethnic history of the province. Only recently have monographs on Irish institutions such as the Orange Lodge and protest groups such as the Fenians been written by Hereward Senior, Cecil Houston and William Smyth. The few theses concerning the Irish have focused on events such as the Fenian Raids or on a few prominent personalities such as Thomas D'Arcy McGee. Examples include Robert McGee's study of the Toronto Irish Catholic press at the time of the Fenian Raids and Robin Burns' biography of Thomas D'Arcy McGee. The one exception to the almost complete lack of interest in mid-nineteenth century Irish society in Canada is John J. Mannion's study of cultural transfer and adaptation in three selected

Irish settlements in Ontario and Atlantic Canada. Yet his choice of an Irish community in Ontario is unrepresentative of the provincial Irish at large, arriving as it did some decades earlier than the late 1840s famine immigration, aided with government assistance, and given grants of land by the Crown.

The recent growth of interest in social history is beginning to redress the lack of interest in the Irish population of mid-nineteenth century Ontario. Perhaps the best examples are David Gagan and Herbert Mays' study of the predominantly Irish Toronto Gore Township in Peel County, and Julian Gwyn's study of Huntley Township in Carleton County. Gagan's work on Toronto Gore Township in the Toronto hinterland is not very useful for the study of an Eastern Ontario Irish community where the ethnic structure is so different. Gwyn's work on Huntley, by contrast, too well fits this criterion for ninety percent of the township's population was of Irish origin, and thus does not contain a sufficient proportion of non-Irish population with which to make comparisons. Moreover, the recent interest of quantitative historians in reconstructing the social structure of communities has taken place largely in southwestern Ontario, a region where one was least likely to find inhabitants of Irish origin. The meagre literary records left behind by the Irish in comparison with other ethnic groups have further compounded the difficulty of analyzing the Irish

community in Ontario at a period in the province's history when local society was in an unprecedented state of flux.

A study of an Eastern Ontario Township with a large Irish population, but also containing comparable numbers of inhabitants of other ethnic origins and a sufficient cross-sample of the major religious denominations in the province, is long overdue. Montague Township in Lanark County was situated in the heart of the cluster of Irish Eastern Ontario townships, and contained sufficiently large communities of Scottish and English with which to compare the Irish population. Between 1861 and 1941 the population of this largely Irish township dropped by half. By examining the manuscript census returns of 1861, 1871 and 1881 for Montague with the aid of the computer we may reveal the social structure of one Irish Eastern Ontario township during the initial decades of population decline.

The census returns indicate that opportunity elsewhere did not alone contribute to population decline as fertility and mortality patterns shifted from those evident at mid-century. Apart from the continuing decline of population, Montague's social structure between 1861 and 1881 increasingly was marked by stability as farming predominated as an occupation, as farm acreages increased in size, and as the Irish population maintained its numerical predominance. Although divisions existed in terms of wealth and social structure within the

township along ethnic and religious lines, there were qualitative improvements as servitude and illiteracy declined, as school attendance increased, and the living conditions of the majority improved. The Irish were also sharing in the improving standard of living. Last to arrive in Montague, they proved the most reluctant to leave.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank two individuals for their encouragement and assistance in preparing for and writing this thesis. I must first acknowledge my debt to Dr. Cornelius Jaenen for introducing me to the panorama of ethnic history and providing advice for my initial study of Montague which led to this thesis. I am grateful to Dr. Julian Gwyn for combining the better parts of criticism and encouragement in directing the researching and writing of this paper.

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October 1980

An Introductory Profile of Montague: 1783-1881

Situated midway between the cities of Ottawa and Kingston on the Rideau Canal, the township of Montague lies in the heart of Eastern Ontario. Montague comprised part of a major grouping of Irish townships in the Ottawa Valley, the largest such concentration of townships in late nineteenth century Ontario, populated by a majority of inhabitants of Irish ethnic origin.¹

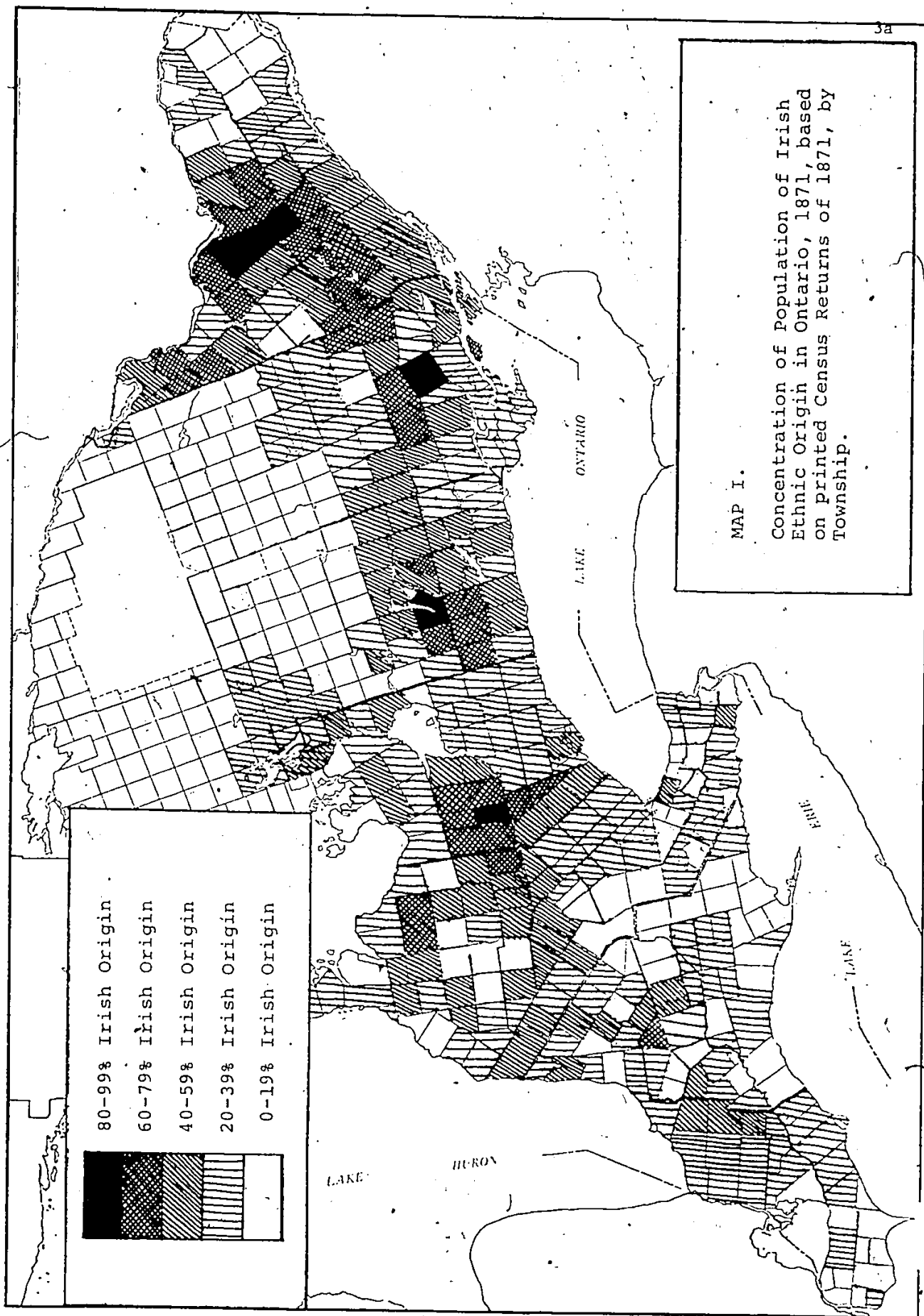
The geology of the township essentially consists of thin layers of sandy loam and muck covering a limestone plain, although the soil tends to be deeper, the nearer land is to the Rideau River. Swamp is predominant in the seventh and eighth concessions, being imperfectly drained by the northward flowing King's Creek which passes through North Mud Lake in the tenth concession. Similarly, a large swamp in the eastern portion of the second, third and fourth concessions is poorly drained by the southward flowing Rideau Creek. The natural drainage of Rose's Creek in southwestern Montague is excellent by contrast, although its source also is in a small swamp that surrounds the owl-shaped South Mud Lake in the seventh concession. Most of the eleven hundred square mile tract of uncharted forest that eventually would come to be known as Montague would prove unsuitable for sustained agriculture, as many settlers later

discovered. Amerindians who as early as one thousand years ago attempted the cultivation of land probably confined their efforts to southern Montague where the fertility and depth of soil was more encouraging.

Exploration and the first century of settlement revealed that most arable land was located adjacent to the Rideau River. As early as 1783 it was reported that the gravelly soil as far as a mile back from the river was "Timbered principally with Beech, and Stony, but not to that Degree as to render it unfit for Cultivation".² When surveyor William Fortune viewed the Montague shore of the Rideau a decade later in 1794, he perceived that the southern concessions would become "good for the production of wheat". This contrasted with the northern boundary where he encountered ridges of high land which he deemed "good land for Pasture but stony", and where he came across no less than ten swamps in as many miles.³ In 1797, a second surveyor, John Stegman, in a detailed survey of Montague's twelve concessions, observed both the stoniness and thin layer of soil which existed in much of the township. Stegman's copious references to tree types suggest that approximately one quarter of the vegetation was coniferous, with cedar predominating. Among deciduous trees, elm, maple and basswood predominated.⁴ While coniferous trees tended to be concentrated in northern Montague, deciduous trees were more in evidence in the southern concessions. Until the thin vegetable mould of most

land was exhausted, however, the extent of the unsuitability of Montague for agriculture was not fully appreciated. When township representative, Peter Clark was asked in 1880 by the Ontario Agricultural Commission how much Montague land was too stony or had rock too near the surface to be profitably cultivated, he matter-of-factly replied, "At least three fourths".⁵ The pockets of good land were concentrated along the Rideau River and adjacent to Rose's Creek.

Montague was among the earliest settled townships in the Ottawa Valley. Settlement began in the late 1780s when Loyalist entrepreneurs sought promising millsites at various rapids on the Rideau. Loyalist and postloyalist migration from the United States before the War of 1812 allowed only minimal population growth, due to the remote location of the township. In addition, over fifty percent of its land area had been granted to Loyalists who already had settled along the St. Lawrence and, who, had no intention of settling or immediately selling their Montague grants, instead holding them in speculation. An additional quarter of Montague's terrain was appropriated to Clergy and Crown Reserves, which the government like other absentee landowners either leased or held for future profit until land values increased. An influx of military settlers after the War of 1812 doubled the population from 173 in 1815 to 341 in 1825. Construction of the Rideau Canal between 1826 and 1832 marked the beginning of truly



significant immigration into Montague. Its population jumped fivefold from 369 in 1826 to 1,810 in 1841, and again doubled to 3,356 in 1851. It finally slackened with an increase of only 59 between 1851 and 1861. Although there were some Scottish immigrants in the wave of population that engulfed Montague by mid-century, overwhelmingly it was Irish. The 1871 census indicates that 71% of Montague's population was of Irish ethnic origin, and it is possible that the proportion was higher in 1851 and 1861:

The distinguishing feature which most Irish immigrants shared was poverty. Their impact on Montague is well summed up in the remarks of an 1851 census enumerator in adjacent South Elmsley Township:⁶

The township filled up very slow for a number of years, the Lands being very indifferent there were no inducements to purchase, but of late years an immense number have found their way into the Township. They are known as squatters, and now almost every lot is occupied (I mean lands known as Absentee Lands, as being occupied by squatters). These people are poor, and Judging from appearances they will remain so, they are settled on the poorest land in the Township. They have cut down most of the Hard Timber on the Lots upon which they have settled, and have and are burning it for the ashes. This land has not been seeded or fenced and is growing up in Thistles and other obnoxious weeds and, where the land has been cleared for some time, in June grass.

Squatters usually were not chased off land belonging to absentee landowners partly because they were perceived to be increasing its value by clearing for cultivation, and partly because, as

the enumerator indirectly indicated, the land was so poor that few were inspired to dispossess the squatting Irish of their holdings. When one absentee landowner at Perth tried to remove squatters from his Montague property, he "was obliged to let [them] take away their crop of oats, peas and hay" in return for giving up "peaceable possession of my own property". He was informed by a local government land agent that since he never had had the property surveyed, the squatters could have made claim to it.⁷ Numerous squatting families were slowly acquiring the capital needed to purchase land, often taking from ten to twenty years before legal title was gained.

In contrast with the poverty of the Irish squatter majority was the prosperity manifested in the increasing number of frame, stone and brick dwellings at mid-century in the southern concessions. They reflected the prosperity of the longer settled families who either had been granted or had purchased the more fertile tracts along the Rideau and in the vicinity of Rose's Creek. Some had initially created capital to develop their farms by engaging in the Ottawa timber trade, floating timber down the Rideau to the mills of Philemon Wright at Hull⁸, but prosperity by mid-century centred in the wheat economy. The Ottawa Valley timber trade provided a steady demand for Montague wheat, and at its peak township production doubled from 23,000 to 47,000 bushels per year between 1850 and 1860. Although modest in comparison with the major wheat

producing townships of southwestern Upper Canada, wheat was the major underpinning of the southern Montague economy before 1860. So extensive were exports of Montague wheat by the early 1860s that one farmer complained of a road along the Rideau being "cut up . . . by the number of Teams delivering Wheat to the Barge".⁹ Gristmills at every rapids along the Rideau, and the growth of agricultural implement foundries in Merrickville and Smith's Falls further reflected the influence of the local wheat economy.¹⁰ Although wheat enjoyed a ready market, increasing difficulty was being experienced in its cultivation. While the production of oats remained stable, between 1860 and 1870 the annual production of wheat fell by two-thirds from 47,000 to 16,000 bushels. Even farmers whose incomes were based on mixed farming were ruined. An 1860 petition to Montague Township Council from sixteen neighbours of William Flood, for example, claimed that he had:¹¹

sustained heavy losses in cattle leaving him not a beast at present which [he] can call his own. Last of all the loss of his Mare, on the labour of which he chiefly depended, for his winters support; Those losses together with a failer in the grain crop, renders him incapable of supporting his family, leaving him a burden on the neighbours.

Despite the increasing difficulty of cultivating wheat, and the growing popularity of mixed and dairy farming, some farmers persistently continued to sow that crop. Peter Clark, for example, testified before the 1880 Ontario Agricultural Commission:¹²

We sow a good deal of wheat and coarse grains. I grew spring wheat largely in former years. When we had good crops we raised from 20 to 25 bushels of spring wheat to the acre, and I have grown 40 bushels of fall wheat to the acre. For the last two years the spring wheat has been a failure, and fall wheat this year was winter-killed.

While subsistence farming predominated on marginal land throughout Montague during the nineteenth century, dairy farming gradually replaced wheat on the profitable acreages in the southern concessions. Although the production of wheat fluctuated between 1850 and 1880, the annual production of butter practically doubled from 84,000 pounds in 1850 to 149,000 pounds in 1860, to lead the rest of Lanark County.¹³ Cheese factories were established during the 1870s, and in the Roseville factory alone, more than 100,000 pounds of cheese were annually being manufactured by 1878.¹⁴ At least two factories were operating by 1880, to be joined by two more by the turn of the century. As Peter Clark commented in 1880: "Dairying is more profitable than grain growing. The farm has improved under this system".¹⁵

Clark was referring only to the inhabitants of the southern concessions. The situation which predominated in the six northern concessions was summed up by 1851 census enumerator, John Nowlan:¹⁶

[The people in general is very [poor]. [The most part of them gets [a] living by working out in the winter and raising a little crop in the summer. [Them that don't work out strive to

make out their wants by getting out a little fire wood or hemlock bark or cooper stuff to Smyth Falls or to Merrickville. I do not think there is ten families from No. 1 to 20 in the fourth concession that could live by the crop they could raise on these farms, but from 20 to Elmsley the land is something better and the people is better off.

Apart from the comparatively better land in the western corner of the township, the economic situation of farmers in northern Montague did not change, despite the widespread transition from wheat to dairy farming.

Access to transportation added to the dichotomy between the northern and southern concessions. Ever since settlement had commenced in the late eighteenth century, the favoured lots had been those fronting on or adjacent to the Rideau. The river's winding course permitted numerous farms in the six southern concessions access to river traffic. As the inhabitant of lot 27 in the first concession observed in the late 1830s, "In consequence of this lot's proximity to the Rideau Canal and from the offers that have been made to pay all arrears upon condition of being allowed to purchase, I should conceive that it must be of considerable value".¹⁷ Other lots in southern concessions, although not close to the canal, were of value not only because of their fertility, but because Rose's and Rideau Creeks offered a means of moving timber to the Rideau, and also because of the short distance involved in transporting wheat by road to canal barges.

The farmers of northern Montague by contrast were landlocked and faced the prospect of transporting wheat up to a dozen miles or more along extremely poor roads to the gristmills and barges on the Rideau. It has been argued that the early roads of Ontario received an unduly bad press because recorded complaints were generally voiced by British travellers of aristocratic origin. John McCallum echoes the conclusions of Thomas McIlwraith, claiming that roads up until the mid or late nineteenth century were generally serviceable and adequate for the needs of farmers in transporting wheat to lake ports, or more commonly to inland millers.¹⁸ These conclusions are based on a detailed analysis of York County, a poor choice on which to base generalizations about the quality of roads across as diverse a relief as that of Ontario. They have no application to the Montague experience. There were no inland grist mills; all were located on the Rideau. The poor reputation which roads in the middle and northern concessions received came not from aristocratic travellers, but from penniless squatters and struggling landholders. At mid-century Montague Township Council received more complaints about the condition of local roads than all other matters combined. Dissatisfaction and frustration are both evident in a June 1853 petition from northern inhabitants who claimed that they could not "get in or out after night for about two miles and a half so that when the night over takes us out we have to stop at some neighbours

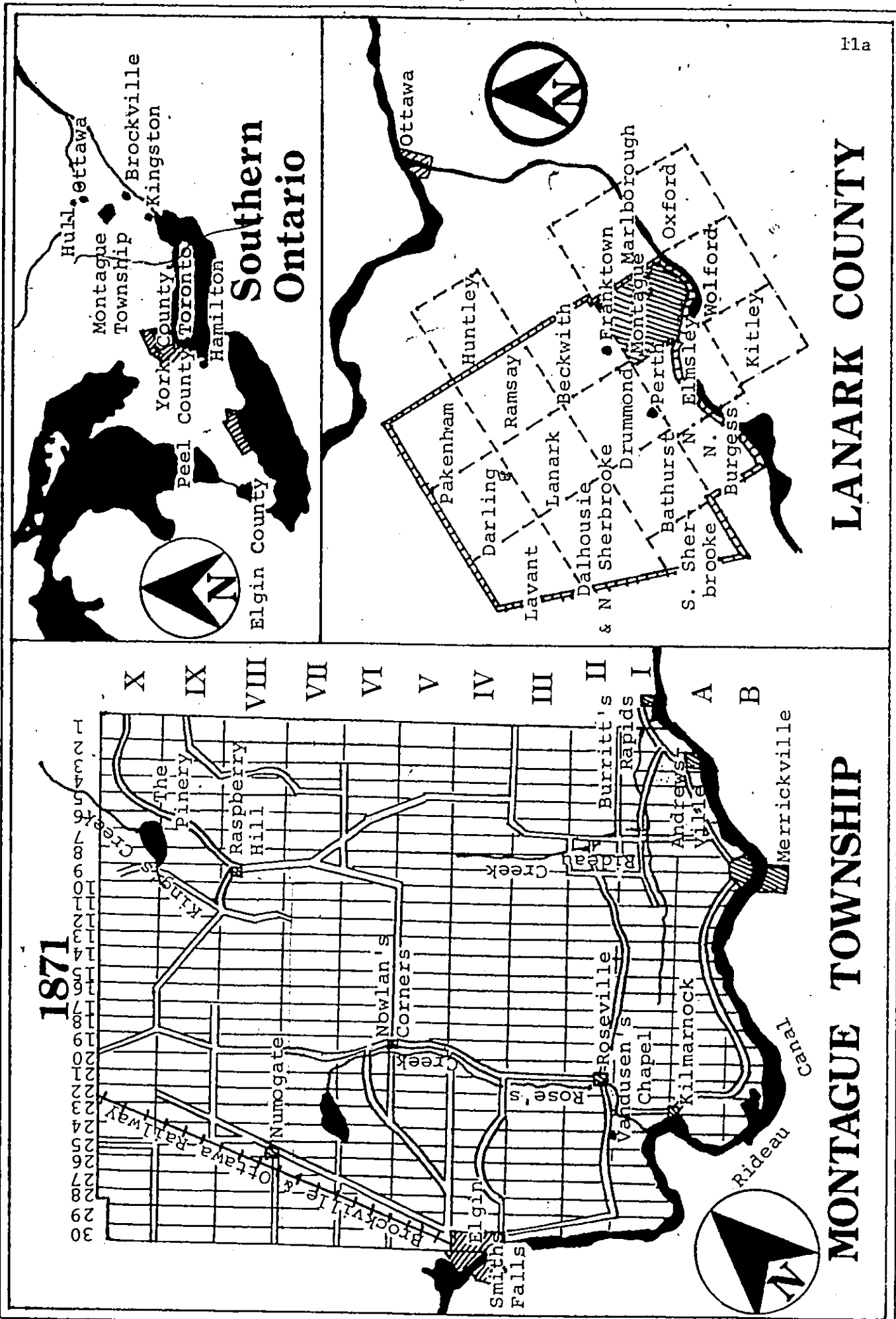
house untill morning".¹⁹ Bad as they were, some farmers were even without access to roads. Humphrey Perrin in the tenth concession claimed in a January 1851 petition that he was "without any way of getting out to any publick road with leave [and] I am 20 years next spring without a rode".²⁰ A September 1859 petition indicated that Perrin was "still without a road".²¹ That Perrin's first petition was written in winter hardly accords with McCallum's hopeless generalization that produce could be transported to water ports by sleigh in winter.²² Poor road conditions, indeed a lack of roads in northern Montague, placed its farmers at a distinct disadvantage in getting their meagre crops to market.

A pattern of communications and commercial activity developed along the Rideau River, rather than in northern Montague. Construction of the Brockville and Ottawa Railroad across the western face of the township in the late 1850s did not altogether alter the communications pattern. As late as 1900 the produce of some Montague cheese factories was being shipped to market by canal barge from Merrickville, rather than by train from Smith's Falls.²³ Only one post office was briefly located in the northern region of Montague during the late 1860s, while post offices had operated in the villages of Burritt's Rapids, Merrickville, Kilmarnock and Smith's Falls along the canal since the late 1820s. In 1859, a post office opened in the village of Roseville, a mile north of Kilmarnock,

followed thirty years later by another at the village of Andrewsville on the canal. A village pattern was developing along the Rideau, while the northern concessions at best could barely muster a couple of hamlets worthy of the name. The villages reflected not only the greater prosperity of southern Montague, but also offered a wide range of services and goods generally not available nor affordable in northern concessions.

Local government enhanced the dominance of southern Montague. The township originally had been surveyed as part of the Johnstown District in the late eighteenth century, comprising a rear township of Grenville County. Local government would not legally be granted to counties and townships until the 1840s; hence, in the interim local officials were elected to supervise the development of roads, the maintenance of agricultural regulations, and the construction of schools - all under the direction of district officials appointed by the provincial government. From 1802 until 1825 Montague was grouped with the adjacent townships of Wolford, Oxford and Marlborough under a council elected from all four townships. Growing population allowed Montague officials between 1825 and 1842 to conduct township business independently, though still under the supervision of appointed officials from the front townships.

A general restructuring of Upper Canadian government in 1842 brought district councils into being. Composed of the



highest elected official(s) from each township, the district council governed the construction of major district roads, schools and agricultural standards, presided over by a warden appointed in Toronto. The Montague representative to the Johnstown District Council attended only one meeting before Montague was transferred from Johnstown into the District of Bathurst, where district council meetings were held in Perth. In 1849, with the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act, Montague was incorporated as a township within Lanark County. Landowners henceforth elected township councils consisting of a reeve, deputy reeve and three councillors. This council in turn appointed individuals to fill the positions of clerk, treasurer, assessors, collector, auditors, superintendent of common schools, pathmasters, fenceviewers and poundkeepers. In 1855 a stone township hall was erected in the village of Roseville, but when it began to crumble, was dismantled and rebuilt on the rear half of lot 21 in the second concession, north of Roseville.²⁴ With the exception of James Gilhuly, who was reeve only briefly from 1854 to 1856, none of Montague's reeves between 1850 and 1880 either was of Irish origin or lived north of the fourth concession, or indeed lived more than a mile from the Rideau.

The coming of local government at mid-century coincided with major improvements in local education. As early as 1799, inhabitants of Montague had petitioned government, "praying that

a tract of land may be apportioned to James Covell to enable him to erect a School House, and as a compensation for his trouble as teacher for the said school".²⁵ Until 1816, public assistance was not given the schools presided over by individuals such as Covell, Rev. Jesse McIntyre and Lamira Dow. As late as 1830 only one school was listed in the township, but immigration increased the number to four by December 1839. The one hundred students listed as attending school at that time comprised only thirteen percent of the 750 township inhabitants under the age of 16.²⁶ During the 1840s and 1850s the number of schools mushroomed to twenty, although many of the buildings in which classes were taught were miserable structures. The increasing number of schools reflected a new emphasis on primary education under the provincial superintendent of education, and between 1850 and 1860 the proportion of those between the ages of five and twenty attending school in Montague increased from forty-five to fifty-one percent. This compared favourably with the rest of Larark County, where the increase for the same decade was from twenty-seven to thirty-four percent.²⁷ By 1860 most sections had adopted the free school system, by which all landowners in a section had a school assessment levied on their property, and the children even of those who did not own property were permitted to attend school. During the 1860s and 1870s more durable buildings began to replace earlier doubtful structures,

as education increasingly came to be perceived as a right rather than a luxury. The 1871 provincial Education Act made school attendance compulsory between the ages of seven and twelve.

Religious development enjoyed more widespread earlier interest than had education in Montague, and the congregations organized before 1880 also reflected the fractured personality of the township. The first Christian minister in Montague was a Loyalist settler, Rev. Jesse McIntyre, whose efforts to spread the Baptist gospel were translated by two sons-in-law toward the dramatic growth of Methodism in the township between 1800 and 1840. When Rev. Anson Green visited the area in 1830, he claimed, "Methodism has a firm hold of the people".²⁸ The Methodists organized on a decentralized pattern, with classes meeting throughout the township, and eventually built numerous local chapels. Local lay preachers led these classes, with occasional visits being made by circuit preachers. Methodist division between Wesleyan and Episcopal sects assisted the decentralized pattern, hence an Episcopal Methodist chapel at Roseville was barely a mile away from the Wesleyan Methodist Vandusen's Chapel. But as population grew, the size of circuits shrank. By 1880 the three Methodist chapels in northern Montague were part of a circuit centering in Beckwith Township, while the five chapels in southern Montague were divided between circuits based in Wolford Township and Smith's Falls.

The Loyalist settlers of Montague either had been Methodists or members of the Church of England, and the vast immigration into the township between 1830 and 1850 brought still more members of the Church of England as well as Roman Catholics, Presbyterians and a few Baptists. Roman Catholics, Presbyterians and Baptists organized centralized congregations in major local centres such as Smith's Falls and Merrickville. When Presbyterians were disrupted by the Free Church schism of the 1840s, new congregations also were located in Smith's Falls and Merrickville. Loyalist Church of England members had built handsome churches on the periphery of the township at Burritt's Rapids, Merrickville, Smith's Falls and Franktown during the 1820s and 1830s, but these were too distant for many inhabitants of central and northern Montague. A small log church was constructed on lot 8 in the sixth concession during the 1840s, and was ministered to by the clergyman at Merrickville. When it became unfit for use by the late 1860s, its struggling congregation continued to worship in a nearby Orange Hall. A larger log church was constructed on the rear half of lot 19 in the eighth concession in the early 1850s, and was ministered to by the clergyman at Franktown. By 1867 a congregation meeting in the school at Nowlan's Corners was tended to by the priest at Smith's Falls. Thus, the Church of England congregations in northern Montague were but weak extensions of other congregations, incapable of supporting a clergyman. When in 1861, one brave

soul, Rev. Samuel Johnson, asked to be licensed to serve in Montague, Bishop Strachan at Toronto refused, "as the people have made no provision for him".²⁹ The struggling congregations and log structures of northern Montague contrasted with the stylish Gothic Revival churches attended by Church of England inhabitants of southern Montague.

The few friendly societies which were organized in nineteenth century Montague underlined the north-south split in the township. The four Orange lodges in the township all were located north of the third concession. By 1880 the composition of these Orange lodges was no longer as narrowly Irish as at mid-century, but the Irish element remained predominant. Despite the efforts of a few members to oust liquor from local lodgerooms between mid-century and 1880, beverages at meetings and decreasing fines for drunkenness reflected the easy tolerance of liquor by northern Montague Orangemen. By contrast, a temperance movement in southern Montague was spearheaded by two local Independent Order of Grand Templars lodges. In 1865 they managed to have the township council enact a bylaw, forbidding the sale of liquor in the township, but this was repealed within four years. The drinking Orangemen in northern concessions contrasted with the zeal for prohibitory legislation to the south. Perhaps the most prestigious organization was the Montague Agricultural Society, organized in 1860, which held an annual exhibition beside the township hall at Roseville.

This society was at first wholly dominated by men from southern concessions. After the removal of the exhibition to Smith's Falls in 1870, a few farmers from northern concessions joined Smith's Falls inhabitants within the society's executive; however, the majority of directors still came from southern Montague.³⁰ The only characteristic shared by the Montague Agricultural Society, the Independent Order of Grand Templars and local Orange lodges was their exclusively male membership.

The dichotomy which existed between northern and southern Montague not only was manifested in the apparent differences of agricultural productivity, wealth, access to transportation and social life, but led to an overall negative image of the community. In addition to the difficulty that many of Montague's inhabitants faced in scraping a living from the shallow soil, the overwhelming Irish immigrant population of the township made the very name of the municipality synonymous with the laziness and inferiority that popularly were associated with that ethnic group. The remarks of an 1851 census enumerator in adjacent South Elmsley Township typify the anti-Irish vocabulary at mid-century:³¹

Most of these persons have large families and are Emmigrants from Ireland and perhaps it would be a libel upon their character to say they were idle, but their Capital (that is their Labour) is not economically expended, in other words, however capable they may be to labour profitably for others; a number of them are not qualified to labour profitably for themselves.

Exactly why the particular association of Montague with the stereotype of the lazy Irish immigrant, when adjacent townships contained as high or even higher proportions of Irish immigrant inhabitants is not known. Perhaps it arose strictly within the predominantly Scottish Lanark County community, within which Montague indeed had the highest concentration of Irish population at mid-century? When Rev. William Bell of Perth found a "ragged Irish beggar" at his door in 1845, he at first assumed that he was but one more object of charity:³²

On enquiry, however, I learned to my surprise, that he owned a farm in Montagu, on which he had paid 50 pounds. He had another 25 pounds to make soon and was saving all he could for that purpose. In the mean time, he said he was begging clothes for himself and the childer. Who but an Irishman would have thought of such a proceeding?

So firmly entrenched had the negative perception of Montague become by the 1860s, that the rare compliment from outsiders for the accomplishments of southern Montague inhabitants indirectly referred to the unprogressive, shiftless stereotype. The editor of the Smith's Falls Review in praising Montague for prohibiting the sale of liquor in 1865, argued that "nothing more than the recent vote is required to show that the many charges brought against Montague for immorality and intoxication are but groundless aspersions".³³ Similarly, when the editor of the Perth Courier journeyed through southern Montague to attend the 1868 Montague Agricultural Exhibition,

so impressed and taken aback was he by the contrast of the Montague stereotype with "the pleasing prospect of rich, level fields, and comfortable looking houses of a rich agricultural country", that he "had to pause and mentally ask - 'Is this indeed Montague? Montague! That place of equivocal character, and so much behind its neighbors in most of the modern advancements"!³⁴ The stereotype would persist and be built on in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth. Gradually, it had ceased to be anti-Irish, but rather became a community stereotype as inhabitants of Irish origin gained increasing acceptance, and as the township's population began to decline from the mid-1860s onward.

The stereotype of Montague as unprogressive was thus built upon the dichotomy which existed between northern and southern concessions. This contrast was firmly based on the more fertile and deeper soil along the Rideau River and the early settlement of Loyalists, English and Scottish settlers along the river before the influx of Irish settlers inundated the remainder of the township. While the profitable wheat economy in southern Montague was replaced by dairy farming after 1860, subsistence farming in northern concessions was only partially replaced by mixed farming. Northern farmers faced poor roads over which to haul crops to market in direct contrast to southern access to Rideau Canal traffic and gristmills. A pattern of communications and commercial activity developed

along the Rideau that did not exist to the north. Although trends in provincial education were responsible for the popularization of education across the township by 1860, finer schools in southern Montague complemented the greater number of churches and the dominance of southern inhabitants in local government and the Montague Agricultural Society. The popularity of Orange lodges in the middle and northern concessions, and temperance lodges in southern Montague also point to ideological differences that polarised the township. This dichotomy, as observed in literary sources spanning Montague's first century of settlement, perhaps appeared quite normal to the enumerators who travelled through the township gathering statistics for census returns in 1861, 1871 and 1881. How well they performed that task in turn will determine how accurately the census may illuminate or contradict the perceived dichotomy in Montague society presented in literary sources.

Notes

¹The ethnic origin statistics on which Map 1 is based are taken from the 1871 printed census. The largest cluster of townships containing a majority of inhabitants of Irish origin stretched from north of Kingston to Ottawa. The second largest cluster was midway between Toronto and Georgian Bay, while the third cluster was north of Port Hope.

²PAC MG 11 Colonial Office Records, Governor Haldimand Papers, 1784, Canada Q, Vol. 23, pp. 16-7.

³PAC RG 1 L3 Upper Canada Land Papers, Vol. 448a "S" Bundle, petition 167.

⁴Ontario, Surveys and Mapping Branch, John Stegman Survey of Montague, Field Notes, 1797.

⁵Ontario. Agricultural Commission, Report, 5 vols. (Toronto: C. Blackett Robinson, 1881), 2:279.

⁶Remarks of enumerator William Riddell in 1851 census manuscript for South Elmsley Township.

⁷Montague Township Records, petition from Dawson Kerr of Perth to township council, 1852.

⁸PAC MG 24 D8 Philemon Wright Papers, Letters Received, Vol. 5, pp. 1524-5.

⁹Montague Township Records, Petition from Peter McGillivray to township council, 21 April 1863.

¹⁰Merrickville Chronicle (weekly newspaper), 21 July 1869, p. 2.

¹¹1861 and 1871 printed census returns. Montague Township Records, petition from James Wynne et al. to township council, 14 December 1860.

¹²Ontario. Agricultural Commission, Op. Cit., 4:108.

¹³1851, 1861 and 1871 printed census.

¹⁴Smith's Falls News (weekly newspaper), 13 September 1878, p. 3, and 6 December 1878, p. 3.

¹⁵Ontario Agricultural Commission, Op. Cit., 4:109.

¹⁶PAC Canada West Census, 1851, Reel C-963, Montague Township. General remarks of Montague enumerator, John Nowlan.

¹⁷ PAC RG 1 L3 Upper Canada Land Petitions, Vol. 385, N20/14c.

¹⁸ Thomas F. McIlwraith, "The Adequacy of Rural Roads: An Illustration from Upper Canada," Canadian Geographer XIV, 4 (1970) cited in John McCallum, Unequal Beginnings: Agriculture and Economic Development in Quebec and Ontario until 1870 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 75-6.

¹⁹ Montague Township Records, petition from Joseph Warn et al. to township council, 24 June 1853.

²⁰ Ibid., petition from Humphrey Perrin to township council, 20 January 1851.

²¹ Ibid., 29 September 1859.

²² McIlwraith and McCallum, Op. Cit., p. 75.

²³ Perth Courier (weekly newspaper), 19 March 1886, p. 3, and 1977 interview with Wesley Burchill, Montague.

²⁴ Montague Township Records, contracts for building township hall in 1855, and rebuilding it in 1874.

²⁵ PAC RG 1 L1 Upper Canada Land Book-D, Vol. 22, p. 442.

²⁶ Upper Canada, House of Assembly, Appendix to Journal of the House of Assembly of Upper Canada, 3 December 1839- 10 February 1840, Vol. 2, part 1. (Toronto: W.J. Coates, 1840), p. 406.

²⁷ 1851 and 1861 printed census.

²⁸ J.E. Sanderson, The First Century of Methodism in Canada. 2 vols. (Toronto, 1908), 1:297.

²⁹ Archives of Ontario Strachan Papers, Letter Book 9, 24 May 1861, p. 373.

³⁰ Mirickville Chronicle (weekly newspaper), 25 January 1861, p. 2., and Montague Township Records, Twenty-First Annual Exhibition of the Township of Montague Agricultural Society to be held on Friday, October 4th, 1878, at the Village of Smith's Falls (Smith's Falls: Thompson & McLeod, 1878), p. 1.

³¹ Remarks of enumerator William Riddell in 1851 census manuscript for South Elmsley Township.

³² Queen's University Archives, Rev. William Bell Journals, Vol. 14, p. 168.

³³ Smith's Falls Review (weekly newspaper), 9 March 1865, p. 2.

³⁴ Perth Courier, 2 October 1868, p. 2.

Manipulation of Census Data: Problems and Procedure

So you're taking the census, mister?
there's three of us living still,
My wife and I, and our only son, that
folks call "Whispering Bill";
But Bill couldn't tell ye his name sir,
an' so it's hardly worth giving,
For ye see, a bullet killed his mind,
an' left his body living.¹

The value of late nineteenth century manuscript census returns to the writing of social history, indeed to the rewriting of Ontario history, has gained increasing recognition within the Canadian historical profession over the past dozen years. Although David Gagan and Herbert Mays have pointed to other contemporary routinely generated documents such as parish registers, school attendance records, apprenticeship indentures, certificates of marriage, land registry records, assessment rolls, wills and obituaries which can be used both to authenticate and supplement census data², the primacy of the census for inclusiveness of information remains unchallenged. It remains the definitive source in which quantitative historians are most likely and too often alone likely to find mention of the

wider spectrum of late Victorian society.

Inclusive though the census undoubtedly is, the accuracy and completeness of returns not only varies from one census sub-district to the next, even within the same township, but the information sought may vary from one census to the next. The historian must be sensitive to the idiosyncrasies of the individual enumerators, while at the same time devising a number of guidelines to overcome discrepancies and faultily entered data. An explanation of the problems encountered, and the procedures employed both to circumvent them and prepare the census data for meaningful manipulation by computer is essential to an understanding both of the variety of data available in census returns and the difficulty of comparing such data from one decade to the next.

There is no indication in the Montague census returns for 1861, 1871 and 1881 whether or not higher officials made corrections or revisions to the information collected by local enumerators. Clearly, some enumerators did not comprehend the precise prescribed method of entering data on returns, notwithstanding the various oral instructions, manuals of direction and specimen schedules given them before they began taking the Montague census.³ Nor were corrections necessarily made since it is clear that one enumerator in 1861 had not entered data properly. An inhabitant of not-too-distant Dundas County observed after the 1861 census had been taken:⁴

Thirty-four enumerators were employed upon an average [of] eight days in taking the census of Dundas, and recording about 550 names [apiece]; their remuneration was two cents for each name. The labors of the enumerators were superintended by one commissioner in each county; by him the sheets were all revised, in many cases corrected, in not a few instances entirely re-written, and each column added up, before they were forwarded to the Head Office in Quebec.

In the introduction to the printed census of 1871, officials admitted that "to devote for further revision more time and labour than have been bestowed on [the discovery and correction of errors], could not have brought a result commensurate with the delay and expense that would have been involved".⁵

To judge from the Montague experience, the accuracy of census returns improved with each decade. The choice of enumerators was based on clerical abilities and their knowledge of a community against which the voluntary information requested could be tested. The 1861 enumerators included former reeve and township councillor Reuben A. Knapp; former reeve, deputy reeve and township councillor James Gilhuly; and insurance agent John Ferguson. Only two enumerators were employed in 1871; Ferguson was joined by a local farmer's son, Solomon Code. In 1881, Code (listed as a teacher) and Ferguson (by this time clerk of the township) were joined by local farmer Robert McCreary. The principal errors that can be recognized a century or more after these men filled out their returns are within the 1861 census.

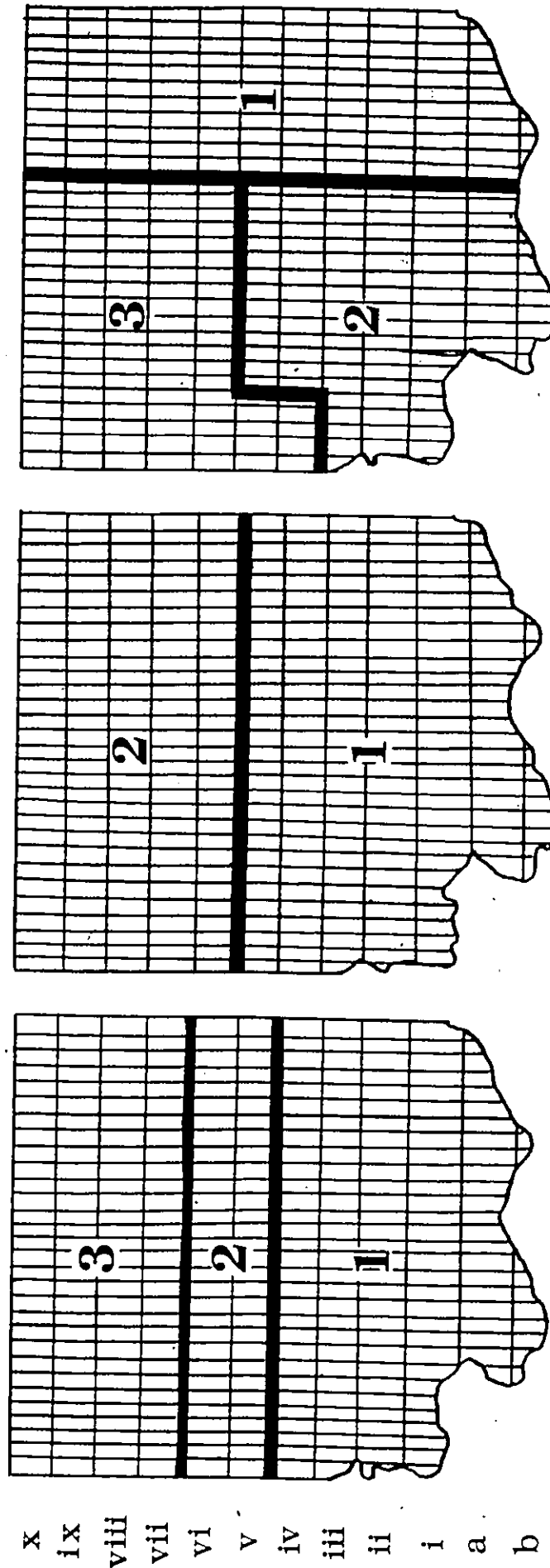
Inconsistencies occurred in the taking of the census from decade to decade. The 1861 returns were reputed to be based on facts that existed on January 13, while the 1871 and 1881 returns were based on "statements of facts as they existed" on April 3 and 4 for those years respectively.⁶ Although there was a consistent decline of Montague's population between 1861 and 1881, the number of enumeration sub-districts within the township varied, and consequently so did the area of each sub-district. These changes are shown in Map III. Had the sub-districts been left unchanged, a comparison could have been made of the composition of the population as well as of the standard of living in relation to the decreasing fertility of the soil, the farther away from the Rideau River a sub-district was located.

The changing terminology from one census to the next also can be confusing. A Canada Presbyterian in 1861 was not precisely the equivalent of a Canada Presbyterian in 1881. The type of house construction was listed in the 1861 census, but not in the returns for 1871 and 1881. Conversely, the ethnic ancestry of individuals was recorded in 1871 and 1881, but not in 1861 returns. The variety of terms used in occupation alone within the same census points to the lack of a common vocabulary, to mention nothing of the difficulty of ascertaining what is engendered in the jargon of each individual enumerator. What does the occupation "Farmer's Son" mean, since it is not

1861

1871

1881



MAP III. Enumeration Districts, Montague Township, Ontario, 1861-1881.

entered for all sons of farmers in the occupation column of one sub-district's returns?

Perhaps the most irritating inconsistency from one census to the next concerns the statistics for illiteracy. The 1861 census merely provided a column with the heading "Persons over 20, who cannot read or write", while the 1871 returns provided separate columns to identify those over the age of 20 who could not read as opposed to those who could not write. The 1881 census made no provision for the recording of illiteracy.

Since some enumerators did not distinguish families one from another, the household is the basic unit within which people are grouped for the purposes of comparative analysis. We must then establish which individuals listed in the census returns can be considered as part of the regular township population. Non-residents, both from a long distance away and from adjacent townships such as Beckwith and Kitley are obviously excluded. Similarly, visitors have been excluded, since implicitly their place of regular residence is not in Montague. By contrast, "absent people" have been retained within the computer listing because absence implies regular residence in the township. Those listed as visiting from another census sub-district within Montague have been returned in the computer listing to their regular household. Since enumerators specified where the regular place of residence of non-residents was, there is no possibility of Montague inhabitants of another census sub-district

being summarily excluded from the computer list. Nevertheless, given the straightforward categories of residents and non-residents, some exceptions must be noted. Mary McDermott, listed as absent from the 1861 household of Patrick McDermott is also listed as married and having a "residence in Elmsley". It is assumed that she recently had married and left to reside in Elmsley, and consequently should not be included in the Montague census. Similarly, Mary Jane Pendergast is not listed since the 1861 enumerator noted that her place of residence was Beckwith. Dead people listed in an 1861 "Return of the Living" have been excluded for obvious reasons. Since some of the dead people were shown as heads of households or with occupations, these were transferred to their widows. But only occupations such as farming as opposed to blacksmithing and harnessmaking were transferred from dead spouse to widow, and, in one instance when a widow heading a household was listed as dead, her orphaned children were shifted to the household immediately preceding which was inhabited by close relatives.

An initial stumbling block in the transcription of written census returns into a form acceptable to the computer, was the discovery midway through the second sub-district of 1861 returns that the numbering of the sheets was distinctly incorrect. A subsequent minute comparison of pages revealed that they were almost hopelessly scrambled and wrongly numbered.

Owing to the number of families with similar surnames there was reason to believe that the task of sorting the pages might well prove impossible. A solution eventually was found, using the order of farmers' names in the agricultural census on which to base the order of the same names in the return of the living.

Problems with the second sub-district of the 1861 census were not confined to the erroneous numbering of manuscript pages. Enumerator James Gilhuly indulged the annoying habit of not entering information in columns opposite each individual's name, but instead entered totals for each family in various columns either opposite the name of the family head or opposite the name of the last member of the family listed.⁷ Although the only columns entered in this fashion which apply to this study are school attendance and "Persons over 20 who cannot read or write", these are the crucial statistics by which literacy patterns are determined. Since there are separate columns for male and female statistics, it is not difficult to determine which individuals were being referred to; in a few instances some assumptions have had to be made. It has been assumed, for example, that when a couple of individuals were listed as being over 20 and unable to read and write in a family where a number of individuals were above that age, the elderly or parents were more likely than young adults to be illiterate. This assumption is based on the pattern of illiteracy apparent in returns from the other 1861 census sub-districts in Montague.

The problems which have arisen concerning school attendance are best illustrated by citing a few instances. The totals for the Alexander Comrie family indicate that three females were attending school, however only two girls and one boy were of school age. It has been assumed that three children in fact were attending school, but that the enumerator in his haste had inadvertently neglected to divide the total between the two sexes. Presumably, the same laziness which had prompted Gilhuly to enter totals for a family rather than for each individual, prompted occasional neglect in dividing family school attendance totals between sexes. Since three year old Elizabeth McConnell was listed in the 1871 census as attending school, three year old William Wynne in the 1861 returns is assumed also to be attending, improbable though the age appears to be. Similarly, although one rarely finds boys above fourteen years of age attending school, it is assumed that John Porter, aged seventeen, was attending school since the enumerator indicates as much, even though two younger sisters did not. The 1881 returns included twenty-three year old Hugh Clark who was listed as attending school. In the third sub-district of the 1861 census, the liberty has been taken of shifting school attendance from nineteen year old Jane to sixteen year old Alice Jacob, since to find a nineteen year old female at school is unknown elsewhere in the census returns for Montague between 1861 and 1881, and it would be highly unlikely for a girl of nineteen to be

at school while a sister of more eligible school age was not. The major assumption underlying this change is that the enumerator inadvertently skipped a line when entering the school attendance data.

The entry of ethnic origin data in the 1871 and 1881 manuscript returns provided perhaps the most fertile ground for unwitting errors. Certainly, it is this portion of the census which is most difficult to clarify. The primary rule of ethnic origin as presented in the manuscript census is that it flows from male rather than female parent. But does it follow that in the process of transcribing manuscript data to a machine-readable form that where ethnic origin appears to follow the mother's line it should be changed to that of the male parent? For instance, seven year old Minnie McCaw in the 1881 household of twenty-four year old Milton McCaw is accorded the same English origin as her twenty-seven year old mother, while her two infant sisters are listed with Milton's Irish origin. If it is argued that the enumerator simply was careless and should have listed Minnie with the same ethnic origin as the male head of household, implying that Milton is her father, then also implicit is the consideration that he sired a child at the age of sixteen. This is not impossible, but more unlikely than to accept the enumerator's entry as correct, and surmise that since the wife is three years older than Milton, she probably brought Minnie either from a previous or from a "natural"

marriage. The five years between Minnie's age and that of the next oldest child in the McCaw household appears to confirm this hypothesis. But where the spacing of children and age of parents suggests that the parents listed were indeed the parents of the children listed after their names, corrections have been made where the enumerator has accidentally listed children with their female rather than male parent's ethnic origin. Or, as in the case of the James Anderson family in the 1871 census, corrections have been made to change the ethnic origin of the father to agree with that of children of which he is obviously the parent. Concern with having ethnic origin follow the male as opposed to the female parent's ancestry does not reflect sexist preconceptions on the part of the transcriber, but rather indicates concern in accurately relaying the information within the manuscript census, which of itself may happen to reflect the preconceptions of the society in which it was devised and taken.

A number of additional factors in the transcription of manuscript census data into machine-readable form may be briefly mentioned. The spelling of the enumerators has been retained both to enhance the accuracy of the transcription, and to allow possible translation of Christian names which in their present form appear to be little more than gibberish. Besides, how safe is the assumption that the name entered as "Pathrick" in contrast with Patrick is not the actual name that an individual

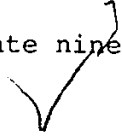
was known by in mid-nineteenth century Montague? Occasionally, enumerators used an initial instead of listing an occupation, and these have been interpreted as the major occupation which began with such an initial within the previous section of the same manuscript return. Hence an occupation entered as "F" has been interpreted to mean farmer, while "F.S." is interpreted as farmer's son. In the 1881 returns the occasional listing of occupation was entered so faintly that this has been interpreted to mean that it originally had been entered and later erased, and hence should not be transcribed. Furthermore, differentiation must be made between the use of ditto marks by different enumerators, and what is implicit in the use of their various forms. The use of "Do." in the 1881 census has been perceived to mean that the occupation of the person whose name it was opposite was the same as that of the person listed immediately above. In the 1861 census, quotation marks were used merely for keeping one's information on the same line, whereas in other returns it was employed as a form of ditto. Some enumerators used the "Do." form in columns such as occupation and school attendance to indicate that the information was the same as for the person listed above, while other enumerators clearly used the term as a way simply of showing that a person was in the same family, since there was no precise distinction between families living within the same household. Hence a child of two years might have a "Do."

opposite his name in the occupation column under his father's name. Finally, death statistics from the manuscript returns and from municipal registers have not been entered for manipulation by computer, since their number allows for easy tabulation by hand.

The scale of work required to manipulate the information contained in three census returns of Montague Township, while hardly comparable to the volume of data involved in similar undertakings such as the Hamilton and Peel County projects, was formidable. The information in "Return of the Living" portions of the 1861, 1871 and 1881 census returns alone amounts to some 9,285 lines of information, each of which contains up to eighteen pieces of data within forty-two units of space, altogether amounting to more than 160,000 pieces of information. Only with the aid of the computer could this mass of data have been manipulated to make the manuscript census yield its wealth of information about Montague's social structure between 1861 and 1881.

The use and transcription of manuscript census returns for the study of social structure clearly requires an appreciation of the variations between each census as well as the foibles manifested by each enumerator in entering data in his returns. Although the accuracy of enumerators improved with each decade, accompanying inconsistencies and changing terminology in the format of the census returns themselves

along with the personal habits of enumerators have to be interpreted in order that the overall data may be standardized as much as possible before being entered in the computer listing. By sensitively interpreting the returns of each enumerator, the primacy of the census may be upheld as a source for gaining insights about late nineteenth century social structure.



Notes

¹"One Bullet's Work", undated, unidentified newspaper clipping in Lockwood family scrapbook in possession of author.

²David Gagan and Herbert Mays, "Historical Demography and Canadian Social History: Families and Land in Peel County, Ontario" in Canadian Historical Review LIV, 1 (1974), pp. 27, 33.

³Introductions to 1851, 1871 and 1881 returns, pages iii, xii and xi respectively. The date on which the 1861 census was taken is presented in David P. Gagan, "Enumerator's Instructions for the Census of Canada 1852 and 1861" in Histoire sociale-Social History VII (1974), p. 363.

⁴James Croil, Dundas; or, A Sketch of Canadian History, and more particularly of the County of Dundas, One of the earliest settled Counties in Upper Canada (Montreal, 1861; reprint ed., Belleville, 1972), p. 241.

⁵Introduction of 1871 printed census, p. xxvi.

⁶The 1861 census was a record of the population for January 14th, 1861. The 1871 information applied to April 3rd, 1871, while that in 1881 applied to April 4th, 1881. Sources of these dates are given in 3 above.

⁷Harvey J. Graff notes that in the United States, "the 1840 Federal census demanded household totals rather than data for individuals". This is from Harvey J. Graff, "What the 1861 Census can tell us about Literacy: A Reply" in Histoire sociale-Social History VIII, (1975), p. 337. Perhaps James Gilhuly came to Montague via the United States where he earlier had participated in taking the 1840 census.

Fertility and Mortality

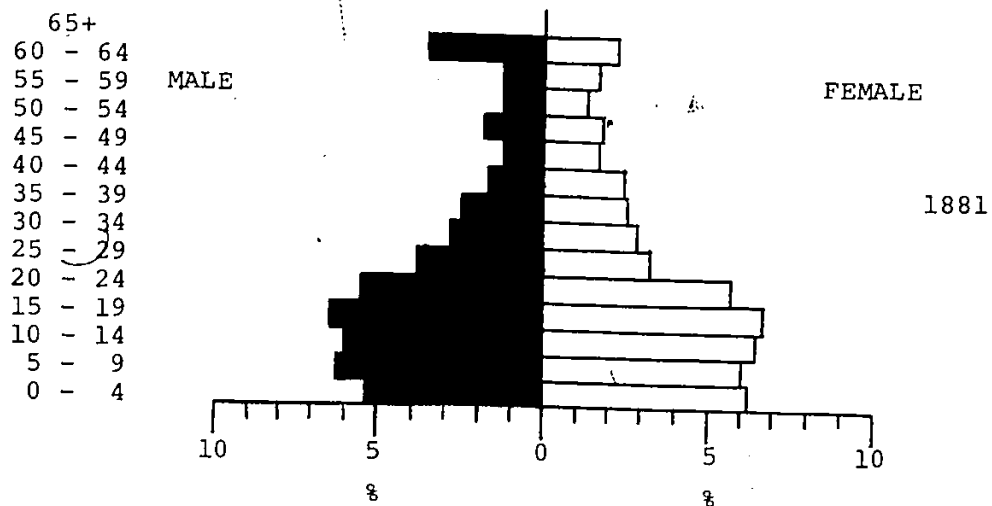
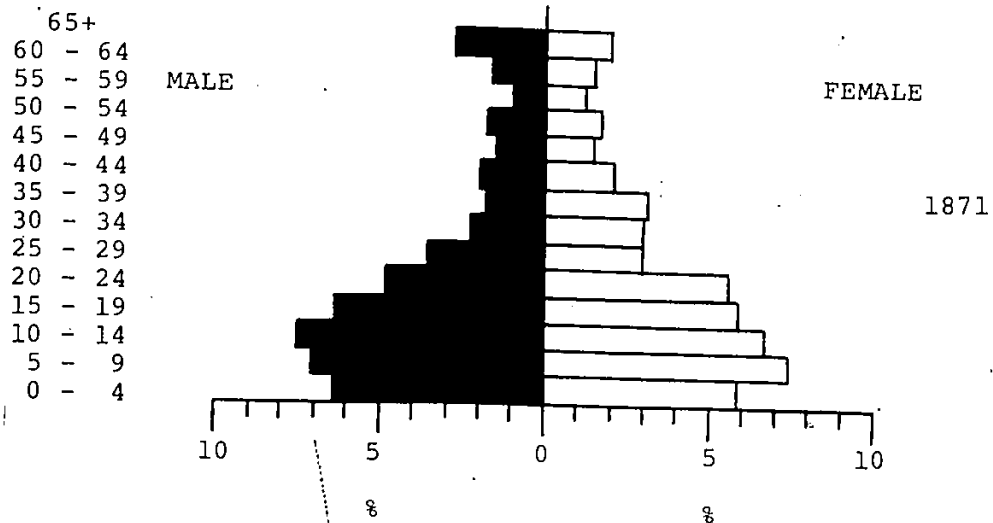
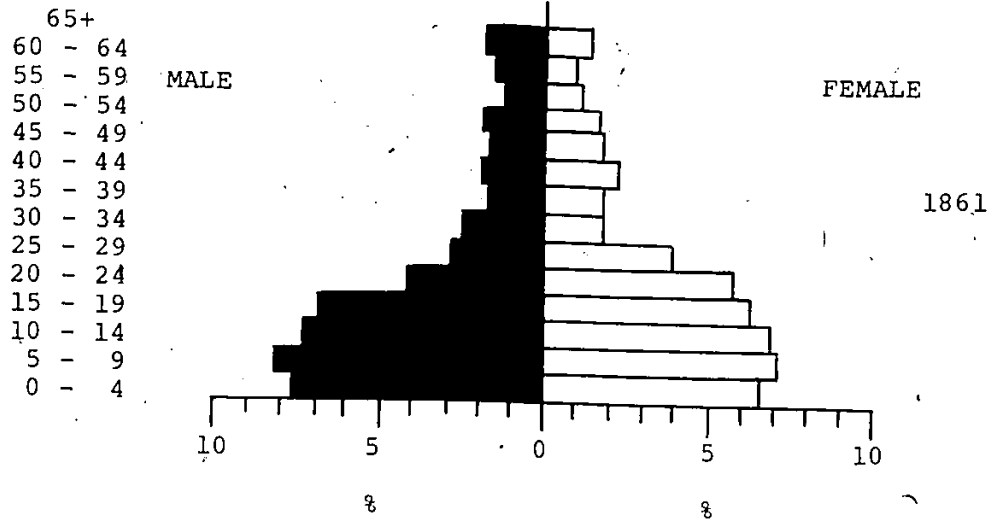
On the evening of Sunday, January 13th, 1861, the 3,400 inhabitants of Montague Township, Canada West, went to bed as usual after having observed the Sabbath, fully expecting to awaken to the responsibilities and routine of a new week the following morning. The evening itself was of no particular importance, although a number of household heads received visits from census enumerators the next day, and up to a month later some household heads were asked to supply detailed information about the size and welfare of their families as they existed on that uneventful mid-winter Sunday evening.

The taking of the 1861 census marked a watershed in Montague's population. The township was more densely populated during the early 1860s than at any time in its previous history or since. The influx of immigrants during the 1830s and 1840s had dropped to a trickle by 1850, and the minor increase of 59 between 1851 and 1861 reflected a yet high birth rate rather than a continuing immigrant inflow. From 1861 onward Montague's population declined, dropping from 3,415 that year to 3,187 in 1871, and again to 2,683 in 1881.¹ There is no doubt that the density of the township's population was decreasing, although the annexation of North Merrickville by the new municipal village of Merrickville in 1860, and the subsequent

annexation of Elgin by Smith's Falls in 1874 were partly responsible for this decline. Had these subdivisions been retained within Montague, the population decline of more than seven hundred between 1861 and 1881 would have been halved. Hence the population decline of 21% indicated in the census returns was in reality a less dramatic decline of approximately 14% for the rural area of the township untouched by expropriation between 1861 and 1881.²

Despite the onset of population decline, Montague's population remained youthful in composition. In 1861 the average or mean age was only four years, and during the next twenty years it rose by only eight months. It was, nonetheless, a population which was beginning to age. This clearly is indicated in age-pyramids for this period. Sixty percent of Montague's inhabitants in 1861 were twenty years of age or under, but this proportion fell to 56% in 1871, and again to 52% in 1881. While the number of middle-aged inhabitants (aged 45 to 64) declined from 12% to 11% of their respective populations between 1861 and 1871 and remained stable in the following decade, those over age 65 increased from 3% to 5% of the population. The only age category in which there was a dramatic increase was for those most eligible to become parents; inhabitants between the ages of 21 and 44 increased by fifteen percent between 1861 and 1881. This increase in contrast with the decrease of those under the age of twenty underlines the

Montague Age - Sex Pyramids



decreasing birthrate that developed in the 1870s. Expressed as a crude birth-rate, the birth of 26.4 children per thousand of population in 1861 fell to 21.7 in 1871, and still further to 17.1 children per thousand in 1881.³ Given the mortality rate of 9.1%, 14.4% and 5.2% in these years respectively, the rate of natural increase was 17.3% in 1861, 7.3% in 1871, and 11.9% in 1881. Although Montague's was yet a young society in 1881, the trend toward an older and less densely populated society was evident.

Montague by 1861 already had the marks of a mature society, notwithstanding the comparatively recent arrival of the major part of its population. This is evident when it is contrasted with Huntley Township in Carleton County, whose initial settlement followed some thirty years after that of Montague and whose population was approximately of 90 percent Irish ethnic origin.⁴ Despite the fact that between 1861 and 1881 Montague's population had a lower mean age than did that of Huntley, the Montague birthrate at its highest in 1861 remained below Huntley's at its lowest, although the 1861 birthrate of about 40 per thousand in Huntley had been that of Montague a decade earlier. Hence the already low birthrate of 1861 in Montague suggests that the decline of a rural birthrate depended upon how far away from the initial pioneering period a community had come. This suggests a mid-nineteenth century Upper Canadian variation of a three-stage model of New

England community development in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to the recent synthesis arising from the quantitative analysis made of New England rural society, the first stage of initial settlement and growth was followed by a period of stability as the sons of the first generation came to local power; by this time the best agricultural land had been occupied, and the availability of land declined as land prices rose. Stagnation marked the coming of the third period, usually about fifty years after initial settlement, bringing with it socio-economic discontent which spurred a new impulse to fund new communities to restore fluidity and opportunity.⁵ Clearly, the Irish immigration into Montague and Huntley before mid-century augmented the ranks of the "second generation" and quickly exhausted the meagre possibilities of local soil so that the stagnation period was upon them by the 1860s. There was as of yet no new hinterland within British North America during these critical years to attract the excess of the "third generation", to provide it also with opportunity. One response was a decline in number of births. Before immigration removed significant numbers of inhabitants in the 1870s and 1880s, the local birthrate maintained a progressive decline, a decline which followed some fifty years after the prior development and widespread settlement of each community. Hence, the declining birthrate in Montague had at least a decade's headstart on that in Huntley, reflecting Montague's earlier settlement.

The declining birthrate was affected by a changing male-female ratio and shifting marital patterns. Where there had been 105.2 males for every one hundred females in 1861, there were only 97.9 by 1881. But although by 1881 females were beginning to outnumber males in the total population, for the age category at which males and females were most eligible for marriage (between 20 and 44 years of age) females continually outnumbered males. The gap separating the two sexes between the ages of 20 and 44 was slowly closing from 84.1 males per hundred females in 1861 to 97 by 1881. A more pragmatic choice of age categories at which people would have been eligible for marriage reveals that the ratio of men to women was improving, but the preponderance of women continued; using the age cohorts of 21-59 for men and 14-44 for women, the ratio of 71.9 males per hundred females in 1861 consistently rose to 80 by 1881. Although married women as a percentage of the total female population declined by only three percent between 1861 and 1881, during the 1860s the proportion of married women between the ages of 20 and 30 declined by more than a third. Montague women increasingly were waiting until later to marry.

Both males and females appear to have deferred marriage, and increasingly, many never did marry. The proportion of men between the ages of 20 and 24 who were married was halved from 12.9% in 1861 to 6.2% in 1881, while of men between 25 and 29 the married proportion dwindled from 59.4% to 36.3%. Even in

the higher age cohorts there was an appreciable decline of interest in marriage. The proportion of married men among the Montague total between the ages of 30 and 34 fell from 87% to 64.9%; of those between 35 and 39 the married proportion dropped from 90% to 74.2%; while of those men between 40 and 44 years of age the proportion of married men declined from 92.3% to 84.4% between 1861 and 1881. Many men were waiting until their late thirties or early forties to marry. Although there was a similar pattern of both deferring marriage and not marrying, the decline of married women in each age cohort between 20 and 40 was approximately by one third of the 1861 figure. Hence between 1861 and 1881 the proportion of women between 20 and 24 who were married fell from 31.8% to 21.4%, of those between 25 and 29 the proportion married fell from 67.7% to 42.5%, of those between 30 and 34 from 93.7% to 63.2%, of those between 35 and 39 from 90.5% to 68.2%, and of those women between the ages of 40 and 44 the married proportion declined from 90.7% to 84.1%. The fifteen year age category in which men were most likely to marry shifted from 25-39 in 1861 to 30-44 in 1881. The fifteen year age category in which women were most likely to marry had more dramatically shifted from 20-34 in 1861 to 30-44 in 1881.⁶ The declining numbers of men and women entering into marriage reflected the current population decline and were harbingers of long-continuing decline after 1881.

The deferral and decline of marriage enhanced an already declining fertility rate. Between 1861 and 1881 the number of children under the age of ten declined by a third from 1,003 to 636. This was the same rate of decline observed in the number of women in age cohorts between 20 and 40 entering into marriage. Within the overall decline in the number of children, there was a drop of 25% from 1.3 children for every woman of child-bearing age (14-44 years) in 1861 to .9 children per woman by 1881. The number of births per year was halved from 90 to 46. Indeed, for every 3.8 married women of childbearing age in 1861, one child was born, compared with 4.8 women per child born in 1881. The declining birthrate was greatly in advance of the general population decline.

The decrease in fertility is but partially explained by the deferral of marriage of an increasing proportion of women until after age 30, and the increasing preponderance of females in Montague. In a study of Peel County between 1850 and 1870, David Gagan has noted a similar pattern, commenting:⁷

It . . . raises the question of how family limitation was accomplished, since it is almost certain that this rural society was a perfectly natural demographic regime in which women without the benefit of contraceptive devices or information produced children at regular intervals of thirty months, more or less, from marriage to menopause.

This spacing of children was evident in Montague, and numerous families, both large and small, often had births precisely spaced two years apart. But it is unlikely that the deferral

of marriage alone accounted for the declining birthrate between 1861 and 1881. To accept Gagan's peremptory dismissal of the possibility that rural women had access to contraceptive information leaves little recourse other than to suppose that the declining birthrate was the result of increasing abstention from sexual intercourse. On the other hand, perhaps abortion and infanticide accounted for a seeming decline in the fertility rate. Or, perhaps women increasingly were aware of essentially reliable forms of contraception. As early as 1856, a Merrickville newspaper advertised a marriage guide which offered instruction "In everything concerning the physiology and relations of our sexual system, and the production or prevention of offspring".⁸ Gagan's question remains unanswered, but it is clear that a decision consciously had been taken within the society to give birth to fewer children.

The birthrate in Montague would further decline from 17.1 children per thousand in 1881 to an all time low of 8.1 children per thousand of population in 1891. Only at the turn of the century would the fertility rate begin to increase, jumping from 10.9 children in 1901 to 20.1 children per thousand of population in 1911. All the while, however, a decline of the overall population would continue until the mid twentieth century.

Population decline along with a decreasing fertility rate contributed to a declining number of households and a

shrinkage in family size. The number of households fell from 527 to 504 between 1861 and 1871, and, gaining momentum in the 1870s, dropped to 448 households by 1881. The average household size did not vary greatly during this period, but it is clear that smaller families were increasingly the rule. The mean size of household declined by ten percent from 6.5 persons in 1861 to 5.9 in 1881. The mean number of married people per household during these twenty years was reduced from 1.9 to 1.7 persons. The deferral of marriage increasingly meant that an increasing proportion of households were being headed by widows or a female parent.

Household size varied along ethnic lines as Table 1 indicates. Although there are sufficient numbers of English

Table 1. Mean Size of Household by Birthplace of Head

(No. of persons per household)

Country of Birth	1861	1871	1881
England	7.2	7.2	6.2
Ireland	6.9	6.7	6.0
Scotland	6.8	6.4	5.2
U.S.A.	6.5	4.7	6.3
Canada	5.7	5.9	6.0
Mean	6.5	6.3	6.0

and Scottish-born household heads on which to base data concerning fertility, the numerically significant statistics are for Irish-born and Canadian-born. On average there was

one person more per household among the Irish-born than among the Canadians in 1861, but by 1881 there was the same number of inhabitants per household among all nationalities, save for the Scottish. While the household size of Irish-born heads of household had continually declined, that of Canadians had progressively increased. But three fourths of the household heads, notwithstanding their country of birth, were of Irish ethnic origin, and among these there was a decrease of mean household size of only .3 persons between 1871 and 1881. The next most numerically significant ethnic group, the Scottish, had a more significant decrease of one person per household between 1871 and 1881. The most significant variance in household size along ethnic lines was the decline by at least one person in households headed by persons born in the British Isles, compared to the increase in size of households headed by natives of Canada.

Religious affiliation also affected the change in size of a household. As Table 2 demonstrates, the Baptists were exceptional in their large households of 1861, and their subsequent halving during the following two decades. Perhaps this was due to the relatively small numbers of Baptists in Montague. Although Roman Catholics maintained the largest households between 1861 and 1881, these were only fractionally larger than those headed by members of the Church of England. Among the four major denominations in Montague the Methodists

Table 2. Mean Size of Household by Religion of Head

(No. of persons per household)

Religion	1861	1871	1881
Roman Catholic	6.9	6.8	6.4
Ch. of England	6.5	6.4	6.2
Methodist	6.4	4.7	5.6
Presbyterian	6.1	7.7	6.0
Baptist	9.2	6.3	4.7
Other	5.7	4.2	8.0
Mean	6.5	6.3	6.0

achieved twice as great a decrease in family size as households headed by Roman Catholics, Church of England members and Presbyterians, of .8 persons per household. Hence, by 1881, Methodists had replaced Presbyterians as the major denomination with the lowest fertility rate, while Roman Catholics and members of the Church of England continued to head households which were above the mean average size.

The slow decline of fertility at the same time that marriage was being deferred until later meant that many children were raised by middle-aged parents. In his study of Hamilton, Michael Katz points to the large proportion of women that gave birth in their late thirties and early forties at mid-century:⁹

In Hamilton in 1851, . . . 60 percent of the 40-45-year-old married women had a child aged 1-5, and 81 percent of married women that age had a child aged 10 or younger, a proportion which increased to 77 percent a decade later.

..4. Before the late nineteenth or the early twentieth century, very few husbands and wives in Hamilton or elsewhere had more than a few, if any, years to live together after their children had left home. In fact, many of the younger children in families could expect to lose at least their father through death before they reached maturity.

Although the mean number of children and adolescents in Montague declined from 3.7 to 3.0 per household between 1861 and 1881, the majority of households had between five and twelve members during this period. The number of households with four members or less was increasing from 28.8% to 34.5%, but large households remained common into the 1880s. Children and adolescents continued to comprise the majority of members in these larger households. Given the ongoing deferral of marriage by many men and women until their thirties and early forties, and the spacing of births approximately two years apart, this meant that many women were conceiving even in their final years of fecundity.

* * *

The late birth of many children meant that younger children in Montague lost at least one parent before they reached maturity. Notwithstanding the trend of deferring marriage, two thirds of married men consistently were between 25 and 54 years of age while about 70 percent of married women

were between 20 and 49 in 1861 and between 25 and 54 years of age in 1871 and 1881. Hence, the many that waited until their thirties to marry faced the prospect that even their eldest children would not see maturity before one parent, usually the father, passed away. The mean number of married parents per household declined from 1.9 in 1861 to 1.7 in 1881, while the number of households headed by women increased from 30 to 43. Since in most cases women became household heads only after losing husbands and if a son had not yet attained maturity, the increase of women heading households from 5.7% to 9.6% of household heads between 1861 and 1881 is a fair gauge of the increasing number of children who lost at least one parent before gaining maturity. In those households where male parents lived past age 54, advanced age increasingly made support of their families impossible. A petition from twenty-three neighbours of Thomas Reid to Montague Township Council in the late 1860s reveals the hardship that attended families in which men had married at middle age:¹⁰

Gentlemen, The Petition of the Undersigned humbly shows that Thomas Reid of the above Township, Cons. 10, Lot 1, is in very great need of a little money aid at the present time. That his wife has been confined to her bed during the last month from the effects of colds, fatigues &c. caught whilst trying to support her family. That he has eight small children wholly unable to provide for themselves. That he is now above eighty years of age and not able to support either himself or family. We hope you will aid him to support his family and help them from starvation.

The trend toward deferring marriage increasingly forced women to face the prospect of raising children without a partner's help.

The aging of Montague's population was also evident in the dramatic increase in number of widowed inhabitants. Their numbers doubled from 22.5 to 41.4 per thousand between 1861 and 1881, indeed rising above the decreasing crude birthrate at some point in the late 1860s. During these twenty years the proportion of widows declined from 66.2% to 58.6% of all widowed persons, indicating the continuing greater likelihood of husbands dying before their wives. The ages of widowed persons presented in the three census returns provides an indirect gauge of mortality among married people. The increasing longevity of women was reflected in the concentration of widowed men between the ages of 45 and 69 in 1861, between the ages of 50 and 74 in 1871, and between the ages of 60 and 84 in 1881. Although the concentration of widowed women more dramatically rose from between the ages of 40 and 64 in 1861 to between ages 55 and 79 in 1871, it remained at that level in 1881. Hence married men also enjoyed increasing longevity, but this was on average some five years below that of married women. The average mean age to which married women could expect to live rose from 62 to 67 years, while that for men rose from 57 to 61 years between 1861 and 1881.

The aging population did not necessarily reflect a steadily increasing mortality rate. From an incredible low of 2.4 deaths per thousand of population in 1851, the mortality rate did indeed jump to 9.1 by 1861 and to 14.4 per thousand in 1871, before taking equally as dramatic a drop to 5.2 deaths per thousand of population in 1881. During the following thirty years the mortality rate remained low at 4.0 deaths per thousand in 1891 and 4.4 deaths per thousand in 1901 before again rising to 10.9 deaths per thousand population in 1911.¹¹

David Gagan has questioned the veracity of the death statistics tabulated in census returns, claiming in his study of the returns for Peel County never to have encountered a single death from homicide, suicide or infanticide, and very few accidental deaths from whatever cause.¹² Michael Katz adds to this the criticism that cemetery and church records of Hamilton reveal that the number of people who actually died within the city far exceeded the number recorded on the census.¹³ These criticisms do not appear to be applicable to Montague death statistics, either those from census returns or the municipal registers. The Katz criticism can be attributed to the number of deaths and interments that Hamilton as a district centre attracted. The Gagan criticism contrasts with the suicides and accidents reported in Montague returns. There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the statistics which show that the mortality rate in Montague rose between 1851 and 1881, and thereafter decreased.

The small number of deaths in 1861, 1871 and 1881 prevents one from drawing particular conclusions applicable to Montague, let alone to Eastern Ontario rural society in general. Yet there are observable trends that accord with earlier findings in this chapter. Clearly, the first year of infancy was a critical period for survival, for it was within that year that between a tenth and a quarter of deaths occurred between 1861 and 1881. After the first year, however, the chances of surviving childhood and adolescence increasingly improved by 1881. The proportion of deaths between the ages of two and nineteen years declined from 45.2% of all deaths in 1861, to 19.6% in 1871, to 14.3% of all deaths in 1881. Conversely, the number of deaths among married inhabitants rose from 22.6 to 35.7 percent of all deaths, and among widowed inhabitants from 9.6 to 21.4 percent of all deaths between 1861 and 1881. Age pyramids indicate a continuing greater persistence of men as opposed to women after age 65. The aging of the population was reflected in the mortality rate, as Table 3 demonstrates.

Table 3. Relative Mortality of Young and Aged

Age Cohort	1861		1871		1881	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1-14	14	45.2	19	41.3	4	28.6
15-44	12	38.7	10	21.7	3	21.4
45+	5	16.1	17	37.0	7	50.0
Total	31		46		14	

The most striking change was that about half of all deaths in 1861 occurred before the age of 15, while half of those in 1881 occurred after middle-age. Clearly, Montague inhabitants were enjoying greater longevity with the passing years.

The census enumerators who tramped up and down the roads of Montague in 1881, whether or not they were conscious of it, observed an intrinsically different society from that recorded in detail by their predecessors twenty years earlier. A steady population decline had set in, and although the population remained largely youthful in composition, by 1881 it was clear that it was an aging population. Nonetheless, by 1861 Montague's was a mature society compared with other townships in the region, and the population decline itself which began in the 1860s was one indication of this. Other indications include the increasing deferral of marriage by both men and women, a declining fertility rate, the smaller number and size of families, the increasing number of native born, the decline in proportion of married people per family, the increasing parenting of children at middle-age, the loss of one or more parents before younger children reached maturity, the increasing number of households headed by women, the increasing number of widowed inhabitants, and the increasing mortality rate among the elderly as opposed to youth. Although ethnic origin, place of birth and religion of household heads indicate variations in the fertility rate between immigrants and native born, between Roman Catholics

and Church of England members on the one hand, and Methodists and Presbyterians on the other, the dominant pattern between 1861 and 1881 was of declining fertility. The decline of the mortality rate from 1871 onward, while underlining the increasing longevity that was being enjoyed, suggests that the decreasing fertility rate alone was not responsible for the population decline which would continue for the better part of a century after 1861.

Notes

¹The 1851 population figure is from the printed census, while the 1861, 1871 and 1881 figures are from computer tabulations of manuscript census data.

²Unfortunately, the precise population of either North Merrickville or Elgin when they were respectively expropriated from Montague is not known. The population of North Merrickville is estimated to have been approximately 100 in 1860, while that of Elgin was approximately 300 in 1874.

³The birth statistics used here are from the 1861 and 1871 manuscript census returns, and the 1881 municipal register of births. It is worth noting here that there were 8.9 births per thousand of population in 1880 compared with 17.1 per thousand in 1881, indicating that the number of births fluctuated from year to year.

⁴Julian Gwyn, "The Irish in Eastern Ontario: The Social Structure of Huntley Township in Carleton County, 1851-1871", in Exploring Our Heritage: The Ottawa Valley Experience / A la découverte de notre patrimoine: la vallée des Outaouais (Toronto: Ontario Heritage Foundation, 1980), p. 5; and 1871 printed census returns.

⁵J.M. Bumsted and J.T. Lemon, "New Approaches in Early American Studies: The Local Community in New England", in Histoire sociale-Social History I (1968), pp. 110-1.

⁶In 1861, 36.1% of married men were between the ages of 25 and 39, while 41.2% of married women were between the ages of 20 and 34. In 1881, 35.9% of married men were between the ages of 30 and 44, while 38.6% of married women were between the ages of 30 and 44.

⁷David Gagan, "Land, Population, and Social Change: The 'Critical Years' in Rural Canada West" in Canadian Historical Review LIX (1979), p. 309.

⁸Merrickville Chronicle (weekly newspaper), 19 August 1856, p. 4.

⁹Michael B. Katz, The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City. (Cambridge Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 246-7.

¹⁰Montague Township Records, Petition from neighbours of Thomas Reid to township council, undated.

¹¹These mortality rates are constructed from data in the 1851 printed census, the 1861, 1871 and 1881 manuscript census returns, and municipal register of Montague for the years 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911.

¹²David P. Gagan, "Enumerator's Instructions for the Census of Canada, 1852 and 1861" in Histoire sociale-Social History VII (1974), p. 357.

¹³Katz, Op. Cit., p. 20.

Household Composition

The aging of Montague's population coincided with a declining number of inhabitants, depleting fertility of the soil, and an emerging mixed farming and dairy economy. As has been indicated in the chapter on fertility, the birthrate in the township was declining, and in addition, the number of households within the general population decline was falling. The declining number of inhabitants meant that there was an increasing ratio of acres of land per household, and this was reflected in the increasing proportion of farmers heading households and in the increasing number of larger farms.

Increasingly, Montague society by 1881 was becoming economically stable and more homogenous. Indeed, stability was also evident in the composition of most households and in the persistence of families. In essence, economic stability was complemented by domestic stability and a continuing attachment to the soil.

Montague's domestic stability between 1861 and 1881 must be understood both within the context of using the household as a unit of measure, and the beginning decline of population. Within the limitations of using only census returns as the statistical data on which this thesis is based, a comparison of household composition remains somewhat crude. Historians often have made cross-references between census

data and a variety of other records, both statistical and literary, to delineate in detail the patterns of family structure that existed in the mid-nineteenth century. Such detail is not required to observe the principal trends that took place. Hence in discussing household composition in the following pages, I will make distinctions only between the various proportions of widowed, married and single inhabitants living with one another. To differentiate between children, boarders and adult singles is not within the scope of this thesis, and to do so would not significantly contribute further to an understanding of the general composition of Montague households. Considering that 83 percent of all single inhabitants in 1861 were under twenty years of age, (although as the population aged the proportion fell to 72.6% by 1881), it is possible to associate single marital status with youth. In addition, it must be remembered that the decline in overall population between 1871 and 1881 is in part due to the expropriation of the village of Elgin by Smith's Falls in 1874. Hence, a comparison of proportionate changes, as opposed to actual numbers, within the declining population more accurately reflects the shifts in household composition in Montague.

Household composition remained relatively stable within the context of a declining and aging population, although there was a tendency towards smaller families. The number of households fell from 527 in 1861 to 504 in 1871, and to 448 in

1881, while the mean number of persons per household respectively fell from 6.5 to 6.0. The nuclear family or household predominated, although it fluctuated slightly as a proportion of all households between 1861 and 1881. As Table 4 shows, the proportion of households containing two married and varying numbers of single people, (the equivalent of the nuclear family), remained approximately two-thirds of all households. Although the proportion of households containing

Table 4. Household Composition

	1861		1871		1881	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Singles Only	13	2.5	14	2.7	14	3.1
Married Only	24	4.6	29	5.8	18	4.0
Widowed Only	6	1.1	8	1.6	9	2.0
Widowed & Married	1	0.2	4	0.8	2	0.5
Widowed & Single	28	5.3	46	9.1	55	12.3
1 Married & Single(s)	8	1.5	4	0.8	7	1.6
2 Married & Single(s)	373	70.8	350	69.4	290	64.7
3+ Married & Single(s)	41	7.8	20	4.0	12	2.7
Married, Widowed & Single(s)	33	6.3	33	6.5	41	9.2
Total	527	100.1	508	100.7	448	100.1

married, widowed and single inhabitants, (the equivalent of the extended family), increased by half from 6.3 to 9.2 percent of Montague's population between 1861 and 1881, it is clear that

the extended family was the exception rather than the rule. A more dramatic increase was that of households inhabited by widowed and single, rising from 5.3% to 12.3%, and reflecting both the aging population and the contemporary deferral of marriage.

Households containing two married and numerous single inhabitants do not alone reflect the predominance of the nuclear family. To these must be added the households containing widowed and single inhabitants, and those containing three or more married and varying numbers of single inhabitants. The sum of the three is presented in Table 5. Despite the crudeness

Table 5. Nuclear Household Composition

	1861		1871		1881	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Widowed & Single	28	5.3	46	9.1	55	12.3
1 Married & Single(s)	8	1.5	4	0.8	7	1.6
2 Married & Single(s)	373	70.8	350	69.4	290	64.7
3+ Married & Single(s)	41	7.8	20	4.0	12	2.7
Total	450	85.4	420	83.3	364	81.3

of the measure, it is clear that the nuclear as opposed to the extended family was the prototype for the overwhelming majority of households in Montague. Indeed, if one were to consider that the households inhabited only by married people were primarily the homes of recently married people whose first

children had not yet been born, and that the households inhabited by widowed people only were formerly the homes of nuclear families, it could be argued that up to ninety percent of all households were affected by the nuclear family prototype.

The trend towards smaller families can be examined within the nuclear households in which two married and varying numbers of single inhabitants were present. A breakdown of family size within this group is presented in Table 6. Clearly,

Table 6. Nuclear Household Comparative Size

Household	1861		1871		1881	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2 Married & 1-4 Singles	189	50.7	169	48.3	166	57.2
2 Married & 5-8 Singles	149	39.9	149	42.6	102	35.2
2 Married & 9+ Singles	35	9.4	32	9.1	22	7.6
Total	373	100.0	350	100.0	290	100.0

there was no dramatic shift in family size, either in the two percent decline of families with eleven or more members, or in the seven percent increase of families with six members or less. To judge from these statistics alone, the decline in family size appears not to have taken place until after 1871. More precise statistics on the mean number of people in households headed by farmers indicate that the gradual decline in family size commenced in the 1860s. From 6.7 people in 1861, this number decreased to 6.5 in 1871 and to 6.2 persons per household

in 1881. The ~~fact~~ that farmers headed between eighty and ninety percent of households in Montague between 1861 and 1881, prevents a comparison of decreasing farm household size with households headed by inhabitants engaged in other occupations. Notwithstanding this, on the whole an observable decline in household size came into being in the 1860s and continued.

The decline of mean household size points to an increasing number of families which actually were not nuclear families, although their composition reflected the primacy of the nuclear family as a prototype. While the number of nuclear households either remained stable or decreased slightly, these "non-nuclear" families increased in number, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Non-nuclear Household Composition & Growth

	1861		1871		1881	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Household						
Singles Only	13	2.5	14	2.7	14	3.1
Widowed Only	6	1.1	8	1.6	9	2.0
Widowed & Married	1	0.2	4	0.8	2	0.5
Widowed & Single	28	5.3	46	9.1	55	12.3
1 Married & Single(s)	8	1.5	4	0.8	7	1.6
Married, Widowed & Singles	33	6.3	33	6.5	41	9.2
Total	89	16.9	109	21.5	128	28.7

The few households in which widowed and married resided together complements the larger number of widowed who resided by

themselves. Wherever circumstances permitted, widows apparently preferred to preside over their own households, rather than move in with married children, relatives or neighbours. The relatively few petitions for relief or exemption from taxes on behalf of Montague widows in the 1860s and 1870s in contrast to numerous petitions in the 1840s and 1850s suggest that increasingly women were equal to the task of managing a farm. The small number of households inhabited by one married person and varying numbers of single people points to a minor but continuing proportion of broken marriages that persisted. An example of a wife and mother abandoned by her husband is provided in a petition from thirteen inhabitants to the township council in April 1865. They observed:¹

that Mrs McRitchie, Wife of James McRitchie Late of Montague but now or the last heard of him in the Disunited States, having been Left with a small family of Children one of which is now Deceased, the remainder of the family are in very indigent and suffering Circumstances, we therefore Pray your Council to Grant them relief from the Funds of the township and relieve them.

Whether abandoned, widowed or remaining single, an increasing proportion, although remaining a minority, of Montague inhabitants did not live within nuclear households.

The predominance of nuclear households and the nuclear prototype must be understood within the context of rural interdependence within a family and within a neighbourhood. It has been argued that the high rural birthrate which existed in the early mid-nineteenth century was the response of immigrants

to the task of establishing farms and paying for them, by having numerous children to provide labour. This, asserts David Gagan, inevitably led to a crisis in the farm economy:²

The real challenge in the long term was to solve the problem of those overpopulated rural households which had once depended for their standard of living on the labour of many children but could no longer compensate them adequately for their contribution and even victimized them in the interests of social security and stability.

The "crisis", claims Gagan, could only be circumvented by increasing the acreage of the land to be divided among sons, or by giving birth to fewer children through deferring marriage, or by pulling up stakes and moving elsewhere. Only the last of these could have been achieved within a short period of time. Had a crisis indeed existed, more dramatic changes would have been evident in household composition. As Ian Winchester observes, "A crisis brought on by overpopulation should have led to more adults coming into one household, and more than one family unit appearing in a household".³ But in Montague in 1861 only fourteen percent of all households had three and more married as well as single inhabitants, or, widowed, married and single inhabitants in the same household, and this proportion declined in subsequent decades. This insight must be kept within the context of more than one household existing on a farm where previously only one house had been. It is unlikely that a son and his wife would choose to live with his parents in the same household, compared with the privacy and lack of

domestic squabbles that an adjacent house, often the older log house that had been replaced by a newer structure, afforded. Hence, two or three sons and their families resided near their father's farm and worked together with one another and with fellow neighbours at farming, and at night each respectively returned to his own home. To trace such a pattern using land records is beyond the scope of this thesis, however the daily entries of one farmwife, Euphemia Chalmers, in her diary of 1884 indicate how it functioned:⁴

September 1881- (3) I up home, J. [her husband] to town (4) Janie home, Maggie down (7) J, I to St. Paul's church, Ray down (8) Ray and I up home (13) J. drawing cheese (15) J. to Mr. Wards (17) thrashing at home (18) J. Peters thrashing (19) I up home (22) J. to other place (29) Willie home from Morrisburg (30) Sarah came down. October- (13) I up home, J. to town (28) I up home, [Rev.] Mr. Mylne here (31) J. to town, I up home. November- (7) butchered pigs (12) J.J. to town, John Herren here (18) J. to bush (20) J. to town with wheat (23) J, I to church, Ray home (24) J, I up home (25) J. to other place (26) J.J. to town (27) J. to other place, I to Mrs. Loucks. December- (2) I up home (5) J, I to Uncle Grahams (6) Frank Davis came (7) Fred, I up home. (12) J, I to town (13) J. to other place (18) Gabriel Fowler here (25) all folks for dinner.

Euphemia Chalmers was referring to the three Chalmers households in southern Montague: where she and her first-cousin husband, James Chalmers, lived was "here", James' father and brother resided at the "other place" while her own parents and a brother's family resided "up home". The close positioning of similar surnames within the census returns suggests that this

interdependent pattern existed on a substantial scale in Montague, and even those farmers without brothers and parents could join with neighbours in mutual chores and bees just as they did when performing statute labour.

The stability that developed in the face of Montague's declining population between 1861 and 1881 was reflected in the very gradual decline of family size in the general population. The nuclear family remained the prototype for the majority of households, notwithstanding an increasing number of extended family households. The small proportion of extended families clearly indicates that there was no crisis in the local farm economy. Within the context of cooperation among family members and neighbours, and the increasing mechanization of agriculture there was decreasing need for as large families as had existed at mid century, and decreasing need as well for as many people to farm within the township's boundaries.

Notes

¹Montague Township Records, petition from Reuben A. Knapp et al., to township council, 28 April 1865.

²David Gagan, "Land, Population and Social Change: The 'Critical Years' in Rural Canada West" in The Canadian Historical Review LIX (1979), p. 307.

³Ian Winchester, "Review of Peel County History Project and the Saguenay Project" in Histoire sociale-Social History XIII (1980), p. 201. Winchester's italics, not mine.

⁴Euphemia Chalmers, Diaries: 1881-1915, 6 vols. (copy in possession of author; the whereabouts of the originals are not certain), 1:38-42.

Occupation and Wealth

Montague's rural economy permitted a remarkably stable society in the 1860s and 1870s. Despite the continuous population decline which began at this time, the quality of life for the majority of Montague inhabitants improved for the better from that at mid-century. There were, of course, instances of poverty persisting in the township, but not to any extent that would permit the suggestion that a rigid structure of inequality divided local society. Certainly, these instances paled in comparison with the widespread poverty that had existed in the 1840s and 1850s. That there was no rigid structure of inequality dividing Montague society in the 1860s and 1870s appears due in large part to the absence of an extremely wealthy class of inhabitants, due also to a lack of widespread poverty, and due to the fact that most inhabitants increasingly were engaged in farming on land which they owned. Of course, some farmers were more prosperous than others. They cultivated significantly greater acreages, inhabited finer houses and probably imagined themselves to belong to an elite compared with the majority of their fellow tillers of the soil. Indeed, when one considers that the higher municipal offices in the township were all but monopolized by farmers of non-Irish ancestry who lived near the Rideau River, it could be argued

that an elite existed. Despite this, there were no enormous inequalities, and failure was the exception rather than the rule after 1860. Hence, Montague differed not only from urban settings such as Hamilton, but from rural communities such as Toronto Gore Township in Peel County as well, in its comparative economic stability during the 1860s and 1870s.

The new spirit of improvement which distinguished Montague farmers in the 1860s and 1870s from their predecessors was apparent to outsiders passing through. One, travelling the road between Smith's Falls and Merrickville in 1850, remarked:¹

There are some excellent stone houses along the road, but a large proportion of the dwellings and farm buildings are of a very poor description, and much of the land appears badly farmed. We noticed fields cropped with wheat, in which the stumps were completely decayed, and would evidently have burned out years ago: and yet the farmer, or occupant, (for farmer he does not deserve to be called) too indolent to set them on fire, continues to plough round them and sacrifice the ground they encumber year after year. As might be expected with such a state of affairs, much of the cattle appeared of poor quality and half starved, and few good orchards were to be seen. Although some of the land is poor and stony, still a large portion is of good quality, and there is no doubt if the country was inhabited by a more active and industrious class of settlers, it would exhibit a very different appearance.

Some eighteen years later, in September 1868, another non-inhabitant travelling along the same road exclaimed:²

In our journey between Smith's Falls and Roseville, we were agreeably struck with the general fine aspect of the country; the superior class of buildings; the large, rich looking fields; and the general air of thrift, taste and comfort pervading each homestead.

Within less than twenty years the face of Montague agriculture had been largely transformed. This was due in part to the formation of the Montague Agricultural Society in 1860, which, along with its annual exhibition encouraged the raising of local standards of breeding and husbandry.

The change must also be seen within the context of increasing land ownership. As late as the 1850s, many Montague farmers did not own farms, either renting or squatting, or making payments on their farms as the years passed. Twenty years was not an unduly lengthy period for a family to wait between settling on land and acquiring title to it. John Nettles, who petitioned in 1836 for the land on which he was squatting, was long dead, and his widow remarried and again widowed before Clergy Reserve Lot 27 in the first concession was granted to her in 1849.³ The James Porter family arrived from Ireland in 1837, and settled a number of farms in the western half of the fifth and sixth concessions, but not until the late 1860s did a member of the family obtain legal title to land.⁴ William James began to settle on lot 21 in the sixth concession after having purchased the "goodwill" of a former inhabitant in 1843, but was engaged in a claims battle with

a neighbour until 1857, afterwards taking an additional eighteen years to purchase the reserve from the government.⁵ The 1840s and 1850s, although a period of unprecedented population increase and immigration into the township, were marked by a struggle for many families to keep body and soul together and to begin accumulating capital with which to purchase land. The comments of Simon Sexsmith in January 1847 probably indicated the situation of many families before 1860:⁶

I have a large family, had to sell my oxen to pay the back rent, to fulfill the requisitions as far as possible, am poor and think the price it was valued at, very high when compared with the quality of the land. Still the labour & expenses which I have been at will induce me to comply with any measure which may be enjoined rather than be turned into the highway destitute of house or shelter and my labour & expenses.

Only by the 1860s and 1870s did a majority of families own the land they previously had cultivated, and ownership brought with it a new pride of property that squatters had rarely exhibited. It seems hardly coincidental that the log shanty virtually passed out of existence in Montague at the same time that a majority of inhabitants at long last owned their own farms.

Farming was the occupation of the majority of household heads, and increasingly became the occupation of the majority of those inhabitants whom census enumerators listed with an occupation. Indeed, as Table 8 demonstrates, the proportion of household heads employed in farming increased by nine percent

Table 8. Occupation of Household Head by Category

Type	1861		1871		1881	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Professional	4	0.8	7	1.4	1	0.2
Clerical	3	0.6	5	1.0	3	0.7
Farmer	394	79.6	385	78.7	376	88.7
Tradesman	4	0.8	7	1.4	---	---
Artisan	41	8.3	41	8.4	17	4.0
Labourer	48	9.7	39	8.0	27	6.4
Other	1	0.2	4	0.8	---	---
Totals	495	100.0	488	99.7	424	100.0

between 1861 and 1881. In the two other occupational categories in which any significant number of household heads were employed, artisans and labourers, the percentage employed actually declined. The decline by more than half in number of artisans who were household heads between 1871 and 1881 probably reflected the expropriation of the Elgin subdivision by Smith's Falls in 1874, although as Table 9 shows, the proportion of artisans within the population as a whole did not decline. Conversely, the halving of the number of household heads who were labourers belied the proportional drop by 75% of all labourers within the population. For reasons that are not entirely clear, the overall number of labourers decreased by roughly the same number that farmers increased by between 1861 and 1871.

Table 9. Occupation of General Population by Category

Type	1861		1871		1881	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Professional	20	2.4	24	2.7	19	2.5
Clerical	4	0.5	17	1.9	9	1.2
Farmer	419	49.2	644	72.5	594	78.5
Tradesman	4	0.5	7	0.8	1	0.1
Artisan	60	7.1	84	9.5	53	7.0
Labourer	339	39.8	106	11.9	79	10.4
Totals	851	100.0	888	100.0	757	100.0
% of Total Population	24.9		27.9		28.2	

The dominance of farming in Montague is not sufficiently revealed by a comparison of the numbers and percentages of people employed within the categories of occupation used in Tables 8 and 9. Indeed, in dividing those with occupations among professional, clerical, farmer, tradesman, artisan and labourer categories, as has been done in Table 9, care must be taken not to accept at face value the terms used by census enumerators in determining occupational structure. It is unlikely that only fifty percent of those with an occupation in 1861 were engaged in farming, in contrast with nearly eighty percent two decades later. The overwhelming majority of households were headed by farmers during the period, hence the majority of the labourers listed in the 1861 census probably were farmers' sons who worked either for their father or on a neighbour's

farm as day labourers. This is consistent with the stability of the proportions of other occupational categories within the general population, and with the decline in tradesman, artisan and labourer heads of household during these two decades. In the 1871 and 1881 census returns the enumerators distinguished farmers' sons, and these have been included within the farmer category in Table 9. The labourers also listed in these returns probably resided near and worked in the villages of Smith's Falls and Merrickville, and for the most part were not engaged in agricultural activity.

The discrepancy between the proportions of heads of household and those of the general population with a nonagricultural occupation suggests that although as significant a proportion of the younger population continued to apprentice or enter into such occupations, increasingly they could not find employment within Montague's boundaries with which to support a family, forcing them to leave the community for opportunity elsewhere. The number of household heads (including labourers) not employed in agriculture declined by half, while the proportion of the general workforce not agriculturally employed remained stable between 1861 and 1881. This suggests as well that nonagricultural occupations were regarded by young men as a temporary or part-time form of employment that contributed to the general household income, but increasingly were regarded as insufficient for a household head to support

a family. Hence, although there were sixteen teachers employed in township schools in 1861, only one headed a household. Although ten blacksmiths were listed in 1881, only half that number headed households. Although the numbers of persons within specific occupations either fluctuated or were too small in themselves to constitute significant patterns in occupational structure, it is quite clear that as large a proportion of young men who lived within their parents' households continued as avidly in 1881 as in 1861 to pursue nonagricultural occupations, while the proportion of household heads engaged in farming increased.

Montague was served by a thin layer of professionals: mostly teachers, a few clergy and the occasional engineer, doctor and notary public. The number of individuals involved in clerical occupations fluctuated, quadrupling from four in 1861 to seventeen in 1871, and then halving to nine in 1881. These clerical skills belonged to lock masters on the Rideau Canal, station masters on the Brockville and Ottawa Railway and telegraph operators in addition to the more typical clerks, bookkeepers, printers and insurance agents. The number of tradesmen also fluctuated; after increasing from four to seven between 1861 and 1871, only one was listed in the 1881 census. These were mostly general merchants or grocers along with the occasional commercial traveller. The one hotel listed in 1861 in contrast with two listed in the 1871 census is

somewhat ironic, since in 1869 the sale of liquor had been banned in Montague. Between the taking of these two censuses up to half a dozen taverns and hotels selling liquor had opened and been closed in the township. The increasing number of clerks and tradesmen between 1861 and 1871 reflected the growth of the adjacent village of Smith's Falls, while the declining number between 1871 and 1881 reflected the removal of those living in the expropriated village of Elgin. The proportion of artisans within Montague's boundaries between 1861 and 1881 remained stable, apart from a slight upward fluctuation in 1871. Among the principal artisans in 1861 were shoemakers, blacksmiths, cabinet makers, carpenters, coopers, joiners, saddlers and weavers; seamstresses, carpenters, moulders, blacksmiths, weavers, cabinet makers, coopers, manufacturers, millers, milliners and shoemakers in 1871; and seamstresses, blacksmiths, carpenters, plasterers and weavers in 1881. The decline in number of moulders and manufacturers between 1871 and 1881 reflected the expropriation of Elgin, while the declining number of shoemakers indicated the competition posed by industrialization in urban centres.

Census returns do not accurately indicate the role of women in Montague's economy. A married woman was not listed as having an occupation unless her husband had died or left, and his occupation was conveyed to the woman. Hence, the majority of women who toiled as homemakers, buttermilks and tenders of

livestock were not credited by census enumerators with having an occupation. Indeed, when prizes were awarded at the annual exhibition of the Montague Agricultural Society, even those given for woven and pieced quilts, woollen stockings and a child's dress - all clearly the work of women's hands - along with all other produce were awarded and credited in local newspaper accounts to their husbands.⁷ The domestic production of nearly 150,000 pounds of butter in 1861 doubtless depended in large part on the work of Montague farmwomen. In 1861, of the 851 individuals listed with an occupation only fifty-five were women: twelve were farmers, thirty-three were servants, six were teachers along with two labourers, a painter and a weaver. The number of women increased to only 56 out of 888 persons listed with an occupation in 1871, in fact a decrease from 6.5% to 6.3% of those with an occupation; however, the proportion of servants had subsided significantly. Of the 56 women, there were seven teachers, a telegraph operator in the clerical category, 22 artisans - mostly seamstresses, a hotel keeper in the tradesman category, eighteen farmers and seven labourers. By 1881, when the number of women was 55 or 7.3% of the 757 individuals listed with an occupation, eight women had entered the professional category as teachers, fifteen were classified as artisans, 26 were listed as farmers and five more were listed as labourers. While the proportion of women labourers declined from 10.3% to 6.3% between 1861 and 1881,

the proportion of female farmers increased from 2.9% to 4.4% and that of female professionals -- all teachers -- rose from 30% to 42.1%, while female artisans soared from 3.3% to 28.3% of all artisans between 1861 and 1881.

Women comprised the majority of servants in Montague households, although by 1881 the declining number of servants coincided with an evening ratio of males to females. There was a strikingly low number of servants in the township in comparison with Huntley Township in Carleton County. Despite Huntley's smaller population, in 1861 when both townships had their greatest number of servants, there were 79 servants in Huntley in contrast to 40 in Montague.⁸ The decline in number of servants was also more rapid in Montague, indicating that the dislike of servitude was particularly pronounced. Given the greater wealth in Montague by 1861, as manifested in the larger number of stone, brick and frame houses constructed, the presence of servants in a community is not an accurate gauge of its wealth. Their presence, instead, it may be argued, provides a better measure of poverty. The greater number and greater persistence of servants in Huntley in contrast to Montague is one indication that poverty did not have as great a foothold in Montague. Implicit in this interpretation is the argument that those rural families which kept servants, did so as much to provide employment for the locally impoverished than because their services were particularly needed or could be afforded.

A comparison of servants in Montague and Huntley is provided in Table 10. There is no documentation to indicate how well or poorly servants were paid, although since most lived in their masters' houses, it is likely they received little more than free room and board in return for their work.

Table 10.

	<u>Number of Servants</u>					
	1861		1871		1881	
	Montague	Huntley	Montague	Huntley	Montague	Huntley
Male	7	21	4	4	5	1
Female	33	58	5	33	4	22
Totals	40	79	9	37	9	23
% of Total Population	1.2%	4.0%	0.3%	1.5%	0.3%	0.9%

Half of all servants in 1861 were Methodist, with Roman Catholics and Church of England members comprising most of the remainder. Roman Catholics, followed by Methodists, dominated in 1871, but by 1881 servants came from no particular religious group. The proportions of servants born in Ireland and Canada fluctuated, with 75% being born in Canada in 1861, seven-ninths born in Ireland in 1871, and seven-ninths born in Canada in 1881. The decline in servants of Irish ethnic origin from 89% to 50% between 1871 and 1881 indicates that servitude was losing popularity the further away the community came from the era of Irish immigration, and indeed that the general standard of living in Montague was rising.

* * *

The presence of servants in households provides an imperfect key with which to examine the more prosperous families of Montague in 1861. Of the thirty-four households containing servants, twenty-six were headed by farmers, two by clergy, and one apiece by a saddler, a gentleman, a carpenter, a mill owner, a station master, a hotel keeper and a merchant. Of the twenty-six farmers with servants in their households, nineteen cultivated one hundred or more acres of land. With the exception of three farmers situated on fertile land immediately north of Smith's Falls, the rest resided south of the fourth concession. More than half of the households were headed by men born in Canada, while a third of them were Irish-born. More than half were Methodists while four Roman Catholics, four Church of England members, four Presbyterians, a Baptist, an Adventist and a Universalist headed households containing servants. Only a third of the houses in which these households dwelt were of log construction. One was brick, a dozen were stone, nine were frame and one was of grout construction. Of these various statistics, those concerning house construction are the most valuable. Although it is clear that Methodists were over-represented while Church of England members and Roman Catholics were vastly under-represented among those households containing servants, the two-thirds of houses not of log construction is

the most telling indication of the comfortable means required to afford a servant. Or, instead, was it more a matter of having the comfortable means to accommodate and keep a servant in one's employ, rather than allow her to entertain the idea of eventually leaving for her own home? Only one servant, Elizabeth Telford, was head of her own household in 1861. But although most servants lived in relatively comfortable households, the majority of the finer houses did not contain servants, and indeed a few of the farmers listed with a servant farmed less than fifty acres.

The keeping of servants during the early 1860s, and its subsequent decline suggests changing attitudes towards the practice. Alison Prentice has pointed to both the low status of servants and the denigration of service as an ideal articulated in the Journal of Education during this period.⁹ Since women comprised the predominant proportion of servants during the 1850s and 1860s, the decline reflected the increasing emphasis that was being placed on domesticity as the true sphere of a woman's work. She should not go outside the confines of her own home to find work, but herself, by being "submissive unto her husband" as both the Bible and Egerton Ryerson admonished, could enhance her husband's status by showing capability in domestic offices. The decline in number of female servants reflected a change from the privations of the 1840s and 1850s to the domestic conveniences of the 1860s and

1870s as the quality of housing improved. Similarly, the farmer found less need for servants and children as agriculture increasingly mechanized. As Peter Clark observed before the Ontario Agricultural Commission in 1881, "The farmers all use agricultural machinery freely".¹⁰ But although the decreasing fertility rate, better quality of housing and increasing ratio of females to males enhanced a decreasing need for servants, it is not altogether clear that the servant was contributing to his master's welfare, as much as the master was looking after that of the servant.

This is not to suggest that a reduced form of "noblesse oblige" existed in mid nineteenth century rural Upper Canada, but rather that there were ethnic and religious bonds which acted as catalysts for offering positions to individuals without ready means of support. Over half of the servants in 1861 had the same religion as their masters, and the same proportion shared the same country of birth. The dominance of Methodists among those employing servants and among the servants themselves suggests that service was not regarded as a subservient occupation, but rather a means of preparing for employment as a mature adult. By 1881, five of the nine servants had the same country of birth as their masters, while all but two had the same religion. Servants overwhelmingly were youthful, with the proportion below age twenty-five decreasing from 90% in 1861 to 67% in 1871 and 1881. Although a few

servants were middle-aged, service for young men and women clearly was but a temporary phase of life, and probably amounted to nothing less than on-the-spot training for men in farming and for women in domestic chores. This helps to explain why a majority of the more prosperous households did not "employ" servants.

There is no evidence that the more prosperous inhabitants of Montague considered themselves members of an upper class. Although the wives of the more prosperous farmers might be elegantly arrayed in silk when their photographs were taken, and John McGill Chambers might, tongue-in-cheek, term his stone house a "manor-house" and affect the title of Baron Munchausen McGill Chambers, these were instances of prosperous Montague inhabitants aspiring to what they could not be, or to be more precise, what the rural Eastern Ontario economy would not permit them to be. With farming the occupation of between eighty and ninety percent of household heads, the similarity of work done by large landholder as well as small, as well as shared community chores such as statute labour and threshing bees ensured that local society was not divided by the rigid structure of inequality observed elsewhere in Ontario. As Table 11 indicates, the amount of land occupied and improved was maximized between 1861 and 1881, and the ratio of land to men aged twenty years and older increased as the overall population declined. Indeed, while the ratio of acres in general occupied per man

Table 11. Ratio of Males Aged 20+ to Land Occupied & Improved

Date	Acres Occupied	Ratio	Acres Improved	Ratio
1860	48,385	1:67	16,924	1:23
1870	49,824	1:67	25,451	1:34
1880	55,286	1:81	32,031	1:47

over age twenty rose by 21% between 1861 and 1881, the ratio of improved acres per man doubled. Table 12 shows that although the proportion of individuals holding 50 acres or more of land remained stable, there was an increase from 29% to 46% of those holdings containing one hundred or more acres.¹¹ Particularly significant was the trebling to 16% of those farms containing 200 or more acres, while the proportion of holdings under ten acres doubled. Conversely, the number of farms containing between eleven and one hundred acres declined. If it may be

Table 12. Land Holding in Montague, 1860-80

	1860		1870		1880	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No. of Occupiers	443		399		409	
10 Acres & Under	18	4.1	11	2.8	32	7.8
11-50 Acres	74	16.7	64	16.0	58	14.2
51-100 Acres	218	49.2	179	44.9	131	32.0
101-200 Acres	112	25.3	110	27.6	125	30.3
200+ Acres	21	4.7	35	8.7	64	15.6

assumed that acreage size is an indicator of wealth, then clearly the number of prospering farmers was increasing by 1881.

The most accurate barometer of wealth for this period was house construction in 1861. The decline in number of log shanties from thirty percent of housing in 1851 to less than one percent by 1861 is eloquent testimony to the improving standard of living that had developed in the 1850s. The four shanties remaining in Montague in 1861 were all inhabited by railway labourers, a clear indication of the accuracy with which house construction reflected wealth. Unfortunately, the log houses in which three-quarters of Montague's population resided, do not necessarily provide precise enough information about the comparative wealth of their inhabitants. Log houses varied from outmoded structures with stone hearths dating from the late eighteenth century to the large house of Robert Livingston which boasted the dimensions of a stone house and was covered by board and batten. The frame, stone and brick houses listed in the 1861 census nevertheless do provide a means of examining the more prosperous inhabitants of the township. Although household heads born in Ireland comprised over half Montague's total, they owned only a third of the better houses. Conversely, Canadian-born inhabitants comprised a third of all household heads, but they inhabited 45% of the better houses. Scottish heads of household were not as greatly over-represented, while the proportion of English and American-born household heads with frame, stone or brick houses was more than double their proportion of the township total.

Broken down by religious affiliation, Church of England and Roman Catholic household heads were least likely to reside in a fine house. This was particularly true for Church of England heads, and although they comprised 39% of all heads of household, only 23% of the finer houses were headed by Church of England adherents. Conversely, although only a quarter of Montague households were headed by Methodists, 42.6% of the finer houses were inhabited by them. Presbyterians also were over-represented in heading the better quality homes. Clearly, Methodist and Canadian-born household heads enjoyed greater prosperity than other groups, although Scottish, English and American-born, and Presbyterians shared this to a lesser extent. The Irish-born were more likely to be found inhabiting log houses. The greater likelihood of Church of England rather than Roman Catholic inhabitants to be residing in log houses, or in other words to be least prosperous contrasts with the general trend in both qualitative and quantitative history to perceive Irish Catholics as inexorably on the bottom rung of the social ladder in mid nineteenth century Ontario.

The household of Peter Clark, by way of example, was among the more prosperous in Montague between 1861 and 1881. Peter and his wife Margaret both had been born in Scotland, and were members of the Free Church. Peter had arrived with his parents in Lanark County in 1829 at age twenty, and by 1861 was presiding over a family of five sons and four daughters

ranging in age from eighteen to two years. His farm consisted of 150 acres in the second concession, adjacent to the village of Roseville and barely a mile from the Rideau. His family inhabited a large stone house. As his sons grew to manhood Clark continued to acquire land until by 1880 he claimed to farm 325 acres. Although the quality of his farmland was depreciating through overcropping by 1880, Clark described the dairy-farming practiced on this extensive acreage:¹²

A good deal of our land is light or rough; about 200 acres can be ploughed. Flat rock comes into parts of it. My five sons work the farm without hired help.

We keep in winter 40 or 50 head of cattle, of which 25 will probably be milk cows. We don't pretend to fatten stock. We look chiefly to dairying, and send all the milk to a cheese factory. Our cows will average \$25 apiece from the cheese factory, per season, and make butter besides. In addition to home consumption, we sell from 200 lbs. to 300 lbs. of butter . . .

The stock is not improved. We have used no thoroughbred male animal. I do not think there is a thoroughbred bull in the township of any breed. Our stock is as good as any I see in this district.

In addition to cattle, the Clark sons raised sheep, swine and apples. While they laboured on the farm, Peter added to his family's prestige by becoming vice-president of the Montague Agricultural Society when it was founded in 1860, and by the late 1870s had become its president. Between 1865 and 1890 he operated the Roseville post-office, and by the late 1870s was manufacturing cheese at the Roseville cheese factory.¹³ In 1860 he was elected a councillor on the Montague Township

Council, was deputy reeve from 1863 to 1871, and from 1872 to 1882, and again in 1884 and 1885 served as reeve. He was warden of Lanark County in 1879. In the parlance of the time, Peter Clark was a solid citizen. Despite his various sources of income, it is worth noting that as late as 1880 all five of his sons - ranging in age from 36 to 21 years - remained home to tend the family farm. Although the Clark family was as prosperous, as industrious and as favoured a family as one might hope to find in Montague between 1861 and 1881, the labour of all its members was required to maintain its economy. Before dairy farming had been introduced in the 1870s, in Peter Clark's own words, "We could hardly live on the farm previously".¹⁴

At the other end of the spectrum were individuals on the brink of starvation, usually widows, abandoned wives, the aged and those beset by accidents and natural disasters, who never comprised more than a fraction of the population. For example, the proportion of widowed persons increased from 2.3% to 4.1% of Montague's population between 1861 and 1881, the majority of whom were not impoverished since they resided in the homes of sons and daughters. A few widows heading households requested exemption from municipal taxes and statute labour as in the 1862 instance of "the widdow of the late William Dormer . . . as she is left destitute of any help and living on a verry poor place".¹⁵ The widow who headed a household of adolescents and young men and women on a farm had no

particular fear of poverty. For the farm family, whether headed by male, female, two parents or indeed no parents was only vulnerable at the stage when its children were all or mostly too young to contribute to its income or provide significant labour. At such a stage, if its head fell ill, as in the case of Joseph Stewart on the sixth concession in April 1865, the ramifications were all too bleak. A petition to the township council from twenty-five neighbours stated:¹⁶

The case of Joseph Stewart who is now lying on a sick bed under Doctors care and having a family of Eleven. Small helpless children demands your active Sympathy and relief. We the undersigned do but represent the majority of inhabitants of his Section of the township, by asking such assistance as shall enable him to sustain his family untill he shall be able to work again.

Sad indeed was the prospect of a family when a number of unfortunate circumstances combined at the stage when a household was filled with "helpless" children. Thomas Reid in the tenth concession was in his early seventies and headed a household of nine young children when in August 1856 "he lost his all" by fire. Petitions from neighbours to the township council referred to "the suffering state of Thomas Reid with a large family in a stage of starvation" in 1863; that he was "in very destitute circumstances and confined to Bed, the probability is never will be able to rise" by 1864; "in very indigent circumstances in fact has nothing to keep him living and his family and himself and they are in danger of starving" by 1866; and as late as 1870 was receiving gifts from neighbours in southern

Beckwith and northern Montague.¹⁷ But this was a remarkable instance, the consequence of a man deferring marriage until past middle age that was unique in Montague.

The continuous aid that Reid along with other inhabitants received from the municipal coffers, and indeed the very petitions of numerous neighbours recommending such grants and themselves individually providing aid, is clear evidence that although the number of inhabitants receiving relief was but a fraction of Montague's population, prosperous and less prosperous neighbours alike empathized and sympathized with their plight. They did so because the overwhelming majority of inhabitants shared the same occupation and continually were aware of how easily any of them might be precipitated into ruin. Nor was this solicitude and feeling of commonality wholly restricted to those sharing the same occupation or even among only the permanent inhabitants of Montague. Farmer Joseph Christie was observed by neighbours "attending to and providing for an Indigent person named Wm. Glasford [a former teacher] who has for about six weeks past been extremely ill and in a critical position through sickness and little hope of his recovery".¹⁸ In March 1860 other neighbours observed that "Mrs. Buntin Widow of the Late Mr. Buntin is in a very indigent state and is burthened by a travelling Woman that put up for the night at her House was taken sick & before she could left was confined and still remain[s] a burthen upon Mrs. Buntin".¹⁹ Clearly, the

comparatively few instances of destitution and poverty that appeared between 1861 and 1871 were responded to with the "active sympathy" and relief of the community. They revealed the increasing stability of the rural economy, as a transition was made from wheat to mixed and dairy farming, a stability never far from subsistence agriculture which nevertheless kept Montague inhabitants ever mindful of the possibility of ruin, and sensitive to the plight of those who fell behind.

Between 1861 and 1881 Montague increasingly was the preserve of farmers, and although as high a proportion of young men sought careers in nonagricultural occupations, they would either have to move elsewhere to pursue them or eventually resign themselves to farming. Population decline meant that the ratio of land to farmers was increasing, and during this period the number of larger farms increased. The comparatively small number of servants in Montague was one indication of the lack of poverty in the township, and indeed the high proportions of masters and servants with the same religion or country of birth suggests that service was more a means of helping fellow inhabitants and giving practical experience to the aspiring late-adolescent who wished to become a farmer or housewife. That the majority of households with the finer houses did not have servants is further proof that the presence of servants was not an indicator of wealth, but rather of practical aid to mostly young persons. Using house construction in 1861 as a

barometer of wealth, Canadian-born, Methodist and Presbyterian heads of household were disproportionately prosperous while Irish-born Church of England and Roman Catholic headed households were least likely to be prosperous. But as the example of Peter Clark clearly shows, prosperity in Montague meant simply having a sturdy house in which to dwell, a large acreage of land and a large family to cultivate crops. Essentially, this was true across the township. The majority of farmers by the 1860s and 1870s had title to their land, were housed adequately, and with the aid of large albeit shrinking families and new technology were enlarging their holdings. But if natural disaster or an accident overtook the farmer just when his children were too young to assist him, to stave off ruin he received assistance or relief from the municipal coffers until he recovered. When some farmers suffered major disasters, and in northern Montague especially, this relief was not sufficient. Such instances were rare. They kept all inhabitants sensitive to the plight of neighbours, a clear indication that the majority was enjoying a similar slightly better than subsistence living, which combined with the emerging dairy economy and an overall declining population ensured that the quality of life would continue to improve for those who remained.

Notes

¹ William H. Smith, Canada: Past, Present and Future. Being a Historical, Geographical, Geological and Statistical Account of Canada West. 2 vols. (Toronto: T. Maclear, 1851-2), 2:317.

² Perth Courier (weekly newspaper), 2 October 1868, p. 2.

³ PAC RG 1 L1 Upper Canada Land Book S, Vol. 37, p. 200 and RG 1 L3, Upper Canada Land Petitions, Vol. 287, No. 17, p. qqqqq.

⁴ Smiths Falls Record News (weekly newspaper), 1941 clipping loaned by Marguerite Lucas of Montague, and Montague Land Registry Books at Lanark County Registry Office.

⁵ PAO RG 1, C-I-1, Land Branch Petitions, William James, Montague, Petition to Governor General Sir Charles Metcalfe, 10 May 1844; Correspondence of Anthony Leslie, Bathurst District, Crown Lands Agent, Perth, to Crown Lands Department, Toronto, 27 November 1857; and Montague Land Registry Books in Lanark County Registry Office.

⁶ Ibid., Simon Sexsmith, Montague, Petition to Hon. D.B. Papineau, Montreal, 19 January 1847.

⁷ Smith's Falls Review (weekly newspaper), 26 October 1865, p. 2.

⁸ Julian Gwyn, "The Irish in Eastern Ontario: The Social Structure of Huntley Township in Carleton County, 1851-1871", in Exploring Our Heritage: The Ottawa Valley Experience/ A la découverte de notre patrimoine: la vallée des Outaouais (Toronto: Ontario Heritage Foundation, 1980), p. 13.

⁹ Alison Prentice, The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1977), pp. 107-8.

¹⁰ Ontario Agricultural Commission, Report, 5 vols. (Toronto: C. Blackett Robinson, 1881), 4:109.

¹¹ The acreage figures for 1870 and 1880 are taken from the printed census. The 1880 manuscript agricultural census returns for Ontario have been destroyed.

¹² Ontario Agricultural Commission, Op. Cit., 4:109.

¹³Mirickville Chronicle, 25 January 1861, p. 2.;
Montague Township Records, John Mezaks (Archives of Ontario)
to Clarence Fitzgerald, n.d. (c. 1975); Smith's Falls News,
13 September 1878, p. 3; Perth Courier, 19 March 1886, p. 3;
and Canada Post Office Department, Table of Post Offices in
Canada, July 1 1872 (Ottawa: L.B. Taylor, 1872), p. 78.

¹⁴Ontario Agricultural Commission, Op. Cit., 4:109.

¹⁵Montague Township Records, petition from George
Dormer et al. to township council, 26 May 1862.

¹⁶Ibid., petition of Henery Moffet et al. to township
council, 25 April 1865.

¹⁷Ibid., petitions to township council concerning the
indigence of the Thomas Reid family, dated 4 July 1857, 23
April 1863, 17 December 1864, 28 April 1865, 2 March 1866, 29
June 1870.

¹⁸Ibid., petition of William H. Kerfoot et al. to
township council, 1868.

¹⁹Ibid., petition of John Telford et al. to township
council, 3 March 1860.

Literacy and Access to Education

The major improvement in Montague during the 1860s and 1870s was the achievement of universal school attendance by the proponents of formal education in the township. Resistance to new programmes of building schools, to the financing of such programmes and to the increasing availability of education for the children of every member of the community all but disappeared by the mid 1860s. Illiteracy, already on the decline, increasingly was to be found in a shrinking proportion of the population, predominantly elderly by 1881. Although the proportion of illiterates in the population as late as 1871 compared poorly with ratios elsewhere in rural Ontario, the dramatic increase in proportion of children attending school after 1871 indicated how sweeping was the impact of the 1871 provincial education Act which stipulated that all children have the right to a certain basic education. Nevertheless, despite the progress of local education between 1861 and 1881, the continuing proportion of illiterates within Montague's rural economy continued to exercise some influence. It is clear that a significant proportion of children were kept in school for the absolute minimum of time allowed by law, and in fact some children who by law should have been in school did not attend. The improving quality of schoolhouses erected,

the increasing number of schools, and most importantly the increasing proportion of students among those of school age all pointed to the inevitable and virtual disappearance of illiteracy in Montague by 1900.

The use of census statistics to measure literacy in Upper Canada between mid-century and 1871 has sparked intense debate in recent Canadian historiography. Harvey Graff argues that the census offers an easier and far more accurate method of ascertaining literacy than relying upon more traditional sources such as parish registers:¹

One is dealing with the entire adult population of an area, be it rural or urban, not with a sample. . . . The census enables the researcher to conduct his study of selected groups, ethnic, religious, occupational, etc., with a control body of the rest of the group and population. This has the limitation of one geographical place, but records exist for all areas in the United States and Canada, so one is free to make selections of geographical areas. Thirdly, the census gives a far greater amount of direct information on occupation, sex, age, marital status, religion, place of birth, number of children, their school attendance, type of dwelling, amounts of property owned, and place of residence, reducing the amount of record linkage needed.

Graff admits that the 1861 census with its column headed with the phrase "Persons over 20, who cannot read or write" contains a certain ambiguity, as to whether it defines an either/or situation or would only include an inability to carry out both operations. Despite this, claims Gagan, even the 1861 census, imperfectly suited to the demands of the historian though it may be, serves to give a measure of a minimum standard of literacy.²

Graff's advocacy of the census to measure literacy subsequently has come under attack from Herbert Mays and H.F. Manzl. At best, they argue, traditional historiographic methods should be brought to bear to test the validity and reliability of census returns as with any other source. When Mays and Manzl compare the returns of those illiterate in the census with signatures in literary records, they claim to discover a significant underenumeration of illiterates in the census returns for Peel County and Hamilton. Was the "cannot read or write" column in the 1861 census interpreted by the census enumerators to mean "cannot read or write" or "cannot read and/or write", they ask? Since rural householders did not have to fill out forms and append their signatures as did their urban counterparts, the historian is left to rely upon the entries of the enumerator alone. Unfortunately, continue Mays and Manzl, of the more than sixty columns on the 1861 census, only literacy and school attendance do not require a conscious effort on the part of the enumerator to create a historical record. If the literacy column contained a mark a man was illiterate, but if it did not, a man not presumed to be illiterate, was by definition, literate. Within the context of taking the 1861 rural census, argue Mays and Manzl, it might have been easy for enumerators to not give proper attention to making entries in the literacy column:³

In a rural census district only one man interpreted the meaning of a potentially ambiguous column on the schedule. If a mistake was made, it was often made consistently. In the case of the literacy columns (25M/26F), this could mean that the column was virtually ignored by an enumerator who was forced to move from one farm to another through one of the worst winters in more than a decade and to record as many as seventy different pieces of information for each household.

Implicitly, argue Mays and Manzl, the marks in the literacy columns were only placed there to record illiterates who always were in the minority, and hence a significant number of illiterates may not have been entered in the haste of taking the census.

In responding to the Mays and Manzl critique of the value of census returns in measuring literacy, Harvey Graff has refined his position. To leave the literacy column of the 1861 returns blank or empty to signify literacy was a statement as firm as the action of ticking the column to indicate illiteracy, Graff affirms, and was no less accurate than the data entered in the other columns.⁴ He deflects the Mays and Manzl claim that there was a significant underenumeration of illiterates in Peel County and Hamilton 1861 census returns when compared with signatures on contemporary documents, by observing that the ability to sign one's name was no guarantee of literacy. The ability to sign one's name, he notes, has generally been agreed to lie somewhere between the ability to read and the ability to write "and that some degree of fluency in reading

(which does not mean comprehension) may correspond to signing".⁵ Hence, the signatures on wills by which Mays and Manzl claim to have exposed the underenumeration in the 1861 census, is itself an inherently distorted basis upon which to determine literacy. By contrast, the census might allow discrimination to be made between readers and non-readers, whereas the literary sources could not. As for the alleged imprecision of the degree of illiteracy of the person whose name was ticked in the "cannot read or write" column of the 1861 census, Graff cites historians of literacy such as Stone, Webb and Schofield to argue that throughout English history one would commonly learn to read before learning to write.⁶

Those who constructed the census question, it would seem, were aware of how literacy was transmitted. They took this into account in placing the conjunction "or" in their definition of literacy and in ordering the words reading, then writing. Presumably, a person literate could read or he could read and write, depending on the length and breadth of his or her schooling and needs for these skills that his or her life demanded. An illiterate person was one who could not read.

The Mays and Manzl criticism, concludes Graff, did not apply to the rural census of 1861, while their endorsement of literary sources was wholly uncritical. The advantage of data in census returns is that it provides information not only for a sample of household heads, but for the whole of the population across Upper Canada.⁷

The data pertaining to illiteracy, and hence indirectly to literacy, in the 1861 and 1871 returns for Montague lends

credence to both sides of the debate over the value of the census in determining literacy. Only forty-two persons were listed as illiterate in the 1861 census, a mere 1.2% of the total township population, compared with 310 persons or 9.7% of the population who either could not read or could not read and write in 1871. Literacy statistics were not collected in the 1881 returns. Mays and Manz1 appear to be corroborated in their argument that enumerators did not pay particular attention to entering information in the literacy column in 1861, considering the scant forty-two illiterates listed in Montague. The seeming dramatic increase in number of illiterates from 1.2% to 9.7% of the population between 1861 and 1871 contradicts the population decline and ethnic constancy of Montague. Clearly, the 1861 enumerators failed to list most of the illiterates inhabiting the township. It can be quite safely assumed that the proportion of illiterates was decreasing as years passed, and hence if we can also assume that the number listed in 1871 is accurate, the number of illiterates in 1861 probably exceeded 10% of the population. Those listed as illiterates in 1871 provide striking evidence that Graff surmised correctly when he argued that those who devised the census, and enumerators as well, were aware of how literacy was transmitted. Of the 310 illiterates, 162 could neither read nor write, while 148 could not write. None were listed who only could not read. Although the Montague 1861

returns hardly provide the basis for so claiming, Graff, Mays and Manz1 appear not to have considered that the potential for inclusiveness in the rural census returns was high since enumerators themselves were from the sub-district and as often as not were aware of who was and was not literate within the community. In reconciling this point with the obviously incomplete literacy data in the 1861 returns for Montague, it seems probable that local enumerators virtually ignored the literacy column. Incomplete though the 1861 returns undoubtedly were, they nevertheless provide a sample sufficient for the sake of comparison with the 1871 census returns.

The decline of illiteracy among Montague's population between 1861 and 1871 is evident in the decreasing number of single and married illiterates, and the increasing number of widowed illiterates. As proportions of the illiterate population, these are expressed in Table 13. The significant increase in

Table 13. Relative Marital Status of Illiterates

Marital Status		Single	Married	Widowed
1861	Cannot Read or Write	19.0%	76.2%	4.8%
1871	Cannot Write	16.8%	70.9%	12.2%
1871	Cannot Read & Cannot Write	16.7%	73.5%	9.9%
1871	Cannot Read and/or Cannot Write	16.9%	72.1%	11.0%

the proportion of widowed illiterates by 1871 clearly reflected the aging of many who had been married ten years earlier.

Although the undramatic decline in proportion of married and single illiterates suggests that a significant proportion of illiterates remained in local society, the lack of literacy statistics in returns from 1881 onward prevents any analysis of how quickly and how thoroughly illiteracy was disrooted.

Female illiterates outnumbered males among the general population, although in one respect the proportion of males to females was relatively even. In the 1861 sample of illiterates, 47.6% were male while 52.4% were female. Of those who neither could read nor write in 1871, 50.6% were male and 49.4% were female. But among the 148 inhabitants of Montague in 1871 who could read, but not write, only 35.8% were male compared with 64.2% who were female. This discrepancy was due to there being thrice as many widowed females and twice as many married females to males who could not write, while there were comparable numbers of single males and females. Clearly, the ratio of wholly illiterate males and females was relatively even, but among the older inhabitants, women comprised two-thirds of the partially illiterate. The even ratio of partially illiterate single males and females in 1871 speaks well of the improving educational opportunities for women in the 1850s and 1860s.

The decline of illiteracy and increasing emphasis on education, while part of a province-wide phenomenon, developed in part because illiteracy was undoubtedly a social stigma. In defending census returns from detractors who contend that

social stigma might effectively counteract the accuracy of illiteracy returns, Harvey Graff points to research showing that well-to-do and rich residents of Elgin County admitted to illiteracy, and that illiterates along with literate people inhabited the finer stone and brick houses.⁸ But although Graff is perhaps justified in his defense of census returns as accurately reflecting literacy, the fact that some wealthy Ontario inhabitants happened to be illiterates says little about social stigma. Nor does Graff's quote from R.K. Webb, stating that a good many people in early Victorian England admitted to illiteracy, apply to Ontario, where widespread popular education had a headstart of more than fifty years over England. It is difficult to imagine how the illiterate household head in Montague could have helped but feel some degree of stigma in the 1860s and 1870s in admitting an inability to sign his name when innumerable petitions were circulated for the opening of taverns, the closing of taverns, the building of schools, asking relief for indigent neighbours, and most importantly the improvement of local roads. Even as early as 1852, when the inhabitants of School Section No. 13 in northern Montague complained about teacher John Knowlin "not being qualifyd to teach our children [so] that we have by that means suffered a loss that cannot be made up",⁹ evidence of concern for proper education (in which reading and writing were the more prominent of the three Rs) is proof of the value that was

placed on literacy, and the disadvantage at which the illiterate felt himself to be.

The most striking evidence that illiteracy was a social stigma is the high proportion of illiterates who were married to one another. In the 1861 sample, 62.5% of all married illiterates were married to one another. In the 1871 returns, 22.9% of those married who could not write were married to one another, 42.0% of those married who could neither read nor write were married to one another, while of the partially illiterate and totally illiterate married inhabitants of Montague, fully 54.5% were married to one another. Considering that those who could not read and those who could neither read nor write together accounted for less than ten percent of the overall population, and less than a quarter of the married population, the intermarriage among illiterates is truly amazing. How can this be explained other than as evidence of social stigma? It clearly reveals that illiterates themselves largely perceived their lack of literacy as a count against their eligibility for marrying a literate person, and it is probable that it also reflects actual rejection of proposals of marriage made to literate people. Not surprisingly, those illiterates who did marry non-illiterates were predominantly women, although the female lead dropped from 75% to 64.7% between 1861 and 1871. This further reveals the stigma attached to illiteracy. Whereas literate men were not as unwilling to marry women who could not

read or write, literate women were not willing to choose an illiterate or semi-literate mate. The moderate declines in the proportion of illiterates married to one another and the female/male ratio of illiterates married to literate inhabitants suggests that illiterates remained only as a dwindling proportion of the population well past 1880. Their decline reflected the inevitable triumph of social stigma against illiteracy.

Illiterates were largely of Irish birth, Roman Catholic in religion, overwhelmingly of Irish ancestry and mainly farmers by occupation. The shifting ratios of illiterates in the total population by birthplace and religion are presented in Tables 14 and 15 respectively. The shift of illiterates

Table 14.

Illiterates by Birthplace

	1861		1871	
Country	No.	%	No.	%
Ireland	32	76.2	181	58.6
Scotland	1	2.4	6	1.9
England	--		4	1.3
Canada	9	21.4	113	36.6
United States	--		5	1.6

from Irish-born to Canadian-born between 1861 and 1871 did not detract from the fact that in the latter year 82.7% of all illiterates were of Irish ethnic origin. Irish-born Roman Catholics were over-represented among illiterates, as to a

minor degree were inhabitants of European and American ancestry, while Canadian-born were severely under-represented, as to a lesser degree were English and Scottish-born, Methodists and Presbyterians. A similar breakdown applies to illiterate household heads. Of the eighteen illiterates with an occupation in 1861, fifteen (83.3%) were farmers while the remaining three

Table 15.

Illiterates by Religion

Denomination	1861		1871	
	No.	%	No.	%
Church of England	12	28.6	104	33.7
Church of Rome	22	52.4	141	45.6
Presbyterian	2	4.8	15	4.9
Methodist	6	14.3	46	14.9
Baptist	--		3	1.0

were servants. Of the 57 inhabitants with an occupation who could not write in 1871, 44 (77.2%) were farmers, seven (12.3%) were labourers, and four (7%) were artisans. Of the 83 who neither could read nor write and had an occupation in 1871, 61 (73.5%) were farmers, thirteen (15.7%) were labourers, and four (4.8%) apiece were artisans and Amerindian hunters. On the whole, farmers and labourers were slightly over-represented among illiterates, while artisans and tradesmen were under-represented. Between 1861 and 1871 it is clear that although illiterates tended to be of Irish ancestry, Catholic religion

and farmers by occupation they comprised a steadily diminishing fraction of the population, and by 1871 represented a mere 4.4% of those listed with an occupation.

* * *

The decline of illiteracy in the 1860s and 1870s was complemented by a new emphasis on formal education in the local community. Although schools had existed in Montague since 1799, and by 1850 school buildings had been erected across the face of the township, before 1860 most children did not attend school, and those who attended did so sporadically. This was in part due to the rural economy, in which children were required to provide labour in the struggle to purchase the land cultivated and to aid in wresting a living from the thin soil. Even after compulsory attendance for those between ages seven and twelve was introduced in 1871, the attendance of many boys remained sporadic. But the system of education that prevailed before the mid 1860s itself provided little inducement for parents to send children to school. Teachers were scarce and often poorly qualified, as in the case of John Nowlan noted earlier, and school-houses were often rickety, small structures. In February of 1849, the Bathurst District Superintendent of Schools reported three new log schools erected, but also found five of Montague's schools closed, ostensibly because of the

wintry season.¹⁰ One teacher, William Bradley, described the poor quality of one school:¹¹

In 1868 and 1869 I taught in Section Number Fourteen, Montague, County of Lanark. In 1868 I was teaching in an old School House, where my head touched the ceiling, the Benches stood all around the Room and there was one double Desk at which all could write . . . In 1869 the new School House was finished, and was plastered and raised up well from the ground.

Superintendent Padfield complained in 1848 that schools often were comparatively deserted, having frequently not more than ten or twelve scholars in regular attendance - and in some instances not more than four or six little children just learning their letters, or reading words of one or two syllables.¹² Most children, once they reached an age at which they could perform chores, ceased to attend school to work at home. Since school attendance was not compulsory, and only those parents who sent children to school had to pay municipal education taxes as well as boarding the teacher around, it appeared economically sensible for many families to forego what for them seemed the luxury of education before 1860.

A spirit of reform entered local education in the late 1850s and 1860s. Larger stone, frame and log structures replaced the inadequate older schoolhouses, while teacher preparation standards were upgraded. The number of teachers increased, largely due to the number of women entering the profession at this time. The major spearhead of educational

reform was the adoption of the "Free School". Whereas previously, education had been available only to the children of those who could afford to pay an education tax, officials at Toronto promoted a system in which all the land occupiers of a school section would be taxed and education would be freely available to all children in the section, regardless of whether their parents were penniless squatters or prosperous. There was resistance to this from numerous landholders at first, and hence the "Free School" system was adopted individually by each section as its landholders variously accommodated themselves to the concept. Resentment towards the "Free School" concept was expressed in a January 1851 petition to Montague Township Council from six inhabitants of S.S. No. 3. They warned:¹³

that if any application is made to your Council for assessing this section for School Purposes we trust you will not grant the same inasmuch as nearly all Parties interested in the School are fully able to educate their children without taxing those that Derive no Benefit from the School and the Law makes ample Provision for the relief of the Poor if any in the Section there be.

By 1864, however, the Superintendent of Montague Schools could claim that nearly all of the township's seventeen schools had adopted the Free System.¹⁴

Free Schools, however, only provided an environment in which greater school attendance might occur; they did not make school attendance compulsory nor did they guarantee that

attendance would increase. Census statistics do not provide particularly accurate measures of school attendance. The census returns for 1851 and 1861, for example, indicate that the number of children attending school increased from 638 to 761. A report by the township superintendent of schools, Rev. Edward Morris, in 1856 indicated an average attendance of only 372, a figure half that reported in the 1851 and 1861 returns. Clearly, when census enumerators asked which children in a family were attending school, they were given and accepted the names of all children, regardless of whether they had attended a few days or were full-time students. The Morris report indicates that perhaps only half of those listed attending school in census returns attended on a full-time basis.

Between 1861 and 1881 school attendance measurably improved, partly because of the Free School concept that had been introduced, and also because of the stipulation in the 1871 provincial education Act which required all children between the ages of seven and twelve years to attend school. The proportion of children between the ages of five and eighteen years attending school are presented in Table 16. The numbers between the ages of seven and twelve years are presented in Table 17. Clearly, the proportion of males and females attending school evened between 1861 and 1881, but this reflected an evening sexual ratio among the age group as opposed to an increasing opportunity for girls to attend school. Indeed, by

Table 16. School Attendance of 5-18 Age Group

	1861		1871		1881	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Males	404	54.3	383	51.6	334	50.8
Females	340	45.7	360	48.5	323	49.2
Total as % of Age Group	744	53.9	743	60.2	657	69.0

1861 girls already comprised a proportion of the school population in keeping with their proportion of the population within both the five to eighteen and seven to twelve age groups. Although these statistics do not allow a precise definition of school attendance, it is equally clear that the proportion attending school in both age groups progressively increased. The 1871 Education Act had indeed largely achieved its purpose, for only five percent of those between seven and twelve years of age were not attending school by 1881. The crucial change in local attitude, however, had taken place during the mid 1860s. Whereas the local superintendent had remarked in 1863

Table 17. School Attendance of 7-12 Age Group

	1861		1871		1881	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Males	268	56.9	229	49.5	185	50.3
Females	203	43.1	234	50.5	183	49.7
Total as % of Age Group	471	79.8	463	83.1	368	94.8

"The cause of non-attendance is partly parental neglect and partly poverty", by 1867 his successor noted that, "The parents have shown an improved interest in their children receiving an education".¹⁵

The increasing popularization of education was in keeping with the declining number of illiterates in Montague between 1861 and 1881. The predominance of female illiterates among married and widowed contrasted with smaller and even proportions of single male and female illiterates. Illiterates were declining in number because of the increasing social stigma attached to illiteracy. This is apparent in the high proportion of illiterates married to one another, even though all illiterates comprised a fraction of the township's population. Primarily of Irish ancestry, Catholic religion and farmers by occupation, by 1871 illiterates had declined to less than five percent of the population listed with an occupation. As their numbers decreased a new emphasis was placed on providing universal education to the children of all township inhabitants. A majority of school-age children had been kept home from school as late as the 1850s either because their parents could not afford to pay the education assessment or because the children were needed within the rural economy to help pay for the farms on which many families yet were squatting. A new spirit of reform in education, emanating from Toronto, and responded to locally, brought better school-houses, higher standards of

teaching, and wider access to education into Montague by the early 1860s. The proportion of children attending school increased, as the number of Free Schools predominated, but only after compulsory attendance was introduced in 1871 was there almost complete enrolment of those between the ages of seven and twelve years. As Montague school superintendent, Rev. Solomon Mylne, quietly remarked in 1865, "Progress in education has been observed".¹⁶

Notes

¹Harvey J. Graff, "Literacy and Social Structure in Elgin County, Canada West: 1861" in Histoire sociale-Social History VI (1973), p. 28.

²Ibid., p. 29.

³Herbert J. Mays and H.F. Manzl, "Literacy and Social Structure in Nineteenth Century Ontario: An Exercise in Historical Methodology" in Histoire sociale-Social History VII, (1974), pp. 333-5, 340, 344-5.

⁴Harvey J. Graff, "What the 1861 Census can tell us About Literacy: A Reply" in Histoire sociale-Social History VIII (1975), p. 342.

⁵Ibid., pp. 343-4.

⁶Ibid., pp. 338-9.

⁷Ibid., pp. 341, 348-9.

⁸Graff, "Literacy and Social Structure", Op. Cit., pp. 29-30, 39.

⁹Montague Township Records, petition from Asa Webster et al to township council, 2 September 1852.

¹⁰Report of Rev. James Padfield, Superintendent of Education for the District of Bathurst, to Bathurst District Council, February 1849, cited in Lloyd C. Sutherland, Yearning For Learning: The Story of Education in Lanark County, 1804-1867. (Smiths Falls: Performance Printing Ltd., 1980), p. 150.

¹¹John George Hodgins, Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada . . . 1791 to . . . 1876, 28 vols. (Toronto: L.K. Cameron, 1894-1910), 28:280.

¹²Queen's University Special Collections L F1028 P2 Rev. James Padfield, Superintendent of Common Schools, Bathurst District, Education Report 1848, p. 1.

¹³Montague Township Records, petition of John Copeland et al to township council, 15 January 1851.

¹⁴Canada. Sessional Papers, 28 Victoria, (No. 5), Local Superintendents' Reports, cited in Sutherland, Op. Cit., p. 264.

¹⁵ Report of Rev. Robert Brewster, Superintendent of Common Schools, Montague Township, 1863 Report, and Report of Rev. Solomon Mylne, Superintendent of Common Schools, Montague, 1867 Report, cited in Sutherland, Op. Cit., pp. 257, 282.

¹⁶ Report of Rev. Solomon Mylne, Superintendent of Common Schools, Montague Township, 1865 Report, cited in Sutherland, Op. Cit., p. 264.

Religion and Ethnicity

The persistence of the Irish and the predominance of Methodist and Church of England adherents in Montague between 1861 and 1881, in the face of continuous population decline from 1861 onward, together suggest the central importance of ethnicity and religion in analyzing the township's social structure. Elsewhere in this thesis, use is made of ethnicity and religion to compare average household size, to measure literacy, to compare quality of housing (and indirectly wealth) and the keeping of servants. From these areas of examination alone it is clear that the numerical persistence of the Irish and predominance of Church of England adherents cloaked the increasing number of Methodists, and disproportionate numbers of Methodists and Presbyterians who inhabited the finer houses and manifested relatively greater prosperity. Given the central importance of ethnicity and religion in analyzing Montague's social structure, these help to explain the transition that occurred in local society from the religious discord and ethnic prejudice that existed at mid-century to the relative tolerance of the early 1880s. Within a few decades the Irish had ceased to be perceived as a drain on the community as a new generation of Canadian-born inhabitants both of Irish and non-Irish origin

became adults. The new concord emerged from the coincidence of increasing land ownership by Irish household heads, the declining fertility of soil, the low price of land, and the decreasing population that allowed an increasing ratio of land to population. The dropping proportions of inhabitants born outside Canada marked the decline of ethnic tension, and to a lesser extent, of religious discord in Montague by 1881.

The importance of ethnicity and religion in analyzing the social structure of a community can not be too strongly emphasized. It is perhaps more appropriate to say that census returns, containing as they do information about the country of birth, the ethnic origin and religion of each member of an entire population, possess importance for insights in ethnic history which can not be too strongly emphasized. At least one historian who has based his analysis of a community's social structure on manuscript census data, has downgraded the value of ethnicity as a key to explain differences within a society. Apart from a few fundamentalist religious sects or those wishing to establish a special communal way of life, argues Michael Katz in his study of Hamilton between 1851 and 1861, there is no evidence that the various ethnic groups (and by implication religious groups) coming together in mid-nineteenth century Upper Canada were indeed bent on other things than participating in the North American scramble for economic success.¹ Katz nevertheless claims that mid-nineteenth century

Hamilton contained a population in which ethnic groups had differential access to either economic position or political power in a way that can not be explained through the operation of forms of stratification other than ethnic stratification.² In other words, ethnicity and religion may be used as an ancillary means or perhaps last resort to analyze social structure. But ethnicity and religion do in fact provide a unique and substantial means of access to understanding the situation of every individual member of a society. The only other statistics given for each individual are age, marital status and sex. Hence ethnicity and religion statistics in the census returns alone permit a context in which to situate individuals within households, within families as well as within neighbourhoods and communities. Of equal importance, they permit the historian to analyze changing proportions and intermarriage among members of denominations and ethnic groups within municipalities and indeed to test whether ethnicity and religion were factors in the social status and mobility of families and individuals. Paradoxically, despite his minimizing of its value to social history, Katz extensively employs ethnicity to demonstrate a variety of phenomena ranging from the persistence of Irish inhabitants at the bottom of Hamilton's social pyramid to the maintenance of a rigid class system along ethnic lines.³ That their detractors rely upon ethnicity and religion for substantial portions of a community's social structure is striking evidence of their importance.

At mid-century it is clear that both ethnic and religious tensions were at play in Montague. Instances of ethnic prejudice against the Irish have been noted earlier in the introductory chapter. The evidence of religious prejudice in literary sources is largely more indirect. Numerous articles from Smith's Falls and Merrickville newspapers in the 1850s and 1860s were explicitly anti-Catholic in tone, and ranged from detailed accounts of missionary society attempts to spread the Gospel to ignorant people who were in "subserviency to the yoke of Papal superstition"⁴, to editorials pontificating against local merchants engaged in "the retailing of idolatrous pictures".⁵ An 1851 letter to Egerton Ryerson in Toronto from the Methodist and Church of England trustees of School Section No. 16 in Montague reveals how strong Catholic/Protestant discord was at mid-century. The trustees complained that their current teacher:⁶

is neither qualified nor fit to teach in this Section as he can neither write nor speak a word of plain English, and moreover at the annual School Meeting when we opposed his being kept in the school, the opposite party like savages threatened to have the lives of all loyal people who dare oppose them and even beat one man, and had it not been that there was a justice of the peace in the house, they would certainly have done more harm, now sir if we are to be trampled upon in this manner by a mob of uncivilized Papists, It is high time that we would be separated from them. . . . at the annual meeting three of the most violent of the Papists called on the Trustees, and ordered them, not to allow any preaching being Protestant to be allowed in the school-house or they would prosecute them for so doing and If that failed they would pull down the house.

These were not mere idle threats. Within a couple of months the school near Numogate did indeed burn down, and afterward two new public schools were erected to separate Protestants and Roman Catholics in that school section. Such incidents reflected ethnic and landowner/squatter tensions in addition to religious discord that thrived at mid-century, but these declined with the passing years as squatting gave way to land ownership.

The religious composition of Montague changed significantly between 1861 and 1881. Within the context of population decline, as Table 18 illustrates, the Church of England remained the

Table 18. Religious Affiliation of General Population

Denomination	1861		1871		1881	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Church of England	1,316	38.5	1,095	34.5	942	35.1
Roman Catholic	750	22.0	724	22.8	527	19.6
Presbyterian	400	11.7	428	13.5	302	11.3
Methodist	892	26.1	845	26.6	848	31.6
Baptist	33	1.0	61	1.9	60	2.2
Other	23	0.7	20	0.6	4	0.1

denomination with the largest number of adherents within the township. This could not disguise the declining numbers of adherents in general and households headed by Church of England adherents. Similarly, the number of Roman Catholics in

Montague by 1881 had declined to seventy percent of the number present in 1861, although the decline as a proportion of the population was slightly less than for the Church of England population. The decline of Roman Catholic household heads was only to 78.5% of the 1861 number compared with the Church of England drop to 72.5%, as shown in Table 19. By contrast, the proportion of Presbyterians in the general population, and the number of households headed by Presbyterians

Table 19. Religious Affiliation by Household Head

Denomination	1861		1871		1881	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Church of England	207	39.3	175	34.9	150	33.5
Roman Catholic	107	20.3	104	20.7	84	18.8
Presbyterian	63	12.0	64	12.8	55	12.3
Methodist	135	25.6	143	28.5	145	32.4
Baptist	5	1.0	10	2.0	12	2.7
Other	10	1.9	6	1.2	2	0.5

remained stable. The proportion of Methodists in the general population and the number of Methodist household heads dramatically increased from one quarter to a third of the population. Although the number of Baptists also increased, they remained an insignificant percentage of the population. Similarly, the decline of people in the "Other" category, composed largely of Universalists, is not particularly significant.

The major change in the religious composition of Montague between 1861 and 1881 was the Church of England's decline to one third of the population at the same time that Methodists increased from 26.1% to 31.6% of the population. As a trend therefore, the fundamentalist denominations either proportionally increased or remained stable while the older established churches and adherents of obscure sects and creeds disproportionately declined in number.

The changing religious composition of Montague between 1861 and 1881 can be explained in part by the population decline and the decreasing number of transients that yet continued to enter the township. But given both the higher rate of fertility among Church of England members and Roman Catholics as well as the under-representation of Church of England members and Methodists among the transient population, the declining number of Church of England adherents and the increasing proportion of Methodists appears paradoxical. Perhaps because Methodists and Presbyterians were over-represented among those inhabiting the finer houses, there was more reason for their moderate-sized families to remain in Montague, whereas larger Roman Catholic and Church of England families in their smaller log houses increasingly found greater compulsion to look for opportunity elsewhere. This seems the more likely reason for Church of England and Roman Catholic decline, considering the greater decrease of fertility among Methodists and Presbyterians that

has been noted in an earlier chapter. Although there was a dramatic increase of Methodists as a proportion of Montague's population between 1861 and 1881, the number of Methodists actually declined, and the number of households headed by Methodists increased only by ten. Hence, the shifting religious composition of the township can be explained by members of the Church of England and Roman Catholics tending to leave while Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists did not.

Households inhabited by people who all did not have the same religion became increasingly rare in Montague between 1861 and 1881. Those households in which inhabitants were all of the same religion increased from 80.3% to 87.3% of all households. A comparison of the numbers of households containing inhabitants with the same religion or with a variety of religious affiliations is made in Table 20, however one must keep in mind

Table 20a. Religious Composition of Households

	1861					
	Church of England	Roman Catholic	Presby- terian	Methodist	Baptist	Other
Church of England	171	18	17	37	1	1
Roman Catholic	18	98	6	11	1	2
Presby- terian	17	6	48	20	1	--
Methodist	37	11	20	105	4	10
Baptist	1	1	1	4	1	1
Other	1	2	--	10	1	--

Table 20b.

1871

	Church of England	Roman Catholic	Presby- terian	Methodist	Baptist	Other
Church of England	155	8	13	22	1	1
Roman Catholic	8	101	5	3	--	--
Presby- terian	13	5	49	14	1	--
Methodist	22	3	14	129	2	2
Baptist	1	--	1	2	7	2
Other	1	--	--	2	2	3

that some households possessed inhabitants of three or more different religious backgrounds and that these have been incorporated within a table capable only of showing the likelihood of members of one religion inhabiting the same household as those of another religion. Roman Catholics consistently maintained the highest proportion of households in which only

Table 20c.

1881

	Church of England	Roman Catholic	Presby- terian	Methodist	Baptist	Other
Church of England	133	5	11	23	1	1
Roman Catholic	5	78	3	2	1	--
Presby- terian	11	3	38	9	2	--
Methodist	23	2	9	132	4	1
Baptist	1	1	2	4	10	1
Other	1	--	--	1	1	--

one religion was present. Consistently, the proportion of Roman Catholic, Church of England, Methodist and Baptist households in which only one religion was present increased. Only the proportion of households in which Presbyterians alone resided dropped from 90.6% to 69.1% of those headed by Presbyterians between 1861 and 1881. Why Presbyterians increasingly allowed members of other denominations to reside in their households is not yet possible to explain. Church of England members and Methodists consistently remained the largest number of those inhabiting the same household, followed by Methodists and Presbyterians, Church of England members and Presbyterians, and then Church of England members and Roman Catholics. Although the proportions of all these mixed households decreased, the most dramatic decline in mixed households was that inhabited by Church of England adherents and Roman Catholics.

The declining proportion of households containing inhabitants of more than one religion reflected the declining number of mixed marriages. As Table 21 illustrates, members of the Church of England and Methodists who married comprised the largest proportion of mixed marriages between 1861 and 1881, followed in turn by Methodists marrying Presbyterians, Church of England members marrying Presbyterians, and Church of England members marrying Roman Catholics. It is surely significant that Roman Catholics tended principally to marry members of the

Table 21a. Mixed Marriages by Religion

	1861		1871		1881	
Denominations Marrying	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Church of England & Other	22	29.0	23	29.9	21	31.8
Roman Catholics & Other	6	7.9	11	14.3	7	10.6
Presbyterians & Other	9	11.8	15	19.5	15	22.7
Methodists & Other	29	38.2	20	26.0	20	30.3
Baptists & Other	3	4.0	4	5.2	2	3.0
"Others" & Other	7	9.2	4	5.2	1	1.5
Total	76	100.1	77	100.1	66	99.9

Church of England, when they married outside their own denomination, while Church of England members married as extensively among Methodists and Presbyterians. Equally significant is the majority of inhabitants listed in the "Other"

Table 21b. Mixed Marriages by Religion

	1861		1871		1881	
Denominations Marrying	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Church of England & Methodists	15	19.7	12	15.6	11	16.7
Church of England & Roman Catholics	6	7.9	6	7.8	3	4.6
Methodists & Presbyterians	8	10.5	6	7.8	6	9.1
Church of England & Presbyterians	--	---	4	5.2	7	10.6
Methodists & "Others"	6	7.9	1	1.3	1	1.5
Total	35	46.0	29	37.7	28	42.4

category - largely Universalists - who were married to Methodists in 1861, and their subsequent decline thereafter. Clearly, there were limitations to which churches Roman Catholics would turn when marrying outside their own church, while only Methodists and the occasional Baptist could contemplate the risk of contamination in marrying adherents of obscure creeds such as Universalists. The proportion of married people who chose a partner other than of their own denomination and did not convert to his or her faith slightly increased from 7.4% to 8.7% between 1861 and 1881. If it may be assumed that the husbands and wives listed in census returns were the total number or a majority of those marriages in which partners were of different denominations, then their proportion of the total married population was truly minimal. Nevertheless, at a time when denominationalism was rampant and each church was jealous of its numbers of adherents, mixed marriages can hardly have been welcomed. If indeed all wives and husbands of different religions were listed in the census, and few or none converted to the partners' faith, the maintenance of one's religion after marrying a person of a different denomination is evidence of the religious differences that persisted between 1861 and 1881.

Mixed marriages eventually forced couples to decide upon the denomination in which their children would be baptized and instructed. Practice varied during the two decades in question. Of the 35 mixed marriages for which children were

listed in 1861, 71.4% of the children had the same religion as that of the mother. In 1871, 68.8% of the children were listed with their father's religion, while by 1881 the faith of 69.7% of children was the same as their mothers'. In only one or two households in each census were children divided between the religion of the parents. No rigid patterns on a strictly religious perspective appear. There was a tendency for the children of Church of England/Roman Catholic parents to be raised in the Church of England, while the children of Presbyterian and Methodist couples tended to be raised as Presbyterians. When a Methodist or Baptist married a member of an obscure sect, often Universalist, their children usually were raised as Methodists or Baptists. Apart from these trends, there was no particular pattern of religious adherence for children of Methodist/Church of England, and Presbyterian/Church of England parents... What is striking, and refutes popular mythology at the same time, is that Roman Catholics consistently had the lowest proportion of children following their faith in a mixed marriage. This corresponds with the consistently high proportion of Roman Catholics who did not marry outside their faith, indirectly implying that when Protestant and Catholic married, effective pressure was placed upon having children raised as Protestants.

The religious differences that continued in Montague were within the context of an overwhelming proportion of the population that was of Irish ancestry. As Table 22 illustrates, the number of inhabitants actually born in Ireland had decreased

Table 22a. Religion by Birthplace of General Population

1861

	Total	England	Ireland	Canada	Scotland	U.S.A.
Church of England	1,316	27	347	933	6	2
Roman Catholic	750	2	214	526	2	5
Presbyterian	399	5	42	268	79	5
Methodist	892	14	95	740	10	32
Baptist	33	0	0	24	6	3
Other	23	0	0	22	0	1

Table 22b.

1871

	Total	England	Ireland	Canada	Scotland	U.S.A.
Church of England	1,095	8	241	841	3	1
Roman Catholic	724	2	174	532	0	14
Presbyterian	428	3	32	333	56	4
Methodist	845	9	63	732	23	18
Baptist	61	1	0	47	9	4
Other	20	0	1	17	0	2

to 20.4% of the total population by 1861, and twenty years later only 12% could claim Irish birth. The remaining inhabitants

Table 22c.

1881

	Total	England	Ireland	Canada	Scotland	U.S.A.
Church of England	942	4	138	797	1	1
Roman Catholic	527	1	101	423	0	1
Presbyterian	302	2	14	255	26	2
Methodist	848	3	69	759	5	11
Baptist	60	1	1	48	7	3
Other	4	0	0	3	0	1

of Irish birth were overwhelmingly members of the Church of England and Roman Catholics. The disproportionately small number and percentage of Methodists of Irish birth in contrast with sixty percent who claimed Irish ancestry as is shown in Table 23, is one indication that the Methodist population of Montague generally arrived earlier in the township than did Church of England and Roman Catholic inhabitants. The ethnic origin statistics presented in Table 23 clearly show that overwhelmingly Roman Catholics, Methodists and members of the Church of England were of Irish origin. It did not matter that the Methodists and members of the Church of England were largely Ulster men while Roman Catholics came from the southern portion of Ireland; they all considered themselves to be of Irish ancestry, and that as such they were indeed a majority in Montague from mid-century onwards. Similarly, Presbyterians and Baptists were largely of Scottish origin. While small but

Table 23a. Religion by Ethnic Origin of Population

	1871					
	Total	Irish	Scottish	English	American	European
Church of England	1,095	981	17	97	0	0
Roman Catholic	724	647	0	8	0	52
Presbyterian	428	143	263	16	1	5
Methodist	844	493	126	166	0	59
Baptist	61	1	37	13	0	0
Other	20	2	13	5	0	0

significant proportions of Presbyterians were of Irish origin, and of Methodists were of English and Scottish origin, less than nine percent of Church of England members claimed to be of English origin. As late as 1881, 61.1% of Methodists, 90.7% of Church of England adherents and 96.2% of Roman Catholics claimed to be of Irish origin.

Table 23b.

1881

	Total	Irish	Scottish	English	American	European
Church of England	942	854	22	62	0	4
Roman Catholic	527	507	0	0	0	11
Presbyterian	302	87	195	13	0	7
Methodist	848	518	60	139	28	64
Baptist	60	14	34	12	0	0
Other	4	4	0	0	0	0

Table 24a. Country of Birth of General Population

Country of Birth	1861		1871		1881	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Canada	2,514	73.6	2,509	78.7	2,285	85.2
Ireland	698	20.4	511	16.0	323	12.0
Scotland	103	3.0	91	2.9	39	1.5
England	48	1.4	23	0.7	11	0.4
Europe/U.S.A.	50	1.5	52	1.6	21	0.8
Other	1	0.0	1	0.0	1	0.0

The continuing perception of ~~itself~~ as a predominantly Irish community is possibly due in large part to the higher proportion of household heads amid the dwindling percentage of the population that originally came from Ireland. As Table 24 illustrates, 53.3% of all household heads in 1861 were born in Ireland compared with only 20.4% of the overall population. Although by 1881 only 30.1% of household heads compared with 12%

Table 24b. Country of Birth of Household Heads

Country of Birth	1861		1871		1881	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Canada	179	34.0	231	45.8	282	62.9
Ireland	281	53.3	219	43.5	135	30.1
Scotland	39	7.4	35	6.9	21	4.7
England	16	3.0	11	2.2	5	1.1
Europe/U.S.A.	12	2.3	8	1.6	5	1.1

Table 25a. Ethnic Origin of General Population

	1871		1881	
	No.	%	No.	%
Irish	2,267	71.1	1,984	73.9
Scottish	456	14.3	311	11.6
English	318	10.0	226	8.4
European	117	3.7	86	3.2
Amerindian	17	0.5	---	---
American	1	0.0	28	1.0
Canadian	---	---	39	1.5
Unknown	10	0.3	9	0.3

of the overall population were born in Ireland, their impact must have been considerable compared to the less than 6% combined

Table 25b. Ethnic Origin of Household Heads

	1871		1881	
	No.	%	No.	%
Irish	343	68.1	324	72.3
Scottish	81	16.1	54	12.1
English	57	11.3	42	9.4
European	18	3.6	16	3.6
Amerindian	4	0.8	--	---
American	---	---	5	1.1
Canadian	---	---	6	1.3
Unknown	1	0.2	1	0.2

total of household heads born in England and Scotland. The passing of one generation could by no means affect, much less obliterate, the local Irish vocabulary, and there were Roman Catholic priests from Ireland and strong local Orange lodges to maintain an Irish mentality in Montague. Although there were no significant infusions of new Irish blood after the famine immigration of the late 1840s, the decreasing number of Montague inhabitants who could remember the old country is not particularly significant. They had brought with them the institutions and bias to re-create a facsimile of life as they preferred to remember it, within which to raise new generations. This looking back to a heroic past is indicated by a verse placed on an Orange banner made in Montague about 1860:⁷

Our good british laws they still merit applause
Since blood purchased the refformation,
Our church did not shine till that fortunate time
When William was king of the nation

Ye sons of Montague let your spirits now rise
And trust to the heart that won't waver
Victoria on the throne is a good Queen we own
But the memory of william for ever.

Only by 1881 were there a few household heads who considered themselves of Canadian origin rather than European origin when asked their origin by census enumerators. As Table 25 illustrates, the proportion of the general population and household heads that were of Irish origin increased in direct contrast to the decreasing proportions of those of all other ethnic groups. The Irish community in Montague was stabilizing.

The comparative persistence of the Irish population in Montague between 1861 and 1881 disguised the shifting religious composition within the township. Literary evidence alone suggests that the Irish/non-Irish and Catholic/Protestant divisions in local society at mid-century were beginning to wane by 1881, but this probably reflected the increasing acreages of land that a smaller population could share among its members as well as the virtual disappearance of squatters. It is true that the number of Church of England and Roman Catholic inhabitants declined by a disproportionately greater proportion than did Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists. Nevertheless, the numerical order of denominations did not change; Church of England adherents remained most numerous, followed by Methodists, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians and Baptists. As a general rule, the fundamentalist Protestant denominations either increased or remained stable as a proportion of Montague's population while adherents of the Churches of England and Rome substantially declined. This trend between 1861 and 1881 was due principally to the better economic situation of Methodists and Presbyterians who felt less compulsion to leave compared with Roman Catholics and Church of England members. As the population declined, so did the number of households containing people who all did not have the same religion. Only Presbyterians differed from the other major denominations in increasingly allowing inhabitants

of other faiths to reside in the households they themselves headed. Although the proportion of religiously mixed marriages increased; they remained a distinct minority in Montague. The children born to such marriages usually followed the religion of only one parent, despite the other parent retaining his or her original religion. In an era of population decline when religion was of primary importance within the community, it is perhaps significant that mixed marriages were tolerated, even as in the case of Methodists to Universalists in the 1860s, but one did not change one's faith. Formidable though the Irish reputation has been for intolerance, perhaps the lack of conflict and tolerance of mixed marriages in Montague between 1861 and 1881 must be viewed within the context of the Irish ancestry that a majority of the population shared, which bound them together in a front against the anti-Irish prejudice that greeted them when they originally arrived and was passed down in the local Irish consciousness. There were limits to this tolerance to be sure, as in the majority of children born to Church of England/Roman Catholic marriages being raised as Church of England members, and given the exuberance of local Orange lodges. Despite the changing religious proportions within its overall population, Montague remained a township that predominantly was Irish in origin and outlook.

Notes

¹Michael B. Katz, The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth Century City (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 109-10.

²Ibid., pp. 60-2.

³Ibid., pp. 138-9, 163-5, 173, 186, 208.

⁴Smith's Falls Review (weekly newspaper), 26 October 1865, p. 2.

⁵Mirickville Chronicle (weekly newspaper), 10 November 1860, p. 2.

⁶PAO RG 2 C-6-C, Incoming Correspondence, Box 10 cited in Lloyd C. Sutherland, Yearning for Learning: The Story of Education in Lanark County, 1804-1867 (Smiths Falls: Performance Printing Ltd., 1980), pp. 189-90.

⁷Orange Banner for Loyal Orange Lodge No. 512, Montague, in possession of author.

Conclusion

The manuscript census returns between 1861 and 1881 permit an overview of the changing social structure of Montague Township during the first twenty years of population decline when the Irish immigrant influx at mid-century had ceased. They allow a comparison to be made of one Irish Eastern Ontario community with others elsewhere in the province.

By examining the social structure of Montague Township through census returns, we have confirmed some stereotypes about late-nineteenth century Eastern Ontario and modified others. It has also led to a number of new conclusions which a study of the printed census returns alone would not have allowed. The traditional perception of stagnation is reflected in the declining population, the deferral of marriage, the declining fertility rate, the increasing number of widowed persons and the depletion of the soil. By contrast, the quality of housing improved, educational opportunity improved, illiteracy dwindled, fewer people were employed as servants, and the ratio of improved acres per man over age 20 doubled as agriculture began to mechanize. The decreasing population meant that more land was left to divide among fewer farmers, increasing the acreage owned by each. Those

who remained in Montague were disproportionately Methodist and Presbyterian, while disproportionate numbers of Roman Catholics and Church of England members departed. Among the declining population more inhabitants were living to increasingly advanced ages. The new stability was reflected in the predominance of the nuclear household prototype, although the small proportion of extended households was increasing. It is quite clear that the quantitative decline between 1861 and 1881 was balanced by a qualitative improvement in local living conditions.

The stability and quality of life for those who remained in Montague reflected the strengths and weaknesses of a farm economy that was beginning to mechanize. Agriculture increasingly was the occupation of the overwhelming majority both of household heads and all inhabitants listed with an occupation. Servitude as an occupation declined, an indicator of the increasing means of the majority who remained in Montague. Another indicator was the disappearance of shanties. The better off farmers tended to be Canadian-born Methodists and Presbyterians as opposed to Irish-born Roman Catholics and Church of England members. There was no rigid structure of inequality within local society. Indeed, all engaged in the family farm economy were probably aware that unfortunate events, particularly when one's children were young and unable to contribute to the family economy, could play havoc with

operating a productive farm. Hence relief was provided out of public funds to assist unfortunate neighbours. In the same vein increasing acceptance was given to the concept of providing the same opportunity to all children to attend school, regardless of their parents' income. The popularization of education in the 1860s contributed to the decline of illiteracy in Montague. Still, the social stigma attached to illiteracy was evident in the high proportions of illiterate and semi-literate people married to one another. The proportion of children allowed to attend school, however, did not approach universal enrolment until after the Education Act of 1871 was passed. Clearly, there was resistance to some aspects of the improving quality of life.

The major discovery in this thesis is the comparative persistence of the Irish in contrast with all other ethnic groups. There appears to have been increasing ethnic and religious tolerance with the passing of years, although the number of households containing people of varying religions declined. Religiously mixed marriages persisted throughout the period, with the children born to such couples following the religion of one parent. Although the religious composition of Montague shifted with the declining population, the predominance of the population of Irish ancestry was maintained. Given the decreasing quality of Montague's soil, the growth of industry in local towns and the major

metropolitan centres which attempted to entice farmers' sons and daughters, as well as the promotion of emigration schemes to the Western United States and Canada, the Irish persistence in Montague as late as 1881 was truly amazing. Situated as they often were on the poorest land, they had finally acquired their own property and to their great loss only reluctantly would a few be persuaded to leave for a future elsewhere.

The manipulation of manuscript census returns by means of the computer opens up new avenues for the historian. The findings of this thesis reveal significantly different aspects of Montague's social structure than does an intensive search through the wealth of literary sources for the township in the nineteenth century. The stigma of illiteracy, for example, reveals a facet of social structure that literary sources do not betray nor are capable of measuring. The marital patterns among illiterates, to be specific, suggest a different perception of Montague women than that allowed by literary sources alone. To judge from all available literary sources referring to Montague women at mid-century, they were beings who had no diversion, knew nothing but unceasing domestic chores, belonged to no friendly societies, did not vote, were accorded no recognition, did not sign petitions, for the most part did not own property, and were treated as less than livestock by local law courts. There is not one shred of literary evidence from Montague's past to contradict or

even modify this perception of woman's lot. The illiteracy statistics from the census returns, however, indicate that literate women were not willing to marry either illiterate or semi-literate men, whereas literate men were not hesitant to marry illiterate women. Clearly, notwithstanding their powerless position within local society, Montague women must have perceived certain advantage in marrying literate as opposed to illiterate men. Too much can be made of this, perhaps, and yet in keeping with the increasing number of female teachers, it is possible to perceive Montague women contributing to the new enthusiasm for public education as a means to furthering their own welfare in the long run. In essence, the insights into social structure that this thesis has afforded, suggest that historians in future must examine social structure according to census returns before turning to literary sources.

The limits of this study can only anticipate the increasing value of manuscript census data in analyzing social structure as population decline in Eastern Ontario continued after 1881. The dramatic growth of Smith's Falls during the 1880s, for example, which encouraged shantytowns to develop along the Montague border with the town, offers a new context within which to examine the shifting social structure of the township. Comparisons could be made with townships that have comparable percentages of inhabitants of Irish origin, but

in which successful village patterns developed in contrast with Montague's position as a wholly rural township on the border of towns such as Merrickville and Smith's Falls. The manuscript census returns of these adjacent towns must be combed to see whether or not the declining rural population was being attracted from afar or close to home. Were there other tensions in local Irish townships as urban centres began to develop locally? Already, the discussion of Montague's social structure between 1861 and 1881 points out how little we actually know about the Irish in Canadian society. An examination of surviving literary sources within the context of the insights provided by the manuscript census at the local community level, is thus transforming the writing of local history in Ontario. Especially affected is our knowledge of the changing social structure during the late nineteenth century. To this end, this study of Montague makes its modest contribution.

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Abstract

The Irish have been all but ignored in Canadian historiography, despite having been the largest ethnic group in mid-nineteenth century Ontario. They have still not profited from the new interest in community reconstitution and quantitative analysis, which has focused on Southwestern Ontario, where a minority of Irish immigrants settled.

In this thesis the social structure of Montague, a largely Irish township in Eastern Ontario between 1861 and 1881 is examined. This study is based on the computer analysis of manuscript decennial census returns, supplemented by birth and death registers. It compares the social structure of the Irish population in Montague with that of the smaller non-Irish community.

The principal observations can be briefly stated. Population declined between 1861 and 1881, while housing improved, educational opportunity expanded, illiteracy dwindled and poverty decreased. Methodists and Presbyterians remained in Montague as Anglicans and Roman Catholics departed. The nuclear household remained predominant while the average age of the population gradually increased along with the number of widowed people.

Agriculture increasingly was the occupation of most inhabitants as the number of artisans and labourers declined. Domestic servitude, as an occupation, practically disappeared. Canadian-born Methodists and Presbyterians possessed the better farms in contrast to Irish-born Anglicans and Roman Catholics. A family economy persisted across the township, and although the popularization of education mirrored the increasing stigma of illiteracy and increasing school attendance, both of these threatened the child labour on which the rural economy was based. Although the Irish tended to be located on the inferior soils in Montague, in contrast with all other ethnic groups, they alone proved to be persistent. Despite their powerless position in Montague society, rather than entertain the possibility of a prosperous future among strangers elsewhere, the Irish preferred to remain where they comprised a homogenous ethnic majority.