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ABSTRACT/RESUME

The way of life of the Red River Metis of Manitoba combined farming activities with great summer and fall bison hunts. In general, the Metis were less successful at farming than other settlers in the area. Commentators have explained this phenomenon by suggesting that the Metis were an indolent people, or alternatively that farming and hunting could not effectively be carried on simultaneously. The author concludes from his study that agriculture among the Metis should be viewed as an activity supplementary to the hunt.

Le mode de vie des Métis de la rivière Rouge au Manitoba combinait la culture et, en été et en automne, la grande chasse au bison. En général, les Métis ont moins bien réussi en agriculture que les autres habitants de la région. Certains commentateurs ont expliqué ce phénomène en suggérant que l'indolence des Métis était la cause de leur échec, ou encore que la chasse et la culture ne pouvaient pas être efficacement pratiquées simultanément. L'auteur conclut de son étude que l'agriculture parmi les Métis devrait être considérée comme une activité supplémentaire à celle de la chasse.
That the mixed-blood Rupertlanders who resided in the Red River Settlement - i.e., both those of Roman Catholic French-Canadian extraction who will hereafter be identified as the Metis and those who were largely of British extraction and who were identified by the census-takers of the 1850's as the Protestant Rupertlanders - were both part-time farmers and buffalo hunters is an accepted fact. The question, however, of why the Roman Catholic Metis residents of both the Grantown and the St. Boniface - St. Norbert area were substantially less committed to agriculture than their Protestant neighbours, is a matter of continuing debate.

For Alexander Ross, the Red River's first historian, the lack of agricultural progress of the Metis and the Canadians was to be explained primarily in terms of their care-free lifestyle and their indolent habits.

Canadians and half-breads (i.e., the Metis] are not, properly speaking, farmers, hunters, or fishermen; . . . They farm today, hunt to-morrow, and fish the next, without anything like a system; the spring of the year, when the [Europeans] ... are busy, getting their seed into the ground, the Canadian is often stuck up in the end of his canoe fishing gold-eyes, and the half-breed as often sauntering about idle with his gun in his hand . . . Harvest time shows no improvement on sowing time, for they are to he seen anywhere but in the neighbourhood of their proper work. In short, they do all things out of season, and in the multiplicity of their pursuits oftener lose the advantage of all than accomplish one:... While they are planning this and that little labour, the summer passes by, and winter threatens them often with their crops unsecured, their houses unmudded, and their cattle unprovided for. They live a ragged life, which habit has made familiar to them. Knowing no other condition, they are contented and happy in poverty .... (1856:193-195).

More recant commentators, however, have suggested that the nature of the two economies was such that neither could pre-dominate in the pre-1870 Red River. W.L. Morton, for example, has argued that each of the agricultural and the buffalo hunt economies acted as a "fatal check" upon the other.

Neither . . . could displace the other, and each depressed the price of the other's produce in a limited local market. From that fatal check of this internal equipoise of the hunting and farming economy, only the development of an export economy for agricultural produce could have freed Red River (1949:316).

According to the geographer, Barry Kaye, however, the two economies were more complimentary than competitive.

The buffalo herds were sometimes distant, the Sioux a trouble.
and as a result the spoils of the chase were in some years meagre. On such occasions, the farmer helped provide for the needs of the métis hunters whose agrarian interest rarely went beyond a garden patch, if, however, the returns from the settlement's stilled land were poor, the produce of the annual hunting expeditions had to suffice for most of the settlement's dietary needs (1967:156-157).

Were Ross's criticisms valid? Could the "ragged life" of the Métis be explained simply in terms of slothful habit, of doing "all things out of season"? Were they content in "their poverty"? And what of the differences between the various groups in degree of agricultural commitment, of agricultural development? Why did those differences exist? Did the two economies, as W.L. Morton contended, act as a "fatal check" upon the other, or did they, as Barry Kaye has suggested, play such a useful - perhaps essential - supplementary role that many residents deliberately retained the status quo?

Could differences in agricultural development within the Red River settlement be explained even in part by varying soil conditions? While the settlement's first newspaper repeatedly stressed the uniform excellence of the prevailing black loam "resting upon a sandy clay," it also noted that "up on the Assiniboine the loam becomes intermixed with sand.... affording... a soil more adapted for cultivation, especially of root crops, than the pure black loam." The Nor'Wester also reported that crops matured at varying rates in accordance with variations in soil structures.

Lower down, in the Indian Settlement - on the east bank of the river - wheat had fully ripened nearly four weeks since; and was all stacked before farmers in other parts of the Settlement had begun to do anything but cut a little barley. The settlers nearest the lake are usually thus fortunate, their land being of a light, sandy quality, which allows the grain to come to maturity quickly. Though sown later, the crops in this vicinity were reaped a week earlier than any above the Stone Fort.2

On another occasion, the voice of the Red River noted that "the lower half of the Settlement... is on the whole the most fertile."3 According to the geographer John Clarke, however, the Red River's Chermozemsoil type was "one of the most fertile... in the world", was "monotonously level" and any differences which existed due to different drainage conditions were extremely slight (1966:3). Differing soil conditions, therefore, would not affect the agricultural practices of the day nor could they explain any variations in agricultural development which existed within the settlement.

Without doubt, of the 6691 residents of the Red River settlement, the several hundred Kildonan Scots - "due to their inherited traditions and techniques" (ibid:155-56) - were the most committed to agriculture of 1856. Second to the Kildonan Scots (and grouped with them in that year's census) were the slightly more numerous Orcadians who had largely made the transition
from fur trading to farming. Both the Metis and the Protestant Rupertlanders (who together comprised the colony's single largest group in that 828 of the settlement's 1095 families were headed by a "mixed-blood" in 1856) remained substantially less committed to agriculture than the aforementioned Scots and Orcadians. This was equally true of those less numerous Canadians and Indians who resided within the settlement.

As John Clarke has noted, the commitment to agriculture of those Metis and Protestant Rupertlanders who resided in the Lower Settlement (the term used by census takers to describe the settlement area along the Red River) varied in accordance with their religion. For example, only 2.3% of the Roman Catholic Metis in 1838 farmed 10 or more cultivated acres in contrast with 17.7% of their Protestant counterparts who did so. However, "the gap began to close in the 1840's" (ibid:87). For example, by 1849 the percentages of those with ten or more cultivated acres were more comparable: i.e., 20.7% to 28.2% in favour of the Protestant body.

The statistics for the Grantown settlement, however, were in marked contrast as 26.9% of the estimated 194 Grantown Metis (98.3% of whom were Roman Catholic as of 1856) had farmed ten or more cultivated acres in 1838 (ibid:64). But even more surprising is the fact that the percentage of those possessing ten or more cultivated acres declined rather than increased during the next eleven year period. By 1849, only 10.1% of the 771 Grantown Metis possessed farms of that size.

It is interesting to note in passing that this apparent decline in agricultural activity was equally evident in the case of the Canadians who lived at Grantown. Whereas 62.5% of their population had 10 or more cultivated acres in 1838, only 19.9% were farming similar size holdings by 1849 (ibid:88).

The differences between the Red River's several component groups were not, of course, confined to cultivated acreage. Logically, those who farmed the fewest cultivated acres had less need for plows (which cost £6 each in the 1850's) and harrows. Perhaps the converse was equally true. Those who had to till the tough prairie sod using only hoes would understandably cultivate only garden-size plots. 4

While Scots/Orkneymen owned 16.3 plows per 100 persons by 1849, the ratio for Protestant Rupertlanders residing in the Lower Settlement was a distinctly lower 9.1 and for the Metis an even smaller 7.9 For those 771 Metis who lived at Grantown the ratio was a startlingly low 3.1. The variations in ratios of those who owned less expensive harrows were comparable: 22.2 per 100 Scots/Orkneyman; 11.2 per 100 Protestant Rupertlanders; 8.7 per 100 Metis residing in the Lower Settlement; and a substantially lower 3.5 per 100 Grantown Metis. Curiously, even though a higher percentage of Scots/Orcadians residing in the Lower Settlement owned harrows than plows, that was not the case with the Grantown Metis. Their holdings remained numerically insignificant in both cases.

Similar differences were apparent in the numbers of horses and oxen owned by the several component groups. Alexander Ross, moreover, perceived the Metis predilection for horses as evidence of their lack of commitment to
Agriculture.

A Canadian or half-breed able to exhibit a fine horse, and gay cariole is in his glory; this achievement is at once the height of his ambition, and his ruin. Possessed of these, the thriftless fellow's habitation goes to ruin; he is never at home, but driving and carioling in all places, and every opportunity;... (1856:196).

Although Barry Kaye suggested that the ownership of oxen was indicative of a greater commitment to agriculture,\(^5\) that in itself did not fully explain why both the Grantown and the Lower Settlement Metis owned the most horses on a per capita basis.\(^6\) The Metis and those Canadians who participated regularly in the buffalo hunt necessarily had to own horses. While oxen could displace "cart horses," they could never serve as substitute buffalo runners! On the other hand, the fact that both the Grantown and the Lower Settlement Metis were less likely to own expensive oxen\(^7\) would inevitably discourage them from attempting to enlarge substantially their cultivated acreage.\(^8\)

Similar differences were evident, for a variety of reasons, with respect to the numbers of cattle owned by Red River farmers. Again the Scots/Orkneymen (of whom 89.2% had some cattle at the time of the 1849 census) were most committed to cattle raising. On the other hand, only approximately one-half i.e., 54.4%) of the Grantown Metis owned any cattle in 1849, a percentage which slightly exceeded that of the Lower Settlement Rupertlanders, Protestant and Roman Catholic alike, of whom only 48.1% kept cattle during that census year (Clarke, 1966:113-116). Cattle, of course, were susceptible to attack by wolves and disease.\(^9\) According to The Nor'Wester, many farmers along the Assiniboine were reportedly losing cattle to a disease known in the East as "hollow horns" in 1869. Many of the cattle died in substantial numbers unknowingly to their owners due to the fact that they were grazing on the prairies.\(^10\) The fact, therefore, that the Metis' cattle generally ran at large meant that their losses, due to both wolves and disease, could be substantial and that activity, therefore, was discouraged.

The cattlemen's most severe problem, however, was that of frequent hay shortages. According to Samuel Taylor, a Rod River diarist, in mid-March 1864, "a great many people [were] clean out of hay, all through the Settlement".\(^11\) A few days later, Taylor recorded that "a great many cattle [were] dying for want of something to eat."\(^12\) in addition to being compelled to buy hay at 6s. per cart load during the winter crisis months (a proposition that was particularly unattractive to unenthusiastic Metis farmers), local residents were forced on occasion to travel to the lakes to cut hay "from 10 to 60 miles from their houses, and most of them will build sheds and winter their cattle out there in preference to hauling home the hay."\(^13\)

The differences between the various segments of the settlement were even more marked in the case of the numbers of sheep which were owned by local farmers.

In the Census of 1838 . . . there were 457 head at the Lower
Settlement . . . By 1843 there were 3,569 sheep in the colony, the majority at the Lower Settlement but at Grantown there were 159, at the Swampy Village there were 24 . . . In 1849 at least 80% of English, Irish and Others of Canadians and of Rupertlander householders at both the Lower Settlement and at Grantown were Without sheep. In contrast only 38.9% of Scots/Orkney householders were without sheep; . . . Of the 129 sheep kept at the . . . the White Horse Plain [settlement], 61 belonged to three men, namely Alexander Berland, Urbin de L’Orm and Pierre Falcon. In 1849 there were 25 sheep at the Swampy Village. None were kept at the Saulteaux Village (Clarke, 1966:118).

In the absence of any external market for wool and in light of the fact that mutton was not a favourite food with many, the need for sheep was sharply curtailed. Sheep also seemed particularly susceptible to the periodic droughts, such as that of 1845. "Moreover sheep required constant care, a quality more lacking in the Rupertlanders of Grantown and the Lower Settlement than in the Scots/Orkneymen . . ." 14

Statistics indicating the numbers of pigs owned by the various members of the several groups were somewhat in contrast to those just provided for sheep. While the numbers fluctuated throughout the period, supposedly as a result of "essential fertility . . . of pigs . . . the severity of winters, and . . . the availability of pemmican which was always preferred to pork by the inhabitants of the colony and of the outposts of the North-West," no single ethnic group was primarily associated with their production (Clarke, 1966:121).

At the Lower Settlement Canadians demonstrated a greater interest in pigs than did the Scots/Orkneymen. The comparative lack of interest in pigs on the part of the latter can perhaps be attributed to a pig-prejudice which has been observed elsewhere in North America. At Grantown though the interest in pigs was somewhat greater than that in sheep . . . there were [nevertheless] only 125 pigs at the White Horse Plain (ibid:121-122).

The varying degrees of commitment to agriculture was also reflected in the establishment of and location of wind and water-mills. As the geographer Barry Kaye has noted, thirteen of the Red River's then eighteen windmills were located in the Protestant parishes of St. John, St. Paul and St. Andrew.

Until the 1850's only one mill sufficed to grind the wheat grown by the Canadian and Metis farmers of St. Boniface. This was the windmill built south of the St. Boniface mission church, sometime between 1840 and 1843, by the Canadian Narcisse Marion . . .

For many years one windmill, erected sometime during the early 1830's by the settlement's founder, Cuthbert Grant, ground flour
for the Metis settlement of Grantown (St. Francois-Xavier). Grant's Mill remained the most westerly one in the Red River Country until the early 1850's. At that time English-speaking half-breeds from St. Andrew's and St. Paul's began to migrate westwards along the Assiniboine and settle at Portage la Prairie, where a windmill was erected by John Hudson soon after the commencement of farm settlement... (Kaye, 1981:15).

The presence or absence of a mill located within a reasonable distance would probably influence the decision of Metis to grow wheat or not. For example, the Indian residents at St. Peters were encouraged by the restoration of their mill in 1848 to increase their cultivated acreage. The establishment of a second mill in the Indian settlement in 1852, Rev. William Cochran anticipated, "will no doubt induce the Indians to enlarge their farms and look more to the soft for the supply of their wants" (ibid:40).

Although the Metis at Grantown were served by only one mill for many years, it is interesting to note that Protestant Rupertlanders owned five of the colony's twelve mills in the early 1850's while Cuthbert Grant owned a sixth. Mill-owners John Vincent, William Bird and Thomas Bird were "half-breeds of English extraction." The other "half-breed" mill-owners were Thomas Logan of Scotch extraction, Robert Sanderson of Orkney extraction and, of course, Grant, who was of Canadian extraction.

For a variety of reasons, many Metis were unable or unwilling to surmount the problems generated by the conflicting time demands created by their participation in the two economies of buffalo hunting and farming. For example, the fact that the hunting and the "growing" seasons frequently overlapped meant that the Metis would have to choose, to some degree, between the two pursuits. As Barry Kaye has noted, most of the Metis "having ploughed or dug their small plots and sown their crops.... left for the plains and the hunt, and did not return until the time for harvesting. Throughout the growing season their crops were largely unhusbanded, choked by weeds and open to the ravages of both wild and farm animals" (1967:180). Furthermore, sheep (including those belonging to the Metis) were often the victims of the temporarily abandoned dogs which roamed at large in the settlement while their Metis owners were absent on the hunt. The cutting of hay on the unclaimed open prairie traditionally began on July 20 but the Metis frequently did not return from the spring hunt until August: they could not readily participate, therefore, in the cattle raiser's most important activity. While many farmers reportedly spent the autumn of 1864 building sheds "at Long Lake and elsewhere to winter their cattle", as the local hay crop had been inadequate, Metis cattle raisers had to choose between that option and the annual fall buffalo hunt. As those farmers who had insufficient feed sometimes had to pay as much as 6s per cart load for hay, many Metis reportedly and understandably chose to butcher even their breeding stock when faced with either food or feed shortages. For many Metis, the choice was relatively easy to reach. Instead of buying expensive hay to feed cattle, they could hunt the buffalo (the feeding of which was not the
responsibility of the Metis!) and sell the remains (i.e. the head, fat, dried meat and pemmican) to the Hudson's Bay Company for 2d per pound.

Although the Metis devoted only a portion of their time and capital to the development of their farms, they could have fulfilled a vital but separate function as agricultural labourers. Just as the Hudson's Bay Company was in regular need of tripmen, so too did so-called "progressive" farmers require seasonal "hired help." According to Alexander Ross, even Scots "with all their industry, . . [could] cultivate but small patches" due in part to "the scarcity of servants." (1856:201) As Ross explained, wages were reasonably generous.

Men generally get 20£ per annum, and women 10s. per month . . . A daily labourer, during hay and harvest season, gets 2s.6d., and in the dead season, 1s. 6d per day; the employer always furnishing food, and a blanket to sleep in (ibid:394).

Nevertheless, as The Nor'Wester, explained, local farmers experienced great difficulty in procuring even a small number of Indian "helps" to use the sickle or follow up the work of the reaper by tying and "stocking" . . . the sheaves in the field. When a few harvesters such as these have been scared up, the great problem is how to keep them at work They are particularly slow and careless in what they do… Many able-bodied men in the mother country would be glad of the is. 6d. or 2s a-day and meals which workers here earn so easily. 18

Although Alexander Ross argued that local "half-breeds" were of little value as agricultural labourers as they preferred "indolence to industry, and their own roving habits to agricultural or other pursuits of civilized life" (ibid: 194), the problem of seasonal overlapping could also explain the reluctance of the Metis to accept employment as farm labourers. Men, women and children left for the summer hunt or to join the boat and cart brigades in late June or July. As a result, few would be available to assist with the time-consuming haying operation. More. admittedly should have been available to assist with the grain harvest as fewer Metis participated in num smaller fall buffalo hunt.

Despite the fact that the Grantown Metis were less committed to agriculture than either the Protestant Rupertlanders or their Scots/Orkneymen neighbours, there were a number of Metis farmers whose farms and herds seem to have been much larger than those of the general Metis population. For example, both Cuthbert Grant and Hugh Ross farmed 50 cultivated acres by 1838. Baptiste Gardipuis with 45 acres, Joseph Gilbeau with 40 acres, Louis Gardipuis with 36 acres, and Pierre Falcon with 30 acres would also qualify as large farmers by the standards of that age. 19

The majority, however, of the Grantown Metis rather surprisingly refused to follow such role models as Cuthbert Grant and Hugh Ross. Instead, they seemingly became less committed to agriculture during the 1840's and 1850's.
Even though the total number of cultivated acres in the Red River rose dramatically from 2,196.5 in 1832 to 8,805.54 in 1856 (Clarke 1966:45), and despite the fact that the ratio of cultivated acres per 100 people was increased for all groups who resided within the Lower Settlement, comparable statistics indicate that the Grantown Metis on the average farmed fewer, rather than more acres in 1849 (ibid:91) than they had done in 1838. To be more precise, the 402 Grantown Metis farmed a total of 438 cultivated acres in 1838, a substantially target 675 Metis farmed 323 cultivated acres in 1843 and an even larger 771 Metis farmed only 370 cultivated acres in 1849 (ibid:89). While the Grantown Metis had possessed 108.9 acres per 100 people in 1838, that figure was reduced to 480 cultivated acres per 100 by 1849. Furthermore, a greater percentage of the Metis (i.e., 89.9%) farmed less than 10 acres by 1849 than had been the case (i.e., 73.1%) in 1838.

Why would the Grantown Metis commitment to agriculture actually decline during that period? First of all, the Metis may have been discouraged by their comparative lack of farming success as a people. According to Kaye, wheat yields were generally greater in the Lower Settlement and "lowest in the Metis settlement of the Upper Red and White Horse Plain" (Kaye, 1967:166). Secondly, the years in question, i.e. 1838-1849, were unusually disappointing. The 1840's were often hungry years at Red River for in five years of that decade the returns from agriculture were slight. Prolonged drought and heat during the growing season stunted the growth of crops and prairie grasses in 1840, 1846, 1847, and 1848, and for reasons not known the crops all but failed in 1844 (ibid:158).

Faced with the painful realization that farming was frequently unrewarding, the Metis could discover no convincing reason why they should abandon the usually profitable buffalo hunt in favour of an exclusive commitment to an all-too-often disappointing agricultural economy.

The Metis, nevertheless, were willing to participate in both economies to the extent that they could be combined easily together. That was particularly true when a handful of influential leaders within the Indian and Metis communities encouraged the pursuit of agriculture, either by example or by teaching. Consider, for example, the settlement of Cook's Creek where the population grew by some 50% between 1838 and 1845. That growth, according to John Clarke, "was largely due to the participation of the inhabitants in agriculture, in turn a reflection of its ethnic structure and of the leadership and inspiration of [Rev. William] Cochran" (1966:45). A similar situation existed at Grantown in the 1830's and the 1840's. It is John Clarke's opinion that the Metis interest in agriculture was largely "due to the persuasions of the Roman Catholic missionaries and to the inspiration and example of Cuthbert Grant, Warden of the Plains, and of a few other families who cultivated acreages between 20 and 45 acres" (ibid:91-93). However, some of those who encouraged the Metis at Grantown to intensify their agricultural endeavours became substantially less influential as the 1840's ended. Father Belcourt, for example, withdrew to the
Pembina settlement in 1849 while Metis agriculturalists such as Cuthbert Grant and Pierre Falcon were entering upon their declining years which in Cuthbert Grant's case, at least, led to a decided loss of influence within the community. As Clarke has concluded,

The natural predilection of the Grantown "habitant" was not towards the plough but the hunt. In face of the continued uncertainty of agriculture or when, in the natural course of events, many of the leaders of the Grantown community died, these Grantown Metis reverted to the ways of their Indian forebearers. The death of these "early fathers of agriculture" or the continued subdivision of holdings without increased cultivation would seem to largely account for the sudden drop in ratio at Grantown between 1838 and 1849 .... (ibid).

One might also suggest that the growing free trade movement under a newly emerging commercial class and the apparent victory for free trade as a result of the Sayer Trial could only encourage those who naturally preferred the hunt to farming.

But what of the Hudson's Bay Company's experimental farms? Did they not serve as an example to mixed-blood farmers? Did they not demonstrate the benefits to he derived from agriculture and provide an object lesson on how those rewards could be achieved? Although Alexander Ross conceded that the experimental farm produced some positive results - "the breed of horses was decidedly improved" (1856:156) -- he concluded that the overall results were destructive as it
gave such a contemptible idea of the skill of the white man. It became a by-word in the colony, among the half-breed population, "that the ice-bern farmers were bad, hut the experimental farmers were worse; and, after all their grand performances, the whites have but little to boast of."

There remains one further explanation for the increasing disinterest in agriculture on the part of the Metis as a way of life. As the average Red River farm grew in size and as machinery became more sophisticated, there emerged a growing need for capital. While adequate statistics respecting the capital necessary to farm are not available, draught oxen cost the farmer £6 each in the early 1850’s as did a plough (ibid:312). In a booster issue published a decade later, *The Nor’Wester* informed potential immigrants that the price of oxen ranged from £8 to £10, cows cost £5 to £7 each, while good horses could cost as much as £25. 22 Although most farmers continued to use very primitive farm equipment such as the scythe and sickle, individuals such as Alexander Ross and the manager of the Company's farm at the Lower Fort were purchasing mechanical reapers as of 1860, at £35 each, an indication that farming was becoming more capital intensive. 23 According to an 1861 edition of *The Nor’*.
"Reapers, mowers and threshers are indispensable to the farmers if farming is to be done... on a grand scale. In this settlement the sickle and the flail are fast becoming among the things that were... A great many labor saving machines have of late years been introduced by Mr. D.C. Jones of the agricultural warehouse, St. Paul... In fact, some of that equipment was becoming quite exotic as in the example of Fowler's Steam Plough. While the steam engine remained stationary, the plough was pulled across the field. According to reports, the machine - which was popular in England - would plow an acre "for one-half the cost of horse power." While such machines were obviously not a necessity, The Nor'Wester concluded in 1869 that prospective settlers who possessed "a small capital, say from £100 to £1000" should consider coming as immigrants. Presumably those who lacked that amount - which would include many of the Metis - should not.

In addition to requiring a greater amount of capital investment for machinery if not yet for land, the farmer's operating costs were likewise growing. The Nor'Wester, in one of its first "booster" issues, lauded the achievements of a Mr. Gowler of Headingly who began farming on his own after the failure of the Hudson's Bay Company experimental farm of which he had been an employee. Although the Red River's first newspaper was primarily concerned with publicizing Gowler's bumper crops, the information that the model farmer had expended during one crop year a total of £17.5 for seed, £2.5 for preparing and tilling the soil, and £100 for harvesting demonstrates the growing necessity for a substantial cash-flow.

While there is no evidence to indicate the capital resources of any particular segment of the Red River community, some retired Hudson's Bay Company employees obviously enjoyed an initial advantage in that the grateful company had rewarded many of them with one hundred acres of land free of charge in return for their years of service. The Orkneymen, according to Alexander Ross, were favourably suited for farming due to their "industry and frugality" especially in that the savings which they had accumulated during their years as HBC servants had provided them with the necessary capital to commence farming (1856:110-111). John Clarke has concurred with that observation by noting that the Orkneymen of St. Andrew's parish were retired fur traders who "made up by their wealth what they lacked in farming techniques" (1966:58-59). The Metis who, according to Alexander Rose's obviously exaggerated calculations, collectively invested some £24,000 in the annual buffalo hunt (1956:244), presumably did not possess the additional capital which was becoming increasingly necessary for farming.

That the Lower Settlement Metis and, to a much more substantial degree, the Grantown Metis both cultivated fewer acres and owned fewer ploughs, harrows, oxen, cattle and sheep than their protestant fellow-residents of the Red River has been documented. In fact, the Grantown Metis's commitment to agriculture even diminished during the period under examination. By heritage and by tradition, they had been buffalo hunters; they had been persuaded, however, to supplement their incomes by farming, albeit usually on a rather casual basis. As the summer hunt coincided with the "weeding" and haying
season, one activity or the other had had to suffer. Moreover, the Metis had been undoubtedly discouraged by the several crop failures which had characterized the 1840’s. Disappointed by poor yields, dismayed by the intensifying demands for labour and capital in farming, and freed (for the moment) from the exhortations of their role models, the Metis of Grantown had felt increasingly compelled to choose between one or the other of the economies. In retrospect, it is not surprising that the Grantown Metis ‘became even less committed to agriculture but it is ironic that they did so at the very moment when their buffalo hunting economy, unbeknownst to themselves, was on the verge of collapse.

NOTES

1. *The Nor’wester, and Central British American Advertiser*, February 26, 1869 (hereafter cited as *The Nor’Wester*.)

2. Ibid., September 14, 1860.

3. Ibid., May 28, 1860.

4. "When these people began to till the land in 1812, they had only rude hoes with which to plant their patches of wheat, potatoes, barley, and peas. Until 1850 the plows used at Red River were made of wood. Although these plows had iron points or, in some cases, iron-plated moldboards, they were not efficient in the heavy Red River valley soil. Men imported cast iron plows from the United States before 1856, but they had only a few steel, self-scouring plows before 1867" (Murray, 1967:38).

5. "The high number of horses in the metis settlements of the White Horse Plain and the Upper Settlement was a good indicator of the very low level of agricultural activity in those areas. The numbers of oxen, the basic animal for farm work, were greatest in the areas where the level of farming was highest, that is in the Lower Settlement" (Kaye, 1967:282).

6. As of 18,19, Grantown Metis owned 59 horses per 100 individuals, the Lower Settlement Metis owned 39.6 per 100, while Protestant Rupertlanders from the same sector owned only 29.5 per 100 (Clarke, 1966:158-162).

7. Oxen cost £6 each in the early 1850%; later they cost £8 to £10. *The Nor’Wester*, April 17, 1869.

8. Curiously, however, census returns indicate that there was a "decreasing interest" in oxen "even at the Lower Settlement . . . The decline in oxen . . . is apparent in all but the Scots/Orkneymen group [which remained constant] . . . As time went on there was an increasing preference for horses on the part of all the groups but most especially amongst the Cana-
dians and the Rupertlanders" (Clarke, 1966:93-103). Why the decreased interest in oxen amongst the non-Metis? Perhaps oxen in part were early victims of farm mechanization and technological change. As S.N. Murray has explained, some of the new machines such as reaper-mowers were pulled more satisfactorily by horses than by the more powerful but slower-moving oxen (Murray, 1967:42).

9. Of the 111 deaths incurred amongst the Tallow Trade herd in one year, 53 were killed by wolves (Ross, 1856:152-53).

10. The Nor'Wester, September 5, 1868.


12. Ibid.

13. The Nor'Wester, August 18, 1864.

14. In 1849 the number of sheep was reduced by 1,000 as a result of natural calamity and lack of continued interest on the part of all save the Scots/Orkneymen, the only group amongst whom the number of sheep actually increased in the years 1843 to 1849..." (Clarke, 1966:118).

15. According to Barry Kaye, whose list of mill owners is more extensive than that of Alexander Ross, all but four (i.e., Andrew McDermot, Michael Klyne, Narcisse Marion and Grant) of the Red River's twenty plus millers before 1856 were Protestant (Kaye, 1981:17).

16. The Nor'Wester, May 14, 1860.

17. The Nor'Wester, November 2, 1864.

18. The Nor'Wester, September 14, 1860.

19. Clarke, 1966:91f. Giraud agreed that there were relatively few large Metis farmers. "... pour vingt-quatre families Canadiennes dont les terres cultivées atteignent ou dépassent 20 acres, huit families métisses seulement disposent de champs également étendus" (Giraud, 1945:833).

20. The ratio of cultivated acres per 100 people increased at both the Lower Settlement from 131.1 in 1832 to 221 for Scots/Orcadians and from 66.8 in 1838 to 112 per 100 Protestant Rupertlanders in 1849 and from 43.8 in 1838 to 99.2 per 100 métis in 1849 and at the recently established Swampy Village where it more than doubled from 27.1 per 100 people in 1840 to 56.1 per 100 in 1849 (Clarke, 1966:158-159).
21. (Ross, 1856:136). Perhaps the Hudson’s Bay Company’s sponsorship of a number of massive projects such as their decision to herd overland 1500 sheep from Kansas and the establishment of the Tallow Company unduly encouraged individuals to perceive the solution to the settlement’s agricultural problems in bold and grandiose schemes. Some, at least, were readily prepared to invest heavily in various joint-stock company proposals while others, such as Cuthbert Grant, undertook major projects on their own. Encouraged, it is suggested, by the example of a Mr. Logan who bought and successfully operated the settlement’s first windmill, Cuthbert Grant established the settlement’s first watermill.

"on Sturgeon Creek, a small tributary of the Assiniboine, nearly midway between the Forks and the White Plains.... Stimulated by the prospect of 0a/n, and fond of notoriety, Mr. Grant began the construction of a dam from bank to bank across the creek, a distance of some 240 feet . . . In due course . . . the mill [was] built, and the stores for grain finished; but the mill after several trials, gave but little satisfaction - the dame still less... in less than three years all was abandoned, leaving Mr. Grant minus 800£ sterling (ibid., 145-46).

22. The Nor’Wester, May 29, 1869.

23. Ibid., September 14, 1860.

24. Ibid., September 14, 1861.

25. Ibid., October 17, 1864.

26. Ibid., May 29, 1869.

27. Ibid., December 28, 1859.

28. 

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<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>£ s. d.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1,210 cats, number to the plains this year at 1 10 0 each.</td>
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<td>620 hunters, 2 months or 60 days &quot; 0 1 0 per day.</td>
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<td>650 women, two months &quot; 0 0 9 &quot;</td>
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<td>£60 boys and girls &quot; 0 0 4</td>
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<td>740 guns &quot; 2 0 0 each.</td>
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<td>150 gallons gunpowder &quot; 0 16 0 per gallon.</td>
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<td>1,300 pounds trading balls &quot; 0 1 0 per pound,</td>
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<td>6,240 gun flints &quot; 0 0 0½ each.</td>
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<td>100 steel dagues &quot; 0 3 0 &quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>100 couteaux de chase</td>
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<tr>
<td>403 buffalo runners (average good and bad)</td>
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<tr>
<td>655 cart horses</td>
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<tr>
<td>586 draught oxen</td>
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<tr>
<td>1,210 sets of harness</td>
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<td>403 riding saddles</td>
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<tr>
<td>403 bridles and whips</td>
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<tr>
<td>1,240 scalping knives</td>
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<tr>
<td>448 half axes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sundries. Camp equipage, such as tents, tent furniture, culinary utensils, too tedious to be enumerated</td>
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Giraud, Marcel  

Kaye, Barry  


Morton, W.L.  

Murray, Stanley Norman  

Ross, Alexander  
1856 The Red River Settlement: It’s Rise, Progress and Present State.