

Once the main harvest was past, the autumn plowing took place and the last touches were given to the land prepared for the fall wheat or rye. The seed grain for the autumn sowing was carefully selected from the best sheaves in the field, which were the first to be threshed and cleaned. The threshing of the main crops continued at intervals as time permitted or need required during the autumn and winter. At first only the flail was used, an instrument consisting of two rough hardwood sticks of about four or five feet in length joined to each other at one end by a leather thong, sometimes with a swivel intervening. Holding one of these sticks in the hands, the thresher beat the grain with the other. Some little experience was necessary to acquire an easy and effective swing. Later when the farmers acquired oxen and horses, these were frequently used to thresh the grain by tramping it out in the ancient and orthodox fashion on the floor built of boards or of hard-beaten earth. When the floor was made of boards, the seams or cracks were "corked" or "calked" to prevent the grain from falling through. The straw being easily separated from the wheat and chaff by the ordinary rake or fork, the chaff was next separated from the grain by winnowing it in an open space in a stiff breeze. Owing to the light black earth midst which much of the grain was grown, and the process by which it was threshed and winnowed, the wheat, at least, required to be washed and dried, a process undertaken by practically all of the early settlers. After 1807, when windmills or fanning mills driven by hand became common in that part of the country, we find in the diary no further reference to the washing of wheat.

After the summer grains had been harvested during August and September, the corn was gathered in the first half of October and during the latter half of the month the pumpkins were brought in, as also the apples, then the potatoes and other roots. At that time practically all the winter apples, potatoes, turnips and even pumpkins, cabbages and other vegetables were stored for winter use in pits dug in the earth. The pits were located in a dry spot and after being lined with straw, if available, the fruit or vegetables were placed in them, the contents covered with straw and then with earth to a depth of two or three feet. In the climate of Southern Ontario and