

Salute to the farmer

The history of Canada abounds with stories of voyageurs, explorers, traders and leaders but neglects one hero who, according to the federal Department of Agriculture, ranked among the adventurers and statesmen who built this country — the Canadian farmer.

Agriculture is one thread that runs unbroken throughout the fabric of Canadian history. Indians were growing corn, beans, pumpkins and tobacco when the Europeans arrived. Their crops saved many early settlers from starvation.

The first settler to make his living from farming in Canada was Louis Hebert. In 1617, he cleared a small plot of land near Quebec City and grew grain, pumpkins and beans as well as raising livestock from France. During the years of French rule agriculture grew as settlers pushed back the forest along the St. Lawrence River and the St. John River valley in New Brunswick. Other French agricultural settlements were established on Prince

Edward Island, in Nova Scotia and in southwestern Ontario near the present city of Windsor.

In the late eighteenth century the Spanish and English set up small farms on Vancouver Island. Among others, United Empire Loyalists opened up new farmlands in southern Ontario and the Atlantic region after Canada became British North America and the 13 colonies became the United States.

Lord Selkirk was one of the first men to realize the great agricultural potential of the Canadian prairies. His settlement in the early 1800s along the Red River in southern Manitoba was the first farming activity on the prairies.

The first half of the nineteenth century was a period of continued expansion of agriculture in eastern Canada. More land was cleared, more farms established and railways built to carry the farm produce to growing cities and towns in Upper and Lower Canada as well as in the Atlantic colonies.

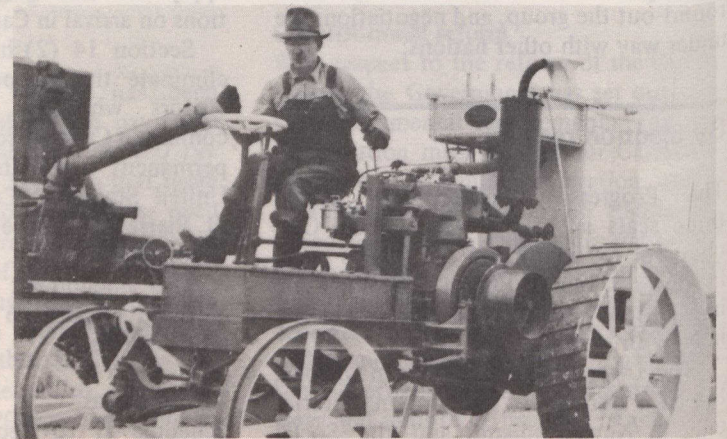
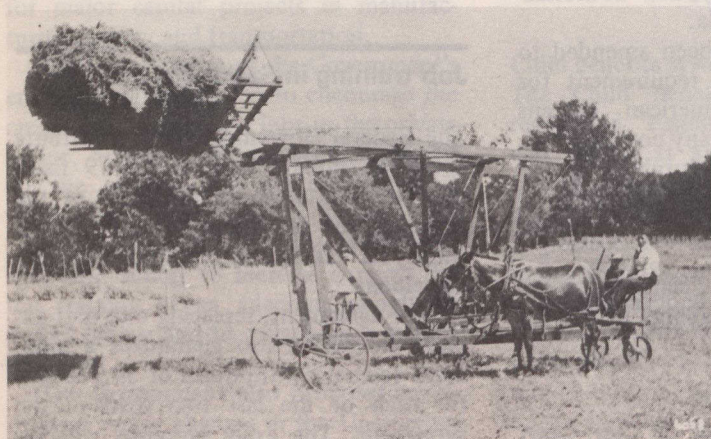
After Confederation in 1867, the Canada Department of Agriculture was

formed, which was responsible for immigration, public health, arts and manufactures, statistics, patents, copyrights, industrial design and trademarks, as well as agriculture.

Pioneer farmers

The completion of the railway from Montreal to Vancouver in the 1880s offered great opportunities to immigrants. European homesteaders poured in to build the rich agricultural and ethnic mosaic that exists today in the prairie provinces. Grains, especially wheat, became the prime crop. Ranches appeared on the vast rangelands. Trains that carried settlers westward returned eastward with foodstuffs for the growing urban markets and for export to Europe.

By the turn of the century, Canada was one of the world's important food producers. Farms occupied more than 24 million hectares of the young country. Refrigeration made it possible to ship butter and cheese to Britain. Federal Department of Agriculture experimental farms were operating in five provinces,



These scenes and implements were familiar to pioneer farmers who welcomed advances like the first gas tractor (lower right).