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CANADA'S WHEAT ^{1/}

The growing of wheat in Canada can be traced back approximately 340 years. A French settlement in the Maritimes is reputed to have grown wheat in 1605 and in 1616 Champlain wrote of a fine sample of wheat being cut at Quebec for shipment to France.

In the middle of the eighteenth century Canada was actually exporting wheat, shipments in 1754 amounting to 80,000 bushels. Newfoundland and the French West Indies were the principal markets in which the wheat was then sold, but in 1770 export shipments to Great Britain were made. The records of 1802 show that between April 5 and July 5 of that year some 29 vessels cleared from the port of Quebec with wheat. Of this number six sailed for Barcelona, five for Hull, three for Cork, three for "Cork and a market", two each for Halifax, Bristol and Liverpool, and one each for Greenock, Cadiz, Sunderland, Newfoundland, Jersey, Madeira and Leghorn.

Wheat in Western Canada

But it was not until later in the nineteenth century, when Western Canada went into the production of wheat, that the type known in world markets as Manitobas put on Canadian wheat the hall-mark of quality which the prairie provinces still jealously guard today. The Lord Selkirk settlers who came from Scotland to the Red River valley in 1812 first introduced wheat growing to the western provinces, and it was in the Province of Manitoba that the strong hard wheat for which Canada has become famous first made its appearance.

Failures, plagues of mice and grasshoppers, and floods in turn destroyed the crops of the early colonists and in 1868-69 wheat for seed had to be brought in from the United States. It is believed that among this wheat was the seed from which the famous Red Fife type was grown. From this wheat the late Sir Charles Saunders, Dominion Cerealists at the Government's Central Experimental Farm at Ottawa, later produced the celebrated Marquis wheat, a cross between Red Fife and Hard Red Calcutta. This is the type upon which Canada has built a world-wide reputation for quality wheat. Newer varieties have now largely replaced Marquis in the Prairie Provinces.

The first shipment of the wheat of the western plains, direct to Great Britain, was made in 1877. It was consigned by Robert Gerrie to Barclay and Brand, Scotland, and went out by Red River steamer to St. Paul, Minnesota, thence by rail to seaboard.

^{1/} NOTE: This reference paper is a revision of an article written by Mr. J. McAnsh for the Commercial Intelligence Journal. The original work was brought up to date and new sections were added by the Agricultural Statistics Division of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics.