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FLAX IN CANADA.

Flax is indigenous to the American Continent. The *Linum Virginianum* has been found growing wild in several of the States, and the plant has been discovered growing wild in California; though it probably is not the same species of plant as the *Linum usitatum*, or common flax, which appears to have been imported from Europe probably by the Puritans at the time of whose emigration from England it was attracting attention. How it was introduced into Canada does not appear, but it was cultivated extensively in Lower Canada under the French rule. "The Paris document" notice its existence in 1719—and it is probable from them that Bouchette takes his information when he writes that, "The *habitans* of Lower Canada were attached to flax. In 1717 Lower Canada produced 45,967 lbs., and in 1721, 54,650 lbs."

In 1734 there were 14 mills in operation in Canada for the production of Linseed oil, and there was also produced 92,246 lbs. of flax. "In 1806 the British Government offered a bounty for the importation of flax and hemp from the North American Colonies." "In 1827 there were in Lower Canada 13,243 looms, and, 1,058,696 French Ells of linen woven." "Few farmers cultivated more than half an acre of flax seed the growth of which supplied them with ample material to manufacture their home-linen." "Flax grew with great luxuriance in Canada." Upper Canada, which was set apart as a separate Province, in 1791, had at that time only about 10,000 inhabitants; and we have not any special accounts of what extent of flax was cultivated in it in those early days of settlement. Agricultural associations had been formed in the Counties of York, Ontario, and Peel so early as 1825. A Provincial Agricultural Association of Upper Canada was formed and held its first meeting in 1846, and the Board of Agriculture for Upper Canada was formed under an act passed in 1850. In 1849 commenced the publication of the "Canadian Agriculturist," under the proprietorship of Mr. (now the Honourable Provincial Secretary) Wm. McDougall, and acted in a semi-official capacity for

the Board of Agriculture of Upper Canada. This Board collected reports from the Associations of the various Counties in the Province, and published some of them with the reports of its own proceedings. The Bureau of Agriculture was within the last few years added to executive departments of the Province, and has made reports from time to time. These, the census reports, and the various local newspapers are the only sources from which information can be attained with regard to flax statistics, until lately; and even the latest returns are not to be relied on. In the census reports flax and hemp are both enumerated under the one head, and it is impossible to distinguish the quantities of each.

From these sources, meagre as they are, we find that in 1818 "there was much flax cultivated in the Niagara district, all manufactured by hand." "In 1829 a patent was granted in Canada to Robert Hoyle for an improved machine for dressing flax," "in the early settlement almost every farmer cultivated a small field of flax which almost invariably furnished the family with a good supply of linen—and *such linen*" "in 1849 flax was shown at the Exhibition held at Kingston;" in 1847 a patent was granted to James McGee of Toronto for "a method of rotting flax and hemp in a vat or tank to be nearly filled with cold water and then heated by steam to about 90°; this in about 15 hours caused fermentation, and in three days produced decomposition of the glutinous matter." In 1850 another patent was granted in Canada for "machinery for dressing flax and hemp" by a combination of a toothed cylinder, a trunk, and an endless apron, all arranged to operate together." "Flax was cultivated to some extent in Prince Edward's County, and 880 yards of linen were manufactured in it, in 1848." "In 1849 there was imported into Canada, linen to the value of £20,000 "Stg."

The Counties of Ontario, Peel and York produced flax "in 1848—5,712 lbs., 1850—5,017 lbs., and 1852—12,672 lbs." In the early settlement every farmer cultivated a small field of flax, which almost invariably produced a good supply of linen." "The girls of Peel of the present day (1852) are sadly deficient in that useful accomplishment." Spinning flax is sown in small quantities for domestic use," "383 yards of linen and 922 lbs. of hemp and flax" were produced in County Peel in 1851. "466 lbs. of hemp and flax, and 337 yards of linen were in same year produced in the County of Grey. In 1850 "14,955 yards of linen and 50,650 lbs. of flax and hemp were produced in Upper Canada. "Flax and hemp had been tried 1851-2 in County Wellington, and both appeared