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Ontario Department of Agriculture

TOMATOES

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About the beginning of last August I was appointed to investigate the tomato industry of this Province. The investigation is simply the result of inquiry and observation, and has nothing to do whatever with practical experience. I will first give you an idea of the extent of the industry as I find it in this Province. By far the larger area is devoted to producing tomatoes for the canning factories. In 1891 there were about 800 cars of canned goods shipped; last year this increased to about 8,000; from 1904 there was approximately 3,000, so that it has increased 5,000 cars in the last five years.

HISTORY.

The tomato plant is of South American origin, and was apparently cultivated there for many years prior to the discovery of the country by Europeans. As early as 1554 we find that in Europe certain varieties of tomatoes had been described. From that year to 1860, fifteen distinct varieties were described and we have records of tomatoes being successfully produced under glass in Europe in 1820.

The first mention on this continent of the tomato being grown for culinary use was in Virginia in 1781. During the following twenty years futile attempts were made to popularize the use of the fruit. However, it is on record that the fruit was regularly quoted on the market in New Orleans in 1812, and that the seed was first offered for sale as that of an "edible vegetable" six years later. From that time on the increase in its popularity and culture has gradually proceeded, until to-day the tomato ranks with the more common fruits found on the markets of this continent, either in the natural or canned state. But while the majority of these more common fruits have been in great demand for some decades past, yet the same cannot be said for the tomato, for it is only during the last few years that it has assumed such a prominent place in the list of necessary articles of food.