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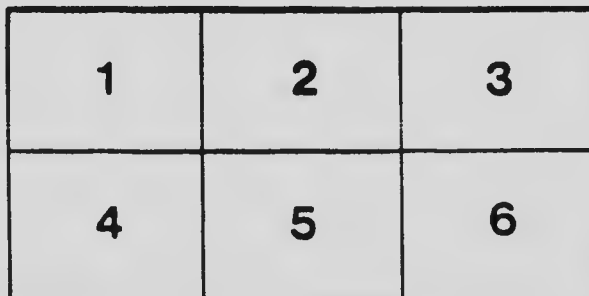
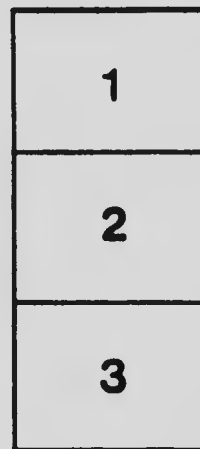
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AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES
OF ONTARIO.

C. C. JAMES,
DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE.

1911?



Agricultural Resources of Ontario

C. C. JAMES

DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

THE land area of the Province of Ontario is approximately 220,000 square miles, or 140,000,000 acres. This does not include the addition proposed to be made on the north. From the mouth of the Albany River on James Bay to Pelee Island in Lake Erie, the distance is about 750 miles; while from the eastern limit on the St. Lawrence to the western limit near Lake of the Woods, it is about 1,000 miles. The southern limit is just south of the 42nd parallel of latitude, approximating that of Chicago. Its northern limit is beyond the 52nd parallel, which is two degrees north of the City of Winnipeg. It is larger than the nine north Atlantic States by one third; larger than Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio combined.

For the present consideration of the agricultural resources, this Province may be divided into three divisions, viz.:

- 1st. The old settled area (23,000,000 acres).
- 2nd. The recently settled area (1,500,000 acres).
- 3rd. The unoccupied and only partially explored area (16,000,000 acres).

We shall consider these in order:

The rural assessed area of Ontario amounts to 24,500,000 acres, having increased in the past ten years by exactly 1,000,000 acres. This is made up as follows:

Acres cleared	14,000,000
Acres woodland	5,500,000
Acres slashland	2,000,000
Acres swamp, marsh or wasteland	3,000,000

Taking out 1,500,000 acres of recently occupied land in scattered areas, we have left 23,000,000 acres as forming the area of the old settled portion of the Province.

If a line be drawn along the north shore of Lake Huron, due east, it will run a short distance north of Montreal. We have, therefore, the old settled portion of the Province of Ontario forming a triangle; the south-eastern side of which is Lake Erie, Lake Ontario and the River St. Lawrence; the western side, Lake Huron and Lake St.

Clair; and the northern side, the 46th parallel, taking in the north shore of Lake Huron, Lake Nipissing and the Ottawa River.

Not all of this triangle is agricultural land. Within it is the large Provincial Park Reservation, Algonquin Park, together with a considerable amount of land lying west, south and east of it which is more suited to forestry than to agriculture. This old area was settled by a mixed population between the years 1783 and 1860. After the clearing of the forest the growing of grain naturally became the chief occupation of the farmers. Gradually, however, live stock were introduced, and following it, in the rapid development, came dairying. Down to 1890 the products of the farmers consisted to a large extent of grain crops, with some dairy products and some other animal products. As an outcome, however, of the McKinley tariff, which practically prohibited the exportation of barley, sheep, eggs, horses, etc., to the United States, the agriculture of Ontario was forced, in self defence, into new lines; that is, to the production of more finished products to be sold in the only great market then left to them, namely, that of Great Britain.

It took some few years to adjust methods to the new conditions. By 1896, however, a new agricultural system had been worked out for the larger portion of the Province. The result of that change may be seen in the following statement:

PRODUCTION OF ONTARIO FARMS.

	1896.	1906.
Beef	\$12,000,000	\$27,200,000
Bacon and Pork	10,000,000	22,500,000
Cheese	9,000,000	15,000,000

The above table shows that in three products—beef, cattle, hogs and dairy cattle—there has been a material increase. In other words, instead of selling the soil products in the form of grain, the Ontario farmer of recent years has been selling his products in the form of beef, bacon and cheese, with the result that there is now in operation in this old settled area an agricultural practice which tends to the preservation of the fertility of the soil. In other words, that the natural soil resources are being conserved.

The following statement shows the steady increase in the numbers of live stock kept upon the farms of Ontario, the only noticeable exception being that in the case of sheep:

Horses. The number on the farms has increased from 611,241 in 1898, to 639,581 in 1903, to 726,471 in 1908.

Cattle—Milch cows have increased from 956,000 in 1898, to 1,051,108 in 1903, to 1,113,374 in 1908.

Swine—1,640,787 in 1898, 1,977,386 in 1903, 1,816,763 in 1908. Owing to the fluctuation in market prices the number had dropped from 1907 by 230,000.

Poultry in ten years have increased from 9,084,273 to 12,285,613 in 1908.

Sheep show a falling off from 1,677,014 in 1898 to 1,043,898 in 1908.

Values of farm live stock sold or slaughtered—1896, \$29,750,000, 1906, \$61,500,000.

The total value of the live stock on the farms of the Province shows an increase from \$10,000,000 in 1898 to \$189,500,000 in 1907.

In addition to the increase in the value of the live stock, we have corresponding increases in the value of the lands, buildings and implements. The total value of farm property in the Province was \$923,000,000 in 1898; in 1907 it was \$2,225,000,000.

During the last ten years there has been a very decided increase and improvement in the production of fruits, vegetables and special crops, which has been accompanied by a very marked increase in the value of lands devoted to such purposes. These values, of course, are determined by the increasing values of the crops produced upon this land, and the inference may be fairly drawn that such land has not been depreciated in soil fertility, but has, by proper handling and fertilizing, been improved in soil fertility.

Two important lines of work may be referred to here in connection with the handling of lands within the Province. There are considerable areas more or less unproductive because of lack of drainage. During the past three years a special line of investigation has been carried on under the direction of the Ontario Department of Agriculture, in assisting and encouraging farmers to drain their lands. This is done through the lately created Drainage Districts in connection with the Agricultural College. This work has included one hundred surveys on as many different farms in the Province of Ontario and prepared plans for the drainage of such lands, with a view to bringing land into a fit state for cultivation. The object is to give such instruction as may lead farmers to drain lands hitherto been waste land or land only partially cultivated.

The other line of work is that of reforestation of waste farm lands. This, it should be understood, is in direct contrast with the large scheme of forest reserves which lies to

Crown lands that have been, are being, or may in the future be transferred over. For a few years past the Department of Agriculture, through its Forestry Branch, has been endeavoring to encourage farmers to plant those portions of their farms which are least suitable for grain growing or pasture, and plans are in preparation which will supply material to the farmers at a minimum cost. Here and there throughout the Province there are considerable areas which at one time carried fine forests. These forests have been cut away, the land has been cropped more or less, and when the soil is of a very light nature, it has run out leaving sandy stretches which have had to be abandoned as farm land, or which are now producing a very small return. The Ontario Department of Agriculture has commenced a system of local municipal forest reserves. The lands are bought in at very low rates. Where there are trees, these are being carefully protected from fire and the running of live stock; where there is little or no tree growth, seedlings will be set out from the Government nurseries. It is expected that within a few years blocks of municipal forest reserves will be established in different parts of the Province, varying in extent from five to twenty thousand acres each. It may be found advisable to take in even larger areas. Up to the present time the Forestry Branch of this Department has surveyed and examined about 125,000 acres of land in the old settled portion of the Province suitable for this purpose.

To sum up, the present tendency of the agriculture of this area is to put back into forest growing, land which has been over cropped, and is now run down and unsuitable for agricultural purposes; to bring into productiveness by draining, land which is now low lying and too wet, and to develop still further upon the farms of the Province the keeping of live stock and the production of beef, bacon, butter, cheese, fruit and special crops; so that it may be considered as fairly conclusive that the general tendency is towards the preservation and conservation of the soil fertility in this area.

The second area is that of newly settled lands lying in Northern Ontario, but mainly on the south side of the height of land. These are scattered; one block is in the Rainy River country adjoining the State of Minnesota; another is in the vicinity of Lake Temiskaming; others are along the north shore of Lake Huron, etc. In these sections agriculture as yet has only a divided interest, the settlers being concerned partly in the production of lumber and pulp wood and partly in the cultivation of their fields. The soil is quite rich, and the aim is to encourage settlers to introduce live stock at as early a

period as possible so that there may be no depletion of the soil. These areas will in the aggregate make about 1,500,000 acres.

The third area is what is generally known as the great clay belt of Northern Ontario. The land to the north of the height of land is drained by a large number of rivers flowing into James Bay. It has been only partially explored. Such explorations as have been made indicate that at least sixteen million acres of land are to be found in a compact area running east and west, and continuing across the boundary line into the northern part of Quebec. This clay belt begins about 420 miles north of Toronto. It runs west by north to a point almost due north of Port Arthur. In width it varies; it will average probably 120 miles. At present it is covered by an unbroken spruce forest which will produce an enormous amount of pulp wood for the settlers. The Grand Trunk Pacific going west from Quebec enters this belt at the boundary line, just at the northern limit of Lake Abitibi. A few miles west of this it joins the northern terminus of the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway at Cochrane, approximately five hundred miles north of Toronto; it then continues west by north running almost through the middle of this belt for a distance of four hundred miles.

The Ontario Department of Agriculture has begun to clear a demonstration farm on the T. & N. O. Railway at a point about thirty miles south of the junction. Already settlers are going in and taking up land as fast as railroad construction proceeds. The soil of the entire belt is clay, overlaid by a layer of vegetable soil varying in thickness. Four fifths of this clay belt lies between the 48th and 50th parallel. It lies in the same latitude as southern Manitoba. The question that will first arise is as to whether crops can be grown in this belt. The fact that it is in the same latitude as southern Manitoba would lead to the conclusion that, as far as sunlight is concerned, crops can be grown. It is known also that first class garden crops have been grown for years at Hudson Bay posts lying within or adjacent to this area. Further, samples of oats and wheat have been brought to the Department grown in this belt in 1908, within ten miles of our demonstration farm. The officers of this Department are quite of the opinion that, with the clearing of the land and such drainage as would be necessary on any other farm land in Ontario, this great belt can be and will be utilized for agricultural production. It may not be a rival of the prairie countries for wheat production, but it has all the indications of being able to carry live stock in large numbers. It has some advantage over prairie country in that it is well wooded and well watered.

Handwritten note:
The clay belt is
the same as the
Manitoba clay belt.

