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BRITISH IMMIGRATION BEFORE CONFEDERATION

People move from an old to a new homeland because life in the old is too difficult or opportunities in the new promise improvement, or for both reasons. When both causes occur at the same time, the result is a great emigration. After 1815 the end of the long wars and agricultural and industrial changes caused unemployment and discontent in the British Isles at a time when British North America offered work for settlers. The number of British emigrants rose. Reverse the two essentials — provide opportunities at home and lack of them in the new land — and emigration declines, as happened in the mid-1850s when prosperity at home, a decrease in the population of Ireland and the Crimean War occurred in years of commercial troubles in North America.

Immigration before Confederation was predominantly British because of the influence of the British government and the preference of human beings for surroundings congenial to their habits. A group of Scots who answered Russia's invitation to move to Poland found the experience so trying that they were brought home at British expense; only a few British soldiers tested the opportunities opened for immigrants in South America. British emigration drained residents from the homeland without reducing its population noticeably; it peopled British America so that two-thirds of the colonists who entered Confederation were British in origin.

Although some British subjects received help in emigrating, the majority of the people who straggled off the Atlantic ships paid their own way. All kinds of people emigrated: those who had had advantages, those who had none. The emigrants usually came not in organized groups but individually. The human atom tore itself away from its parent root and moved off to attach itself to a new base. In a century of instant news and scientific marvels, it is possible to underestimate the courage of the men and women who dared to cross the unknown sea in 300-ton sailing vessels to make homes in an equally unknown land. It is also possible to believe that their fortitude and courage helped to produce the men of another daring century.

I. BRITISH EMIGRATION BEGINS ANEW

British emigration to North America was interrupted but not wholly halted during the years of the American and French revolutionary and the Napoleonic struggles. Far-reaching changes in
agricultural land use and the textile and metal industries began in Great Britain in the war years and continued after them. Following the peace of 1815 when some fighting men were being disbanded, the farms and industries which had supported the war effort, providing food and clothing and improved guns for Nelson to hammer the French, began to slow down. Unemployment spread. Hopes of the people fell suddenly, though they had held bravely when the industrial changes first caused unemployment. It was a time for new opportunities.

The peace opened the seas to the movement of trade and peoples. Although the more southerly of the British North American colonies had become independent, the wars proved that in the northern colonies which remained British subjects might find the raw materials — the timber, corn, furs — even the employment and markets which they needed. Trade between Great Britain and British North America grew. British ships sailing west in ballast to take on timber and other cargo in the maritime and Quebec ports offered space for emigrants. The way was opened for the adventurous or unemployed in the British Isles to find work in the British American colonies in producing materials which the home country could use and at the same time to become consumers of the goods manufactured in Great Britain. Such a system of empire interchange was to serve well enough until the adoption of plans for free trade among all countries. By that time, British emigration to the American colonies had become a well-established habit; it sprang not from theories or government policies but from the people themselves. Before that habit was firmly set or understood, alarm springing from post-war demobilization of men and industry and economic dislocation and unemployment caused the British government to experiment with assisting a few British subjects to emigrate to the British North American colonies.

Government Assistance

Official British planning for the British North American lands which were retained during the long wars of the late 1700's followed the customs of the centuries: men disbanded from land and sea service were to be placed in spots strategic to the defence of the empire. As early as 1749 and 1763, transportation, supplies and land were offered to disbanded men in order to encourage them to move to Nova Scotia. Despite some scepticism among officers in the colonies regarding the chance of making satisfactory pioneer settlers of men accustomed to military life, the planning continued. The arrival of the Loyalists at the time of the American revolution brought to the northern British colonies settlers well fitted for pioneering by their loyalty and experience. They were placed, often in their regimental groupings, in parts of the maritime colonies and in border areas above Lake St. Francis, around Cata-
raqui, and on the boundary frontier at the Niagara River. In most of these later settlements, demobilized men and civilian settlers mingled and farm and family life prospered.

When therefore the peace of 1815 gave the British government the task of planning for both regiments of demobilized service men and civilian workers unemployed because of changes in industrial and agricultural production, the first step was to offer the demobilized men the customary supplies and land — at the rate of 100 acres to each private and 50 acres for a family member. They were to take up land in border areas stretching from the maritime colonies to western Canada, which were open to invasion from the United States. By the time the home government was ready to assist unemployed and distressed private workers as generously as the military were being helped, a group of the latter were about to be located in new townships, Bathurst, Beckwith and Drummond in Lanark county in the region of the Rideau waterway, though not as close to it as had been thought necessary for making that inland waterway safe in time of war. In July and August 1815, the government Transport Board provided ships for about 700 selected Scots to sail from Glasgow. The Victualling Office was to prepare food, farm implements were ordered and civilian as well as military settlers were to be supervised by the Quarter Master General’s department. Despite such careful preparations, the new arrivals were not located in the townships until October 1816. Making homes in a rather unproductive part of an unbroken wilderness was difficult; rations and supervision were needed for two years and, as the financing came from the Military Chest, such generous assistance for disbanded men was provided for only one year longer and for civilian emigrants it was to be reduced. Three small civilian emigrations in which private leaders backed the capital expenditure except for transportation were also tried and discontinued. A government spokesman, meanwhile, replied to criticism of the assistance by explaining that the purpose of government policy was merely to direct to British colonies persons who were already determined to emigrate.

Economic emergencies sometimes stretched this policy of impartiality somewhat thin. As the spread of mechanization in the textile industry and a decline in trade caused severe unemployment, petitions for help came from textile workers and were heard in Parliament. The government in 1820 and 1821 tried to lessen tension in the Paisley, Glasgow and other regions by promising free land and personal, repayable cash loans to acceptable emigrants. The result was the arrival of about 3,000 souls in the Rideau or Lanark settlements. Again in 1823 and 1825 wretched misery, the failure of the potato crop and disorders in Ireland brought another attempt to solve problems at home and provide population for the colonies by assisting emigrants. Witnesses before
a parliamentary committee favoured shipping out Irish population and Parliament approved votes of £15,000 and £30,000 for two emigrations from the south of Ireland. The emigrants of 1823 went mainly to the Rideau area where contradictory rumours about wayward and unruly Irish and Scottish disapproval soon spread. The second shipment of Irish were taken to the Rice Lake and old Newcastle district; from there too came reports of uneasiness and the danger of emigrants decamping to the United States, but the soil and neighbourhood were generally friendly. The publicity given these assisted settlers formed inducements for independent emigrants to follow; they came in numbers so large and at so small expense to themselves and the government that such aid to emigrants was not repeated.

THE UNASSISTED EMIGRANTS

In the long war years, heavy demands upon manpower and agricultural and industrial production partially hid the changes by which the demands were met. Scientific development, however, was running ahead of the growth of public and other services to meet the changes. As the landowner improved his fields to increase production and inventions began to mechanize industry, small farmers lost both their leases and their home industries. Before 1825, England had seen riots of discontented and needy farm and industrial workers and the government had received hundreds of pleas for help. The majority in Parliament held no belief in action which would reduce the labour market. With the exception of the assistance between 1815 and 1825 no official help was given and the people sought their advantage in their own fashion: by the hundreds, by the thousands, they emigrated.

THE SCOTS

The Scots were early, persistent and hopeful emigrants. At times the conversion of northern and western Scottish estates to sheep farming and changes in the kelp and fishing industries left hundreds of half-independent Scots without occupation and sometimes without roofs. Certain landowners joined with members of the Highland Society who were concerned over the loss of population from emigration and the consequent loss of life on unseaworthy sailing vessels. To remedy the first loss, they tried to keep the would-be emigrant at home by creating employment in the fisheries and on canals and other public works. To remedy the second loss, they passed through Parliament — while it was busy with French problems — a passenger vessel law which was partly designed to provide British emigrants as safe ships as slave traders were required to use with their human cargo, and incidentally designed to decrease emigration by raising costs. Despite such
efforts to reduce the outward movement, in which Scots had reached Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island as early as the 1770's, emigrations continued and increased. In the first six years after the peace of 1815, according to government records, about 19,000 emigrants, some of them possibly Irish who went on to the United States, sailed from the customs ports of Scotland. In one day in 1819, 525 Scots sailed from Crinan in Argyll, in one week 581 sailed from Dumfries.

Perhaps one-fourth of these Scottish emigrants had held some kind of marketable property and were determined to have it again. A Greenock correspondent reported that the emigrants were "the very sinew of the country's strength"; that one ship of 1819 carried away £30,000 in specie. For the Scots, removal to the North American colonies was no longer exile; they went to join Scots who had preceded them. As Samuel Johnson wrote, they changed nothing but the place of their abode and of that they saw the advantage.

The English

In the early years of British control in the land which became Canada, the rate of English immigration did not equal that of the Scottish. While the industrial revolution transformed the countryside and created the mill village, the population of England and Wales rose from less than 7 million in 1763, the year of the establishment of British government in Canada, to approximately 12 million in 1820: the rise in employment did not keep pace with population growth. Theorists announced that the country was suffering from overpopulation; ordinary folk knew only that their native land did not offer a decent living for all. The landed interests were powerful in Parliament; the price of bread rose but wages did not and the parish system helped some of the needy. Industrial workers were divided on the advisability of trying to win economic and political reform at home or leaving home altogether. The numbers of petitions for help in emigrating which came to the government in 1818 were as great as in 1831 and 1832, years of maximum emigration. By 1819 perhaps one half of the British subjects who sailed for British America were English.

Although newspapers in England and various landing lists kept in Quebec show a preponderance of unskilled labourers among the immigrants, disbanded officers and persons of some means were emigrating. In Quebec in 1831 it was said that one shopkeeper received 18,000 gold sovereigns in exchange. As in Scotland, many English wished to leave while they still could afford to pay their way. Farmers discouraged by the postwar agricultural uncertainties and the high taxes required to support those who received the parish dole, tradesmen whose business fell off as unemployment spread, fathers with large educated families for whom suitable
positions could not be found wrote to government offices in London — where their letters may still be read. They enquired about possibilities of obtaining land and employment in the British American colonies, about positions for their children; then risked their all in the Atlantic sailing ships and the promise of the New World.

THE IRISH

In Ireland in the early nineteenth century, the climate, the fertility of the soil with its harvests of potatoes, as well as the political and economic system combined to increase population. In 1815 probably 6 million Irish were managing to survive on some 13 million acres of arable land, land which was farmed by backward and unproductive methods. Six years later, Ireland had more mouths to feed per square mile than any country in Europe. When the famine of the 1840's struck, Leinster with its grazing lands supported only 281 persons per square mile, but in Connaught there were 411 per square mile and in Ulster, which had some manufacturing, there were 414. A farm let to one tenant in 1793 might be subdivided legally until within 50 years the same acreage would be expected to sustain 140 tenants and perhaps 700 mouths. But when the landlord improved his fields or turned to grazing, some of the labourers and the least profitable tenants had to go. These homeless dispossessed were often highly inclined to disease and disorder.

Farmers who were evicted or feared being so and had the energy and information to foresee a better future sometimes sold what few possessions they had and answered the advertisements of the emigration agents. "They cut the corn on the Sunday, sell it on Monday morning," a government official wrote, "and are off to America in the evening, leaving the waste land behind them and the landlords without rent." In Londonderry, Cork, Dublin, Belfast and smaller ports, the ships which brought Ireland flaxseed, tobacco and timber products were waiting for a westbound cargo for their empty holds. The small farmers, tradesmen and also farmer-weavers from Ulster who could not compete with the larger employers, made their bargains with the shipping salesmen and sailed for Quebec, New York, the maritime provinces. Some of the 15,000 Irish emigrants who are reported to have arrived in British American ports in the year 1818 were in actual need, others able to find work for themselves and, according to report, many were ready to move on to the United States.

II. EMIGRATION, A PUBLIC ISSUE

Although the Victorian age with its industrial wealth and growing world trade lay just ahead, contradictory demands for reform were growing among farmers, business men and theorists.
In the midst of the discussion of reform, emigration became a public issue. The departure of the discontented, the scenes in the emigration ports, the business interests which profited from the outfitting and transporting of emigrants, the use being made of colonial lands, all became news and interested publishers and members of Parliament. The small government-aided emigrations before 1826 and the larger unassisted movement which accompanied and followed them were a mere beginning. The exodus to British North America reached its first great high in the calamitous cholera year of 1832 and until Confederation it fluctuated from a low in the year after the Canadian rebellions to an astonishing high in 1847 during the Irish famine.

In Parliament

The invigorating effect of these immigrations upon the colonial economies has seldom been questioned. For the British Parliament which could expedite or hamper the outward movement of population, the unsolved problem was how the departures affected the mother country. Some theorists believed that emigration of population would ease unemployment; others insisted that the removals merely weakened the economic pressures which were the only practical check on the increase of population and unemployment. However, in Ireland where emigration went on till almost every family had a leg over the Atlantic and in the north and west of Scotland removals to the New World, together with famine, reduced population between 1831 and 1851 to a degree which may have brought relief to the overcrowded labour market as the advocates of emigration were promising. On the other hand, in England and Wales population rose from 12 million in 1820 to almost 20 million by 1860 and generally with a higher level of capital investment, industrialization, employment and standard of living that in the decade after 1815 when the government gave a little aid to emigration. The Times announced that overpopulation was a relative condition, that by a reinvigoration of trade the country could well support its population.

With the force of such theories before them, without the hindsight to be found in later economic data, and pressed by humanitarians and reformers who demanded more help for those in need, more protection for workers at home and passengers at sea, Parliament early created a series of committees to investigate conditions and present recommendations. The committee of 1822 which considered the dangerous state of agriculture in the United Kingdom refused to recommend emigration as a means of rural relief. Though the government voted costs for a small emigration to the Cape of Good Hope in 1819, it was not until the committees of 1823 and 1825 studied the distress and near-chaos in parts of Ireland that emigration as a form of assistance won sufficient
approval to cause Parliament to vote a considerable sum for aiding emigration. This vote stipulated that a committee should investigate the subject of British emigration. When that committee had heard witnesses for and against government-supported emigration, it recommended in 1827 that assistance be given to paupers on parish rolls who wished to emigrate and secondly that a board of emigration commissioners be appointed with agents to watch over the movement of emigration. Strong criticism of the recommendation for assisting poor emigrants came from social reformers, free traders and from theorists who proposed to sell colonial lands in order to raise a fund for assisting emigrants and thus to maintain the supply of land, capital and labour in good balance. The committee’s plan for assisted emigration failed to win attention in Parliament; later an act was approved to authorize parishes to raise money to help paupers to emigrate. The parish-aided emigration did not find favour; for the emigrant, parish assistance bore a stigma; for the parish, those dependents it wished to be rid of the colonies did not wish to receive. The number of needy whom this system helped to emigrate from England and Wales in the decade after 1836 was only 9,500.

What the government did not offer officially, social-minded groups and individuals tried to offer privately. Some English parishes found private funds, weavers’, machinists’ and other societies taxed members to send to the colonies people who could not find means for their own removal. The Female Emigration Society, the Poor Law Ragged Schools, the Children’s Friendly Society produced money for the same purpose. Some English, Scottish and Irish landlords equipped at their own expense hundreds of emigrants from their estates, one landlord at the rate of £5 each for 3,000 tenants.

The proposal for colonial land sale and assisted emigration, meanwhile, worked well enough for those who preferred to make the expensive journey to Australia. For Canada where the Crown’s lands were depleted and the voyage was less costly and the danger of losing emigrants to the United States ever present, the government believed that independent, unassisted emigration was the best policy. By mid-century the emigration commissioners were convinced like the advocates of free trade that unassisted emigration — even to the United States — was a very healthy movement. The government had no right, the commissioners decided and subsequently cabinet officers agreed, to promote emigration actively; for enquirers about emigration, the government must offer neither encouragement nor discouragement but information only. With the help of their agents in the ports, the emigration commissioners began to provide this information on sheets which gave the emigrant what he needed on routes of travel, prices, kinds and places of employment and other opportunities in the colonies.
The second recommendation of the emigration committee of 1827, the appointment of an emigration board or commission and emigrant or port officers, which had quickly become effective, continued in one form or another until 1877. An emigrant agent was appointed for Quebec in 1828, to important British ports in 1833-34 and later to St. John and other colonial ports. In the colonies, these devoted traffic officers met emigrant vessels — which were often "heavily laden" with disease — looked over the passenger lists, reported on the condition of the ship to the British emigration board or the helping agency, tried to advise new arrivals on the location of open lands and employment, and sometimes struggled with the local charitable groups over the expense which ill-prepared emigrants imposed on their meagre resources.

In the home ports, the emigrant officers — naval officers on half pay and special salary — dealt not only with the bewildered emigrants but also with the suppliers who profited from the emigrant trade and with the most formidable profiteers of all, the shipping interests whose vessels they had to inspect for conformity to the current passenger vessel law. Until 1842, the timber shipping owners provided three-quarters of the tonnage in the British North American trade. Once the timber products from the colonies were unloaded in the British port, the windowless timber hulk was cheaply lined on all sides and down the centre with double tiers of six-foot square bunks and filled with hopeful emigrants. Emigrants travelling in these bunks in the ship's hold were said to be supporting the shipping merchants at the rate of £650,000 a year; for such accommodations and locating himself in the colony an emigrant needed at least £50 in cash. To travel in the ship's cabin with his family and buy colonial land on arrival would cost a man possibly £500.

Under terms of an act of 1803, the hold of a timber vessel converted for passengers might carry 200 persons if it measured 95 by 25 feet and 5½ feet in height; by 1835 the same space might legally carry 240. Sometimes in a strong, sound ship, with a good master, sufficient food and fair weather the Atlantic crossing was pleasant and the sturdier emigrants landed invigorated. Too often in years of peak emigration, the battered hulks of the old Atlantic trade, with hatches battened down, were crowded with undernourished, sick emigrants. Life went on in public; in fetid air and the eerie light of cooking fires, the sick lay in open berths beside brawling noisy creatures; births and deaths occurred. In 1840 one per cent of those embarked died at sea; in the potato famine year 16 per cent died. Such tragedies roused humane-minded persons. The colonies imposed a head tax on passengers to raise the costs for shippers; Parliament enacted new laws to control the shipper's
space per passenger, the construction of the vessel, and the supplies carried. The decisive revolution in ocean transport came with the passenger vessel act of 1855, the Magna Carta of the emigrant, and with the use of iron and steam in larger ships. For the reforms achieved in the control of the emigrant traffic few deserve more credit than the emigration commissioners in London and the emigrant agents in the ports, two of whom died following long service, one after repeated exposure to disease during inspections of arrivals and the other after exhausting inspections in a port which often saw 30 vessels with 8,000 passengers sail on one spring tide.

**In the Control of Colonial Lands**

The opportunity to own land was perhaps the colonies’ greatest attraction for an emigrant. Obtaining information about available lots was difficult: such large acreages had been acquired by favoured applicants and reserved for special purposes that unheld government lots were often scarce; few newly-arrived immigrants could hunt them down. Although the report was widely held that 100-acre lots were given free, in reality the fees to be paid to officers who administered the land system and the cost of travel inland often prevented the immigrant from dealing with the government. In such an emergency, he might happen upon a land speculator whose terms he could meet, he might work for wages while saving to begin independently, or he might squat on what seemed to be unoccupied land. When in the 1830’s the government began to sell land directly, the immigrant’s practices did not change greatly. He might never reach the site of the land sale or, if he did, he might be outbid by a native speculator; and by 1856 government land was available in Canada only on the rough Laurentian plateau. Responsibility for the inefficiency of land administration must be borne partially by the home and colonial governments, partially by the rival colonial groups who enriched themselves without thinking of the good of the colonies. The cash-poor emigrant who survived the ocean crossing and managed to acquire land had taken a long step on the colonial road to the survival of the fittest.

The government land sale policy created a new type of individual and corporate land owner. Individuals who acquired land by government grant or by purchase sometimes advised and assisted immigrants wisely and developed prosperous settlements; a few happened to resemble the modern real estate swindler. Beginning in 1826, three influential groups of investors purchased large areas of colonial lands in order to profit by selling land themselves. The Canada Company of Upper Canada popularized that colony’s possibilities in the British Isles and in colonial ports so that by the time of its tenth anniversary it had sold 100,000 acres to occupying settlers. The New Brunswick and Nova Scotia Land Company of the maritime colonies also advertised widely and
spent heavily to attract settlers. In the Eastern Townships of Lower Canada, the British American Land Company carried on the industrial development of its region as well as the settlement of its lands. The optimistic propaganda of these companies promoted immigration and the growth of the colonies in a way very different from the "information only" policy of the emigration commissioners in London.

The Uncontrolled Remittance

Neither the activities of the British government and the charities nor the publicity of the land companies and emigration publications influenced the growth of emigration as much as the one force over which the government could have no control — remittances of money from friends and relatives in the colonies. In the British Isles letters which arrived with descriptions of life in the New World were passed from family to family until they were often worn to shreds. If a letter contained a remittance of money, it proved all that a hesitating would-be emigrant needed to know; the sender had not only established himself but he advised the recipient to follow him. Although it has been impossible to learn the exact amount of these private remittances, it is known that between 1834 and 1842 four embryo banks in Upper Canada sent moneys totalling more than £20,000. In London, it was estimated that £1,700,000 was spent on emigration in 1849 and from Quebec came the estimate that in 1850 such gifts from North America amounted to almost £1,000,000. Through remittances, emigration was paying for itself.

III. IMMIGRANTS BUILD A NEW HOMELAND

In the British Isles, the political reform act of 1832 did not quiet the uneasiness which had spread from unemployment and the Paris and Belgian revolutions of 1830. As the textile, metal and pottery industries, railroad building and capital investment expanded and for a time brought an increase in employment, both industry and agriculture became sensitive to markets abroad and overproduction at home. A depression which began in the 1830's continued intermittently for ten years. In the manufacturing centres, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, the Manchester Guardian in 1841 found the unemployed numbering tens of thousands. Uncertain of their livelihood at home, attracted by publications and advertising flyers landing opportunities in the colonies, enticed by persuasions of shipping agents, and possibly invited by remittances from relatives overseas, British subjects made their way to the ports and the emigrant ships. Until after the great famine, Ireland supplied the largest part of these hordes.
THE IMMIGRANTS

From the industrial Midlands, the farming areas of England, Scotland and Ireland, the numbers of emigrants reaching the American colonial ports tripled in 1839, following the Canadian rebellions, and doubled again in 1840. From 1846 to 1859, labourers and farmers were far in the majority among these arrivals, carpenters ranked second in numbers, then came miners, shoemakers and tailors, house servants, blacksmiths and masons — the workers most needed in a new country. In this later period, even those who were assisted to emigrate seemed to be well supplied, ready to travel inland and search for work. The numbers of professional men and farmers of experience, some bringing £1,000 and the family silver plate, began to increase. More and more of the arrivals came to join relatives who were already established; 245 wives reached Quebec to join husbands in 1844 and brought 713 children with them.

Unless they received help from the charities on landing, almost all of the immigrants vanished from the ports, leaving no trace except the ship’s and the emigrant officer’s hasty notations and family tales to be told and retold by descendants. One Quebec port record indicates that of about 32,000 arrivals in 1846, perhaps 1,900 remained in the lower province, about 28,000 went to the upper, and possibly one-fifth of all passed on to the United States. Four years later when again 32,000 disembarked in Quebec, the proportions for the lower and upper parts of Canada were as 4 to 14 but the loss of population jumped to two-fifths. In New Brunswick in various of these years, according to official despatch, practically 100 per cent of the able-bodied male arrivals crossed to the United States. Except for the year 1842 when a number of immigrants failed to find work and returned home, the British exodus rose and fell with depressions and recoveries in Britain and attractions in the colonies, until the famine and typhus emigration of 1847 overwhelmed all colonial reception facilities. Quarantine stations could not find sufficient beds or tents for the enfeebled arrivals. In the worst year about 98,000 reached the Grosse Isle station near Quebec; almost 10 per cent of all were detained as too ill to proceed; of these one-third died at the station. In New Brunswick in the same year, arrivals totalled 17,000 and about 700 died in quarantine. The emigrant officer at Quebec fell ill of the “emigrant fever,” the doctor in charge dared hire only aides who had survived the same disease, and the local hospitals lost by death many devoted helpers. When the immigrants carried the tragic fever inland, the crisis stimulated unparalleled generosity and a sense of responsibility and independence. Thereafter as conditions in the British Isles improved, emigration was no longer a fearful flight but a normal removal of hopeful citizens reacting to new opportunities.
The British, meanwhile, relying on industrial capitalism, adopted a policy of free trade. In the difficult years after 1815 a few nuisance taxes had been removed, industry and commerce were encouraged by the lowering of certain customs duties and barriers to foreign trade, and agricultural interests lost some favours. By 1850, even the Corn and Navigation laws which had assisted some British and colonial producers and merchants were gone. Great Britain's splendid Victorian era had come and the British North American colonies were practically "on their own."

**Colonial Responsibilities Growing**

In the colonies, the increase in population created new responsibilities and opportunities. The changes were seen first in the ports where the arrival of thousands made growing demands upon hospital, charitable and transportation services. Even before the cholera and famine ships of 1832 and 1847 inundated the wharves with helpless and dying human beings, the inhabitants of Halifax, Quebec, Montreal and other ports formed emigrant societies which advised and often cared for confused and dazed new arrivals. Eventually the British Treasury each year approved a grant of about £1,000 for relief in the port of Quebec and the New Brunswick government contributed to the assistance of immigrants in need. Transportation of immigrants became a business enterprise; river batteaux men, wagoners, steamboat owners profited. By 1841 ship building was a sizeable industry: Quebec alone launched 64 ships that year; in 1850 the maritime provinces were fourth in registered tonnage of the world. The building of the Lachine and Welland and other canals and later the railroads enlarged local opportunities and employed thousands of workers. When the colonial governments began to improve roads, waterways and harbours, the need for labourers increased even beyond the number of 20,000 which had been estimated for 1835. The employment offered in these expanding occupations and the arrival of British capital to spur on development in others greatly enlarged the attractions by which the colonies drew population from the British Isles.

The first step towards colonial control of immigration was taken when the governments of Lower Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia authorized the head tax on arriving emigrants in 1832. Although the head tax in Quebec sometimes brought in £15,000 a year, much of the sum had to be spent in forwarding immigrants inland. As the British belief in free trade, even in human beings, was firm and the government's emigrant officers in the British Isles were partly responsible for the condition in which emigrants sailed, the British Treasury began to grant a supplement to the colonial head tax. Experience with these duties in the ports, the occasional arrival of emigrants who were ill-adapted to colonial
life and the sturdy appearance of Scandinavian emigrants who were passing through British America to the United States stimulated the colonial governments' desire to eliminate the unfit and choose their own immigrants. In the mid-1850's, immigration agents from New Brunswick and Canada went to England, Norway and Germany to spread accurate information and encourage emigration to British North America. After 1855 the British government no longer appropriated money for the emigrant agents' work in the North American colonies nor for helping emigrants arriving in the colonies.

**Filling in the New Homeland**

Between the years 1815 and 1855 almost 1 million British emigrants landed in British North America ports. Even after allowing for a drain of population to the United States, the numbers remaining were sufficient to set the character of all the colonies, except French Canada, for the next two generations. From immigration and natural increase, the population which had been about 2 million in 1850 grew to 3½ million by the year of Confederation. The maritime colonies had received varying influxes of British-born immigrants, and the vast empty space of western Canada had been given a first population, which, with a few exceptions, was also British in origin. Although colonial life was predominantly rural, when the 1860's began spots which were tiny hamlets in 1845 were thriving villages; St. John had almost 30,000 inhabitants in a province of 250,000, Halifax more than 25,000 in a province of 330,000, Toronto some 45,000 and Montreal 90,000 and their provinces (then united) about 1 million each.

Appreciation of the achievements of the British immigrants is not easy in modern times when power machines slash down trees and medicine works miracles. Clearing wooded lands was a major feat for the immigrants because they were unfamiliar with the art of wielding the North American woodsman's heavy axe. They could not at first combat the climate, the intense heat and cold, the severe winter chill and summer ague, the effects of the new foods, the malaria and the mosquito, the stark loneliness in the dark little opening in the thick woods. Lives were lost from accidents and disease, but before the period ended, cleared farms were widespread and many roads had been cut in all the colonies. The exports of fish from the coasts and timber from the forests were important and the export of farm products was rivalling both. Settlements no longer had the appearance of raw pioneering: churches, schools, taverns, stores were rising and woolen, shoe and furniture industries were growing. Almost two thousand miles of railroad were laid between the years 1850 and 1860; steam engines were hauling freight and passengers and blowing their noisy whistles in the maritime provinces and from Rivière du Loup
on the St. Lawrence to Montreal, Toronto, and on to the border of the United States in Western Canada. In one lifetime, the immigrants were passing from a most primitive economy to the railroad age.

Emigrants who had arrived almost penniless were becoming landowners and proprietors, ready to hire other new arrivals. None who wished to work needed to lack employment. Immigrant lawyers, ministers, doctors and families of many types were giving their communities an organized, independent life. It inspired strangers with confidence and hope. Difficult times might lie ahead, as they had in the British Isles; but the land and the people were young, local pride and a new patriotism were growing.
Statistics used are from official British and colonial government records. Some figures, however, may be official approximations because there were too few naval and port officers to inspect the emigrant traffic efficiently and because of the artifices practised by some agents in that traffic.
Arrivals at the Port of Quebec from the British Isles 1829-1859

Thousands

From England:  
From Ireland:  
From Scotland:  

1829  1835  1840  1845  1850  1855  1859

0  3  6  9  12  15  18  21  24  27  30  33  36  39  42  45  48  51  54
Basic manuscript sources for British emigration and government policy were consulted in the Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, London, in volumes of letters (C.O. 384) from the "Emigration Room" of the old colonial department. Related correspondence was found in C.O. 385 and in the exchanges between colonial and British government officials in C.O. 42, 217 and 188 and the G series of the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa. Essential information is available in printed Parliamentary Papers; these include reports of government committees which investigated conditions in the British Isles: on agriculture, (Parl. Paps., 1822, V, 165, 236, 348); the Poor Laws, (Parl. Paps., 1817, VI, 462; 1818, V, 107, 237, 358; 1819, II, 529; 1834, XXVII, 44); emigration, (Parl. Paps. 1823, XIII, 401; 1825, XVIII, 131; 1826-7, V, 237, 550; 1841, VI, 182, 333; 1847-8, XVII, 415); the conveyance of emigrants (Parl. Paps., 1851, XIX, 632; 1854, XIII, 163, 349); and official reports, descriptive, critical and statistical, from government agencies and later the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners and the port agents, (Parl. Paps., 1831-2, XXXII, 724; 1837-8, VIII, 183; 1838, XL, 388), etc.

Important also for examining the movement of emigration and immigration are Acts of Parliament, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, the Journals of the legislative bodies in Great Britain and the colonies and a number of studies of British emigration and colonial immigration: S. C. Johnson, A History of Emigration from the United Kingdom to North America, 1763-1912 (London, New York, 1913), N. Macdonald, Canada 1763-1841, Immigration and Settlement (Toronto, New York, 1939), both reissued recently; W. A. Carrothers, Emigration from the British Isles (London, 1929); W. S. Shepperson, British Emigration to North America (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1957); H. I. Cowan, British Emigration to British North America, The First Hundred Years (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1961); W. F. Adams, Ireland and Irish Emigration to the New World (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1932); M. L. Hansen, The Atlantic Migration 1607-1860 (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1940). Revealing sections on the growth of Canadian population and on the causes for British emigration may be seen in standard histories of Canada and economic histories of Great Britain.