

Speculation and the Surveyor: An Analysis of the Role Played by Surveyors in the Settlement of Upper Canada*

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Land speculation has been recognized as playing a major role in the settlement of Ontario, but only recently have scholars examined this activity at a detailed level. One theme which remains to be investigated is the relationship between speculation and surveyors. From the beginning of settlement, the government used land in lieu of cash to reward people for different services. After 1818, surveyors were reimbursed for their duties with a percentage of the land surveyed. This paper outlines the dimensions of this particular process of remuneration and then examines the landholding behaviour of a small number of surveyors, making use of the information contained in the Abstract Index to Deeds.

On sait que la spéculation foncière a joué un rôle important dans la colonisation de l'Ontario, mais elle n'a que récemment fait l'objet d'études détaillées. La place qu'y ont occupée les arpenteurs reste encore à dégager. Dès le départ, les autorités ont substitué l'octroi de terres au paiement comptant pour services rendus. Après 1818, les arpenteurs reçoivent ainsi une partie des terres qu'ils avaient arpentées. À partir des renseignements que fournissent les registres de l'Abstract Index to Deeds, nous définissons ici ce mode de rémunération dans ses aspects essentiels et nous retraçons le comportement de quelques arpenteurs devenus propriétaires fonciers.

Studies of land speculation in early Ontario have concentrated on providing estimates of the volume and extent of speculation and on discovering the individuals involved in such activity.¹ This is difficult work because speculation is a multi-faceted activity. Although there has been much concern with identifying the dimensions of the problem, the mechanics of speculation have been relatively neglected. What is speculation? What are its varied forms, both endemic and exterior to the agrarian system? What was its impact on the land market? Was such activity generally profitable?

These are questions which necessitate further analysis. Most research has concentrated on the examination of speculative activity on the part of individuals who viewed landed capital as a source of power and prestige

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¹ See, for example: G. PATTERSON, "Land Settlement in Upper Canada", in *Sixteenth Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario*, ed.: A. FRASER (Toronto: Jackson W. James, 1921), pp. 1-255; L. GATES, *Land Policies of Upper Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968); L. A. JOHNSON, "Land policy, population growth and social structure in the Home District, 1793-1851", *Ontario History*, 63, 1 (1971): 41-60; J. CLARKE, "The role of political position and family and economic linkage in land speculation in the Western District of Upper Canada, 1788-1815", *The Canadian Geographer*, 19, 1 (1975): 18-34.

as well as an economic resource. This study is similar to previous efforts in that it focuses on a group of evident large-scale speculators who used land to further their own gain, but this is a group whose land activities have never been examined in detail. Specifically, I am referring to those land surveyors who were reimbursed for their duties with a percentage of the lands surveyed. "Inevitably", as Gentilcore and Donkin state, "these lands figured prominently in subsequent speculation [and thus] the whole question of the role of the surveyor in land speculation remains to be investigated."²

This question is the focus of this paper. In particular it outlines the dimensions of such activity and then concentrates on the landholding behaviour of a small number of surveyors, making use of the information contained in the Abstract Index to Deeds.³ An effort will be made to discern any speculative activity on their part and to investigate the profitability of such activity.

I. — THE REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

Prior to 1818, expenses for surveys as well as crown purchases of Indian lands and half-fees on privileged grants had been defrayed from the Military Chest.⁴ However, because of an increasing lack of funds, a system of survey under contract was introduced. Two different interpretations of why this scarcity developed have been offered. Patterson argues that an order from Lord Bathurst, the Colonial Secretary, forbidding the exaction of settlement and survey fees, resulted in the lack of funds for further survey.⁵ Gates, on the other hand, attributes the dearth of funds to the Crown's refusal to award control of the revenue derived from natural resources to the provinces.⁶ Faced with the increasing number of discharged soldiers and immigrants for whom land had to be surveyed and free patents provided, the Legislative Assembly appealed to Lieutenant-Governor Maitland for assistance. While Maitland refused to agree to any provincial claims, instead supporting the Crown's control of resources, he did agree that the Assembly should not bear the expenses of further surveys. As a result, the new system of survey by contract was adopted.⁷

Whatever the reason for its creation, this new system was put into effect in December 1818 by an Order-in-Council. This order stated that payment for surveys was to be in land and that applicants must state the

² R. L. GENTILCORE and K. DONKIN, "Land Surveys of Southern Ontario", *Cartographica* Monograph No. 8 (n.p., 1973), p. 20.

³ For a description of this source, see: R. W. WIDDIS, "Tracing Property Ownership in Nineteenth Century Ontario: A Guide to the Archival Sources", in *Canadian Papers in Rural History, Vol. II*, ed.: D. AKENSON (Gananoque: Langdale Press, 1980), pp. 83-102.

⁴ GATES, *Land Policies of Upper Canada*, p. 157.

⁵ PATTERSON, "Land Settlement", p. 125.

⁶ GATES, *Land Policies of Upper Canada*, p. 157.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

percentage desired.⁸ My examination of letters written by surveyors to Thomas Ridout, surveyor-general, and dated January 1819, reveals that these bids ranged anywhere from 4.5 to ten percent, the latter being the figure proposed by Reuben Sherwood in his bid to survey Alfred and Plantagenet townships:

York. 20 January, 1819

Thomas Ridout Esquire,
Surveyor General.

Sir:

I will contract to survey and lay out upon the new principal the remaining unsurveyed tracts of the townships of Alfred and Plantagenet for ten percent, five percent thereof to be at my choice and five by draught and provided the deeds given unto me free of expense on the close of the survey without any claims therein obligating myself or assignees to perform any settlement duties thereon.

I have the honour to be your faithful servant,
signed R. Sherwood, deputy surveyor.⁹

Shortly after the beginning of the new system, however, the government decided on a general allotment of 4.5 percent of the surveyed land as payment for survey.¹⁰

The actual contract system is something which invites investigation. Payment in land was awarded to the contractor who in turn paid the surveyor out of his own pocket. In many cases, however, the contractor did the actual surveying. In effect, this was a three-tier system, composed of contractors who hired surveyors, contractors who performed the survey duties, and surveyors themselves.

II. — CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONTRACT SYSTEM

The historical literature is united in its condemnation of the contract system. For example, Johnson states: "While such payment could be justified in short-range economic terms, it merely helped perpetuate the system whereby non-residents, having their capital tied up in lands, had nothing to do but wait for a good price."¹¹ And Patterson claims that "the system of paying surveyors by grants of land had been adopted on conditions which enhanced the evil of extending locations without actual settlement".¹²

The most scathing censure emerged shortly after the system was initiated. Lord Durham's report of 1839 condemned not only the speculative activity of surveyors, but also the confusion and errors which resulted from the contract system:

⁸ PATTERSON, "Land Settlement", p. 125.

⁹ Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, Letters received by the Surveyor-General's Office, Roll 21, Volume 18, 1816-49, p. 55.

¹⁰ C. SCHOTT, "The Survey Methods", translated by Andrew F. Burghardt, *The Canadian Geographer*, 25, 1 (1981): 84.

¹¹ JOHNSON, "Land policy", p. 45.

¹² PATTERSON, "Land Settlement", p. 124.

The present state of surveys is inadequate and injurious to the settlement of land ... The practice introduced by Sir Peregrine Maitland, in spite of the results being pointed out by the then Surveyor General [Thomas Ridout], of letting out the surveys to any person who was willing to contract for them a certain quantity of land, produced extreme carelessness and inaccuracy ... The consequences of this have been confusion and uncertainty in the possessions of almost every man, and no small amount of litigation.¹³

In 1850, a later commissioner of Crown lands, Price, added further criticism of the contract system:

Valuing the lands given at four shillings an acre ... the surveys paid in land cost more than twice as much as those paid in cash, while it is notorious that the former were very erroneous and defective ... In some cases concessions or parts of concessions shown on plans have no existence on the ground, in others the lands have not been surveyed at all, but fictitious plans and field notes prepared which grossly mislead those who referred to them.¹⁴

In reality, the inefficiency of the system was recognized almost immediately, as revealed in the following excerpt from a letter sent by Ridout to Mahlon Burwell, the most prominent surveyor of that time, and dated 28 June 1823:

Are you aware of any injury and loss of property which several settlers have sustained in consequence of the incorrect surveys of the townships of London or Lubro or perhaps both?

Are you aware that a system of surveying is now going or likely to lead to similar injurious consequences?

Are you aware that the townships of East and West Tilbury and Romney have just been surveyed under the direction of a very young man named Mackintosh possessing neither the talent nor experience it is thought necessary for such an undertaking, and at any rate not found on the list of licensed deputy surveyors?

Do you know whether any other townships in the same quarter have been surveyed under the direction of a Mr. Weeks, whose name also is not found in the list of licensed deputy surveyors?¹⁵

Obviously Ridout was aware of the inadequacy of the surveys carried out under contract, but he was unable to convince the Council to change the system. The Council did attempt to distribute the percentage of lands selected by contractors as uniformly as possible by ordering this property to be described in such a manner that the Crown should pay for only one patent in each township. "But", as Patterson remarks, "the superior knowledge of the country possessed by the contractors often enabled them to choose the best lots in a given area, and 'surveyors script' was notoriously a good investment for speculation."¹⁶

This detailed knowledge of the land worked to the contractor's benefit. For example, an examination of the survey field notes of Charles Kennedy, Richard Bristol and Andrew Miller, deputy surveyors hired by Abraham

¹³ Lord Durham, quoted in Sir Charles LUCAS, ed., *Report on the Affairs of British North America*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), III: 231-32.

¹⁴ Commissioner Price, quoted in GATES, *Land Policies of Upper Canada*, p. 158.

¹⁵ Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, Letters written from Surveyor-General's Office, Roll 8, Volume 26, 1 January 1823 — 31 December 1826, p. 47.

¹⁶ PATTERSON, "Land Settlement", p. 126.

Nelles to survey the townships of Erin, Esquesing, Ennismore and Harvey between the years 1819 and 1822, shows that of the lands awarded as remuneration to Nelles, almost 29 percent of the parcels were described with the adjectives good or excellent; almost 5 percent were described as being good mill sites; nearly 8 percent fronted on water; over 70 percent were covered with maple, beech and basswood, an association of trees often linked with good land; and only 17 percent of the parcels contained sections of swamp.¹⁷

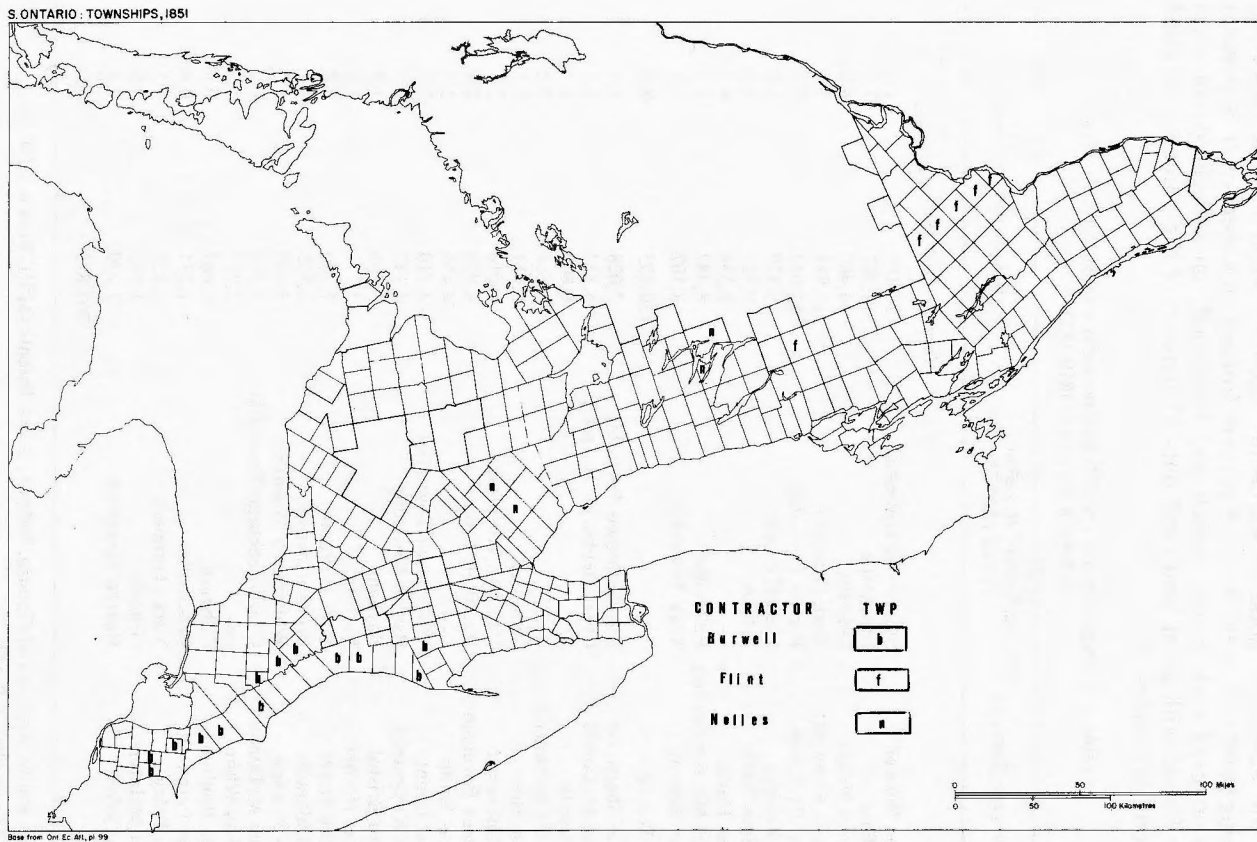
Table 1. — INDIVIDUALS (N=32) REIMBURSED FOR SURVEY DUTIES
IN UPPER CANADA, 1819-1825.

<i>Contractor/Surveyors</i>	<i>Place of Residence (circa 1820-25)</i>	<i>Reimbursed Acreage</i>	
		<i>Number of Acres*</i>	<i>% of Total Acreage Awarded</i>
Mahlon Burwell	Southwold Township	24,169	11.6
Billa Flint	Brockville	14,707	7.1
Abraham Nelles	Grimsby	14,460	6.9
James G. Chewett	York (Toronto)	11,913	5.7
Samuel Ryckman	Barton Township	11,042	5.3
Allan Robinet	York (Toronto)	10,120	4.9
Thaddeus Davis	Pelham	9,359	4.5
Charles Hays	—	8,534	4.1
Samuel Manson Benson	Belleville	8,482	4.1
Ezekiel Benson	York Township	8,107	3.9
Total Top 10		120,893	58.2
Reuben Sherwood	Elizabethtown Township	7,028	3.4
Duncan McDonell	Charlottenburgh Township	6,833	3.3
John Smyth	—	6,809	3.3
Nicholas McDonald	—	6,664	3.2
William Browne	Cornwall	6,311	3.1
John Goessman	Vaughan Township	6,010	2.9
Zaccheus Burnham	Hamilton Township	4,970	2.4
Thomas Smith	—	4,455	2.1
Gabriel Lount	Whitchurch Township	4,210	2.0
James Kirkpatrick	Barton Township	4,147	2.0
Richard Bristol	Bayham	3,800	1.8
Thomas Horner	Burford	3,773	1.8
Timothy Street	York (Toronto)	3,700	1.8
John Galbraith	Brock Township	3,555	1.7
James Pearson	Whitchurch Township	3,440	1.7
William McDonell	Charlottenburgh Township	2,550	1.2
Jonathan White	—	2,216	1.1
George Boulton	Cobourg	1,867	0.9
George Ferguson	Brockville	1,331	0.6
James Foley	York (Toronto)	1,130	0.5
Daniel McIntyre	Grimsby	1,120	0.5
Owen Quinn	Horton Township	1,080	0.5
Totals		207,892	100.0

Source: Public Archives of Ontario, Index to Land Patents (MSI), Reel 6, 1790-1825.

*Average number = 6,340.

¹⁷ Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, Survey Field Notes, Books 204, 207, 208, 249, 442.



Map 1. — UPPER CANADA TOWNSHIPS IN WHICH LAND WAS AWARDED TO THE THREE LARGEST CONTRACTORS, 1819-1825.

III. — DIMENSIONS OF SPECULATION

Lord Durham reports that by 1839, 264,000 acres of land had been awarded to persons contracting to make surveys.¹⁸ Much of this remuneration, however, had been granted during the first five years of the new system. In fact, the Index to Land Patents in the Public Archives of Ontario reveals that by 1825, 207,892 acres had been allotted as payment to contractors (Table 1).

This particular source is very useful because it reveals just who received land in compensation for survey duties. It is also illuminating for what it reveals about the remuneration process. Investigation shows that the person to whom the patents were awarded did not always collect them. Often individuals hired middlemen or land agents to collect the patents for them. Sometimes relatives or even friends picked up the patents for the contractors. It is also evident that property was sometimes issued in townships other than those which were surveyed directly by or under the auspices of the person to whom the patents were awarded.

Table 2. — REIMBURSED LAND AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL TOWNSHIP
ACREAGE IN UPPER CANADA, 1819-1825.

<i>Contractor / Surveyors</i>	<i>Township in which Land was Awarded</i>	<i>Reimbursed Acreage</i>	<i>Total Acreage of Township</i>	<i>Reimbursed Acreage as % of Township</i>	
Mahlon Burwell	Raleigh	2,172	69,000	3.14	
	Gosfield	916	61,000	1.50	
	Zone	2,950	63,000	4.68	
	Howard	1,714	58,000	2.95	
	East Tilbury	2,494	51,000	4.89	
	West Tilbury	2,306	51,000	4.52	
	Southwold	719	88,000	0.81	
	Yarmouth	1,024	71,000	1.44	
	Houghton	1,507	—	—	
	Ekfrid	5,265	69,000	7.63	
	Mosa	2,237	44,000	5.08	
	Middleton	875	44,000	1.98	
	Billa Flint	Fitzroy	1,880	64,000	2.93
		Darling	2,080	64,000	3.25
Pakenham		1,920	64,000	3.00	
Lewant		1,818	54,000	3.36	
Torbolton		795	25,000	3.18	
Marmora		3,100	69,000	4.49	
Abraham Nelles	Palmerston	3,114	69,000	4.51	
	Esquesing	1,400	69,000	2.02	
	Erin	1,720	69,000	2.49	
	Harvey (Emily Gore)	5,900	110,907	5.31	
James G. Chewett	Ennismore	5,440	20,257	26.85	
	Caledon	1,400	57,000	2.45	
	Albion	2,635	55,000	4.79	
	Oro	3,105	62,000	5.00	
	Medonte	2,803	56,000	5.00	
	Vespra	1,970	56,000	3.51	

¹⁸ LUCAS, *Report*, III: 222.

Samuel Ryckman	Nassagaweya	973	34,000	2.86
	Caledon	1,685	57,000	2.95
	Eramosa	2,030	34,000	5.97
	Garafraxa	4,631	89,000	5.20
	Erin	1,723	69,000	2.49
Allan Robinet	Tosorontio	2,240	45,000	4.97
	Mono	960	69,000	1.39
	Mulmur	3,572	69,000	5.17
	Amarenth	3,248	65,000	4.99
Thaddeus Davis	Zorra	5,069	113,000	4.48
	Nissouri	4,290	92,000	4.66
Charles Hays	Belmont	8,534	71,636	11.91
Samuel M. Benson	Hungerford	2,466	100,000	2.46
	Sheffield	3,158	87,000	3.62
	Bedford	2,858	87,000	3.28
Ezekiel Benson	Adjala	2,310	34,000	6.79
	Essa	3,253	69,000	4.71
	Mono	2,544	69,000	3.68
Reuben Sherwood	Toronto Gore	900	17,000	5.29
	Nassagaweya	1,000	34,000	2.94
	McNab	5,128	69,242	7.40
Duncan McDonell	Cumberland	5,612	79,436	7.06
	Gloucester	1,221	88,000	1.38
John Smyth	Elzevir	3,447	69,000	4.99
	Kaladar	3,362	69,000	4.87
Nicholas McDonald	Clarence	6,664	69,000	9.65
William Browne	Seymour	3,515	69,000	5.09
	Alfred	1,320	48,000	2.75
	Plantagnet	1,476	92,000	1.60
	Tiny	3,796	70,000	5.42
John Goessman	Flos	2,214	55,000	4.02
	Otonabee	3,150	70,000	4.50
Zaccheus Burnham	Asphodel	1,820	44,000	4.13
	Sombra	4,455	99,000	4.50
Thomas Smith	Tecumseth	2,350	69,000	3.40
Gabriel Lount	West Guillimbury	1,960	69,000	2.84
	Fenelon	4,147	69,000	6.01
James Kirkpatrick	Esquesing	800	69,000	1.15
Richard Bristol	Chinguacousy	1,800	66,000	2.72
	Toronto	600	64,000	0.93
	Trafalgar	600	69,000	0.86
	Dawn	3,773	99,000	3.81
Thomas Horner	Esquesing	800	69,000	1.15
	Toronto	1,000	64,000	1.56
	Chinguacousy	1,900	66,000	2.87
John Galbraith	Mariposa	3,555	71,101	4.99
James Pearson	Innisfil	3,440	69,000	4.98
William McDonell	Russell	2,550	46,344	5.50
Jonathan White	Thorah	2,216	33,000	6.71
George Boulton	Verulam	1,867	63,658	2.93
George Ferguson	Tyendinaga	1,331	87,000	1.52
James Foley	Madoc	1,130	69,000	1.63
Daniel McIntyre	Madoc	1,120	69,000	1.62
Owen Quinn	Horton	1,080	43,000	2.51
Totals		207,892	5,252,581	3.90*

* Not including Houghton acreage awarded to Mahlon Burwell.

Sources: Public Archives of Ontario, Index to Land Patents (MSI), Reel 6, 1790-1825; Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, Letters written from Surveyor General's Office, Roll 8, Volume 26, 1 January 1823 — 31 December 1826, pp. 43-47.

Table 2 and Map 1 reveal more clearly the amounts and distribution of land awarded to contractors between 1819 and 1825. While the figure of 4.5 percent was decided upon as the standard percentage of payment, the information in Table 2 shows that this amount was not always enforced. The actual numbers in many cases either exceeded or fell short of this 4.5 percent figure. For example, Abraham Nelles received almost 27 percent of Emily Gore Township (now Ennismore) in payment for the surveys of Burleigh, Emily and Harvey townships (Figure 1). At the other extreme, Richard Bristol only received 0.86 percent of the total area of Trafalgar township in payment. But allowance must be made of the fact that in this particular case and in other instances also, the survey was undertaken for only a portion of the township listed and it also must be noted that the extremely large percentages may be explained by the fact that the contractor chose to select his property in total in one township as opposed to collecting smaller parcels in several townships. Yet, how can we explain the fact that Richard Bristol and Timothy Street, surveyors for the entire township of Chinguacousy, were awarded 3,700 acres or 5.7 percent of the entire acreage of that township?

IV. — CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTRACTORS

The identification of those persons awarded remuneration for survey duties was made possible by reference to the Index List of Patents and their family, economic and social backgrounds were established by reference to a number of secondary source materials.¹⁹ Of those thirty-five persons receiving land as compensation for survey duties between 1819 and 1825, most were deputy land surveyors although there is evidence to suggest that in certain cases, these persons hired others to carry out the survey. For example, Abraham Nelles, a licensed deputy surveyor, hired Charles Kennedy to survey Erin and Esquesing townships in 1819, Richard Bristol to survey part of Esquesing that same year, and Andrew Miller to survey Emily Gore and Harvey townships in 1822.

Although most of the persons listed in Table 1 were licensed surveyors, some served as contractors only. Billa Flint (1805-94), for example, who received almost 15,000 acres of land in payment for survey duties during the years 1823-25, never completed a survey in his life. He was a successful Belleville merchant who sat for Hastings in the Legislative Assembly from 1847 to 1851 and for South Hastings from 1854 to 1857.²⁰ George Strange Boulton (1797-1869), who received almost 2,000 acres in Verulam township, was a lawyer. Born the third son of D'Arcy Boulton and educated by the Reverend John Strachan, he represented Durham in the Legislative Assembly from 1830 to 1841 and was appointed a member of the Legislative Council of Canada in 1847.²¹

¹⁹ These secondary materials include: W. S. WALLACE, *The Macmillan Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1963); *Reports of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors*, No. 24 (1909) and No. 35 (1921).

²⁰ WALLACE, *The Macmillan Dictionary*, p. 237.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.



Figure 1. — REMUNERATION OF ABRAHAM NELLES, EMILY GORE EXAMPLE.

Source: Public Archives of Ontario, R.G. 1, Map Collection, C-I-10.

Many of those who were licensed deputy surveyors also held some political office in their lifetime. The largest contractor/surveyor, Mahlon Burwell (1783-1846), was a member of the House of Assembly for Middlesex from 1812 to 1824 and from 1830 to 1834 and held the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the militia.²² James Grant Chewett (1793-1862), the son of the former joint Surveyor-General, William Chewett, was elected as an alderman of Toronto in 1835 and was later elected as the first president of the Bank of Toronto in 1856.²³ Further examination reveals that most of the contractors and surveyor/contractors were born into the Upper Canadian élite and quickly accumulated property and positions of power. Indeed, many of them were important members of local Tory compacts.

V. — LANDHOLDING BEHAVIOUR

This paper addresses the question of whether or not these individuals engaged in speculative activity. Speculation is defined as the activity whereby a person acquires and holds land for the express purpose of selling part or all of it for a profit at a later date. On the basis of this definition and an examination of the surveyors' land transactions as illustrated in the Abstract Index to Deeds, it is possible to ascertain the extent of their speculative behaviour. Rather than examine the landholding behaviour of all the designated contractors and surveyors, this analysis will focus on the land activities of three prominent contractor/surveyors: Abraham Nelles, and the father and son team of Ezekiel and Samuel Manson Benson.

Table 3. — TIME LAG BEFORE TRANSFER OF LAND PARCELS:
THREE CASE STUDIES, c. 1819-1850.

A) ABRAHAM NELLES (COMPLETE PARCEL)								
Years	Esquesing Township		Erin Township		Harvey Township		Emily Gore Township	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<1	4	66.6	4	66.6	37	84.9	30	90.9
1 — 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3 — 5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6 — 10	1	16.7	0	0	2	4.5	0	0
11 — 15	0	0	0	0	5	11.6	3	9.1
16 — 20	1	16.7	2	33.4	0	0	0	0
>20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer before Patent Date	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	6	100.0	6	100.0	44	100.0	33	100.0

²² *Reports*, No. 24 (1909), pp. 11-37.

²³ *Reports*, No. 35 (1921), p. 46.

A) ABRAHAM NELLES (PART OF PARCEL)

<1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	50.0
1 — 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3 — 5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6 — 10	1	50.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11 — 15	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	50.0
16 — 20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
>20	1	50.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer before Patent Date	0	0	2	100.0	0	0	0	0
Totals	2	100.0	2	100.0	0	0	2	100.0

B) EZEKIEL BENSON (COMPLETE PARCEL)

Years	Adjala Township		Essa Township		Mono Township	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<1	3	27.3	2	10.5	2	16.7
1 — 2	7	63.6	8	40.2	7	58.3
3 — 5	1	9.1	5	26.3	3	25.0
6 — 10	0	0	1	5.2	0	0
11 — 15	0	0	2	10.4	0	0
16 — 20	0	0	0	0	0	0
>20	0	0	1	5.2	0	0
Transfer before Patent Date	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	11	100.0	19	100.0	12	100.0

B) EZEKIEL BENSON (PART OF PARCEL)

<1	0	0	0	0	0	0
1 — 2	0	0	0	0	0	0
3 — 5	1	25.0	0	0	0	0
6 — 10	0	0	0	0	1	50.0
11 — 15	2	50.0	0	0	1	50.0
16 — 20	0	0	0	0	0	0
>20	1	25.0	2	100.0	0	0
Transfer before Patent Date	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	4	100.0	2	100.0	2	100.0

C) SAMUEL MANSON BENSON (COMPLETE PARCEL)

Years	Hungerford Township		Sheffield Township		Bedford Township	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<1	6	60.0	1	14.3	0	0
1 — 2	1	10.0	5	71.4	1	5.6
3 — 5	1	10.0	0	0	6	33.3
6 — 10	0	0	1	14.3	2	11.2
11 — 15	0	0	0	0	1	5.6
16 — 20	0	0	0	0	1	5.6
>20	2	20.0	0	0	0	0

Transfer before Patent Date	0	0	0	0	7	38.7
Totals	10	100.0	7	100.0	20	100.0
C) <i>SAMUEL MANSON BENSON (PART OF PARCEL)</i>						
<1	0	0	4	50.0	0	0
1 — 2	0	0	1	12.5	1	50.0
3 — 5	0	0	0	0	1	50.0
6 — 10	0	0	0	0	0	0
11 — 15	0	0	0	0	0	0
16 — 20	0	0	2	25.0	0	0
>20	0	0	1	12.5	0	0
Transfer before Patent Date	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	0	0	8	100.0	2	100.0

Sources: Public Archives of Ontario, Abstract Index to Deeds, and Index to Land Patents (MSI), Reel 6, 1790-1825.

Table 3 shows that in all three cases, the contractor/surveyors sold most of their remunerated property within a short period of time after receiving their land. Obviously these individuals were not interested in developing their property but rather were desirous of making profit as soon as demand pushed the price up. Unfortunately, the Abstract Index to Deeds does not always list the sale price between the two parties involved and so it is difficult to ascertain the profits made by speculation. But this information is available in most cases and this gives us some idea as to the amount of money involved.

For example, Abraham Nelles sold 562 acres of land in Harvey township on 27 July 1824 and 1,599 acres in both Harvey and Emily Gore townships on 27 February 1824 to a David Kern for £100 and £250 respectively. This averages out to about 3s. 10d. for the land in Harvey and 3s. 6d. for the land in Harvey and Emily Gore. Nelles also sold 3,644 acres of land in Harvey township and 2,964 acres in Emily Gore township on 27 February 1824 to Andrew Miller for £500 and £400 respectively. This averages out to about 3s. 2d. for the land in both townships. Miller was hired by Nelles to survey both townships in 1822 and so it may be suggested that the contract stipulated that the latter was to sell land to the former at a rate below the usual price as remuneration for the survey duties completed. Examination of other transactions between contractor and surveyor may prove this assumption to be correct and illustrate that this type of contractual agreement was a common procedure of the time.

Table 4 reveals what Andrew Miller and Charles Kennedy, surveyors hired by Abraham Nelles to carry out the surveys of Harvey and Emily Gore townships and Esquesing and Erin townships respectively, did with the property sold to them by Nelles at what I perceive to be prices lower than the going rate. Kennedy received little land and so it is difficult to make any statement as to his landholding behaviour, but there is evidence

that Miller sold land shortly after acquiring ownership. Thus, Miller shares with Nelles and the two Bensons the tendency to sell property as soon as possible, presumably as soon as the market conditions made it possible to achieve some margin of profit. Miller did, however, hold on to some land for the rest of his life and some of this property was passed on to his inheritors while the rest, which had been left vacant, was put on public sale by the sheriff of the district.

As mentioned, most of the property acquired by Nelles and the two Bensons was quickly sold. These individuals were involved in other affairs including politics and business and so had little interest in dealing extensively in land. Nelles, besides being a member of parliament, was also involved in several Grimsby businesses and was a captain in the militia.²⁴ Both Bensons were more directly involved with surveying and displayed a greater tendency to hold on to property before selling, although Samuel Benson arranged to sell much of his land in Bedford township before he even received his patent. But the property records reveal that in this example, the contractor (Nelles), the surveyor/contractors (Bensons) and the surveyor (Andrew Miller) were very eager to sell their property quickly.

Table 4. — TIME LAG BEFORE TRANSFER OF LAND PARCELS: SURVEYORS RECEIVING PROPERTY FROM ABRAHAM NELLES AS REMUNERATION FOR SURVEY DUTIES: TWO CASE STUDIES, C. 1819-1850.

<i>A) CHARLES KENNEDY (COMPLETE PARCEL)</i>				
<i>Years</i>	<i>Esquesing Township</i>		<i>Erin Township</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
< 1	0	0	0	0
1 — 2	0	0	0	0
3 — 5	0	0	0	0
6 — 10	0	0	0	0
11 — 15	0	0	1	50.0
16 — 20	0	0	1	50.0
> 20	0	0	0	0
Transfer before Patent Date	0	0	0	0
Totals	0	0	2	100.0

<i>A) CHARLES KENNEDY (PART OF PARCEL)</i>				
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
< 1	4	100.0	0	0
1 — 2	0	0	1	25.0
3 — 5	0	0	0	0
6 — 10	0	0	2	50.0
11 — 15	0	0	0	0
16 — 20	0	0	1	25.0
> 20	0	0	0	0
Transfer before Patent Date	0	0	0	0
Totals	4	100.0	4	100.0

²⁴ Public Archives of Ontario, Abraham Nelles Papers, Inventory Ms 502.

B) ANDREW MILLER (COMPLETE PARCEL)

Years	Harvey Township		Emily Gore Township	
	Number	%	Number	%
< 1	5	20.8	2	10.5
1 — 2	0	0	5	26.3
3 — 5	6	25.0	2	10.5
6 — 10	11	45.8	5	26.3
11 — 15	0	0	0	0
16 — 20	0	0	0	0
> 20	2	8.4	5	26.3
Transfer before Patent Date	0	0	0	0
Totals	24	100.0	19	100.0

B) ANDREW MILLER (PART OF PARCEL)

< 1	0	0	0	0
1 — 2	2	33.3	0	0
3 — 5	2	33.3	0	0
6 — 10	2	33.3	1	50.0
11 — 15	0	0	1	50.0
16 — 20	0	0	0	0
> 20	0	0	0	0
Transfer before Patent Date	0	0	0	0
Totals	6	100.0	2	100.0

Sources: Public Archives of Ontario, Abstract Index to Deeds, and Index to Land Patents (MSI), Reel 6, 1790-1825.

Perhaps the pressure to sell land and generate capital was a major reason behind this pattern. The expenses of other business enterprises and paying settlement duties on occupied land may have created situations where temporary shortages of capital forced individuals to sell property. The following letter sent by Mahlon Burwell to Abraham Nelles and dated 8 April 1821 supports this notion:

My only object in offering land at the low rate I mentioned to you was to obtain cash, for which I am much pressured, and in immediate want. The 3,000 acres I offered to you for £300 currency is situated in the townships of Ekfrid and Mosa on the Thames, 2,000 acres of the land is of an excellent quality, 1,000 acres of a middling quality, but none of it on the Thames; it is all to the north side of the road but if it was not for my present want of cash, I would not sell the two thousand acres for less than two dollars per acre and the remaining thousand for a dollar and a half per acre. To any person who can afford to lay out his money by taking it at £300, it would be worth to him in a few years at this rate £1,370 as these townships are subject to settlement duties and every lot on this road that passes through them is already taken up.²⁵

The letter reveals that Burwell, the largest contractor/surveyor, a member of parliament, and a wealthy man, encountered periods when he needed

²⁵ Public Archives of Ontario, Abraham Nelles Papers, Series A — General Correspondence.

capital to fulfill other ambitions and commitments. That he would offer property to another large contractor, Nelles, suggests that perhaps some type of economic bond existed within this group. Or it may be the case that he was simply offering his property to another who could afford his asking price.

VI. — CONCLUSION

This study has examined briefly the landholding behaviour of a major group of speculators, namely those surveyors and contractors receiving land in lieu of cash during the period 1819 to 1825. The investigation has shown that such a practice resulted in extensive amounts of the best land falling into the hands of a few individuals who failed in most instances to develop their property. Instead, they sold this land quickly to other individuals. It remains to be seen whether these persons also entered into speculative ventures.

This is just one group of speculators who played a major role in the development of early Ontario. As I have argued elsewhere,²⁶ once the different types of speculation and the individuals involved in them are identified, then this research can focus on related analyses such as the impact of such activity on the land market and the profitability of speculation.

²⁶ R. W. WIDDIS, "Motivation and Scale: A Method of Identifying Land Speculators in Upper Canada", *The Canadian Geographer*, 23, 4 (1979): 337-51.