The Journal of Eliza Calkins White: A View of Mid-nineteenth Century Rural Life in Quebec's Eastern Townships

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ABSTRACT

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Anne F. Holloway

Eliza Calkins White and family moved from Vermont to the Townships in the late 1830s. Her journal, written sporadically between 1852 and 1874, offers a rare opportunity to examine the daily details of a world that has received little attention from historians, that of farm life in the borderland of southern Quebec. This thesis endeavours to convey a picture of that life as voiced by Eliza through the journal, while addressing its contents in terms of the questions debated in contemporary historical scholarship about the farm economy.

After a brief consideration of texts focussed on the Eastern Townships, this thesis first looks at the literatures that discuss the history, content, form and historical value of diaries and journals. The following chapters widen out like concentric circles to examine the content of Eliza's journal within the context of rural historiography. They evaluate the role of the women members of the family in the strategies of the farm economy, and the extent to which farm production in this particular time and place was geared towards the market. This journal shows women both in the farm economy as producers and in the marketplace as negotiators. Moreover, the products that were largely the result of women's labour that were sold or traded in the local market were an essential contribution to the stability of the family economy. Without such journals the work of women such as Eliza and her daughters and the intricacies of farm life would remain invisible.

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I wish to express my thanks to all the people who became involved in this project one way or another. John Staton drew my attention to the journal (which he found in the attic of an old house he purchased) and supplied me with further information. Marilyn Cameron Stairs introduced me to her aunt, Doris White Cameron, who readily shared the information that she has gathered on the White family. Marilyn and her husband Walter Stairs, along with Doris White Cameron, took me on a tour of Potton Township to show me the places I wanted to photograph. Without the help, patience and good humour of Arlene Royea and Betty Cowan at the Brome County Historical Society, and of Peter Ayles who was my help line for computer related problems, this project may well have not been completed. I also wish to thank the staff of Concordia University's Department of History, particularly Dr. Mary Vipond for her advice and encouragement as my thesis advisor, and the members of my examination committee for their suggestions.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines a unique document, the journal of a nineteenth-century farm woman, Eliza Calkins White, who with her husband Kneeland and five children moved up from Vermont to Quebec's Eastern Townships at the end of the 1830s and settled in Potton Township.[1] Beginning in 1852 and ending in 1874, though there are lacunae of months and sometimes years, this is a substantial document. Though the journal reveals little of Eliza's inner self or of the emotional relationships within the family, it gives a daily report of the activities of each member of the household and notes the neighbours and traders that came to the farm that day.[2] This document is of particular interest as it records both the type and the extent of the labour that each person contributed towards the economic security of the family unit. The work of the farm, particularly the work of the women, is the main theme of the diary, and of this thesis.

To analyse such a document requires a consideration of several literatures. Chapter 1 first gives a brief assessment of texts focussed on the Eastern Townships, few of which are very useful for this particular study. I then consider the literatures that discuss the history, content, form and historical value of diaries and journals, and assess the extent to which Eliza's journal confirms, or not, the arguments of the various authors. I argue that such diaries offer a rare glimpse into the lives of ordinary women of the past and reveal the details of daily life, thus supplementing histories based on public

1. To refer to Eliza's document as a journal rather than a diary may seem a misnomer. However Kathryn Carter sees the differentiation between journals and diaries as "arbitrarily introduced as a way to separate lesser 'diaries' from the more introspective and coherent 'journals' usually produced by those who have had access to various degrees of literary training." She adds that "in practice, both terms are applied to such a variety of texts and styles that attempts at categorization prove fruitless." Kathryn Carter, ed., *The Small Details of Life: Twenty Diaries by Women in Canada, 1830-1996* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 5-6.

2. For a transcription of the journal, see Eliza Calkins White, *Eliza Calkins White's "Journal of Life"1852 – 1874*. Transcriber Gwen Davis Morton (Knowlton, Quebec: Brome County Historical Society, 2000).

information, political correspondence and the lives of the elite, as well as social histories that use cliometrics to form their conclusions. David Gagan acknowledges that "there is simply no other way to understand how life was actually lived in the past than to reconstruct, stage by stage, the lives of actual people as they went about the very ordinary business of getting on with life itself," and his book gives a very good demonstration of the value of cliometrics as a basis on which to examine social change.[3] However studies based on sources such as censuses, land registrations and church records provide only a still shot taken from a distance, whereas diaries such as Eliza's show a close-up of the actors of that society in motion over a period of time as they interact with relations, neighbours and friends and thereby give a more intimate portrayal of families "getting on with life."

The following three substantive chapters widen out like concentric circles to examine the content of Eliza's journal within the context of rural historiography. They address two main questions: what part did women play in the strategies of the farm economy, and to what extent was farm production in this particular time and place geared towards a market economy? An additional question is to what extent local conditions impinged on the strategies of Potton Township's farmers. The journal suggests that these questions are all interrelated. It shows clearly that the family all worked together as an economic unit and that women's work was geared towards the local economy, both as part of this unit and through the goods they produced that could be traded in the local market. Though Eliza and her daughters customarily performed different tasks from her husband and her sons, the farm's end-products were the result of the input of labour from

3. David Gagan, *Hopeful Travellers: Families, Land, and Social Change in Mid-Victorian Peel County, Canada West* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 8.

both sexes. Moreover, the products that were largely the result of women's labour that could be sold or traded in the local market were an essential contribution to the stability of the farm's economy. Each person worked according to his or her ability, age and experience, and was provided for in return. More importantly, they worked towards the same objective, the sustenance of the family unit. The journal does not tell us how willingly such work was undertaken, or what disputes arose, but the labour of everyone was required to keep the family secure from one generation to the next.

Official settlement in the area that became Potton Township did not begin until the end of the eighteenth century. Frederick Haldimand (who became the governor of Quebec in 1777) did not want the area now known as the Eastern Townships opened up to settlers. He wanted to leave it undeveloped as a barrier between British and American territory.[4] It was not until a proclamation in 1792 officially opened up the area for development that settlers were able to own and dispose of land as they wished. The territory was divided into townships. These were to be squares with ten miles on each side except for those on navigable rivers, which were to have nine miles frontage and twelve miles depth. This proclamation was well published in newspapers in both Canada and the United States, and the petitions started flowing in immediately.[5]

The settlers that came to Potton Township found forests of deciduous and coniferous trees.[6] They also found mountainous terrain. The areas of the township depicted by the shaded areas on the map of Potton (figure 1) show fairly accurately the

4. Jean-Pierre Kesteman, Peter Southam, and Diane Saint-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons de l'Est* (Sainte-Foy: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1998), 84.

5. Kesteman, Southam, and Saint-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons*, 88-89.

6. D. B. Cann, P. Lajoie, and P. C. Stobbe, *Soil Survey of Shefford, Brome and Missisquoi Counties in the Province of Quebec* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1947), 15.

contours found on modern maps.[7] The mountains on eastern side of the township, Bear, Owl's Head and Sugar loaf, are 678 metres, 754 metres and 663 metres high respectively.

Figure 1. Map of Potton Township. Courtesy Missisquoi Historical Society. [8]

These are in the Sutton-Orford range, a continuation of Vermont's Green Mountains; they are all part of the Appalachian upland.[9] Potton Townships is almost totally surrounded by mountains, with the result that the main thoroughfare from north to south follows the North Missisquoi River which is fed by tributaries from the mountains

7. See, for example "Lac Memphrémagog, Québec," 31H/01, Édition 1-JLC (Gatineau, Québec: JLC Géomatique, 2007).

8. From *Map of the Counties of Shefford, Iberville, Brome, Missisquoi and Rouville, Canada East* (H.E. Wallings, 1864 DVD © Musée Missisquoi). This includes the names of the residents on the various lots. However the notes written by David Ellis, who made the CD from the original map, suggest that "care should be exercised when interpreting this information as the cartographer is thought to have incorporated earlier work by others when making the map."

9. Kesteman, Southam, and Saint-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons*, 38-42.

on either side. Though not wide enough to be navigable, this river provided power for the mills that were built in the early decades of the nineteenth century by some of the first settlers in the location that later became Mansonville .[10]

Figure 2. View of the Green Mountains from near Eliza's house. Photograph by Anne F. Holloway

"The land is good, and much of it under a good state of cultivation," wrote C. Thomas in his *Contributions to the History of the Eastern Townships* which was published in 1866.[11] A soil map published in 1947 shows more than a dozen different soil types distributed throughout this township. About 40 percent of the terrain is

10. For further details on the first mills, see C. M. Day, *History of the Eastern Townships* (1869; repr., Belleville, Ontario: Mika, 1989), 281-82; C. Thomas, *Contributions to the History of the Eastern Townships: A Work Containing an Account of the Early Settlement of St. Armand, Dunham, Sutton, Brome, Potton, and Bolton; With a History of the Principal Events that have Transpired in Each of These Townships up to the Present Time* (Montreal, John Lovell, 1866), 314-18.

11. Thomas, *Contributions*, 329.

classified as "rough stony land" which is defined in the accompanying report as that which "includes areas with steep slopes or too much stone to be fit for agricultural purposes." Blanford loam, which is shown for approximately 16 percent of the township is less stony but good for crops such as oats, corn and potatoes. These were the two soil types on the White farmland. The rest of the land in Potton Township had a variety of soils, some of which were suitable for cultivation and less stony.[12]

Lake Memphremagog, on the west side of the township, started to become a popular tourist destination in the second half of the nineteenth century but this had little impact on the lives of families such as Eliza's. In 1850 visitors from Montreal and New England started to cruise the lake on a steamer, the Mountain Maid, from June to October between Newport, Vermont at the south end of the lake and Magog at the north end.[13] They came to Lake Memphremagog to take in the scenery which "was described by tourists and promoters alike as raw, unadorned and empty."[14]

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, due to poor roads and lack of proximity to the railway, the farmers of Potton Township remained isolated from external markets such as Montreal, where products could be sold for cash. The market for the White family's products such as cloth, butter, dried apples, maple sugar, potatoes, beans, oats and livestock was thus effectively limited to neighbours, pedlars and livestock dealers who came to the farm, and traders in the nearby village of Mansonville as well as those a few miles over the border in Vermont. The journal shows the way in which the functioning of the local market relied to a considerable extent on exchange of goods and

12. For details see Cann, Lajoie, and . Stobbe, *Soil Survey*, 29-62.
13. Kesteman, Southam, and Saint-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons*, 469.
14. Elizabeth Liane Jewett, "Notes on Nineteenth Century Tourism on Lake Memphremagog, 1850-1899," *Journal of Eastern Townships Studies/Revue d/études des Cantons de l'Est*, no. 31 (Fall/Automne 2007): 33.

promissory notes as well as cash, and illustrates the role of women in both the farm economy as producers and in the marketplace as negotiators. Products that were largely the result of women's labour that could be sold or traded in the local market were an essential contribution to the stability of the household economy which changed little over the twenty-two year span of the journal.

Eliza's journal offers a rare view of a world that has received little attention from historians, that of a nineteenth-century farm family's life in the borderland of southern Quebec. This thesis endeavours to convey a picture of that life as voiced by Eliza through the journal, while addressing the text in terms of the questions debated in contemporary historical scholarship.

CHAPTER 1

ELIZA CALKINS WHITE AND HER JOURNAL

The Migration to the Eastern Townships

In the fall of 1839, according to a genealogy published in the mid-nineteenth century, Eliza, her husband, and their five children, the oldest of whom was eleven, migrated approximately forty miles north. They left their home town of Hyde Park, Vermont, named after Eliza's grandfather, and a region where they had many relatives, to go to Bolton, one of the Eastern Townships in what was then called Lower Canada.[15] By 1842, according to the census for that year, there were six children, the family was living in the adjoining township of Potton on two hundred acres, of which twenty-eight were "improved," and Lower Canada had become Canada East.[16]

At that time this township was predominantly rural, English speaking, and somewhat isolated from industrializing centres such as Trois-Rivières, Sherbrooke and Montreal. From the inception of land grants for the Eastern Townships in the 1790s, many of the settlers moving into Potton Township came up from the United States, principally from New England, rather than from other areas of the Canadas or from across the Atlantic. The 1861 census shows that sixty-four years after the first official settlers arrived, this township was almost entirely occupied by English-speaking people born in either the United States or Canada. Many of the family names found on this census are those of the original settlers. Of the almost two thousand residents, 68 percent

15. Reuben H. Walworth, *Hyde Genealogy: Or, the Descendants, in the Female as Well as in the Male lines, From William Hyde, of Norwich, with their Places of Residence, and Dates of Birth, Marriages, &c., and Other Particulars of Them and Their Families and Ancestry*, Vol. 1 (Albany: J. Munsell, 1864), 512, http://books.google.ca/books?id=rIKhN5aMelcC&dq.

16. Mss. Census, Canada East, 1842, Stanstead County, Potton Township, , 2625, line 28 reel C732.

were born in Canada, and of the 27 percent born in the United States, at least 60 percent were born in Vermont; over four hundred children had at least one parent born there.[17] Living only a few miles from the United States, Eliza and her family interacted with a community that reached south across the border to such places as North and South Troy and Hyde Park.

Literature on Potton and the Eastern Townships

Very little has been written about this part of the Eastern Townships, especially in relation to rural women, and much of the history of the region still lies on shelves in the archives of local museums and historical societies. The most comprehensive book is *Histoire des Cantons de l'Est* by Jean-Pierre Kesteman, Peter Southam, and Diane Saint-Pierre, but as it covers, in just over 700 pages, the entire history of the whole area, from pre-historic times until the end of the twentieth century, there is little room for details about the social history of particular townships. It is, however, an extremely useful general reference.[18] J. I. Little has written several books on Eastern Townships history, but much of his work is concerned with politics. In *Crofters and Habitants: Settler Society, Economy, and Culture in a Quebec Township, 1848-1881* Little examines a township that, although similar to Potton in terms of population size and isolation, was settled by French-Canadian and Scottish settlers.[19] In the course of his research he used census and other public information, but he did not have any "descriptive personal documents" that he could use, which perhaps explains why women are scarcely visible in

17. Mss. Census, Canada East, 1861, Brome County, Potton Township, Personal Census, 157-197, Reel C1270. The percentage of residents born in Vermont was no doubt higher than 60 percent; ninety-nine of the entries just gave "United States" as the birthplace.

18. Kesteman, Southam, and Saint-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons.*

19. J. I. Little, *Crofters and Habitants: Settler Society, Economy, and Culture in a Quebec Township, 1848-1881* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

this study.[20] In *Love Strong as Death: Lucy Peel's Journal, 1833-1836* (edited by Little), the letters she wrote to her family back in England give a good description of rural life but, as Little points out, "journals such as Lucy Peel's reflect the experiences and views of a small, privileged sector of society."[21] She and her husband, who had been in the British navy and was receiving half-pay, were members of the English gentry, and although they worked hard and were frugal, they obviously had more financial resources than the White family as they paid in full with cash for nearly everything they bought. After less than four years farming near Sherbrooke the Peel family retreated back to England.

By reading the works of C. M. Day (whose books were published in the 1860s) and Thomas one can learn a considerable amount about the early history, geography, wildlife and population of the townships, as well as anecdotes of encounters with wild animals, but they lack information on the day-to-day functioning of the farm.[22] Women are hardly mentioned in Thomas's book, and only occasionally by Day. The Reverend Ernest M. Taylor's two volume *History of Brome County*, the second volume of which was published in 1937, is also a useful source of information concerning Potton, but likewise contains little about the contributions of women. Much of the content concerning early settlement is similar to that of Day and Thomas, though Taylor, who grew up in Potton, includes considerably more genealogical information.[23]

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20. Little, *Crofters*, 9.

21. J. I. Little, ed., *Love Strong as Death: Lucy Peel's Canadian Journal, 1833 – 1836* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001), 2.

22. Day, *History of Eastern Townships*; Day, *Pioneers of the Eastern Townships: A Work Containing Official and Reliable Information Respecting the Formation of Settlements; With Incidents in Their Early History; and details of Adventures, Perils and Deliverances* (1863; repr., Sherbrooke: Page-Sangster, 1973); C. Thomas, *Contributions*.

23. Rev. Ernest M. Taylor, *History of Brome County Quebec from the Date of Grants of Land Therein to the Present Time With Records of Some Early Families,* Vol. 1, (1908; repr. Milton, Ontario: Global Heritage Press, 2009; Vol. 2 1937 (repr. from original published in Montreal by John Lovell, no details of reprint given]).

The History of Diaries

Jackson W. Armstrong traces the roots of the structure of nineteenth century women's diaries back to the late Middle Ages. Drawing on the work of Eamon Duffy, he writes that "the owners of late medieval and sixteenth-century books of hours, who were largely women, made personal entries on the fly pages and calendars of these texts, noting family births and deaths, political events, and even domestic details like the contents of their linen closets."[24] Harriet Blodgett, studying upper and middle class Englishwomen's diaries, sees the beginning of diaries in the sixteenth century, when comments began to be included in record keeping documents. "Having no careers, commands, or embassies to write of," she points out, "women noted the minutiae of domestic affairs, creating the sort of record that by the eighteenth century would mature into the diary as we customarily think of it . . . the serial record of personal memorabilia that gives us a sense of the diarist too." She notes the development later that century and in the next of "the formulaic diary of conscience (religious soul-searching in forms prescribed by devotional manuals)" and the inclusion of entries about items of public life in record keeping journals, so that "by the eighteenth-century the diary was flourishing as an eclectic form" with elements of both.[25] Margo Culley maintains that many diaries written by North Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were written for other people to read, and that the women especially "wrote as family and community

24. Jackson W. Armstrong, ed., *Seven Eggs Today: The Diaries of Mary Armstrong, 1859 and 1869* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004), 16, 168, endnote 7.

25. Harriet Blodgett, *Capacious Hold-All: An Anthology of Englishwomen's Diary Writings* (Charlotteville: University of Virginia Press, 1991), 3-5.

historians," giving the "exquisite detail" of the events "that made up the fabric of their lives."[26]

Finding Women's History in Diaries

Women's private writings frequently owe their survival not to their perceived archival or literary value but to the failure of the writer's heirs to clean out the attic. Yet, as Lynn Z. Bloom states, "a great deal of valuable information; historical, economic, political, social, medical, cultural" can be found in women's diaries.[27] A compilation of the details can reveal valuable information such as goods available for purchase in a given area and their price, weather patterns and medicinal remedies. In Eliza's journal there are frequent references to items bought, sold and traded, which often include the method of payment, be it cash, home-produced goods or promissory notes. Eliza's journal therefore shows how the local economy worked as well as the functioning of the family economy.

For a long time few historians were interested in women's diaries unless the writer was closely associated with an important man or wrote about major events.[28] As Kathryn Carter points out, "women's diaries can be and have been used to perpetuate androcentric models of historiography."[29] In the 1970s research into women's private writings was stimulated by the interest of feminist academics from various disciplines, particularly

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26. Margo Culley, ed., *A Day at a Time: The Diary Literature of American Women from 1764 to the Present* (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1985), 4.

27. Lynn Z. Bloom, "'I write for myself and strangers': Private Diaries as Public Documents," in *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*, eds. Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 27.

28. See, for example, J. Ross Robertson, ed., *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe, Wife of the First Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Upper Canada, 1792-6* (1911; repr. from Briggs edition, Toronto: Prospero Books, 2001); Mary Boykin Chesnut, *A Diary from Dixie*, ed. Isabella D. Martin and Myrta Lockett Avary (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1905, accessed at http.//docsouth.unc.edu.).

29. Kathryn Carter, *Diaries in English by Women in Canada, 1753-1995: An Annotated Bibliography* (Ottawa: CRIAW/ICREF, 1997), 7.

history and English studies, but much of that research focussed on autobiographies and memoirs rather than diaries, and on twentieth-century writers. The private writings of working class and rural women remain elusive, yet they are very important for our understanding of all aspects of past societies. As Caroll Smith-Rosenberg asserts

> To ignore women is not simply to ignore a significant subgroup within the social structure. It is to misunderstand and distort the entire organization of that society. Incorporating women's experiences into our social analysis involves far more than adding another factor to our interpretation and thus correcting an admittedly glaring oversight. It forces us to reconsider our understanding of the most fundamental ordering of social relations, institutions and power arrangements within the society we study.[30]

Finding these experiences is no easy task and little can be found in censuses and other public documents in which women are for the most part invisible. In the case of Martha Ballard, "without the diary," writes Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "her biography would be little more than a succession of dates."[31] Ulrich found that

> Outside her own diary, Martha has no history. Although she considered herself "the head of a family," a full partner in the management of a household, no independent record of her work survives. It is her husband's name, not hers, that appears in censuses, tax lists, and merchant accounts for her town. She is not listed in Hallowell's poor relief records, though we know she relieved the poor, nor in the earliest records of the Augusta First Church, though she was a member. Nor does any extant court record acknowledge the testimony she took from unwed mothers in delivery.[32]

Elizabeth Jane Errington describes a similar lack of women's history in public documents and histories of Upper Canada.[33]

Culley is of the opinion that far more men than women kept diaries until late in the nineteenth century.[34] But we have no way of telling just how many women's diaries

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30. Caroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1985), 19.

31. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 5.

32. Ulrich, *Midwife's Tale*, 343-44.

33. Elizabeth Jane Errington, *Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada 1790-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), xi-xii.

were discarded. Nor do we know as yet how many are lying unread in the collections of small museums and historical societies. When researching material for his book based on diaries of emigrants to Australia, Andrew Hassam came to the conclusion that "the gender bias of the archives is probably more acute than the class bias. . . ." He found that only 14 percent of these accounts were written by women, even though "official figures place the balance of male to female emigrants to Australia for the thirty years 1843 to 1872 at ten males for every eight females. . . ."[35] Yet during this period "women do not seem to have been markedly more illiterate than men. . . ."[36]

Why did These Women Write?

Reading Eliza's journal is somewhat like watching a train go by. The entries are a stream of facts, with little or no elaboration. On March 25, 1856, for example, she wrote: "Abel worked for Frank Pebody to day Frank was taken sick last night and had the docter Francis helped his pa and Charley scatter the buckets and then went to mill medora at Olivers Kneeland tapt part of the sugar place I went to marthas marietta done chores and embroidered Royal here to breakfast and went to the lake Lord forgive all our sins."[37]

Bloom's description of Martha Ballard's diary could for the most part apply to Eliza's. Bloom writes that "her observations are elliptical and usually uninterpreted; she doesn't identify people or places or analyze events. She doesn't need to; she is writing this

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34. Culley, *Day at a Time*, 3.

35. Hassam, *Sailing to Australia: Shipboard Diaries of Nineteenth-Century British Emigrants* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 15.

36. Andrew Hassam, *Sailing*, 14.

37. When quoting from Eliza's journal, I have chosen to use her original punctuation, or rather the lack of it, as well as her spelling and grammar. There is the danger in amending sentence structure that the original meaning may be misinterpreted. The fact that she knew how to punctuate, as evidenced by some entries, but did not take the time to do so, suggests that for her grammatically correct structure was less important than getting the information down. When reading the journal, the flow of her words, uninterrupted by commas or periods, reflects the unrelenting pace of her work-filled life.

aide-mémoire exclusively for herself."[38] But Eliza's journal is more than an aide-mémoire. On November 27, 1870, Eliza refers to it as her "Day book" and as her "Journal of Life" in another heading on January 14, 1872. Both are appropriate, but it is not just the journal of *her* life. On a few occasions when she was absent from the house for a few days, the record was continued by one of her children, one of whom wrote that "at Mothers request I am to keep "books" till she gets back" which suggests that the journal is a form of record keeping.[39] Yet it is both less and more than record keeping. Money transactions were frequently noted, but the amount involved was not always specified. Nearly every entry includes a prayer, some of which are of considerable length. There are also quotations from the Bible and other literature, hymns and poems, some of which appear to be her own compositions. It was personal in that she often asked God to forgive her for her sins, or help her to be a better person, or end her miserable life, in a way that one would expect to find in a truly private diary. It seems that Eliza did not mind others seeing it, even though the content and the style sometimes indicate otherwise. She let her children have access to the journal, and on at least one occasion she showed it to a non-family member.[40] Though she rarely expressed concern for others except to remark that they were unwell, she was very much concerned about the state of her soul and her relationship with God. She prayed for relief from her own health problems, but hardly any of her prayers include supplications on behalf of members of her family.

38. Bloom, "I Write for Myself," 25.

39. Calkins White Journal, acc. no. 83-29, Brome County Historical Society Archives, Knowlton, Québec, November 6, 1870.

40. On March 3, 1854 she wrote "miss Este has been examining this this [sic] book and I hope she found it interesting." Miss Este was perhaps the school teacher.

Ulrich sees Martha Ballard's diary as "a selective record, shaped by her need to justify and understand her life, yet it is also a remarkably honest one," and perhaps the same can be said of Eliza's diary.[41] Gayle R. Davis, in an article on pioneer women's diaries written in the western United States in the nineteenth-century, maintains that "the journals mediated for the authors between feeling insignificant and feeling important, and ultimately, between being forgotten and being somehow remembered."[42] Culley takes this further, suggesting that "keeping a diary, one could argue, always begins with a sense of self-worth, a conviction that one's individual experience is somehow *remarkable* [emphasis hers]. Even the most self-deprecating of women's diaries are grounded in some sense of the importance of making a record of the life."[43] Diarists such as Eliza are hardly likely to have seen their lives as "somehow remarkable," however, surrounded as they would have been by women living very similar lives, and few of them appear to have been writing for future generations. Moreover, in Eliza's case at least, it was not her own life that she was writing, but the life of the entire household.

Form and Content

Bloom writes that diaries like Eliza's "march along chronologically, their day-by-day progress dictated by the format and textually insulated from the rest of the work. They exhibit no foreshadowing and scarcely a retrospective glance."[44] I would argue that although an entry may be seen as textually insulated in that it is inscribed as a separate day's events, each is linked to those before and after, forming a larger chronological unit, one deliberately determined by the writer. But at the same time, as Margaret Conrad

41. Ulrich, *Midwife's Tale*, 343.
42. Gayle R. Davis, "Women's Frontier Diaries: Writing for Good Reason," *Women's Studies* 14 (1987): 12.
43. Culley, *Day at a Time,* 8.
44. Bloom, "I Write for Myself," 26.

points out, "such documents, rather than offering a coherent whole, describe daily details of life with all its disorder, incompleteness, disharmony and disjuncture. . . ."[45] It is up to the researcher to find some coherency and order in the text by following from day to day the storylines of the people and events that tie the unit together.

Such storylines provide alternate ones to those narrated by men, with different perspectives, priorities and concerns as they are about private, not public lives. Margaret Conrad, Toni Laidlaw and Donna Smyth, looking at the private writings of Maritime women, found that "instead of forming a backdrop to 'great events,' ordinary lives here occupy centre stage. So-called 'important events' are reduced to rumours and abstractions." In the diaries they looked at, "wars, revolutions, depressions and elections are sometimes mentioned but are rarely described as directly related to the lives of our chroniclers."[46] Eliza only mentions the American Civil War once in her journal. From the end of September 1861 until May 1869 she wrote very little, but in 1861 there are daily entries from January 1 to September 26. During this time Eliza alluded thirty times to some member of the family going over the border to Troy, Vermont, and on April 20, eight days after the opening shot in the American Civil War at Fort Sumter, her son Charles brought six newspapers back from Troy. Although the war must surely have been very much on their minds, and presumably the reason for the purchase of the papers, she does not mention it. In fact, the only brief reference to the war appears in the only entry for 1862, on June 1, where she wrote "maria got a letter from Lucus last night the

45. Margaret Conrad, "Recording Angels: The Private Chronicles of Women from the Maritime Provinces of Canada 1750-1950," in *The CRIAW reader: Papers on Literary Productions by Canadian Women,* ed. Diana M. A. Relke (Ottawa: CRIAW/ICREF, 1992), 3.

46. Margaret Conrad, Toni Laidlaw and Donna Smyth, *No Place Like Home: Diaries and Letters of Nova Scotia Women 1771-1938* (Halifax: Formac, 1988), 3-4.

war is nearly over I hope."[47] One of the papers found with the journal is a letter she wrote headed "Hydespark July 1862" addressed to her children, which includes one sentence about the war.[48]

Eliza's narrative is set within the domestic space of her home, and depicts a life that differs little in many respects from the lives of most women of her time. As Elizabeth Hampsten points out, "depending on where he lives, a man can be a cattle raiser, a whaler, or a miner; what women do all day long is much the same from one place to another."[49] Like Eliza, women in the working-class areas of Montreal, travelling on the trail to the western states of America and on the emigrant ships to Australia were all washing, cleaning, cooking and child-minding, in a routine that varied little from day to day.[50] It is not surprising therefore, that the form and content of many nineteenth-century women's diaries are similar, and that "the repetitive diary, like the emigrant on board ship, remains in the same place."[51]

Such diarists are writing within the context of their domestic space, which is not merely a static back-drop for their lives. As the Personal Narratives Group maintains, diarist and context interact in "a dynamic process through which the individual simultaneously shapes and is shaped by her environment." But historians interact with the text through knowledge gained from other sources. Analysing such texts, therefore,

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47. Maria by this time was married to Lucius McClaflin and Eliza's journal for January 1860 shows that they and their two young children were living in Troy, Vermont by then. Army records indicate that Lucius enlisted as a Vermont Volunteer on August 14, 1861. Historical Data Systems, comp., *U.S. Civil War SoldierRecords and Profiles.* Accessed via Ancestry.ca.

48. Acc. no. 83-29, Brome County Historical Society Archives.

49. Elizabeth Hampsten, *Read this only to Yourself: The Private Writings of Midwestern Women, 1880-1910* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 30-31.

50. See, for example, Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1996); Hassam, *Sailing* ; Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-80* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979).

51. Hassam, *Sailing,*100.

"involves understanding the meaning of a life in its narrator's frame of reference, and making sense of that life from the different and necessarily comparative frame of reference of the interpreter." [52]

Ethics of Reading Diaries

Reading Eliza's journal lets us enter the life of a particular woman, her family and her neighbours. But first the question of the diarist's right to privacy needs to be addressed. At what point, if at all, does it become morally right to read diaries that were intended to be kept private? If one of Eliza's neighbours had read her diary without first asking her, this could be seen as intrusive. Why does it seem less intrusive for one to read the diary l50 years later? Hassam tries to address this issue by looking at the differences between the published and the unpublished diary. He sees the reader as being able to "violate the privacy of the diary without guilt" if it is published. In the case of a diary never intended for publication, he thinks that "the expectation of secrets revealed is tempered by the knowledge that time has made them less dangerous. The laws of libel ensure that no living person can be hurt." He puts the onus of ensuring that a diary will not be published on the author, for "unless the diarist destroys the diary, there is no guarantee it will never be published."[53] The historian, in pursuit of information about a particular society, may not stop to think of an old unpublished diary as still belonging to its author in a moral or a legal sense before opening it or may decide that the text, and what it might reveal, is more important than its author's right to privacy. But guilt-ridden researchers into older diaries can take heart in Carter's statement that "the alleged frisson

52. Personal Narratives Group, eds., *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 19.

53. Andrew Hassam, "Reading Other People's Diaries," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 56 no.3 (Spring 1987): 438-39.

that results from reading an unpublished diary is based on the idea that the diarist does not want her words read by other eyes, but the idea of complete privacy is peculiar to the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Diary writing engages in dialogue with an audience - a real or imagined community of one or many - who already understands a great deal of the narrative."[54] In reading the text and analysing it, the historian becomes part of the audience and engages in the dialogue.

Extracting the History from the Journal

Engaging with a diary such as Eliza's is a somewhat daunting task but Ulrich's work provides the methodology. Ulrich found that other historians who were aware of Martha Ballard's diary did not see how to use it and interpreted the information in it as having no worth. Ulrich saw it differently. "It is in the very dailiness," she writes, "the exhaustive, repetitious dailiness, that the real power of Martha Ballard's book lies. To extract the river crossings without noting the cold days spent 'footing' stockings, to abstract the births without recording the long autumns spent winding quills, pickling meat, and sorting cabbages, is to destroy the sinews of this earnest, steady, gentle, and courageous record. . . . For her, living was to be measured in doing. Nothing was trivial."[55] By searching for connected pieces of information in different diary entries, forming them into narratives, and contextualizing them, Ulrich gleans a harvest of information from Ballard's brief diary entries about the economic, social and political life of Ballard's society. Ulrich's approach shows how to draw from the text coherent patterns of the strategies used by Eliza's family to sustain the household economy and the important part that interaction with her community played in those strategies.

54. Carter, *Small Details*, 12.
55. Ulrich, *Midwife's Tale*, 8-9.

One of the problems in working with such texts is that it is often difficult to ascertain where the various people alluded to fit in the pattern of the diarist's society. Eliza did not identify her relationship with the many people that came to her house, for the most part she uses first names or last names, sometimes abbreviating them or using a diminutive for the first name. Nor is she consistent in her spelling of these names. Yet her neighbours, should they happen to turn its pages, living a similar life within the same community, knowing the same people, and using the same language, would have been able to interpret it. It is only the outsider who fails to see its coherency. "Abel chopt Kneeland broke roads Francis and marietta got home from the watch meeting" Eliza wrote on January 1, 1856. "Sarah Johney and John Baley here Francis chopt in the after noon maria done the work . . ." she continued, and "Charley got our 13 sheep from dans." Thanks to the genealogical records of Doris White Cameron (Eliza's great-grandchild) and the 1861 census we know that Kneeland was Eliza's husband and Abel, Francis, Charley and Marietta were her children, and the 1860 census shows that Jonathan Bailey was a farmer living in the area, but who are Dan, Sarah and Johney?[56] As Ulrich puts it, "Opening a diary for the first time is like walking into a room full of strangers. The reader is advised to enjoy the company without trying to remember every name."[57] Vocabulary can also be problematic. The meaning of words can change with time and some are no longer used. Just what did her son bring Eliza from the store on November 22, 1873 when he "got me some anarchy"? Such diaries require a considerable amount of patience and time to analyse, but can offer information that is not to be found elsewhere.

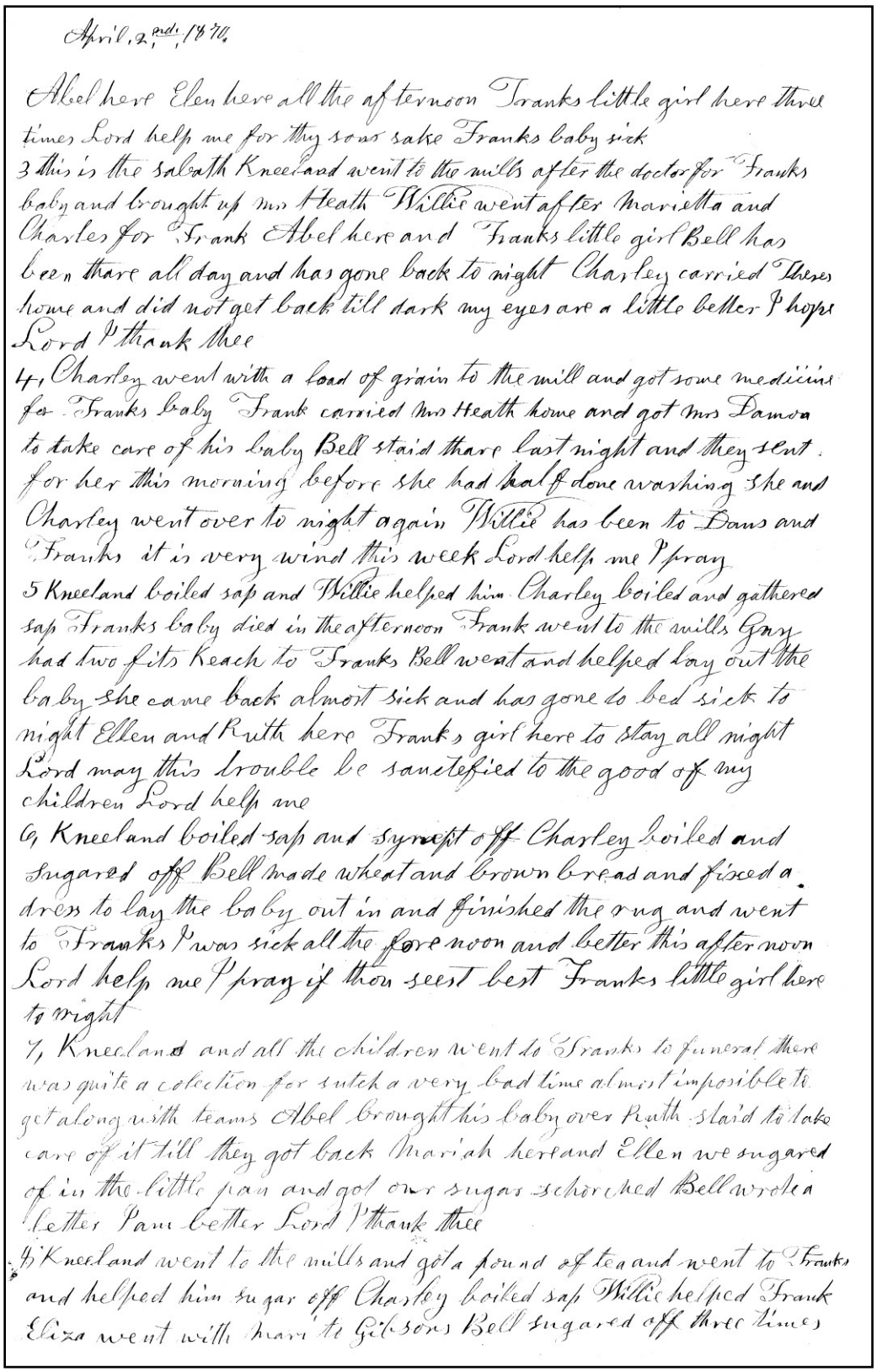
56. Doris White Cameron, Private Papers, Genealogy,
57. Ulrich, *Midwife's Tale*, 35.

The Manuscript

Eliza did not use any kind of bound book for her journal. It simply consists of booklets made from large sheets of paper, folded in half, some of which were stitched together. Most of the time she used up the whole page, but sometimes she left space at the bottom to start a new month or a new year, or for no apparent reason, indicating that buying paper was not a problem. The manuscript was relatively easy to work with as the writing is clear, the ink has not faded too much, and the pages have not disintegrated. The heading on the first page is "July 18, 1852 Potton, Lower Canada," suggesting either the beginning, or a renewal of a practice that had been abandoned for some while. Although Eliza was assiduous in making daily entries, some years have lacunae of months, others have just a handful of scattered entries and some years are missing entirely. As she frequently started a new year on the same page as the previous one, these gaps are not necessarily because some of the manuscript has been lost or destroyed. They are more likely the result of her circumstances at the time.

Diaries like Eliza's are about dailiness and domestic space. Carefully examined, they can enrich our knowledge of the lives of nineteenth-century rural women. "Taken alone," writes Ulrich, "such stories tell us too much and not enough, teasing us with glimpses of intimate life, repelling us with a reticence we cannot decode. Yet, read in the broad context of the diary and in relation to larger themes in eighteenth-century history, they can be extraordinarily revealing."[58]

58. Ulrich, *Midwife's Tale*, 25.



April 2nd 1870.

Abel here Ellen here all the afternoon Franks little girl here three times Lord help me for thy sons sake Franks baby sick

3 this is the sabath Kneeland went to the mills after the doctor for Franks baby and brought up mrs Heath Willie went after Marietta and Charles for Frank Abel here and Franks little girl Bell has been thare all day and has gone back to night Charley carried Theses home and did not get back till dark my eyes are a little better I hopes Lord I thank thee

4, Charley went with a load of grain to the mill and got some medicins for Franks baby Frank carried mrs Heath home and got mrs Damon to take care of his baby Bell staid thare last night and they sent for her this morning before she had half done washing She and Charley went over to night again Willie has been to Dans and Franks it is very wind this week Lord help me I pray

5 Kneeland boiled sap and Willie helped him Charley boiled and gathered sap Franks baby died in the afternoon Frank went to the mills Gay had two fits Keach to Franks Bell went and helped lay out the baby She came back almost sick and has gone to bed sick to night Ellen and Ruth here Franks girl here to stay all night Lord may this trouble be sanctified to the good of my children Lord help me

6, Kneeland boiled sap and syrupt off Charley boiled and sugared off Bell made wheat and brown bread and fixed a dress to lay the baby out in and finished the rug and went to Franks I was sick all the forenoon and better this afternoon Lord help me I pray if thou seest best Franks little girl here to night

7, Kneeland and all the children went to Franks to funeral there was quite a colection for such a very bad time almost impossible to get along with teams Abel brought this baby over Ruth staid to take care of it till they got back Mariah here and Ellen we sugared off in the little pan and got our sugar scorched Bell wrote a letter Pam better Lord I thank thee

8 Kneeland went to the mills and got a pound of tea and went to Franks and helped him sugar off Charley boiled sap Willie helped Frank Eliza went with Mary to Gibsons Bell sugared off three times

Figure 3. A Page from Eliza's Journal.

CHAPTER 2

THE FAMILY FARM

Literature on the Farming Family in North America

As R. W. Sandwell points out, rural history was not seen as important until late in the 1970s and Hal S. Barron, looking at nineteenth-century New England a few years later, found a similar lack of interest.[59] "The marginalization of women and the family in our historiography," writes Sandwell, "shares a common bond with the marginalization of rural history. The silence regarding the economic, political, and cultural behaviour of each of these groups can be largely attributed to their failure to appear clearly or consistently on the screen of the market economy."[60] The significance of women's labour in the rural economy was overlooked by researchers until towards the end of the twentieth century.

For many years much of Canada's history was explained in terms of the staple theory, in which external demands for staple products, such as furs, wood and wheat were the agents of change in Canada's economic, political and social development. However, once historians began to pay more attention to Canada's rural history, a different picture emerged. "Their findings," Sandwell writes, "suggest that a varied, complex, and dynamic rural society was created in the later nineteenth century that differed both from the rural subsistence economy associated with the traditional peasantry of Europe or frontier America and from the wheat monoculture widely believed to typify the Canadian

59. R. W. Sandwell, "Rural Reconstruction: Towards a New Synthesis in Canadian History," *Social History/Histoire Sociale* 27, no. 53 (May 1994): 2; Hal S. Barron, *Those who Stayed Behind: Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century New England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984),1.

60. Sandwell, "Rural Reconstruction," 19.

rural experience."[61] By 1984 Marvin McInnis could write that it was generally accepted that early colonial farmers were not self-sufficient and that it was now a question of determining "the extent of commercialization at any time and place."[62] Referring to the 1861 census for Upper Canada, he concluded that rather than specialising, most farmers engaged in mixed farming and sold any surplus beyond the needs of the family to a local market for consumption by non-farming members of the community.[63]

Douglas McCalla demonstrates that local merchants purchased and sent to Montreal not only wheat, but also items such as pork, potash, lumber and staves, thereby providing their debtors with other ways of meeting financial obligations.[64] He emphasises the importance of the rural merchant's system of credit in the rural economy of Upper Canada:

> Such credit might be seen essentially as consumer credit. . . . But it can also be viewed as loans in support of investment, in that it permitted farmers, and other producers, to use whatever means they possessed initially for other purposes, such as the acquisition of land or stock, or the construction of buildings, in the knowledge that they could postpone their payments for imported goods and, ideally, make them from sales of produce twelve or more months later. Because the ordinary results of a farmer's work included not merely the production and sale of crops but also the expansion and improvement of his farm, such credit helped to create capital in the province.

He also suggests that the merchant, operating in a society that had little cash, had little choice but to offer credit to his customers. [65]

Allan Greer refers to a similar situation in the parishes he studied in Lower Canada.[66] Moreover, the farmers on Lower Canada's seigneuries needed to produce more

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61. Sandwell, "Rural Reconstruction," 2.

62. Marvin McInnis, "Marketable Surpluses in Ontario Farming, 1860," *Social Science History* 8, no. 4 (Fall 1984): 395.

63. McInnis, "Marketable Surpluses," 422.

64. Douglas McCalla, "Rural Credit and Rural Development in Upper Canada, 1790 to 1850," in *Patterns of the Past: Interpreting Ontario's History*, ed. Roger Hall, William Westfall, and Laurel Sefton MacDowell (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1988), 38.

65. McCalla, "Rural Credit," 39-40.

than they required for subsistence not only to be in a position to buy needed imported goods, but also, more importantly, in order to meet their financial obligations to the seigneur and to the church. Greer maintains that although many researchers found that these "all added up to an aggregate 'feudal burden' that was paltry indeed," his study of Lower Richelieu indicated that these dues were a matter of considerable concern, "both to exploiters and to exploited because the wealth at stake was significant."[67] Fernand Ouellet also points to the anxiety that these obligations created.[68]

As Greer points out earlier, studies of the rural communities of Lower Canada mostly depicted the habitant as "the male individual, torn from his family setting."[69] He looks more closely at the communities of Lower Richelieu to give the details of the peasant family's life, and suggests that "work . . . was primarily, though not exclusively, a family affair. Not only was wage labour fairly unimportant, but French-Canadian agriculture had hardly a trace of the communal practices that were so common in Western Europe and even in early New England."[70] He describes the annual work cycle of both men and women, their crops and livestock and their consumption patterns and their concern with their own security and that of their children.

In the United States the role of the family unit in the changing economy of the United States began to receive attention in the late 1970s. Hal Barron sees the influence of the Annalistes on American historians, referring in particular to James A. Henretta's

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66. Allan Greer, *Peasant, Lord, and Merchant: Rural Society in Three Quebec Parishes, 1740-1840* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 160.

67. Greer, *Peasant, Lord,* 133-4.

68. Fernand Ouellet, *Lower Canada. 1791-1840: Social Change and Nationalism,* trans. and adapt. Patricia Claxton (1980; repr. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1983), 4. It seems that rents were low in Ontario. See Catharine Anne Wilson, *Tenants in Time: Family Strategies, Land, and Liberalism in Upper Canada, 1799-1871* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009),, 103.

69. Greer, *Peasant, Lord,* 88.

70. Greer, *Peasant, Lord,* 25.

article, "*Mentalité* in Pre-Industrialist America," as well as articles by Michael Merrill and Christopher Clark.[71]

Henretta does not deny the importance of profit, but places the economics of the farm firmly into its rightful place, the social context. "Economic gain was important for these men and women," he writes, "yet it was not their dominant value. It was subordinate to (or encompassed by) two other goals: the yearly subsistence and the long-run financial security of the family unit."[72] He notes that even as the economy developed, "the family persisted as the basic unit of agricultural production, capital formation, and property transmission." He sees this as indicating that "alterations in the macro-structure of a society or an economic system do not inevitably or immediately induce significant changes in its micro-units. Social or cultural change is not always systemic in nature, and it proceeds in fits and starts."[73] Merrill makes the important observation that the trading of products between households "was controlled by need rather than price."[74] In this situation, "household production . . . is regulated by neither profit nor individual need alone, but by social need. Production is planned with one eye on the needs of one's own household, and the other on the needs of neighbouring households. A household produces use-values for itself, and use-values for others." This differentiates it from both the subsistence-type economy and the capitalist economy.[75]

Clark, looking at the Connecticut Valley at the beginning of the nineteenth century, also sees a society where profit was not the principal motivation, and could be

71. Barron, *Those who Stayed Behind*, 4-6.

72. James A. Henretta, "Families and Farms: *Mentalité* in Pre-Industrial America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (Jan., 1978): 19.

73. Henretta, "Families and Farms," 25.

74. Michael Merrill, "Cash is Good to Eat: Self-Sufficiency and Exchange in the Rural Economy of the United States," *Radical History Review* 13 (Winter 1977): 53.

75. Merrill, "Cash is Good Enough," 63.

describing Potton Township as seen in Eliza's diary when he writes that "the outside market was resorted to mainly to acquire necessities that were not available inside the region . . . or in certain instances, to purchase luxury items that similarly could not be produced locally."[76] He points out that "Rather than relying on the market, rural families supplied their wants both by producing their own goods for consumption and by entering into complex networks of exchange relationships with their neighbours and relatives in order to provide for the needs that they could not, or chose not to, provide for themselves. . . . Cash played little part in these exchanges."[77]

Clark points out that even as late as the 1860s this way of life had not disappeared. He argues that changes to the rural economy were not due solely to external developments; they also came from within, not only because the modus operandi was adaptable, but also because it "generated its own values, of co-operation, of work-swapping, of household integrity and family advancement, that were to be influential throughout the early period of capitalist development." Both external and internal pressures "helped change the circumstances in which rural families were seeking to achieve their aims and forced them to find new ways to reach old ends."[78] Generally, as a region became more populated, farmers began to produce more crops, but there was less land available for newcomers and farmers' children, leading to more people looking for alternative ways of supporting themselves, as wage earners or by starting some kind of enterprise. "The growing market economy," writes Clark, "expanded the possibility of

76. Christopher Clark, "The Household Economy, Market Exchange and the Rise of Capitalism in the Connecticut Valley, 1800-1860, *Journal of Social History*, 13, no. 2 (Winter 1979): 172.

77. Clark, "Household Economy," 173.

78. Clark, "Household Economy," 175.

using a trade, some education or some other skill as an 'inheritance', and permitted the household system to adapt to the crisis."[79]

When looking at rural economic development through the eyes of the above historians, it is hard to see the members of the farming families as individuals. They appear, rather, as homogenous groups with blurred faces. Rarely is a distinction made in these theories between the contribution of men and that of women towards the farm economy, and then only in terms of division of labour.

Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, however, when looking at women's work in pre-industrial France and England, recognize the importance of women's work for the household economy in that period. However they see such tasks as "growing vegetables, raising animals, preparing food, making clothing and helping with farm or craft work" as having "more often what economists call 'use value' than 'exchange value'." But, perhaps because they see such activities as "immerged imperceptibly with women's household or domestic chores," they do not analyse such work sufficiently to bring forth the extent of women's contribution to the household economy. [80] They do, however, point out the importance of the family as a "unit of decision making for the activities of all its members" and suggest that "decisions are made which implicitly assign economic value to all household tasks."[81] They see the family as "the institution which mediates between the system and individuals" but attribute changes to the family unit as being imposed by

79. Clark, "Household Economy," 176.

80. Louise A.Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work and Family* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston 1978), 3.

81. Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work,* 6.

the system. The economic system of a society constrains and shapes production and reproduction," they write, "and eventually modifies family organization."[82]

Marjorie Griffin Cohen emphasises the importance of women in the household economy of rural Ontario and, concentrating on the dairy industry, argues that their work enabled the accumulation of capital for the farm. She introduces the role of patriarchy and gender division of labour within the family and shows how responsibility for dairy production was taken over by men with the introduction of mechanization. [83] But she fails to take into account the interaction of the family members in terms of their social relationships both within the family and with the surrounding community. In her view, "a dual economy existed: subsistence production, which provided the most basic needs of the household, and the market-oriented production, which provided income."[84] Though such a separation may have been the case in Ontario, Eliza's journal depicts a farm economy which was much closer in structure to those of the northeastern states of America, and reveals family dynamics which are missing in Cohen's study.

In his study of the Hudson valley from 1780 to 1860, Martin Bruegel describes a society with an economy similar to that of Potton Township at the time when Eliza was writing her journal. By using microhistorical methodology, he is able to see more closely the dynamics of the farm economy. "Instead of thinking of market and nonmarket sectors as mutually exclusive aggregate economic entities in a necessarily chronological time

82. Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work*, 8.

83. Marjorie Griffin Cohen, *Women's Work, Markets and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

84. Cohen, *Women's Work,* 8.

line," he writes, "their very coexistence characterized the social experiences of residents of the American countryside."[85]

It was not until the late 1970s, then, that researchers into Canadian rural history started to see that the staple theory gave a too simplistic picture of the rural economy. McInnis and McCalla in Ontario, and Ouellet and Greer in Quebec point to the existence of local markets in which merchants played a key role as suppliers of imported goods, purchasers of farmers' surplus products, and lenders of credit. Eliza's journal shows the same. However, although these researchers make valuable contributions to our understanding of the economic aspects of agriculture, the interconnectedness of the family as a social entity and the economics of the farm are largely ignored. Though Scott and Tilly point to the importance of women's labour and the family unit in pre-industrial society, they do not look for connections between family values and economic strategies. Cohen's monograph on the development dairying in Ontario emphasises the role of women as an economic force, but only discusses the family in terms of gender.

While the research into rural Canada gives valuable insight into the role of local markets, merchants and credit in the economy, it is the work of historians looking at farming communities in the United States that is more relevant for an analysis of Eliza's journal, as they place the farm economy firmly within its social context. Henretta's suggestion that though profit was a significant motivator, meeting the needs of the family and providing for future generations were also important considerations, and Merrill's perspective that the value of goods exchanged within a community was not simply a function of supply and demand, but was determined rather by need for one another's

85. Martin Bruegel, *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 5-6.

goods show the need to look at an economy in terms of its functioning within a particular society. Clark's study of the Connecticut valley validates the views of Henretta and Merrill and shows how the farmers adapted to a changing economy, but also retained their moral objectives as they endeavoured to provide security for both the current and the next generation. Bruegel sees the Hudson Valley as a community in which nonmarket and market activities co-existed, intermingled and were part of the social fabric of that society. Eliza's journal, depicting a society at a similar stage of development as those studied by Clark and Bruegel, shows clearly the importance of providing for the next generation as in the closing years we see that her sons were established on their own farms, and the future of all her daughters except one was ensured, hopefully, by their marriages as they become part of another family unit. The ideas of Henretta, Merrill, Clark and Bruegel are all supported by evidence found in Eliza's journal, which shows how the family worked as a unit to achieve a common goal while also interacting with the local market.

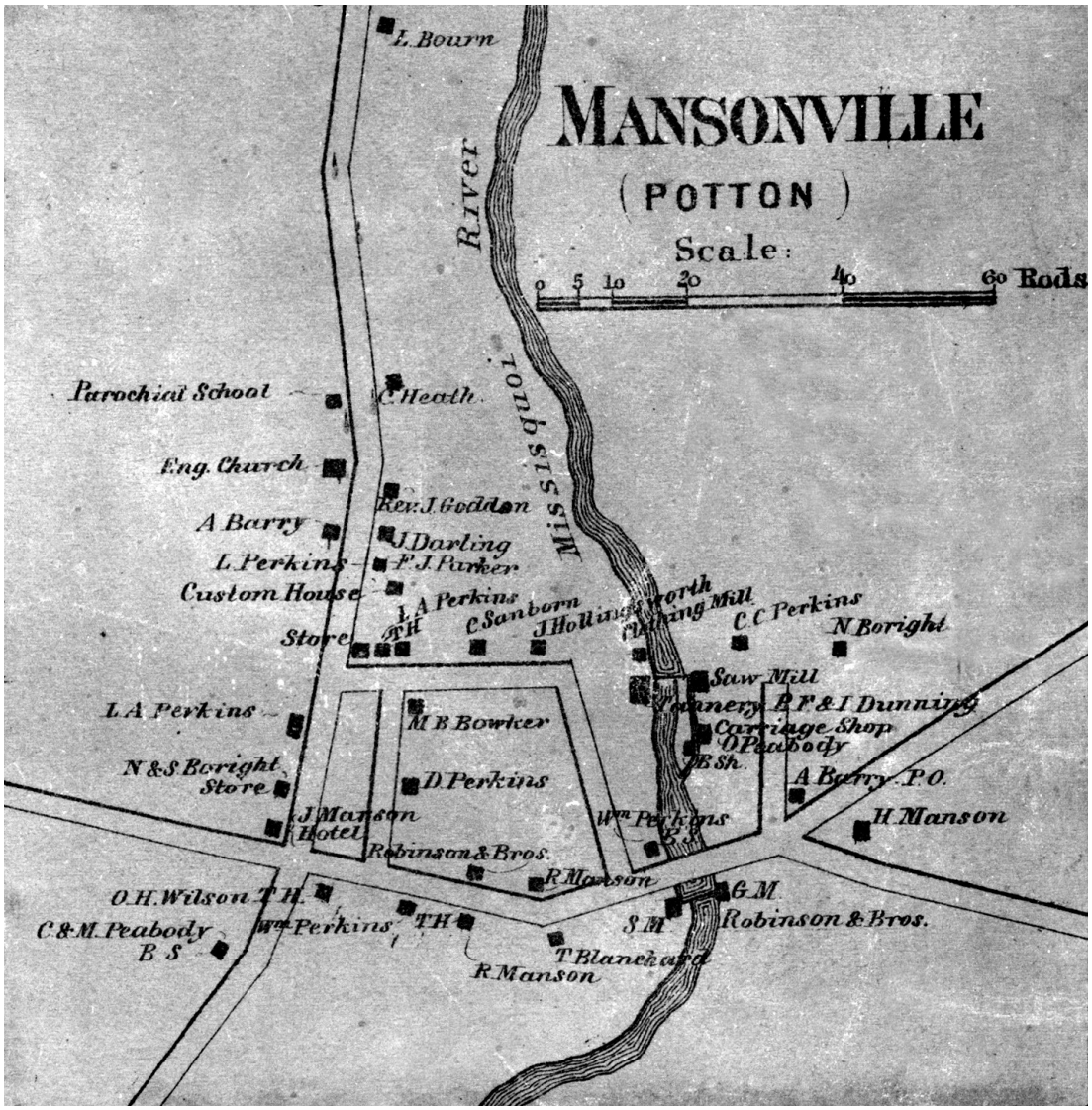
These studies are more relevant also because most of the migrants coming into Potton did not arrive from Europe, as was the case in Lower and Upper Canada, but from the United States. The settlers that came into the Eastern Townships brought with them their experience, their tools, their animals, and their values. The implements they brought, the crops they grew and their cultivation and livestock methods differed from those used in other parts of Lower Canada.[86] Eliza's journal shows that although Potton Township at that time was in theory part of Canada East, in practice it seemed more like an extension of the United States.

86. See Kesteman, Southam, and Saint-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons,* 134-143.

Figure 4. Looking down on Mansonville from near Eliza's house. Photograph by Anne F. Holloway

Mid-Nineteenth Century Potton Township

Before analysing the contents of the diary, I need to set the scene and introduce the characters. Mansonville (where the smoke is rising from the valley in Figure 4) was the village about four miles from the farm. Eliza always referred to this place as "the mills" in her journal. Most days at least one member of her family went there for one reason or another. They could trade their produce for the things they needed, take logs, wool and grain to the various mills, attend religious meetings and avail themselves of the other facilities in the village such as the blacksmith and the carriage shop. Members of Eliza's family also often went over the border to North Troy in Vermont, approximately five miles from Mansonville, trading, picking up newspapers, mailing and collecting



S.M. - saw mill; G.M.- grist mill; S.H. school house; Ch, church; T.H. tenant house.

Figure 5. Map of Mansonville. Courtesy Missisquoi Historical Society. [87]

letters from the post office and visiting Eliza's daughter Maria who lived there after she was married. Twice Eliza recorded having to fetch a doctor from North Troy, and the journal also shows that in 1860 two of Eliza's children, Rosebell (whom Eliza almost always referred to as Bell) and Charles, stayed there from Monday to Friday to attend the fall term at the academy; Charles went again the next fall. Less frequently members of

87. This map is an insert on the Wallings map referred to in the introduction and the key is elsewhere on the larger map. A rod is five and a half yards.

the family would go to South Troy, about seven miles further down the road.[88] There was also the occasional trip back to Hyde Park (mostly in the 1850s), thirty miles or so further on.[89] The roads from the township towards the urban centres of the province were not well developed, and, as Ernest Taylor's diary shows, in 1868 the trip by carriage from the nearest railway station, in Waterloo, to his family's house in Potton (a distance of about twenty-seven miles) could take six to seven hours.[90] There was no railway going through Potton until 1873 when a section of the South-Eastern Counties Junction Railway was completed between the two American towns of Richford and Newport. Because of the mountains, this line went back into Canada to follow the Missisquoi River valley before re-entering the United States.[91] Mansonville Station was on this line, but it was a few miles south of the town, and developed later into the village of Highwater.[92]

The White Family 1852

When her journal entries begin in July, 1852 Eliza was forty-three, Kneeland was forty-seven, and they had nine children, all of whom except one daughter were still living at home. Their sons were Abel aged twenty-three, Francis (sometimes referred to as Frank), fifteen, and Charles (or Charley), who was almost nine. The eldest daughter, Martha, twenty-two, was already married to Royal Berry, an itinerant clergyman, and their son, born in 1850, was Eliza's first grandchild.[93] The journal indicates that the Berrys had a farm not far away, but they did not live there all the time. The next

88. North and South Troy were two separate villages, but when a post office was established in South Troy in 1823, it became Troy. However, when Eliza just wrote "Troy" the contexts in which she used it imply that she was referring to North Troy on these occasions.

89. Eliza referred to this town as "Hydespark."

90. Taylor MSS Diaries 1863-1941, Acc. No. 89-24, BCHS archives, commencing 1868, 2, 24-25.

91. J. Derek Booth, *Railways of Southern Quebec*, Vol. 1 (Toronto: Railfare Enterprises, 1982), 60.

92.(Taylor,*Brome County,* Vol. 2,120).

93. White Cameron, Private Papers, Genealogy.

daughter, Maria (occasionally referred to as Mari) was nineteen. Next came thirteen-year-old Medora, followed by Marietta (sometimes called Tet), who was eleven, and Rosebell (Bell), who was six. The youngest, Diadama (Dima), was only two.[94] Eliza was probably still nursing her last child when her first grandchild was born.[95] However, with the exception of Dima, all the children were old enough to contribute to the farm economy through their labour. The season-driven cycle of work varies little throughout the years of the journal, and the most comprehensive way to describe it is by examining a particular year in conjunction with information from a census, and looking further afield to other years covered as appropriate. As there is no extant 1852 manuscript census for Potton the 1861 census is the first one that can be linked to the information in the journal.[96] However, as Bruce Curtis points out, the statistics of that census are not very reliable, due to incompetent organisation, poor form design and illogical instructions, as well as enumerators' errors, omissions and inconsistencies.[97] Eliza's journal confirms that for her family the entries on the personal census are correct. It is harder, however, to assess the accuracy of the agricultural census, but most farmers should have been able to give reasonably accurate information concerning crops, livestock, and other products; the continuing survival of their families depended on such knowledge. I have used the census information with caution and any calculations should be viewed as rough estimates.

94. The genealogy compiled by Doris White Cameron shows that Medora's first name was Laura and Rosebell's was Mercy, but Eliza always called them by their second names.

95. White Cameron, Private Papers, Genealogy.

96. This census was taken at the beginning of the year, so the information concerning production relates to 1860.

97. Bruce Curtis, *The Politics of Population: State Formation, Statistics, and the Census of Canada, 1840-1875* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 171-273. See also David P. Gagan, "Enumerator's Instructions for the Census of Canada 1852 and 1861," *Social History/Histoire Sociale* 7 (1974) 355-65.

Dates shown are from the genealogical chart of Doris White Cameron unless otherwise indicated. Births, marriages and deaths after the last entry in the diary in 1874 are not included.

Eliza Rosamond Calkins (b. 1809) m. Abner Kneeland White (b. 1804) 1827.

Their children:

1. Abel Calkins (b.1828) m. Maria Jersey (b. 1836, d. 1874) 1856.
   Their children: Ellen Adelia (b. 1858, d. 1871); Ruth Elizabeth (b. 1859); Malcolm Herman (b. 1860); Ida May (b. 1869); Cora Edith (b. 1873).

2. Martha Cornelia (b. 1830) m. Royal E. Berry (b. c. 1821) 1849.
   Their children: Royal Eugene (b. 1850); Edward S. (b. c. 1856);[*] Martha (b. c. 1864);[†] Abram (b. c. 1866);[†] John Grant (b. 1871)[††]

3. Maria Hannah [diminutive Mari] (b.1833, d. 1866) m. Lucius McClaflin (b. unknown) 1856.
   Their children: Willie (b. 1857); Eliza (b. 1859).

4. Francis Kneeland [diminutive Frank] (b.1836) m. Louisa Maria Gilman (b. 1829) 1865.
   Their children: Guy Elwin (b. 1866); Olea Ulysses (b.1869); Burton (b.,d. 1870); Bert Mead (b. 1871).

5. (Laura) Medora [diminutive Dora] (b. 1838), m. Enoch Davis (b. 1833) 1855.
   Their children: Emily (b. 1856); Aylmer (b. c. 1858);[‡] Eldon James (b. c. 1865);[§] Belle (b. c. 1867);[§] Nora Eva (b. 1870); Archie (b. c. 1873).[**]

6. Marietta Eliza [diminutive Tet] (b. 1840), m. Charles Garland (b. c. 1830) 1860.
   Their children: Preston Archie (b. 1861); Frank Washington (b. 1863); Maud Patience (b. 1864); Claud Dana (b. 1867); Minnie Cora (b. 1870).

7. Charles Carroll [diminutive Charley] (b. 1843) m. Mianda Bourne (b.unknown) 1872.

8. (Mercy) Rosebell (b. 1846).

9. Diadama Lillian [diminutive Dima] (b. 1849), m. Marcus Miles Geer (b. 1845) 1868.
   Their child: Clair Elmer (born 1871).

[*]Calculated from age on Mss. Census, Mississquoi County, Dunham Township, Personal Census 1861, f. 39, line 34, Reel C-1296.
[†]Calculated from age on Mss. Census New Hampshire, Carroll, Coos County, 1870, Reel M593_839, 10A, lines 33-34. Accessed via www.Ancestry.ca.
[‡]Calculated from age on Mss. Census, Brome County, Potton Township, Personal Census 1861, f. 177, line 28,reel C-1296. (The Davis family lived in Vermont at this time but Medora and her children were visiting her parents on the census date.)
[§]Calculated from age on Mss. Census, Brome County, Bolton Township, 1871, f. 50, lines 11,12. Reel C-10073.
[**] Calculated from age on MSS. Census, Bolton East, 1881, f. 11, line 30, Reel C-13201. Accessed via www.Ancestry.ca.
[††]New Hampshire, Births and Christening Index, 1714-1904. Accessed via www.Ancestry.ca

Figure 6. The White Family.

The White Family 1860

By 1860 Abel was married and had a farm adjoining that of his parents.[98] Maria and Medora were also married and living a few miles over the border in Vermont, Maria in Troy and Medora in Derby.[99] Marietta also appears to have been living in Troy, perhaps with Maria, until June. But the youngest daughters were now twelve and fourteen, so old enough to do the work previously performed by their elder sisters, and there were no longer small children to look after. Charles, seventeen, was still at home, as was his elder brother Francis, now twenty-four. The information given on the 1861 agricultural census for Potton Township suggests that the farmers there were not focussed on growing staples for export, and that the farm economy of the White family was similar to that of most farms in the township. [100]

Eliza's husband and their son Francis are shown in this census as each holding fifty acres of land on adjacent lots, but those figures are bracketed together and the remaining columns have one entry for the two pieces of land, indicating that they worked the hundred acres as one unit. Seventy-five percent of the land is shown as being under cultivation, with fifty-four acres for crops, twenty for pasture and one for orchard and garden produce. The most obvious strategy in the farm economy that can be seen in the 1861 census for all the farms is the practice of mixed farming which offered some protection should a particular crop fail. There is little indication of specialization for a

98. Mss. Census, Canada East, 1861, Brome County, Potton Township, Agricultural Census, 307, lines 7-9, Reel C-1271.

99. The journal shows that Maria was living in Troy. Medora and her family were staying with her parents at the time of the census, where they are shown as non-residents (Mss. Census, Canada East, 1861, Potton Township, Personal Census, 177, lines 28-30, Reel C-1270).

100. Mss. Census, Canada East, 1861, Brome County, Potton Township, Agricultural Census, 304-311, Reel C-1271. This census shows the largest farm as over seven hundred acres, but only four farmers with more than four hundred acres. Less than 10 percent had under fifty acres, and just over 65 percent had between fifty and a hundred and fifty acres.

particular market for any of the field crops on Kneeland and Francis' land at this time. The field crops shown for the White farm are spring wheat, oats, buckwheat, "Indian corn"(maize), potatoes, turnips, beans and hay. The census also records four "bulls or oxen over three years of age" which the journal shows to be all oxen, six milch cows, nine "steers or heifers under three years of age," two horses, and eleven sheep. Their son Abel is shown on the census as having a hundred and fifty acres, ninety of which were cultivated and planted with similar crops to those of Kneeland and Francis, and similar numbers of livestock. The census also shows the quantities of wool, maple sugar and butter produced and the dollar value of the yield from the orchard and garden.

Census statistics yield a considerable amount of useful information regarding population and production, but they cannot show the inner workings of the farm economy. Close analysis of the daily details in journals as Eliza's, however, can reveal the strategies used by the members of the household as they work as a unit to maintain the farm economy.

Figure 7. The road by Eliza's house, March, 2012. Photograph by Anne F. Holloway

Figure 8. Remains of Eliza and Kneeland's house. Photograph by Anne F. Holloway

Figure 9. Remains of Abel and Maria's house. Photograph by Walter Stairs.

CHAPTER 3

AN ANALYSIS OF WORK ON THE WHITE FARM

There is a general consensus among North American historians that for the most part the men and boys did the field work on the farm and took care of the livestock. The women and girls looked after the household chores, the children, the garden, the dairy and the poultry. Much of the literature tends to look at the family in terms of this division, rather than as a single unit in which both males and females are working towards the same goals, the survival of the farm and the future of the family.[101] The following analysis of Eliza's journal shows that although in general the men did the outdoor work while the women looked after the indoor chores, there were often occasions when the men helped with indoor work and vice versa.

Until the beginning of June only two daughters, Bell and Dima, were living at home, and together with Eliza they did the routine chores which changed little for much of the year. Washing was done on Mondays, and Saturday entries nearly always include "Saturdays work," but just what this covers is never specified. It must surely have included preparation for Sunday, a day of rest when most of the family went to some kind of prayer meeting, and sometimes two. Nearly every Sunday Eliza's journal entry would begin with "this is the sabath" but she rarely went to a prayer meeting herself. Perhaps this was due to her poor health rather than a lack of religious conviction as her journal entries frequently ended with a somewhat formulized and sometimes lengthy prayer. The rest of the week Eliza and "the girls" would be carding and spinning, knitting and sewing,

101. See, for example, Errington, *Wives and Mothers* 8; Greer, *Peasant, Lord,* 29, 32; Kesteman, Southam, and Saint-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons*, 132; Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 147, 150; Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work*, 32, 44-45; Wilson, *Tenants,*169.

ironing, cleaning, quilting, cutting carpet rags and baking. Then there were the unspecified chores, which would have included preparing all the meals.

During the first few months of 1860 Eliza did not give much detail as to the kind of work that Kneeland, Francis and Charles were doing. Several times during the year she wrote that they were working "at the hill" or "on the hill farm" which could be their property or Abel's farm which was further up the road; there was a considerable amount of reciprocal labour between the two. Similarly, in later years when Charles and Francis had their own farms, they all helped one another. The men were often working in the woods during the winter. Sometimes Eliza specified that they were splitting rails for fencing, or hauling logs to "the door" where they would be chopped up for firewood for the house, mostly by Charles. They also needed firewood at "the sugar place" to boil the maple sap until it turned into sugar. It is possible that some of the wood that year was taken to the mill for sale or to be cut into boards for the family's use; transporting logs to the mills would have been easier in the winter when the roads were frozen. In 1861, when a new house was built, Eliza frequently mentioned the men taking logs to the mill and bringing back boards.

Everyone helped with the making of maple sugar in March. On March 13 "the men comenced fixing the buckets" and the next day "the girls went to the sugar place and washed buckets." Three days later "the men tapt the sugar place," which involved drilling holes in the trees for the spigots and hanging the buckets beneath them. On March 19 "the men worked at the sugar place and the next day "Frank and Charles boiled sap." They would have been collecting and boiling the sap most days until it stopped

running into the buckets when the weather got warmer. In other years Eliza mentioned that she and her daughters helped with the boiling process.

Figure 10. Location of Charles Garland's house. Photograph by Anne F. Holloway.

Towards the end of March Kneeland made some wheels for a cart, the rail splitting and wood chopping continued, and they started working on fences. Kneeland also "laid up stone wall in the stable." Towards the end of April preparations for planting began with ploughing, harrowing and getting manure out onto the fields; ploughing and manuring also took place in the fall. In May there was more fencing work as well as the annual chore of picking up stones from the fields. In May potatoes, oats, peas and corn were planted. There must have been a problem with the corn as on May 21 the men had to plant it "the second time over." On May 29 Kneeland sheared the sheep and June 1

Francis and Charles washed the wool. Beans were planted in early June, "the men got in India wheat" on June 14 and "sowed the turnip patch" on June 18. Also in June there was more stone picking, and the hoeing began. On June 15 Eliza wrote that "the men . . . comenced hoeing for the second time." By the end of the month the cart that Kneeland had been building was finished, and on June 28 Kneeland "comenced the girls shoes." In the early years of the journal Eliza mentioned quite often that Kneeland "tapt" boots and shoes, mostly for the family but occasionally for other people. Usually, however, she did not specify if he was making or mending them. From 1859 on there are fewer references to tapping boots and shoes and by 1870, though they are still being mended, there are no references to making these items.

Towards the end of July the men started haying, and this continued until mid-August. Throughout the journal there is no mention of the women helping with this. However, in the 1850s both sexes picked hops. In 1852 the White family were helping neighbours with their crop. On September 9 Eliza noted that "Baley here after the girls to pick hops" and the next day Maria, Medora and Marietta all went to Bailey's farm to work. Eliza recorded them being there seven more times before the end of the month. The journal shows the family growing their own hops for the next few years, and Eliza and her daughters all helping with the picking.

Eliza wrote on July 17 that "Frank went to the mills and got two sythes" which suggests they were cutting the hay by hand. Though some mowing machines were being used around 1840 in the Eastern Townships, there were not many until the 1860s when they started to be made in the region.[102] In late August and the first part of September other crops were harvested. Over the summer the men also cut bushes and worked on

102. Kesteman, Southam, and Saint-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons*, 291.

building a sugar house for processing the maple sap; the wood for this project had been cut earlier in the year. On September 22 "Kneeland finished drawing the bords for the sugar house from the mills and he and Frank covered it." The men started picking the corn on September 24, with Dima helping them. It appears that some, but not all of the thrashing was done by hand. Eliza mentioned several times that the men were thrashing, then on October 4 "Frank . . . and his father cleaned the barn floor for the machene" and on October 5 and 8 she wrote that "the thrashers" were there, mentioning also on October 5 that "Abel and Joe helped thrash a little." This suggests that perhaps the men who travelled from farm to farm with the machine did the work on those days rather than Kneeland and his sons. In October the men also dug potatoes, "got in the stalks" (probably from the corn, which would have been used for fodder), ploughed and helped the local surveyor "run the line" between Kneeland and Eliza's farm and Abel's. In late October they started harvesting the turnips which were then cut up. These would have been used as feed for livestock.[103] She also mentioned on two occasions that a sheep was slaughtered. As winter approached they built stone walls, fixed fences, banked the house, did some more ploughing, and thrashed beans. The hogs were killed in December and the hauling and chopping wood continued.

Meanwhile, while the men were working outdoors, Eliza and her daughters were busy in and around the house. In May they made soap, gave the house a spring cleaning, and started working in the garden.[104] School started on May 7 and Dima started going then, but Bell did not go until two days later. The term ended on August 24, but just how often they went is hard to ascertain, because Eliza may not have always mentioned it. It

103. Kesteman, Southam, and Saint-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons,* 295.
104. They made soap again in October.

seems also that Bell went away to stay with her sister Martha for a while as on May 21 Eliza wrote that "Bell and I fixed for her to go to marthas" and on May 22 "Royal started for home this morning Bell went with him" and there is no mention of her until June 13 when "Royal brought home Bell." This left only Dima to help Eliza. No wonder her June 2 entry started on a pessimistic note. "I am fifty one years old to day" she wrote, "may the good God grant that I may not see so much trouble for the next year or give me more patience to bear it . . . I got up this morning sick and discouraged," but then "soon after breckfast mary came and brought me a letter from marietta, saying she would come home . . . thus has a gleam of sunshine broke in through darkness that has for the last few days enveloped me." Two days later "Frank got home with Marietta."[105] The addition of another woman's labour not only freed Dima and Bell to go to school, it also allowed for considerably more time to be spent on the production of cloth.

On Thursday, June 7, only a few days after Marietta's arrival, she and Eliza "comenced picking wool," the next day they "finished the wool and greased it" and two days later Frank took it to the mill, presumably to be carded. On June 13 "marietta comenced spining" which was a major activity until July 7 when "the girls finished spining." Marietta appears to have done the bulk of it, though Bell also did some. Eliza did not mention that she was doing any spinning that year, and as she usually referred to her daughters as "the girls" it cannot be ascertained if Dima was helping with this task. After the spinning came scouring, colouring and spooling until there was enough yarn to start the weaving. "marietta and I got in the web and comenced weving" wrote Eliza on July 20, but she still mentioned spooling and colouring now and then. Marietta and Eliza

105. The journal shows that Marietta married Charles Garland, the son of a neighbour, on December 20, though she was still living at home at the end of the year.

spent much of their time weaving until October 12, when "marietta got the loom down." Eliza did not mention how much she wove on any one day, but she wrote that on both September 7 and September 20 Marietta wove five yards. In addition to the weaving Marietta and Eliza were still, along with the Bell and Dima, doing Saturday's work and Monday's washing, as well as sewing, cleaning and mending, and other work around the house. Bell and Dima do not seem to have done any of the weaving. From August 4 until August 17 Medora came to stay, and from August 9 to August 15 Martha was there also, so for a while Eliza had more daughters helping with the chores. The 1861 census shows that Eliza's family produced over forty yards of cloth.[106] Approximately 45 percent of the families on the 1861 agricultural census have entries for cloth production, with an average of thirty-one yards per weaving family.[107] Eliza's household is shown on the 1871 census as producing eighty-five yards of cloth.[108] The 1871 census shows 41 percent of all families living in the township making cloth with an average of approximately thirty-six yards per weaving family.[109] Eliza's journal demonstrates that processing wool and flax was labour intensive and time consuming. Yet the family was

106. Mss. Agricultural Census, Canada East, 1861, Brome County, Potton Township, Agricultural Census, 308, lines 30, 31. Reel C1271. This is yardage shown for the land jointly farmed by Kneeland and Francis.

107. I refer here to families here rather than households as there are family heads listed on the agricultural census who do not appear on the personal census. This is perhaps because they are managing land owned by someone else. There are also households on the personal census which do not appear on the agricultural census, some of which include farmers, as well as some with no farmers but labourers and other occupations. The second page of the personal census, which asks about manufacturing and livestock of "Townspeople" shows a few of such people having sheep, but there was nowhere to record the amount of wool produced or cloth made domestically.

108. Mss. Census, Quebec, Brome County, Potton Township, Census 1871, division 1, schedule 5, 8, line 20, Reel 10073.

109. Mss. Census, Quebec, 1871. Brome County, Potton Township, Census 1871, divisions 1 and 2, Reel 10073. This does not necessarily mean a decrease in weaving families since 1861, as approximately 62 households were not included in my calculation for 1861(see footnote 94).

still producing cloth in 1874, even though they lived less than thirty miles away from a wool cloth factory in Magog that had set up operations in 1825.[110]

Richard Lyman Bushman points out that by 1830 few farm households in the northern United States were still weaving, and Cohen mentions that in Ontario after 1850 the increased availability of commercially produced cloth led to a reduction of domestic production.[111] But Beatrice Craig, in her study of the Madawaska Valley, found that in Lower Canada and the Atlantic provinces from 1850 to 1870 the amount of cloth produced in the home went up.[112] The census figures given above for Potton Township suggest a similar trend. As Craig, Rygiel and Turcotte point out, this was often attributed to farm families being too poor to buy ready-made cloth or clothing. But their research showed that homespun commanded a high price compared to other fabrics, and they suggest that it was in demand because of its durability and the warmth it provided. [113]

Perhaps it was the qualities of strength and warmth that induced local people to pay Bell for such work; by the early 1870s she was spending much of her time weaving for other people, showing that there was still a demand for domestically made cloth within the community. On August 8, 1871, for example, "Alfs girls brought out a web for Bell to weave." During the fall of 1872 Bell was very busy. Eliza wrote on September 12 that "old mrs Bourn [here] to get Bell to weve." Two days later "old mrs Shubel, brought her web for Bell to weave" and on September 26 Hadlock arrived with his web. On October 1 "Bell wove seven yards" and the next day she did eight. On

110. Kesteman, Southam, and Saint-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons*, 365.

111. Richard Lyman Bushman, "Markets and Composite Farms in Early America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 55, no. 3 (July1998): 373; Cohen, *Women's Work,* 81.

112. Béatrice Craig, *Backwoods Consumers and Homespun Capitalists: The Rise of a Market Culture in Eastern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 182.

113. Béatrice Craig, Judith Rygiel, and Elizabeth Turcotte, "The Homespun Paradox: Market-Oriented Production of Cloth in Eastern Canada in the Nineteenth Century," *Agricultural History* 76, no. 1 (Winter, 2002): 29-30, 50-51.

October 11 Ella Blanchard arrived with "some yarn for Bell to weave," and on Oct 17 "Alfs wife and girl brought another web for Bell to weave." Bell was also weaving for other people, including her siblings, in 1873 and 1874. The increase in the household's cloth production was facilitated by the presence of Eliza's granddaughter who, along with her brother Willie, had come to live with Kneeland, Eliza and Bell after their mother Maria died in 1866. The granddaughter, also called Eliza, was now old enough to spin. However in 1873 help was also needed from outside the family. "Ella Blanchard and wesley came," wrote Eliza on December 2, "she is going to spin for Bell for a few days." From the summer of 1869 on the journal shows that Bell was a teacher for several months of each year, but the weaving took place in the periods when she was not teaching.[114]

Recent research suggests that from the 1850s on domestic weaving was made easier by the establishment of commercial enterprises such as carding, fulling, and spinning mills.[115] Eliza and her household seemed to take little advantage of the local carding and fulling mills in the earlier years. They used them selectively, perhaps weighing the cost against the labour and time involved for the earlier stages of the processing of wool and linen. On August 26, 1852 Eliza took her "white wool" to be carded, but in the same year there are several references to her carding both wool and flax. Even her younger children helped with the carding. "I and the little girls did housework and carded" she wrote on October 14 the same year. Unfortunately many of the carding references did not specify the fibre. There is only one entry about carding at home in the six months of entries that exist for 1855, but in the same period "Francis

114. On November and December 17 of 1871 Eliza writes that Bell was asked to "keep school" but both times she refused, perhaps because she was very busy weaving at that time of the year. She did not start teaching again until February 12, 1872.

115. See Craig, Rygiel, and Turcotte, "Homespun Paradox," 31.

went to mill and carried the wool to be carded" on July 21, and on November 17 "Charles went to the carding machine with the wool." It seems, then, that machine carding was becoming a viable option for their household by then. There are very few references to carding at home after that, and some, if not all, of these may be referring to making bats for quilts. There is, however, an early reference to a later stage of cloth production. "Francis went to the mills with 10 bushel of india wheat and 1 of corn carried the cloth to be fulled" on October 1, 1852.

Given the variety of items made, and the kind of purchased textiles that Eliza mentioned, it would appear that it was not so much a matter of whether or not they could afford to buy factory-made textiles, as one of making some types of textiles and buying others. Perhaps they could have provided for all their needs, but desired different kinds of cloth that they could not produce or that were too time-consuming to make. On December 8, 1852, for example, Eliza wrote "Abel got mari some cambrick to line her cloak last night" and on August 26 some lawn was obtained. In 1853 on May 14 "marietta went to Brocks and got . . . some calico to make her an apron" and on June 10 "I and mari went to the store . . . mari got a muslin dress."[116] Even as late as the early 1870s the women of Eliza's household had not given up home-weaving, yet they seemed to be buying more fabric. Calico, alpaca, cotton cloth, print, cloth for overalls, shirts, cloth for a suit and a coat, silk, drilling, gingham, and flannel are all mentioned.

Returning to the work cycle for 1860, after September 9 there was less labour available in Eliza's household as Bell and Charles were away at school in Troy during the week. But even before the weaving was finished, it was time to start working on the

116. Though it might appear that Mari was buying ready-made clothing, the entries for June 11 and June 14 show that she was making the dress. On several other occasions Eliza refers to purchasing a dress when later entries show that it was the dress material that was bought.

apples. After they were picked they were peeled and sliced, then threaded onto strings of cotton yarn and hung up to dry. The picking and processing of apples was an activity in which both sexes took part. During the outdoor task of picking the women and girls helped the men, but in the house when the apples were processed the roles were reversed as the men were then the helpers. On October 1 Eliza wrote that "we all gathered apples" and the same day the apple drying process began. The next day "Dima and I . . . helped Kneeland pick up apples pared apples to night Charles and Joe helped."[117] The apple paring seems to have taken up a considerable amount of time during October and into the beginning of November. In December, as in other years, Eliza and her daughters made candles. On December 19, 1872 she noted that "Charley helped me dip candles."

A comparison of the 1861 census with the 1860 journal entries reveals two apparent inconsistencies. The first is that although on May 15 Kneeland "went to Bedards after flax seed," on August 21 he "pulled flax," and on September 20 "marietta wove five yards table linin," the column for linen on the census is blank. Perhaps there was a problem with the crop that year and the thread used in 1860 was either purchased or grown in a previous year, and of course the enumerator may have omitted to ask about flax and linen.[118] In the first few years of the journal there are often references to the processing of flax. On August 23, 1852, for instance "Kneeland swingled flax . . . the little girls spun four skeins of tow mari washed and spun one skean of linen and I . . .

117. Joe Jones was a labourer aged about twenty, who in 1860 seems to be living at Eliza's house, but on the 1861 census is shown as a labourer living with Eliza's eldest son Abel and his family (Mss. Census, Canada East, Brome County, Potton Township, Personal Census 1861, f. 178, line 5, Reel C-1270. As there is no mention of Eliza's son Charles for the rest of this week as he was most probably at school, the Charles mentioned here is likely to have been Charles Garland, Marietta's future husband, who is mentioned in the journal entry for the next day.

118. The journal entries for 1859 unfortunately do not cover sufficient months to indicate if there was a flax crop that year.

hecheled flax and carded tow."[119] On April 15, 1853, "I fineshed my flax and boiled it out" Eliza wrote. On April 10, 1854 she "comenced spining flax." It seems that all the processing of the flax was carried out in the household.

The second apparent inconsistency is that although the census shows the family owning six milch cows and producing five hundred pounds of butter, the journal for 1860 only mentions trading butter twice and there are also only two references to making it. One is on May 19 when Eliza wrote that "the girls and I done Saturdays work and cleaned the buttery" (this appears to be mentioned as part of the process of spring cleaning) and the other on May 31 when Eliza noted that she churned butter. This labour may well have been one of the unspecified tasks that fell under the rubric of "chores" or "Saturday's work" so was not mentioned separately. The entries that refer to butter making in other years make it clear that this was primarily the women's domain because of her use of the possessive case. "I worked over my butter" Eliza wrote on February 9, 1854, and there is a similar entry on June 15, 1869. But other people helped sometimes. On October 4, 1852, for example, she wrote "I and the little girls . . . , churned and worked over butter" and on June 21, 1871 “Charley churned and Bell took care of the butter." Butter was a source of income throughout the years of the journal.

In 1860 there were days when Francis and Charles worked elsewhere instead of at home, and sometimes Kneeland helped another farmer but, as in other years, it is hard to determine the extent of reciprocal labour between the White family and other households in the community. The journal shows a constant stream of people coming to the farm and

119. Swingling is "to clean flax by beating it with a wooden instrument resembling a large knife." Tow is "the coarse and broken part of flax or hemp, separated from the finer part by the hatchel or swingle." (Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language,* Revised and enlarged by Chauncey A. Goodrich (Chicago: Brock and Rankin, 1897).

family members, both male and female, going elsewhere; Eliza often does not say why they came and went, though sometimes their purpose is clear. On October 19, 1860, for instance, "Frank helped Charley Garland till noon and then helped Jersey with the cart and oxen till night drawing wheat," and in 1855 on September 12 "Kneeland went to Pebodys after Sephrona" and "Sephrona comenced picking" the next afternoon. Several non-family members were noted in the 1860 entries as being at the White farm to work, and members of the White family worked for some of the same people at other times. But, with the exception of Joe Jones, it is not possible to determine how much of this was part of a network of reciprocal labour and how much was based on a financial arrangement. Another problem is that Eliza often omitted to give the reasons for the comings and goings. On March 1, 1860, for example, "Kneeland went to Chappels Charles to the Elders Dima to Garlands" and on March 13 Eliza wrote "Jenkins Charles Garland &c here." As she very rarely mentioned any work taking place on Sundays the frequent visits to and fro on that day of the week were probably social, and evening visits on other days might well have been the same, but some of the weekday arrivals and departures were probably part of an informal web of labour exchange.

Catharine Anne Wilson's article on work bees emphasizes both the number and variety of work bees that took place in Ontario, often involving all the members of different families and a considerable amount of food and alcohol. These were big social occasions.[120] These people might have found Potton rather a dull place. In 1860, for example, Eliza only mentions bees three times, and none of them involved the entire family. On June 21 "Frank and Charles . . . went to Alfs rasing in the after noon," on

120. Catherine Anne Wilson, "Reciprocal Work Bees and the Meaning of Neighbourhood," *Canadian Historical Review* 82, no.3 (September 2001), 1-19.

June 23 "Frank went to Austins bee" and on June 29 "Frank hoed at a bee at George Garlands." Rarely did Eliza list more than two or three people coming to the farm on any one day.[121] She did, however, refer to members of different families getting together to process apples in the fall. At the beginning of October "Frank and tet Bell and Charles went to the widow Jerseys and pared apples," later that month "the Jersey and Garland young folks" were at Eliza's house helping with the apples, a few days later Eliza noted that "Frank and Tet gone to Garlands this evening to apple pareing" and at the end of the month "the children went to Bedards to apple paring."[122] The use of the term apple paring suggests that this was a social gathering not just a time of work. Also, paring mostly took place in the evening when the men and boys would not be working outside because of the diminishing hours of daylight.

The journal also shows that in the early years especially the White family borrowed and lent an assortment of tools and equipment, such as saddles, horses, wagons, fanning mills, horse rakes, sleighs, ploughs, cradles and kettles, but it is hard to ascertain which implements belonged to the White family and which ones were borrowed from other farmers.[123] Sometimes the ownership is clear, as on July 26, 1852, when "abel got Perkins horse rake" and on July 11, 1853 when Eliza wrote that Levingston had come to the farm "after his horse rake." But on many occasions Eliza's phraseology makes it impossible to determine ownership. For example, on February 2, 1854 she simply wrote "John Baley after the auger" which could mean that he was collecting an auger belonging to him, or borrowing one from Kneeland.

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121. Greer remarks in his study of Lower Richelieu that he found no mention of bees taking place there (Greer, *Peasant, Lord,* 25).

122. Calkins White Journal, October 6, 18, 22, 29 1860.

123. The horse-drawn rake was used in haying. A cradle was a wooden framework holding a scythe which was used for cutting grain.

The activities of 1860 show a gender division of labour similar to the other years of the journal, but this was a practical way of achieving greater efficiency as a family unit. The spacing of the births of her children was such that Eliza, like many other mothers, was probably breast-feeding each of her babies for about two years. The work that was performed in the house such as weaving, sewing and the regular household chores could be interrupted to attend to the needs of her offspring in a sheltered space. It was more efficient to have men do all the outside work which was often undertaken at a distance from the house, using dangerous equipment and requiring considerable physical strength. As the parents worked they also passed on to their children the skills they would need as adults. But this did not mean that products could always be identified with a particular gender.

As Nancy Osterud points out in her study of rural New York in the nineteenth century, "farm processes often began in men's domain and culminated in women's; many farm products had to pass through women's hands before they could be used or sold." Moreover, "all family members owed allegiance to 'the good of the farm,' which appeared to them as a matter of immediate and visible necessity. When circumstances seemed to require it, men and women crossed over the boundaries of gender to assist each other."[124] In order to sustain the farm, all members of the White family had to contribute their labour and all production was realised with the contribution of some labour on the part of both men and women. The women and children's work doing regular household chores such as washing, cleaning, baking and mending clothes, not only provided for everyone's daily needs, it also enabled the men to perform their outdoor work more productively. The work pattern on the farm was determined ultimately by the seasons and for some

124. Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 147.

tasks it was necessary to have all the family involved. The maple sap could only be tapped for a brief time in the early spring and then each batch had to be boiled down for hours to turn it into sugar. In the fall the apples needed to be dried before they started to deteriorate. In the summer the women tended to the vegetable garden for the family's consumption, and the men looked after the field crops which would mostly be used to feed the livestock that provided milk and meat for the family. The men sheared the sheep and raised the livestock, and the women processed the wool into cloth and knitted items and made butter. Ultimately, though some items are seen as the work of women and some the work of men, usually according the amount and type of labour involved, the production on the White farm resulted from the labour of all members of the family and they performed that work because the farm was their livelihood. Moreover, the items and cash gained by trading and selling surplus production came back to the family.

CHAPTER 4

WOMEN AND THE LOCAL MARKET

Women as Producers for the Local Market

The labour of Eliza and her daughters as producers not only had the potential to contribute to the accumulation of sufficient capital to secure the future of the next generation, as argued by Cohen. The strategy of deliberate production beyond the household's needs of items such as knitted goods, cloth, dried apples and butter, items which mostly involved women's labour, provided a certain degree of economic stability for the family through the seasons. These were readily negotiable items that could be sold or traded any time of the year directly to others in the community or to merchants in nearby villages. This local market made it easier for the supplier to estimate the demand for a product, as well as its exchange value, which was determined by the needs of both producer and customer. Moreover, these women's products were less exposed to such risks as the vagaries of the weather than the field crops that the men were growing.

The Economy of the Local Market

The journal, with its many detailed references to shows items bought, sold or exchanged, shows how the local economy operated by using cash, promissory notes and barter. It also shows the extent to which the items bartered were those made by women with a view to marketing them and the role of Eliza and her daughters in the marketplace as negotiators.

Kesteman and his colleagues, when looking at the Eastern Townships in the period from the late eighteenth century until 1840, describe an economy in which there

was a scarcity of cash and a reliance on credit and barter.[125] Eliza's journal indicates that the economy of Potton Township was still functioning in much the same way when the journal ends in 1874, though in the latter years there seem to have been more cash payments and trading is not mentioned very much.

The methods of payment in Potton Townships were a jumble of promissory notes, cash and goods. Eliza often refers to notes written by and passed on to various people. On October 10, 1871 "Charley went to Brocks and sold Hials note got him some shaveing tools." Some of these notes were for a considerable amount of money. On July 26, 1853 "Boardman and his boy here paid for and took up 150 dollars worth of notes" and on September 2, 1855 "Abel got home from Hydespark last night and paid Jim two hundred dollars and fifty and got up his note." The notes were not necessarily paid in full. On December 27, 1856 "Francis went to Roswell Bourn and paid him 52$ dollars on a sixty five dollar note."

Eliza uses a somewhat confusing variety of terminology for the various cash payments that were being used in the local economy. On July 17, 1869 for example, "Kilburn . . . paid Kneeland 7 ½ dollars in silver" and on September 18, 1871 Kneeland "got 4 pounds of tea and paid three dollars in good mony." In 1873, on January 9, "Kneeland and Eugene went to the mills and paid Dave, 10, dollars in currency" and On October 28 "Kneeland . . . carried Gordon ten dollars in states and four in current mony." Then there was just plain money, as in "Abel paid me two dollars in money,"[126] thereby indicating that she had not been paid in kind, something which featured in many of the transactions and was usually referred to as trading.

125. Kesteman, Southam, and Saint-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons*, 162-65.
126. November 4, 1860.

Trading was still an important part of the local economy. Sometimes the transactions were small, like the one on September 18, 1852, when Francis went to the mills and "carried three pounds of butter to get tea," and on July 8, 1856, when "Charley went to the mills and carried two dozen and a half of eggs and got two spools of thread." There are few references to trading or selling eggs in the journal, so perhaps they usually only produced enough for their own consumption. There is also no indication as to who looked after poultry, though there are several years in which the women were plucking chickens (either in November or December) which were then traded. On December 16, 1869 Eliza wrote that "Kneeland . . . went to the village in the evening with the chickens and apples to pay for Eliza's shoes and a pair of rubbers."

The apples that dried each fall were a useful form of currency. On December 5, 1860, "Francis carried me to the mills I sold 4,3 pounds of dried apples to Robinson and settled the book" and ten days later "Kneeland went to mill and got . . . some things at, Robinsons, paid in dried apples." Then shortly afterwards, on January 9, 1861, "Frank carried marietta to the mills and got her a wash bowl and pitcher and carried dried apple to pay." My favourite trade is the one she noted on September 29, 1873, when a man who came for dinner "bought twelve bushels of apples" and "paid two dollars and a half and a little dog."

Craig suggests that domestic cloth production generally "did not generate huge surpluses."[127] This seems to be the case in the White family. Though the items taken to the mills and to Troy to be traded often were not recorded, there is only one specific

127. Craig, *Backwoods Consumers*, 194.

reference to domestic weaving being used as a means of exchange. On September 20, 1869, "Bell changed her cloth for a good many things that we need."[128]

The trading was also somewhat complex at times. On August 26, 1852 Eliza wrote:

> francis and I went to the mills to day and carried my white wool to card and carried 8 pounds of sugar to pay for carding got a bushel of wheat of Jim and paid the miller half a dollar in cash for corn went to the store and paid twelve pound 3 ounces of butter credited on book at twelve and a half cents per pound sold one pair of footings for lawn and bought medora a shawl to be paid in footings and half a pound of tobacco charged and came home.

On January 10, 1872 "Kneeland and Bell went to the mill . . . carried ten and a half pounds of butter to get her overskirt and had two dollars charged, got her sack at Mansons and let him have a dollars worth of berries, one dollar 85 due."

The trading also took place across the border. Eliza wrote on June 20, 1855, for example, that "Abel and maria went to south troy yesterday and traded with Parker" and on July 11 the same year "Francis and I went to south troy carried a tub of butter 45 pounds and got some calico and other things." On January 11, 1860, "Charles and I and Dime went to Troy . . . carried some butter to Gilman and got some calico got two yards and a half of green silk fringe charged 25 cts."

Women as Negotiators in the Local Market

In the case of Eliza's household at least, it was not necessarily the men that were making the economic decisions. The women were often doing the trading, indicating not only that they could purchase items without male supervision, but also that they were seen as having good business sense. On November 5, 1852, for example, Eliza "went to

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128. This may seem surprising, considering the amount of time that Eliza's family spent weaving. However the needs of the family would be met first, and in the later years, Bell was weaving for other people.

Brocks and paid him one dollar in cash and half a bushel of onions and traded some." On June 8, 1871 "Bell . . . went to the mills and paid Boright and Manson and traded some." The women also went further afield to trade. On November 3, 1860 Eliza wrote that "Francis carried me to Troy and I traded for a web of cot cloth with Dorman." Sometimes the purchases were quite substantial. "Francis carried me to Willeses," she wrote on March 17, 1853, "and I bought a stand and stone pot and two wheels and chest of drawers." Further evidence that the women had a certain degree of control over money which they perceived as their own can be found in the journal. On May 17, 1871, for example, "Kneeland went to the mills and got him a pair of new fine boots Bell gave him the money to buy them" and on November 25, 1873 "Baxter and Lake here with sewing machines, Bell bought and paid twenty six dollars down." It seems reasonable to assume that the money for these purchases came from cash she earned teaching and weaving for other people and that some of it, at least, was considered hers to spend as she saw fit. In 1864 Eliza paid Abel two hundred dollars for fifty acres of his land in a sale which was formally registered on March 9.[129]

The journal thus shows that the women in Eliza's household had considerable autonomy in their role as participators in the local economy as suppliers, customers and negotiators, and the land transaction between Eliza and Abel, about which we

129. Livre de renvoi official, Township de Potton, Comte de Brome, 1856-66, Potton Registry B, vol. C, no. 3651. A very rough copy of this document, perhaps a preliminary draft, is one of the miscellaneous pages found with the journal. As there are very few entries for the years 1862 to 1868, there is nothing in the journal to suggest why this purchase was in Eliza's name and not Kneeland's or where the money for the purchase came from. If it was Eliza's own money rather than farm income accumulated over the years, perhaps she inherited some from her mother's or her stepfather's family. Doris White Cameron, when I sent her a copy of this transaction recently, speculated that Kneeland could have been sick or there might have been a legal dispute of some kind with a neighbour. The 1871 census does not list Eliza as a landowner.

unfortunately know nothing more, suggests that this autonomy went beyond trading in the local market and into the male domain of land purchase.

Figure 11. Gravestones of Eliza and Kneeland, Protestant Cemetery, Mansonville. Photographs by Anne F. Holloway

CONCLUSION

"I am sixty five today and it is Bells birth day also" Eliza wrote on June 2, 1874, and the next day's entry is the last one. Her son Abel's wife, Maria, who had been sick for some time, had died two weeks earlier. Perhaps Eliza was too busy helping look after their children to continue with her journal. Although the eldest two were thirteen and fourteen, the youngest ones were only four and one. Bell, now twenty-eight, was still unmarried and living at home.[130] Eliza's grandchildren Willie and Eliza were still living with them and doing their share of the work. Willie was now sixteen and Eliza fourteen. Various entries in the journal over the years and in Cameron's genealogy show that by 1874 Francis was living on his own farm with his wife and their four children.[131] The journal shows too that Charles was also married and living on his own property, and that on April 22, 1871 Kneeland bought some more land. None of their children had been forced to migrate out west or move to the city in order to make a living. There were times over the years however when family members looked elsewhere for work. On April 2, 1853, much to Eliza's dismay, Francis left to go and work on the railroad. "Lord help me in this trouble also how can I do without him" wrote Eliza, "Lord thou knowest he was one that I depended on greately." Francis kept in contact with his family and returned home on April 25. On May 14 he left again for the railroad, this time with his brother Charles, but it seems they did not find work, as they were back home on May 18. A few years later, on October 27, 1860, Eliza wrote "Frank talks of going west." As there are big gaps in the diary in the 1860s he may have left Potton Township for a while, but he came home to take up a similar life to that of his parents.

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130. Bell married Darius Adams in October, 1882, and it was in their son Clinton's house that Eliza's journal was found. Eliza died in February, 1883. (White Cameron, Private Papers, Genealogy)

131. White Cameron, Private Papers, Genealogy.

The journal shows that the family's strategies to look after themselves in the present and ensure the security of the next generation were successful. It also shows that they worked as an integral unit, with the various tasks distributed according to both practicality and ability. They helped and were helped by members of other families, and borrowed and loaned equipment as necessary. The journal also suggests that women like Eliza not only played an important role in the household economy, they also could have some power and independence in the marketplace.

It seems that the industrial development taking place in the urban areas of the province resulted in little change in the White family's way of life. A few entries, though, suggest attempts to sell to a market outside the community. One of these was in the early years of the journal. On September 25, 1855 Francis "helped Abel start for montreal" and on October 1, "Abel got home from montreal and did not sell his hops." Though the journal shows that the family was growing hops from 1853 to 1856 there is no indication that they grew them after that.[132] Perhaps they were discouraged by the failure to sell them in Montreal. On October 29, 1871 Eliza wrote "Frank here getting redy to go off with his butter tomorrow morning Charley will go with ours" which suggests that the butter was being transported to an external market. The next day "Charley and Frank started for Sutton flat with the butter." This was about eighteen miles away, and they were probably planning on shipping the butter by train. The next day was the official opening of the section of the South-Eastern Counties Junction Railway which passed

132. The 1861 agricultural census shows only four Potton farms with hops, one with only six pounds. The others listed with yields of from eight hundred to two thousand pounds, suggesting that these were being grown for an external market (Mss. Census, Canada East, 1861, Brome County, Potton Township, Agricultural Census, 307, line 36; 310, lines 3, 6, 10).

through Sutton Flat on its way to Richford, Vermont.[133] Overall, however, the entries in the journal suggest that practically all of the products that were not for home consumption were sold or exchanged directly from the farm or taken to local merchants in small quantities. There was no north-south railway through the township until the beginning of the twentieth century when the section of the Orford Mountain Railway from Bolton Township reached south to Troy, Vermont in 1907.[134]

The entries in the journal describing the selling and trading of goods show not only how women and girls contributed to the household economy and participated actively in the market, they also show the household's pattern of consumption. Their purchases over the years did not change radically. Items such as tobacco, saleratus and tea which were frequently noted, as well as matches, salt, and sheets of paper which were listed less often, were no doubt seen as essentials.[135] In the early years of the journal the majority of the goods obtained were practical. They included items such as leather and a last for Kneeland's shoemaking, madder and indigo for dying, a pocket knife and an axe, though sometimes there were trades that included somewhat surprising items, such as the two silk cravats that were part of a trade on February 17, 1854. They were perhaps the articles that clinched the deal. The other items, "1 pound of tea . . . 4 sticks black linen thread 1 spool 1 rake 1 thimble quarter grose matches" were more mundane. Eliza did not seem to be inclined to be self-indulgent, with one exception. On July 26, 1853 she wrote "I bought a gold ring of Plumley mari bought a dimond ring." Over the years the purchases mentioned remained mostly practical, though different kinds of items

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133. J. Booth, *Railways*, 62. Sutton Flat was later named Sutton. (*Taylor*,*Brome County,* Vol. 1, 81).

134 Taylor, *Brome County,* Vol. 1, 141.

135. Webster's *American Dictionary* definition of saleratus is "a carbonate of potash . . . used in cookery." The modern equivalent is baking soda.

appeared. New products, such as rice, raisins, crackers, kerosene and chimney lamps were noted, suggesting a higher level of disposable income, though they were still making candles in 1872. Newspapers and magazines were mentioned more frequently from 1870 on, perhaps because by then they were available in Mansonville. The purchases made by the family suggest that their lifestyle did not change significantly over the years.

It seems also that there were no major changes in farming methods. The 1871 census shows Kneeland and Abel with the same acreage as in 1861 and Francis and Charles with a hundred acres each. The census also provides evidence both that there was a considerable amount of borrowing and lending of farm implements and that much of the work was being done by hand. Unfortunately the 1861 agricultural census only asked for the value of farm implements, but the 1871 census requested more detail. The column for "ploughs and cultivators" lists Kneeland, Abel and Francis as each having two, probably one of each; a cultivator was a type of harrow, used to break up sod after ploughing and to cover the seed.[136] Kneeland and Francis also had a horse rake each, but no reapers, mowers, thrashing machines or fanning mills. Charles had none of the implements listed on the census, and though many farmers had ploughs and/or cultivators, there were few reapers, mowers, horse rakes, fanning mills or thrashing machines in use. Similar crops are listed on each census for Kneeland, Abel and Francis, but Charles, who had acquired his land more recently, has only oats and maple sugar. Other farmers in the township appear to have grown similar crops on both censuses, though there was a noticeable increase in hop production by 1871 as that census shows

136. Webster, *American Dictionary*.

thirty-seven hop growers (still only about 10 percent of all farmers) growing a total of over eighteen thousand pounds, suggesting that this was beginning to be seen as a viable crop.

The 1871 census indicates a considerable increase in dairy production. Kneeland is shown as having six milch cows in 1871, the same number as on the 1861 census. Abel, however, is listed as having ten in 1871, as compared with four in 1861. Kneeland's butter production is shown as five hundred pounds on each census, but Abel has a hundred pounds on the 1861 census and seven hundred pounds in 1871; neither household has cheese listed. The latter census shows that the number of milch cows in the township increased by over six hundred, butter production increased by around 60 percent and that of cheese by over 50 percent. But the increase may not have been quite this high, as non-farming families were not asked about dairy production in the 1861 census and it is likely that some of them would have kept cows (and other livestock) as did families in Montreal.[137] But only under 10 percent of the farms had ten or more milch cows, the highest number being thirty-two, and nearly 80 percent had five or fewer, so small scale dairy production remained the norm. It seems, then, that the community as a whole did not undergo any great change over the time span of Eliza's journal. Under the 1871 census list for "Industrial Establishments" there are seven saw mills with a total of fourteen employees, but four of these are shown as operating for six months a year or less and only one as running year round. The other establishments on this census consist

137. See Bettina Bradbury, "Pigs, Cows, and Boarders: Non-Wage Forms of Survival among Montreal Families, 1861-91," *Labour/Le Travail.* 14 (Fall, 1974): 9-46.

of five blacksmiths with a total of nine employees, a shoe shop and an ashery, each of which has two employees.[138]

A diary such as Eliza's, with its chronicling of each day's activities undistorted by the passage of time or the bias of personal opinion, enables the reader to construct the economic framework that sustained the household and to see the daily lives of the family members as they worked, went to church meetings and to school, and visited their neighbours. But the lack of personal perspective and reflection means that little can be learned about the emotional relationships of the family members with one another and how these affected or were affected by the functioning of the household economy. The value of Eliza's journal lies in the picture it reveals of a farm economy operating in a particular place at a particular time, and given that most of the families living there had roots in New England, it is not surprising that the lives of the families described by Clark, Barron and Bruegel were very similar. Clark sees such an economy persisting in the Connecticut Valley even after the rise of external markets. "The old practices persisted," he writes, "because they continued to make sense in their cultural and economic context. The household system had welcomed and complemented market development and not resisted it, and so it was able to continue."[139] The increased dairy production between 1861 and 1871 suggests that the farmers of Potton Township were responding to an

138. The ashery was presumably engaged in making potash, a valuable commodity which Day refers to as "black salts." She writes "so profitable was it at particular times, that at the less busy seasons of the year, men would go into the woods, fell trees and burn them for the simple purpose of making salts: or in cases of emergency when money was greatly needed, this was the readiest and surest way to obtain it. For many years pot and pearl ashes were the staple articles which to make remittances in trade, and for a long time were the principal products which could be spared from sections of the country where a non-producing population was rapidly multiplying." Day, *History of Eastern Townships*, 190-91. Several times in the 1850s Eliza wrote of men coming to the house to buy ashes and paying for them with cash. But it is not clear if the trees were cut specifically to sell as ashes. They may have been felled in order to clear land for crops.

139. Clark, "Household Economy," 181.

increased demand for dairy products, but achieving this through traditional modes of small herds, rather than large commercial operations.

Potton Township remained a somewhat isolated community and could not easily embrace a wider economic system as beyond the basin of Lake Memphremagog the amount of viable agricultural land was limited by the mountainous terrain. There was little room for expansion. Though the coming of the railroad and better roads made it easier to send products to external markets the area remained, and still is, a predominantly rural community.[140]

Though historians may look for signs that the society of mid-nineteenth century Canada was working consciously towards a wider market economy, and the women were seeking empowerment, Eliza's journal suggests rather that the family's goal was to get through life as best as they could in the circumstances and provide for the next generation. It demonstrates the way in which all members of the family contributed to the farm economy, their interdependence with other members of the community for labour and equipment, and their involvement in the local market. Moreover, the entries show not only the value and negotiability in that market of the products to which women contributed most of the work, such as butter, dried apples and weaving, but also the women's participation in the marketplace. Without such journals the work of women such as Eliza and her daughters and the intricacies of farm life would remain invisible.

140. The Orford Mountain Railway was abandoned in 1936 (Kesteman, Southam, and Saint-Pierre,*Histoire des Cantons*, 579).

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