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Published by Ronald Caplan on 1991/8/1

tice." Officials could not hope to keep track of these thousands who arrived at remote ports and who quickly disappeared into the woods. The new settlers had learned little in Scotland of scientific agricultural methods. They simply cleared the trees, burnt the wood for fertilizer, and with a cas-chrom • a home-made hand plough • planted their po? tatoes or some wheat among the stumps. Fortunately, the virgin land bore abundantly. This poverty and overwhelming dependence on the potato proved dangerous. An extraordinarily cold season in 1832 greatly diminished the potato and grain crop. The following year wit? nessed serious crop failures at Baddeck, Middle River and St. Ann's. Though the government sent supplies, thus averting a calamity, cir? cumstances inviting disaster in Cape Breton remained. It arrived in 1845. By 1846, potato blight affected virtually the whole island. This meant that lack of seed for the next crop made 1847 and 1848 probably the most disastrous years in human terms. In 1848, the rot was still bad and heavy rains after early August hurt other crops, especially hay. 1849 was a drier year and the rot was not as prevalent, but the wheat fly struck. Substitute crops, however, were then being cultivated, somewhat lessening the dependence on pota? toes and wheat. The following year was moister, resulting in more rot which also affected tubers stored after harvest. In 1851, the fly once again devastated the wheat crop, and even in 1852, both parasites remained, though increasing crop diversity lessened the threat. Gen? erally, after 1851, improved agricultural methods and a diversity of planting eliminated the danger of famine, though the two pests con? tinued to be a problem.

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The interior lands at the Strait of Canso suffered in 1845, 1847 and 1848. The territory extending from Little Narrows to Lake Ainslie was very hard hit, the latter area in particular suffering successive failures from 1845 to 1847. Nearby Broad Cove lost its crop in 1845 and 1847, Ma? bou lost half its crop in 1846, and the 1847 planting was a total failure. Baddeck was hit early, in 1845, but in 1848 the entire area from the village to St. Ann's, and northward to Middle River and Margaree, was badly affected. The latter two areas were also attacked in 1845 and 1847. The Sydney area suffered most in 1847 and 1848. The threat of starvation hung over the island throughout this period. When the blight first struck in 1845, farmers in Margaree hoped their cattle could be fed the infected potatoes, only to discover that the animals died. Instead, livestock was exported; in 1845 alone, Margaree shipped 440 head of cattle and 500 sheep to Newfoundland. In such a way, cash could be obtained for the purchase of food and seed. Newly-settled areas could not fall back on this expedient; in 1847 at South Lake Ainslie and Whycocomagh, for example, when the cattle and sheep had eaten all the grain, they had to be slaughtered, so that seed grain could be saved for the next season. These people had given up on the potato, and should their next grain crop fail, they faced starvation. The same applied to Arichat, but as a seaport, oats and barley could be imported there from Prince Edward Island. Like Arichat, Sydney could easily bring in food, but the great demand for supplies led to serious shortages there. In June 1847, for example, there was not a barrel of flour to be found in the town, and a girl died of starvation at nearby Mira. The danger of starvation was serious for the needy and the Indians, as well as for the newer settlers. A poor man starved to death at Cow Bay (Port Morien) in the spring of 1849, and a short while later, a coroner's inquest found that a Mic? mac had died "from the effects of cold and want of food." No records were kept of those who perished from debilitation or diseases which developed in bodies weakened by hunger, but between 1845 and 1851, many reports indicated that people were in a "state of starvation," and that the situation in places was "feartul." Conditions in Broad Cove in 1847 were described as "deplorable." Such statements were reported in the House of Assembly. A Committee on Relief to the Poor Settlers reported in the spring of 1848 that "Poverty, wretchedness, and misery, have spread through the island of Cape Breton." The island was also described as the "Ireland of Nova Scotia." People from the back and new settlements filtered into the principal towns in groups of twenty or more, some walking forty to fifty miles, begging for a bit of flour or meal. A Loch Lomond woman later recalled: "A group of men and women started for L'Ardoise by foot over blazed roads, following the lake and river down as far as Grand River then taking a blazed trail over L'Ardoise Highlands, for some of us were over thirty miles from our homes. The poor women were barefooted and each woman took her knitting along with her and knitted away as they walked over and around the hills, by windfalls and swamps until they reached the shore, hungry and tired. Each man and woman was supplied with a half a barrel of Indian meal, then