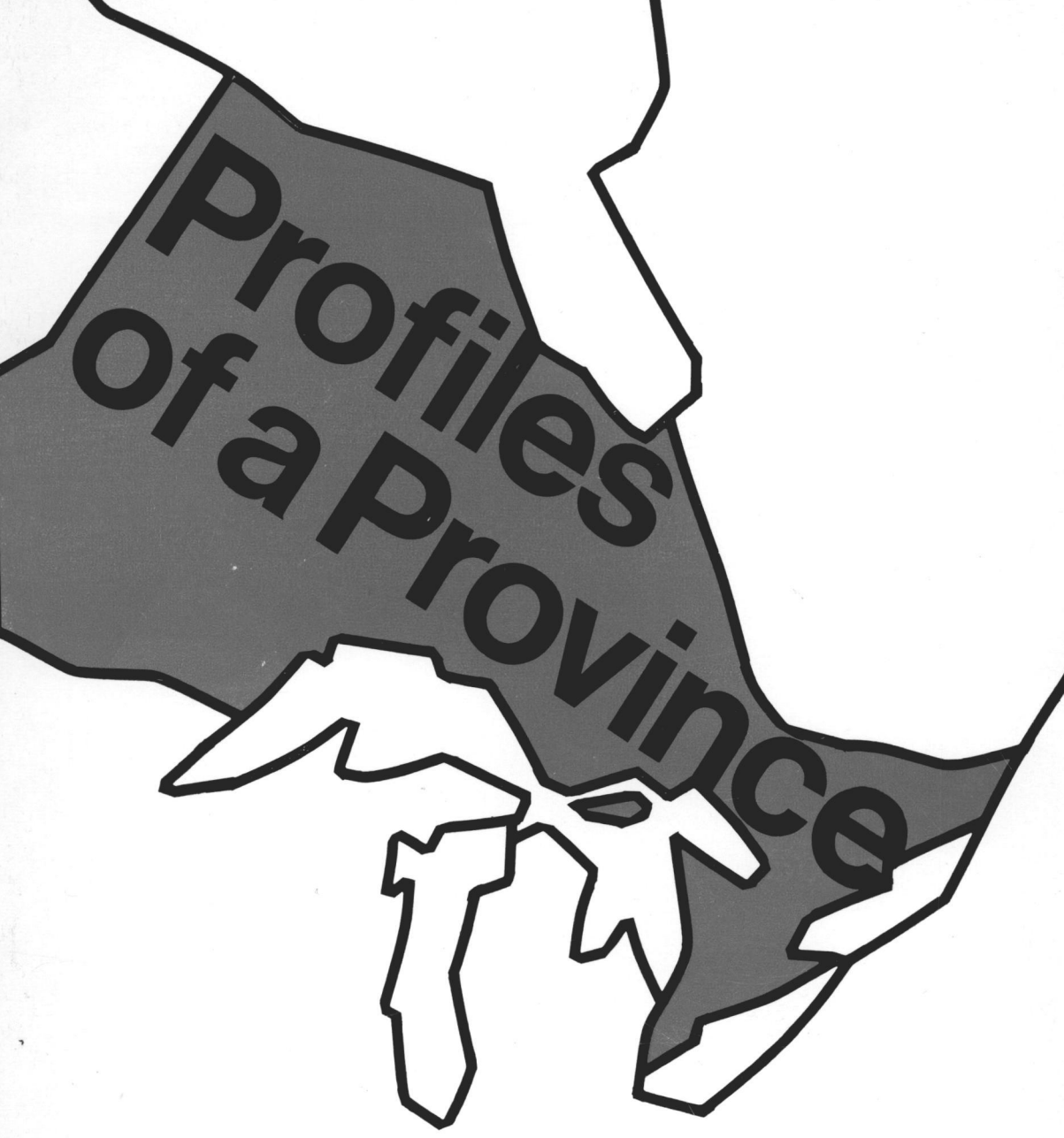

Ontario Historical Society

Profiles of a Province

Profiles of a Province

Studies in the history of Ontario

A collection of essays commissioned by
The Ontario Historical Society
to commemorate the centennial of Ontario

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Preface

The celebrations associated with the one hundredth birthday of the Dominion of Canada have occupied the centre of the stage during 1967, and rightly so, for the Dominion that came into being a century ago was a bold, imaginative experiment in political engineering that is gradually becoming recognized as an important event in modern world history—the founding of a mighty nation whose industrial and artistic maturity are fittingly expressed in the World's Fair in Montreal, Expo 67.

These festivities honouring the centenary of the Dominion of Canada should not completely obscure the fact that not one, but three, political entities came into existence on July 1, 1867 in British North America—the provinces of Ontario and Quebec as well as the Dominion. True, the Dominion was a completely new creation, while the province of Ontario, despite the newness of the name, was a functioning regional community, the reality of whose existence was confirmed by the creation of the province. Ontario was the continuation of an earlier colony, Upper Canada, whose beginnings went back another seventy-five years; although it had been merged with Lower Canada in 1841 the union had not effaced the distinctive qualities of the community along the Great Lakes and upper St. Lawrence River, but only intensified them.

The people of Ontario, proud of their heritage as Canadians, have participated in the festivities to help make 1967 a year of rejoicing and of national rededication. But, equally, this year completes a century in the life of the province, during which Ontario has made tremendous advances. This centenary offers a convenient point to review and assess the many accomplishments of the province and its people. In this volume are examined some of these achievements in Ontario's progression from pioneer loyalist colony to powerful modern industrial and cultural community, or, as one author has phrased it, its advance from Outpost to Empire.

Profiles of a Province was conceived as a collection of essays that reflected the areas of special interest of the authors. All except three were especially prepared for this collection by scholars whose fields of study, taken as a group, cover the various periods of Ontario's history and a wide range of subjects. Inevitably, even though the articles represent a broad cross-section of current researches in the field of Ontario history, they leave many important aspects untreated. The number of possible subjects is simply too vast; a collection that aimed at being comprehensive would have necessitated a number of volumes. Because each author was given a free hand to treat his

subject in his own way, the articles represent a considerable variety of approaches and presentations. To a surprising degree, however, the result is a reasonably well-rounded, integrated, comprehensive group of essays, which have been arranged in four parts according to their main themes. The Ontario Historical Society counts itself fortunate to have secured the support and assistance of so large a group of gifted and devoted contributors. It thanks these contributors for their excellent presentations, as well as Miss Edith G. Firth, head of the Canadian History and Manuscript Section of the Toronto Public Library, who acted as editor and superintended the volume through the press.

A perusal of the articles shows that even before the present province was established, an Ontario community with a definite, distinct regional character had evolved. On the political side, both Tory and Reform movements had abandoned extremist positions in favour of moderate, gradual constitutional reforms and responses to the needs of an industrializing community. Both had also perfected the organizations and structures of the future national and provincial parties. Despite a short-lived flirtation of the Radicals with American ideas, the Ontario of 1867 scorned republicanism and equated democracy with mob rule, and its citizens, depending on the circumstances, were either latently or openly anti-American. The laws, institutions, and traditions of the colony were British. Finally, the union with Lower Canada helped to weld the future province into a sense of its being a distinctive community, differing in interests, outlooks, and needs from its Lower Canadian partner. This regional or sectional feeling inspired its political leaders to evolve a new constitutional framework that would provide home rule for the Ontario community as a province in the new Dominion of Canada.

Ontario had also developed into a distinct economic community by the time of Confederation. By 1850 it possessed vigorous, buoyant, burgeoning cities, a prosperous staple export economy, thriving manufacturing plants and financial structures, and an adequate system of transportation by water and land. These were further expanded and improved during the 1850's through the building of railways. To preserve the autonomy of this economic region the statesmen of 1864–67 created a federal system under which existing material benefits could be maintained and extended within the province of Ontario, while at the same time the province could aspire to win an economic hegemony over the vast free trading area of the Dominion of Canada. Implicit, too, in the economic development of the Ontario community was a sizeable degree of state aid and control, unaccompanied, however, by a concern for the long-term welfare of the public, or the proper care of the natural resources.

The Upper Canadian experience had also moulded a distinctive society and personality. The community was strongly Protestant, pluralistic, disposed towards voluntarism, and opposed to religious privileges and state-supported churches. The people were serious, pious, sabbath-observing, pragmatic, frugal, puritanical, and interested in causes for human betterment like temperance, Indian and foreign missions, and the anti-slavery movement. Their architecture, painting, and literature were not profoundly original, but they reflected confidence in the worth of the community and a contented acceptance of established values.

During the century that followed, the province continued many of the patterns established by the previous colony. Post-Confederation leaders, Oliver Mowat in particular, epitomized the qualities of slow, gradual, practical reforms, the distrust of bold or radical solutions, a cautious but progressive approach to the needs of an industrializing, urbanizing society, a strong pro-British even imperialist sentiment, and a determination to maintain Ontario's rights to remain a distinct community within the Canadian Confederation. The personalities and works of later figures like J. P. Whitney, N. W. Rowell, and Mitchell Hepburn continued to reflect similar tendencies. Particularly in the career of N. W. Rowell one may discern the persistence of such traditional socio-religious virtues as earnestness, industriousness, application, temperate habits, and a sincere concern for the improvement of society.

The expectations at Confederation of continuing industrialization and diversification were fulfilled as southern Ontario became an industrial, commercial, and financial heartland of the transcontinental Dominion, and the province secured territories to the north and west that tripled its original area. The concept of the state as provider of material aid and facilities was reflected in the establishment of the Ontario Northland Railway and the Hydro-electric Power Commission as public utilities. State regulation has moved into setting industrial and labour standards, conserving natural resources, and providing support for the underprivileged. The religio-educational values of the earlier period were carried forward in the steadily-improving system of public education, created and guided by Dr. Egerton Ryerson in a non-denominational but Christian direction. Only in the field of the arts, to judge from the article on Ontario's literature, has the province possibly failed to fulfil its earlier promise.

Have the developments of the past century maintained or diminished Ontario's regional character? Certainly the modern province, thanks to its growth and diversification, has become less homogeneous than was the community that gained provincial status in 1867. Still, while no one would dispute the real differences that exist among such districts as the St. Lawrence valley and the Lakehead, or the minefields of the Canadian Shield and Metropolitan Toronto, the extent of their diversity can be exaggerated. The British background of language, laws, and institutions inherited from the older colony continues to unite Ontarians, as well as the works of successive provincial governments—the framework of local and municipal institutions, the schools system, common wage and work standards, the province-wide system of welfare services. Improving transportation media have reduced the effective distances between sections of Ontario, while technological developments have undermined localisms and integrated diverse sections, linking city and countryside, and southern with northern Ontario. The diffusion of common literary, cultural and artistic standards (largely fashioned in, and disseminated from, Toronto) is facilitated by the rising levels of education and increased leisure. Thus the different sections of the province are being increasingly unified and perpetuated as a distinct region.

Yet the regional sense, of being a part of a distinct entity known as Ontario, lacks the emotional quality of a century ago that inspired the establishment of the province, or that threatens Confederation today. Indeed, the regionalism of Ontario is often so closely identified with Canadian nationalism that many Ontarians fail to regard

Ontario as a region at all and equate the larger Dominion with the purposes of Ontario. This view comes easily to Ontarians, seeing that the province comprises one-third of the population of Canada, the national capital is in Ontario, and federal programmes of national integration have almost invariably favoured Ontario's regional interests. The inhabitants of other regions of Canada, all too often, have accepted this identification and accused Dominion governments of designing their programmes too much in conformity with the interests of Ontario, and insufficiently in tune with those of the western provinces, the Maritimes, or Quebec.

Is not this view which identifies Ontario with the Dominion, simply another manifestation of Ontario regionalism, an outlook characteristic of the province which differentiates it from the other sections of Canada? In fact, the domination of the federal state by Ontario has been exaggerated; more often than not, Ontario has returned opponents rather than supporters of federal governments to Parliament. The programmes of economic integration were conceived in the interests of national consolidation, to give reality to Confederation, and the benefits to Ontario were incidental to those objectives. Increasingly, Ontario has recognized its benefits under Confederation and shown a willingness to assist less well-endowed parts of Canada, or regions adversely affected by those policies that have been so helpful to Ontario. As Professor Innis observed over thirty years ago, in his article reprinted below, "An empire has its obligations as well as its opportunities." Ontario has been the willing ally and partner of the national government, prepared to identify its own interests with the preservation of a healthy Confederation, ready to co-operate to achieve the purposes of Canada, and more willing than most to submerge its own views in the face of the common good. Provincial rights found their earliest home in Mowat's Ontario, but the 'home rule' status achieved at that time has proved sufficient to Ontario's needs and aspirations. During the present century a prosperous, contented Ontario has been the Dominion's staunchest support against external threats of conquest or absorption, and against internal forces of division and disruption.

In publishing *Profiles of a Province* the Ontario Historical Society seeks to pay its respects to the great province, aspects of whose history and achievements it has studied since its founding. By this volume it hopes to place in truer perspective many of the key developments that have shaped Ontario and to help identify the basic characteristics of the modern province. It aims also to assist future scholars by answering some questions with these studies, and posing others. Finally, it hopes that this volume will reach the citizens of Ontario—particularly the young people in the schools—and make them aware of the glorious heritage bequeathed them by earlier generations of Upper Canadians and Ontarians, to the end that they will take a just pride in that heritage and be inspired to emulate the achievements of those who have gone before.

MORRIS ZASLOW
Past President, Ontario Historical Society

List of Contributors

FREDERICK H. ARMSTRONG is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Western Ontario.

MARGARET A. BANKS is Law Librarian at the University of Western Ontario.

R. N. BEATTIE is Records Administrator of the Hydro-electric Power Commission of Ontario.

PAUL G. CORNELL is Professor of History at the University of Waterloo.

A. MARGARET EVANS is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Guelph.

W. S. GOULDING is a Professor in the School of Architecture, University of Toronto.

FRED COYNE HAMIL is Professor of History at Wayne State University.

J. RUSSELL HARPER, formerly Chief Curator of the McCord Museum, McGill University, is lecturing in Canadian art history at Carleton and Sir George Williams Universities.

BRUCE W. HODGINS is Assistant Professor of History at Trent University.

NEIL C. HULTIN is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Western Ontario.

CHARLES W. HUMPHRIES is Assistant Professor of History at the University of British Columbia.

H. A. INNIS, who died in 1952, pioneered in the study of Canadian economic history, and was one of Canada's outstanding scholars.

FRED LANDON, formerly Chief Librarian and Professor of History at the University of Western Ontario, was awarded the Tyrell Medal in History, and the Cruikshank Medal. He is a past president of the Ontario Historical Society.

FATHER NEIL MCKENTY, S.J., formerly on the staff of Regiopolis College, is the author of *Mitch Hepburn.*

WILLIAM H. MAGEE is on the staff of the Department of English at the University of Alberta.

JOHN S. MOIR is Professor of History at the University of Toronto (Scarborough College) and is President of the Ontario Historical Society.

FLORENCE B. MURRAY is a Professor in the School of Library Science, University of Toronto.

EDWARD PHELPS is Collections Librarian at Brock University.

MARGARET PRANG is Associate Professor of History at the University of British Columbia.

GEORGE W. SPRAGGE, formerly Archivist of Ontario, has been awarded the Cruikshank Medal for distinguished service to Ontario history.

C. P. STACEY, O.B.E., is Professor of History at the University of Toronto.

ROBERT M. STAMP is Assistant Professor in the History of Education at the Althouse College of Education, University of Western Ontario.

J. J. TALMAN is Chief Librarian, University of Western Ontario.

S. F. WISE is Chief Historian in the Historical Division of the Canadian Forces Headquarters.

R. I. WOLFE is Associate Professor of Geography at York University.

MORRIS ZASLOW is Professor of History at the University of Western Ontario, and a past president of the Ontario Historical Society.

PART I

The making of a province

The United Empire Loyalists

J. J. Talman

In a brief paper such as this on a subject which has been covered voluminously we cannot do better than confine ourselves to trying to find answers for some of the questions that come to mind regarding the United Empire Loyalists. Why were they loyal? What kind of people were they? Where did they come from? How many were there? What was the immediate effect of their migration? What were the long-term effects? Is the Loyalist background of the province of Ontario still significant? Were the Loyalists who came to that part of Quebec which became Upper Canada different from those who went to Nova Scotia? Our answers in this paper must generally be limited to the present province of Ontario.

To answer our first question, a person who wishes to discover the Loyalists' views on loyalty has not an easy task as he is hampered by lack of evidence. Lorenzo Sabine, the mid-nineteenth century New England historian, was one of the earliest to point out this fact when in 1864 he wrote: "Men who, like the Loyalists, separate themselves from their friends and kindred, who are driven from their homes, who surrender the hopes and expectations of life, and who become outlaws, wanderers, and exiles, – such men leave few memorials behind them. Their papers are scattered and lost, and their very names pass from human recollection." Two competent early Canadian historians, William Canniff and Judge J. F. Pringle, discovered the same paucity of records. The latter, in 1889, complained of the great dearth of the "records of the services, the labours and the sufferings of the U.E. Loyalists both before and after their coming to Canada."

Some historians have tried to explain the movement of the Loyalists to what became Upper Canada as a simple migration of people looking for better land. Others have suggested that they were those who believed that the mother country would subdue the rebellious colonies and therefore, "having bet on the wrong horse," were forced to leave. Doubtless there were Loyalists who fitted these descriptions. At the same time it must be recognized that many were loyal out of a genuine loyalty to the Crown. They were Americans who wished to live under a king; as Edward Winslow put it, "zealots in the King's cause." On the other hand many *bona fide* Loyalists had been in America a very short time and were practically transients as far as the thirteen colonies were concerned.

The question as to what kind of people the Loyalists were and where they came from may be readily answered. As far as Upper Canada was concerned they

did not represent the royal officials, the large landed proprietors, the professional classes or the wealthy classes of the thirteen colonies. Exceptions, of course, stood out. The Johnson and Jessup families had held large estates in New York. The Reverend John Stuart and the Reverend John Bethune were clergymen. But in over six hundred claims recorded in the Ontario Bureau of Archives *Report* for 1904 not a single lawyer is to be found and there are only two doctors in the group. That the Loyalists who settled in what became Upper Canada were not men of property is shown by a letter from Quebec dated January 29, 1786, written by Lieutenant Governor Hope to the commissioners investigating Loyalist claims. He protested because the commissioners were determined to hold their sessions in Halifax and expected claimants even from the western parts of Quebec to make their way there to present their claims. Hope wrote:

> The Loyalists in the Province with a few exceptions do not consist of Persons of great Property of consequence. They are chiefly landholders, Farmers and others from the Inland parts of the Continent, many of whom very early quitted their homes and Possessions to join the Royal Standard, the rest have been forced to abandon them and take refuge under his Majestys Government. . . . A small compensation for their Losses would restore to the great part of them all the Comforts and Conveniences they have lost.

Colonel Thomas Dundas, one of the commissioners investigating Loyalist losses, likewise wrote in 1787 to Lord Cornwallis that the settlers up to that time were "mostly farmers from the back parts of New York province."

The description of Loyalist immigrants to the present province of Ontario cannot be projected to describe the Loyalists of New Brunswick. Mr. Gerald Keith of Saint John has generously supplied the writer with a list of the names of some of those persons registered as Freemen of Saint John in 1785, together with the names of others who were thereabouts. He has found six physicians, twenty-four persons described as "esquires" (many of whom were lawyers), nineteen described as "gentlemen" and many others whose biographies record the holding of high positions in the thirteen colonies.

The conclusion seems clear. The Loyalist party in the thirteen colonies was made up of all sorts and conditions of men but with rare exceptions only Loyalists of humble origin found their way to what became Upper Canada and later Ontario.

The question of the number of Loyalist immigrants to Upper Canada is not so easily answered. The number actually was lower than is generally believed. In 1786 the official record of "the Number of Loyalists settled in the Upper Parts of the Province of Quebec" was 5,960. In 1791 the population, which by then included many non-Loyalists who quickly joined the Loyalist movement and within a few years became almost indistinguishable from it, had risen to only 10,000. This was the estimate of a select committee of the House of Assembly of Upper Canada in 1838. It is true that immigrants who fulfilled the technical requirements necessary to receive Loyalist land grants were recognized if they arrived by July 28, 1798. Nevertheless, the first flood of Loyalists who came to Canada soon after the peace totalled approximately 6,000.