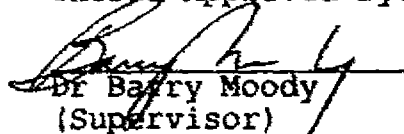


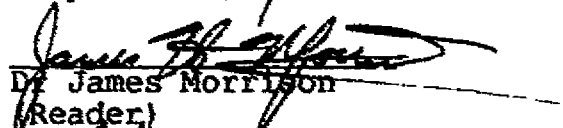
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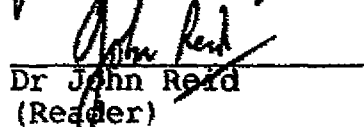
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Abstract

On July 24, 1759, the Governor of Nova Scotia, Charles Lawrence, ordered the creation of Onslow Township. This township, laid out on the north side of the Bay of Fundy, stretched from east of the mouth of the Chiganoise River along the shore of the Cobequid Basin to beyond the mouth of the North River. From the shoreline, Onslow extended north into the Cobequid Mountains and formed a roughly twelve square mile plot of land. The physical reality of Onslow was fairly easy to establish; the human dimension would take much longer.

The land contained within this corporate space, defined as Onslow, functioned on a number of levels for both the community and the families that eventually settled in the township. Land defined the community, at times acted as a commodity of exchange, and was important in obtaining and maintaining status. In modern terms, land provided Onslow families with subsistence, a saleable product, collateral, old age security, and trust funds. Land drew settlers to the township and allowed successive generations of families to remain. The importance of land in eighteenth and nineteenth century Onslow made its conveyance from parents to children an emotionally charged and contentious issue. The records surrounding land transactions reflect Onslow's communal and familial relationships. Land had the power to pull community and family members together or to tear them apart. The investigation of Onslow landholding provides a window through which this study of community and family in Planter Nova Scotia takes place.

Acknowledgements

There are a number of persons and institutions whom I am indebted to for their assistance with this work. Barry Moody was generous with both his time and knowledge. David Cone, Colin Howell, and John Reid provided flexible and stimulating ACS course work which helped launch my research. The Gorsebrook Research Institute supplied financial support through a Gorsebrook fellowship. The staff of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, and Nan Harvey, at the Colchester Historical Museum, charted a course through the evidence held by their respective institutions. The Colchester Historical Society graciously provided the opportunity to present my ideas.

Much of the credit for this thesis must go to my family. My wonderful parents, Phillip and Jean McNutt, supplied a deep well of support to draw on. My parents-in-law, Don and Grace Arseneau, pitched in with heaps of encouragement. My dear son, Bennett James McNutt, provided perspective and diversion. To my much beloved wife, Catherine Lorraine Arseneau, I dedicate this thesis, thank you for the sense of humour and love. Your intellect and faith have been irreplaceable during the last several years.

M.A.Mc.

Introduction

Immigrants who made their way to Nova Scotia, between 1759 and 1768, have long been missing from Canadian historiography. The Planters, as they have been called, have been a marginalized topic in a marginalized region.¹ One reason for the marginalization of the Planter experience is its rural setting. Rusty Bittermann, in "The Hierarchy of the Soil", argues that the impressive renaissance which Maritime historiography has experienced over the last two decades has concentrated on issues located outside of the countryside. Rural spaces in which most of the region's economic activity occurred have received relatively little study.² This thesis focuses on one of these unexamined rural spaces, the Onslow Township, and the people who occupied it.

¹ Planter is an old English word for colonist. Its use was consciously decided on by the Planter Studies Committee at Acadia University to replace the ahistorical label of Pre-Loyalist. Planter describes the immigrants who made their way to the province of Nova Scotia, after the deportation of the Acadians and prior to the coming of the Loyalists. The term Planter in this thesis is not used narrowly to describe settlers who shared a common origin, lifestyle, and religion - Congregationalist, New England farmers - but rather, widely to include all those who shared the experience of migrating to Nova Scotia in the expectation of new opportunities. Planters were not people who planted crops, they were people who planted colonies. See Esther Clark Wright, Planters and Pioneers: Nova Scotia, 1749-1775 (Hantsport, 1978) 6-7, and Margaret Conrad, ed., They Planted Well: New England Planters in Maritime Canada (Fredericton, 1988) 9.

² Rusty Bittermann, "The Hierarchy of the Soil: Land and Labour in a 19th Century Cape Breton Community," The Acadiensis Reader: Atlantic Canada Before Confederation, eds. P.A. Buckner and David Frank (Fredericton, 1990) 220.

There are dangers associated with the study of an individual community. Kenneth A. Lockridge, in A New England Town, contends that the student of the New England town faces a difficult choice; the student can either deal with many towns, asking few or shallow questions, or deal thoroughly with a single town, running the risk of describing an atypical example.³ Much of the same holds true for Planter townships in Nova Scotia; however, even the atypical example offers important lessons about generalization and diverse development.

The basic issues this thesis will address involve three interrelated subjects - land, family, and community - as they affected the lives of the first three generations of Planters in one Nova Scotian township. How did Planters' approach to the landscape reflect their culture and history, and what were the long-term results of this approach to the land for successive generations of their families and community?

The Onslow Township, from 1760 to 1860, gave shape and body to this discussion of land, family, and community. Onslow was, and remains, a rural space on the north shore of the Bay of Fundy's Cobequid Basin. No town was ever incorporated within Onslow's boundaries and, on the surface,

³. Kenneth A. Lockridge, A New England Town (New York, 1970) xi-xv.

life in the area would seem "unbroken in its continuity".⁴ Under the surface, however, lay a history of adaptation by Onslow's inhabitants to the gradually changing context in which they lived their lives.

This history of Onslow did not reveal itself easily. The township's early inhabitants left little evidence about their lives in the form of letters or diaries. Documents involving the community and its interaction was also lacking as Onslow has few surviving maps or records of township meetings. What did remain was a large amount of information which still reflected Onslow's past. This includes deeds, probate records, vital records and government documents.

The registration of deeds within Onslow began shortly after the first settlement of Planters. Although the initial records in the township were sparse, the deeds were meticulously kept, since land was the only item of real value for many early settlers. The most common transaction found in the registry was the land deed, which recorded the sale or ownership transferral of a specific piece of property and gave details concerning contracting parties, purchase price, and land description. Other documents concerning land were also regularly entered in the registry

⁴ A township was a unit of land that could be defined by survey whether peopled or not. A town is the incorporated political entity within the territorial definition of a township. Elizabeth Mancke, "Corporate Structure and Private Interest: The Mid-Eighteenth-Century Expansion of New England," Making Adjustments: Change and Continuity in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800, ed. Margaret Conrad (Fredericton, 1991) 164.

- mortgage records, bonds, indentures, judgement records (decisions handed down by the court of common pleas or supreme court in land disputes), wills, dower settlements, and separation agreements. All the deeds used in the following thesis were found at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, the Registry of Deeds, Colchester County, reel numbers 17,438 to 17,464.

Probate refers to all those records which related to the disposition of an estate after its owner's death. All probate records are divided into two categories; testate, referring to someone who died with a will, and intestate, referring to someone who died without a will. Some Onslow inhabitants died leaving no probate trail. In some cases their land had already been conveyed to family members by deed and whatever personal property remained was not significant enough to warrant a will. In other cases records of land and possessions being transferred may have been lost or an unwritten agreement was used to pass on an estate.

Technically speaking, a "last will and testament" was really two documents; a will deals with real estate, while a testament concerns personal property and money. As with modern usage, the terms appear to have been used interchangeably in early Onslow. Once a will was drawn up, and its maker dead, the document was to be presented for probate. This involved the filing of a petition for probate.

At this point, the will was copied into the will books maintained by the Registrar of Probate.⁵ Subsequently, letters of testamentary were granted to the executors named in the will, permitting them to proceed with the settlement of the estate. After a bond to guarantee their responsibility was made, the executors had an inventory and an appraisal of the real and personal property done. Often included were lists of creditors and debts. If the assets did not cover the debts the real or, as was more often the cases in Onslow, personal estate had to be sold. This required a petition for permission and a license to sell. When all of these details had been worked out with the Probate Court of the county, a decree of distribution, or probate decree was issued, signifying that the estate had been settled, and in what manner.

When no valid will remained, the official settling of an estate was somewhat different. In these cases the estate was administered by persons appointed by the Probate Court. Letters of administration were normally granted to the surviving spouse or next-of-kin, who then filed a bond to guarantee responsibility. The remaining procedure was the same as an estate with a will. In Nova Scotia, the law gave a third interest in the estate of the deceased to the wife for life, and then divided the estate among the children,

⁵ While Onslow did not have will books, wills were occasionally copied into the registry of deeds and, after 1798, the register books.

with the eldest son receiving a double share.⁶

Unfortunately the surviving probate records for many of Onslow's inhabitance are not a complete set of all of these steps. The probate records used in the following thesis were found at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia under the Halifax County Estate Papers, 1750-1841, reel numbers 19,398 to 19,426, and the Colchester County Court of Probate - wills, estate papers, and register books - reel numbers 19,164 to 19,173.⁷

Chief among the vital records remaining for Onslow was "The Book of Records for Deaths, Births and Marriages". Early census records were also important, as were a number of genealogies, published and unpublished. The genealogies often contain information regarding Planter origins, lives, and migrations. A variety of government documents and court records have also been important to this research of Onslow's history.

By the use of deeds, probate, vital records, and government documents it was possible to reconstruct patterns of land holding and inheritance in early Onslow and, in

⁶ For an example of this law in practice see Registry of Probate, Public Archives of Nova Scotia (PANS), RG48, Colchester County Estate Papers, 21, estate of Charles Dickson, 20 March 1804.

⁷ Terrence Punch, "Land and Probate Records in Genealogy," Newsletter of the Archival Association of Atlantic Canada, Vol. 5, 1, May 1977. For a general discussion of archival sources relating to this time period and topic see Barry Cahill, "New England Planters at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia," They Planted Well: New England Planters in Maritime Canada, ed. Margaret Conrad (Fredericton, 1988) 120-131.

turn, to use this reconstruction as a window to both community and family history. Land functioned on many different levels in Onslow; it defined the community, acted as a commodity of exchange, and was central to status. Issues surrounding land had the power to unite or divide the community. The important role land played in Onslow allowed the deeds and probate to be imprinted with the township's history. These records provided clues to the effects of immigration, exodus, and revolution upon Onslow. The records also spoke to family relations within the township.

While land could operate on many different levels within the community, so too could it function within the family. In modern terms, land provided Onslow families with subsistence, a saleable product, a commodity of exchange, collateral for performance bonds and mortgages, old age security, and trust funds for children. What fathers, and sometimes mothers, did with their land was of important consequence to the futures of their families.

For the purpose of this study a family was considered either a group of kindred who usually, but not always, resided in the same community or in relatively close proximity. Historian Philip Greven suggests most studies of modern American and European families have observed that the most frequently found household consists of the nuclear family. When households include other kindred they form an extended family. Greven argues that such a definition of

extended family focuses attention upon a single household thereby narrowing the concept of family to a relatively small number of people. "An analysis that concentrates on households cannot appreciate the complexities of structure that emerge from the expansion and the contraction of the kinship group within a given community and within a given social setting."⁴ Adult children in Onslow did not have to reside with their parents to be emotionally and financially effected by them. Did Onslow Planters have an expanded or contracted view of family? How was this view connected to land and was it perpetuated by Planters' children, and grandchildren?

An important related issue surrounding household and kinship was the question of the patriarchal nature of Onslow families. To what extent did Planters bring their concept of family with them to Nova Scotia, and how, if at all, was it modified by the impact of the Onslow experience? Did Onslow fathers attempt to control the lives of their children or act as benefactors responsible only for the future well-being of their off-spring? At what point in their lives were children able to establish their own autonomy and economic independence, indicated by the ownership of property?

Graeme Wynn, in "The Geography of the Maritime Colonies

⁴ Philip J. Greven, Jr., Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts (Ithaca, 1970) 15.

in 1800: Patterns and Questions", points to the importance of detailed community histories, manageable in scale, and allowing exhaustive use of the available documentation, within the study of Planters. These histories along with the reconstruction of land-holding patterns promise to add much to our knowledge of eighteenth and nineteenth century Nova Scotia. He wrote:

Close analysis of land-holding patterns, the quantities of productive land held by individuals, and patterns of inheritance and land transfer could tell us much about how the Planters of the 1760s "initiated" life in their new setting, how successful they were in building the foundations upon which their sons and daughters could consolidate, and when, if ever, disintegration set in.⁹

These are crucial issues in rural societies, in which land generally constitutes the foundation of wealth. It was with an eye to studying the interrelations of land, family, and community, and in the process uncovering the history of Onslow that the following thesis has been written.

⁹ Graeme Wynn, "The Geography of the Maritime Colonies in 1800: Patterns and Questions," They Planted Well: New England Planters in Maritime Canada, ed. Margaret Conrad (Fredericton, 1988) 146-147.

Settlers and Soil, 1761-1769

On July 24, 1759, the Governor of Nova Scotia, Charles Lawrence, ordered the creation of the Onslow Township. This township, laid out on the north side of the Bay of Fundy, stretched from east of the mouth of the Chiganoise River along the shore of the Cobequid Basin to beyond the mouth of the North River. From the shoreline, Onslow extended north into the Cobequid Mountains and formed a roughly square plot of land containing twelve square miles. The physical reality of Onslow was fairly easy to establish; the human dimension would take much longer.

To begin an exploration of Onslow and the Planters who built their lives on its soil, two basic questions must be addressed: one, who came to Onslow, and two, where in the township did they choose to live? The answers to these seemingly simple questions are essential to an understanding of early Onslow, as the cultural orientation of its settlers would have important implications for the future community. Furthermore, the way in which these settlers chose to approach the landscape not only gives insight into their lives, but also shaped the experience of future generations in the township. The evidence remaining for the time period spanning the arrival of the first settlers in 1761 and the reception of the township, or effective, grant in 1769 is scant but some basic conclusions can be formulated.

Onslow was situated on part of the land commonly known as Cobequid. Cobequid surrounded the head of the Basin and had been the home of about a 1000 Acadians prior to the summer of 1754. The Acadians of this area vacated their community in the early 1750s as part of France's desire to create a new Acadia north of Fort Beausejour on the Isthmus of Chignecto.¹

The Beausejour scheme not only provided a solution to the long standing French concern of having approximately 8000 Acadians living under British control, but it also represented a challenge to the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht. In that treaty France surrendered Acadia "according to its ancient boundaries" with the exception of Isle Royale and Isle St. Jean. The British believed that they had been ceded all of the territory of present mainland Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. However, the French acted as if they had not surrendered as much as the British thought.²

While the capture of Fort Beausejour, the Acadian expulsion of 1755, and the fall of the French Fortress of Louisbourg in 1758, gave the British the appearance of being in control of the disputed territory, it also left Lawrence in need of settlers to assume vacated Acadian farm lands and again have them supply Halifax and Boston markets. With the

¹ Stephen E. Patterson, "1744-1763: Colonial Wars and Aboriginal Peoples," The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History, eds. Phillip Buckner and John Reid (Toronto, 1994) 131.

² Patterson 131.

Seven Years War in full swing in Europe, Lawrence, with the approval of the Board of Trade and Plantations in London, looked to New England as the most likely source for immigrants.

On October 12, 1758, Lawrence issued a proclamation which invited immigration to the province and publicized it widely throughout the New England colonies. 100,000 acres of productive plough-land and a similar quantity of cleared upland were advertised as being available. These lands were described as "so intermixed that every single farmer may have a proportionable Quantity of Plough-land, Grass-land, and Wood-land, and are all situated about the Bay of Fundy, upon Rivers navigable for Ships of Burthen".¹

A more detailed second proclamation had to be issued in January, 1759, as a response to many inquiries from interested potential settlers. This proclamation promised: that townships of approximately 12 miles square (100,000 acres) were to be laid out; arable and pasture lands would be allocated according to ability to farm them; each household head would receive 100 acres of woodland and 50 acres for each family member; no individual was to receive more than 1,000 acres, no family more than 5,000; one-third of each grant was to be cultivated, improved, or enclosed every 10 years; and a quit rent of 1 shilling per 50 acres

¹ The proclamations are reprinted in W.O. Raymond, "Col. Alexander McNutt and the pre-Loyalist settlements of Nova Scotia," Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada sec. 2, 1911, 104-5.

would commence a decade after settlement. In addition, settlers were offered forms of government similar to those of the New England colonies, military protection from any possible Micmac attack, and full religious freedom for all Protestants.⁴ New Englanders responded to these proclamations by sending agents to view and negotiate for the lands which were being offered. Agents also arranged details such as transportation, supplies, quit rents, and other conditions of settlement with the Governor and Legislative Council in Halifax.

Onslow's formation was the result of an application made by Joseph Scott and Daniel Knowlton on behalf of themselves and 50 others from Massachusetts for a tract of land at Cobequid.⁵ The township was located on the north side of the Bay of Fundy's Cobequid Basin, with Scott, Knowlton and associates receiving roughly 26,000 acres of land for 52 individuals.⁶ In total there was to be 200 shares in the township and the land was to be granted in common, rather than to individuals. Council also agreed that Knowlton could have the liberty of 50 additional shares in Onslow if he could provide the necessary settlers.⁷ To

⁴ Raymond 104-5.

⁵ Families for Onslow township, PANS, O/S, no. 203, undated.

⁶ D.C. Harvey Papers, PANS, MG1, Vol. 1798. F12, no. 5, 26 July 1759.

⁷ J.S. Martell, "Pre-Loyalist Settlements around the Minas Basin," MA thesis, Dalhousie University, 1933, 53.

ensure their claim, Scott and Knowlton, on their return to New England, prompted 164 potential immigrants, "all of Massachussetts", to petition Council for an interest in Onslow. Timothy Houghton and William Keyes came to Halifax as representatives of this group, and submitted 51 names of those they considered most desirable to have as settlers in Cobequid.¹⁰ On October 18, 1759, Council granted the Houghton-Keyes group 53 shares of 200 acres each in Onslow.¹¹ On the same day Joseph Twitchell and Jonathan Church obtained 50 shares in the township for themselves and a number of others, all from Massachusetts with the exception of Joseph Fairbanks, a Halifax "gentleman" speculating in land.¹² In November of that year Knowlton applied for 150 more shares. Council advised Knowlton that only 41 shares were left in Onslow and he would have to be accommodated elsewhere for the other 109.¹³

¹⁰ D.C. Harvey Papers, PANS, MG1, Vol. 1798, F12, no. 7, 18 October 1759.

¹¹ Israel Longworth, "A Chapter in the History of the Township of Onslow, Nova Scotia," Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society Vol. 9. (Halifax, 1895) 40.

¹² Onslow Preliminary Grant, PANS, RG1, vol. 359, no. 27, 28, 30-33, 18 October 1759.

¹³ D.C. Harvey Papers, PANS, MG1, Vol. 1798, F12, no. 8-10, 18 October 1759.

¹⁴ Actually there should have been 47 shares left in Onslow but it was common practice for Council to reserve a small number of shares in each township for their own use. Knowlton and associates were given Wolfe. Wolfe was a new township adjoining Onslow and the Shubenacadie river. During the summer months of 1759, many arrangements were made by people to settle at Wolfe. When no

Confusion followed as only a small number Planters took up the land provided for them by these grants. Only 11 of the 153 persons listed on the three preliminary grants correspond to names of Onslow Planters on the township grant or other records.¹³ The list of 164 subscribers collected by Scott and Knowlton on their return to Massachusetts held only 12 names which matched those of Onslow Planters.¹⁴ According to the three preliminary grants a proportion of Onslow's Planters were to be established in the fall of 1760 with others to follow the next summer.¹⁵ The Planters did not arrive in September and October of 1760 as outlined in the grants. This was common in a number of the new townships as the logistics of the move, a resurgence of Acadian-Indian resistance, and a gale that damaged some of

Planters arrived the lands of the proposed township went to others who formed Truro. Grants to Onslow Township, PANS, O/S, no. 201, 24 November 1759. Also see Longworth 40, and Martell 53.

¹³. Besides Scott and Knowlton, of the first intended settlers only Jacob Stevens, Thomas Stevens, Jacob Lynds, William Tackles, Hugh Tackles, David Cutten, Abjab Scott, William Whippie, and Samuel Nutting would be granted land in Onslow or appear in the remaining records for the township. Onslow Township Grant, 21 February 1769, PANS, O/S, no. 202. Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reels 17438 - 17440, Vols. 1, 2, 3A, 3B, 4, and 5. The Book of Records for Deaths, Births and Marriages for the Town of Onslow (Deaths, Births, and Marriages), PANS, RG1, Vol. 361 1/2, 22 August 1761.

¹⁴. James Wilson, Joel Camp, David Hoer, Ephraim Hayward, Abner Brooks, George Hayward, Edward Brooks, Phineas Brooks, John Hayward, Benjamin Brooks, Martin Brooks, and John Hueitt all appear on the Scott-Knowlton subscribers list and Onslow's Township Grant or records.

¹⁵ Onslow Preliminary Grant, PANS, O/S, no. 200, 26 July 1759. Also see D.C. Harvey Papers, PANS, MG1, Vol. 1798, F12, no. 4.

the former Acadian dykes in November 1759 delayed the main influx of Planters until 1761. The confusion and delay resulted in a proclamation regarding forfeiture by Council.¹⁷ Eventually Council recalled the original grants and issued new ones, years later, for the settlers who were occupying the land.¹⁸ Onslow did not receive its effective grant until February 21, 1769.

The committees of several townships were advised to meet and tell the grantees that their land was in danger of being lost. The committees were to notify Council as to the number of prospective families intending to come to the province, with the number of persons in each family and the quantity of their stock. Council also wanted to know how many of these families would be ready to embark in the spring of 1761.¹⁹

Shortly after this proclamation was issued, Richard Upham, a New England merchant living in Halifax, applied for forty shares for himself and others in any of the townships around the Bay of Fundy. Council accommodated Upham and his associates in Onslow and Truro. Upham appears to have profited personally from this grant as he is listed by Charles Morris and Jonathan Binney, in a report to Council,

¹⁷. Council Minutes, PANS, Vol. 211, 30 December 1760.

¹⁸ This difficulty was common among the new townships. See Martell 171-174, and J.B. Brebner, The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia (New York, 1937) 29-30.

¹⁹ Martell 101-103.

as having seven shares in Onslow "By order of Lt. Gov. Belcher". The report also lists 5 others in Onslow as having received their shares "Under Mr. Upham".¹⁹

The threat of forfeiture had its desired effect as far as Onslow and Truro were concerned. Early in April, 1761, "In consequence" to the proclamation, commented Belcher, "I have received lists of persons intending to settle Onslow and Truro, who with their families amount to about five hundred persons, with a very considerable stock of Cattle, but all declare their inability of removing unless assisted by the Government with transportation".²⁰

Nova Scotian authorities provided free transportation to the Onslow and Truro settlers as it did with most Planter migration prior to 1763.²¹ Belcher wrote Thomas Hancock, a Boston land agent, to inform him that "Capt. Cobb with two other Sloops" would be arriving "in order to receive all persons who shall be ready to embark by the 1st of May for Truro and Onslow".²² The following day Governor Belcher wrote Colonel William Forster, commander of the British

¹⁹ John Carter, Jacob Lines Heirs, Jacob Lines Jun, David Gay, and Robert Crowell were all listed as having received their shares under Upham. See List of Onslow Proprietors, PANS, MG1, Vol. 1798, F12, no. 11-13, 3 October 1768.

²⁰ Belcher quoted in Martell 101.

²¹ J.M. Bumsted, "Resettlement and Rebellion," The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History, eds. Phillip Buckner and John Reid (Toronto, 1994) 158.

²² D.C. Harvey Papers, PANS, MG1, Vol. 1798, F12, no. 3, undated.

troops in Nova Scotia, requesting 200 men to meet arriving Planters at "the Lands formerly call'd Cobequid in the Bay of Fundy". Belcher wanted the troops "for the protection of the settlers and to defend them against any attempts or discouragements which may happen from the fugitive Acadians or the Indians who have not yet made their Submission to His Majesty".²³ Two groups of Planters set out on an armed vessel named the Montague early in May, 1761. The vessel arrived at Cobequid in the latter part of the month after a brief stop at Horton. The immigration brought 52 grantees with 117 head of cattle and horses to Onslow.²⁴

Onslow later received more settlers as a result of the efforts of Alexander McNutt. An army officer and land agent, McNutt became involved in the colonization of Nova Scotia while working as a deputy for Thomas Hancock. The group of settlers destined for Truro who arrived with the Onslow contingent in May, 1761, were recruited in New Hampshire by McNutt, who also raised settlers in the Ulster region of Ireland.²⁵

By October, 1761, McNutt and 300 colonists had arrived in Halifax directly from northern Ireland. In contrast to

²³ Belcher to Forster, PANS, RG1, Vol. 136, 26, 28 April 1761.

²⁴ D.C. Harvey Papers, PANS, MG1, Vol. 1798, F12, no. 3, undated.

²⁵ For more on McNutt's role in the early history of Truro see Carol Campbell, "A Prosperous Location: Truro, Nova Scotia, 1770-1838," MA thesis, Dalhousie University, 1988.

the relatively more substantial New England farmers who had come the previous year, McNutt's Scots-Irish were described as "indigent people, without means of subsistence". The immigrants remained in Halifax for the winter, subsisting through government assistance and work as labourers. In the spring of 1762 Council gave them provisions, seed corn, tools, and building materials, and arranged for a vessel to transport them to Cobequid. While the majority would eventually become grantees in Londonderry, some became tenants on the lands of earlier settlers in Onslow and Truro.²⁷

McNutt landed two more groups of Scots-Irish in Nova Scotia, a large number of whom found their way to the Cobequid area. Exactly how many of McNutt's immigrants lived in Onslow either briefly or permanently can not be determined, but clearly some did. Robert Barnhill arrived in Halifax on October 9, 1761, aboard the Hopewell. Barnhill, his wife, son, three daughters and their husbands, were from Donegal, Ireland and eventually settled in the Londonderry Township. Robert's son John was born in Ireland in 1730 and took up a share in Onslow.²⁸ Bothers Aaron,

²⁶ Quoted in Phyllis Blakeley, "Alexander McNutt," Dictionary of Canadian Biography, ed. Mary P. Bentley, Vol. 5 (Toronto, 1983) 554. and Notes for article in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, PANS, MG1, Vol. 3005, no. 14-18.

²⁷ Blakeley 554.

²⁸ Thomas Miller, Historical and Genealogical Record of Colchester County, 2nd ed. (Belleville, 1972) 184.

Thomas, and John Crow also made their way to Nova Scotia on the Hopewell. Natives of Londonderry, Ireland, the Crow brothers initially settled in Windsor. In 1771, Thomas purchased three shares in Onslow from Ephraim Hayward and his widowed mother Joanna. Thomas sold Aaron and John a share eight years later.²

The overwhelming majority of Onslow Planters immigrated from Massachusetts and of these a number were of Scots-Irish origins.³ A steady flow of emigration to the American colonies from the north of Ireland, the lowlands of Scotland, and the northern counties of England began after the end of Queen Ann's War in 1713. This movement continued in a strong "wavelike rhythm" until the outbreak of the American Revolution. Part of this movement was directed into Massachusetts and it was from these Scots-Irish and their descendants that a portion of Onslow's settlers came.⁴ Francis Blair and his brother William of Onslow were sons of William Blair, who eventually settled in

¹ Miller 199-205.

² Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 85, Ephraim Hayward and Joanna Hayward to Thomas Crow, 30 November 1771.

³ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 476, Thomas Crow to Aaron and John Crow, 26 September 1779.

⁴ A.W.H. Eaton, The Settling of Colchester County, Nova Scotia, by New England Puritans and Ulster Scotsmen (Ottawa, 1912) 228-233.

⁵ David Hackett Fischer, Albion's Seed (New York, 1989) 606.

Worcester, Massachusetts, after emigrating from Londonderry, Ireland.³⁴ Joel Camp, William McNutt, Isaac Farrell, and Hugh Tackells were all Scots-Irish and living in Palmer, Massachusetts, prior to settling in Onslow. Joining the Blairs, McNutts, Farrells, and Tackells were the descendants of older New England families. It has been argued that the Carters, Cuttens, and Stevens along with their fellow New Englanders formed the largest part of Onslow's population.³⁵ While census figures for 1767 indicate that the majority of Onslow residents were Americans, it does not state how many Americans were of Scots-Irish origins.

Other members of the new township included Anthony Elliott and Matthew Staples, both of whom came with Governor Edward Cornwallis' fleet to Halifax in June of 1749. Elliott was a soldier who received two shares in Onslow. In the spring of 1762, after his discharge, Elliott and his small family moved to Onslow. Staples also moved to Onslow that same year after labouring in Halifax as a blacksmith for thirteen years.³⁷ Staples and Matthew Taylor, a Truro

³⁴ Miller 167.

³⁵ Wright 65, 111, and 226, and Eaton 229.

³⁶ See Eaton 228. The 1767 census states that there were 137 Americans, 100 Irish, 4 English, and 4 Scots in Onslow. The census does not indicate how many of the Americans were of Scots-Irish origins.

³⁷ Miller 9-11.

settler, unlike other grantees in Onslow, each received his land in one large lot through a "Private Grant".⁴² Taylor possessed 1000 acres on Onslow's border with Truro, while Staples held 750 acres stretching back from the Chiganoise River.⁴³

The previously mentioned Richard Upham also resided in Halifax prior to settling in Onslow. Born in 1716 in Malden, Massachusetts, he married Elizabeth Hovey, who died 7 June 1756, and was the mother of all but several of his youngest children. His second marriage was to Elizabeth Putnam, widow, and along with her sons, heir to the Putnam estate of Essex County, Massachusetts. Upham was engaged in trade from Salem, along the coasts of Maine and Nova Scotia, to Cape Breton. Upham and family settled in Halifax after its founding and later secured a grant in Onslow.⁴⁴

Onslow, like much of Nova Scotia, was settled by families. Unlike many North American frontiers of European settlement, Nova Scotia did not attract a large population of single males to exploit a resource frontier of fur, fish, and timber. Instead, it was settled by successive waves of pre-industrial families, who by a combination of subsistence

⁴² List of Onslow Proprietors, PANS, MG1, Vol. 1798, F12, no. 11-13, 3 October 1768.

⁴³ Onslow Township Grant, PANS, Maps, O/S, no. 202, 21 February 1769. Widow Staples Land, Onslow, PANS, Maps, F/230, 22 February 1781.

⁴⁴ Upham Family File, Colchester Historical Museum (CHM), 29 Young St., Truro, N.S.

production and commercial exchange sought to better their material condition. According to the 1767 census, 44 percent of Nova Scotia's population, estimated at 11,779, consisted of woman.⁴¹ Onslow's families appear to have been composed of married adults of child bearing age. Between 1761 and 1769, only three marriages and three adult deaths were recorded in contrast to 56 births, this among a stated population of 245 in 1766.⁴² Furthermore, a number of genealogies indicate that at least several of Onslow's young families brought children with them to the colony.⁴³

While Onslow seems to have been lacking the range of ages associated with some other townships there is evidence for the immigration of at least one large kinship group.⁴⁴ Ephraim Hayward and Joanna Wheeler were married on 28 June 1726 in Brookfield, Massachusetts, and among their children were George, Ephraim, and Thankful. Thankful, born 14 November 1745, married David Gay in Western, Massachusetts.

⁴¹ Margaret Conrad, Toni Laidlaw and Donna Smyth, eds., No Place Like Home (Halifax, 1988) 6.

⁴² Deaths, Births, and Marriages, PANS, RG1, Vol. 361 1/2, 1-16, 22 July 1761 to 15 October 1769, and Martell 177.

⁴³ See F.K. Upham, The Descendants of John Upham of Massachusetts (New York, 1892), Elizabeth Geddes, "Genealogical Notes on the Lynds, McCallum and McNutt Families", in the private collection of Mrs. Vera McNutt, and Miller.

⁴⁴ See Debra McNabb, "The Role of the Land in Settling Horton Township, Nova Scotia, 1766-1830," They Planted Well: New England Planters in Maritime Canada, ed. Margaret Conrad (Fredericton, 1988), and Barry Moody, "Land, Kinship and Inheritance in Granville Township," Making Adjustments: Change and Continuity in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800, ed. Margaret Conrad (Fredericton, 1991).

David's sister Mary married Carpenter Bradford in Stoughton, Massachusetts. Ephraim, his two sons George and Ephraim, David Gay, and Carpenter Bradford, were all granted land and settled in Onslow with their families.⁴⁵

With New England families, Scots-Irish directly from Ireland and via Massachusetts, and later settlers from Britain, the township of Onslow thus quickly became an amalgamation of many diverse peoples. Whatever inclination the New England population in Onslow may have had for closed, corporate communities, like those described by historians of the New England town, quickly became irreconcilable with the new Nova Scotia setting.⁴⁶ More than a century earlier New England's first settlers had created these communities, closed because the membership was selected while outsiders were treated with suspicion or rejected altogether, and corporate because the community demanded the loyalty of its members, offering in exchange privileges which could be obtained only through membership. The typical inhabitant of Massachusetts could obtain land only by belonging to a particular town.⁴⁷ While the Nova Scotian government was willing to grant proprietors certain

⁴⁵ Robert Charles Anderson, "David Gay (1739-ca. 1815) of Onslow, Nova Scotia, and Lincolnville, Maine," National Genealogical Society Quarterly, 1978, 85-89.

⁴⁶ Michael Zuckerman, Peaceable Kingdoms (New York, 1970). Also see Greven and Lockridge.

⁴⁷ Lockridge 16-17.

rights over the land and its distribution, that same government, and not the community itself, decided who would indeed be proprietors.⁴⁸ Thus the very strangers whom New Englanders would have at one time sought to exclude from their community were their neighbours in Onslow, and a significant portion of the population.

Onslow, like other Nova Scotian townships, was an eddy in the stream of migrating Planters, drawing in a variety of persons of different backgrounds all of whom shared the common objective of obtaining free land. The exclusiveness of rural New England towns even in its place of origin was in the process of collapsing by the mid-eighteenth century and simply could not be successfully grafted into Onslow. In any case there seems to have been little ambition to have done so as the lives of many individuals from all groups rapidly became intertwined. Aptly enough, the first marriage recorded in Onslow was between Ephraim Hayward, Jr. and Sarah Blair.⁴⁹ Ephraim was the son of Ephraim Hayward and Joanna Wheeler, grandson of George Hayward and Hannah Chadwick, and Samuel and Joanna Wheeler, New Englanders from Concord and Brookfield, Massachusetts.⁵⁰ Sarah Blair was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, the second daughter of

⁴⁸ Moody 169.

⁴⁹ Deaths, Births, and Marriages, PANS, RG1, Vol. 361 1/2, 5.

⁵⁰ Wright 141.

William Blair and of Scots-Irish descent.⁵¹ The process of integration had begun.

In the same manner that Onslow Planters would not recreate a New England-styled, exclusive community, neither would they approach their new landscape in the manner some New Englanders had a century earlier. Onslow was surveyed in an open-field village fashion typical of New England and similar to the Horton and Annapolis Townships.⁵² One of the principal characteristics of open-field villages was the nuclear structure of the community, with all the inhabitants residing side by side along the streets of a central location. In addition, the land was distributed in large open fields in which all of the inhabitants possessed pieces of land in strips or parcels of varying size and shape. Open-field villages were in sharp contrast to enclosed-farm areas, in which people owned relatively consolidated farms and lived at a distance from each other on their own lands.⁵³ Onslow was split into marsh, village, improved, and eventually three divisions of unimproved lands. A share guaranteed the proprietor a portion of each division for a total of 500 acres. Undivided land in the settlement was to be held in common with divided lots being drawn for in a

⁵¹ Miller 167.

⁵² A.R. MacNeil, "The Acadian Legacy and Agricultural Development in Nova Scotia, 1760-1861," Farm Factory and Fortune, ed. Kris Inwood (Fredericton, 1993) and McNabb.

⁵³ Greven 42-43.

lottery.⁵⁴ Provincial authorities felt the open-field approach to the landscape would inhibit Planter desires for large quantities of land, encourage village centres, and allow for the settlement of a large number of inhabitants, thereby putting more land into production and better supplying the markets of Halifax.⁵⁵ Accordingly, at a town meeting held on September 14, 1761, a committee made up of David Cutten, Elijah Fitch, William Blair, Joshua Lamb, and Thomas Stevens, was formed to "Lay out the Mashes and Plough land and the first Devision of the un Improved Lands".⁵⁶ However, almost immediately these carefully laid plans began to unravel, and a quite different landscape began to emerge.

The dyked marshes left by the Acadians totalled about 1400 acres and ran along the shore of the Basin, providing the most valuable farmland in the township.⁵⁷ The amount of marshland however appears to have been "much less than... expected". Settlers declared there to be insufficient quantity to sustain 200 families as formerly proposed. Subsequently, Council reduced the number of shares in Onslow

⁵⁴ Onslow Township Grant Map, PANS, V7/230, E-20-18, 21 February 1769.

⁵⁵ Graeme Wynn, "A Province Too Much Dependent On New England," Canadian Geographer, ed. Donald G. Janelle, 31, no. 2, (1987) 100-102.

⁵⁶ Longworth 47.

⁵⁷ Wilmot to Lords of Trade, PANS, RG1, Vol. 222, no. 7, 27 October 1763.

to 150.⁵⁸

In close proximity to the valuable marshes the two villages of King's and Queen's were laid out according to the plans of Charles Morris, Provincial Surveyor.⁵⁹ King's Village was located just north of Fort Belcher, a small military outpost built by the British. It appears that King's Village was to be settled by the Planters who received their shares under Richard Upham. King's never developed into a community as Upham, the Rev. James Lyon and, eventually, Upham's stepsons William and Caleb Putnam, and Thomas Brown would control most of the land the Morris plan had intended to be house lots. Upham was granted a large amount of land in King's and added to his extensive holdings by purchasing the property formerly belonging to Jacob Lynds, including the "pastore... on which the Barracks now stands".⁶⁰ Lyon, a Princeton-trained Presbyterian minister, also held property in King's through the purchase of two shares from Robert Crowell made up of the after

⁵⁸ Quoted in Martell 172.

⁵⁹ Plans of King's and Queen's Villages and the marsh no longer exist information regarding them has been collected from the Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reels 17438-17440 Vols. 1, 2, 3A, 3B, 4, and 5. The plan for Queen's Village by Charles Morris is mentioned in Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 142, James Wright to Isaac Farrell, 2 January 1773.

⁶⁰ Onslow's registered deeds are not a complete record of all land transactions within the Township, this is especially the case in the first decade. There is no deed of conveyance from Jacob Lynds to Richard Upham, however, the transaction is referred to in Registry of Deeds, PANS, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 35, Richard Upham to William Putnam, May 1771.

divisions, "two house lots near fort Belcher and the Marsh joining north on Richard Upham Esq. Settlement".⁶¹

Most of the King's Village land was conveyed to William and Caleb Putnam through inheritance and purchases, with William eventually selling the "fort Belcher farm" to Thomas Brown. Brown, described as a Cornwallis gentleman and trader, paid 400 pounds to William and Upham's widow, Elizabeth, for a "plantation... laid out to Richard Upham Esq. and Jacob Lynds as their original drafts... being Three hundred and Seventy one ackres of Upland and one hundred and Thirty four ackres of Broken dyke and Marsh adjoining front of Said farm... except fort lane and Harris' house lotts".⁶² Brown would later consolidate even more land in King's with the purchase of the first division drafts of Robert and William Crowell and the Harris' house lots.⁶³

A small number of settlers did build on the one and a half acre house lots near Baird's Brook in Queen's Village. These settlers tended to consolidate adjoining lots into continuous homesteads. When Isaac Farrell sold the

⁶¹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 55, Robert Crowell to Rev. James Lyon, 29 December 1767. Timothy J. McGee, "James Lyon," Dictionary of Canadian Biography, ed. Mary P. Bentley, Vol. 4 (Toronto, 1979) 490.

⁶² Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 430, William Putnam and Elizabeth Upham to Thomas Brown, 10 May 1779.

⁶³ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 479, Timothy Putnam to Thomas Brown, 9 November 1779, Vol. 2, 46, William Crowell to Thomas Brown, 12 February 1781, and 205, William and James Hamilton to Thomas Brown, 19 August 1785.

remainder of his property in Onslow to James McCormick of Windsor, his house and other building stood on three connected house lots. Farrell, described as a house carpenter and yeoman, held six in all.⁶⁴ Peter Richardson held Queen's Village lots 17 to 23 in section B "where House stands".⁶⁵

Contrary to Morris' village plan with its tidily arranged house lots, grantees from Massachusetts quickly spread to all parts of Onslow. Many appear to have favoured the fertile marsh and intervals at the mouth and along the banks on the North River and built their houses and barns close to this valuable farm land. By 1771, John Hueitt was living in Lancaster, Massachusetts, and sold Thomas Lynds his share in Onslow. Included in Hueitt's share was his "House on the East side of the North River" on the 100 acre lot A no. 5.⁶⁶ When Francis and Joanna Blair sold "all the lands we hold in Onslow" to Noah Miller in 1772, their house stood on a 100 acre lot on the west side of the North River.⁶⁷ In 1778, Truro merchant Eliakum Tupper purchased

⁶⁴ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 281, Isaac Farrell to James McCormick, 29 April 1774.

⁶⁵ Registry of Deeds, PANS, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 87, Carpenter Bradford to Peter Richardson, 26 July 1771, and 368, Peter Richardson to George Cochran, 1 September 1776.

⁶⁶ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 75, John Hueitt to Thomas Lynds, 4 November 1771.

⁶⁷ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 113, Francis and Joanna Blair to Noah Miller, 8 June 1772.

100 acres on the North River, "being Number 3 woodland with house and Barn", from Carpenter and Mary Bradford."⁶⁸ With individual holdings widely scattered, Onslow settlement quickly dispersed. Rather than focusing on the village lots, many Planters preferred to build their houses and barns on their larger 60 acre farm lots or 100 acre first division lots. In the early 1760s, it is clear, the township was already evolving in ways not intended by the Nova Scotian authorities who had granted and supervised the surveying of land in the area. Not only is the scattering of settlers within the township a good indication that settlers were not easily controlled by government, but it speaks to the New England that many had left behind. The nucleated settlements established by some early New England colonists in the seventeenth century had dispersed within a generation of their inception. Furthermore nucleation was not the constant rule for settlement form in early New England at any rate.⁶⁹ The open-field villages Morris had planned simply did not fit the cultural blueprint Onslow settlers had brought with them.

The few remaining township records show Onslow's proprietors to be focused on the division of land and

⁶⁸ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 452, Mary Bradford to Eliakum Tupper, 4 November 1778.

⁶⁹ Joseph Wood, "Village and Community in Early Colonial New England," Material Life in America, 1600-1860, ed. Robert Blair St George (Boston, 1988) 159-169.

establishing the local economy. On July 28, 1761 the township granted Ephraim Hayward, David Hoar, and James Wilson, "the Privilege of a Mill-place on a Stream... to Build a Grist-mill, And... a Saw Mill".⁷⁰ The three were also offered extra land to offset their capital investment. Despite these efforts the first two or three years in Onslow were not easy. In April, 1762, Council ordered the distribution of corn as well as seed wheat and barley to keep Planters from leaving the colony.⁷¹ The following year changed little as Onslow Planters continued to have difficulty establishing themselves. Governor Montagu Wilmot reported to the Lords of Trade on October 27, 1763:

Onslow has about fifty families. These are the most indigent, as well as the most indolent people in the colony. Several families suffered very severely last winter, and some were famished. If they are not relieved this winter there will be great danger of their starving or quitting the colony.

Governor Wilmot understood the causes of Onslow's problem to be "a small proportion of stock to the other inhabitants of the province," and "Very few people of any substance among them".⁷² Wilmot's explanation of Onslow's hardships may not have been unfounded as the 52 settlers who landed in 1761 brought only 117 cattle and horses,

⁷⁰ Longworth 45.

⁷¹ Council Minutes, PANS, RG 1, Vol. 165, 218, 28 April 1762.

⁷² Longworth 44.

proportionately less than the amount destined for Truro.' Along with Onslow's lack of stock came the age factor. The young age of Onslow's settlers increases the probability that the community had less built-up wealth than other communities with settlers of a larger range of ages.

There is no record of government assistance to Onslow after 1763. The township was either able to sustain itself by that time or Halifax was no longer willing to pay for provisions and supplies. Planters quickly discovered that Nova Scotia was not a bargain. Successful settlement demanded not only usable land, but also a market for agricultural surplus. The first was seized from the Acadians, but the merchant connections needed for the second would take time to develop.⁷⁴

In addition to suffering through their settlement's first growing pains, Onslow Planters had difficulty in establishing their right to sell land. Provincial authorities had made the initial township grants in common and did not change their minds until 1767 when they revoked earlier grants to townships and made new grants to individual land holders. These grants to individuals were not made in Onslow until February 21, 1769, when the township was given its effective grant. The small number of

⁷³ D.C. Harvey Papers, PANS, MG1, Vol. 1798, F12, no. 3, undated.

⁷⁴ Bumsted 163.

deeds written before 1769 reflect the insecurity settlers felt about their right to sell land. These deeds were written as deeds of indenture that committed the individual selling land to a penal sum of money to be paid in the event that "Licene (to) Execute a Deed of Conveyance" could not be "obtained from the Governor or Commander in Chiefs of the Province".⁷⁵ The ability to sell land was of no small concern to a group of settlers attempting to consolidate their land holdings and who had few other possessions they could liquidate or exchange.

The 1769 township grant would once again reduce the number of shares in Onslow, this time from 150 to 100, probably a recognition on the part of government of the settlers' complaint that the amount of Onslow marshland was "much less than they had expected".⁷⁶ The grant, after three years, made the first quit rent payable. Of key importance to the following generation in Onslow were the shares applied for and received on the township grant by fathers for adolescent sons. James Tackles, Christopher Stevens, Abraham McNutt, and Jacob Lynds, Jr., were all listed as minors and all received a whole or half share. A large number of older sons also received shares while still being listed as living with their parents and without

⁷⁵ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 240, Abner Brooks to Isaac Farrell, 14 July 1766.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Martell 172.

livestock of their own."

The offer of free land had drawn New Englanders and Scots-Irish settlers to Onslow. To these earlier residents of the township were added immigrants from the British Isles, and together they formed the cultural base of Onslow. Onslow was not an exclusive community like those which had characterized early New England. Onslow grantees had no control over whose names appeared on the proprietors list, but there is little indication of animosity between Planters of different backgrounds.

The way the land was approached by Onslow settlers also showed no desire to recreate the nucleated settlements common in early New England. Their approach is better placed in the context of the dispersed settlement patterns which were present in seventeenth century New England as well. Lockridge, in A New England Town, argued that Dedham, Massachusetts, which started as several hundred families huddled together in a village in one corner of a tract 200 miles square, by the 1730's had been changed irrevocably by the consolidation of individual land holdings. "One by one [Dedham] farmers began to decide to end their long daily treks between village and barn by building homes out on their farms and abandoning their

¹¹ List of Onslow Proprietors, PANS, MG1, Vol. 1798, F12, no. 11-13, 3 October 1768.

residences in the village."⁷⁸ Historian Joseph Wood disputes Lockridge's point, arguing that the dispersion of residents which towns such as Dedham endured did not leave a legacy of imperfectly settled outlying spaces. Nucleation was not the constant rule for settlement form in early New England. Nucleated forms, while useful for establishing initial settlements in the deep woods, were not ideal for general farming.⁷⁹ What ever the prevalent situation in New England, Onslow's settlement pattern fits well into the mid-eighteenth century dispersed form.

Despite Nova Scotian authorities' granting of land in common and their wish to promote village centres, Onslow Planters settled the spaces in the township which best suited their purposes. In disregard of Morris' surveyed house lots, Planters showed interest in contiguous homesteads and thus some built on 60 acre farm lots or 100 acre first division lots. A similar movement away from house lots had also taken place in Horton in the 1760s. There settlement had drifted westward in the township, drawing families away from a town plot to homesteads often widely separated from each other.⁸⁰ While Planters, inhabiting dispersed farms and interested in obtaining consolidated, freely held land, were perhaps placing a

⁷⁸ Lockridge 94.

⁷⁹ Wood 163.

⁸⁰ McNabb 155.

priority on the interrelationship of families as opposed to the interaction of community, however, as the following chapters argue, this in no way means that the community of Onslow was non-functioning. Wood concludes about New England:

A well-bounded corporate space, inhabited by people who sensed they composed a community distinct from any other, was sufficient to provide the order and cohesion long attributed to nucleated settlement.⁸¹

By 1769 each grantee in Onslow held at least 250 acres, or a half share, while many held more. These large holdings went far beyond the amount of land an individual farmer could hope to put under cultivation. This land could be used for speculation and collateral, but as Barry Moody in "Land, Kinship and Inheritance" points out, it could also be used "to root families, through many generations, firmly in the soil of the township".⁸² By 1769 Onslow fathers already held an important legacy for their children's future. Not only had the first generation been successful in gaining large quantities of land in their own names but also in the names of adult and minor sons, thus helping to secure the future for many in the second generation.

⁸¹ Wood 167.

⁸² Moody 170.

**"from my honoured Father":
Parents and Children, 1770-1800**

By 1770, the community of Onslow and its families were established on the township's soil. Further events affecting this community and these families during the lifetime of the first generation of Planters will now be examined. Did Planter origins or settlement patterns hamper Onslow's ability to act cohesively as a community? The methods and motives behind the conveyance of land from the first generation to the second is another important issue to be explored. Was land used by fathers to cast a net of self-interested control over their families or did they convey land in an attempt to secure their children's future? The discussion of these issues, land conveyance within families and the emergence of cohesive community, reveals much about the evolution of Onslow in the late eighteenth century.

On October 16, 1782, Thomas Brown, described as a gentleman from Cornwallis, leased the farm "Commonly called Fort Belcher with all its buildings and improvements" to William Aikins for three years. Brown agreed to provide the livestock and utensils necessary for the running of the farm. In return Aikins was to pay 60 pounds each year, "which sum is to be laid out on the premisses in fenceing, Ditching, Clearing Land". Aikins received 18 pence "per

Rod, fence made of Birch poles shaved on three sides", drains and ditches were dug at 7 pence for each rod, and the "peninsula where on the Fort Stands" was to be cleared at an undecided number of shillings per acre. The term of the lease was for three years and would be renewed "if Brown and Aikins can agree on Rent if not three neutral parties agreeable to both shall decide". All "stock and increases" were to be returned to Brown when the lease was terminated.¹ In the early 1790s Brown and Aikins attempted to settle their accounts with each other. The chosen arbiters, Daniel Dickson, Robert McElhenny, and John Morrison, found Aikins to be "much or deeply Indebted" to Brown.² No remaining evidence reveals Aikins to have ever obtained any property in Onslow. Clearing land at shillings per acre was not a feasible way to cover 60 pounds of yearly rent.³

As the Aikins-Brown lease demonstrates, labour as a commodity in eighteenth century Onslow had little monetary worth. While not all those who worked for wages entered into agreements as seemingly unfair as the one Aikins found

¹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 293, Thomas Brown and William Aikins, 16 October 1782.

² Halifax County Supreme Court Records, PANS, RG37, No. 22, 93, William Aikins vs. Thomas Brown, 3 July 1794.

³ If a man and his family devoted all efforts to felling trees they might clear as many as five acres a year; if other chores have to be done only one or two acres could be cleared in a year. Peter Russell, "Forest into Farmland: Upper Canadian Clearing Rates, 1822-1839," Historical Essays on Upper Canada, eds. J.K. Johnson and Bruce G. Wilson (Ottawa, 1989) 139.

himself in, those who arrived in Onslow with neither a grant nor capital had an up-hill struggle to obtain a land holding. Michael O'Brian first appeared in Onslow's records in 1790 as a labourer owed 11 pounds and 13 shillings in wages by the estate of William Cater.¹ O'Brian eventually managed to buy land in Onslow, but his real and personal estate was worth less than 200 pounds and insolvent at the time of his death.² The low monetary value of labour could have only served to heighten the dependency of Onslow sons on their fathers for land. What events precipitated the closing off of opportunities for newcomers to easily obtain land in Onslow?

The early deeds for Onslow show a tendency for many Planters to have stayed only briefly in the township. The individual ownership of land in Onslow was confirmed by Nova Scotian Governor William Campbell in a grant issued on February 21, 1769.³ The confirmation of title over land precipitated the sale of a large number of shares in Onslow. Whether they had been discouraged by the difficult years

¹ Halifax County Estate Papers, PANS, RG48, Vol. 399, C43, estate of William Cater, 13 August 1790.

² Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17439, Vol. 3A, 249, James Clark to Michael O'Brian, 13 April 1796, and 248, Samuel McCully to Michael O'Brian, 15 June 1797. Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Estate Papers, 115, estate of Michael O'Brian, undated, and Colchester County Register Books, Vol. A, "A Return on the Sale of the Personal Property of Michael O'brian", 6 February 1816.

³ Onslow Township Grant, PANS, O/S, no. 202, 21 February, 1769.

following their arrival or had come north for purely speculative reasons, many of the Planters selling land in the early 1770s had already moved back to New England, and willingly parted with their Onslow land for small sums of money.

By June 15, 1771, Onslow grantee John Hayward was living in Brookfield, Massachusetts. While there, Hayward sold the unimproved remainder of one Onslow share which he still owned for 12 pounds to Caleb Brooks, a mason from Palmer.⁷ Brooks moved to Onslow, sold the Hayward land totalling 493 acres for 36 pounds to Isaac Ferrell, and by 1774 was living in Western, Massachusetts.⁸ Jacob Stevens and his son, Christopher, of Freetown, Massachusetts, parted with their "right claim in the Town of Onslow" for 20 pounds each from Jacob Stevens Junior in September of 1771.⁹ Cousins James Tackles and Hugh Actor Tackles of Ware, Massachusetts, sold their collective right to one and a half shares of land in Onslow to James' father William Tackles for 30 pounds.¹⁰ William, also living in Ware, had disposed

⁷. Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Vol. 1, 154, John Hayward to Caleb Brooks, 15 June 1771.

⁸. Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 179, Caleb Brooks to Isaac Ferrell, 1 September (no year listed), and Vol. 1, 264, Caleb Brooks to Abner Brooks, 17 September 1774.

⁹. Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 77, Christopher Stevens to Jacob Stevens Junior, 16 September 1771.

¹⁰. Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 185, Hugh Actor Tackles and James Tackles to William Tackles, 9 August 1773.

of his one and a half shares in Onslow in 1771 and later sold the land "purchased from James and Hugh Actor Tackles" to James Sinton, a Windsor shoemaker, in 1773.¹¹ By 1774, at least 20 of the 80 persons named in the effective grant had left Onslow for other parts of Nova Scotia and New England.¹² In McNabb's study of Horton, 38 shareholders had sold their rights in the township by 1770. The majority of those selling their grants returned to New England.¹³

Some Planters who left Onslow continued to buy, sell, and hold mortgages to land in the township. In 1770, the Presbyterian minister James Lyon moved from Onslow to

¹¹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 43, William Tackles to William Sterlin, (day and month not stated) 1771, and Vol. 1, 131, William Tackles to James Sinton, 7 October 1773.

¹² Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 13, Abijah Scott to William McNutt, 16 November 1769, 43, William Tackles to William Sterlin, (day and month not stated) 1771, 47, Edward Brooks to James Lyon, 18 October 1768, 55, Robert Crowel to James Lyon, 29 September 1767, 67, George Hayward to William McGranaham, 1 December 1769, 77, Christopher Stevens to Jacob Stevens Junior, 16 September 1771, 79, John Hueitt to Thomas Lynds, 4 November 1771, 85, Ephraim Hayward Junior to Thomas Crow, 30 November 1771, 113, Francis Blair to Noah Miller, 8 June 1772, 125, James Lyon to Caleb Putnam, 7 November 1772, 153, James Lyon to William and Caleb Putnam, 14 November 1772, 154, John Hayward to Caleb Brooks, 15 June 1771, 157, Abner Brooks to John Dickson, 29 May 1773, 185, Hugh Actor and James Tackles to William Tackles, 9 August 1773, 195, William Hamilton and William Nisbiet to Alexander McCurdy, 13 October 1773, 196, Edward Brooks to William and Caleb Putnam, 9 June 1773, 232, William Tackles to James Sinton, 7 October 1773, 254, Isaac Ferrell to John Bulmer, 2 June 1774, 281, Isaac Ferrell to James McCormick, 29 April 1774, Vol. 2, 1, William Putnam (acting on a power-of-attorney from William Calf) to Luke and Nathan Upham, 11 May 1779, Reel 17439, Vol. 3A, 362, Asa Scott to William Blair, (no day stated) March 1771.

¹³ McNabb 153.

Pictou. A year later Lyon was living in Machias, Maine.¹⁴ In November of 1772, Lyon disposed of the major part of his holdings in Onslow, when he sold two shares purchased from Robert Crowell to Caleb Putnam, a stepson of Richard Upham living in Shubenacadie.¹⁵ A week later Lyon sold Caleb and his bother, William Putnam, his 1900 acre "Plantation in Onslow" where he "did once live, being now occupied by Messers. John Polly and Jonathan Higgins Junior".¹⁶ After selling the large portion of his holdings Lyon continued to deal in Onslow land. In 1773, he purchased a half share from Sylvanus Brooks, by then living in Western, Massachusetts. Brooks, along with his father and brother, was granted land in Onslow and sold it to Lyon for 8 pounds.¹⁷ Ten years later Lyon still held land in Onslow. In 1783, for 10 pounds he released a 50 acre lot in the first division to Thomas Stevens Junior, "where Stevens now lives, deed which I hold... from his Father Thomas Stevens".¹⁸

¹⁴. Timothy J. McGee, "James Lyon," Dictionary of Canadian Biography, ed. Mary P. Bentley, Vol. 4 (Toronto, 1979) 490.

¹⁵ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 132, James Lyon to Caleb Putnam, 7 November 1772.

¹⁶ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 153, James Lyon to William and Caleb Putnam, 14 November 1772.

¹⁷ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 277, Sylvanus Brooks to James Lyon, 10 May 1773.

¹⁸ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 113, James Lyon to Thomas Stevens, 1 October 1783.

The wholesale out-migration of Onslow grantees meant a large number of shares were for sale in the early 1770s. The majority of vacated shares were sold to men from other Planter townships and to newcomers from outside Nova Scotia. Only a small amount of this land was purchased by Planters already living in Onslow as members of the township who stayed were making land available to external buyers themselves. Onslow Planters who were able to hold onto their granted shares and buy land in the early years of the township insured available land for future generations of their families.

Early newcomers to Onslow from outside Nova Scotia included three men from Great Britain. John Dickson "of the Parish of Linthgore in Scotland" purchased Abner and Abigail Brooks' one and a half rights in Onslow including the "home settlement with house and barn" in 1773.¹⁹ In the spring of 1774, Isaac Ferrell sold his 60 acre farm lot, a marsh lot, and 6 house lots to James MacCormick of Windsor and the other 600 acres of his land to John Bulmer from "Havingham in the North Riding of Yorkshire in great Prittain".²⁰ The blacksmith, Robert Jackson, "late of great

¹⁹. Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 157, Abner and Abigail Brooks to John Dickson, 29 May 1773, and Onslow Township Census, PANS, RG1, Vol. 443, no. 27, 1 January 1774.

²⁰. Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 281, Isaac Ferrell to James MacCormick, 29 April 1774, and Vol. 1, 254, Isaac Ferrell to John Bulmer, 2 June 1774. Bulmer was perhaps among the 1000 former tenants of the Duke of Rutland and other Yorkshire landlords, who had balked at paying increased rents, and

Britain now of Onslow", also appeared in the township's deeds by 1775.²¹

Among those who immigrated to Onslow from within Nova Scotia was James Downing. Originally settled in Truro, Downing moved to Onslow after purchasing all the "right title and interest" Abner Brooks had in "a right and a half" of land. The 40 pounds which Downing paid was very much in line with the amounts paid by others buying similar amounts of land in the early 1770s.²² By 1789 Downing's "One and a half Rights of Lands in Onslow" was listed as being worth 220 pounds, 5.5 times more than the purchase price.²³ Even if one considers the improvements which Downing may have made it was still a highly inflated price. It is probable that the newcomers themselves were part of the reason for Onslow's increasing land values in the 1770s and 1780s. So to, perhaps, was the American Revolution.²⁴

Charles Dickson was also among the early newcomers to Onslow. Dickson was originally from Middletown,

were attracted to Nova Scotia by Michael Francklin.

²¹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 321, Caleb Putnam to Robert Jackson, 6 July 1775.

²² Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 22, Abner Brooks to James Downing, 22 November 1770.

²³ Halifax County Estate Papers, PANS, RG48, Vol. 402, D94, estate of James Downing, 9 November 1789.

²⁴ In the 1770s Truro land prices appear to have increased significantly as a result of newcomers from the British Isles. See Campbell 27.

Connecticut, where he was born to Robert and Abigail (Harris) Dickson on October 21, 1746. In 1754, Robert Dickson died leaving his brother Major Charles Dickson as his son's guardian. In 1761, Major Dickson, along with his young nephew, moved to Horton, Nova Scotia. Charles lived with Major Dickson in Horton until 1774, when he purchased a share in Onslow from John Carter.²⁶ As a merchant and shipbuilder Dickson quickly became the most affluent member of his new community. Dickson also became the focal point in the friction between British authorities in Halifax and Onslow settlers during the American Revolution.

By the spring of 1775 marked the beginning of the American Revolution between Britain and the American Colonies. In Onslow, however, local issues continued to take priority. On April 21, 1775, Admiral Thomas Graves sent a special request to Governor Legge of Nova Scotia for "fresh beef, mutton, poultry, vegetables of all kinds, butter, cheese, every kind of provision".²⁷ This request for Nova Scotia to provision British troops at Boston was met by the Cobequid and Minas Basin communities. Onslow farmers and merchants probably welcomed this new market for their products.

²⁶ Emily McKay, Descendants of Charles and Amelia Bishop Dickson of Onslow, Nova Scotia (Boston, 1953) 15.

²⁷ Registry of Leeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 144, John Carter to Charles Dickson, 11 March 1774.

²⁸ Quoted in Campbell 44.

Onslow did not respond as positively to the Militia Bill, enacted in November of the same year. The Bill was to provide for the defence of those parts of the province not easily accessible to the forces stationed at Halifax. Another bill, passed at the same time, provided for the raising of a tax to defray the expenses of maintaining the militia.²⁶ The passage of the Militia Bill created a furor in the more isolated areas of Nova Scotia. Settlers in Yarmouth, Cumberland, and Cobequid all registered their protests with the government in the form of petitions. The sections of the Act most offensive to the settlers involved the maintenance of a standing troop of militia prepared to march anywhere in the province on 48 hours notice.²⁷

Onslow's petition was dated January 3, 1776, and appears to contain the names of the majority of heads of household (57 names). Onslow settlers of all backgrounds argued that the Militia Act and the accompanying tax "seems every way Calculated to Distress this Unhappy Province and is by no Means the Sence of the People in General".²⁸ The most notable exceptions to this list were Richard Upham and Anthony Elliott, both of whom resided in Halifax prior to

²⁶ Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia (JHA), PANS, October, November, 1775.

²⁷ Mary Ellen Wright, "...of a Licentious and Rebellious disposition," Collections of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society, vol. 42 (Halifax, 1986) 31.

²⁸ Quoted in Mary Ellen Wright 31.

being granted land in Onslow." The Planters making the petition preferred to preserve and defend their own farms and families rather than those of strangers. Commenting on the interruption of trade with the New England colonies, they argued that if men settled on new farms, "with all our former resources cut off", should be marched away from their homes, "privation distress with the resulting necessity for government relief would doubtless ensue". The combined effect of the various petitions against the Militia Act was a compromise offered by Council in the form of a tax deferral.'

In August, 1776, Governor Arbuthnot made a 14 day trip through the districts of Minas and Cobequid. He reviewed the volunteer militia, met the magistrates and dined with the "best" people. Cobequid residents assured him of their loyalty to the British Crown, and Arbuthnot concluded that all that had been required was a visible display of government authority for "to my great astonishment no Governor had visited these poor people".¹³ He expected that members of the Onslow township would gladly swear the Oath of Allegiance to the King and defend themselves against British enemies, as things turned out, a rather optimistic

¹³ Onslow grantee Matthew Staples also resided in Halifax prior to 1762, but by 1776 had passed away.

¹⁴ Minutes in Council, PANS, RG1, Vol. 212, 8 January 1776.

¹⁵ Arbuthnot Letter, PANS, RG1, Vol. 45, 15 August 1776.

view.

Only a month and a half later, on October 13, 1776, John Cole and Peley Card, co-owners and joint masters of the Hairwind out of Windsor, sailed into the Cobequid Basin and put ashore near the house of the merchant Charles Dickson. Cole and Card soon discovered Captain Carleton and roughly thirteen seamen were in Onslow fitting a vessel bound for New England. Carleton and crew had earlier in the year sailed a rebel privateer into Canso, raided the port, and escaped to Pictou. After a brief sojourn the privateers travelled by land over the Cobequid Mountains to Onslow where Simmons, a Carleton cohort, had purchased a sloop from Carey Morrell for six pounds."

After being "Chearfully and Expeditionously" aided by Dickson and his neighbours, Carleton's crew was joined by four Halifax seamen whom Cole understood to be deserters from a British man-of-war. The privateers sailed the day after the Hairwind had arrived but were quickly run aground by the unpredictable Fundy tides. Carleton's successful departure had to wait until the following day."

The investigation of the incident by Michael Franklin resulted in Dickson's indictment a month later on charges of treason. Depositions given to Franklin by Cole and Card

" The Deposition of Peley Card, PANS, Court Records, P61, Vol. 342, No. 76, 7 November 1776.

* The Deposition of John Cole, PANS, Court Records, P61, Vol. 342, No. 72, 30 October 1776.

implicated more than just Dickson. John Polly apparently told Card "if he mentioned at Windsor anything about the Privateer people being there he must never come to Cobequid". Carpenter Bradford suggested "if Francklin comes to Cobequid Damn him, I will Pilose him through the woods to the Congress" and Card "may tell him so".¹ Cole related to Francklin "Many of the people of Cobequid abraided both" him and "Card for taking the Enrolment Oath of the Volunteer Militia".²

It is revealing to note that while certain individuals were willing to threaten the owners of the Hairwind with rebellious rhetoric to prevent them from becoming informers, "many" in Onslow were upset with them only for their enrolment in the militia. Obviously the controversy of the previous year surrounding the Militia Act was still unresolved in the eyes of numerous Planters, contrary to the belief expressed by Arbuthnot earlier that fall.

The outbreak of Jonathan Eddy's Cumberland rebellion during the time of the Dickson investigation served to increase tensions within Onslow and placed added strain on the township's relationship with Halifax. This tension and a preoccupation with the Cumberland uprising show in the depositions given by seven Planters from Truro and Onslow on

¹ The Deposition of John Cole, PANS, Court Records, RG1, Vol. 342, No. 72, 30 October 1776.

² The Deposition of Peley Card, PANS, Court Records, RG 1, Vol. 342, No. 76, 7 November 1776.

November 16, 1776. In a deposition given to Francklin, Sampson Moore of Truro professed knowing little about Dickson aiding Carleton. Moore declared "there are not exceeding Ten or (a) dozen in the Townships of Truro and Onslow who will join the Rebels in Cumberland ... and these people are not people of weight or consequence". Moore, however, did admit that Carpenter Bradford and John Polly were "much disaffected at least in their conversation".³⁸

Thomas Stevens of Onslow, like Moore, had little to reveal about Dickson but said he had been warned to attend a meeting at Bradford's house. Stevens also volunteered that his fellow townsmen John and William Cutting had "frequently Endeavored to Convince the people that the Rebels Cause was Just".³⁹ Robert Morrison, an "elderly" Onslow Planter, "says he heard about 300 Rebels ... coming from Cumberland to Cobequid" but knew "nothing of Capt. Carlton or his people".⁴⁰ A magistrate residing in Truro, James Yvall, reported that "two or three people went from Onslow to join ... Rebels at Cumberland".⁴¹

Yvall seems to have been correct, as Joshua Lamb and

³⁸ The Deposition of Sampson Moore, PANS, Court Records, RG1, Vol. 342, No. 74, 16 November 1776.

³⁹ The Deposition of Thomas Stevens, PANS, Court Records, RG1, Vol. 342, No. 74, 16 November 1776.

⁴⁰ The Deposition of Robert Morrison, PANS, Court Records, RG1, Vol. 342, No. 74, 16 November 1776.

⁴¹ The Deposition of James Yvall, PANS, Court Records, RG1, Vol. 342, No. 74, 16 November 1776.

Carpenter Bradford both left Onslow during this time and are later listed in the United States as refugees of the American Revolution. On November 1, 1776, Lamb sold his house and two shares in Onslow to Robert Catherwood, a husbandman from Londonderry, Nova Scotia.⁴ In 1778, all the land belonging to Carpenter Bradford, "Late of Onslow", including "One hundred Acres on the West side of the North River, being number 3 woodland with house and Barn" were sold by his wife, Mary, to Eliakum Tupper, a Truro merchant.⁴¹

Both Lamb and Bradford eventually found their way to Massachusetts where they were joined by Martin Brooks and David Gay. Brooks was Lamb's brother-in-law through the marriage of Lamb to Mercy Brooks on September 11, 1766. Gay and Bradford were also brother-in-laws. Before leaving Onslow, Brooks sold his homestead containing 180 acres on the east side of the North River to Charles Dickson in February, 1781.⁴² Later that year Dickson also purchased David Gay's half of a "corn and Saw Mill", while Eliakum

⁴ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 37, Joshua Lamb to Robert Catherwood, 1 November 1776.

⁴¹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 452, Mary Bradford to Eliakum Tupper, 4 November 1778, and Vol. 2, 125, Carpenter Bradford to Eliakum Tupper, 18 November 1783.

⁴² Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 23, Martin Brooks to Charles Dickson, 22 February 1781.

Tupper acquired Gay's farm on the North River.⁴⁵

In 1798, the Continental Congress of the United States passed a law providing for grants of land to the refugees of the American Revolution. Four years later Gay, by then living in Ducktrap, Hancock County, Massachusetts, obtained three lots totalling just over 960 acres in a tract of land in Ohio set aside for refugee claims. Gay was allotted this land for himself, Lamb, and Brooks. Bradford of Meduncook, Lincoln County, Massachusetts, also received land in the refugee tract.⁴⁶

The American Revolution had a different effect on Onslow than it had on some other Nova Scotian townships. The Revolution was more important in Onslow for the people it forced to leave as refugees than those it forced to arrive as United Empire Loyalists. Lamb, Bradford, and Gay, had all been original grantees in Onslow. Each, along with Brooks, had a role in the early history of the township. Gay had owned part of a mill, while Lamb had acted as Onslow's representative to Nova Scotia's General Assembly in Halifax, Registrar of Deeds, and Justice of the Peace. The remaining deeds for Onslow reveal only one possible

⁴⁵ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 33, David Gay to Charles Dickson, 9 May 1781, and 28, David Gay to Eliakum Tupper, 2 May 1781.

⁴⁶ Anderson 88-89, and Longworth 57-58.

Loyalist to have purchased land in the township.⁴⁷ The increased demand for land which accompanied the Loyalist migration north was not experienced in Onslow.

Onslow settlers remained difficult to control for the duration of the American Revolution. In 1777, when the Governor sent two magistrates to Onslow to administer the Oath of Allegiance, 39 members of the community either refused to swear the oath or asked to be excused from swearing it under what council termed "frivolous pretenses".⁴⁸ While the majority of those refusing to swear the oath were from Massachusetts, there were some notable exceptions. Among the 38 were John Dickson from Scotland and Alexander McCurdy from Ireland. The Governor and Council resolved "that all such persons so refusing should be held and deem'd as Popish Recusants and should be proceeded against by due process of law".⁴⁹ Accordingly, on June 11, 1777, the House of Assembly passed a resolution refusing to allow the appointment of a new member for Onslow. By 1780 however, Onslow and neighbouring townships were obliged to comply with the demands of Halifax and sent

⁴⁷ William McDonald was described as "a private in the second Battalion of Royal Highland Emigrants". Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 441, James McDonald to William McDonald, 20 July 1779.

⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that Upham and Elliott are once again not on the list. Court Records, PANS, RG1, Vol. 342, 47, "Oaths of Allegiance, Onslow Refusals", 5 May 1777.

⁴⁹ Minutes of Council, PANS, RG1, Vol. 212, 5 May 1777.

a "party of militia" to help repair fortifications in the British stronghold."

With little evidence implicating him and the Crown's main witness missing, Dickson was cleared of the treason charge. While those questioned from Cobequid were willing to give information pertaining to the activities of people without "weight or consequence", they said little relating to Dickson. Dickson continued to be a successful merchant and shipbuilder, and replaced Lamb as a member in the Assembly after Onslow was readmitted to the House. Dickson would also become the Registrar of Deeds for Colchester and Pictou, and a Justice of the Peace.

In late August, 1796, after a trip to the West Indies on one of his vessels, Dickson arrived in Halifax. While on the voyage he had come down with "yellow fever" and died a few days after returning to Nova Scotia.⁵⁰ At the time of his death, Dickson's holdings were extensive. His real estate included 10 sixty acre lots with his house, barns and store located on numbers 17, 18, and 19, an additional house and barn on 20 and 21, and another barn on 29. He also owned 18 house lots in Queens Village, 19 marsh lots, 2 tracts of marshland, 7 lots of upland, woodlands, and a grant in Shubenacadie. An inventory of Dickson's real

⁵⁰ Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk, A People Highly Favour'd of God (Toronto, 1972) 57.

⁵¹ Longworth 60.

estate estimated its value to be in excess of 2000 pounds.²²

In addition to the value of Dickson's land there was a vast personal estate and a long list of debts due him. The personal estate was made up of two brigs and half of a schooner, the inventory of the store, a large amount of stock, as well as furniture, farming utensils, and produce. Dickson's personal estate was valued at over 3200 pounds. The 240 debts due to Dickson equalled 2853 pounds of assets and, when added to the real and personal property estimates, brought his estate's total worth to more than 8053 pounds.²³

Financially and politically, Dickson was clearly the most influential member of Onslow at the time of his death. Other than Dickson, all other real and personal estate inventories extant for Onslow's first generation were valued at under 500 pounds.²⁴ Dickson however died intestate and the final settlement of his estate did not take place until 1804, when the Court of Probate made a "Just and equal division" of his property "according to Law". Amelia, Dickson's widow by then remarried to Joseph McLean, was granted "One Third part of the said lands and Buildings as her Dower there in during her life". The "rest and residue"

²² Halifax County Estate Papers, PANS, RG48, Vol. 401, D59, Charles Dickson, 10 September 1796.

²³ Halifax County Estate Papers, PANS, RG48, Vol. 401, D59, Charles Dickson, 10 September 1796.

²⁴ Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Estate Papers, Reel 19177 (index), 1802-1948, and Halifax County Estate Papers, PANS, RG48, Vols. 398-426.

of Dickson's estate was divided into eleven shares with his eldest son receiving two shares while the rest of the children received one each. Dickson's four sons managed to continue his trade and shipping business. This business, along with important connections made by "marring well", maintained the second generation Dicksons as Onslow's most powerful family.

While no other father in Onslow left a legacy of wealth and position to his children to compare to Dickson, most attempted to secure their children's future well being. Central to this attempt was the conveyance of land. Land was not only essential to farming but was also needed for collateral in mortgages and performance bonds.

Onslow fathers used a variety of different methods to pass land on to their sons. Some fathers used deeds of gift to give their sons the land necessary for their own advancement in life. By 1779, Francis Harris, a shipwright, was living in Windsor. Harris, in "consideration of the Natural love for Son" William Harris, gave him a share in Onslow. William Harris later sold the share, which he described as a "gift from my honoured Father", for 26 pounds.⁵⁵ William Hamilton gave his son, James, "one half of or an equal share of the three rights of Land lying on the Chiganoise River". William stressed that the gift of

⁵⁵ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 432, Francis Harris to William Harris, 14 June 1779, and 462, William Harris to James Hamilton, 22 June 1779.

land was "for ever Absolutely and without any manner of condition".⁵⁷

William Hamilton, like some other Onslow fathers, also sometimes conveyed land to the next generation of his family by selling it for a minimal amount. In 1778, William sold a share in Onslow to his daughter's husband, Hugh Wilson, for 5 shillings.⁵⁸ In 1771, Richard Upham for 10 pounds from his stepson, William Putnam, sold him "the plantation commonly Called fort Belcher" containing "Three hundred and Seventy one acres of Upland and one hundred and thirty four acres of Broken dyke and Marsh". Putnam sold the property eight years later for 400 pounds.⁵⁹

Yet others chose to sell land to their sons for what would appear to be market value prices. On May 8, 1782, David Hoar sold David Hoar Junior 200 acres of land in Onslow, including "One Hundred acres on Gay's Mountain with House and Barn", for 100 pounds. Hoar had purchased the same property earlier that year for 60 pounds.⁶⁰ David Cutting left Onslow in the early 1770s for New England,

⁵⁷ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 459, William Hamilton to James Hamilton, 13 December 1778.

⁵⁸ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 402, William and Marjory Hamilton to Hugh and Marjory Wilson, 21 January 1778.

⁵⁹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 35, Richard Upham to William Putnam, (day not stated) May 1771, and 430, William Putnam to Thomas Brown, 10 May 1779.

⁶⁰ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 91, David Hoar to David Hoar Junior, 8 May 1782.

eventually settling in Charlton, Massachusetts. In 1784, while living in Charlton, he sold 750 acres of land for 300 pounds to his son.⁶⁰ Aaron Crow sold 7 1/2 acres of interval land to James Watson Crow and Daniel Crow, "brothers and sons of Aaron", for 50 pounds.

Some parents attached conditions to the conveyance of their property. In an indenture, original grantee Ephraim Scott gave his son William one and a half shares in Onslow "Together with all buildings" there on. In return William agreed to pay 17 pounds yearly to his father and not to sell any of the land without his consent. William also was to provide half the dwelling house, as much of the barn as Ephraim wanted, 6 acres of improved land, firewood, and care for livestock. All of these obligations were to be met "yearly for the Rest of Ephraim's natural life, half to his Wife if she out lives him". William was also made responsible for his siblings' inheritance. Ephraim sold William the "Farm Stock and utensels value 36 pounds 3 shillings in consideration of which William... (was) to pay his Brother Alexander and sister Sarah 20 pounds each in four years after death of father".⁶¹ Was Scott, and other

⁶⁰ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 167, David Cutting to William Cutting, 12 July 1784.

⁶¹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17439, Vol. 3A, 422, Aaron Crow to James Watson Crow and Daniel Crow, 4 March 1799.

⁶² Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 480, Ephraim Scott and William Scott, 28 February 1792.

Onslow fathers, trying to exert control over his son or simply ensuring his and his wife's security in their later years?

The paternal control which fathers aspired to obtain and maintain over their sons in New England a century earlier does not appear to have been an important motivation among Onslow's fathers. Like those described by historian Barry Moody in his study of Granville, Onslow fathers attempted to secure enough real and personal estate to maintain themselves in old age. These possessions were not parted with lightly, as many conditions were often attached to their conveyance. "Giving one's property away too hastily, even to one's children, might easily be bitterly regretted in old age or sickness."⁶³

If it was control alone Onslow fathers were seeking they would not have employed the varied methods of conveying land to their sons that they did. Jonathan Higgins was granted his one and a half shares in Onslow "By Order (of) Council".⁶⁴ Higgins sold his son Jonathan a 60 acre lot of land by the bay for the small sum of 1 pound in 1777.⁶⁵ Three years later Higgins sold another of his sons, this time Joshua, a 60 acre lot, a 100 acres of second division

⁶³ Moody 171.

⁶⁴ List of Onslow Proprietors, PANS, MG1, Vol. 1798, F12, 11-13, 3 October 1768.

⁶⁵ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 383, Jonathan Higgins to Jonathan Higgins, 5 May 1777.

woodland, and three lots in the Great Marsh for 50 pounds. In 1781, Joshua bound himself and his family to his father and mother in the sum of 500 pounds. "The Condition of this Obligation is such that if the above bounden Joshua Higgins... (does) find Things Convenient for the Maintainance of the above named Jonathan and Rachel Higgins so long as they shall live."⁶⁶ If Jonathan was trying to maintain control over his sons' lives he would surely not have sold them land at below market prices. Even the language of Joshua's bond to his parents hardly sounds controlling; Joshua will maintain his parents if he finds "things Convenient".

Alexander McCurdy, like Jonathan Higgins, sold land to his sons for relatively small amounts in order to give them a good start in life. Originally a grantee of Londonderry, McCurdy sold Daniel 9 acres of marsh, 10 acres of improvement, and 486 acres of division woodland in Onslow for 50 pounds. Daniel also received 250 acres on the Stewiacke River which his father held by a grant.⁶⁸ On the same day for the same amount James McCurdy received land from his father. Alexander sold James 8 acres of marsh, a

⁶⁶ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 15, Jonathan Higgins to Joshua Higgins, 8 December 1780.

⁶⁷ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 102, Joshua Higgins and Jonathan and Rachel Higgins, (no day or month stated) 1781.

⁶⁸ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17439, Vol. 3A, 142, Alexander McCurdy to Daniel McCurdy, 11 March 1796.

house lot, an interval lot, 8 acres on the "Country Road", 200 acres of second division woodland, and 250 acres on the Stewiacke River.¹⁰ Alexander eventually sold Daniel and James' younger brother, Robert, 500 acres in Onslow for 10 pounds, but it was James who bound himself to his parents.¹¹

James, for the house, barn, and homestead, including 6 lots in the Upper Mowing Marsh adjoined by "all house lots, interval lots, and sixty acre lots", agreed to provide for Alexander and Jenny in their remaining years. James could not sell land without his father's consent and was to allow him a substantial amount of "good merchantable" produce, stock, half the dwelling house, part of the barn, and firewood. If James' mother, Jenny, survived Alexander she was to receive "half of the aforsaid rents and privilages... or one Third of the yearly profits of the said Estate which she shall choose". James was also entrusted to pay his sisters, Margaret Taylor and Jeany McCurdy, 50 pounds each four years following the death of their parents.¹²

Alexander does not appear to have been trying to dominate James or his other two sons. If control over James' life was his intention he would not have sold him a

¹⁰ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17439, Vol. 3A, 145, Alexander McCurdy to James McCurdy, 11 March 1796.

¹¹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17439, Vol. 3A, 326, Alexander McCurdy to Robert McCurdy, 1 January 1798.

¹² Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17439, Vol. 3A, 200, Alexander McCurdy and James McCurdy, 27 February 1797.

large amount of land for a relatively small sum only a year before entering into a bond with him. Alexander was simply trying to balance his desire to secure his children's future and the future security of him and his wife.

Not all bonded agreements developed in ways that those who entered into them would have imagined or chosen. On the list of grantees compiled by Charles Morris and Jonathan Binney in 1768, William Whippy was listed as a single male with one share in Onslow. Whippy married Ruth Hoar in 1771, and purchased "half of all the real estate" her father, David Hoar, possessed in Onslow for a 100 pounds on January 3, 1783.⁷² On the same day Whippy and his father-in-law entered into a bond with each other. Hoar was to make a deed "for the other half of his land in Onslow or by last will and Testament" in return for "the benefiets and priviledge which William Whippy his heirs Executors Administrators and assigns hath bounded himself to".⁷³ Two years later, Hoar purchased half of his estate back from Whippy for the same price of 100 pounds and sold it to his son, Ebenezer Hoar, for 300 pounds.⁷⁴ Apparently the transfer of land from David Hoar to Ebenezer came with the

⁷² Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 58, David Hoar to William Whippe, 3 January 1783.

⁷³ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 59, David Hoar and William Whippy, 3 January 1783.

⁷⁴ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 185, William Whippy to David Hoar, 21 May 1784 and 189, David Hoar to Ebenezer Hoar, 25 May 1784.

understanding that his son would share in the responsibilities to which Whippy had bound himself.⁷⁵

On January 24, 1791, William Whippy died, and the widow married William Downing two years later. At the time of his death Whippy was without a will and still bound to his father-in-law, who has survived him. By 1793, "Supporting the Grand Parents" had fallen to "The Heirs of William Whippe". The heirs would continue to maintain David Hoar and wife until September 24, 1802.⁷⁶ The following year two of Whippy's sons, Allen and William, were granted "Letters of Adminstration of the Goods Chattles and Credits of William Whippy late of Onslow" by the Colchester and Pictou Court of Wills and Probate.⁷⁷ Allan and William declared the estate insolvent as the value of their father's personal property would not discharge the debts due from the estate. The main reason for the insolvency was the heirs' charge of 248 pounds against the estate for 10 years of supporting David Hoar "p. Bond".⁷⁸

⁷⁵ An agreement between Ebenezer Hoar and David Hoar is referred to in Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Register Books, Vol. A, 25, estate papers of William Whippy, 2 August 1804. The Whippy papers state "it appears that the Estate of the Deceased was charged with the maintenance of the said David Hoar".

⁷⁶ Halifax County Estate Papers, PANS, RG48, Vol. 426, W177, estate papers of William Whippy, 28 February 1805.

⁷⁷ Registry of Probate, PANS, Colchester County Wills, Vol. A, 6, estate papers of William Whippy, 11 January 1803.

⁷⁸ Halifax County Estate Papers, PANS, RG48, Vol. 426, W177, estate papers of William Whippy, 28 February 1805.

William Whippy Junior eventually purchased a "quit claim to the real and personal estate" of his deceased father from his siblings for 500 pounds. To help meet the monetary demands of his brothers, sisters, and brother-in-laws, William sold 119 acres of his father's farm, including the house and barn, to Francis Lorain of Windsor for 350 pounds.⁸⁰ William also sold land to younger brothers David and Stephen part of which was "the Original draft lot of David Hoar".⁸¹ By 1811 William had gained clear title to what remained of his father's estate, 20 years after William Whippy Senior's death.

Some Onslow fathers attempted to provide not only for sons but for daughters as well. In the Onslow deeds, as has already been seen, it was not uncommon for fathers to give, sell, or bond land to sons-in-law. On May 13, 1788, Abner McNutt for 200 pounds obliged himself to "provide and supply... Robert and Mary Morrison with Comfortable and wholesome support". McNutt was obligated to provide "a good house room", firewood, food, clothes, and a horse for the

⁷⁹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17441, Vol. 7, 135, David Whippy, Abigail Whippe, Shephen Whippe to William Whippe, 8 October 1808 and Vol. 6, 456, Allan Whippy, William Scott, Easter Scott, Alexander Teakles, Nancy Teakles, and Barthshiba Whippy to William Whippy, 7 March 1811.

⁸⁰ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG48, Reel 17441, Vol. 6, 355, William Whippy to Francis Lorain, 7 December 1810.

⁸¹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17441, Vol. 6, 332, William Whippy to David Whippy, 7 November 1808 and 421, William Whippy to Stephen Whippy, 5 November 1811.

rest of his parents-in-law's natural lives."³³ On the same day Morrison sold McNutt 100 acres of land along the North River for 40 pounds."³⁴ Two months later Morrison purchased the same 100 acres back from McNutt for 200 pounds and McNutt in turn paid 200 pounds to be released from the bond in which he had promised to support his father and mother-in-law."³⁵ There is no indication in remaining records of a breakdown in the relationship between father and son-in-law causing Morrison to help McNutt purchase a release from their mutual bond. Morrison and McNutt would again have land transactions."³⁶ It seems more likely that Morrison was trying to help his daughter, her husband, and family. There seems no other plausible reason for Morrison to have purchased a tract of land for 200 pounds from McNutt when he had sold it only two months earlier for 40 pounds.

While some Onslow fathers attempted to provide for their daughters' future well being through land transactions with sons-in-law, others made provisions regarding daughters in wills. Daughters commonly received a small sum of money,

³³ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 316, Abner McNutt to Robert Morrison, 13 May 1788.

³⁴ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 315, Robert Morrison to Abner McNutt, 13 May 1788.

³⁵ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 358, Abner McNutt to Robert Morrison, 11 July 1788, and 378, Robert Morrison to Abner McNutt, 11 July 1788.

³⁶ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 415, Robert Morrison to Abner McNutt, 1 December 1790.

to be paid out of the estate, or some livestock. James Wilson bequeathed to his "well Beloved Daughter(s)", Elizabeth and Lyndy, one cow each. Jutty, another of Wilson's daughters, received "Two Cows or the value of them". Wilson left "the rest and residue of... (his) goods and chattels land tenements" to his "Dear and well beloved wife to be Intirly at her Disposall".⁸⁶

As in Wilson's case, some Onslow wills left widows with a fair degree of power. Matthew Staples, a blacksmith who came to Nova Scotia with the Cornwallis fleet in 1749, left his sons John and William all of his land in Onslow. Staples' 750 acres was to be shared equally by them but not before "one Third part... (was) possessed and enjoyed" by his wife, Sidney, "During her naterall life".⁸⁷ John and William Staples were both under the age of four at the time of their father's death in 1771, and their mother subsequently maintained control over their land for years after.⁸⁸

Yet other husbands preferred to provide only for their wives' security. Hugh Tackles divided all of his land between his sons William and Alexander, except 90 acres and

⁸⁶ Halifax County Estate Papers, PANS, RG48, Vol. 425, W100, will of James Willson, 18 October 1780.

⁸⁷ Halifax County Estate Papers, PANS, RG48, Vol. 422, S138, will of Matthew Staples, (day and month not stated) 1771.

⁸⁸ The share and a half was listed as the "Widdow Staples Land" in a map drawn by Robert Archibald. Maps, PANS, F/230, 22 February 1781.

a marsh lot which he reserved for another son, Robert. To his daughters Tackles left livestock and a small sum of money. To his wife he bequeathed all the remaining livestock, a room in the house, "and a Comfortable Maintainance During her life".⁸⁹

Despite the good intentions which many Onslow fathers and husbands had for the security of their wives and children, occasionally unforeseen events would alter well laid plans. In 1770, James Downing, a cordwainer from Truro, sold his grant of two shares to the Windsor merchant Henry Glen and moved to Onslow.⁹⁰ Downing purchased Abner Brooks' share and a half in Onslow.⁹¹ Passing away in 1776, Downing left his "Well beloved Daughters Mary Catherine Jenne and Nanne each of them one cow", son William a suit of cloths and 20 pounds out of the estate, the "Remainer of estate both real and personal to son James Downing, Lands, Tenements and Buildings and all moveable stock Utensals and goods - who I appoint sole Excutor". James Downing Junior was not to inherit his father's estate until his mother had "the use, Occupatation, Profits and improvement of all my

⁸⁹ Halifax Estate Papers, PANS, RG48, Vol. 423, T1, will of Hugh Tackles, 27 March 1792.

⁹⁰ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 39, James Downing to Henry Glen, (day and month not stated) 1770.

⁹¹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 22, Abner Brooks to James Downing, 2 November 1770.

Estate both Real and Personal during her natural life".⁹²

James Downing Junior died on July 21, 1789, having never come into full possession of his father's estate. His wife of two years, Marget Dickson, died the following February. Jennet Downing would maintain her dead husband's farm until 1799 with the help of hired hands, neighbours, and family.⁹³ On January 11, 1799, Jennet Downing's son-in-law William Blair, Junior "firmly bound" himself to the widow's remaining son, William Downing, and three other son-in-laws, Ebenezar Hoar, John Blair, and Joshua Higgins in the amount of 200 pounds for the estate of James Downing Senior. In return Blair was responsible for any remaining debts incurred by James Downing, Senior and Junior, and to "keep Support supply and Maintain... Jannet Downing in a Comfortable and Decent manner".⁹⁴ The Downing land would remain in the Blair family for years to come as William Blair passed it on to his son Robert, and Robert to his sons Daniel, David, and Robert.⁹⁵

⁹² Halifax County Estate Papers, PANS, RG48, Vol. 402, D94, will of James Downing, 28 October 1776 and Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 2, 302, will of James Downing, 28 October 1776.

⁹³ Halifax County Estate Papers, PANS, RG48, Vol. 402, D94, the estate papers of James Downing, (day and month not stated) 1789.

⁹⁴ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17439, Vol. 3A, 434, William Blair and William Downing, Ebenezar Hoar, John Blair, Joshua Higgins, 11 January 1799.

⁹⁵ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17441, Vol. 6, 540, William Blair, to Robert Blair, 11 December 1804, Reel 17449, Vol. 20, 181, Robert Blair to Daniel Blair, 14 July 1834, Vol. 19, 440,

Many of Onslow's grantees stayed only a few short years before selling their land and moving to other parts of Nova Scotia or back to New England. These grantees were replaced by newcomers from neighbouring townships and Britain who, before the American Revolution, were able to buy considerable amounts of land in Onslow for relatively little money. The increased demand for land which accompanied the migration of these newcomers to Onslow inflated land prices in the township. Rising land prices and the low monetary value of labour worked hand-in-hand to heighten the dependency sons had on their fathers for land, as there was little hope of being able to earn enough money to buy it at a reasonably young age.

A variety of methods were used to pass land from the first to the second generation in Onslow. While deeds of gift and deeds of sale for minimal sums of money were present among these conveyances, few examples of these transactions were found. The most common way for Onslow fathers to transfer land to their sons was by deed of sale at, or slightly below, what would appear to be market value prices.⁹⁶ Occasionally these deeds of sale would include a written bond from a son promising certain tasks would be

Robert Blair to David Blair, 19 December 1840, and Vol. 20, 357, Robert Blair and David Blair, 6 May 1842. Also see Miller, 168-170.

⁹⁶ 13 of the 24 fathers whose estates were traced for this chapter used deeds of sale to pass land on to the next generation of their families.

preformed by him for the father in return for the land."⁹⁷

In one instance land was conveyed to a son in return for a bond alone. A son who purchased his inheritance showed a desire for autonomy from his father as the land undoubtedly would have been his to inherit without cost eventually."⁹⁸

The bonds made by some sons for land give insight into the expectations which fathers and sons had for each other. They also signified the existence of extended family households in Onslow as the bonds often made arrangements for the son's family to live with the father and mother. These arrangements must not always have been congenial as authority regarding decisions affecting the house and farm must at times have been unclear. While land was given, sold, and bonded to sons, not all of the fathers' well laid plans developed in ways which they could have foreseen or wished. An unexpected death could leave an estate intestate, leading the children into disputes over remaining property. It could also find an estate insolvent, leaving the widow and family destitute.

A study of the actions of Onslow's first generation fathers offer the possibility of an interesting comparison with the actions of their contemporaries in New England. Jack Greene, in "Recent Developments in the Historiography

⁹⁷ There were 6 of these bonds found among the 24 first generation estates traced.

⁹⁸ Greven 133-134.

of Colonial New England", asserts that historians have found that beginning in the 1730s and 1740s much of New England was undergoing the pressure of population growth and the decreasing availability of land. As evidence of these changes they have pointed to a tendency to convey land to sons at earlier ages and a rising proportion of impartible inheritances. Greene summarized:

No longer patriarchs grandly presiding over an ancestral estate and minutely controlling the lives of their sons and heirs, fathers now tended to act as benefactors responsible for the future well-being and prosperity of their offspring."

Onslow fathers did act more as benefactors than patriarchs. While some fathers only gave up the balance of their property with a bond from their sons, these bonds were as much for reasons of security as control. It is difficult to determine exactly what the average age of Onslow sons was when land was conveyed to them by their fathers. Many sons must have benefited early in life from the land their fathers had managed to have granted in their names while still minors or young adults. There is, however, some evidence to the contrary, as two of William McNutt's sons, Gideon and Phineas, were not sold any land by their father until they reached their mid-thirties. While many Onslow fathers offered sons the opportunity to buy their

" Jack Greene, "Recent Developments in the History of Colonial New England," They Planted Well: New England Planters in Maritime Canada, ed. Margaret Conrad (Fredericton, 1988) 92.

inheritance, these purchases required a built-up wealth which some sons, without assistance, could only acquire after years of effort. The age at which sons received land could vary within an individual family. Brothers James and Daniel McCurdy purchased land from their father at the respective ages of 30 and 28. Their younger brother, Robert McCurdy, was able to purchase his land at the age of 23. An interesting example of inheritance buying involved William Elliott. William purchased 223 acres of his father's marsh and upland along with six acres "considered as house lots... where upon the house and Barn now stands" for 300 pounds at the age of 49, a year before his father, Anthony Elliott, died.¹⁰⁰

Impartable inheritance in Onslow however was not common.¹⁰¹ This differs significantly from Horton testators, of whom 43 percent bequeathed all of their real estate to one son.¹⁰² The abundance of land which Onslow fathers had been granted was divided among all their sons, and in some cases sons-in-law. There appears to little difference in

¹⁰⁰ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17441, Vol.7, 69, Anthony Elliott to William Elliott, 28 May 1812.

¹⁰¹ The only clear incidence of impartable inheritance found in the 24 first generation estates traced was that of James Downing's. To his eldest son William, Downing left a "Suit of Black Cloaths" and 20 pounds. To his youngest son James Junior, Downing left the "Remainder of (his) estate both real and personal". Halifax County Estate Papers, PANS, RG48, Vol. 402, D94, will of James Downing, 28 October 1776.

¹⁰² McNabb 159.

the way fathers of all origins conveyed land to the next generation of their families. Men like Jonathan Higgins and Alexander McCurdy both relied on deeds of sale and bonds to supply their sons with land.

By the end of the eighteenth century, most of the land in Onslow had passed into the hands of the second generation. This generation could now fully enjoy and build on the hard earned benefits they received from their parents. As the original settlers of Onslow, the first generation suffered through the difficult early years in the township. The community they formed in the 1760s had its cohesiveness tested first by a large turn over in membership and second by the strain created by the American Revolution. While some township members implicated others during the Dickson trial, Onslow Planters of all origins appeared to have been unified in their refusal to comply with the Militia Act. The land and community which the second generation inherited provided the context in which they and their children would live their lives.

**"To Share and Share alike":
Children and Grandchildren, 1800-1830**

In the same manner that the discussion of the first generation's conveyance of land to the second provided a window on the late eighteenth century Onslow family, the second generation's conveyance of land to the third provides similar insights on the early nineteenth century family. By examining the mechanisms of conveyance used in the second generation's transfers of land to the third, the opportunity of comparison with the first generation's transfers is offered. In other words, did second generation fathers still use deeds of gift, deeds of sale, bonds and wills, to pass land on to their sons? Another important point to discuss is that of partible versus impartible inheritance. Did all sons continue to benefit from land transactions with their fathers? The question of what was commonly left daughters and widows shall also be explored. At the community level, the attempt to maintain cohesion within the township continues to be an important issue to develop in gaining an understanding of Onslow.

"The manner of splitting property is a manner of splitting people; it creates (or in some cases reflects) a particular constellation of ties and cleavages between husband and wife, parents and children, sibling and

sibling, as well as between wider kin".¹ No where was this quotation more clearly illustrated among Onslow's second generation than in the dispute between Mary and John Crow over the estate of George Feash Crow. An affluent merchant at the time of his death in 1820, George F. left the disposition of his real and personal estate unresolved. Mary, the intestate's widow, and John, his brother, waged a three year battle over the undivided property. To make matters worse, other family and community members were drawn into this dispute causing a great deal of strain on familial and community relationships.

Brothers Thomas, Aaron, and John Crow came to Nova Scotia from Londonderry, Ireland, and settled in Windsor. In 1771, Thomas purchased three shares in Onslow from Ephraim Hayward and his widowed mother Joanna.² Thomas eventually sold Aaron and John one of his shares.³ It was on this share that John and his wife Elizabeth Crow built a house and raised their family. John and Elizabeth's eldest son George F. Crow was born in 1777. By the age of 33, George F. was carrying on "bussiness as a merchant

¹ Jack Goody, Joan Thirsk and E.P. Thompson, eds., Family and Inheritance, Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200-1800, (Cambridge, 1978), 3.

² Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 85, Ephraim Hayward and Joanna Hayward to Thomas Crow, 30 November 1771.

³ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17438, Vol. 1, 476, Thomas Crow to Aaron and John Crow, 26 September 1779.

at Onslow... and kept a store or shop at his father's house". In 1810, George F. and his younger brother John Crow Junior formed a firm to pursue their mutual interests in trade, shipbuilding, milling, and real estate.¹ On one of his trips to the United States, George F. married Mary Johnson of New York and brought her back to Onslow.² George F.'s death a few years later precipitated a heated dispute between Mary and John Crow Junior in the Court of Chancery.³

On October 11, 1820, "George F. Crow departed at Onslow... Intestate, and without lawful Issue". The Probate Court for Colchester County granted the administration of George F.'s estate solely to Mary, who then attempted to produce an inventory of her late husband's rightful property. The best estimate Mary could produce was that "George F. Crow, Deceased, and John Crow Surviving Partner" each held an undivided share in 840 pounds worth of stock, produce, supplies, and rum, and 2071 pounds worth of real estate including the "Home Farm and all the back Lands in the Township of Onslow". Mary was also aware of debts due the estate from Hicks and Co., New York, and Crop and Benson, Liverpool,

¹ Court of Chancery of Nova Scotia, PANS, RG36, 483, doc. 1, Mary Crow vs. John Crow, 14 November 1821.

² Miller, 206.

³ The Court of Chancery of Nova Scotia was based in Halifax and dealt mainly with the foreclosure of mortgages and contentious probate matters. For a chronological list of cases see PANS, Reel 16565, 1-1904, 1751 to 1855.

England, totalling 1092 pounds.' In order to make a proper assessment of her husband's holding and a final settlement of the estate, Mary demanded the firm's books and the collection of all outstanding debts. When John Crow Junior refused to meet these demands Mary pursued her cause in the Court of Chancery.

In a bill of complaint presented to the Court, Mary stated that her late husband George F. Crow took John Junior on as a minor partner due to his "brotherly affection toward him". She alleged that John Junior, following the death of George F., had collected debts "and applied (them) to his own use", misrepresented a mortgage as an absolute sale of real estate "for the purpose of injuring and embarrassing" her, and refused to "exhibit the accounts" and settle them."

In response to Mary's allegations, John Junior argued that when the "Partnership was formed George F. Crow was labouring under Considerable embarrassment from which he was extricated by the credit of the Defendant". John Junior stated that he was not acting in bad faith with Mary by taking an extended period of time to settle the firm's accounts. According to him, the firm's dealing had been highly complex and "never having kept a Clerk nor any regular Books the difficulty of such

Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Estate Papers, 154, estate of George F. Crow, 6 November 1820.

The Court of Chancery of Nova Scotia, PANS, RG36, 483, doc. 1, Mary Crow vs. John Crow, 14 November 1821.

settlement has been unusually great". He also did not wish to "proceed to harsh measures" in collecting debts due the firm, as it would drive persons owing into insolvency, thus making it impossible to collect full sums. In John Junior's opinion had he not allowed delays "and forced immediate payment it would have occasioned a very heavy loss to all parties and proved arsenious injury to this Defendent in the future Transaction he might be engaged in". John Junior denied having misrepresented a mortgage as a deed of sale but admitted that the person who had received the land was to pay interest on the purchase price with the property being recoverable after five years. In return he accused George F. Crow of having "collected large sums of Money from the debtors to the concern of George F. and John Crow, and of James Crow [a third] for which he never accounted".'

Mary demanded John Junior prove his statements by turning the firm's books over to the Court and he replied by handing the Court a list he composed containing 300 debts due the firm from various persons and companies in Nova Scotia, Canada, Britain, the United States, and the West Indies. Included on the list were the names of 107 Onslow residents with debts ranging from a few pence to 100 pounds. He also listed the firm's real estate as being worth 1354 pounds, 717 pounds less than Mary's

' The Count of Chancery of Nova Scotia, PANS, PG36, 483, doc. 5, Mary Crow vs. John Crow, 14 March 1822.

valuation. Against these assets were debts of 612 pounds, including 244 pounds due John Crow Senior, and a receipt for a 244 pound final payment on a 903 pound debt owed the estate of James Crow.¹¹

Mary protested bitterly against the amounts apparently due from the firm to her husband's father and late brother's estate. Mary argued that "John Crow Senior, is a very old man and if he has indeed made the claim now set up your petitioner does believe he has done the same under influence". As for the amount due her deceased brother-in-law, Mary stated that "James N. Crow died intestate and unmarried" John Junior has "increased the amount apparently due to the estate as he is one of the heirs".¹²

The Court in absence of the "original book or books" for the firm of George F. and John Crow supported Mary's claim to 75 percent of the partnership's assets "according to the Interest the said George F. Crow there in" held.¹³ Of the real estate, Mary became "seized and possessed" of one-third of all firm held land "for her natural life" as her dower right. In late 1823, Mary granted a "General Release of Dower" and "letters of

¹¹ The Court of Chancery, PANS, RG36, 483, doc. 13, Mary Crow vs. John Crow, 13 August 1823, and Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Estate Papers, 138, estate of James Crow, 26 June 1821.

¹² The Court of Chancery, PANS, RG36, 483, doc. 14, Mary Crow vs. John Crow, 13 August 1823.

¹³ The Court of Chancery, PANS, RG36, 483, doc. 18, Mary Crow vs. John Crow, 13 August 1823.

Administration" in her husband's estate to John Crow Junior "for the Consideration of divers sums of money" and "promises" to which he had bound himself."

While the amount of strife which surrounded the administration of George F. Crow's estate obviously was not common to the settlement of all second generation Planter estates, it remains an important example of how diverging interests in a deceased family member's remaining property could function to tear a family apart. George F. Crow's estate papers also reveal the intricate web of debt which tied Onslow residents together. When George F. died his firm was owed 300 debts, many of which were members of Onslow. If John Crow was forced to call on firm held loans it would have set-off a chain reaction of debt collection throughout the community. Thus both immediate family and the broader community were affected by such strife.

The remaining estate papers for Onslow are littered with personal notes due and owed by township residents. These notes at times acted in the place of currency as an individual would exchange a property or service with another in return for a third person's note. When Truro's Matthew Archibald Esquire died in 1820 he was due

* No record of the amount of money or what was stated in the promises could be found. Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17443, Vol. 11, 260, Mary Crow to John Crow, 5 December 1823, Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Estate Papers, 154, estate of George F. Crow, 5 December 1823, and Colchester County Register Books, Vol. A, 120, George F. Crow, 8 October 1820.

2432 pounds from the 56 notes he held. Onslow residents were responsible for 20 of these notes.¹⁴ In dealing with local merchants, many Onslow Planters simply purchased items on account, the debt recorded in a register book. When Onslow blacksmith Danford Dunbar Nichols died, he owed 43 debts totalling 260 pounds to a variety of persons in and outside the township. Due Nichols' estate were 44 notes and debts from Onslow residents recorded in the books for his shop to the amount of 80 pounds. Also due the estate were 36 notes and debts worth 110 pounds which were "Considered doubtful", meaning for reasons such as death and insolvency these could not be collected.¹⁵ Often a deceased person's land and buildings had to be sold to meet the debts brought to bear against the estate. In Nichols' case, 30 acres of "upland with house and barn" and 5 acres of marsh were sold to meet the debts his remaining personal property could not cover.¹⁶

If it was debt which acted both to link members of Onslow together and pull them apart, it was land which

¹⁴ Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Register Books, Vol. A, 147, "An Inventory of the Property of the late Matthew Archibald Esquire", 23 August 1820.

¹⁵ Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Register Books, Vol. A, 109, "Account of the Estate of Danford Nichols", 22 January 1822, also see Colchester County Wills, Vol. A, 294, will of Danford Dunbar Nichols, 22 January 1820.

¹⁶ Halifax County Estate Papers, PANS, RG48, Vol. 417, N52, estate of Danford Nichols, 29 December 1822.

could function in the same capacity among families. The conveyance of land from the second to the third generation was in many ways similar to that by the previous generation; there were, however, significant differences. While some Onslow fathers still conveyed land to sons at a fairly young age by deed of gift or deed of sale for a minimal sum of money, these methods of transferring land go from rare to almost nonexistent. Also rare are examples of land being made available to sons-in-law. Second generation Onslow fathers maintained a pattern of conveying the main portions of their land at or slightly under market value prices, less often with conditions attached. There was a large increase in the number of fathers who held on to significant amounts of land until their death. While inheritance for the most part remained parable, an important minority of third generation sons received little or no land. Many of these changes in land conveyance appear to be linked to a growing scarcity of good farmland due to an increasing population committed to partible inheritance.

Brothers John and William Staples had each inherited an equal and undivided share of their father Matthew Staples' farm. Matthew was a blacksmith who came with Cornwallis' fleet to Halifax in 1749. He eventually became a grantee in Onslow and received 750 acres of land along the Chiganois River. John Staples sold his half of the "Marshland, Interval and Upland" to John Barnhill in 1819 for 600 pounds. John stressed that Barnhill was "to

Share and Share alike in the above described Premises with William Staples who is the owner of the other half at this time".¹¹ William Staples and John Barnhill eventually drew up a deed of partition between them and William began selling land to his sons.

In 1839, William sold his eldest son James C. Staples "one Third part of all his lands and buildings" for 250 pounds. James C. was 29 years of age and received 150 acres of property.¹² It was not until 1845, at the age of 76, that William parted with the remainder of his land by selling his sons William and Wilson each "One third part of the [remaining] Two thirds of all my Real Estate" for 200 pounds each.¹³ William's youngest son John H. Staples received no land from his father and eventually moved to Boston where he married Elizabeth Rodenberry.¹⁴

James McCurdy, like his father Alexander from whom he received his land, divided the bulk of his real estate between two sons. In 1833, for 400 pounds each, James sold Isaac and David McCurdy sizable portions of marsh,

¹¹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17443, Vol. 11, 132, John and Catherine Staples to John Barnhill, 1 November 1819.

¹² Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17449, Vol. 19, 495, William Staples to James C. Staples, 20 January 1839.

¹³ Registry of Deeds, RG47, Reel 17454, Vol. 27, 25, William Staples to Wilson Staples, 17 April 1845, and 104, William Staples to William Staples, 17 April 1845.

¹⁴ Miller, 14.

improved and woodland. Issac's purchase also included a house and a blacksmith shop, while David was given "one half of all the Barns and outhouses belonging to the said James".²¹ Over the next 11 years James continued to sell land to his two sons including another large purchase by Isaac.²²

James McCurdy's brother Daniel was not fortunate enough to be able to distribute land to his sons over a number of years. In 1815, Daniel "finding himself about to depart this life" bequeathed his son Charles a tract of land on the Tatamgouch Road and the remaining children 20 shillings each upon their arrival at the age of 21. His wife Eunice was left "all and singular the remaining part of all (Daniel's) lands", buildings and personal property. These properties were to be used to discharge debts, educate the children, and maintain Eunice during her natural life, "then divided among my heirs".²³

Perhaps the best example of parable inheritance and its effects in Onslow rests with the Blair family. William Blair had received one and a half shares as an

²¹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17447, Vol. 15B, 133, James and Nancy McCurdy to Isaac McCurdy, 18 July 1833, and 355, James and Nancy McCurdy to David McCurdy, 18 July 1833.

²² Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17448, Vol. 18, 104, James McCurdy to Isaac McCurdy, 22 June 1837, also see Reel 17449, Vol. 20, 442, James McCurdy to David McCurdy, 5 March 1844, 443, James McCurdy to Isaac McCurdy, 5 March 1844, and 445, James McCurdy to David McCurdy, 12 December 1838.

²³ Registry of Probate, PANS, Colchester County Wills, Vol. A, 200, will of Daniel McCurdy, 17 July 1815.

original grantee in Onslow. William managed to secure a share for his eldest son William and a half share for his second son John in Onslow by 1769. William and John along with their youngest brother James were all successful in receiving additional grants of land in Nova Scotia from the Halifax Council.²⁴ The three brothers were all given portions of their father's land and William and James also came into possession of the real estate belonging to their fathers-in-law.²⁵ These three brothers would use this land to give many of their sons a good start in life.

The eldest Blair brother, William, along with his wife Mary, had ten children including eight boys. William managed to settle five of the sons on his land in Onslow. Robert Blair was William's oldest son and at the age of 30 he purchased "...all and every part and parcel of the Estate or property which James Downing Senior late of Onslow aforesaid died Possessed of" containing over 600 acres for the small sum of 60 pounds.²⁶ William sold to his 28 year-old son William Blair Junior his "lands on the southside of the North River" for 60 pounds, probably

²⁴ Land Papers, RG20, Series "A", Reel 15689, Vols. 10-12, Memorial for land by John Blair, 1785, Reel 15691, Vols. 14-17, Memorial for land by William Blair, Ephraim Howard, and James Blair, 1786.

²⁵ William Blair's father-in-law was James Downing and James Blair's father-in-law was Robert Catherwood. See Miller, 167, 341.

²⁶ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17441, Vol. 6, 540, William Blair to Robert Blair, 11 December 1804.

an under market value price when one considers the sale included a mill.¹ Just west of the land purchased by William Blair Junior was the marshland sold to Ephraim Blair for 25 pounds. Ephraim had become a cordwainer and purchased this land from his father William at the age of 34.² While William had provided more or less for these three sons, it was his sons Alexander and Oliver who received their father's homestead including the bulk of his marsh and improved lands, the house, and barns.

In 1811 William sold his then 24 year-old son Alexander Blair "one Third part of all the Intervale and uplands belonging to the farm which the said William Blair now occupies and lives upon," consisting of three lots of interval and a tract of upland on which an orchard stood "together with one half of the house and half of two Barns". William sold Alexander this property for 200 pounds "with out any limitation condition or Incumberance whatsoever".³ Six years later William sold his 23 year-old youngest son Oliver a 140 acre tract of upland adjoining Alexander's land, along with "half of the house and Barn", for 300 pounds.⁴ Even with the

¹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17441, Vol. 6, 541, William Blair to William Blair Junior, 11 November 1807.

² Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17443, Vol. 11, 514, William Blair to Ephraim Blair, 13 January 1824.

³ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17441, Vol. 6, 432, William Blair to Alexander Blair, 11 November 1811.

⁴ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17443, Vol. 11, 40, William Blair to Oliver Blair, 30 December 1817.

wealth of land William Blair possessed he had to make choices as to which of his sons received the most valuable tracts of land; to divide his homestead equally between eight sons would have given none the ability to sustain a living. While Alexander and Oliver were fortunate enough to have gained possession of their father's house, barns and land they would also have the added pressure of working and residing on "the farm and property which the said William Blair now lives",¹¹ therefore, living and working under the tutelage of their father and likely caring for him in his old age.

According to remaining records William's sons John, Daniel and James Blair received no land from their father. John married Isabella McNutt and settled on Onslow Mountain. Daniel married Rebecca Freeman of Cumberland County and settled in Onslow. Daniel and Rebecca's oldest son William Freeman Blair moved to Horton and married Rebecca Payzant in 1837. The following year William sold to his grandson William Freeman Blair, "of Horton now of Onslow", 200 acres "of that Certain Three Hundred Acre Lot of land No. 27 in the Third division".¹² James moved to New Brunswick.¹³

William's brother John Blair distributed real estate

¹¹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17444, Vol. 13, 147, William Blair to Oliver Blair, 18 October 1820.

¹² Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17448, Vol. 17, 127, William Blair to William Freeman Blair, 7 September 1838.

¹³ Miller, 170.

among his eight children in a similar way with all but one of his five sons receiving at least some land. John along with his wife Nancy, "for and inconsideration of that natural love and affection which they have and beareth to their Son Samuel Blair," and 100 pounds sold him 5 acres of improved mowing land in "what is called Blairs one hundred acre Lott... the original draft of William Blair Senior, half of the remaining part of the aforesaid lott", and an interval lot. Samuel was John and Nancy's eldest child and was 23 years-old at the time of this land conveyance in 1805." John also sold land to his second son James D. Blair. In two separate transactions of 50 pounds each, James D., described as a joiner, purchased two lots of interval and two tracts of first division land."

John reserved his homestead for sons Simeon and John Blair Junior. On December 29, 1820, for 300 pounds from both Simeon, aged 31, and John Junior, aged 27, John sold them all of his interval, improved and woodlands, part of "Which the said John Blair originally drew as... his Hall Right throughout the Township of Onslow". Included in the sale to John Junior was a lot on the North River "where the said John Blair Junior has lately built a house and

" Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17440, Vol. 2, 270, John and Nancy Blair to Samuel Blair, 21 September 1805.

" Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Peel 17440, Vol. 4, 436, John Blair to James D. Blair, 20 July 1804, and Reel 17441, Vol. 7, 334, John Blair to James D. Blair, 10 June 1813.

Barns". In addition to the land sold to Simeon was John's house, hog house, and barn. Excepted from the sale to Simeon was John's "use and occupation of the Garden, the North half of the Orchard, Also the North Room [of the house] and front entry way, the north part of the chamber, the east cellar and the priviledge of washing and Baking in the kitchen and porch, also one stand in the hog house, with a small stable in the Barn and Room to put a Ton or Two of hay.... Also the priviledge of Sowing half a Bushel of Flax seed every other year".

These sales of land did not come without obligations as Simeon and John Junior mortgaged their newly purchased land to their father in the amount of 500 pounds each and made bonds to him. In John Junior's bond to John he promised to "faithfully furnish and provide good and Sufficent Keeping, Such as good English hay for Winter and good Pasturage for Summer, and Sufficent Stable Room and attendance for two Cows and eight Sheep belonging to the Said John Blair Senior and Nancy Blair" for the rest of their lives. John Junior was also to provide his parents with 13 bushels of wheat, 25 bushels of oats, 100

" Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17442, Vol. 10, 336, John and Nancy Blair to Simeon Blair, 29 December 1820, and 232, John and Nancy Blair to John Blair Junior, 29 December 1820.

" Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17443, Vol. 10, 339, Simeon and Jenny Blair and John Blair, 29 December 1820, and 334, John Junior and Elizabeth Blair and John Blair, 29 December 1820.

bushels of white and blue potatoes, half a hundred weight of sugar, two pounds of tea, 10 cords of hardwood, and "Suitable ploughed Land... to sow every Second year half a bushel Flax Seed".¹⁷ In Simeon's bond to John he agreed to "provide good Keeping for Two Cows and one horse" to his father and mother along with the same amount of produce, sugar, tea, and wood as John Junior promised to supply.¹⁸ There is no record of John's son William being conveyed land by their father. William learned the trades of tanning and shoemaking and eventually purchased his own tannery.

The third brother of the second generation Blairs was James. James, unlike William and John, had only one son, Robert Catherwood Blair, and conveyed all his land to him. At the age of 20 Robert C. purchased his father's land, house, barn, and a share of the meeting house in Onslow for 30 pounds in 1813.¹⁹ In 1818, Robert C. paid 300 pounds more for the same properties.²⁰

The transmission of land from the second to the third generation of the Blair family is an excellent example of the partible conveyance of land and its

¹⁷ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17443, Vol. 10, 335, John Blair Junior and John Blair, 29 December 1820.

¹⁸ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17443, Vol. 10, 340, Simeon Blair and John Blair, 29 December 1820.

¹⁹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17443, Vol. 11, 92, James Blair to Robert C. Blair, 2 December 1813.

²⁰ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17443, Vol. 11, 93, James Blair to Robert C. Blair, 22 December 1818.

effects on Onslow. Even with the large amounts of real estate which William and John were possessed of they could only settle a limited number of children on their land. William choose to sell land at below market value prices to five of his eight sons. Two of the three sons not receiving land managed to buy it in Onslow, perhaps with their father's help, while the remaining son moved to New Brunswick. William's two daughters, Jane and Catherine, both married descendants of original grantees in Onslow. Jane eventually settled in Truro while Catherine settled in Onslow.⁴ William's brother John also had to choose between children as to who would receive land. John, like William sold land to his sons for what appears to have been under market value prices. Four of John's five sons purchased land from their father and two of them bound themselves to care for their parents in old age. John's three daughters all married and settled in the Onslow area.

While William and John had successfully managed to root large families in Onslow's soil, the seeds of disintegration were also sown. Partible land transmission was making land availability more scarce in Onslow with each successive generation of the Blair family. Of the fourth generation of Blairs in William's family who lived to adulthood - William's grandchildren - 21 of 66 traced left Onslow. Importantly, the number of

⁴ Jane married Archibald Taylor and Catherine married John Staples, his second wife. See Miller, 167.

William's grandsons carrying the surname Blair who left the township. Of the 34 sons of William's sons - fourth generation Blair men - 16 had left Onslow for other parts of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, the United States, and New Zealand. Also of importance was the fact that both William and John maintained control over the bulk of their property until all of their sons were of age. Even then, John conveyed his homestead only with bonds from Simeon and John Blair Junior to provide for him and his wife in their old age. Therefore, the older sons had to wait, often well in to their thirties, to receive land from their fathers.

Abner, Gideon, Phineans, and Rufus McNutt were all sons of original grantee William McNutt. William sold land to three of these sons, with Gideon and Rufus each obtaining "one half of the buildings and improvements" from their father for 100 pounds a piece. On the same deed Rufus was also conveyed most of his father's remaining lands which he held by grant, "Together with all the Farming Utentials and Carpenter tools which the said William McNutt now hath".⁴⁴ William sold another son, Phineans McNutt, a third division lot containing 300

⁴⁴ Miller, 168-175.

⁴⁵ The land William McNutt held by grant and sold to Rufus McNutt included first division lot B no. 69 containing 100 acres, second division lots nos. 30 and 83 containing 100 acres each, and third division lot no. 50 containing 300 acres. Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17441, Vol. 6, 463, William McNutt to Rufus McNutt, 20 May 1805, and Reel 17440, Vol. 4, 154, William McNutt to Gideon McNutt, 3 October 1800.

acres.⁴⁵ There remains no record of land being transmitted between William and Abner McNutt, perhaps because Abner received a half share by grant.

In 1802, Rufus McNutt married Margaret Crow of Onslow and together they had twelve children, including ten sons. Rufus could convey the land he had received from his father to only a few of his sons. Rufus sold both Lemuel and George McNutt a 100 acre lot each while reserving the main portion of his land for Isaac McNutt.⁴⁶ To "their son" Isaac, Rufus and Margaret sold "All that certain lot of land whereon (they) reside". Isaac also received two other lots of land, the house, barn, furniture, the hay and grain in the barn, all the stock, and the farming tools. In return for his parents' real and personal property, Isaac paid 300 pounds and promised at "all times hereafter [to] well and truly provide allow and furnish... for the term of their natural life of the longest liver of them good and sufficient meat, drink, washing, and lodging suitable for them and a good and comfortable room in the House... sufficient cloathing... attendance in case of sickness with choice of a Physician and a good horse with saddle and bridle as may be required and school board and lodge their son William

⁴⁵ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17440, Vol. 5, 125, William McNutt to Phineans McNutt, 5 July 1805.

⁴⁶ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17448, Vol. 17, 575, Rufus McNutt to Lemuel McNutt, 3 March 1835, and Reel 17455, Vol. 28, 332, Rufus McNutt to George McNutt, 10 May 1830.

McNutt until he is twelve years of age and pay Fifty pounds of debt now due and payable by the said Rufus".⁴

Not all second generation fathers managed to pass land on to their children. While the ownership of land was important in securing sons', and sometimes daughters', futures, it also played a key role in money lending as collateral. Without land the ability to take on debt and make material gains would have been seriously hindered. With a mortgage, however, came the danger of foreclosure. While the majority of real estate mortgages in Onslow were successfully paid-off, occasionally an unpaid loan was collected through foreclosure. In 1825, Rufus' older brother Abner McNutt and Jane, his wife, mortgaged "a Certain lot or parcil of land Situate lying and being in the Township of Onslow", containing 100 acres and including all buildings, to Samuel George William Archibald of Truro for 120 pounds plus interest. The interest was to be paid yearly while the entire debt was due within three years. Jane released her right to the land as dower for 5 shillings.⁴⁹ In another deed Abner described this 100 acres as "all land that I now possess in Onslow and on which I reside".⁵⁰

⁴ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17448, Vol. 17, 268, Rufus and Margaret McNutt to Isaac McNutt, 19 February 1838.

⁴⁹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17443, Vol. 11, 482, Abner and Jane McNutt to Samuel George William Archibald, 11 November 1825.

⁵⁰ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17443, Vol. 11, 183, Abner McNutt to Samuel McNutt, 1 September 1821.

By 1838, Abner McNutt had passed away still owing money against his property, 10 years after the debt was due. Archibald filed suit "against Jane McNutt and others the Widow, Children, and heirs... of Abner McNutt" in the Court of Chancery. Archibald won the right to foreclose on the real estate in question and the revenue gained from its sale would go towards the "payment of a large sum of money due to the said Complainant by virtue of a Mortgage".⁵⁰ Jane had lost the security which land could provide in old age and the heirs would never receive an inheritance in the form of land.

The remaining wills for the second generation reflect the partible nature of land inheritance in Onslow. The majority of wills divided land between a number of sons and sometimes daughters. Robert Dickson was the third son of Charles Dickson, and in 1798 married Lavinia DeWolf of Horton. Robert was an extensive farmer, a Justice of the Peace, and like his father, brother William, and brother-in-law Samuel George William Archibald, a representative in the Nova Scotia House of Assembly. He bequeathed the whole of his worldly goods "both real and personal" to three of his six surviving sons Elisha DeWolfe Dickson, Joseph McLane Dickson, and William Dickson. Robert gave them the "authority to sell

⁵⁰ Court of Chancery of Nova Scotia, PANS, RG36, Vol. 72, 1250, Samuel George William Archibald vs. Jane McNutt and Others, 28 August 1838, and Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17448, Vol. 17, 321, James Walton Nutting Esq., Master in the Court of Chancery and Samuel George William Archibald, 11 February 1839.

and dispose of all any of such property for the payment of my just debts and funeral expenses and the charges attending the proving of this my last will and testament". The sons were also charged with "maintaining and supporting... their mother Lavinia Dickson and their two sisters Lavinia and Abigail and also furnishing them with all decent proper becoming and necessary clothing and apparel whilst sole and unmarried as long as they may live". Each sister was also to be paid 30 pounds upon the death of their father, 2 pounds 10 shillings annually til her marriage, 25 pounds within a year of marriage, and furnished "with a good suitable bed bedding curtains and mahogany bedstead, a chest of drawers and a set of China tea Service". The remaining married daughter Amelia Rouch, was to be paid 25 pounds within two years of Robert's decease."

Like Robert Dickson, Thomas Stevens wished his remaining property to be divided among a number of his children. In his will, Stevens bequeathed all his real and personal property to his wife Catherine Stevens "for her whole use and benefit during her natural life and after to be disposed of by her to and among my dearly beloved children Elizabeth Stevens, Mary-Ann Stevens and Ezra Stevens". Left out of this final division of property was Thomas and Catherine's "beloved son James

" Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Wills, Vol. B, 126, will of Robert Dickson, 23 September 1835.

Clarke Stevens" to whom Thomas had "given and disposed all the share of... [his] property which... [was] intended for him excepting five shillings". As was the case with many of his contemporaries, Thomas Stevens was attempting to provide for as many of his children as possible.

While 38 percent of the Onslow fathers who wrote wills in this period left all of their remaining real estate to one son, these wills must be taken in the context of the deeds written during the fathers' lifetime.⁵² William Elliott was the only son of Anthony Elliott and his wife Jemina of Onslow. Anthony, like Matthew Staples, had come to Halifax as a part of Cornwallis' fleet in 1749 and was later granted two shares in Onslow. William purchased his father's farm and land on the Chignoise River. In his will, William left his second son William Elliott Junior all his real estate after he provided his mother with "a Comfortable Maintance... during her natural life"⁵⁴. William Junior eventually exchanged the farm that had been owned by his father and grandfather for land further up the Chiganois

⁵² Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Wills, Vol. B, 19, will of Thomas Stevens, 23 August 1828.

⁵³ Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Wills, Vols. A, B, and C.

⁵⁴ Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Wills, Vol. B, 208, will of William Elliot, (day and month not stated) 1834.

River. Taken alone it might appear that William Junior's inheritance was impartible. The deeds reveal that at the age of 22, William's eldest son Isaac Elliott was sold the first division lands for 150 pounds, which lands William held "by Virtue of a Deed of conveyance from [his] father Anthony Elliott".⁵⁷ For his third and youngest son Anthony Elliott, William secured a 100 acres of land in New Annan which he sold to him for 30 pounds in 1834.⁵⁸ Thus all of William's sons were provided with land, although in differing manners.

A slightly different pattern is revealed in the case of Nathan Upham. In his will, Nathan left his "loving wife Eleanor Upham all the Remands of my real and personal Estate for and during her natural life". After Eleanor's death all of the real estate was to pass to his son Robert. Years earlier Nathan and Eleanor had sold both Robert and his brother Luke three 100 acre lots for 300 pounds each.⁵⁹ Even though Robert received the remainder of his father's land after his mother's death,

⁵⁷ No deed or probate document records this transfer of land. See Miller, 10.

⁵⁸ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17443, Vol. 11, 41, William Elliott to Issac Elliott, 26 December 1817.

⁵⁹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17448, Vol. 17, 54, William Elliott to Anthony Elliott, 22 December 1834.

⁶⁰ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17442, Vol. 8, 498, Nathan and Eleanor Upham to Luke Upham, 23 December 1809, and 377, Nathan Upham to Robert Upham, 18 December 1815.

it was "to be held by him for the sole benefit of such of my within mentioned [ten] children as he the said Robert Upham shall or may think stands in need of assistance and support".⁵⁹

John Barnhill Junior had obtained a share in Onslow and a share in Londonderry by a deed of conveyance from his father in 1786.⁶⁰ In 1819, Barnhill purchased an additional 375 acres from John Staples for 600 pounds.⁶¹ He bequeathed all of his real and personal estate to Isaac, a son by his second marriage. Barnhill's reason for leaving one son all his remaining property was that all his other sons "have been largely advanced unto by me heretofore". He felt the need to explain the impartable nature of his will as he wished to "prevent confusion dispute litigation and quarrelling... among my children".⁶² Thus division of the family property among a number of children, although not always equal, remained the norm in Onslow.

There was a small minority of third generation sons who received all their father's land. Along with the

⁵⁹ Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Wills, Vol. A, 203, will of Nathan Upham, 28 May 1818.

⁶⁰ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17439, Vol. 3A, 210, John Barnhill to John Barnhill Junior, 22 April 1786.

⁶¹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17443, Vol. 11, 132, John and Catherine Staples to John Barnhill, 1 November 1819.

⁶² Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Wills, Vol. B, 259, will of John Barnhill, 13 November 1837.

land, these sons often inherited demanding responsibilities to their mother and siblings. When Robert Morrison died in February, 1825, he left all his real estate to his "dearly beloved wife" Abigail, "by her freely to be possessed and enjoyed"⁴⁴. Abigail Morrison wrote her will 14 years later and left all her real estate to her son Daniel "to be set off to him... two years from this date provided he stays and works the farm"⁴⁵. Phillip Higgins willed all of his real estate to his wife Jane "until that time as My Son becomes the age of Twenty one years". At this time Phillip's son Charly Higgins was to receive half of his father's land. Charly would inherit the other half of the land after it was possessed by his mother for "the term of her natural life". To his daughter Margaret Anne, Phillip bequeathed "One Hundred pounds Currency to be paid in four equal payments by my Son Charles"⁴⁶.

As has already been revealed in several wills, it was not uncommon for Onslow's second generation widows to be willed all of their spouses' remaining real and personal estate for the term of their lives. Some

⁴⁴ Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Wills, Vol. B, 3, will of Robert Morrison, 15 February 1825.

⁴⁵ Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Wills, Vol. B, 244, will of Abigail Morrison, 13 (month not discernable) 1839.

⁴⁶ Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Wills, Vol. B, 191, will of Phillip Higgins, 27 October 1840.

widows, such as the previously mentioned Abigail Morrison and Catherine Stevens, were also bequeathed the task of dividing this property among their children as they "think and conceive most proper".⁶⁶ John Bartlet stated in his will: "I give unto Mary my dearly beloved Wife all and Singular my lands and Tenements by her freely to be possessed and enjoyed, and all my homestead goods... and personal effects". To his five sons and two daughters Bartlet left 10 shillings each.⁶⁷ Luke Upham, another of original grantee Richard Upham's sons, bequeathed "all and every part" of his real and personal estate to his wife Grace, whom he also made the sole executrix of his last will and testament. Luke also made arrangements for the children of his deceased son Richard. He left 140 pounds along with room, board and education for Richard's three youngest children, "if they attend wholly the benefit and interest of said Executrix".⁶⁸

This differs from the position of first generation widows, whose security and care was more often placed in the hands of sons or sons-in-law through bonds made with the widows' husbands during their lifetime. The change may well be due to an increase in the number of fathers

⁶⁶ Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Wills, Vol. B, 19, will of Thomas Stevens, 23 August 1828.

⁶⁷ Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Wills, Vol. B, 148, will of John Bartlet, 14 July 1837.

⁶⁸ Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Wills, Vol. A, 203, will of Luke Upham, 28 June 1817.

remaining in possession of significant amounts of real estate until death. Instead of conveying land by deeds and having his and his wife's maintenance in old age insured with a bond, second generation fathers tended to retain a portion of their land for their lifetimes and their spouses.

While it was more common for widows to be left in control of all remaining real estate upon the death of their husbands, this by no means was always the case. John Baird chose to leave his wife in control of a third of his real estate and yearly profits.⁶⁹ Other husbands continued to make bonds with sons for the maintenance of their widows.⁷⁰ Some husbands simply died intestate in which case the Court of Probate for Colchester generally upheld the widow's right to a third of his estate. In Margaret McElhenny's instance not only did her husband die without a will, his estate was also insolvent.

Margart's husband Thomas McElhenny was probably born in Londonderry, Nova Scotia, and moved to Onslow after purchasing a 60 acre lot, a 10 acre tract of "swamp and upland", and 100 acres of "Mountain land", from David and

⁶⁹ Registry of Probate, PANS, RG48, Colchester County Wills, Vol. B, 42, will of John Baird, 4 December 1828.

⁷⁰ For an example of such a relationship see Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17443, Vol. 10, 232, John and Nancy Blair to John Blair Junior, 29 December 1820, 334, John Junior and Elizabeth Blair and John Blair, 29 December 1820, 335, John Blair Junior and John Blair, 29 December 1820, 336, John and Nancy Blair to Simeon Blair, 29 December 1820, 339, Simeon and Jenny Blair and John Blair, 29 December 1820, and 340, Simeon Blair and John Blair, 29 December 1820.

Hannah Cutten for 323 pounds in 1822.⁷¹ Thomas and his wife Margaret eventually mortgaged all but 40 acres of this property for 172 pounds to M.P. Martin, a merchant, and Robert Noble Dickson McElhenny, a farmer, both of Londonderry.⁷² In the year following this mortgage Thomas died intestate and insolvent.

M.P. Martin and Dickson McElhenny foreclosed on Margaret in Chancery and later stated "that the amount of the proceeds of sale [of the land] was just sufficient to answer the Debt and Costs". In addition to the Londonderry creditors Thomas owed 452 pounds to 18 other individuals at the time of his death, thereby forcing the Colchester Court of Probate to order a "Public Auction be organized to try and meet the debts against the McElhenny estate". At the auction all of Thomas' personal property was to be sold including his stock, farming tools, and house furniture. The Court reserved only a bed, bedding, table, chairs, and kitchen ware "as Paraphinalia of the Widow of deceased". On March 13, 1838, John Crow, James Blair, and Samuel Archibald reported to the Governor's Council on the auction. They stated that "Ten Articles... were sold to the Widow of the Intestate and

⁷¹ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17444, Vol. 13, 107, David and Hannah Cutten to Thomas McElhenny, 28 November 1822. For an indication of Thomas McElhenny being from Londonderry, Nova Scotia, see Registry of Deeds, RG47, Reel 17450, Vol. 21, 328, Hiers of Thomas McElhenny to James Cleveland, 29 January 1845.

⁷² Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17447, Vol. 15B, 425, Thomas and Margaret McElhenny to M.P. Martin and Robert Noble Dickson McElhenny, 12 May 1835.

the prices which they brought [were] at least Fifty Pounds beneath their value". This was despite of the fact "that the sale was publicly advertized for three weeks before it took place and that it was attended by upwards of Forty Persons but that the Widow having bid for these articles other would not compete". The community clearly wished to help Margaret provide for herself and her children and thus refused to bid against her. Her purchases included stock for the most part, as she managed to reclaim a horse, a pair of oxen, a pair of steers, three cows, a heifer, a bull, two calves, eight sheep, two lambs, and two yearling pigs for 10 pounds. In total an estate which was estimated to be worth 95 pounds sold for 18 pounds and Thomas' remaining debt after the auction of roughly 400 pounds, was left to stand against 40 acres of real estate described as "being at present almost in the natural state".⁷³ This property was sold two years later for 66 pounds to John Moore.⁷⁴

Third generation Onslow Planters were closely linked by kinship ties, as the second generation had become highly integrated through marriage. Members of the township were also linked through an all encompassing web of debt which left few in Onslow unentangled. If debt could serve as a focal point for understanding the

⁷³ Halifax County Estate Papers, PANS, RG48, Vol. 416, Mcl52, estate of Thomas McElhenny, 1 May 1838.

⁷⁴ Registry of Deeds, PANS, RG47, Reel 17449, Vol. 19, 97, Administrators of Thomas McElhenny to John Moore, 22 June 1840.

community then land could act in the same manner for the family.

Land continued to be conveyed in Onslow through the same mechanisms employed by the earlier generation, but there was a change in their use. Deeds of gift basically became extinct. Deeds of sale at or below market value prices remained a popular way to convey land, however fewer of these deeds of sale had associated bonds for the maintenance of parents in old age.⁷⁵ It would seem that the substantial amounts of money received from sales of land to sons and the increased number of wills making provisions for widows were serving purpose of bonds in the previous generation.

Second generation fathers either lacked the amount of land necessary or refused to settle all their sons; increasingly one or more sons received no land at all from their father. There was a marked increase in the number of wills conveying large portions of real estate. This may be partly explained by a better survival rate of newer records, but it also seems to indicate that fathers were hanging on to land until death. These wills commonly left land under the control of the widow for the duration of her life and occasionally made it her responsibility to divide the real estate among the children. While daughters continued to receive sums of money and stock in wills, real estate conveyed to them or

⁷⁵ Of the 34 estates second generation estates traced, 2 included bonds between fathers and sons.

their husbands via fathers became uncommon.

The history of Onslow's families and community is a story of adaptation by the township's inhabitants to the gradually changing context in which they lived their lives. While there was continuity in the way first and second generation father's conveyed land to their sons, there was also change. Second generation fathers may well have wished that they had the ability to root all of their children in the community's soil but the reality of the landscape's limited carrying capacity forced them to make difficult decisions.

There had been little discernable difference in the way Onslow's settling groups initiated life in the township. they all appear to have approached and conveyed land in a similar manner. The second generation of these groups became highly integrated through marriage, making land use distinctions between groups meaningless. By the time settlers' grandchildren had come into adulthood, three generations of partible inheritance had brought on disintegration within the community. Increasingly men and women of the third generation would have to make their lives beyond the confines of Onslow's, and in some cases Nova Scotia's, landscape.

Conclusions

If actions truly speak louder than words, perhaps it is fortunate that Onslow's early inhabitants left little evidence about their lives in the form of letters or diaries and that the community as a whole has few remaining township meeting records. Regrettable as these realities may be in some contexts, the shortage of these forms of evidence involving family and community interaction does force historians to look at another category of records - deeds and probate - which portray actions as opposed to thoughts alone. The records surrounding the conveyance of land in Onslow provide a window on the interrelationship between the community and its families.

Onslow, like other Nova Scotian townships, was an eddy in the stream of migrating Planters, drawing in a variety of persons of different backgrounds, all of whom shared the common objective of obtaining free land. Onslow's land attracted its largest group of settlers from Massachusetts. This group was composed of settlers representing two origins, the descendants of older New England families, and the more recently arrived Scots-Irish. These Scots-Irish were either directly from the British Isles or American-born. Joining the Massachusetts settlers in Onslow were three earlier residents of Nova Scotia, two of whom - Staples and Elliott - had arrived at Halifax with the

Cornwallis fleet in 1749. Onslow also received Scots-Irish immigrants directly from northern Ireland as a result of the efforts of land agent Alexander McNutt. The stay in Nova Scotia for many of Onslow's New Englanders was short-lived and their replacements in the township included another set of immigrants from the British Isles arriving in the early 1770s. The influx of these new arrivals served to increase land prices in Onslow which until this point appear to have remained low. Onslow quickly became an amalgamation of New Englanders, Scots-Irish, and British, leaving whatever inclination the New England population may have had for an exclusive community irreconcilable with the Nova Scotian environment.

Onslow, like much of Nova Scotia, was settled by families. Unlike many North American frontiers of European settlement, Nova Scotia did not in this period attract a large population of single males to exploit a resource frontier of fur, fish, and timber. Instead, it was settled by successive waves of pre-industrial families, who by a combination of subsistence production and commercial exchange sought to better their material condition. Onslow's families appear to have been composed of young married couples of child-rearing age when they arrived in Nova Scotia. A number of genealogies indicate that at least several of Onslow's young couples brought children with them to the colony.

From the early stages of settlement British authorities seem to have found Onslow residents difficult to control. Instead of taking up the house lots in the villages planned by Charles Morris, settlers chose the spaces on Onslow's landscape that best suited their purposes. General farming was better served by a system of consolidated landholdings as opposed to a nucleated village with the checker board parcelling of land common to the open-field style of settlement. Many grantees appear to have favoured the fertile marsh and intervals at the mouth and along the banks of the North River, and built their houses and barns close to this valuable farm land.

While Onslow Planters, inhabiting dispersed farms and interested in obtaining consolidated, freely held land, were perhaps placing a priority on the interrelationship of families as opposed to the interaction of community, this in no way means that the "community" of Onslow was non-functioning. Historian Joseph Wood argues that a well-bounded corporate space, inhabited by people who sensed that they composed a distinct community, was enough to provide the order and cohesion long attributed to nucleated settlement.¹

In 1769 Onslow was given its effective grant in which each grantee held at least 250 acres, or a half share, while some held up to 1000 acres. These large holdings went far

¹ Wood 167.

beyond the amount of land an individual farmer could hope to put under cultivation. This land could be used for speculation and collateral, or it could also be used "to root families, through many generations, firmly in the soil of the township". By 1769 Onslow fathers already held an important legacy for their children's future. Not only had the first generation been successful in gaining large quantities of land in their own names but also in the names of adult and minor sons, thus helping to secure the future for many in the second generation.

The order and cohesion of Onslow's community would be tested by the American Revolution, which at different times brought both American privateers and British troops to the township. The Revolution also brought a good measure of tension to the community as the passage of the Militia Act in 1775 was resented by Onslow residents. Hatred of the Act was revealed in the evidence given for Charles Dickson's trial on charges of treason and Onslow's refusal to take the Oath of Allegiance.

Dickson's trial also indicates that there was a small group of openly rebellious settlers living in Onslow. During the Revolution, residents Lamb, Bradford, Gay, and Brooks all found their way to Massachusetts where they were eventually granted land in Ohio as refugees of the American Revolution. The Revolution had a different effect on Onslow

* Moody 170.

from that it had on some other Nova Scotian townships. The Revolution in Onslow was important for the people it forced to leave as refugees, as opposed to those it forced to come as United Empire Loyalists. The increased demand for land which accompanied the Loyalist migration north to some Nova Scotian townships was not experienced in Onslow. As was the case with much of Nova Scotia, Onslow's land prices perhaps under-went some inflation as a result of the incoming Loyalists but nothing like the skyrocketing cost of land documented in some townships.

As for familial relationships, a low monetary value of labour and inflated prices made Onslow sons very dependent on their fathers for land, although this dependence does not seem to have been exploited by fathers. On the contrary, first generation fathers acted more as benefactors than patriarchs. Fathers used a variety of methods to pass land to the second generation of their families. While deeds of gift and deeds of sale for minimal sums of money were present among these conveyances, few examples of these transactions were found. The most common way for Onslow fathers to transfer land to their sons was by deed of sale at, or slightly below, what the roughly 1200 deeds studied for this research would indicate to be market value prices. Of the first generation estates traced, 54 percent used deeds of sale to pass land on to the next generation of their families, and 25 percent of estate conveyances

included a written bond from a son promising certain tasks would be preformed by him for the father in return for land.

Some Onslow fathers attempted to provide for their daughters' future wellbeing through land transactions with sons-in-law, while others made provisions regarding daughters in wills. Daughters commonly received a small sum of money, to be paid out of the estate, or some livestock. In at least one case a first generation widow was given a fair degree of power over her deceased husbands estate. However other widows had only their security in old age provided for.

Onslow's second generation had become highly integrated through marriage leaving the third generation closely linked by kinship ties. Members of the township were also linked through an all encompassing web of debt which left few in Onslow unentangled. The exchange of personal notes bound members of the community together in numerous chains of interconnecting debts. While debt could serve as a focal point for understanding the community, land could act in the same manner for the family. Just as the exchange of notes created and maintained relationships of obligation between Onslow residents, the conveyance of land created similar relationships within Onslow families. Bonds for land included arrangements for sons to provide and care for their parents. In cases where sons purchased land from fathers, the asking price was at times paid over an extended period

thus entailing a term of monetary responsibility between sons and fathers.

The conveyance of land from the second to the third generation was in many ways similar to that by the previous generation, although there were significant differences. While a few Onslow fathers still conveyed land to sons at a fairly young age by deed of gift or deed of sale for a minimal sum of money, these methods of transferring land go from rare to almost nonexistent. Also rare are examples of land being made available to sons-in-law. Second generation Onslow fathers maintained a pattern of conveying the main portions of their land at or slightly under market value prices, less often with conditions attached. Only 6 percent of second generation estates traced included bonds between fathers and sons. There was a large increase in the number of fathers who held on to significant amounts of land until their deaths. While inheritance for the most part remained partible, a substantial minority of third generation sons received little or no land. Many of these changes in land conveyance appear to be linked to a growing scarcity of good farmland due to an increasing population committed to partible inheritance.

The increase in the number of fathers remaining in possession of significant amounts of real estate until death held important implications for widows. Instead of conveying land by deeds and having his and his wife's

security in old age insured with a bond, a second generation father tended to hang on to a portion of his land until after his, and his spouse's, death. It was not uncommon for Onslow's second generation widows to be willed all of their spouses' remaining real and personal estate for the term of their lives. Some widows were also bequeathed the task of dividing this property among their children. Thus an increased number of widows were left independent of their children and in some cases with a fair degree of power over them. Unlike second generation daughters, third generation daughters and their families did not benefit from land conveyances to sons-in-law. They did, however, continue to be left sums of money and livestock.

Land functioned on many different levels in Onslow; it defined the community, at times acted as a commodity of exchange, and was important to status. By the way settlers interacted with it, land also functioned as an indicator of cultural origins. The dispersed, consolidated farms that settlers created on Onslow's landscape fitted well into a mid-eighteenth century New England context. By this time in New England, dispersed farming settlements had become the norm, as consolidated land holding appears to have been the most practical method of ownership for the purpose of general farming. Despite living at arm's length from each other, Onslow residents still saw themselves to be members of a community and acted cohesively in response to issues

which affected them as a whole.

Cohesive action in Onslow can be seen with its protest of the much despised Militia Act of 1775. On a petition dated January 3, 1776, the vast majority of Onslow's heads of household argued that the Act seemed in "every way Calculated to Distress this Unhappy Province and is by no Means the Sense of the People in General".¹ During Charles Dickson's trial for treason, John Cole and Peley Card, the joint masters of the Hairwind, reported that the people of Onslow upbraided them both "for taking the Enrolment Oath of the Volunteer Militia".² The community continued to protest the Act in 1777, and when the Governor sent two magistrates to Onslow to administer the Oath of Allegiance, 38 members of the community either refused to swear the oath or asked to be excused from swearing it under what council termed "frivolous pretenses".³ While Onslow, along with neighbouring townships, was obliged to comply with the demands of Halifax and sent a "party of militia" to help repair fortifications in the British stronghold, Onslow residents had clearly seen themselves as members of a community whose common interest was not being served by the Militia Act.

¹ Quoted in Mary Ellen Wright 31.

² The Deposition of Peley Card, PANS, Court Records, RG 1, Vol. 342, No. 76, 7 November 1776.

³ Court Records, PANS, RG1, Vol. 342, 47, "Oaths of Allegiance, Onslow Refusals", 5 May 1777.

In the early nineteenth century the community would once again raise its common voice. At a public auction organized to try and meet the debts against the deceased Thomas McElhenny's estate, "upwards of Forty Persons" refused to bid against McElhenny's widow Margaret. Margaret, who otherwise would have been left destitute, was able to buy most of the estate's stock for only 10 pounds. In total an estate which was estimated to be worth 95 pounds sold for 18 pounds. The community had acted to help the widow McElhenny provide for herself and her children, regardless what the law said.

Recognising themselves as being part of a community and acting cohesively were not the only forces binding Onslow residents together. From early in the township's history a web of debt started to be spun between members of the community. With time the web became almost all encompassing, leaving few unentangled. Supportive with this argument are the remaining estate papers for Onslow. These records are littered with personal notes due to and owed by township residents.

While land could operate on many different levels within the community, so too could it function within the family. In modern terms, land provided Onslow families with subsistence, a saleable product, a commodity of exchange,

¹ Halifax County Estate Papers, PANS, RG48, Vol. 416, Mc152, estate of Thomas McElhenny, 1 May 1838.

collateral for performance bonds and mortgages, old age security, and trust funds for children. What fathers, and sometimes mothers, did with their land was of important consequence to the futures of their families. The single most common way for first and second generation fathers to convey land to their sons was by selling it at close to market value prices. The popularity of inheritance buying in Onslow comes as no surprise given the New England and northern Ireland origins of most of the township's settlers. This method of land transfer within families was common to both areas. At first glance it may seem rather odd that a son would pay for what would ultimately be his anyway. Perhaps more than anything else however, inheritance buying represents the firm belief on the part of both parties involved that a father and son should obtain some measure of autonomy from each other during their lifetimes. It is conceivable that this desired autonomy caused an increased number of second generation fathers to stop making bonds with their sons and maintain substantial amounts of real estate until their death.

Contrary to autonomy was the generational dependence that was faced by Onslow families. Parents were depended on children for maintenance and care in their old age, and children depended on parents for the land necessary to secure a livelihood. In recognition of this co-dependence, bonds were made between fathers and sons. These bonds do

not symbolize a controlling nature among Onslow fathers so much as they represent complex business arrangements which regulated the exchange of land for old age security.

While inheritance buying was common to both first to second generation conveyances and second to third generation conveyances, the range of family members receiving land became more limited. First generation fathers transferred land to almost all their sons and some of their sons-in-law. Second generation fathers transferred land almost exclusively to their sons. Not only were daughters' families no longer being given land through their husbands, but in many families one or more sons were being conveyed no land whatsoever. Partible inheritance and the township's finite amount of farmland had joined hands to force some members of the third generation to seek opportunities outside of Onslow. If the Blair family is representative of other fourth generation Onslow families, the rate of disintegration that the community was enduring would only increase with coming years. It may be constructive to view the omission of sons from receiving land as a coping mechanism similar to the one which had forced Massachusetts settlers to move to Onslow in the 1760s. In this light, first generation fathers' ability to make land available to a large number of family members was an aberration, made possible by large land grants, as opposed to the norm.

Throughout Onslow's first 70 years there were instances

in which the good intentions fathers had for their wives and children were altered by unforeseen events. An unexpected death could leave an estate intestate and insolvent. The responsibility expected from a bonded estate occasionally fell on the shoulders of heirs, leaving them to fulfill promises made by their fathers before receiving an inheritance. Diverging interests in a deceased family member's remaining property could tear a family apart. It is perhaps the cases of misfortune which best display how complex and emotionally charged the issue of property conveyance was in early Onslow. Central to these disputes was land, as it often provided the only object of any real value in many estates. While parents may have wished to "prevent confusion dispute litigation and quarrelling" among their children, this desire did not always become a reality.'

The records surrounding land transactions provide a window on eighteenth - and nineteenth - century Onslow's community and families. The simple fact that these records can be used to reflect the experiences of the first three generations of Onslow Planters is perhaps the clearest statement one need make regarding the key role land played in their lives.

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