

Social Studies 10

Unit 1 Readings

Geography of Canada

Pages 1-15

The Physical Geography of the West

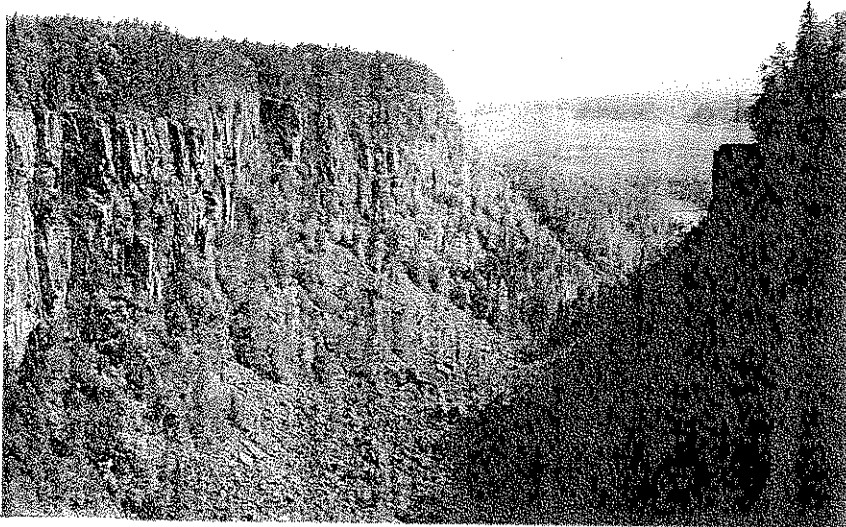
Three major landform regions, each running north-south, dominate the physical geography of western North America. These regions are the Canadian Shield, the Great Plains (or Western Interior Lowlands) and the Western Mountains (or Western Cordillera). Each has its own kind of climate, vegetation and animal life.

The Canadian Shield

The Canadian Shield is made up of ancient weathered rock formations surrounding Hudson Bay. These rock formations are among the oldest and hardest in the world. They are all that is left of a mountain range created several hundred million years ago. Over countless centuries, glaciers and rivers gradually eroded the mountains, leaving a generally flat and rocky landscape. The rivers and lakes that mark this landscape create a vast network of water transportation routes. The Native peoples and early explorers of Canada's West used these routes extensively.

The cool and rocky landscape of the Canadian Shield, with its many wet areas, has very little fertile soil. Much of the area is still covered by forests of coniferous trees, just as it was several centuries ago. Smaller trees, shrubs, and other hardy forms of vegetation create a sparse cover on the forest floor amid the fairly widely spaced trees. Wild rice, rushes and other plants grow alongside the lakes and marshes of the region.

When Europeans first visited the region, the forests and waters were home to a wide variety of birds and animals. Among them were many valuable species of fur-bearing mammals: beaver, musk-



Bare, exposed rock and many lakes and swamps tell of the force that gave this land its appearance—glaciation.

rat, otter, mink and fox. Most of the Native people of the region were hunters and trappers. They lived in small, nomadic bands, following the seasonal migrations of the animals.

Beneath the Canadian Shield lie many rich deposits of minerals such as nickel, iron, copper and uranium. These resources have only become known and used since the late nineteenth century, as the Native peoples of this region had no metal-working technologies.

The Great Plains

The Great Plains are usually called "the Prairies" by Canadians. This vast expanse of low, flat or rolling land extends from the sub-Arctic in the north to the coast of the Gulf of Mexico in the south. Millions of years ago it was covered by an ocean lying between the Western Mountains and the Canadian Shield and the Appalachian Mountains to the east. Erosional deposits from these three mountain systems gradually covered the floor of this ancient sea. Geological forces slowly produced a gradual rising of the entire region. The region rose most sharply in the West as the Rocky Mountains were formed. The Great Plains slope gently eastward toward Hudson Bay, the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River.

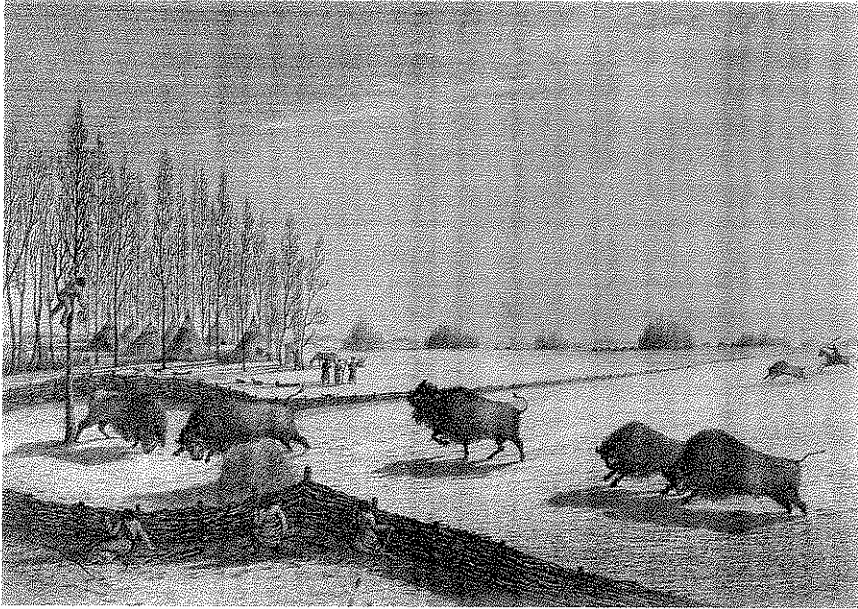
The Great Plains also fall away to the north and south from the centre of the continent. Two great river systems, the Mackenzie in the north and the Mississippi in the south, drain the region. These

slow-moving rivers follow wide, meandering watercourses through the soft, sedimentary deposits of the plains on their way to the sea. Beneath the surface of the Great Plains lie vast reserves of coal, oil and natural gas. At the surface, the sedimentary deposits easily form rich, fertile soils.

When the first Europeans reached the Great Plains, the region was covered by prairie grasslands. Stands of deciduous trees such as aspens were also present along the rivers and lakes of the southern plains. Coniferous forests were found in the northern part of the region.

Some scientists believe that these forests were the true natural vegetation of this region. They think that the great grasslands seen by early European visitors were the result of human activity in the region. Native hunters, they suggest, may have used fire to drive deer, bison and other game from the forests and into pounds where they could be easily killed. This method of hunting may have cleared the forests and left vast expanses of fast-growing tough prairie grass in their place.

When the first non-Native explorers reached the Great Plains, the grasslands were home to many species of animals. Among them, the most important by far was the bison. Three centuries ago, the nearly 2 million km² of rolling hills and grasslands that make up the Great Plains were home to millions of these large, brown shaggy beasts.



The Native peoples built "bun-falo pounds" to trap the bison that roamed the Great Plains. How were the pounds used?

The bison was a very valuable resource to the Native peoples of the Great Plains. Hunting on foot and using stone-age technology, the Native peoples could kill only small numbers of bison. To feed themselves, they also hunted other animals, among them elk, deer, antelope and rabbits, and gathered berries, roots and wild rice.

Some of the early Native groups of the Great Plains grew crops of corn, sunflowers, squash and beans in the rich prairie soils. Ironically, the introduction of horses and guns to the region through contacts with Europeans led many Native peoples to abandon farming to hunt bison for food. These innovations, combined with farm settlement after the coming of the railway, would quickly lead to the near extinction of the bison.

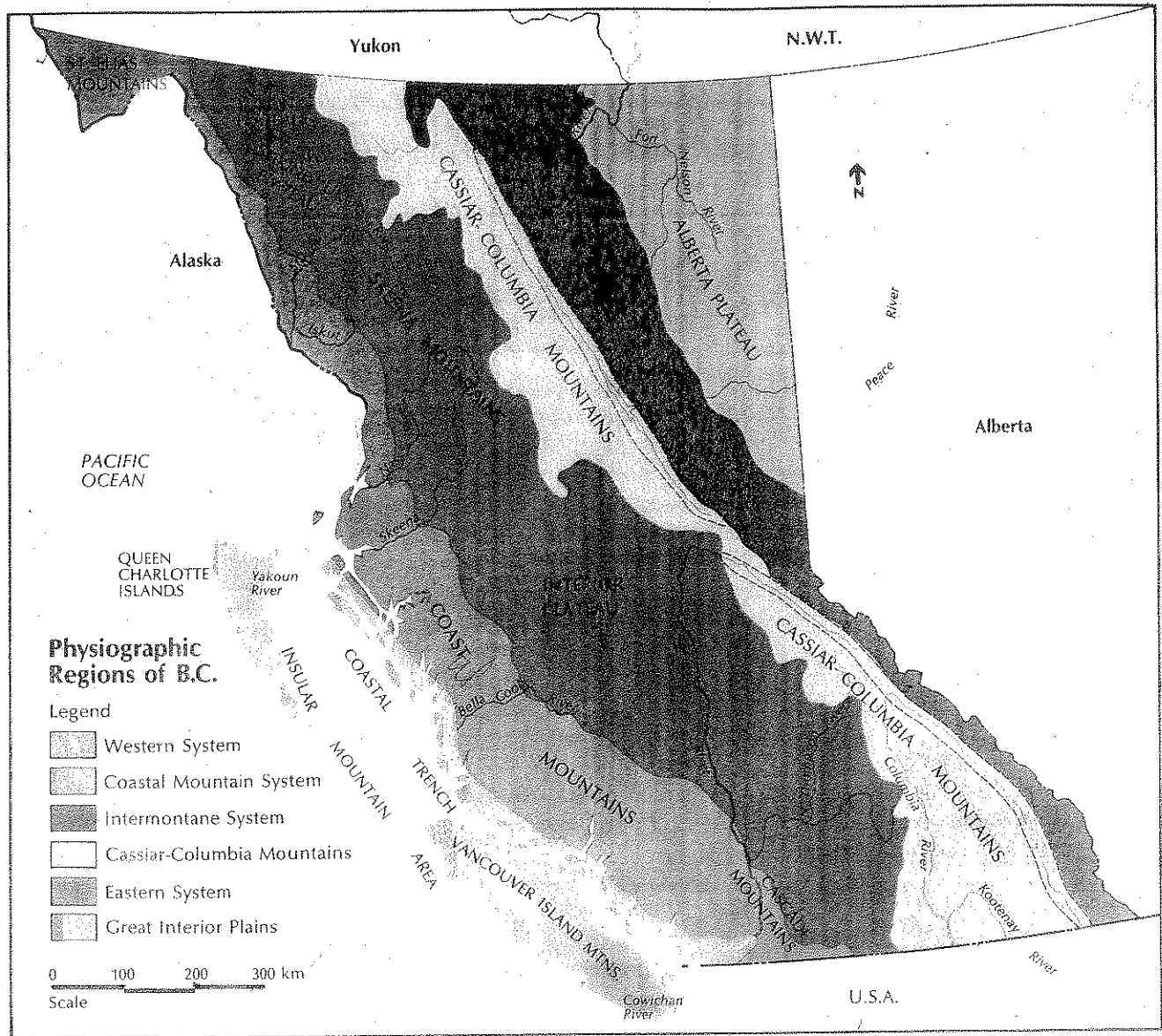
Today, the great expanses of prairie grass that once covered the Great Plains are almost completely gone. Human activity is again the cause. In order to farm the region it had to be stripped of its natural vegetation so the soil beneath could be ploughed and planted with crops such as wheat.

The Western Mountains

Western Mountains are made up of a number of mountain chains running north-south from Alaska to the Isthmus of Panama. Among them are the Rocky Mountains, the Coastal Mountains, the

Mountains and valleys are the dominant features of the Western Mountain region. Less rugged plateaus fill in areas between mountain chains.

Cascade Mountains and the Sierra Nevada and Sierra Madre ranges. The mountains of the Western Cordillera are relatively young, in terms of geological time, having been pushed up between 60 million and 30 million years ago. Many of the western mountain ranges are made up of high, rugged peaks which have not yet been reduced and rounded by erosion.



Mountains are not the only prominent landforms of this region. Lying between the mountain chains are a series of plateaus and valleys. Plateaus are upland areas of relatively flat land, while valleys are troughs cut by rivers or glaciers. Valleys formed by rivers flowing out to the sea between mountain chains may be accompanied by broad and fertile floodplains. Rivers flowing through sedimentary rock may carve deep and sharply defined canyons. The Fraser River Canyon, in the southern part of British Columbia's interior plateau, is an example of this geological process.

Rivers are an important feature of this region. The heavy moisture that falls as snow or rain on the western slopes of the Coastal Mountains feeds many fast-flowing streams and rivers. Among the great rivers that flow from the Western Mountains to the Pacific Ocean are the Yukon, the Stikine, the Skeena, the Fraser, the Columbia and the Sacramento.

Not all of the rivers of the Western Mountains flow into the Pacific. Some, such as the Peace and the Parsnip, flow north and east to join the Mackenzie on its way to the Arctic Ocean. Others flow eastward from the Rocky Mountains, some to join the rivers of the Great Plains that form the great Mississippi River system, emptying into the Gulf of Mexico. Other eastward-flowing rivers, such as the North and South Saskatchewan, eventually drain into Hudson Bay. Still other rivers, such as the Colorado, follow routes along the

intermontane plateaus, carrying meltwaters from the mountains south through desert landscapes to the Gulf of California.

These rivers and their valleys were important transportation routes for the Native peoples of this region. Later, fur traders and explorers would use them. As non-Native settlement of the West progressed, rail lines and highways would follow the river routes through the mountains.

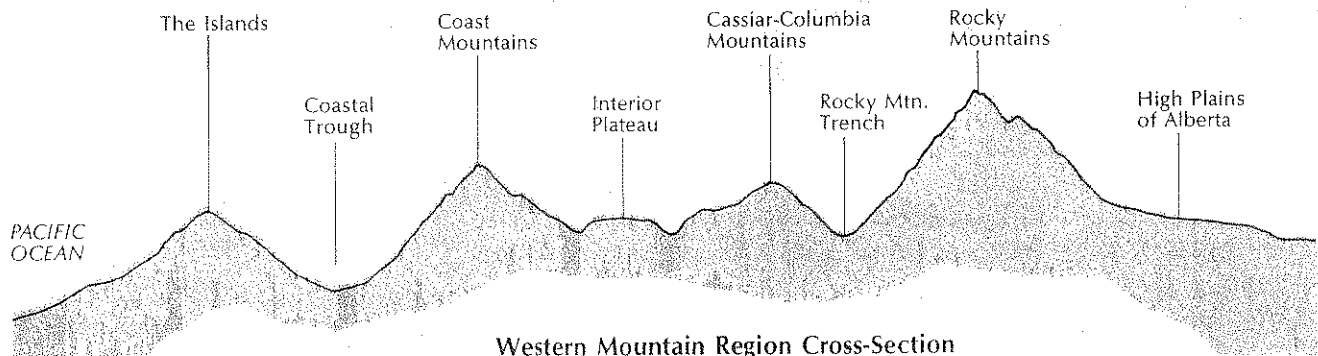
The rain-fed rivers that flow from the Western Mountains to the Pacific Ocean are home to several species of salmon and sea-run trout. Once present in uncountable millions, these fish were the major source of food for a large Native population when this region was first visited by European explorers.

The rain falling along the coast also nourishes the great forests of coniferous trees. Towering Douglas firs, red cedars, spruce and hemlock once crowded the mountain slopes in vast forest stands running right to the ocean's edge. Early European visitors were awed by the sight of these great trees rising 100 m or more above the forest floor. Red cedar was especially important to the Native peoples along the Pacific. They used its wood to build great longhouses and large ocean-going dugout canoes.

The forests and coastal margins were home to a wide variety of land and sea animals, including many species of waterfowl and shellfish. Native peoples obtained food from both the sea and the forests. They hunted deer, elk and mountain goat for food and skins. They also hunted and trapped the fur-bearing animals in this region, including beaver, marten, sea otters and seals.

The intermontane plateaus differ greatly from the surrounding mountains. Generally much drier than the mountains, the plateaus tend to support different species of plants and animals. East of the coastal mountains, the interior plateau of the southern third of the

A cross-section of the Western Cordillera.



Western Mountain Region Cross-Section

province of British Columbia is largely covered by grassland and thin forests of small coniferous trees. Near water sources, larger trees and thicker plant cover are found. Willows, rushes, edible roots and berries found near these water bodies were important resources to Native peoples of the plateau lands. They used these foods to supplement the meat they obtained by hunting: deer, elk, mountain goats, rabbits, gophers, and fowl.

When European explorers first reached the Western Mountain region, they found large numbers of Native peoples, most of whom made their home along the Pacific coast, in the river valleys or on the intermontane plateaus. Within this region, several distinctive Native cultures evolved. To a large extent, this diversity reflected the ways each group had adapted to or made use of the differing environments of the region.

1. For each of the three physical regions of the West, list the following key information: geological beginning, present-day landscape, vegetation.
2. In each of the three regions, what resources of the local environment were used by the Native peoples?

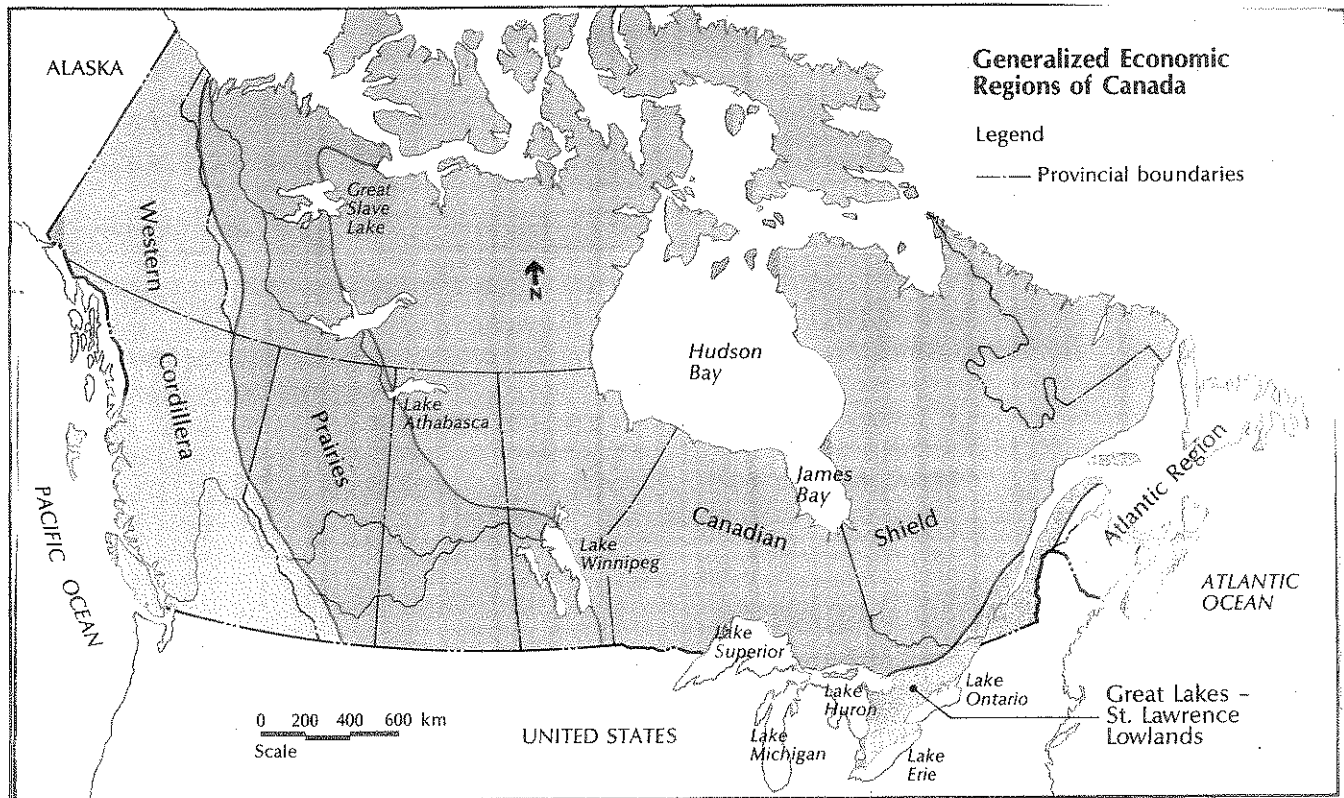
Summary

Spaniards were the first people to map and explore western North America, followed by French fur traders as well as by representatives of the Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company. The chief motive of all these explorers was to search for natural resources and transportation routes.

In terms of physical geography, the three main regions of the West are the Canadian Shield, the Great Plains and the Western Mountains.

A mountainous region millions of years ago, the Shield is today a rocky area with little fertile soil. Its main attraction, both to Native peoples and to Europeans, was fur-bearing animals.

The Great Plains, formed from the bed of an ancient ocean, are rich in natural fuels and fertile soil. Grasslands covered the region when the first Europeans arrived. Yet some historians feel that the coniferous trees of the northern Prairies were once the natural vegetation of this entire region. Of all the animals of the region, the bison was the most important to its Native peoples.



Places which share economic features can be grouped together to form an economic region. Can you suggest one or two industries found in each of the economic regions shown?

references to such subregions, but the emphasis will be upon five broad regions: the Atlantic, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Lowlands, the Canadian Shield, the Prairies, and the Western Cordillera.

The Atlantic Region

In 1497, John Cabot and a crew of eighteen men sailed from England for the shores of North America. This voyage marks the beginning of the non-Native portion of Canadian economic history. Cabot took back news of seas teeming with fish, which prompted further English voyages to the New World. Yearly fishing expeditions to the coastal areas of what are today Newfoundland and Nova Scotia began almost immediately. French as well as Portuguese ships also began to search for fish in the rich coastal waters over the Grand Banks and other shallow water "bank" areas.

With their plentiful supplies of salt, the French and Portuguese fishermen used this method to preserve the fish. The fishermen

caught the fish and then stored them in barrels of heavily salted water, or "brine." This method, called the "green" or "wet" fishery, meant that ships did not have to land. Therefore, no French settlements occurred along the coasts at this time.

The British, with poor supplies of salt, had a different method for fish preservation. The fish were caught, brought ashore, cut open and allowed to dry on drying racks or "flakes." The warm summer sun and winds soon dried the fish so that they could be shipped long distances, even to tropical areas, without spoiling. This "dry" method required the fishermen to land and establish some sort of permanent base on the coast. In 1610, the English began a winter settlement on the shores of Conception Bay in Newfoundland, close to the fishing grounds.

Codfish provided the staple diet for the British navy and for all ships' crews sailing to hot climates. Several towns in England depended on profits from the fisheries. While much of the fish caught by British fishermen was used to feed the population of Britain, other markets were developed as well. Some of these markets were in the colonies which Britain had established in the West Indies. Cheap food in the form of dried fish was exported to these colonies to feed the slaves who produced tobacco, fruit and sugar for Britain. The sale of fish to Spain provided gold and silver for Britain.

As demand for North Atlantic cod grew, more and more ships sailed to Newfoundland to catch fish for sale in Spanish and other markets. These ships sailed to the New World without a cargo. It was not long before the ship owners were looking for settlers they could carry to the new lands. Even so, estimates put the population of Newfoundland at fewer than 2000 by 1650.

In other parts of the Atlantic region, the climate and physical conditions were less harsh than in Newfoundland. Here, the population grew a little more rapidly. Land was more easily farmed, even if forests had to be cleared to make farmland. The felled trees, viewed as a nuisance by the struggling farmers, were usually burned. The earliest Maritime farmers were the Acadians who grew peas and wheat in the fertile marshes around the Bay of Fundy. Three decades after the 1755 Expulsion of the Acadians by British Forces, the Maritimes saw the arrival of Loyalists. Many of the Loyalists took up farming, both around the Bay of Fundy and in inland areas.

In the early nineteenth century, the agricultural development of the Atlantic region was hampered by competition from the United

States. Nova Scotian farmers did raise livestock and dairy products because these products were costly to transport from the United States. They avoided growing wheat, as the Acadians had done, because it was now cheaper to get it from the United States. As well, a lack of population and good roads in the Atlantic region meant that transport and markets for farm products were limited. Investment money and business interests were focussed on overseas trade rather than on local agriculture. The farmers had little incentive to produce a surplus over and above their own requirements. In the 1830s, however, Prince Edward Island began to export some wheat to Britain. At about the same time, Prince Edward Island farmers began to harvest crops of potatoes.

The timber of the Atlantic region was eventually to become important as an export product. By the early 1800s, England's forests had become largely depleted. A French naval blockade of Britain during the French Revolutionary Wars cut the British off from their foreign sources of lumber in Scandinavia and Northern Europe. Thus, Britain had turned to the lumber from Canada's forests. In the hills of central New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, an economic region based on lumber began to take shape. At first, the pine forests of Nova Scotia provided the Halifax dockyard with masts to repair the naval ships of Britain damaged in conflicts or in storms. Soon, the dockyards in England relied on New Brunswick for pine masts.

By mid-century, the Port of Saint John had developed its own shipbuilding industry, and had become one of the largest building centres in the world. But the transition from wooden clipper ships to iron steamships by the 1890s, effectively ended the Maritime shipbuilding industry.

In later years, the forests of the Atlantic region were used for purposes other than shipbuilding. In central Newfoundland and New Brunswick, pulp and paper mills were built to produce newsprint for the large newspapers of British, American and Canadian cities. Their locations were based on the abundant forests and on hydro power sites that could be developed easily. The plants were located where rivers emptied into lakes, or into the Atlantic. Such locations allowed for cheap water transportation. The economic subregions based on pulp and paper exist today, little changed over the last fifty or sixty years. For example, the Abitibi-Price pulp mill in Grand Falls, Newfoundland, and the New Brunswick International Paper Company newsprint mill at Dalhousie, New Brunswick, are still vital to their respective communities.

Sawmills and fish processing plants are two activities that still flourish in the Atlantic region. Their locations are related to their source of the raw materials. The numbers and sizes of the processing plants have varied since the turn of the century. Many smaller sawmills have closed because of an inability to compete, a lack of demand for lumber or a lack of quality wood.

In the nineteenth century, some mining of coal began on Nova Scotia's Cape Breton Island to supply local steam engines. By the time of Confederation, Cape Breton coal miners were producing two-thirds of all coal mined in Canada. A small manufacturing subregion developed on Cape Breton Island around Sydney. It was based on the manufacture of iron and steel, using furnaces fuelled by coal. The major advantages for location here were the local supply of coal and cheap transport of iron ore across the 150 km stretch of the Cabot Strait from Newfoundland.

Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Lowlands

When Samuel de Champlain arrived at the site of present-day Quebec City in 1608, he met groups of Algonquian Natives, such as the Montagnais. These tribes, plus the Hurons of the Great Lakes area, soon proved useful to the French. They provided the furs—especially beaver—that brought high prices back in France, where beaver hats had become the fashion. Here was the beginning of a second economic region, one based on the fur trade. The French fur traders were able to procure large quantities of beaver pelts through their contact with the skilled Indian trappers and hunters. The French influence spread along the St. Lawrence and up the Ottawa and Saguenay rivers as the search for high quality furs expanded.

A trading system in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region, with its base in Quebec City, was firmly established by 1623. The Huron Indians, who were semi-agricultural, supplied northern tribes with

food and European goods which they had received in exchange for furs traded to the French. This system was an obvious advantage to the French, as it cut their travel time and costs and therefore increased their profit in the markets of Europe.

In order to make the fur trade still more efficient, the French formed trading companies. These companies were more organized and productive than individuals or small groups trading on their own. The French government awarded control of the fur trade to these companies on the condition that they bring settlers from France. Generally, this settlement was not effectively carried out. Many of the men who came to New France were reluctant to work as farmers. They preferred to lead the life of *coureur-de-bois* ("runners of the woods"), travelling the forests and waterways in search of furs.

The few agricultural settlements that did get started were not very successful. When Champlain died in 1635, there were fewer than twenty-five actual settlers at Quebec; thirty years later, there were only 2500 settlers in all of New France. (This figure was less than 1 percent of the population of the British colonies to the south.) Those who were farming only produced goods for themselves, or for the few people in the settlements. By 1663, the economic situation of New France had become so difficult that the French government took direct control of the colony out of the hands of the companies. Over the next decade, increased immigration, directly sponsored by the government of France, enlarged the tiny population along the St. Lawrence to about 7000. Small farming settlements began to grow up along the banks of the river, yet furs remained the economic staple of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region in the era of New France. By the middle of the eighteenth century, fur trading still accounted for about 70 percent of New France's exports.

By the time of the British Conquest in 1759 (see page 3), New France had a population of about 60 000. British settlers began moving into the area, especially Loyalists fleeing the rebellion in the United States. While the French had burned the forests to clear the land, the British saw a commercial value in the forest. A shortage of English oak—an important timber in the construction of ships—caused the British to search for new supplies in their colonies. In the early years of the nineteenth century the British naval timber trade began to shift to Quebec, obtaining pine for masts and oak for the hulls and planking. The navy could obtain all the timber it needed from the St. Lawrence Lowlands, but the price was high due to high

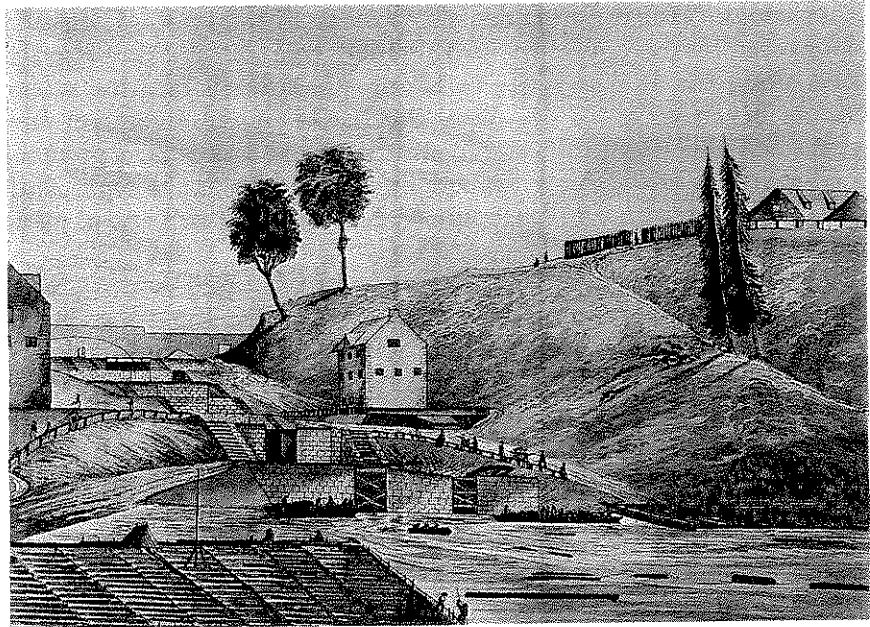
transportation costs. In order to assure Canadian companies of a reasonable profit from this industry, Britain placed high import taxes on timber coming in from Scandinavia and other countries. Thus, for the British, Canadian timber became cheaper than other sources, and the Canadian timber industry flourished.

It was not long until the Ottawa Valley had a booming lumber industry. Trees were cut, rafted down the river and shipped to England. The cutting of "square timber" for export to Britain tended to be wasteful. First of all, only the best trees were cut; then these trees had their four sides made flat by a broad axe, so the timber would pack tightly.

The centres of lumbering moved steadily inland. By 1820, rafts were coming down the St. Lawrence River from the eastern end of Lake Ontario. But, by 1840, lumber was arriving in Quebec from the Lake Huron area.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, lumber was the main Canadian export. The forests of the St. Lawrence Valley, the Ottawa Valley and the Great Lakes Lowlands were the main sources of the timber. Agriculture quickly followed lumbering, with the lands cleared of timber used for farming. Quebec agriculture shifted from wheat-growing, for which the local soils were not especially suitable, to dairying and stock-raising, meeting the needs of the growing

This painting shows the entrance to the Rideau Canal at Bytown in 1839. Notice the rafts of square timbers. This was the most efficient way of transporting the timber to the Port at Quebec City.



communities. In Ontario, different areas of the province developed their own specializations: orchard farming in the Niagara area, tobacco in the southwestern end of the province.

The mineral resources of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region were also developed to some extent during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Iron was first made in Canada by the Forges St. Maurice, near Trois Rivières, Quebec, in 1733. In 1822, the Marmora Ironworks, near Peterborough, Ontario, began operating. It was, at that time, one of the most technologically advanced ironworks in North America. In both places, the iron was processed from local sources of ore.

The development of manufacturing in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Lowlands was greatly influenced by the region's geographical position. The late nineteenth century saw the concentration of manufacturing and capital in the northeastern part of the United States. It was inevitable that the Canadian businesses in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Lowlands, closest to this centre of American activity, should benefit from the new inventions, the easy movement of people and ideas, and the capital. The other regions of Canada were not able to take the same advantage of this growth because they were not as well endowed with population, rail and water connections linking the centres of population, available capital for investment, or sources of energy.

Manufacturing plants using raw materials from local primary industries produced iron and steel ingots, sawn lumber, pulp and paper, packaged fish, milled flour, beer and other alcoholic beverages. Hamilton, Ontario, became the early centre of heavy manufacturing because of its protected harbor and its location, roughly midway between iron ore from the Lake Superior region and coal from Pennsylvania.

As the United States developed into the world's foremost industrial and financial economy, American businesses began to influence the Canadian economy. Troubled by this outside presence, the

Canadian government erected tariff barriers to protect young Canadian manufacturing industries against competition from products manufactured in the United States. To get around these tariffs, American companies established "branch-plant" operations in Canada to manufacture goods locally, using Canadian labor. The automobile, paper, chemicals and electrical products industries in Canada were (and are) almost all branch plants. These operations were set up mostly in southern Ontario and southern Quebec. Here there was hydro power, an efficient modern transportation system, and productive agriculture already in place. There were few barriers to the growth of these branch plants.

The extent of American involvement in the Canadian economy can be seen by examining the amount of foreign investment in Canada. The American portion of foreign investment in Canada grew from 14 percent in 1900 to over 80 percent in 1985. During the same period, Great Britain's investment dropped from 85 percent to less than 10 percent. The American influence in the Canadian economy will be examined in detail in Chapter 13.

The Canadian Shield

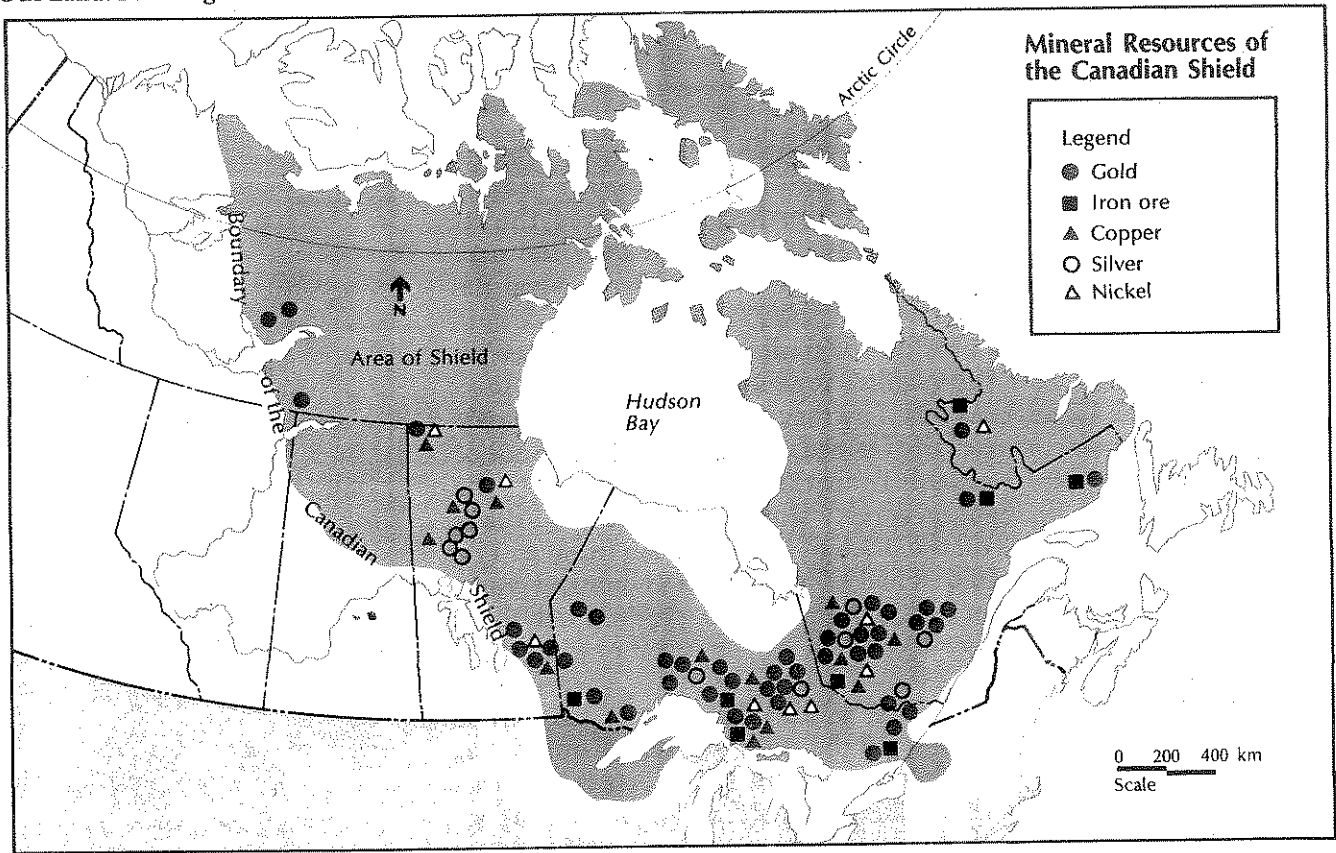
As in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Lowlands, the fur trade was the Canadian Shield's first industry. Around 1700, as the fur bearing animal populations of the lowlands region became depleted, the fur trade began to move into the Shield. It continued over the next century until British-French and HBC-NWC rivalries pushed the centre of the fur trade further west.

With the decline of the Shield's fur trade in the early nineteenth century, timber became the region's predominant resource. However, unlike the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Lowlands, where lands cleared of forest were eventually farmed, the cleared timberlands of the Shield did not prove suitable for agriculture. Consequently, the region remained dependent on forestry alone. By the 1840s, Britain began to lower its tariffs on the price of Scandinavian lumber. The square timber of the Shield that had been so much in demand could no longer compete in Britain. Exports of this product declined, along with the economic fortunes of the region, until new markets were found in the United States.

In the early twentieth century, mining became an important industry of the Shield, beginning in the Sudbury area. Mining then spread into northern and northwestern Ontario and east into northern Quebec. The mining companies set up plants to process the ore, further developing the economy of the area. The plants "concentrated" the metals and thus reduced shipping costs to smelters outside the region. Concentration is a process by which the waste rock of the ore is removed, leaving the valuable mineral in a more pure form. Hydro plants provided the mining companies with inexpensive energy supplies.

Private American capital was responsible for the development of iron ore mines in Quebec and Labrador, particularly during the two decades before and after World War II. The economic subregion that resulted, centred around Sept Îles and Labrador City, soon had railway links, hydro installations, concentrator mills, and ocean ports. This mining area, in a remote part of the Shield, fell on hard times in the 1980s.

As the railway was extended farther north and east during the early part of this century, the economic importance of the Shield expanded. Lumber and pulp and paper mills, utilizing the boreal forests of the region, developed near the southern edge of the Shield, close to water and hydro power. The plants are large and



What problems are associated with mining in the Canadian Shield?

efficient; their market is the large newspapers of cities in the southern part of the country and in the United States.

Several new mills in the Shield, such as that at Amos in northwestern Quebec, have been built in the past two or three decades. Such mills have often been subsidized by the government, especially in Quebec. Government money helps these remote towns to build the necessary services like schools and hospitals.

The pattern of capital investment in the Canadian Shield since the 1950s shows a substantial increase in foreign, especially American, investment. These investments have brought with them an advanced technology which has strongly stimulated the economic growth of the Canadian Shield.

1. When and where did mining become important on the Canadian Shield?
2. Why would it be advantageous for mines to be located near railways and near sources of hydro power?

The Prairies

The activities of the Hudson's Bay Company were a major influence on the early economy of the Prairies, since many of the rivers flowing into Hudson Bay also flow through the Prairies. While the fur trade was the dominant activity, a small agricultural settlement (the Selkirk colony) was established in 1812 on the Red River, in what is now Manitoba.

Agriculture began to develop around the Red River settlement, but grain was not as yet a major money-making product because of transportation costs. It would take the coming of the railway (see Chapter 10) to create a strong agricultural economy on the Prairies, allowing products to reach the markets of eastern Canada and, from there, Europe. The focus of the railways on Winnipeg made that city a major growth area. Similarly, since the markets were located to the east, railheads (where a railway meets a water route) such as Port Arthur and Fort William (now merged as Thunder Bay) became important grainhandling ports. Here, the products were transhipped from railway to freight ships for movement down the Great Lakes.

Today, the Prairie region is by far the largest agricultural region in Canada, accounting for over 80 percent of the country's farmland and over 70 percent of the country's revenue from agricultural crops. Of these crops, cereal grains—wheat, barley, oats, rye and

corn—are overwhelmingly dominant, with the Prairie region producing over 90 percent of the national total. While Saskatchewan leads in the production of wheat and rye, Alberta leads in barley and oats.

In 1914, what one writer called "the British Empire's... potentially richest petroleum asset" was discovered in southern Alberta. This discovery was made when oil was found seeping up through the ground at Turner Valley, south of Calgary. By June of 1929, there were 103 producing wells near Turner Valley, some as deep as 2000 m. After World War II, the search for oil and gas across Canada resulted in the discovery of the important Leduc field, just south of Edmonton. One after another, new oil districts were found. As a result, a dozen or so petroleum refining plants sprang up. The effects of the petroleum industry on the economy of Alberta, in particular, have been extremely important. With its heavy dependence on the oil and gas resource, the economy of the province has boomed and slumped according to changes in the world petroleum market.