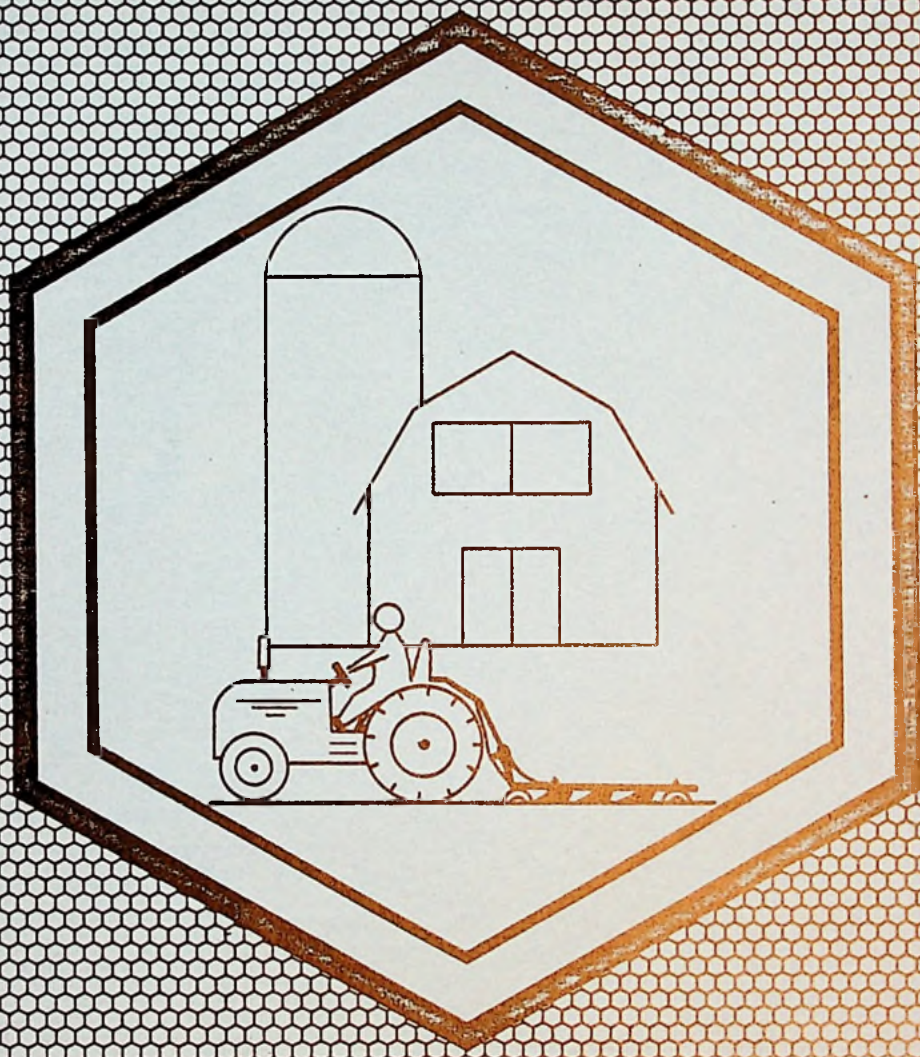


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PREFACE

This paper, prepared by the City of Brantford Planning Department as one of a series of background documents to the Official Plan of the City of Brantford Planning Area, outlines the influence of agriculture in the development of the City of Brantford. It describes the role which agriculture has played in the past, not only in providing the base upon which the community was founded but also in complementing the industrial economy which later developed on this foundation. It reviews the current relationship existing between the City and the surrounding rural area, and it indicates the continuing importance which agriculture will have in the future as a factor in Brantford's development as a strong urban centre.

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THE EARLY YEARS

Agriculture has played a very significant role in the development of the City of Brantford, dating from the time the village at Brant's Ford began in the midst of a pioneer farming area.

Even prior to this, before the arrival of Europeans in this part of the world, the site was the centre of an agricultural society of sorts. The Attiwandaron Indians, who occupied an area extending from east of the Niagara River to the southern part of Lake Huron, established their principal village of Kandoucho on the Grand River at the present site of Brantford. They were a sedentary people who, in addition to hunting and gathering the products of nature, were noted for growing tobacco and other crops in clearings in the forest.

When tribal conflict resulted in the destruction of Kandoucho and the annihilation of the Attiwandarons in the 1650's the rudimentary agricultural activities ceased, and for more than a century the region was left to hunters and fur traders. A new era was to begin, however, following the American War of Independence when some of the Indians of the Six Nations Confederacy in New York State, led by the Mohawk Chief, Joseph Brant, chose to relocate in the Grand River Valley. In 1784, a tract of land, extending the entire length of the Grand River and having a width of six miles on each side of the River, was granted to the Confederacy by the British Crown.

A settlement known as the Mohawk Village was established at a central point in this territory, in what is now the southern part of the

City of Brantford. (Her Majesty's Chapel of the Mohawks is the one remaining structure from that early community.) Farms, which were laid out in the vicinity were served by a grist mill and other facilities established in the Village.

It soon became evident that the Six Nations Territory could not be successfully exploited by the relatively small number of inhabitants under their traditional way of life. In the Indian culture the men were accustomed to hunting while the women tended the crops, but with the hunting grounds becoming exhausted as clearing for agriculture proceeded in the new colony of Upper Canada there was an obvious need to retrain the men for farming. Accordingly Brant arranged the sale of much of the more remote parts of the territory and encouraged white farmers to lease land in the area near the Village where they could assist his people in establishing a flourishing agricultural community. The building of a corn mill in this area was an early example of efforts to achieve this goal.

In the 1790's white settlers were beginning to appear here and there in the area now comprising Brant County. Early settlements included Oakland, Scotland, Mount Pleasant, Fairchild's Creek and Burford. Land clearing involved the stripping of great stands of trees which grew in profusion on the fertile soils, the dominant species being oak, maple and hickory. Since several years were required to clear and develop a fully-developed farm, farming began on a subsistence level with no export of food in the early years. Flax and wool were spun at home in simple

log dwellings. Implements were primitive but the land was rich and productive.

By the 1820's a small urban settlement was developing at the present site of downtown Brantford, where the road between Hamilton and London crossed the Grand River, and not far from the Mohawk Village. This settlement developed into a trading centre for the surrounding agricultural area which by this time was becoming fairly extensive and productive. The first stores provided a wide variety of goods including a large quantity of farm produce received in trade.

The settlement, with its abundant waterpower, also offered advantages for small frontier industries producing goods or providing services for farmers or utilizing agricultural produce. These included grist mills, sawmills, blacksmiths, wagonmakers, breweries and distilleries.

The Village of Brantford was formally incorporated in 1830 when an 807-acre village plot was purchased from the Six Nations Confederacy. Over the next couple of years a thriving community developed as merchants and farmers alike converged on the site to claim the available land.

The surrounding region was rapidly becoming a flourishing agricultural area, based largely on wheat production. At this time farm produce destined for outside markets had to be shipped overland to transshipment facilities at the west end of Lake Ontario. The desire for a more efficient means of transport led to the formation of the Grand River Navigation Company for the purpose of improving the navigability of the River to permit large scale commercial shipping.

Within a few years sufficient improvements had been made to permit large vessels to proceed upstream as far as Brantford, where they could dock in a canal basin next to the heart of the community. As the head of navigation on the Grand, Brantford became the shipping point for an extensive rural area extending, in the case of wheat shipments, to well over half-way to London on the west. Grain was received at several large warehouses adjacent to the canal basin. From here there was easy access to Lake Erie and to ports such as Buffalo, and to Lake Ontario via the Welland Canal. Most of the wheat was shipped out for milling at other points such as St. Catharines, but there were also considerable quantities ground at local flour mills and then exported.

The peak year for the Grand River Navigation Company was 1854 when 400,000 bushels of wheat were shipped. That same year, however, the first railway line reached Brantford, thereafter providing a more attractive means for moving goods. Within a few years the Navigation Company had ceased to operate.

THE RAILWAY ERA

The coming of the railway resulted in a still greater degree of prosperity for agriculture, which was still the dominant sector of the local economy. Farmers now had much better access to markets, both in the expanding urban centres at home and in the industrialized nations abroad where wheat was much in demand.

While wheat remained the staple crop, agriculture in the area was becoming increasingly diversified. Root crops and peas and beans were important, while barley and hops found a market at local breweries.

Apple orchards were becoming a common feature on farms. The raising of livestock also flourished, providing plentiful supplies of beef and dairy products in particular. Bow Park Farm, enclosed by a large bend of the Grand River immediately south-east of Brantford, was by the late 1860's and 1870's a leader in livestock breeding. Its owner, George Brown, a prominent Toronto publisher and a Father of Confederation, was instrumental in introducing mechanization on a large scale to local agriculture.

With the increasing abundance of farm produce, the Market Square in Brantford became an ever more thriving place. The local Farmers' Market which had existed in some form since the early days of settlement, shared the Market Square with the Town Hall. This block was the focal point of activity in Brantford and served to symbolize the important role played by agriculture in the life of the community.

Local agricultural products formed the basis for several of the small industries present in the Town at that time. One of these was a canning factory which took in farm produce for processing. Tanneries were also active concerns, one of them being recorded as employing 30 to 35 people and tanning 90,000 to 100,000 sheepskins annually.¹ Sheepraising in the area also led to the establishment of a woollen mill in Brantford where there was an ample supply of water, an essential in that industry's procedures.

Much of the new machinery coming into use on farms at this time was produced in Brantford. The increasing affluence of farmers during the early years of the railway era enabled them to purchase manufactured items which they previously could not afford. Foundries and machine

shops found that there was a ready market in the farming community for wood stoves as well as plows and other farm implements, and they accordingly expanded their operations to produce such items.

Prior to this time there had actually been little advance in agricultural technology over methods used by ancient civilizations. The harvesting of grain had been done by hand using a cradle (consisting of a heavy iron blade and curved hardwood fingers) and a long-handled rake, while threshing was done by beating the grain with a flail. The increasing demand for grain, however, necessitated more efficient methods, and farmers were eager to take advantage of the new machines, such as the horse-drawn reaper, which could eliminate much of the toil and drudgery which had been their lot.

Locally, William Verity's machine shop specialized in the manufacture of plows which were of a markedly improved design over the crude implements of pioneers days and so became very popular. Verity's market soon expanded well beyond the local area, as did that of other implement manufacturers who also began operations in Brantford, notably the Harris and Cockshutt firms in the 1870's. These various companies, which were soon exporting their products around the world, were leaders in transforming Brantford into a very significant industrial centre, and they have remained of prime importance to the local economy ever since. It is thus obvious that the early productivity of the local agricultural region played an important initial role in generating the City's later industrial prosperity.

THE INDUSTRIAL ERA

Even though Brantford's role as an agricultural service centre had, by the latter part of the nineteenth century, begun to be overshadowed by its role as a manufacturing centre, the trade generated by the farming community remained an important factor in the City's economic wellbeing. Fluctuations occurred in the agricultural economy just as they did in industry, and these tended to become quite pronounced during the early part of the twentieth century. In the years immediately prior to the First World War there was a general economic slump. With the outbreak of war, however, came a renewed demand for supplies from farm as well as factory and a boom period followed for several years.

Toward the end of the 1920's economic troubles were accumulating again. The market was becoming glutted in a number of commodities, and many of the farm people in particular could not afford to purchase many manufactured items. Then the stock market crash of 1929 and the plummeting prices which ensued initiated a period of poverty across North America which was particularly keenly felt in the rural area.

The agricultural scene began to brighten somewhat in the late 1930's. A Conservation and Reforestation Committee, organized in Brant County at that time, encouraged the planting and preservation of trees and measures to improve flood control. The local Crop Improvement Association took steps to promote more efficient use of farmland. Tobacco farming, which had been underway on a limited scale in the region for a number of years, became much more widely practised, making use of sandy, porous soils mainly to the south-west and west of Brantford which were not suited to the more traditional crops.

Agricultural production in the Brantford area continued to be quite diversified during this period. The bulk of the acreage was devoted to the various common field crops, oats being the dominant grain at that time just as wheat had been in the previous century. Corn was grown to some extent but on a relatively small scale compared to the position it was to occupy a generation later. It is significant that the Brantford region, particularly to the east and north of the City, is endowed with extensive areas of Class 1 soils (as rated by the Canada Land Inventory of Soil Capability for Agriculture). These soils are ideal for the growing of common field crops such as wheat, oats, barley and corn.

The outbreak of the Second World War provided a major boost to the agricultural economy. The greatest problem now was a shortage of labour, caused by a sudden surge in new factory jobs and military enlistment. Also, it became difficult to obtain new farm equipment as implement manufacturers turned much of their capacity into the production of military equipment. Nevertheless the rural community experienced great affluence at this time as markets for farm produce rapidly improved.

The processing of vegetables and other farm produce was an important activity in Brantford at this time. The wartime need for canned vegetables brought about the prompt rebuilding of a large canning factory which had been destroyed by fire in 1940. This factory was originally established in 1900 as the Farmers' Co-operative Company. It became a subsidiary of Canada Packers Ltd. in 1930, eventually becoming

known as York Farms. It received produce from as far as 50 miles from Brantford.

THE EFFECTS OF URBAN EXPANSION

Agriculture continued to prosper in the period following the Second World War. This was an era of rapid urban growth which created new markets for farm produce. The local agricultural region benefitted not only from Brantford's expansion but from its position on the fringe of a large, burgeoning urban region around the western end of Lake Ontario.

During this period much agricultural land abutting urban centres was being developed for residential subdivisions and other urban uses. Locally, development was spilling out well beyond the City's corporate limits into Brantford Township. In 1955 some 7,900 acres were annexed from the Township, bringing into the City extensive areas already urbanized in addition to farmland designated for future housing, industry and other urban uses.

Post-war urban expansion brought about an increased demand for mineral aggregate as a building material, a prime source of which was to be found in an area to the north-west of the City. Over 1,000 acres of rather marginal farmland in this area, in the vicinity of Hardy Road, were purchased or leased for gravel extraction.

The City continued to expand its boundaries, acquiring nearly 1,500 acres to the north-east for urban development in 1974. The series of post-war annexations culminated with the Brantford-Brant Annexation Act, 1980, under which some 4,000 acres were taken into the City in

January, 1981. (Map 1) The main objective of this legislation was to ensure that the City had sufficient land to accommodate necessary industrial, commercial and residential expansion for at least the following two decades.

It should be noted that Brantford was built largely on good agricultural land. Each major annexation had represented a substantial loss of productive farmland. The land annexed in 1981, however, did not include any areas of high quality farmland. An extensive portion of it, lying to the south-west, consisted of marginal land which was not being intensively farmed. Provision was also made for the annexation of a large area to the north-west of the City containing the lands from which aggregate was being extracted. This was done with the intention of developing the bulk of this land for an industrial park following the completion of aggregate extraction and the rehabilitation of the land. Rehabilitation of the area for agriculture was not considered feasible in view of its stoniness, low moisture content and low fertility, all related to the porous, gravelly, sandy subsoil and the absence of groundwater near the surface.

The Brantford-Brant Annexation Act also provided for a belt of land roughly a mile in width, abutting the City, to be restricted to agriculture and related uses. (Map 1) This was designed to reduce the occurrence of urban sprawl. Without such protection urban and semi-urban development tends to creep out from the edge of a City, often consuming valuable agricultural land. It also tends to make for inefficient use of the remaining adjacent farmland, with normal farm operations being

inhibited by complaints from new residential neighbours about noise and odours. The existence of a permanent "green belt" should ensure the preservation of a productive agricultural zone in which farming investment is protected, and it should provide for a clear distinction between city and country living in the Brantford area. The adoption of this policy is an expression locally of the Ontario Food Land Guidelines, which are a statement of the Provincial Government's policy to conserve farmland.

THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURE TODAY

Agriculture still plays an important part in Brantford's economy. Considered in a manufacturing context it provides a market in many parts of the world for the industry which has long been the City's leading employer - the manufacture of farm implements - and, indirectly, the market for a number of other local industries producing components for the implement manufacturers.

Agriculture is vital to Brantford in a purely local sense as well, providing the economic base for a substantial part of the population in the City's retail trade area, thereby generating considerable commercial activity locally. Brantford's trade area is deemed to embrace nearly all of Brant County as well as portions of the Regional Municipalities of Haldimand-Norfolk and Hamilton-Wentworth.(2)

Within Brant County alone there were in 1981 a total of 1,227 farms from which the total value of agricultural products sold was \$92,663,601. Corn has been by far the dominant crop since the late 1960's in terms of acreage planted, though small grains of various kinds are still grown extensively and tobacco has been a significant crop in

much of the area since the Second World War. Dairy farming and the raising of beef cattle, hogs and poultry are important activities, as is market gardening to which a thriving local Farmers' Market can attest. The income generated by such a diversified agricultural base contributes a degree of stability to Brantford's commercial activity, helping to counter fluctuations in the local industrial economy.

Agriculture also generates considerable industrial employment locally through the processing of farm produce. Of the approximately 15,000 people employed in manufacturing in Brantford and the immediate vicinity in 1971, over 1,000 were employed in the food and beverage sector. There are various establishments in and near the City engaged in the processing of vegetables, meat, poultry and dairy products, as well as in the production of livestock feed and other farm supplies.

Within the boundaries of the City of Brantford itself agriculture is of little significance as a land use. The City's Zoning Bylaw specifically provides for an Agricultural Market Gardening Zone but the land so zoned amounts to only a few acres. Elsewhere in the City agriculture is a permitted use in many areas zoned for other purposes, allowing for the farming of undeveloped land until such time as it is required for urban uses. Mention might also be made of the lowlying lands below the dikes along the Grand River, where agriculture is a permitted use. These areas, being subject to flooding, cannot be developed for urban uses but they tend to have highly productive soils for certain crops, benefitting from the periodic deposition of silt from flooding.

Official Plan Amendment No. 38, enacted in 1981 and applying to areas annexed to the City under the Brantford-Brant Annexation Act, 1980, does not designate any land for agricultural use but it does provide for agriculture to be carried on as an interim use on lands designated Industrial and Residential. This excludes intensive animal operations, in view of their incompatibility with neighbouring urban uses by reason of their potential for generating offensive odours and pollution. It also excludes greenhouse developments and the erection of permanent structures so that the eventual development of the land for industry or housing will not be unduly impeded by the presence of existing structures. Areas hazardous for urban uses and designated as Floodplain and Hazard Land and areas designated as Open Space may be used for agriculture as well provided no permanent structures are built. It would be appropriate to incorporate similar policies within the City's Official Plan to apply to undeveloped areas in the remainder of the City as well.

SUMMARY

Agriculture was the basis for Brantford's early development into a prosperous town. It established the foundation for the predominantly industrial City which was to follow and it has continued to complement industry in supporting the commercial growth of the City. It is important to recognize and encourage this continuing role of agriculture in forming the basis for a healthy local economy.

There are various ways in which the City can show support for the agricultural community and derive benefit in so doing. Measures have already been taken to establish a distinct boundary between the urban and

rural areas to forestall the loss of productive farmland and to avoid the servicing problems generated by urban sprawl. It is also important to encourage the provision within Brantford of shopping facilities and other commercial services adequate to satisfy the needs of the rural population in order to maintain a large and healthy trade area for the City. Finally the City must strive to fulfill its potential as an outlet for local farm produce through the maintenance of a strong Farmers' Market and by encouraging the establishment and expansion of food processing industries which can utilize the products of the surrounding rural area. It is important that these points receive due consideration in the formulation of the various goals and objectives for the City of Brantford's Official Plan.

FOOTNOTES

1. Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Brant, 1875, Summary of Principal Manufactories.

2. Update of Retail Market Analysis, Brantford Redevelopment Project, Realty Research Group Ltd., November 1981, Pg. 2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgement is made of the following sources of information used during the preparation of this paper:

1. Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Brant, 1875.
2. History of the County of Brant, F. Douglas Reville, 1920
3. Brant County - A History, 1784-1945, C.M. Johnston, 1967
4. Census of Canada Reports, 1931 to 1981
5. Soil Capability Classification for Agriculture, Canada Land Inventory, Report No. 2, 1969
6. Food Land Guidelines, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ontario, 1978.
7. Brantford-Brant Expansion Options Study, Northwest Area, Underwood McLellan Ltd., February 1980
8. Report on the Brantford-Brant Local Government Pilot Project, Provincial Fact Finder, April 2, 1980
9. Brantford Industrial Directory, 1980
10. Update of Retail Market Analysis, Brantford Redevelopment Project, Realty Research Group Ltd., November 1981.



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