



Backwoods Consumers and Homespun Capitalists: The Rise of a Market Culture in Eastern Canada

Beatrice Craig

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In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a local economy made up of settlers, loggers, and business people from Lower Canada, New Brunswick, and New England was established on the banks of the Upper St. John River in an area known as the Madawaska Territory. This newly created economy was visibly part of the Atlantic capitalist system yet different in several major ways.

In *Backwoods Consumers and Homespun Capitalists*, Béatrice Craig examines and describes this economy from its origins in the native fur trade, the growth of exportable wheat, the selling of food to new settlers, and of ton timbre to Britain. Craig vividly portrays the role of wives who sold homespun fabric and clothing to farmers, loggers, and river drivers, helping to bolster the community. The construction of saw, grist, and carding mills, and the establishment of stores, boarding houses, and taverns are all viewed as steps in the development of what the author calls "homespun capitalists." The territory also participated in the Atlantic economy as a consumer of Canadian, British, European, west and east Indian and American goods. This case study offers a unique examination of the emergence of capitalism and of a consumer society in a small, relatively remote community in the backwoods of New Brunswick.

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