

ments and eventually by the creation of Boards or Departments of Agriculture as a feature of their administrative functions. Another avenue, followed by awakened official interest in agricultural improvement, was the provision of facilities for instruction. The first agricultural school in Canada was opened in 1859 at Ste. Anne de la Pocatière and this has been followed by numerous other schools and colleges in various parts of Canada.

Origin of the Dominion Experimental Farms System.—The period of agricultural prosperity and high prices, already mentioned as beginning about the middle of the 19th century, was followed in the 1870's by a period of rapidly declining prices and general depression. The farming industry was particularly affected by the decline in prices. These conditions provided a wide-spread incentive for improvements and greater efficiency in agricultural production and resulted eventually in the establishment of the Dominion Experimental Farms System.

The system owed its inception to the report of a Select Committee of the House of Commons which, in 1884, recommended the establishment of an experimental farm. William Saunders of London, Ontario, was selected by the Minister of Agriculture to plan the organization of such a farm. In June, 1886, the Experimental Farm Stations Act was passed providing, in addition to the original farm intended near Ottawa, for others in the Maritime Provinces, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories, and British Columbia. The farm near Ottawa, designated for the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, was to be the principal or central station. Late in the autumn of 1886, the site of the present farm at Ottawa was acquired and William Saunders was appointed the first Director of Experimental Farms. In the year 1888 the branch farms provided for by the original Act were all established, that for the Maritime Provinces at Nappan in Nova Scotia, for Manitoba at Brandon, for the Northwest Territories at Indian Head, and for British Columbia at Agassiz.

These five original farms are designated as Dominion Experimental Farms to distinguish them from similar stations established at later dates and known as Dominion Experimental Stations. There are also a number of Dominion experimental sub-stations, operated by staffs somewhat smaller than those of the regular farms and stations.

The contribution toward the improvement in agriculture made by the Dominion Experimental Farms System and also by provincial experimental farms, lies chiefly in the breeding of improved live stock and plants, and the development of better cultural practices. While the breeding of pure-bred live stock is carried on very largely by private enterprise as well as by experimental farms, the breeding of improved varieties and strains of field, garden, and orchard plant life has devolved almost exclusively upon the Experimental Farms. Time and patience are the essential factors in the improvement of plant species and each year's progress is the result of fundamental work done years before by men who often have not lived long enough to see the fruits of their labours. For the past fifty years, men who have operated these farms have been leaders in Canadian agricultural progress. Dr. William Saunders, the first Director of the Dominion Experimental Farms System laid the foundation for the development of Marquis wheat by his son, Dr. Charles Saunders. This is still the leading variety grown in Canada and commands a premium on the markets of the world. It is impossible to measure in dollars and cents the value of the contributions made along these lines but, to mention only a few of the more important results obtained in plant breeding, yield per acre has been greatly increased, the climatic limitations of various types of plants and trees