

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY FARMER IN UPPER-CANADA:  
A COMPARATIVE BUTCHERING ANALYSIS OF FOUR HISTORICAL  
SITES IN ONTARIO

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## ABSTRACT

### The Nineteenth Century Farmer In Upper-Canada: A Comparative Butchering Analysis Of Four Historical Sites In Ontario

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Historical subsistence has received a great deal of attention in the literature of recent years, yet it is still relatively misunderstood, particularly in respect to the 19<sup>th</sup> century North American immigrant. The interpretation of zooarchaeological remains have proven useful in contributing to the overall knowledge, but the analysis of faunal material is often mediocre because quantitative units are ambiguous, and the impact of taphonomic forces on the survival of skeletal remains is unclear.

It is proposed that a fuller understanding of subsistence may be achieved through the study of butchering patterns, specifically in respect to culturally relevant units of consumption. These units are calculated specifically for the domestic species of cow, pig and sheep, in four 19<sup>th</sup> century zoo-archaeological assemblages from across Upper Canada, including the Benares, Duff-Bâby, Macdonell and Moodie sites. Results illustrate the complexity of historical butchering patterns, and ultimately demonstrate that self-sufficiency, as it has come to be defined, did not exist, but took many varied forms in early pioneer life.

## Chapter 5: The Butchering Analysis

### 5.1 Quantifying Butchered Units

As discussed above (see Section 3.2.7), for inter-site comparisons of faunal material to be valid, some level of analogue must be mutually established and easily recognizable. The most common means of determining common traits in different faunal assemblages is through quantification, but unfortunately, this is also the most common means of obscuring these traits as well (see Chapter 3 for an extended discussion of this). The value of a faunal analysis is moot if no clear unit of study is justified, described, and posited for comparative purposes. To this end, this thesis advocates the use of culturally relevant *units of consumption*. The concept has been introduced by other authors (Huelsbeck 1991: 62; Lyman 1987: 60), and its application to quantitative theory is admittedly not a new one, but it is worthy of further study nonetheless, as it is a unit that is often misunderstood.

The first source for confusion in the literature stems from the basic definition of units of consumption. Typically, for comparative purposes, they are identified as *secondary meat cuts* (Lyman 1979, 1987a; Schulz and Gust 1983), which are gross divisions of the livestock anatomy that combine and confuse the more commonly understood wholesale and retail cuts of meat. Unfortunately, these skeletal designations are applied to the butchering analyses of disparate assemblages, often without distinction. Such an application fails to consider functional variation (Lyman 1977:71), assumes universal homogeneity in the size and shape of individual butchering units (Ensminger 1983:1082), and is relies entirely on contemporary practices of butchering. For example, it has been noted that present day cuts are smaller than historical ones, as many articular connections have been trimmed, possibly due to the fact that contemporary consumers are “squeamish ... and do not like to be reminded of where

their food actually comes from” (Davidson 1982:388). This shows that a butchering analysis which presumes that modern cuts of meat are totally analogous to historical ones proceeds from a false assumption.

A second source of misunderstanding stems from the fact that *units of consumption* are often confused with *units of purchase*. Both are butchering units, and as such they are products of the butchering process (Lyman 1987a:252). As units of purchase, they are meat cuts that have been paid for and acquired in a market setting, and as units of consumption, they are individual cuts of meat that have been discarded after consumption. At most times, both of these terms refer to the same concept, when the unit is consumed in the same form in which it was purchased and it has not been further butchered before being eaten. This is especially the case in some urban environments, where butchering on a domestic scale may not have been common, whether due to a lack of facilities, equipment, or laws forbidding its practice (Bowen 1992:277; Guillet 1947:99; Landon 1996:16). In such settings, urban butchers provided small, careful, standardized cuts of meat to a population unable to do such processing itself (Landon 1996:8).

It should not be assumed however, that this is always the case on historical sites, for we must acknowledge the possibility that wholesale cuts of meat were being acquired and butchered into units of consumption domestically (Huelsbeck 1991:69). The fact is, as discussed in Section 1.1, urban sites often had the kind of butchering facilities that were usually associated with their rural counterparts, and were often able to break down wholesale cuts, or butcher medium sized mammals themselves (Belanger 1994:7; Landon 1996:121; Stewart-Abernathy 1986:5). This rebuffs the custom of recognizing universal cuts of meat in historical zooarchaeological assemblages, because butchering in a domestic setting proceeds primarily from a personal perspective and may suffer from a lack of knowledge, experience, tools or facilities, and inevitably would produce

units of consumption that were idiosyncratic, and differed from the norm due to individual variation (Gerrard 1951:227). By acknowledging the fact that butchering activities such as this may have occurred, we are in effect eliminating the standardized unit of purchase from consideration. As a result, this research will reconstruct historical butchering techniques based on the evidence of what was consumed and not on assumptions of what was purchased.

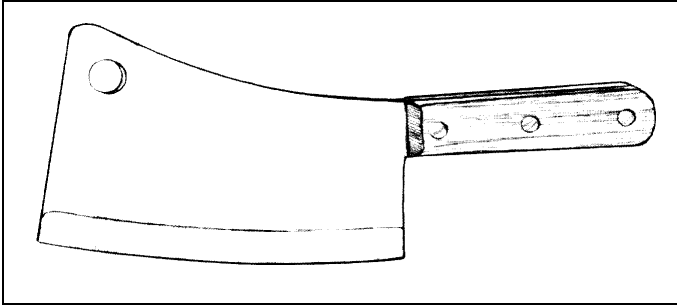
The four historical sites chosen for comparison in this research have one thing in common: the people who lived there all relied on meat as a primary food source. As the act of butchering is a natural prerequisite for the consumption of meat, I propose that the way in which this was achieved could serve to illuminate the differences or similarities between the sites. To this end, I conducted a detailed butchering analysis in order to construct a model of the *historical butchering process, identify the typical wholesale and retail cuts of meat, and specify the common units of consumption.*

## **5.2 Methodology of a Butchering Analysis**

The first step in this butchering analysis was the careful examination of each butchered bone specimen to determine species, element, location and type of butchered modification. It is important to identify that portion of the bone which remains, and what tool had been used in the butchering process. In the course of the butchering analysis, information for each specimen was listed on an illustrated form and then entered into a database. From this, it was possible to determine how historical livestock was butchered at the sites herein under consideration.

### 5.3 Historical Butchering Tools

Butchering evidence is easily recognizable on skeletal material, and can provide insight into the type of butchering tool employed, the manner in which it was used, and



**Figure 5.1**

A Butchering Cleaver  
(From Mettler 1986:3)

by extrapolation, the butchering process through which livestock animals were dismembered. There are two primary butchering tools, the cleaver (see Figure 5.1), and the bone saw (see Figure 5.2).

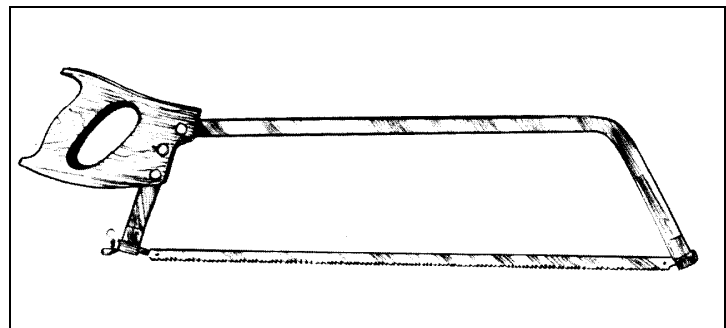
The butchering cleaver was a very crude way to butcher an animal. The sharp edge was used to chop at the bone, and the back, flat edge of the head of most cleavers could serve as a hammer to fully sever partially cut bones, and fracture them for marrow extraction (Langenwalter

1980:107). Even in skilled hands the tool could splinter skeletal material, making it a cultural activity that is all the more difficult to recognize in

the archaeological record (Lyman 1987:299). The

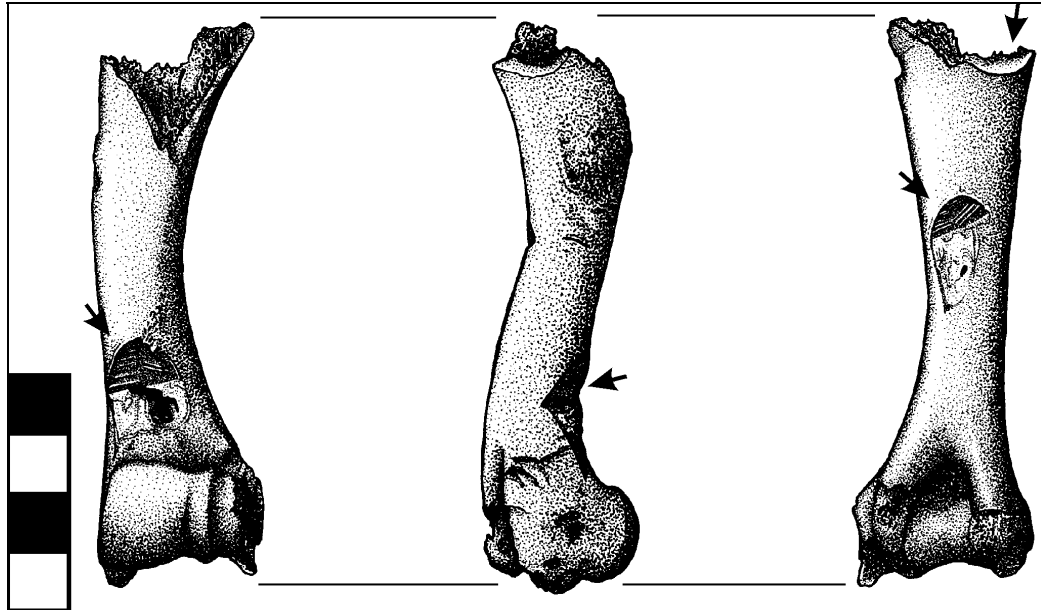
cleaver leaves semi-circular

wedge-shaped flake scars on bone (Landon 1996:59; Reitz and Scarry 1985:85), marks that are almost always associated with a sharp fractured edge where the bone has been truncated through sheer force (see Figure 5.3).



**Figure 5.2**

A bone saw  
(From Mettler 1986: 4)



**Figure 5.3**

A sheep humerus butchered with a cleaver. Note that the chip close to the distal end is in the location where the shoulder is separated from the breast.

Often recognized by researchers as the oldest butchering tool, the cleaver was used almost exclusively on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century North American sites (Landon 1996:64, 94), and continued as the primary butchering tool well into the last century. Its popularity dropped off in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the bone saw was adopted as a tool which enabled much more precise butchering (Landon 1996:94).

Butchering trends for the sample sites of this thesis match this pattern, and although they show variation in the preference of hand saw versus cleaver, they are 19<sup>th</sup> century sites, and the hand saw is clearly favoured. This is definitely the case with the Benares, Duff-Bâby and Moodie assemblages which all have a higher percentage of bones that had been butchered with a hand saw (see Table 5.1). The Macdonell assemblage differs slightly from this pattern, and is reflective of the earlier statement that the cleaver continued to be used long after the hand saw had been introduced, as it appears to have been the tool of choice at the site. The decision of what butchering tool

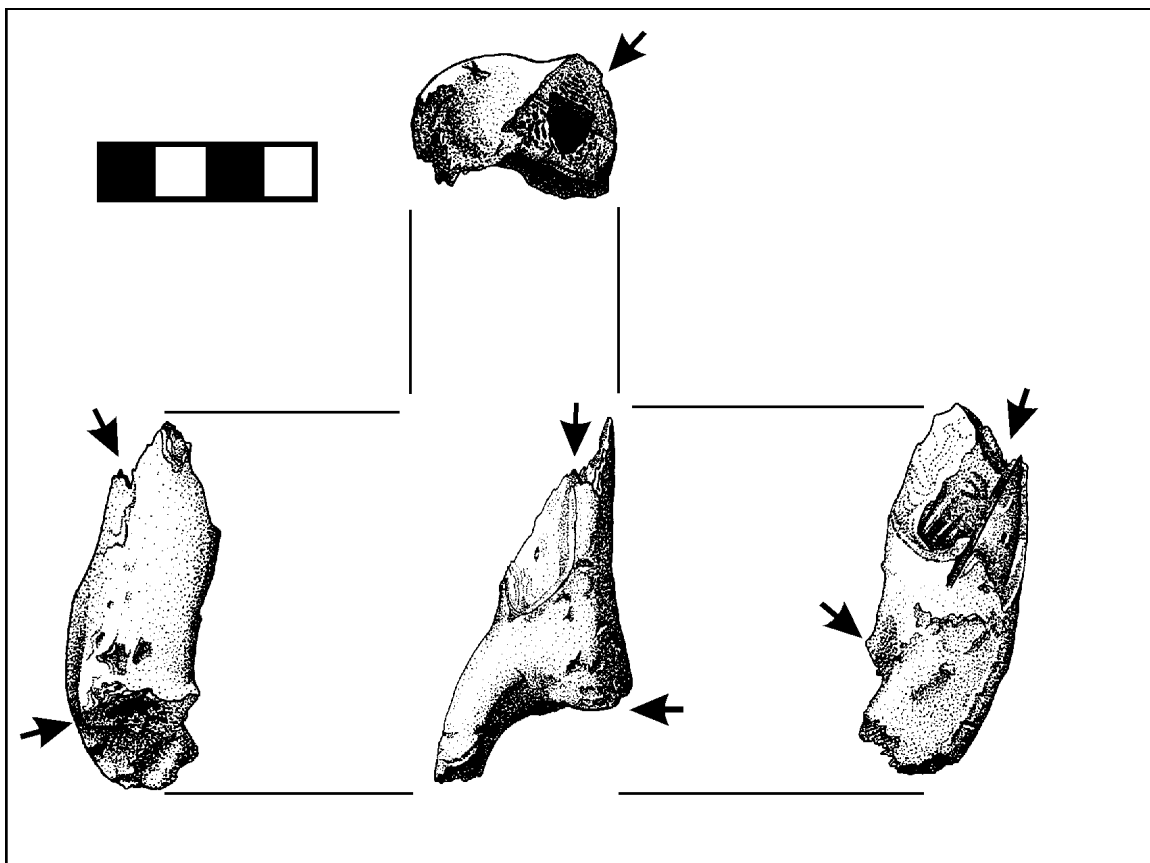
to use to accomplish the task at hand apparently has little to do with what species is being dismembered, as the overall preferred method of butchering appears to apply to all domestic species on a site, with the exception of the Duff-Bâby assemblage where the domestic pig is butchered more often with a cleaver instead of the hand saw, even though all other species present on the site were butchered more frequently with a hand saw.

**Table 5.1**  
Butchering trends in the four faunal assemblages.

	<i>Bos taurus</i>		<i>Sus scrofa</i>		<i>Ovis aries</i>		Medium		Large		Totals	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Benares</b>												
Hand saw	8	73%	4	29%	99	74%	78	70%	0	0	189	70%
Cleaver	0	0%	2	14%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	2	1%
Cut marks	2	18%	2	14%	16	12%	16	14%	0	0	36	13%
Fracturing	1	9%	6	43%	18	14%	18	16%	0	0	43	16%
	11	100%	14	100%	133	100%	112	100%	0	0	270	100%
<b>Duff-Baby</b>												
Hand saw	32	54%	3	20%	9	90%	6	75%	0	0	50	54%
Cleaver	18	31%	8	53%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	26	28%
Cut marks	2	3%	1	7%	0	0%	2	25%	0	0	5	5%
Fracturing	7	12%	3	20%	1	10%	0	0%	0	0	11	12%
	59	100%	15	100%	10	100%	8	100%	0	0	92	100%
<b>Macdonell</b>												
Hand saw	8	35%	4	16%	3	21%	0	0%	0	0	15	24%
Cleaver	10	43%	15	60%	7	50%	0	0%	0	0	32	51%
Cut marks	1	4%	4	16%	3	21%	1	100%	0	0	9	14%
Fracturing	4	17%	2	8%	1	7%	0	0%	0	0	7	11%
	23	100%	25	100%	14	100%	1	100%	0	0	63	100%
<b>Moodie</b>												
Hand saw	49	56%	9	26%	6	21%	7	33%	7	50%	78	42%
Cleaver	6	7%	5	14%	4	14%	6	29%	1	7%	22	12%
Cut marks	5	6%	7	20%	4	14%	0	0%	1	7%	17	9%
Fracturing	27	31%	14	40%	15	52%	8	38%	5	36%	69	37%
	87	100%	35	100%	29	100%	21	100%	14	100%	186	100%



The bone saw, because it is not as destructive as the cleaver, results in a cultural modification that is much easier to recognize on faunal material. The metal teeth of the bone saw leave an irregular butchering surface that is cross-hatched by uneven ridges of bone (Landon 1996:59; Reitz and Scarry 1985:85). It does not require a strong blow to sever the bone, instead, truncation is achieved by completely cutting through the bone with the saw, or at least enough to weaken it so that it may be snapped (see Figure 5.4).



**Figure 5.4**

The distal end of a sheep humerus partially sawn, and then broken. Arrows show where the cuts were made, and where the breaks occurred.

## 5.4 The Historical Butchering Process

General patterns in historical butchering have been reconstructed for this thesis with data compiled from various sources. Relevant documentary evidence has been particularly illustrative as to the manner in which livestock was butchered on early sites (see Section 2.3 and Haight 1885; Langton 1926; Langton 1964; Miller 1968; Scherck 1905; Traill 1969[1855]). Also, more contemporary sources published specifically as guides for the butchering of livestock were particularly helpful in regard to more recent meat technologies, and provided insight into how soft tissues may have been processed (Ashbrook 1955; Ensminger 1983; Gerrard 1951; Mettler 1986; Rivers 1916; Ziegler 1968). Several authors have attempted similar reconstructions in work that has been published in the domain of historical archaeology, and these were also consulted in the course of this research (Davidson 1982; Landon 1996; Lyman 1977, 1979, 1987a; Reitz and Scarry 1985; Schulz and Gust 1983). Most importantly though, the faunal component from these four early Canadian sites has proved instrumental in determining how animals were typically processed in the early 1800's. This combined evidence reconstructs an historical butchering process that is divided into three separate stages that will be described below.

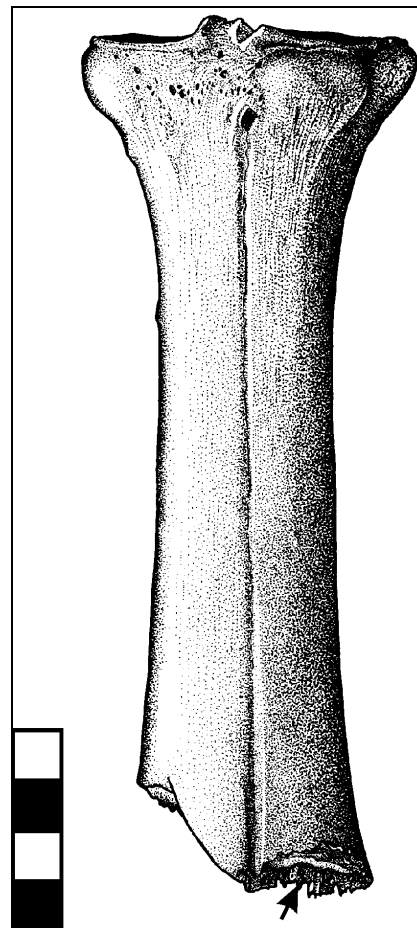
### 5.4.1 *Stage 1 of the Butchering Process*

The butchering process begins at its most obvious point: the killing of the domestic animal. The individual could have been stunned by a strong blow to the head, and then its neck slit (Haight 1885:27), or killed outright with a bullet to the brain (Mettler 1986:13). For the most part, cranial material from these assemblages is too fragmented to allude to one method's use in lieu of the other. After the animal was bled, the feet were removed, often with a cleaver (see Figure 5.5). This was a common occurrence in cow butchering, but these appendages were often left on sheep and pig bodies because

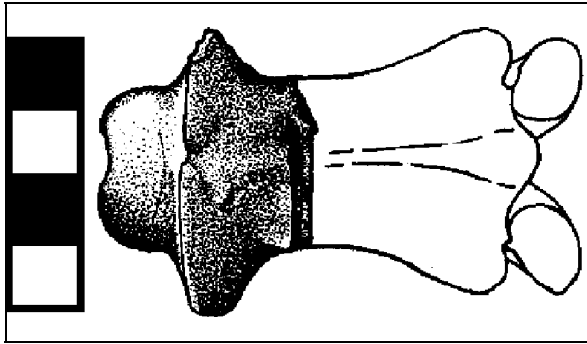
of the smaller size of these animals, and the ease in which they could be butchered. The animal was then hung by its hind legs, and the head removed. Mettler (1983) and Ziegler (1968) advocate cutting through the soft tissue of the articular facet between the first and second vertebrae, but faunal evidence indicates that the same effect was often achieved by sawing through the anterior end of the second cervical vertebra (see Figure 5.6). The material that is produced from the first stage of the butchering process is often referred to as butchering waste, but as we have seen in previous discussions (see Section 1.6), it is often not as useless as it has often been referred to, and it would behoove an early settler not to waste it.

#### 5.4.2 Stage 2 of the butchering process

The second stage of the historical butchering process involved splitting the carcass down the middle of the spinal column. The removal of the head prior to this stage is confirmed by the presence of axes (second cervical vertebra) in the faunal assemblages that have been butchered close to their anterior ends (see Figure 5.6). Had the vertebral column been split first, then this specimen would have been cut sagittally instead of transversely.



**Figure 5.5**  
Cow Metatarsal butchered at distal end with a cleaver.

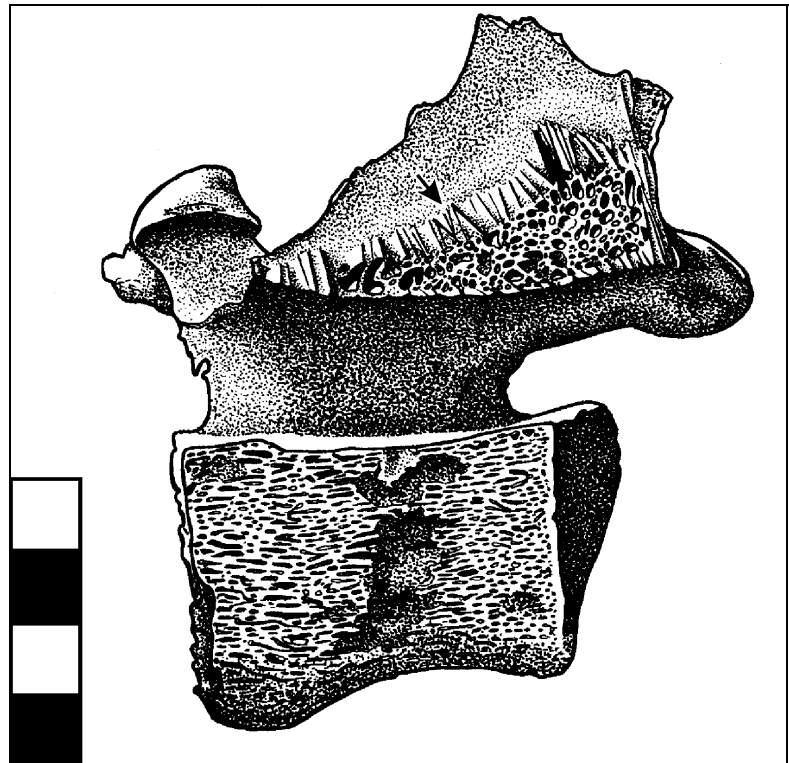


**Figure 5.6**

A sheep axis cut laterally with a hand saw.

This stage of butchering is commonly identified in historical assemblages (Landon 1996:72), and is easily recognized in the form of vertebrae that have been split in half (see Figure 5.7). Often, it is also possible to infer the means through which this splitting occurred. Although it is possible to halve an animal using a cleaver, this takes a great deal of skill (Mettler 1986:20), and it is much easier to use a bone saw to accomplish it. The bovine lumbar vertebrae that is illustrated in Figure 5.7 exhibits an irregular cutting edge that is indicative of the use of a hand saw. It also demonstrates that the action occurred on a slight angle with the butcher positioned dorsally (see Figure 5.8).

Evidence for this second stage of butchering is present in each of the faunal assemblages examined for this research. The assemblages from the



**Figure 5.7**

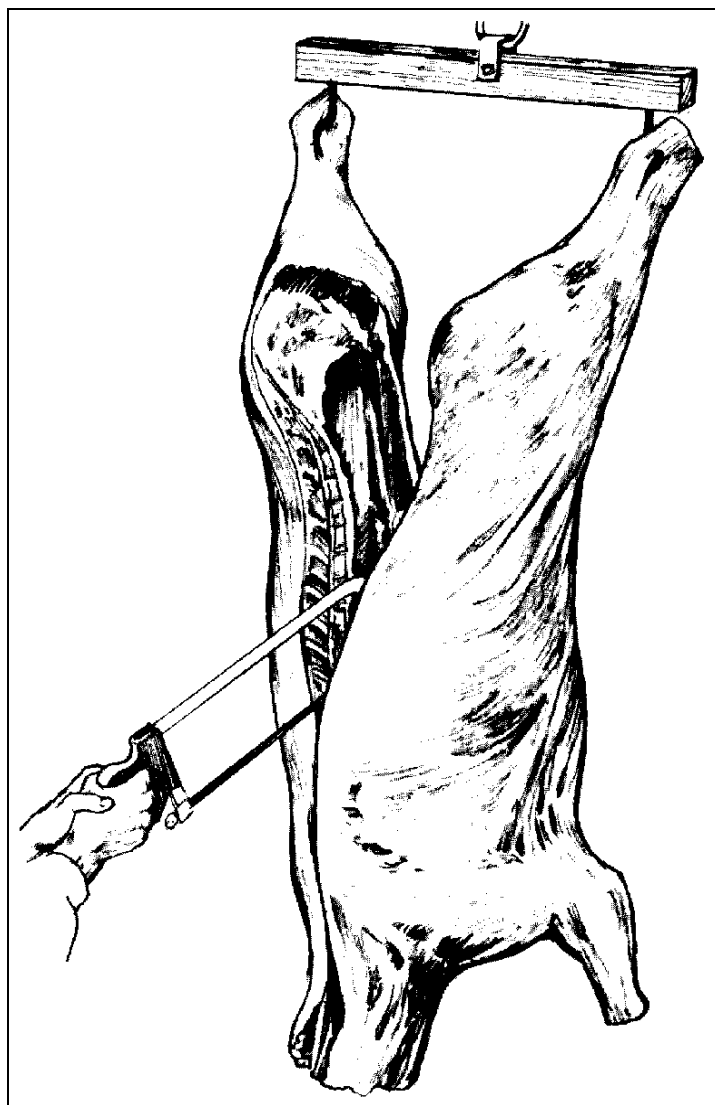
The lumbar vertebra of a cow. The roughness and angle of the cut marks indicate that the animal was cut from an angle on the dorsal plane (see Figure 5.8).

Benares site (see Table 5.2), the Duff-Bâby site (see Table 5.3), and the Moodie farmstead (see Table 5.5) possess a higher proportion of split vertebrae than whole for each domestic species.

The assemblages do contain some whole vertebrae, but interestingly, they are all from the cervical area, suggesting that they were removed along with the head prior to Stage 2. The Macdonell site (see Table 5.4) stands out from the others studied here, in that there are more whole vertebrae

present from other areas of the spinal column. This is only the case with the skeletal remains from the domestic pig and sheep, and is clear evidence that these animals were not split in half. This is not unusual, as medium sized mammals are often butchered into wholesale meat cuts (see next section) without being halved (Ensminger 1983; Ziegler 1968).

**Figure 5.8**  
Splitting a cow with a bone saw.



(From Mettler 1986: 21)

**Table 5.2**

State of butchered vertebrae at the Benares site.

	<i>Bos taurus</i>		<i>Sus scrofa</i>		<i>Ovis aries</i>		Medium		Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<i>Cervical vertebrae</i>										
Whole	1	20	0	0	6	10	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	1	20	0	0	16	26	0	0	0	0
<i>Thoracic vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	1	20	0	0	16	26	0	0	0	0
<i>Lumbar vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	1	20	0	0	22	35	0	0	0	0
<i>Sacral vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	1	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Caudal vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Total whole vertebrae</i>	1	20	0	0	8	13	0	0	0	0
<i>Total split vertebrae</i>	4	80	0	0	54	87	0	0	0	0
	5	100	0	0	62	100	0	0	0	0

**Table 5.3**

State of butchered vertebrae at the Duff-Bâby site.

	<i>Bos taurus</i>		<i>Sus scrofa</i>		<i>Ovis aries</i>		Medium		Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<i>Cervical vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	1	11	0	0	0	0	2	100	0	0
<i>Thoracic vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	1	11	0	0	2	29	0	0	0	0
<i>Lumbar vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	2	22	0	0	3	43	0	0	0	0
<i>Sacral vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	3	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Caudal vertebrae</i>										
Whole	2	22	0	0	2	29	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Total whole vertebrae</i>	2	22	1	100	2	29	0	0	0	0
<i>Total split vertebrae</i>	7	78	0	0	5	71	2	100	0	0
	9	100	1	100	7	100	2	100	0	0

**Table 5.4**

State of butchered vertebrae at the Macdonell site.

	<i>Bos taurus</i>		<i>Sus scrofa</i>		<i>Ovis aries</i>		<i>Medium</i>		<i>Large</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<i>Cervical vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	3	38	2	20	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	0	0	1	13	1	10	0	0	0	0
<i>Thoracic vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	2	25	2	20	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	0	0	1	13	1	10	0	0	0	0
<i>Lumbar vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	0	0	1	13	2	20	0	0	0	0
<i>Sacral vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	0	0	1	10	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	0	0	0	0	1	10	0	0	0	0
<i>Caudal vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Total whole vertebrae</i>	0	0	5	63	5	50	0	0	0	0
<i>Total split vertebrae</i>	0	0	3	38	5	50	0	0	0	0
	0	0	8	100	10	100	0	0	0	0

**Table 5.5**

State of butchered vertebrae at the Moodie farmstead.

	<i>Bos taurus</i>		<i>Sus scrofa</i>		<i>Ovis aries</i>		<i>Medium</i>		<i>Large</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<i>Cervical vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	1	33	0	0	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	3	38	1	33	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Thoracic vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	1	33	0	0	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	3	38	0	0	0	0	1	25	0	0
<i>Lumbar vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	1	13	0	0	0	0	1	25	0	0
<i>Sacral vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Butchered in half	1	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Caudal vertebrae</i>										
Whole	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	50	0	0
Butchered in half	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Total whole vertebrae</i>	0	0	2	67	0	0	2	50	0	0
<i>Total split vertebrae</i>	8	100	1	33	0	0	2	50	0	0
	8	100	3	100	0	0	4	100	0	0

## 5.5 Wholesale and Retail Cuts of Meat

### 5.5.1 *Stage 3 of the butchering process*

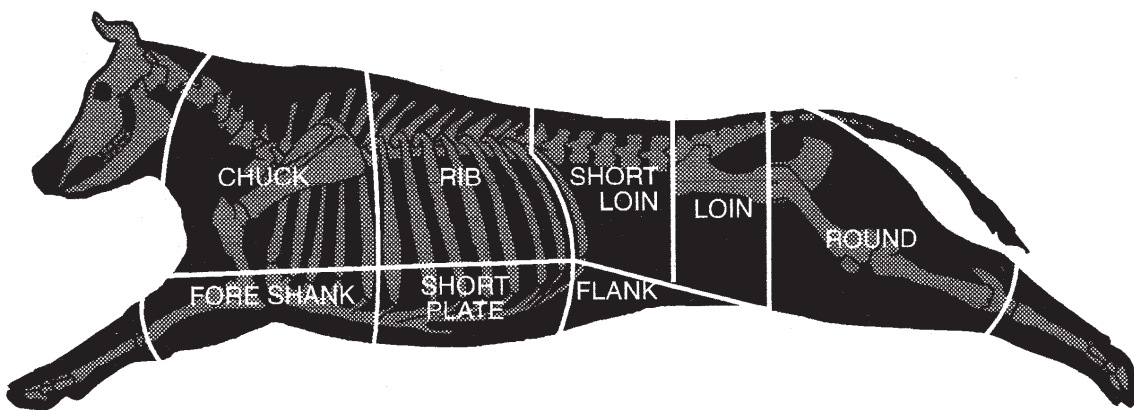
In the third stage of the butchering process, the domestic carcass was further sub-divided into wholesale and retail cuts of meat. The wholesale cuts are the coarse anatomic divisions that serve to make the carcass more manageable, and retail cuts of meat are the much smaller divisions that are the ideal size for consumption. As has already been discussed briefly (see Section 3.2.7), there is considerable variation in the techniques of butchering that have traditionally been described (Davidson 1982; Ensminger 1983:1082; Gerrard 1951:227; Ziegler 1968:334), and at least part of this confusion stems from the fact that many of the same cuts have been given more than one name. Prior to 1973, for example, there were as many as 3,000 different names in use to describe the many meat cuts of the three main domestic species. At this time, national standardization occurred in the United States, and the number was reduced to roughly 300 (Ensminger 1983:1082).

A similar problem of classification in historical literature is at least as significant. For example, the skeletal definitions of livestock meat cuts are defined in three different ways in three different treatments on the topic (Davidson 1982; Lyman 1979; Schulz and Gust 1983). Given that there is variability in the way in which the modern domestic carcass is butchered, the historical butchering process is bound to be equally idiosyncratic in its application. To encourage standardization, this thesis will define wholesale and retail meat cuts according to contemporary standards, and use associated skeletal descriptions and nomenclature. The butchering trends recognized in the assemblages are then compared against these definitions to determine if any of these primary units have any interpretive value or are at all recognizable in the zooarchaeological assemblages from historical sites.



### 5.5.2 Wholesale Meat Cuts

Wholesale meat cuts are unique to the specific livestock species in question but, due to the similarity of domestic anatomies, there exist a number of analogous cuts of meat (Gerrard 1951:227). A side of beef derived from Stage 2 processing is further subdivided into fore and hind quarters, the division is shown here as being between the 12th and 13th ribs (see Figure 5.9). The forequarter is then butchered into chuck, rib, foreshank, and short plate, and the hindquarter into the loin, short loin, flank and round (Ensminger 1983:1083; Mettler 1986:23; Ziegler 1968:335).

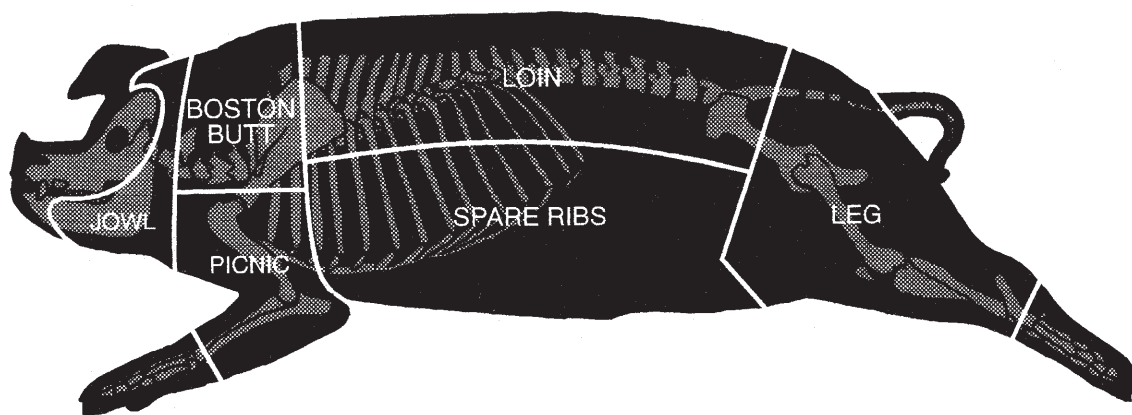


**Figure 5.9**

The wholesale meat cuts of the domestic cow.

Figure is a compilation of The Diagram Group (1990); Ensminger (1983); Mettler (1986); Sisson and Grossman (1975); Schulz and Gust (1983); and Ziegler (1968).

The medium sized domestic mammals do not have as many associated meat cuts. The body of the domestic pig for example, is divided into four anatomical sections: the head, shoulder, belly and ham (see Figure 5.10). From the head is derived the jowl, from the shoulder come the boston butt and the picnic, and from the belly, the spare ribs (Ensminger 1983:1088; Mettler 1986:53; Ziegler 1968:287).

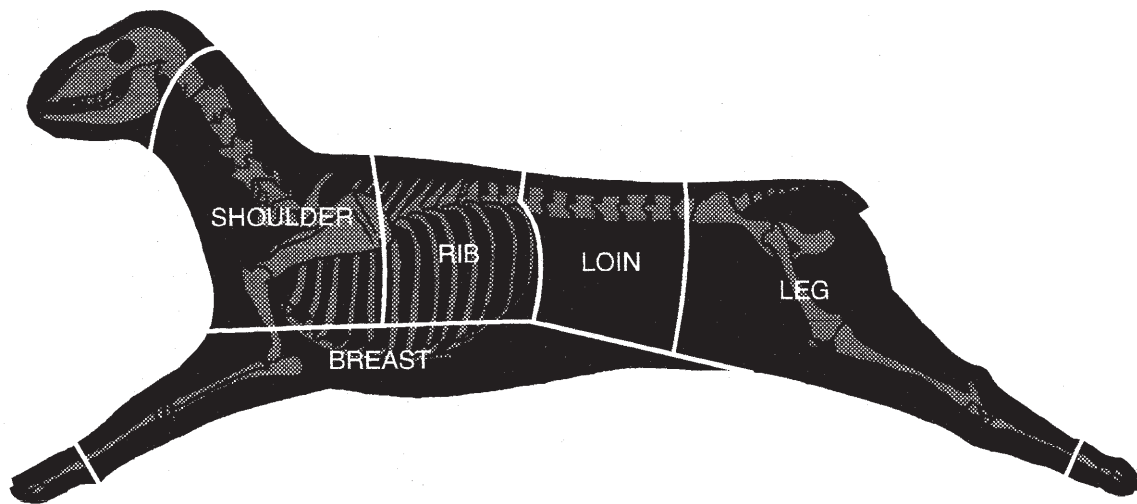


**Figure 5.10**

The wholesale meat cuts of the domestic pig.

Figure is a compilation of The Diagram Group (1990); Ensminger (1983); Lyman (1977); Mettler (1986); Sisson and Grossman (1975); and Ziegler (1968).

The domestic sheep carcass can be processed in one of two ways. If the vertebral column is split, then it can be divided into the common wholesale meat cuts. Alternatively, if the carcass is not halved, then the anterior and posterior portions of the sheep are separated into fore and hind saddles, the division being between the 12th and 13th ribs (Ensminger 1983:1086). This cut is analogous to the fore and hind quarters of the beef carcass. Archaeological evidence from the four sites studied herein indicate that most sheep vertebrae were butchered in half (see Tables 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4), so the wholesale cuts will be discussed in this regard. The ovine carcass is divided into five main cuts, the shoulder, rib, loin, leg and breast (see Figure 5.11).



**Figure 5.11**

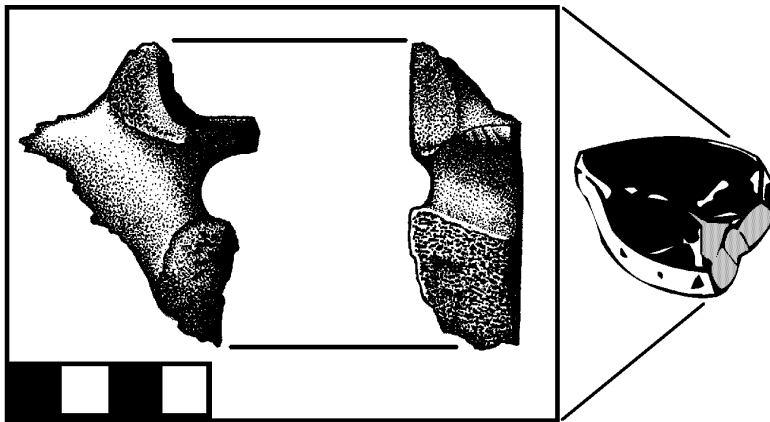
The wholesale meat cuts of the domestic sheep.

Figure is a compilation of The Diagram Group (1990); Ensminger (1983); Lyman (1977); Mettler (1986); Sisson and Grossman (1975); and Ziegler (1968).

## 5.6 Units of Consumption

Many authors have attempted to define and use the secondary meat cuts that occur in the historical faunal assemblage to reflect such things as dietary preferences, ethnicity, status or wealth (Huelsbeck 1991; Lyman 1977, 1979; Schulz and Gust 1983). These works have merit to be sure, but ultimately it is the perception of the meat cuts used that is at fault in each of these articles. The authors' perceived definition of the secondary meat cut is a confusing combination of wholesale and retail cuts of meat that is often used as a direct measurement of consumption. It stands to reason that the wholesale cuts of meat that have thus far been demonstrated will never be recognized in this exact form in the faunal assemblages from historical sites. Clearly, it is not enough to specify cuts of meat, and assign economic relevance to them if they are not culturally relevant to the people being studied. As a result, it is necessary to examine the butchered skeletal remains from historical sites to determine the forms and frequencies of specific units of consumption.

The faunal assemblages from the four sites studied for this thesis are relatively easy to interpret in this regard. For example, the bovine lumbar vertebra in Figure 5.12 is a thin lateral slice of the vertebral body with a portion of the transverse process. Evidence that it was split in half by a hand saw is clear above the cavity of the vertebral



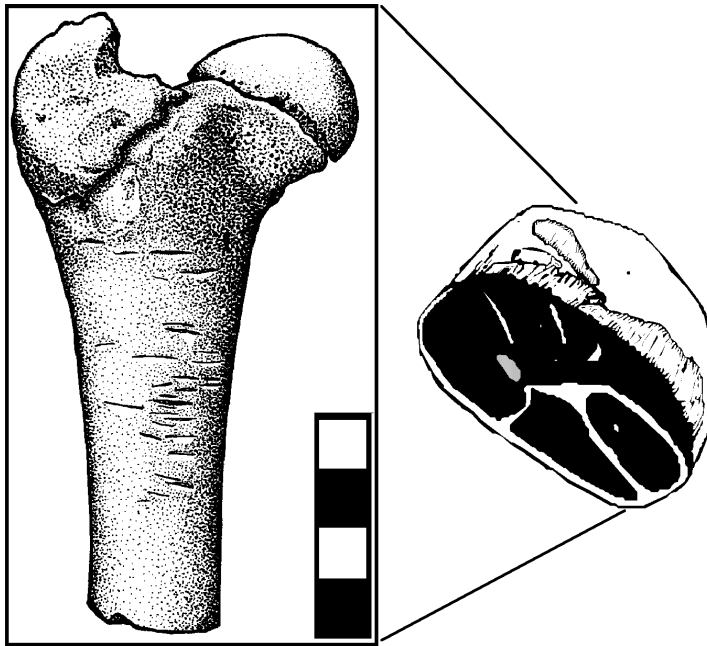
**Figure 5.12**

The lumbar vertebra of a cow butchered as a steak cut. From the left is the anterior view, the sagittal view, and a graphic of a porterhouse steak with the skeletal material shaded (Steak graphic modified from Ensminger 1983:1083).

foramen on what is left of the base of the spinous process. Apparently, it was then butchered on the cranial and caudal ends to form a steak cut. The skeletal element specifies the wholesale meat cut as *short loin*, and more specifically, a

*porterhouse steak*. It is information such as this that is rarely apparent in the type of studies that were listed above. In such work, this skeletal element would have been a statistical inclusion in the secondary meat cut designation, and we would have missed out on the significant information that is provided concerning details of its consumption. Steak cuts typically represent a single meal of a single person (Schmitt and Zeier 1993:23), and are indicative of an increased difficulty in butchering and as such are demonstrative of a butcher with a fair amount of skill with a hand saw, implying the solicitation of professional butcher. If this is indeed the case historically, then it stands to reason that such precise units of consumption could not have occurred with any great frequency prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As we discussed earlier (see Section 5.3), the hand saw is the only butchering implement that could possibly produce these cuts of meat, and it was not used extensively until this time. It follows then, that public perception of

what constituted a quality cut of meat did not become common place until it was



**Figure 5.13**

The femur of a pig, butchered mid-shaft and inscribed by cut marks. The graphic is the sirloin half of a ham with skeletal material shaded (Graphic modified from Ensminger 1983:1088).

possible to produce said cut (see Section 1.6). These last two points have relevance for any discussion of butchering and subsistence patterns prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially those that assume a parallel with contemporary practices.

Similarly, the pig femur in Figure 5.13 was butchered mid-shaft, and likely represents a dietary choice for the sirloin half of a

ham. Further, the lateral cut marks along the shaft are a result of the removal of meat, possibly the deboning of a ham (Mettler 1986:54). Both of these examples represent individual meals, and if we are able to determine the frequency and type of these meals, it will provide insight into the subsistence strategies of the historical inhabitants of the sites studied in this thesis, and by extrapolation the nature of the subsistence of a settler in Upper Canada.