The Homeless and Reformers: Negotiating Progress in the Upper Streets of
Halifax, 1890-1914

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The extremely poor have often been cast as deviants or others, in both the past and the present. Historians of Atlantic Canada have used the idea of deviance as an acceptable approach to the poor and homeless of the past and tacitly encourage us to see the contemporary homeless as deviants. Victorian theorists such as Malthus and Mayhew pejoratively characterized the poor as an underclass. Contemporary writers have provided evidence that challenges the use of the concept in Canada. But it remains a powerful force within American sociology, which is able to cast its influence over Canadian historical writing. It is the contention of this research that it is possible to be true to the past, to reflect the warts and downfalls of the extremely poor and homeless who lived there, but at the same time recognize their efforts to follow prevailing norms and to empathize with their plight and in doing so generate at least the possibility of recognition and empathy in the present. Such recognition and empathy may be the keys to creating and maintaining humane solutions to poverty and homelessness. The examinations conducted by this research address an area of our past that has been largely overlooked. This research supplements broad historical surveys of social welfare legislation by examining social welfare policy in action at the local level. By positioning itself at the convergence of labour history and studies of poverty, and by demonstrating that the populations examined by these discrete areas of research are more alike than different, this research shows that labour history can be extended to include many of those who lived "rough" in the past. Through its approach this

research hopes to encourage a view that can help to integrate the study of extreme poverty and homelessness into the mainstream of Canadian historiography.

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Chapter One - The History of Poverty and Destitution in Halifax Can be Better Understood

Introduction

An old woman bundled in layers of Salvation Army handouts trudges along behind a rusted grocery cart. A ratty scarf hides her face. Her movement is clumsy, but she is not drunk. She stumbles because her rubber boots are two sizes too big. She mutters constantly. Now and then she stoops to inspect a garbage bin or the ground beneath a hedge, looking for returnable bottles and cans. It is seven o'clock on a Saturday morning and minus fifteen degrees. She should be home warm in bed. But this woman has neither home nor bed. And for her, one day of the week is little different from the next. Her mental illness may be a cause or an effect of her condition; it is no longer possible to tell. Untreated and unloved she wanders the streets between stays at a shelter. It is hard to look at such vulnerability and suffering so most do not, they hustle past denying witness. In the 70s, this scene would have seemed strange to most Canadians. Over the past two decades it has become commonplace in cities across the country. It has come to be known as homelessness.¹ Some see homelessness

¹ Terms such as vagrants, tramps, beggars, wondering poor and homeless have been used in the past to describe and disparage those outside - or precariously within - a settled homeful existence. The word homeless is used at times in the records of the Halifax Police Court and the city prison. The local press also used the word in describing the poor and persons before the court. In the past the word seems to have referred to the absence of physical shelter. It does not seem to have referred to a state of mind or a distinct group of people as it does in the present. For example, an article appearing in the 9 January 1900 edition of the *Morning Chronicle* described the activities of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty for the preceding year. It noted that 4 "homeless persons were removed to shelter". The article of approximately 300 words said a great deal about the Society's work with animals. But nothing about the individuals referred to as "homeless" beyond their being provided with some form of shelter. *Morning Chronicle*, 9

as a systemic problem. Others see the homeless as authors of their own misfortune. While the debate over who to blame continues the homeless are becoming more visible everywhere in Canada from St. John's to Victoria.

Despite the reality of 'bag ladies'², most Canadians, as well as outsiders, see Canada as a benevolent country. Over the past century Canada has developed a complex array of social welfare programs, federal transfer payments and crown corporations such as Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Farm Credit Canada. In general, these organizations attempt to provide Canadians with a minimum of social and economic wellbeing, a social safety net. It is in the patina of these social welfare policies that we see our benevolence. Because he is commonly identified as the person most responsible for creating public health care, a service that has become sacred, Tommy Douglas was recently dubbed 'the greatest Canadian'.³ At the same time, as Dennis Guest points out, state commitments to welfare programs have been shrinking, sometimes at an

January 1900. NSARM mfm# 5279. For the purposes of this discussion the terms homeless and homelessness refer to persons and circumstances with the least access to the level of secure housing, health care, employment and education available to the majority of people in their own time and place. This definition is similar to the definition currently used by the United Nations. See: *The Street Speaks Report, 1996*, (Calgary: unknown, 1996) Current research is moving away from narrow definitions that focus solely "upon homeless peoples' ability to find shelter" and developing broader definitions that recognize homelessness as a social-psychological condition with structural causes. See David Hulchanski et al., *Solutions to Homelessness: Vancouver Case Studies* Ottawa, (Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1991) and Kim Hopper, *Reckoning with Homelessness*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

² According to the 2007-2008 edition of the *Merriam-Webster English Dictionary* this term dates back to the 1970s and is used in reference to a "homeless woman who roams the streets of a city carrying her possessions in shopping bags" as well as grocery carts or other means.

³ "In November 2004, Canadians voted Tommy Douglas the Greatest Canadian of all time following a nationwide contest. Over 1.2 million votes were cast over six weeks as each of 10 advocates made their case for the Top 10 nominees in special feature programs on CBC Television. After a Final Showdown and one last chance to vote, the results were revealed on November 29, 2004 by hosts Wendy Mesley and Shaun Majumder." 15 February 2005 <<http://www.cbc.ca/greatest/>>

alarming rate, over the past twenty years.⁴ Are we celebrating our truly benevolent society or are we conveying our determination to preserve it? In other words, does the selection of Tommy Douglas as 'the greatest Canadian' represent a desperate attempt to preserve public policies and an image of ourselves increasingly threatened by the high cost of programs, government cutbacks, and unsolved, paralyzing arguments over who should pay?

The Canadian economy has seen modest but steady growth in recent years. Government revenues are holding or increasing. So is the number of Canadians barely or unable to make ends meet.⁵ Meanwhile taxpayers and governments are increasingly leery of dependence and welfare cheats.⁶ Accountability and measurable results are the new clarion calls for program managers. Many government offices, boardrooms and households once again have to decide where the line between individual and social responsibility should be drawn. That debate sets the parameters of our social welfare policy and the gage of our social safety net. Canadians have never been as well protected from the outcomes of that debate as they want to believe.

The modern-day homeless have fallen through the social safety net. They are the least protected members of contemporary Canadian society. Thomas

⁴ Dennis Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada 2nd ed.*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985).

⁵ For a national perspective see: Jack Layton, *Homelessness: The Making and Unmaking of a Crisis*, (Toronto: Penguin, 2000). For figures regarding Halifax see: Halifax Regional Municipality, *Homelessness in HRM: A Portrait of Streets and Shelters* (Halifax: HRM, 2004).

⁶ Such leeriness is evidenced in the writings of Charles Murray, Lydia Morris and Alice O'Connor which will be presented and discussed in chapters 3 & 4.

Berrigan, who grew up in late Victorian Halifax, is an example of the itinerancy and extreme poverty that existed within Canada's past. Thomas was sentenced to ten days in Halifax's Rockhead prison for the first time when he was fifteen years old. He was found guilty of being drunk in the street. The year was 1881. Over the next thirty years Thomas would be in and out of Rockhead for similar offenses. Clearly, he had a problem with alcohol. In this he was not alone. Late 19th century Canadian society floated on alcohol; as Halifax historian P.B. Waite has colorfully noted, Canada was a very "un-Victorian" society, particular in regards to alcohol consumption.⁷ Throughout much of his adult life Thomas had no address other than Rockhead or the City Home. Most likely he never had more than a few dollars to his name or an address that could be called permanent. He lived what Robert Humphreys describes as a "rough" life.⁸ A life marred by drink, poverty and itinerancy was often a ticket to the poorhouse in late 19th century Canada. The records of the Halifax poorhouse show that 335 men, many of them much like Thomas, resided there between May 1st 1900 and April 30th 1901. Some stayed for only a day. John McCready was there for all 365 days of that year. So were 133 other men.⁹

⁷ P.B. Waite, "Sir Oliver Mowat's Canada: Reflections on an Un-Victorian Society," *Oliver Mowat's Ontario: papers presented to the Oliver Mowat Colloquium*, ed. Donald Swainson (Toronto: MacMillan 1972) 12-33.

⁸ Robert Humphreys, *No Fixed Abode: A History of Responses to the Roofless and the Rootless in Britain*, (London, St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1999).

⁹ Names and figures here are drawn from the record books of Rockhead Prison and The City Home 1900-01. These records along with the Police Court ledgers and many other records created by the city's administration were for many years housed at Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management (NSARM). Recently these records have been moved to the new Halifax Regional Municipality Archives (HRMA).

Such records regarding the hard facts of poverty and internment have survived. But little has been done to reconstruct the pattern of life at the bottom of Halifax society during the later years of the Victorian period and the early decades of the 20th century. Halifax is not an exception. Nowhere in Canada has the history of extreme poverty¹⁰ received much attention. This research represents one step toward a correction of this historiographical oversight. It follows and examines the actions of individuals who faced the greatest struggle to remain and survive within Halifax society, from the 1890s until the onset of World War I. It examines how the extremely poor and their better-off neighbours shared physical, economic and social space within an area of Halifax known as the upper streets.

The local press of a century ago described the poorest residents of the upper streets as notorious and dangerous. European writers argued that poverty was an individual responsibility and, that as a group, the extremely poor constituted

¹⁰ "Extreme poverty" is not a clearly defined historical or sociological term. Contemporary agencies such as the World Bank and authors such as Jeffery D. Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*, (New York: Penguin, 2005), measure it primarily in monetary terms, that is to say by considering one's income relative to figures such as their nation's average income or poverty line. It is used in this discussion in reference to a range of circumstances (monetary, social and physical) that has at one end absolute homelessness and at the other end the working poor familiar to the readers of Bettina Bradbury, Eric W. Sager, Peter Baskerville and Terry Copp. The working poor studied by these authors are able to maintain a level of wage income, trade in kind and family supports, what Steven King terms "an economy of makeshifts", that is able to keep them above the need for charity and public relief for most if not all of their lives. In the present study, the term extreme poverty will designate those who are frequently, often for long periods, and at various points in the lifecycle, dependent upon charity and public relief. Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993), Peter Baskerville and Eric W. Sager, *Unwilling Idlers: The Urban Unemployed and Their Families in Late Victorian Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), Terry Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Canadian Working Class in Montreal, 1879-1929*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974) and Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850*, (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000).

what they called an “underclass” which, if left unchecked, could threaten the social and economic order of a nation. Their work helped to stigmatize the extremely poor by arguing that they were different, outside of mainstream society. During the later decades of the 19th century many residents of Halifax had grown up in England. They would have been familiar with the journalist Henry Mayhew and his many articles on poverty which were originally published in London’s *Morning Chronicle*.¹¹ Following the ideas of Thomas Malthus, Mayhew was largely responsible for popularizing the idea that the poorest members of society should be seen as a dangerous underclass; an idea that came to North America with British immigrants.¹² Sociological research done in the 1960s built on these earlier works to form a renewed theory of an underclass. Some modern historians have used this updated theory of an underclass to guide their examinations of the past, used it to label and account for those at the very bottom of society. This research refutes the existence of an underclass in Edwardian Halifax. It finds the extremely poor of that time to be more similar to their better off neighbours than different from them. Moreover, the actions of those who lived in close proximity to the extremely poor did not indicate fears of an underclass. In this way, this research may offer an historical perspective useful to those in the present who choose to examine the nature of urban

¹¹ His articles were eventually compiled within three volumes titled *London Labour and the London Poor* published in 1851.

¹² The writings of Thomas Malthus and Henry Mayhew and their influence will be presented and discussed in chapters three and four. For reasons that remain unclear, the Halifax press did not use the term underclass, but its descriptions matched the tone of underclass theory as developed by Malthus and Mayhew.

poverty, to debate the boundaries of individual and social responsibility within Canadian society and to study the nature, impacts and limits of our benevolence.

This research is located at the interaction of many fields; sociology and political science as well as many areas of study within the discipline of history. The following section surveys the work done by Canadian historians who have examined poverty and the extremely poor. The various entry points and approaches used by Canadian as well as some international historians will be presented and discussed; particularly for the vocabularies, findings and questions they offer to inform and guide this research. For the same reasons some contemporary studies of homelessness will also be examined. The first section ends with a statement regarding the intended contribution of this research. The following section identifies and describes the relevant primary materials. The final section outlines the methodology of this study. Upon coming to the end of this chapter it is hoped that readers will be able to see clearly how this study has been informed by previous research as well as the gap within Canadian historiography it is attempting to address. Hopefully, readers will also gain some appreciation of the primary sources identified, their appropriateness and how they will be used within this study.

A Place for this Research within Canadian Historiography

The purpose of this section is to identify the areas of Canadian historiography that are relevant to this research and to discuss the approaches and findings of

particular works form the Canadian as well as the international literature most able to inform this project. By the end of this section the originality of this study will be apparent to the reader. The rationale for its positioning at the convergence of labour history and the histories of poverty will be presented and defended. In the coming chapters it will be seen that particular findings here are similar to the findings of other studies. At the same time, some of the findings of this study challenge the existing literature, Canadian historiography in particular. The areas where those challenges can be anticipated are pointed out here.

Histories of Social Welfare Policy and the Evolution of the Canadian Welfare State

Histories of social welfare can be important in a number of ways. They can show how past ideas regarding the causes and solutions for poverty were formed and used. They can show how social policies have been created. Histories of social welfare can identify policy accomplishments and limitations over the long term. And they can show how past groups within society have responded to need as well as to policies designed to address their need. Anyone interested in the operation, results and reactions to social welfare policy, past or present, can benefit from this historical knowledge. A summary of the historiography of Canadian social welfare policy helps to contextualize local events and policies examined here; helps to show how they fit within the broader evolution of the Canadian welfare state. In Canada, early programs of private and public relief eventually evolved into workers' compensation, old age pensions, mothers' or

family allowance, unemployment insurance (now employment insurance) and, of course, socialized medical care, the cornerstones of the Canadian welfare state. How these policies came into being, the roles of municipal, provincial and federal departments as well as key individuals, is well summarized in *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada* by Dennis Guest.¹³ Guest offers what Kenneth McNaught terms an establishment point of view, similar to most early works in labour or political history.¹⁴ Guest does not provide an explicit theory of the state. However, in his survey of approaches taken to the historical examination of social welfare policy in Canada, James Struthers identifies Guest as a proponent of the functional approach which is based on the work of Harold Wilinsky, whereby the welfare state is seen as a logical response to the forces of industrialization and urbanization. The inability of individuals and families to meet all needs comes to be seen as 'normal' and programs of assistance become 'institutional'.¹⁵ In addition to mapping out a detailed chronology of social welfare legislation, Guest identifies the terms of the debate that have surrounded poverty and social security in Canada. He also addresses a fundamental question faced by policy makers and historians. Where does state responsibility for individual welfare begin and end? Guest favours the view of a comprehensive welfare state enunciated by Marsh and Beveridge.¹⁶ Others have pointed out the negative influences of this particular type of welfare state.

¹³ Guest 1-147

¹⁴ Kenneth McNaught, "E.P. Thompson vs. Harold Logan: Writing About Labour and the Left in the 1970s," *Canadian Historical Review* 62. 1981: 141-68.

¹⁵ James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario, 1920-1970*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) 3-17.

¹⁶ In 1942 Sir William Beveridge submitted his report and recommendations to British Parliament regarding poverty and post war reconstruction. Leonard Marsh presented a similar report to

In his opening to *Social Policy and Practice In Canada: A History*, Alvin Finkel points out that “once uncritically celebrated national proposals for cradle-to-grave “welfare,” such as Britain’s Beveridge Report and Canada’s Marsh Report” are being reexamined “, particularly by feminist scholars such as Jane Lewis who identify their “prescriptive effect” regarding gender roles.¹⁷ In addition to feminist interpretations of the state and the evolution of social welfare policy, Finkel outlines Gøsta Epsing-Anderson’s three ideal types of social welfare state.

The social-democratic welfare state stresses state-run universal programs and social equality, with state programs compensating heavily for the inequitable distribution of wealth in the marketplace...By contrast, in conservative or corporatist welfare states, programs are class-based, with administration of programs delegated by the state to institutions representing different class and group interests. Such states use social policy as much to reinforce market and non-market inequalities as to ameliorate them. Finally, in residual welfare states, there are few universal programs; social policy aims only to prevent the destitute from starving or going without any form of medical care.¹⁸

Like Guest, Finkel’s work focuses on the institutional or establishment point of view. But Finkel is more direct about his view of the state and how he believes social policy is formed. He believes human agency rather than socioeconomic structure determines the course of events. In Finkel’s view the state serves as the arbiter and reflection of the primary forces within society. For him social policy is the official outcome of competition and compromise between particular

Canadian Parliament in 1943. Both reports called for comprehensive state efforts to maintain full employment and to protect the health and security of all families and are considered blueprints to the second half of the 20th century welfare states.

¹⁷ Alvin Finkel, *Social Policy and Practice in Canada: A History*, (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006) 8.

¹⁸ Finkel 6

values and material interests; a view familiar to those who know the work of political cultural theorists such as Seymour Martin Lipset, Louis Hartz, and Gaston Rimlinger.¹⁹

An excellent companion to the above noted works by Guest and Finkel is a collection of essays edited by Allan Moscovitch and Jim Albert, *The Benevolent State: The Growth of Welfare in Canada*.²⁰ These essays present a mixture of views regarding the intentions behind many programs of the Canadian state. In trying to define and discuss the Canadian State, Leo Panitch warns against treating the state as a monolith.²¹ Attributing to it some "intentions" does just that. Nevertheless, within this collection one can see a variety of opinions and keen perceptions that help us to understand and assess the history of social welfare policy in Canada which is largely what these authors set out to do. They did not set out to examine social policies in the context of the lives of the poor, the lives most directly affected by social welfare policy. In order to see poverty close up and to fully appreciate public policy, a different approach is required, one that moves beyond the establishment point of view.

The works noted above, as well as similar studies by Albert Rose, D.C.M. Platt, Malcolm G. Taylor and James Struthers, survey and analyze some

¹⁹ James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence* 7.

²⁰ Allan Moscovitch and Jim Albert, eds. *The Benevolent State: The Growth of Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1987).

²¹ Leo Panitch, "The Role and Nature of the Canadian State," *The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power*, ed. Leo Panitch (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

provincial, but mostly federal legislation.²² They also tell us about individuals such as social worker Charlotte Whitton and journalist John J. Kelso, who were able to direct public and political attention toward particular social issues. These studies focus on prominent characters and public policy as the measure and direction of society. They do rarely, however, study local practices. Rather than assume a universal application of policy, it is important to examine events at the local level. There is often a marked difference between the design and the application of public policy. None of the authors mentioned above examine social welfare policy in operation at the local level through interactions between local officials and those in need. Their approach belongs to a tradition of political history that focuses on the central government and policymaking. An exception to this top down examination of the welfare state can be found in Dominique Marshall's *The Social Origins of the Welfare State: Québec Families, Compulsory Education, and Family Allowances, 1940-1955*. Marshall examined the links between social programs and families in Quebec, in particular the way family allowances and compulsory schooling benefited the children of farm families. While theories of political culture or functionalism can help our understanding, Marshall argued that a complete understanding of public policy

²² Albert Rose, "Social Services," *The Canadians 1867-1967*, eds. J.M.S. Careless and R. Craig Brown (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968), D.C.M. Platt, ed. *Social Welfare, 1850-1950: Australia, Argentina and Canada Compared*, (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan Press, 1989). Malcolm G. Taylor, *Health Insurance and Canadian Public Policy: The Seven Decisions that Created the Canadian Health Insurance System and their Outcomes*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), and James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983). Canada. *Unemployment Insurance Commission. Selected Decisions of the Umpire, 1943 to 1948* is an edited collection of primary documents regarding Unemployment Insurance Claim (UIC) appeals across Canada. In this volume the names, locations and particulars that would identify persons and places have been removed.

formation and impact required a close-up examination of lived experience. This study has more in common with Marshall than with Guest. While not forgetting the legislative context, this research presents policy in action through the lives of those in need in the belief that what happens at this level is the best indication of the effectiveness of our social welfare policy and the quality of our benevolence.

This research supplements broad historical surveys of social welfare legislation such as the one Guest provides, by offering an analysis of social welfare policy in operation at the local level, and by adopting a “bottom up” approach. It focuses on the lower ranks of the social order, where the fields of labour history and studies of poverty converge. It demonstrates that the populations identified by these discrete areas of research are more similar than different. Over the past thirty years, labour historians have paid a great deal of attention to the everyday lives and consciousness of Canada’s working classes. As Carl Berger outlines in the final chapter of *The Writing of Canadian History*, the advent of the ‘new social history’, in the 1960s, saw studies of the Canadian working classes move from examinations of labour unions and leaders toward examinations of the everyday lives of urban workers. Hardship and struggle are visible throughout this body of literature. For example, Bettina Bradbury shows how poor families in Montreal (1860s-90s) used the work of women and children to cope with increasing dependence on low paying wage labour and frequent unemployment.²³ An important aspect of Bradbury’s work is her insistence on the

²³ Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families*. Working class historiography has done a masterful job of reconstructing behavior patterns and strategies used by the working classes to survive the

agency of the labouring poor, their ability to shape events not be merely subject to them. Authors such as Greg Kealey, Eric W. Sager and Peter Baskerville also ascribe agency to the working classes.²⁴ The agency of workers, their ability to affect policy change, falls in line with the social democratic theory of the state as identified by Struthers. "The level of any nation's or region's social policy development reflects the extent to which the working class, through trade union organization and political mobilization, can move the state to meet its needs rather than those of capital."²⁵ Informed by these examples, this research approaches the extremely poor of Halifax expecting them to have influence, to act in their self-interest, to recognize societal norms and to sometimes follow and to sometimes stretch those norms.

Labour History, the Growth of Unions and the Agency of Workers

The history of social welfare has done much to reveal the evolution, implementation and affects of policy. But it has told us less about the actions of the majority of Canadians. Labour history, particularly the "new" labour history that began to appear in the 1970s, has done a great deal to show the affects of

vagaries of an emergent urban industrial economy. Studies of the family, particularly working class families, also have done much in this regard. In addition to Bradbury, see for example: Cynthia R Comacchio, *The Infinite Bonds of Family: Domesticity in Canada, 1850-1940*, (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1999), Lori Chambers and Edgar-André Montigny, eds. *Family Matters: Papers in Post-Confederation Canadian Family History*, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1998) and Joy Parr, ed. *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982).

²⁴ Gregory S. Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867-1892*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), Eric W. Sager, *Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada, 1820-1914*, (Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989) and Baskerville and Sager, *Unwilling Idlers*.

²⁵ James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence* 8.

unions on working conditions as well as the formation and action of the Canadian state. In addition to recognizing the agency of workers, the new labour history has tried to assess the broader implications of that agency. The work of Greg Kealey suggests that the form and limits of worker agency helped to determine the form and limits of the Canadian economy. In his study of Toronto between 1867 and 1892, Kealey concluded that Toronto's workers were able to achieve a degree of class consciousness in response to factory production and consolidating capital. It was a consciousness strong enough to increase the protection of unionized workers and to push governments into creating more comprehensive social welfare programs. But it was not a consciousness strong enough to realize a socialist economy or full employment.²⁶ Workers were able to win some concessions from employers. Meanwhile, the linked processes of industrialization and urbanization that dominated the Victorian era did not deliver higher levels of income, job security or material comforts to the majority of Canadians. Large numbers of individuals in cities across the country continued to

²⁶ Gregory S. Kealey, chapters 8,9 &13 and Michael J. Piva, reviewer *Canadian Historical Review* 61. 1980: 209. As Kealey points out, the Knights of Labour had a broader view and made attempts to organize all workers regardless of skill, sex or ethnicity. Their efforts collapsed and a potential host for emergent socialist ideas disappeared. Michael J. Piva describes Kealey's work as a "monograph about cultural adaptation". Kealey demonstrates how workers used their cultural heritage as craft workers to resist mechanization and the discipline of factory labour. Traditional practices bound and protected craft and union members. At the same time they worked to exclude non-members. Organized labour helped bring about changes that eventually benefited all workers - increased wages, safety regulations, and shorter working hours for example. Regardless of what particular members may have felt, union leadership made no effort to extend the direct social and economic benefits as well as the advocacy of the labour movement to all members of late Victorian Canadian society who were dependant upon the sale of their labour for survival.

lack safe affordable housing. Particularly at the lower ranks of the working classes, economic stability was fragile at best.²⁷

In its assessment of worker agency and broader social reality, the new labour history acknowledges that economic independence through wage labour was impossible at times. That said; times of employment rather than unemployment, and workers efforts to maintain employment and job security through unionization, remain the primary focus of labour history, old and new. Many members of the group who are at the heart of this study were often dependant upon charity and institutions such as the poorhouse. Some, however, maintained economic independence for much if not all of their adult lives. As the extremely poor struggled to survive, labour groups were trying to define their members in the public mind as victims of capital and government policy. Politicians were looking for someone to fault for economic woes. Both groups blamed and separated themselves from the poorest members of society who became increasingly known within the lexicon of economic and social welfare policy as dependant and undeserving. Meanwhile those within the ranks of the labour movement and those who belonged to the emerging professional classes became increasingly known as independent and deserving. The evolution of these distinctions, less visible within the old labour history, has been more completely traced within the new labour history; particularly within the work of

²⁷ Michael Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), Terry Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty* and Baskerville and Sager, *Unwilling Idlers*. Visible in these examples of 'new' labour history is the hardship and struggle of the working classes. The plight of those who fell below the working classes to become dependant upon charity or public relief for short or longer periods is alluded to but not thoroughly examined.

Eric W. Sager, Peter Baskerville, Bettina Bradbury, and Peter McNinnis.²⁸ These authors point out that the actions and circumstances of the “deserving” and the “undeserving” were often indistinguishable. Nevertheless, the undeserving were denied union protection and at least to that extent intentionally abandoned despite the fact that many individuals who were at the forefront of the labour movement were also devout Christians bound by their faith to help the poor and often involved in a wide range of social reform endeavors. The linkages between labour and the broader push for social improvement is evidenced within examinations of Canadian Victorian reform offered by Ramsay Cook, Richard Allen and Andrew C. Holman.²⁹ While the new labour history also points out this

²⁸ Baskerville and Sager, *Unwilling Idlers*. In their first chapter “Discovering the Social Problem” these authors discuss the shift in language that helped to remove some of the stigma attached to being out of work; a process that separated the unwilling idlers from the undeserving. The rest of the study, however, seldom mentions the extremely poor largely left behind by the unwilling idlers and the union movement. Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families*. Bradbury acknowledges that the line between worthy and unworthy was often blurred. The survival strategies that she so carefully details (i.e. shared accommodations, extended family as economic unit, and children as wage earners) were used by families at various points along the socioeconomic spectrum. However, she shies away from an examination of illegitimate strategies (i.e. prostitution, selling liquor without a license and petty theft) which were not the sole property of the “disreputable”. It is the stable working class families able to hold some level of legitimate employment most of the time that are at the centre of her study, families who appear in census records which provide the principal resource for this work. Less stable families and individuals can often be seen between the lines, but they seldom appear in bold relief. Bradbury assigns a great deal of agency to her subjects, but she does not help the reader come to know her characters through detailed biographies. Biographies can help to display agency and overcome the negative connotations created by being left outside the labour movement and the writing of Canadian labour history. At the same time Bradbury attempts to bring a more rounded view to her subjects by attempting to bridge family, women’s and labour history. In agreement with Bradbury’s approach, here it is argued that labour history should be extended to include studies of extreme poverty. Peter McNinnis, *Harnessing Labour Confrontation: Shaping the Postwar Settlement in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002). Like Baskerville and Sager, McNinnis confirms that the extremely poor were abandoned by the labour movement. Unfortunately McNinnis follows the same course as he focuses on industrial legality and the interactions between business owners, union leadership and the state.

²⁹ Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Later Victorian Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), and Andrew C. Holman, *A Sense of Their Duty: Middle-Class Formation in Victorian Ontario Towns* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000),

linkage, it does not satisfactorily explain why it did not result in a more inclusive labour movement. One of the arguments built within this study, based on the evidence of similarities between those protected by the labour movement and those it left behind, says that the new labour history can go further. It can include a group of people previously seen to be outside the working classes and recognize the efforts of that group to be independent contributing members of society.

If the new labour history can go further, why have most of its proponents not done so? One reason is that labour history continues to adhere to boundaries set in the past by the very people it studies. As just mentioned, in the process of organizing and asserting itself during the late Victorian period and the early decades of the 20th century, labour's political discourse identified the lowest rank of society as "others". That process of distinguishing between workers and others is drawn out very carefully by Baskerville and Sager, as well as James Struthers, in their discussions of the language of unemployment as it developed a century ago.³⁰ It is also visible in Kealey's presentation of labour politics which focused on the union vote, not on the welfare of the masses.³¹ In the later part of the 19th century, through its politics and political discourse labour drew itself apart from

³⁰ Baskerville and Sager, *Unwilling Idlers* chapters 2&8. James Struthers. *No Fault of Their Own*. In the introduction of this study, Struthers does not focus on labour's efforts to identify its members as moral victims of structural unemployment. But he very clearly presents the principle of less eligibility and the use of words, such as "shiftlessness" and "pauperism" that stigmatized all those without work, regardless of reason. His discussion provides the background that led to the moment where "worthiness" could be bolstered by pointing a finger at the "unworthy", the moment examined by Baskerville and Sager.

³¹ Gregory S. Kealey, chapters 8&9. Here Kealey details the involvement of Liberal party leaders in the emergent labour movement. The primary purpose of that involvement was to win votes and elections.

those who were intermittently or chronically dependant upon charity and public relief. That distinction has extended into the present. Canadian labour history has followed suit. While labour historians such as those named above have acknowledged links between the working poor and those more destitute, in general the extremely poor have been left largely outside the purview of labour history. The separation between labour history and studies of poverty may be an instance of fragmentation such as that explained by what Michael Bliss described as "privatizing the mind", specialization within the research and writing of Canadian history.³²

³² Michael Bliss, "Privatizing the Mind: The Sundering of Canadian History, the Sundering of Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 26. 1991-2: 5-17. Michael Bliss discusses the state of "professional" history in Canada. Bliss feels that "...the content of Canadian history has fragmented and the world of the academic historian has become introverted to the point of ghettoization." (p. 6). In the second chapter of *Who Killed Canadian History?* (Toronto, 1998), Jack Granatstein echoes the sentiments of Bliss. On page 64 he offers Jeffery Simpson's summation of the current state of Canadian academic history. "History departments now largely teach particularistic histories of people defined by region, locality, gender or ethnicity. Political history is considered passé in many quarters, as is history on the grand scale. Micro-history as taken over, galvanizing some, boring most." While Bliss and Granatstein argue that division and specialization have gone too far, P.A. Buckner contends that from a Maritime perspective it has not gone far enough. Buckner identifies large areas of the region's past that remain untouched by historians and poor representation of the region in recent works attempting to provide a national synthesis through the 'new' histories. P.A. Buckner, "Limited Identities Revisited: Regionalism and Nationalism in Canadian History," *Acadiensis* 30. 2000: 4-15. Carl Berger, *The writing of Canadian history: aspects of English-Canadian historical writing, 1900-1970*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976) 297-319. Carl Berger identifies the divisions of the 'new social history' and debates within and between those divisions. His review makes it apparent that poverty is studied only as it affects the principal focus on the social construction of gender, the formation of class consciousness, the maintenance of ethnic identity, etc. Here it seems that in Canada the historical study of poverty *per se* is not well enough established to be considered a separate specialty. In contrast, the historical study of poverty *per se* is an enormous undertaking within the international literature. This research supports Buckner's contention: much of the history of the Maritime region remains undone; the history of poverty in the region in particular. This research does not argue for the creation of a new specialty history of poverty. Further division would only serve to undermine valuable interdisciplinary cooperation and to perpetuate a negative view of persons who deserve to have their positive actions acknowledged. Moreover, a focus on the negative actions of those at the bottom of past societies does nothing to encourage empathy and assistance of those at the bottom of modern societies. Changing views and actions toward contemporary Canadian natives may offer a case in point. Change in the present may be linked to changing views of natives in the past; from savages to proud peoples who endeavored to cope as best they could with European contact. What this research suggests instead of further specialization is that labour history extend its boundaries and examine more closely the porous

Histories of Social Reform and the Actions and Values of Middleclass Reformers

While recent labour history pays a great deal of attention to the consciousness and agency of workers, historical examinations of poverty in Canada often focus on the ideas held by society's middle classes and their responses to poverty based on those ideas. What, in their eyes, caused poverty? Could it be eliminated? If it could be eliminated, was it a collective or individual responsibility? The overarching questions asked by middle class reformers who wrote and implemented social welfare policies in the past are sometimes uncritically adopted by contemporary historians who study poverty. This is similar to labour historians who do not challenge the distinctions between the deserving and the undeserving drawn by their subjects. The work of Judith Fingard, Susan E. Houston and Alison Prentice confirm that the middle classes in late 19th and early 20th century Canada were imbued with fears of moral degeneration, a threatened social order and a dangerous poor.³³ Their fears and moral values were translated into policies that praised work and were often harsh in pursuit of social discipline; an example that supports Finkel's notion of how social policy is formulated. In *The Dark Side of Life* Judith Fingard characterizes the extremely

nature of the lower ranks of the working classes and the movement in and out of dependency that occurred in late 19th and early 20th century Canada.

³³ Judith Fingard, "The Relief of the Unemployed Poor in Saint John, Halifax and St. John's, 1815-1860," *The Acadiensis Reader: Volume One, Second Edition, Atlantic Canada Before Confederation*, eds. P.A. Buckner and David Frank (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990) 198-219, Susan E. Houston, "The 'Waifs and Strays' of a Late Victorian City: Juvenile Delinquents in Toronto," *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, Joy Parr ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1982) 129-142, and Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada*, (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1999). Houston and Prentice approach the actions of the middle classes, and their relationship with the working classes, through what they, and James Struthers, define as "social control". In this approach social welfare policies are a series of incentives and punishments designed by the middle classes and intended to "improve" the behavior of the working classes. James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence*.

poor of mid-Victorian Halifax as an underclass.³⁴ Fingard ascribes agency to her underclass subjects, but she seems to see them as striving to operate outside of prevailing morality rather than attempting to fit within it as best they could. In *The Dark Side of Life* social welfare policies appear to be conceived and imposed by middle class reformers. And, as Daniel T. Rodgers points out in *Atlantic Crossings*, the concerns of North America's middle classes were shaped by ideas and policies emanating from Europe.³⁵ This research approaches relations between the extremely poor and the middle classes in Halifax, knowing that those relations were tempered by local experience as well as perceptions and examples emanating from such places as London and New York. Moreover, within this study the poor as well as the middle class are seen to have agency and the ability to affect social relations and public policy.

Rodgers examines the movement of ideas between Europe and North America. The international literature on poverty highlights the details of Victorian poverty, particularly in Western Europe, and ideas regarding the causes of that poverty. Within this body of work we can examine the ideas and circumstances that existed in Europe as they were seen by Canadian contemporaries. In the process we can uncover many roots of Canadian social welfare policy, past and present. Bronislaw Geremek, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Arlette Farge and Steven King have all studied the history of poverty on the other side of the Atlantic.

³⁴ Judith Fingard, *The Dark Side Of Life In Victorian Halifax*, (Porters Lake, NS: Pottersfield Press, 1989).

³⁵ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

European industrialization produced extremes; extreme wealth, extreme poverty and extreme responses to poverty on the part of European authorities.³⁶ This study will examine to what extent interactions between middle class authorities and the extremely poor in late 19th and early 20th century Halifax took place in a context framed by these European extremes. Did those interactions justify or belie European clarion calls for action against moral degeneration, a threatened social order and a 'dangerous poor'?

The international literature on poverty can help to establish the legal and ideological framework surrounding events in late 19th and early 20th century Halifax. That literature can also provide useful examples of how to approach events within that framework, the work of Arlette Farge and Steven King in particular.³⁷ In *Fragile Lives*, an examination of 18th century Paris, Arlette Farge uses the ideas of her teacher and collaborator Michael Foucault to study the morals and identities of artisans and labourers as social constructs. Within the Parisian neighbourhoods she examines, life was lived in public and behavior was guided by the community as witness rather than an overarching set of laws or mode of production. Actors were complex characters guided as much by self-interest as by the reactions of others.³⁸ In *Poverty and Welfare in England*,

³⁶ Bronislaw Geremek, *Poverty a History*, trans. Agnieszka Kolakowska (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994), Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age*, (New York, Knopf., 1983), Arlette Farge, *Fragile Lives: Violence, Power and Solidarity in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993) and Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare*.

³⁷ Farge, *Fragile Lives* and King, *Poverty and Welfare*.

³⁸ Because the morals and actions of subjects are of central interest to this study it is important to define what these terms refer to here at the outset. The modifiers positive and negative often used here to characterize particular morals or actions as well as the word vice used here in

Steven King sets out the letter and spirit of the Poor Laws emanating from London between 1700 and 1850 and examines how they operated on the

discussions of the actions of central characters need clarification as well. The word action as used here is influenced by the work of Farge as noted above as well as the typology of action developed by sociologist Max Weber and the importance of choice in understanding action as developed by fellow sociologist Talcot Parsons. Based on interpretations of these authors, individuals are seen here to be guided by choice and intention within the boundaries set by the broader political and economic structures as well as their immediate neighbours as witnesses and respondents. Actions hold subjective meaning for the actor and are at the same time visible to others who form subjective interpretations of what they see. Conflicts often arise when individuals fail to understand or agree with the choices and intentions behind one another's actions. Conflict can also be avoided or resolved by reaching agreement. Reaching agreement involves engagement as will be defined and discussed in chapter three. In this study actions are directed by internal as well as external dialogues that are not always in agreement with one another or consistent over time. Moreover, actions "make sense" in their historical moment, what made sense in the past may not make the same sense in retrospect. Here positive and negative actions refer primarily to how individuals perceive the actions of others, contemporary observers as well as those looking back. In general, actions that provide physical, emotional, or economic gain to the individual and at the same time fall within the bounds of the law and do not impinge upon the lives of others are deemed positive. Conversely, actions that can bring individual or social loss in similar ways or are illegal or intrusive are said to be negative. The line between positive and negative can often be difficult to draw. For example, prostitution can be seen as negative in terms of personal health. On the other hand it can provide positive economic gain, the food and shelter essential to good health. Gordon Marshall ed. *A Dictionary of Sociology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

As understood here the word moral equates with the word good, what is good for the individual or society. Deciding what is moral or good is seldom simple. As will be discussed more fully in chapter three individuals draw upon a complex nexus of ideas and theories to form a moral imagination, a term borrowed from the work of Gertrude Himmelfarb that will also be presented more formally and discussed in the third chapter. The moral imagination is structured by a hierarchy of values or principles. Values at the top of the hierarchy, sometimes referred to as core values, are the most difficult to challenge or change because they provide the essence of the moral imagination, provide the basis of the entire structure. Moral imagination helps to direct the choice and intention behind action. For example, an individual who sees public transit as good for society according to his or her moral imagination may choose to act on that by riding the bus. Deciding how to act in the face of adultery, a drug addicted child or local prostitution is more difficult than choosing to ride the bus, but it is nonetheless very much a matter of one's moral imagination. The moral imagination is not static or necessarily consistent nor is it constant across time, space or culture. Following the work of Kim Hopper, it is the contention here that particular values and the entire moral imagination can also be stretched to justify or accept particular actions.

Here vice is understood as action, disease and commodity. An action done habitually or addictively can be thought of as a vice; drinking, smoking or gambling for instance. Light or moderate participation in such activities may not bring harm, disapproval or loss of control. But high levels of participation is often seen as a character flaw, particularly if ill health, economic dependence or law breaking result. Ongoing participation in the face of such results may be symptomatic of loss of control and disease, alcoholism for example. The line between choice and disease is individual and often blurred. Popular objects of vice such as liquor, sex and wagers, for example, have economic value, they are therefore saleable commodities. Those who sell vice, legally or illegally, risk being blamed for the individual or social harm experienced through consumption of their products. Who bears greater responsibility, buyers or sellers, and whether or not the level of demand is natural or a function of supply depends upon time and place and the moral imagination of those sitting in judgment.

ground' across the country.³⁹ Unlike Farge, King is not driven by a particular theory. He is guided by his belief that examining familiar data in new ways can help us to better understand the operation of the Poor Law. For example in Chapters 4 and 5, King moves away from examinations of employment and wages and "offers alternative measures of poverty – such as exemption from local taxes, rate arrears, and low rental payments."⁴⁰ King concludes that central policies acted more as guide than gospel. The Poor Law operated according to local economics, but more so according to a process of negotiation between those in need of relief, overseers of the poor and land owning rate payers. Practice varied widely. King concludes that Victorian England had relief systems not a system of relief.

These works by Arlette Farge and Steven King do not fit neatly into one of the six historical interpretations of social welfare policies identified by Canadian historian of social welfare James Struthers.⁴¹ Farge and King do not approach the past from a Marxist perspective. Unlike Prentice and Houston, they do not

³⁹ The Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 established public responsibility for poor relief through local parish rates. The Elizabethan Poor Law and guiding principles were adopted and adjusted to suit Nova Scotia and New Brunswick during the 18th century. The New Poor Law as it came to be known after the 1834 amendments instituted the principles of less eligibility, means testing and strengthened settlement provisions. The amendments made relief much harder to get and less generous. Upper and Lower Canada did not adopt the Poor Laws *in toto* but principles such as less eligibility, means testing and settlement were evident in the laws and practices that were adopted. The same attitudes eventually made their way across Western Canada. Traces of the New Poor Law remain evident in social welfare policies across Canada. Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security*

⁴⁰ George R. Boyer, reviewer *The Journal of Economic History* 62. 2002: 873-4.

⁴¹ Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence* 7. In terms of what support was offered to the poor, the social welfare policies of England and France as described by King and Farge respectively fit within Anderson's residual model as outlined by Alvin Finkel, *Social Policy* 6. However, the agency and ability to affect policy as identified by Farge and King does not fit well with the residual model which does not acknowledge the role of the poor in the process of policy formulation and application.

argue for social control. Rather, they claim that their subjects played a key role in forming, maintaining and legitimizing the social order. Farge and King have little in common either with the top down functional approach Struthers ascribes to Guest. In fact their bottom up view is the antithesis of Guest's. Their techniques very much informed this research as it assessed how national policies and trends identified by Guest operated on the ground in Halifax. The work of Farge and King does not fit well either with Struthers's depictions of what he calls "the social democratic model", "the new institutionalism" or "gender analysis". The political cultural approach as outlined by Struthers argues that "a societal consensus around certain values, ideas and core beliefs" largely determines the shape and limits of social welfare policies.⁴² However, as Struthers presents it, this approach does not stress the elasticity of values, ideas and beliefs or that they are influenced by members at the low end of society as much as they are by those who hold higher positions. Farge and King argue that the poor held such influence. In their interpretations, the poor, the working and middle classes hold similar values, ideas and beliefs. They are divided by wealth, not morality, and it is through a fluid morality shared and affected by all members of society that consensus is reached on matters such as the form and level of relief or work place conditions. This research offers an alternative approach to the study of extreme poverty in Halifax. Following the examples of Farge and King, as well as ways of interpreting actions found in the contemporary literature on

⁴² Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence* 7.

homelessness⁴³, as we will now discuss, this study approaches the extremely poor in terms of their sameness, views shared with the working and middle classes. It approaches social welfare policy as a product of consensus, which was sometimes an uneasy resolution of conflict, reached by the community as a whole. To date the history of extreme poverty in Halifax has not been approached in this manner.⁴⁴

Histories of Extreme Poverty

Within the expansive literature on poverty only a small number of studies closely examine extreme poverty and homelessness. Vagrancy laws, poorhouse legislation and outdoor relief efforts are typical entry points. Historical studies that focus on extreme poverty and homelessness in Canada are few in number⁴⁵ and amongst them only a handful examine extreme poverty and homelessness in Atlantic Canada.⁴⁶ Within this group, poverty on a regional scale is a dominant

⁴³ David Wagner, *Checkerboard Square: Culture and Resistance in a Homeless Community*, (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1993) and Hopper, *Reckoning with Homelessness*.

⁴⁴ See for example: James M. Whalen, "The Nineteenth Century Almshouse System in St. John County," *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 7. 1971: 5-27, Brereton Greenhous, "Paupers and Poorhouses: The Development of Poor Relief in Early New Brunswick," *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 1, 1968: 103- 126 and R.E Knoll, "Confines, Wards, and Dungeons," *Nova Scotia Historical Society Collections* 40.1980: 93-107. These authors are similar to Guest in that they focus on changes in the law and the actions of mid-level and senior officials. Conditions within jails and poorhouses are described but the voice or influence of those who lived within those walls is not recognized or assessed.

⁴⁵ See for example: John C. Bacher and J. David Hulchanski, "Keeping Warm and Dry: The Policy Response to the Struggle for Shelter Among Canada's Homeless, 1900-1960," *Urban History Review* 16. 1987: 147-163, David Bright, "Go Home. Straighten Up. Live Decent Lives: Female Vagrancy and Social Respectability in Alberta, 1918-1993," *Prairie Forum* 28. 2003: 161-172, Mary Anne Poutanen, "Regulating Public Space in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal: Vagrancy Laws and Gender in A Colonial Context," *Histoire Sociale* 35. 2002: 35-58 and Jill Wade, "Home or Homelessness? Marginal Housing In Vancouver, 1886-1950," *Urban History Review* 25. 1997: 19-29.

⁴⁶ Whalen, Greenhous, Knoll and Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life*.

theme.⁴⁷ But little has been done to explore wealth disparity within the region at the community level or to examine the lives of those at the very bottom of Maritime society. By focusing on those who lived “rough” in Edwardian Halifax this research helps to fill-in an unfortunate gap in our historical examination of Atlantic Canada. This research also encourages further research into extreme poverty and homelessness elsewhere in Canada, where this aspect of the past has also been largely overlooked.

As noted earlier, middle classes on both sides of the Atlantic, were haunted by fears of a dangerous poor as the 19th century closed and the 20th century began. The “danger” was often identified by the concept of an “underclass”. An understanding of this concept is crucial to explaining interactions between the middle classes and the extremely poor in late 19th and early 20th century Halifax, as several studies use the term uncritically and without regard to its political consequences.⁴⁸ Because it sets people apart from mainstream society, the

⁴⁷ See for example: E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, eds. *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), parts 3 & 4, E.R. Forbes, *Essays on the 20th Century Maritimes: Challenging the Regional Stereotype*, (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1989) and P.A. Buckner and David Frank, eds. *The Acadiensis Reader: Volume One Second Edition Atlantic Canada before Confederation*, (Fredericton, N.B., Acadiensis Press., 1998).

⁴⁸ See for example: King, *Poverty and Welfare*. King sometimes refers to the poor as an underclass without defining the term. At the same time his treatment of the poor belies the underclass concept as it is used by Fingard. King sees the poor as ‘worthy’, as striving for as much economic independence as their circumstances allowed. Fingard, particularly in *The Dark Side of Life*, sees deviance as an acceptable characterization of the poor and homeless of the past and seems unconcerned with the contemporary political implications of her work, which seems to tacitly encourage us to see the contemporary homeless as deviants. For a good historical overview of the underclass concept and its impact see: Lydia Morris, *Dangerous Classes: The Underclass and Social Citizenship*, (New York: Routledge, 1994). For further discussion of the pejorative effects of the concept and of theories of a culture of poverty and the failure of research to prove conclusively that the ‘way of life’ of the poor causes poverty and is not merely a reflection of poverty, see: J. Allan Winter, ed. *The Poor: A Culture of Poverty or a Poverty of Culture?*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1971).

underclass concept (carefully used or not) can create social and political disadvantages for those it identifies as others. By understanding the origins and basis of the concept, this research is better able to assess historical as well as contemporary studies that use the term. The concept of an underclass is most strongly associated with the observations and writings of the Cambridge professor and social theorist Thomas Malthus. Malthus asserted that those who lived in poverty had rejected the essential mores of society, most importantly the willingness to work for a living. The poor lacked affiliations with societal institutions (church, unions, political parties, etc.), were initiated into sex at a young age and often communicated in code or slang. Their way of life comprised a unique configuration of behavioral patterns and values. Malthus argued that this way of life was the cause of poverty and he characterized the poor as the “lower classes”, a group distinct from and dangerous to the rest of society.⁴⁹

The writings of Malthus, in particular his characterization of the poor, shaped amendments to the Elizabethan Poor Laws in 1834. The New Poor Law was designed to strengthen society by reinforcing the work ethic and to cut costs by denying relief to persons seen to belong to the underclass. Moreover, the new law served to legitimate the underclass concept and stigmatize persons it identified as members of the underclass. Vivid descriptions of “debauchery” amongst London’s poor provided by Henry Mayhew in the 1850s intensified the idea of an underclass in the minds of Britain’s middle classes. The concept

⁴⁹ For a good historical overview of the underclass concept as developed by Malthus, and its impact see: Lydia Morris, *Dangerous Classes*.

eventually crossed the Atlantic and exerted a powerful influence on social welfare policies across North America, particularly in Canada.⁵⁰ That influence does not by itself explain the pace at which social welfare policies developed. But minimum levels of assistance, rigid means testing and the practice of denying assistance based on arbitrary categories, were often related to ideas of an underclass, and the assumptions of the New Elizabethan Poor Laws continued to hamper North American expansion of social welfare policies following World War One despite pressure from veterans and women's groups. The modern welfare state did not easily or rapidly fall into place immediately after World War II. It took the combined effects of the Great Depression and the economic boom that followed World War II and the following decade for the underclass concept to be pushed aside and, at the same time, for the welfare state to emerge. John E. Tropman, whose research examines attitudes toward the poor in America, argues that the sequential occurrence of the Depression and World War II eased the punitive potential of values such as individualism and self-reliance. Values such as interdependence and community gained prominence and supported the creation of the welfare state.

In some respects it [World War II] represents a strange but not illogical extension of the social programs of the 1930s. Now it was not just the poor who were on the government payroll; everybody was on the government payroll. World War II demonstrated that a large scale public effort could be mounted, could be a success, and could be morally uplifting as well. The social programs of the 1930s passed through the warfare state to ultimately become the welfare state.⁵¹

⁵⁰ See: Morris, *Dangerous Classes* and Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*.

⁵¹ John E. Tropman, *Does America Hate the Poor?: the other American Dilemma: Lessons for the 21st Century from the 1960s and the 1970s*, (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998) 21.

But, as Tropman points out, the concept of an underclass, and the values that supported it, never disappeared entirely. They remained popular with some sociologists during the 1960s, even when they failed to influence government in an atmosphere of increased support for social welfare programs that lingered from the post war period. The economic recession of the 1980s, followed by a dramatic increase in the number of homeless persons in cities across North American and Western Europe, has rekindled the idea of an underclass in the public mind and more importantly in the minds of those who write and implement social welfare policies on both sides of the Atlantic.

Big Cataclysms – the Depression of the 1930s and World War II – caused fundamental changes in our willingness to help and our willingness to have the government help. Success was a positive reinforcement. Other cataclysms where failure was a leitmotif – Vietnam and the War on Poverty – allowed the resurgence of traditional and more negative values.⁵²

A prime example of that resurgence and its influence upon the disciplines of sociology and history can be seen within *The Dark Side of Life*. Here Judith Fingard accepts the idea of an underclass and uses it to describe and analyze those at the bottom of Halifax society. Fingard draws on the work of American sociologists Ken Auletta and William Julius Wilson for her understanding of the underclass concept. In her review of Fingard's work, Bettina Bradbury takes issue with the use of the concept because of the way it is rooted in the lives of recidivists. Fingard's work is based on 92 individuals who accounted for 31.7% of committals to the city prison between 1864 and 1873. Bettina Bradbury, whose

⁵² Tropman, 24.

work was introduced earlier within the section on labour history, believes that Fingard "makes a much more solid demarcation between this group and the rest of the working class than was probably the case."⁵³ Within her own research Bradbury ascribed agency to the labouring poor by demonstrating how they obtained a degree of leverage over their circumstances. It is her identification of leverage and the effort of the working classes to better themselves that lie at the heart of her criticism of an underclass as used by Fingard. Fingard connotes an intentional separation, a rejection of societal norms which Bradbury does not readily accept.⁵⁴

While the underclass concept has been reinvigorated within some modern studies, it has not been accepted by all of those interested in the causes and consequences of poverty, past or present. In "Keeping Warm and Dry: The Policy Response to the Struggle for Shelter Among Canada's Homeless, 1900-1960", John C. Bacher and J. David Hulchanski survey the history of housing policy. Here the focus is on federal action and senior officials, an approach similar to Guest and one that treats social policy as an amelioration of market forces in keeping with the social democratic model as described by Struthers. Bacher and Hulchanski do not challenge the concept of an underclass head-on by

⁵³ Bettina Bradbury, reviewer *Canadian Historical Review*, 72. 1991: 601.

⁵⁴ Bradbury's unease can be further understood by reading Baskerville and Sager, *Unwilling Idlers* chapters 2 & 8 or Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty*. Throughout her work Himmelfarb discusses the effects of Britain's shift in thinking marked by the shift from the organic language of rank to the functional language of class. "...for those who did not work or were not notably productive: the young and the old, the unemployed and the irregularly employed, the dependent as much as the independent poor. For these groups the language of class was not especially appropriate. Yet they occupied a large place in the social reality and in the social consciousness of contemporaries." 301. Both studies suggest that the line between the working poor (worthy) and those referred to as an underclass (unworthy) is arbitrary and pejorative.

documenting the efforts of the homeless to find employment and gain a more stable place within society. Their primary task is to challenge federal policy. They lay much of the blame for homelessness squarely on the shoulders of the federal government for its failure to ensure adequate housing, particularly for low income Canadians. Their challenge to the underclass concept is implied rather than overtly stated. If extreme poverty and homelessness can be largely resolved through policies that guarantee safe secure housing for all Canadians then the underclass concept fails as an explanation. In my view distinctions, fostered by the resurgent use of underclass theory and by the separation of working class history from the history of poverty, helps to obscure important connections and undermines the possibilities of mutual support between the better-off members of the working classes and the poorest members of our society. By approaching the extremely poor in terms of their sameness, not as separate from, but as the weakest extension of the working classes, this research challenges and tests the underclass concept. The sameness of those who lived "rough" in the past has not been adequately shown and understood. This gap in our historical understanding withholds what may be a very beneficial historical perspective from the weakest members of our society.

A Summary of the Intended Contribution of this Research

The extremely poor have often been cast as deviants or others, in both the past and the present. Greenhouse, Whalen and Fingard use the idea of deviance as an acceptable approach to the poor and homeless of the past and tacitly

encourage us to see the contemporary homeless as deviants. Victorian theorists such as Malthus and Mayhew pejoratively characterized the poor as an underclass. Contemporary writers such as Bacher and Hulchanski have challenged the use of the concept in Canada. But it remains a powerful force within American sociology, which is able to cast its influence over Canadian historical writing. It is the contention of this research that it is possible to be true to the past, to reflect the warts and downfalls of the extremely poor and homeless who lived there, but at the same time recognize their efforts to follow prevailing norms and to empathize with their plight and in doing so generate at least the possibility of recognition and empathy in the present. Such recognition and empathy may be the keys to creating and maintaining humane solutions to poverty and homelessness. The examinations conducted by this research address an area of our past that has been largely overlooked. This research supplements broad historical surveys of social welfare legislation by examining social welfare policy in action at the local level. By positioning itself at the convergence of labour history and studies of poverty, and by demonstrating that the populations examined by these discrete areas of research are more alike than different, this research shows that labour history can be extended to include many of those who lived "rough" in the past. Through its approach this research hopes to encourage a view that can help to integrate the study of extreme poverty and homelessness into the mainstream of Canadian historiography.

Sources

This research is based largely on data recorded on a daily basis within annual ledger books of the Police Court, Rockhead and the City Home for the years between 1890 and 1914. These records also served as the foundation for Fingard's *The Dark Side of Life* as well as the work of Philip Girard who studied the evolution of criminal justice in Halifax.⁵⁵ Arlette Farge's study of 18th century Paris drew upon records kept by the police. Steven King's study of 19th century England relied upon records kept by the overseers of the poor. These sources offered descriptions of particular events, people, general circumstances and personal reflections of the authors. Only a few such resources of similar quality are available to this study. The ledger books noted above provide less detail. But they offer the most voluminous record we have of actions deemed by some contemporaries and modern historians to be evidence of an underclass. Moreover, they record the degree and pattern of such actions across the community allowing for comparisons between the "rough" and the "respectable"; a matter of less concern for Farge or King who were not explicitly challenging the characterization of their subjects as members of an underclass. Because this study is a direct challenge to underclass theory, the comparisons made possible by these records are crucial. The following discussion of the sources used here begins with the records of the Police Court. The Police Court ledger was filled out

⁵⁵ Philip Girard, "The Rise and Fall of Urban Justice in Halifax, 1815-1886," *The Nova Scotia Historical Review*, 8. 1988: 57-71. What Girard referred to as a "conservative or Tory model" of justice will be used in chapter four to assess social reform as it occurred in Halifax, the upper streets in particular. The original use of the records that support this study will be presented in the following section of this chapter.

by court recorders. It kept the court abreast of who appeared for what, the resolution of cases and it may have also been used to indicate who had paid their fines and who owed money to the court. Entries in the ledger books of the City Home and those of Rockhead were made by keepers at both institutions. They kept track of admissions and discharges for daily operational purposes. Funding for the City Home and Rockhead was partially tied to monthly head counts and inmates place of residency. Because costs were shared between the city and the province, both levels of government had an interest in the accuracy of record keeping at these as well as smaller institutions that received public money. Information in these ledgers also helped administrators to construct annual reports used to account for the expenditure of public funds to senior levels of government as well as the taxpaying public.

There are ledger books missing for some years. In some of the surviving books a few pages are missing or parts of them are too damaged to read or the handwriting is indecipherable. The persons who recorded data for the Prison and City Home were thorough. Occasionally, an individual's age, place of birth, etc. is missing, but the gaps are relatively few. There are more gaps in the Police Court records. Here age, place of residence, marital status, etc. is sometimes missing. From time to time the charge for which an individual was called to court is not recorded or the case resolution is not listed. However, in many cases gaps within the Police Court ledger can be filled in using other sources. Regardless of their

few missing pieces, the record books of these institutions are a very rich historical source, but they must be read with caution.

When reading these documents it must be remembered that they do not speak in the direct voice of their subjects. In her discussion of similar circumstance concerning the 18th century records of Paris, Arlette Farge noted that “the judicial archives, for example, are entirely bound up within the judicial and police systems of the eighteenth century which produced and managed them. What they put on view results from their origins and they exist only because a certain exercise of power brought them into being.”⁵⁶ While the central characters of this study may have provided much of the information directly to record keepers, these volumes are not like personal diaries filled with recollections, comments or opinions on matters that the subjects chose to record. These records reveal their subjects indirectly through the details that city and provincial officials deemed necessary or useful to the task at hand; a short set of particulars – age, place of residence, amount of fine, billable family members, etc. Much of that task, and hence a primary need for the records, had to do with money. For example, the poorhouse, known as the City Home, operated under provincial legislation and was directly overseen and operated by the city. Stays in the City Home were chargeable on a per-diem basis to the city, other municipal units, the province, or private individuals. The institution needed a record of admissions and discharges for accounting and billing purposes. Both the City Home and Rockhead received funding from the city of Halifax and the province.

⁵⁶ Farge, *Fragile Lives* 4-5.

Monthly and annual head counts were essential to processes of cost sharing as well as city and provincial audits. Census returns also list information for inmates of both institutions. Whether this information was drawn from the ledger books or directly from inmates is unclear.

The Halifax Police Court sat most weekdays. Between 1815 and 1867 it was presided over by city aldermen according to a monthly Rota. From 1867 proceedings were adjudicated by a stipendiary magistrate with security of tenure appointed by the governor in council.⁵⁷ There was a small public gallery as well as an area reserved for the press. The Court heard minor criminal matters and violations of city ordinances. More serious matters were passed on to the county court or to the Nova Scotia Supreme Court. It appears that Police Court records were filled in as cases were called before the Court. The check marks that often appear beside names may have indicated to the court that the individual had paid his or her fine. We know that administrators consulted the monthly ledgers in the writing of their annual reports. Whether or not other officials consulted these records in the process of formulating public policy is unknown. Police Court proceedings were followed in the local papers. Stories regarding particular individuals sometimes mentioned time spent in Rockhead or the City Home, but as far as we know neither the press nor the public had access to these record books.

⁵⁷ Philip Girard, "The Rise and Fall"

In all three sets of records the subjects are being viewed in a time of weakness or crisis. The recording of one or a small number of minor difficulties is less likely to create a strong negative impression. On the other hand, several appearances in Police Court, a stint in Rockhead on a matter involving violence or an extended stay in the City Home has a much greater potential to create a strong negative impression that is not necessarily deserved or the whole truth. To compensate for the negative potential of these institutional records, every effort has been made to find evidence of positive contributions; evidence of school attendance, work, payment of taxes and rent, or membership in a local church or labour union. The descriptions of particular individuals that follow are largely dependent upon institutional records of state welfare agencies, however, they are as balanced and complete as additional existing records have allowed.

Information from other sources can balance the negative impressions made possible by the records of the Police Court, Rockhead and the City Home. It is also true that the negative impressions made possible by extended involvement with one state welfare institution can also be balanced by examining the records of another. For example, three convictions for drunkenness in Police Court every year for ten years may seem negative on first impression. But if Rockhead and the City Home have no record of the individual it may reflect payment of the optional fines and steadily employment. Similarly, numerous visits to the Court, Rockhead and the City Home over a number of years, always during the same time of year, may indicate seasonal unemployment more than anything else. The

record books of the city's public welfare institutions are useful in another way that the record keepers never intended. Individuals often went to Court and Rockhead with their friends or rivals. Such relations are visible in the records. Prison records indicate when a prisoner was released because someone in the community paid their fine. Persons who paid fines on behalf of Rockhead prisoners were not named, but at least we know that many prisoners had family or friends in the community willing to buy their freedom. Similar connections between institutional residents and persons living in the community are visible in the records of the City Home. The Home's ledger lists friends in the community as well as persons who were paying the costs for residents not billed to some level of government. These bits and pieces of information have been incredibly helpful in the reconstruction of the lives that are at the centre of Chapter Two and the neighbourhood reconstruction that is the heart of Chapter Three. The record books of the Halifax Police Court, Rockhead Prison and the City Home are filled with countless stories. They can provoke anger, joy, sadness, and surprise but they are never dull. And like the very real people for which they stand, they are not always obvious or easy to understand and so they must be read with great care.

Methodology

Despite the theoretical problems mentioned above, Judith Fingard's *Dark Side of Life* is a seminal study. It is biographical history from the bottom up with central characters who are able to tell us a great deal about extreme poverty; a reality too seldom addressed by historians of Atlantic Canada. Fingard's work provides important historical reference to those concerned with social welfare policies in modern-day Halifax. It has also served as a valuable starting point and guide for this research.

The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax is based upon the lives of 92 individuals who were the most habitual offenders of the city between 1864 and 1873. Their recidivism, and the actions behind it, served as Fingard's principal evidence of an underclass. These 92 individuals were a subset of the population at Rockhead that was also a subset of the population living in the city's disreputable upper streets. Fingard presented the actions of her central characters as well as middle class reformers acting in response to her central characters. However, she did not draw thorough comparisons between the actions of her central characters and the actions of better-off members of the city's population who were also involved with the institutions of social welfare and residents of the upper streets. This research covers a period of twenty four years, 1890-1914. It uses the sources noted above to examine the actions of all of those who lived in the upper streets as well as the actions of those from outside who were involved with that community through various activities. As such this

research is a more comprehensive use of available sources than has occurred to date.

The biographies presented in this study were constructed by gathering bits and pieces of information from all available sources. The primary characters were selected in part because they were prominent characters in their time and so their lives were more documented than many of their peers and because fate allowed their documents to survive. The primary characters were chosen also because they well represent the extreme poverty that existed in their time as well as means used to survive it. And all of them were described as notorious by the contemporary press. Their actions and circumstances are much the same as Fingard's subjects. This similarity permits comparisons between the different approaches taken toward the central characters of each study. It also permits a more longitudinal view of particular groups and their actions within the city of Halifax.

Biographies are a crucial means for this study. Equally important is the profile of the upper streets community presented in the third chapter. That community formed and was formed by the lives featured in the biographies. Each is a part of the other. Each one helps to explain the other. The community profile was constructed using six sets of data. Three of the six were institutional records – the Police Court, Rockhead and the City Home. These records reveal different types of involvement with institutions of social welfare – one time, intermittent,

and chronic. Different groups are visible, liquor dealers, chronic drinkers, the dependant aged and injured as well as "respectable" persons who occasionally got into trouble. Overall the men outnumbered the women. Not surprisingly a greater number of persons over the age of fifty were involved with the City Home. Meanwhile, the majority of persons involved with the Police Court and Rockhead were below the age of fifty. It was not possible for a project of this size nor was it necessary to gather data for every single year between 1890 and 1914, the period under study.⁵⁸ The staggering of data collection shown below in Table One allowed this research to track individuals, identify groups, trends and relationships in a manner sufficiently comprehensive without taking up an inordinate amount of time.

⁵⁸ In the process of planning and designing this study all available ledgers of the Police Court, Rockhead and the City Home for the period between 1890 and 1920 were reviewed. This examination revealed no significant changes in the type of information gathered, the size or the characteristics of the populations involved or the operational routines of these institutions. Over this entire thirty year period characters came and went, some appeared only once, others for brief periods, and a few remained familiar to one or all three institutions for many years. Names changed, but important trends such as the average age of inmates at the City Home or the ratio between one time and frequent offenders in the Police Court changed very little. Though it would have been ideal, without the advantages of time and a team of researchers it was not possible for this study to include all the available institutional records. However, given the high level of consistency seen within these records a representative sample has provided manageability without sacrificing accuracy or crucial pieces of the overall picture. Representative samples are commonly used within sociology and political science. Sampling is less common, but not unknown within the discipline of History. For example, in Katz, *The People of Hamilton* a very large sample consisting of ten years (1851 to 1861) of census records, assessment roles and city directories provided the base of the study. Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life* used a sample selected from the population at Rockhead between 1864 and 1873 as the basis for her study. In the case of this research the samples used may have missed a particular individual or some interesting tidbits of information. But the important trends and relationships were able to be identified and accurately portrayed.

Table One

Data Sets Selected from Records of Public Institutions of Social Welfare in Halifax, 1890 to 1914

Document Type	Year					
	1890	1895	1900	1905	1910	1914
Police Court ledger	x	x	x	x*		
City Prison ledger		x	x	x	x	
City Home ledger			x	x	x	x

Source: Before the Halifax Police Court, NSARM, RG 42 Series D, 1890, 1895, 1900 & series B, 1904, City Prison Inmate Registers, NSARM, RG 35-102 Series 18 B, 1895, 1900, 1905 & 1910, City Home Register, NSARM, RG 35-102, 1900, 1905, 1910 & 1915.

*For reasons undiscovered by this research, the Police Court ledger for 1905 has not survived so 1904 was used instead.

In addition to the institutional records, assessment rolls, reports from the Acadian School and listings from the Halifax Directory were used. The records of assessment were chosen taking into account what records were available, what volume of material could be managed and the number of records needed to identify trends across the period of study. The years 1891, '93-'95, 1900, 1905 and 1909 were selected. This sample provides a great deal of information concerning property ownership, tax payments, residency and movement, land use and value as well as the size of the community over a period of nineteen years. Following the same selection criteria the years 1895, 1900, 1905 and 1910 were drawn from the Acadian School records and the years 1901 to 1914 inclusive from the Halifax Directory. The school records are most valuable for their ability to identify children in school as well as family location at particular

moments in time. The Directory is equally valuable for locating individuals. It also provides information regarding occupation, places of work and family connections. In contrast to the institutional records, these records offer evidence of positive actions. Identifying central characters here is in keeping with the hypothesis of sameness being tested by this research. The data collected from all of these sources concerned the heart of the upper streets community only. That is the area from Sackville north to Duke Street and from Brunswick Street east to Argyle Street. In reconstructing the lives of individuals who lived in the upper streets during an earlier period, Fingard drew heavily upon the records of the Police Court and the City Prison as well as newspapers, medical examiners reports and records of private charities, but only for the 92 worst offenders at the centre of her research. Fingard acknowledges that many of her subjects demonstrated agency and a willingness to work. But it is their negative actions that she carefully documents and uses to characterize her subjects. The negative actions of others, however, are not documented. This study marks the first attempt to use large sets of data offering evidence of both positive and negative actions in conjunction with one another in order to create a profile of the entire upper streets community. This study moves beyond previous research to examine a greater volume of activity and uses it to present direct comparisons between the "rough" and the "respectable".

Once selected, each set of records was transcribed into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. Records in spreadsheet form were then imported into a specially

constructed database. This database permitted the simultaneous search of all records according to various search criteria; for example, first name, last name, address or year. Using this database in conjunction with other online and CD-ROM databases permitted a detailed reconstruction of the upper streets community house by house.⁵⁹ The value of each property over time was recorded along with a list of owners and residents and any involvement they may have had with social welfare institutions. Other personal information collected by address included property taxes paid; poll taxes and personal property taxes paid; school attendance; total number of properties owned or lived in; and connections to others who lived in the neighbourhood. In addition to identifying important overall trends, the database also made it possible to create a number of secondary biographies. The actions of these secondary characters and their interactions with primary characters have greatly assisted the effort to describe and understand the context of the upper streets in the decades leading up to World War One. Other projects such as the *Ships and Seafarers of Atlantic Canada* have constructed searchable databases for a variety of users.⁶⁰ However, this is the first historical study of a community in Atlantic Canada done primarily through a project specific database in the manner perused here.

⁵⁹ Like Fingard, this study used census records to help construct individual biographies. Many census records are now accessible via CD-ROM or online databases. For example the 1880 US census as well as the 1881 British and Canadian census can all be searched at, "Family Search," March 2006, The Church of Jesus of Later-Day Saints, 7 March 2008 <http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/search/frameset_search.asp?PAGE=ancestorsearchresults.asp>. Future projects may import data from these sources into larger databases able to cross reference many records. Such undertakings were beyond the scope and technical expertise of this research.

⁶⁰ The Atlantic Canada Shipping Project, *Ships and Seafarers of Atlantic Canada 1787-1936*, (St. John's, Nfld.: Maritime History Archive, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1998)

The records fed into the database carried both positive and negative connotations. The institutional records cast primarily negative impressions. They show evidence of criminal activity, chronic drinking and destitution. Meanwhile, in the assessment rolls, school reports and the Halifax Directory we see evidence of having an address, a job, paying taxes and trying to gain an education, positive things. This combination of positive and negative records reflects the reality of life in the upper streets of Edwardian Halifax. The persons who lived there were a mix of positive and negative actions to varying degrees. By presenting the positive and negative actions of individuals this research refutes the existence of an underclass, the supposedly notorious were sometimes positive in their actions and the respectable sometimes negative. Residents of the upper streets were close, physically and socially. Their economic circumstances fluctuated, often suddenly and dramatically. In such a context clear lines of demarcation did not exist. This study also argues against the separation between labour history and the history of poverty. By focusing almost exclusively on the positive or the negative both sides suggest monolithic characters. In the context examined by this research characters in the lower ranks of society are much more similar than different suggesting that the characters of labour history and the history of poverty are often the same characters who are better served by a more holistic approach than tends to come from separate disciplines.

While this study argues against the existence of an underclass in Edwardian Halifax and against the use of underclass theory it does not argue for an alternative theoretical interpretation. In my view the realities of poverty and destitution in Edwardian Halifax, the upper streets in particular, are best explained by the broader geographic and economic realities; the history of the city as a military base and naval port; particular tendencies in public policy resultant from these realities and some hard truths regarding the human condition. In order to begin supporting that interpretation in the most logical way the next chapter introduces the main characters and their actions, actions said to be evidence of an underclass. By the end of Chapter Two readers will be familiar with Thomas Berrigan, Ellen Reardon, Sarah Sheppard, Charles Clarke and Alfred Jones, their strengths, their shortcomings and the course of their lives and the lives of the larger group they represent. Chapter Three then offers the context of their lives and actions by presenting them alongside the actions of the better-off members of the upper streets community. This direct comparison offers a challenge to the existence of an underclass by showing that actions, as well as moral values, across the community were more similar than different. In the fourth chapter of this study I will develop my explanation for the lives and the community trends presented in Chapters Two and Three based on the available evidence and literature surveyed in the opening sections of this chapter. The final chapter summarizes the findings of this research and what they have to say to our understanding of the past and the present.

Chapter Two - Only Blurred Lines between Rough and Respectable

Introduction

From the top of Citadel Hill on a clear day you can still see from the harbour approaches down to George's Island. The office towers have left us that much. A hundred years ago when the tallest point in view was the spire of Saint Mary's Basilica you could see from the mouth of the harbour along the narrows where the Imo and the Mount Blanc would have their explosive encounter in 1917 and into Bedford Basin. Since the 1850s sailors have been looking back at the citadel for a parting memory of the city. Wars, ship-wrecks and falls overboard would prevent many from ever seeing it again. At a time when Britannia ruled the waves, in 1749 the English had founded Halifax as a naval port and built the Citadel as a stronghold against the French. Seafaring and military life have figured largely throughout much of the city's history. The British Army and Navy are long gone, but Halifax remains the home port of the Canadian Navy, now a small force frequently advised to maintain a low profile during time ashore. It has been over fifty years since the sailors rioted through the city at the end of the Second World War. And more than a century since sailors routinely came ashore in waves headed for the grog shops and brothels of the city's upper streets. The idea of the sailor as a hard living hard drinking rowdy-man lingers, but Maritime Command prefers that old times be forgot.

Maritime Command and other authorities in Halifax have always guarded against actions and events perceived as threats to the peace order and good government of the city. Today authorities have at their disposal an array of agencies and departments filled with trained professionals and backed by a long tradition of government control and responsibility. But in the Halifax of a century ago things were much different. At that time all levels of Canadian government were relatively small and staffed by individuals without high levels of education. In the decades just prior to World War One, the rudimentary Canadian state was incapable of protecting the majority of its citizenry from economic, medical or natural disaster. Many state services, social welfare services in particular, now taken for granted in Canadian cities, were not yet thought of or existed only in elementary form. Caring for the injured, the sick the elderly and the poor had remained the bailiwick of private organizations, most often associated directly or indirectly with one of the major churches. It was only in the late decades of the 19th century that social welfare services would begin to be seen as a matter of public concern.¹

While public recourses and knowledge were comparatively weak in the past, problems were no less daunting. City officials in Halifax had their hands full. The same was true of their counterparts in cities across Canada, the United States and Europe.² As urban populations and dependence upon wage labour grew, so

¹ Guest, chapter 1&2, Moscovitch and Albert, parts I & II.

² Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life*, David Bright, "Go Home. Straighten Up.", Poutanen, "Regulating Public Space", Jill Wade, "Home or Homelessness?", Humphreys, *No Fixed Abode* and Kenneth

did the incidence of urban unemployment and poverty, together with many physical and social ills associated with them. In the search for answers individual action was identified as both problem and solution. Negative actions associated with failure were punished. Positive actions linked with economic success and moral purity were taught and encouraged through a variety of means.

In Halifax attention focused on the upper streets, those sections of Brunswick, Albermarle, Grafton and Argyle Streets that ran parallel to the shoreline below Citadel Hill. This neighbourhood had long been known as the roughest area of the city. For the first half of the 19th century a large contingent of British military personnel was often present in the city, housed in barracks in and around the Citadel. Not surprisingly the nearby streets became lined with bars and bawdy houses that catered to off duty servicemen as well as merchant sailors and locals out for a night on the town. "No person of any character ventured to reside there".³ Drunkenness, disputes of all sorts and arrests were

Kusmer, *Down and out, on the Road. The Homeless in American History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

³ Thomas B Akins, *History of Halifax City*, (Halifax: Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society Vol VIII, 1895) 158. The description of the upper streets that appears here is supported by Beamish Murdoch's *A History of Nova Scotia* publish in parts between 1865 and 1867 and what appears to be Akins' own recollections. According to Murdoch and Akins, in terms of its poverty, congestion and unsanitary conditions the upper streets of the early 19th century appear to have been a smaller version of the slums below Mount Royal in late-Victorian Montreal as described by Herbert Ames. Herbert Brown Ames. *The City below the Hill: A Sociological Study of a Portion of the City of Montreal, Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 1972). Akins' lived in Halifax his entire life. His history was a work in progress begun in the 1830s and continued until a few years before his death in 1891. Consequently, it is often impossible to know exactly when particular passages were written or rewritten. For the earlier periods of the city's history Akins relied on the papers of government officials, particularly Edward Cornwallis. He also drew from the city's early newspapers and magazines. His 19th century sources included local government records; particularly the passage of legislation and public accounts. Later he drew more from secondary sources. At times his accounts seem to be based upon first hand knowledge or information supplied by those who were witnesses to particular events. Because of his ability and interest, Akins became the first Provincial Archivist, appointed in 1857. Cuthbertson discusses

commonplace. By the 1890s some things had changed. The military presence had dramatically declined.⁴ The upper streets now hosted many small businesses and a few large scale commercial operations. The former community of army and navy men was now home to a large portion of the city's working class, many of whom were long term residents. Nevertheless many taverns and brothels remained open and the press continued to refer to the upper streets as disreputable and dangerous.

Shrill tones in the press echoed perceptions held by many middle class Haligonians who were active participants in mission, temperance and rescue work. Edwardian Halifax remained a small walking city. Many middle class Haligonians would have used the upper streets to move between their homes and places of work. It is likely that many of those who engaged in early forms of social work were motivated at least in part by their witness to cases of neglect, addiction and destitution. Those determined to clean up the city were also swayed to some degree by the writings of economists and social theorists who equated poverty with a threat to the social order, and examples of punitive government policies predicated upon their writing, emanating from Victoria's

Akins' leading role as an archivist. He also pays particular attention to the debate that swirled around Akins and his work as the provincial archivist in the last years of his life. In 1888 Henri-Raymond Casgrain claimed that Akins had intentionally kept important documents related to the expulsion of the Acadians out of the public records of the Province. As Cuthbertson shows documents were missing not because of Akins, but because of omissions made during copying in London. Brian C. Cuthbertson, "Thomas Beamish Akins: British North America's Pioneer Archivist," *Acadiensis* 7. 1977: 86-102.

⁴ Public Records Office, London. War Office, 73 Vols. 24 to 60, Monthly Returns: Distribution of the Army, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), mfm#'s B-1755 to 1766.

England and the United States.⁵ Other cities were taking action. Halifax could do the same.

But what were the best courses of action and to what extent should they be followed? Most explanations of the causes and threats of social ills, particularly destitution, described the impoverished as a dangerous underclass. The image of an underclass was largely based on the observations and interpretations of social theorists working in late 18th and early 19th century England. Within their work they spoke of a group at the very bottom of society; men and women driven by base instinct, unaffiliated with the institutions of society and unwilling to work for a living. This so called underclass was identified as a threat to the foundations of civilized society. Did the poorest members of society in Edwardian Halifax constitute such a class? Press coverage of the Police Court and doings in the upper streets certainly fed into such fears. As we saw in Chapter one, Judith Fingard argues that an underclass living on the dark side of life existed within Victorian Halifax. This chapter follows the lives of five central characters; lives typically identified as nefarious by the contemporary press and some modern historians. The purpose of following and examining these lives with a new level of precision is to determine whether or not they appear to be members of an underclass, and if so, if such a group can accurately be said to have existed within Edwardian Halifax.

⁵ Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossing*. Rodgers shows how the concerns of North America's middle classes were shaped by those expressed in Europe.

The investigation begins with the biography of the younger Thomas Berrigan who grew up on Albemarle Street and never strayed far from it. The inquiry then moves forward through the life-histories of Ellen Reardon, Charles Clarke, Sarah Shepherd and Alfred Jones. These five individuals were not close friends, but they knew one another and they were well known to anyone who had anything to do with the upper streets between 1890 and 1914. Together they well represent the range of actions and circumstances which contemporary studies of society identified as the property and evidence of an underclass. Three of them were what we would now call homeless much of their lives; a condition that helps us to understand the actions of the extremely poor and their inability to closely follow and fit within the social order. One was a full time liquor dealer. One appears to have gotten into the liquor trade to make ends meet after the loss of a spouse. The sale of alcohol supported a great many families across all classes. As we follow the lives of central characters their actions will be compared to the actions of others who lived in or frequented the upper streets. Those who believe in the existence of an underclass, past and present, cast persons at the very bottom of society as different, different in thought and action. The poor have left very few records of their thoughts, but we have abundant evidence of their actions as well as the actions of their better off contemporaries. This chapter will make direct comparisons between the actions of the "respectable" and the "nefarious" in order to ascertain whether or not a significant difference can accurately be said to have existed, a difference great enough to demarcate a group that could appropriately be viewed as an underclass.

Forming the portraits and the comparisons which are the base of this chapter and its search for an underclass required the close examination of lives, disorderly lives marked by struggle and difficult circumstances, lives that do not lend themselves easily to logical systematic presentation. At the same time the available records are sparse and indirect. For the five individuals who are the central characters of this study and representatives of a supposed underclass, there are no personal letters, diaries or memoirs to help us understand their most important thoughts and actions or to suggest a manner in which to present their lives. It is not likely that they ever had the opportunity or inclination to create such things. That being the case, once all possible material was collected it came time for the more difficult decision of how to assemble it so that characters emerge for the reader in a way that is both true and engaging. I have begun with the lives of Thomas Berrigan and Ellen Reardon the youngest members of the group and then moved on to Charles Clarke and Sarah Shepherd who were close in age and older than Thomas and Ellen. The last character introduced is Alfred Jones who was also the oldest member of the group. More information survived regarding the lives of Thomas and Ellen. They were also in the early stages of life at the beginning of the period under study. Consequently their lives provide a detailed introduction to the entire period as well as chronological movement through it. As their lives move forward other characters are introduced. While Thomas and Ellen likely knew, or at least knew of, the others in their youth, the majority of contact between Thomas and Ellen and the other three occurred as

Thomas and Ellen grew older, which resembles the order of introduction used here.

The aim of this chapter is to depict lives lived in the upper streets as completely and as clearly as possible. It is the opinion of this research that such precise portraits, as complete and clear as possible, challenge the view of those lives as representative of an underclass. As characters are presented momentary pauses will be taken in order to discuss important details related to their lives. Such pauses are essential to producing the sharpest images possible as well as alerting the reader to important facts which deny the existence of an underclass. Each life presents its own discrete circumstances and facts that are relevant to the argument. At the same time these lives often intersected and they are best understood in juxtaposition to one another. So, in order to present these characters as realistically as possible it seemed best to present their lives through interlocking sections of one large narrative in a manner reminiscent of the way they were actually lived rather than a set of separate narratives which might suggest more physical and social distance between them than was actually the case. The argument against the existence of an underclass is based on the facts revealed by unfolding the details of the lives of a few typical characters. Consequently, it seemed better to also develop that argument in the course of writing their biographies rather than developing the argument in a separate discussion and having to refer readers back to facts previously mentioned within the biographical accounts. An argument constructed in such a back and forth

manner is much more difficult to organize and follow and therefore potentially weaker than one which is constructed in step with the supporting evidence and which brings the reader simultaneously to the end of events and to the conclusion they are supposed to support. Of course we have to begin before we can end. The story begins with the Berrigan family, poor Irish Catholics trying to survive in the upper streets during the late 19th century.

Thomas Berrigan Jr. (1866- 1937), Born and Raised on Albermarle Street, but not a Born Criminal

In the 1830s, the first wave of poor Irish Catholics came to Halifax, to a city founded as a bastion of Protestantism where Saint Paul's, the oldest Protestant church in Canada, stood strongly at the centre of things, physically and spiritually. The newcomers sparked religious conflict that ebbed and flowed over the next thirty years. By the 1860s a large proportion of the population of Halifax Catholics remained poor, but they were bolstered by strong leadership, active charities, and the powerful symbol of Saint Mary's Cathedral, one of the grandest buildings in the city.⁶ In the 1860s the morning sun cast the shadow of the cathedral spire across the upper streets where the Berrigan family made their home, along with many other poor Irish Catholics. On 11 September 1866 Mary

⁶ During the late 18th century open worship of the Catholic faith was prohibited in Halifax. Early in the 19th century restrictions preventing the Catholic faithful from owning land for the purposes of erecting churches was lifted. Friction between Protestants and Catholics lingered. However, in Halifax the two groups were able to get along well enough to avoid the harsh legal, political and social divisions evidenced elsewhere in Canada. Terrance Murphy, "The Emergence of Maritime Catholicism 1781-1830," *Acadiensis* 8. 1984: 29-49.

Berrigan gave birth to a son.⁷ He was named Thomas Jr. Thomas Sr. worked as a labourer to support Mary, the new baby and their two older children; Patrick aged four and Catherine who was two.⁸ Three years after Thomas Jr. was born, the Berrigans had another son, whom they named Michael. As far as we know Thomas and Mary had no other children.⁹

Thomas Jr. and his brother Michael were born into relatively good times. By 1860 the population of Halifax had grown to 20,000. In 1863 Dalhousie was rescued from the doldrums and set up as a provincial university. In 1864 a strong economy revolving around the sea trade and the military led to the founding of a new private bank, the Merchant's Bank of Halifax. Joseph Howe and Charles Tupper were the most prominent political characters. Both men would be at the centre of the confederation debate. Civil war in the United States was nearly at an end, but speculation in the press suggested it could be replaced by American efforts to gain control of the entire North American continent. In 1864 the Halifax police force was reorganized and outfitted with new uniforms. The following year public education made its debut under the recently passed *Free School Act*.¹⁰

⁷ Births Registered in the County of Halifax, 1865-66 p. 66 No. 1159, Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management (NASRM), mfm# 16513.

⁸ For the years 1871-72 to the years 1879-80 Thomas Berrigan Sr. is listed as a labourer living at various addresses on Albemarle Street. In '83-'84 Mary is listed as a washerwoman. It is the only time the *Directory* lists an occupation for her. *McAlpine's Halifax City Directory*, NSARM, mfm#'s 3396-3399, 9708-9710 and 9712.

⁹ 1871 Census of Canada, Halifax Ward 3 Division 2 p. 18 lines 5-10, NSARM, mfm# 13625 and 1881 Census of Canada, Halifax Ward No. 4 Division 1 p. 9., LAC, mfm# C-13168. All of the Berrigan children appear to have been born in Halifax. However, there are no birth records in the city for any of the children other than Thomas.

¹⁰ Prior to the Act, schools were established by private organizations and supported by donations and tuitions paid by the families of attending students. The most active organization in the field during the Halifax of this time was the Catholic Church. James Bingay, *Public Education in Nova*

There was change and some uncertainty in the air, but during the 1860s the finances and services of Halifax were in an upward swing.¹¹ The swing had a shallow arc but it moved steadily through the remainder of the century and, as we shall see more clearly in the next chapter, it created positive economic and social circumstances for the entire city, circumstances that very much set the course of life in the upper streets.

As Thomas Jr. began his life in the upper streets, it is likely that he and his family were living on Albermarle Street. We know for sure that the family lived there throughout the 1870s. In 1871 the Berrigans were living in a one and a half story wood framed house at 110 Albemarle Street. The same building contained 106 and 108 Albemarle. Patrick Brophy a shoemaker lived at 106. A labourer by the name of Patrick Mahoney resided at 108.¹² In the physical sense, the Berrigans were surely a close family. They were not alone in this regard. The section of Albemarle Street where Mary and Thomas raised their four children was filled with wood framed houses shared between two or three family units.

Scotia; A History and Commentary, (Kingston ON: Jackson, 1919) and Terrance Burns, "Public School Education of Catholics in the City of Halifax," MA thesis, Dalhousie University, 1962.

¹¹ Throughout this chapter historical background for Nova Scotia and the city of Halifax is drawn from Harry Bruce, *An Illustrated History of Nova Scotia*, (Halifax, NS: Nimbus, 1997), Thomas H. Raddall, *Halifax, Warden of the North*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1948) and E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces*.

¹² *McAlpine's Halifax City Directory 1871-72*, p. 375, NSARM, mfm# 3396. In addition to the Directory the Halifax Fire insurance map and the assessment rolls were particularly helpful in locating the Berrigans and other characters. 1895 Fire Insurance Map, Halifax and Area, NSARM, mfm# 596. Halifax Assessment Rolls Ward 3 1890 to 1909, NSARM, RG 35.a Vols. 5 to 13. - now located at HRMA. Much information regarding the actions of particular characters was drawn from articles appearing in the *Acadian Recorder* and the *Halifax Chronicle* as well as institutional ledgers. Before the Halifax Police Court 1877-1916, NSARM, RG 42 Series D vols. 26, 31, 34, 36, 38a, 41, 43 and Series B vol. 39, Registry of the City Prison Aug 1873 – Dec 1911, NSARM, RG 35 – 102 Series 18 B, City Home 1900 – 1913, NSARM, RG 35-102 vols. 20, 23, 24, 26 and 33a.) – these records are also now located at HRMA.

However, few of the houses were dedicated solely to residential use. Most buildings also contained shops that provided vital goods and services to the residents of the community – grocers, shoemakers, bakers, and tailors. At the same time there were a number of taverns and shops that sold liquor. Some of them were often associated with trouble. In 1871 Albermarle Street was also home to three policemen, one of them, David T. Power, lived a few doors north of the Berrigans at 162 Albermarle. William Rhind who would later own a number of buildings in the upper streets lived a few doors south at number 38. Albermarle Street was a curious mix of means and manners best illustrated by the tenants that occupied the building at the corner of Albermarle and George, just across the street from the Berrigans.¹³

One of the occupants of the building across the street from the Berrigans was the Inglis School located at 143 Albermarle, a part of the new system of public education designed to teach practical skills, good citizenship and moral purity.¹⁴ The school represented a desire to improve society through a proper blend of science and religion. It represented official efforts to bring about change in the upper streets. Right next door to the Inglis School at 145 Albermarle was Isaac Sallis Liquors. Those familiar with Fingard's *Dark Side of Life* will recognize Sallis as one of her central characters. Sallis was an ex-soldier turned liquor dealer and landlord. He was a tough character who managed and profited from

¹³ McAlpine's *Halifax City Directory 1871-81*, NSARM, mfm#s 3396 to 98.

¹⁴ Bingay, *Public Education* and Burns, "Public School Education". Following a special arrangement with the Catholic Church, some schools within the new public system were operated by the Church. In these schools moral education delivered by Catholic clergy was part of the curriculum. Participation in such instruction was voluntary.

the very activities the school was encouraging its students to avoid. The Inglis School and Isaac Sallis operated under the same roof. The proximity of contrasting interests represented at 143-145 Albermarle Street had become indicative of the upper streets by the 1870s. More importantly, over the coming decades contrasting interests remained co-existent without great social upheaval. There was no violent saloon wrecking as seen in other places, particularly the western United States.¹⁵ Nor did those active in the liquor trade, legal or illicit, or the sex and gambling trades associated with it, attempt to drive from the upper streets those who came there under the banner of reform. Co-existence was not without its difficulties, but as we shall continue to see, the difficulties that did exist were not severe enough to prevent economic and social advancement or to precipitate the exclusion of any particular group from the community. The ability to live together in relative peace had much to do with the fact that actions across the community, and across the entire city, were more similar than different.

One of the ways in which Thomas and Mary Berrigan reflected their similarity with most parents in the city was by sending their two youngest children to school, in their case the Inglis School. At that time school taxes were compulsory, but attendance was not. Classes were large, up to sixty students. The age range within a class could be five or more years. The majority of

¹⁵ From the 1840s the *Morning Chronicle* was one of Halifax's leading newspapers. From 1844-46 it was under the editorship of Joseph Howe. *Morning Chronicle*, 9 February 1901, NSARM, mfm# 5257. The article titled "Mrs Carrie Nation the Kansas Saloon Wrecker" told the story of Mrs. Nation and her long involvement in the anti-liquor movement and violent saloon wrecking most particularly in the state of Kansas.

elementary classes were taught by young single women. Secondary classes were generally taught by male teachers. Few working class students attended high school.¹⁶ Thomas Jr. and Michael attended classes at the Inglis School from 1872 until 1874. They may have attended classes in additional years, but we have no way of knowing. Not all school registers from the 1870s have survived so establishing complete records of school attendance is often impossible. Thomas and Michael were not top students. Both boys consistently received scores of one or two out of five for deportment, reading and spelling. But they were not alone. Thirty-five of the sixty children in the class had similar scores. To some extent, low scores were likely due to poor attendance. The report for 1874 is based on 105 school days. Thomas was in school just 35 days. Michael's attendance was somewhat more regular. He was in school 58 days. But again, the brothers were not alone. Only 13 students in the class attended more than 50 days of the reporting period.¹⁷

Thomas had a brief association with school which was typical for the time. But by the time he was fourteen he and his family had had a long association with Albermarle Street. The same was true for many of their neighbours. James Bonyman and James Stinson lived on Albermarle Street from 1871 to 1880.

¹⁶ Bingay, *Public Education* and Burns, "Public School Education". Through the late 19th and early 20th century attendance would improve as it became legally mandated and enforced by truancy officers. In Houston, "The 'Waifs and Strays', and Prentice, *The School Promoters* it is argued that forcing children into schools was a key element of the state's strategy to imbue the working classes with middle class values. Whether or not one agrees with the social control analysis offered by Houston and Prentice, during the time of interest here, the values held by the Berrigans and the working classes as a whole in Halifax do not appear to be largely attributable to the machinations of the state, at least not state education.

¹⁷ Attendance, Deportment and General Progress of the Pupils Attending School in Albemarle Street. School Year Ending 30 October 1874, NSARM, mfm# 21642.

Catherine McCabe lived on the corner of Albemarle and Duke from 1872 until 1880. Thomas Condon lived directly across from her at 140 Albemarle for four years, the same number of years that Patrick Mahoney lived next door to the Berrigans.¹⁸ Were the Berrigans and the Mahoneys close? Perhaps Thomas and Patrick worked together. It may have been that Mary Berrigan and Catherine McCabe were friends; visited each other and walked the four blocks to St. Mary's together on Sundays. Perhaps the older children babysat while the mothers went out to work or shop for the family during the week. Bettina Bradbury identifies such actions and connections as part of the survival strategy of working class families in Victorian Montreal.¹⁹ As to much of the social details regarding the lives of the Berrigans and their neighbours we can only speculate. We know for certain that in general the upper streets were poor. What we know of the Berrigans, tells us they were part of the poor majority that found it difficult to make ends meet. Nevertheless, they maintained an address in the same block for a number of years and at least two of the children were in school some of the time. All around them, there was plenty of drink and troubles associated with it. But, neither Thomas nor his wife appears in the records of the Police Court, Rockhead, or the City Home. They were not mentioned in the press which was quick to report on negative events in the upper streets and to publish the names of those involved. Proponents of an underclass, past and present, have argued that it transmits negative morals from one generation to the next. This point of view is summed up in the modern pejorative "welfare breeds welfare". As an

¹⁸ *McAlpine's Halifax City Directory 1871-81*, NSARM mfm#s 3396 to 98.

¹⁹ Bradbury, *Working Families*.

adult Thomas Berrigan Jr. became known as a “notorious” character, but his parents certainly were not. The same was true for many of their neighbours. The childhood of Thomas Jr. was not grand but it was rooted in and associated with a great deal of stability. There is nothing in the records to suggest that his childhood was distinctly different from many of his peers who were brought up in the upper streets or elsewhere in the city and who were fortunate enough to avoid notoriety. Thomas Berrigan Jr. was not raised to be dependant upon society. However, his childhood was cut short by the death of his father in 1880.

There is no Evidence that Ellen Reardon was Raised to be a Burden upon Society

While Thomas Berrigan Jr. grew up in Halifax, Ellen Reardon appears to have spent her childhood in the small town of Windsor located 40 miles northwest of Halifax at the juncture of the Avon and St. Croix rivers. In the late 19th century it had a population of approximately 2000 souls, about one tenth the population of Halifax. In the age of sail, Windsor was an important centre for shipbuilding and shipping, particularly of farm produce from the nearby Annapolis Valley and gypsum from the mines just east of town. Windsor was host to the University of Kings College. The town’s most famous resident, Thomas Chandler Haliburton, a graduate of Kings, put Windsor on the literary map with his tales of Sam Slick.²⁰ The rural town of Windsor and the surrounding area offered a stark

²⁰ Thomas Chandler Haliburton was a lawyer, member of the Nova Scotia Assembly and later a judge in the Nova Scotia Court of Common Pleas. His stories of Sam Slick, a fictional character who offered humorous and insightful observations on a wide range of topics, began to appear in the *Novascotian* during the 1830s. They were later gathered into a book titled the *Clockmaker*.

contrast to life in industrializing Halifax. While there were poor families and undoubtedly negative actions within them, Windsor was not a clutter of factories, overcrowded tenements and rough neighborhoods that terrified respectable residents. For those involved in the work of child rescue during the late 19th and early 20th century, the pastoral lives of towns such as Windsor were seen as the physical and moral haven for children found abandoned or abused in dissipated urban communities.²¹

Records indicate that Ellen Reardon grew up in Windsor during the 1860s and 70s. While we know a great deal about the general conditions of the town, we have few details regarding her life there. Like the young Thomas Berrigan, Ellen came from a family of Irish Catholics. It seems that her father, John Reardon, was born in Ireland and that her mother Johannah was a Nova Scotian. John and Johannah had seven children of which Ellen was the second oldest.²² What became of her parents and siblings is unclear. But it is a fact that in 1880 when she was approximately 18 years of age Ellen left Windsor. In that year she came to Halifax. While there were families of Reardons living in Halifax at the time, there is no evidence of connections between them and Ellen.²³ Perhaps she did have family or friends in the city and she came to stay with them while searching for work in the city as a domestic or seamstress. Such a pattern was

Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online, March 2005, LAC, 11 April 2008 <<http://www.biographi.ca/EN/index.html>>.

²¹ Joy Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada 1869-1924*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994)

²² 1881 Census of Canada, Windsor Hants Co. NS Division 2 p.13, LAC, mfm# C-13174.

²³ *McAlpine's Halifax City Directory 1871-91*, NSARM, mfm#s 3396 to 99 and 9708-09.

common among young girls from rural Nova Scotia at that time.²⁴ Perhaps Ellen had never intended to stay. Perhaps she had only planned to visit the city for a short time then return to Windsor. Whatever her plans may have been we know that once she came to Halifax Ellen never left.

While we can not know the details of Ellen's home life as a child, we do know that according to contemporary authorities responsible for the welfare of children, the setting of her childhood was idyllic. Nothing in the available records notes any major trauma in her upbringing – illness, abandonment, severe injury, etc. None of her six siblings appear to have followed in her footsteps to Halifax. If her brothers and sisters had also gone to Halifax in their youth, problems in the family home or their inability to find social or economic opportunities in Windsor might be indicated. We can only speculate on Ellen's plans at the time she left Windsor for Halifax. We do have some idea of how she saw herself after living in Halifax for many years. In response to a vagrancy charge in 1897 Ellen is reported to have said that "she worked for a living as much as anyone on Albemarle Street." We do not know how accurate her statement was. But Ellen seems to have had strong feelings on the matter for when the arresting officer "swore she lived without employment" the press claimed "she sprang at the officer and would have scratched his eyes out had not another officer caught her

²⁴ D.A. Muise, "The Industrial Context of Inequality: Female Participation in Nova Scotia's Paid Labour Force, 1871-1921," *Farm Factory and Fortune*, Kris Inwood ed. (Fredericton, NB: Acadiensis Press, 1993) 121-148. Muise documents shifts in the labour force as they occurred in Yarmouth, Sydney Mines and Amherst. In all three cases women migrated from the surrounding rural hinterlands to new opportunities within the urban paid labour force, particularly in factories and clerical work. Few returned to their rural roots. The same scenario was played out in cities and towns throughout the Maritime Region including Halifax.

by the arms. She called the police every sort of names and while she was being carried from the court she screamed at the top of her voice.”²⁵ It is very possible that Ellen’s actions were exaggerated by having her character impugned in open court. It is equally possible that the description of her actions was embellished by a reporter responsible to help sell newspapers. Examples of sensationalistic reporting within the Halifax press will be seen shortly. But regardless of the accuracy of this particular account or Ellen’s ability to be true to her words, we get the sense that she at least wanted to be, and to be seen as, a person who earned her keep, a person similar to most. We do not get the sense that she was assigned to the margin of society as a result of being born into a family that raised her to be idle and dependent. Ellen was white, raised in what appears to have been a stable rural family. Her beginnings appear to have been relatively advantageous, particularly in relation to many black Nova Scotian’s of that period as will be seen as we turn to examine the life of Charles Clarke.

Clarke’s Place, a Scene of Actions Common to all Races and Social Classes of the City

The blacks of Nova Scotia have always been a small minority, a minority often badly treated. Ten percent of the loyalists who came to Nova Scotia at the end of the American Revolution were black. Like all loyalists they had been promised land and provisions by the British government. For the black loyalists,

²⁵ Under the editorship of John English and Hugh William Blackadar, who bought the paper in 1836 from its founder Anthony Henry Holland, the *Acadian Recorder* was a champion of social reform and political autonomy for Nova Scotia. *Acadian Recorder* 4 Aug 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5274.

few of the promises were made good. But, black loyalists received plenty of harsh treatment.

Britain had promised the blacks the same benefits as white refugees, but on Nova Scotia's stony shores they got the dirty end of every stick. Their rations of food were less nourishing than the whites'. For unloading ships and building houses, they received either lower wages than the going rate, or no pay at all. "Their land claims were met even more slowly than those of whites", Walter Stewart wrote. "They almost never received the full allotments promised, and they were fobbed off on the worst town lots and the scrubbiest, rockiest farmland"²⁶

Most black loyalists were unable to subsist on their own crops or to earn a fair wage. Starving and desperate a third of them left Nova Scotia in 1792 headed for a new colony in Sierra Leone. During the war of 1812 the British Crown promised land, again, and freedom to black slaves in the United States who were willing to fight in the British Navy against the Americans. At the end of the war the British did relocate some former slaves to Canada. In the years immediately following the war approximately two thousand 'Chesapeake Blacks' arrived in Nova Scotia. They were not greeted warmly by the local authorities. The Lieutenant Governor Lord Dalhousie petitioned the British Crown for their removal back to the United States or to Sierra Leone. When that effort failed he arranged passage to Trinidad and worked hard to convince blacks to leave. About 100 took the offer but the majority refused to go. Those that remained were eventually settled on

²⁶ Bruce, 149. Walter Stewart, *True Blue: The Loyalist Legend*, (Toronto: Collins, 1985).

poor lands peripheral to the city. The largest settlements became the black communities of Preston, Upper Hammonds Plains and Beechville.²⁷

Of course not all blacks left the city. From the middle of the 18th century onward a small number of blacks became permanent residents of Halifax. Most often they occupied the lowest paying jobs in the economy. Charles Clarke may have come from one of the black communities outside the city mentioned above. Or he may have grown up in Halifax. He may have begun dealing in liquor and women because no other work was available to him. Or maybe he got involved in these activities simply because they were profitable. We can only guess at the answers to these questions. So far what we do know is that in 1873 he operated a saloon on Quinpool Road, about a mile west of the upper streets. By 1879 he had moved his business closer to the action at 102-104 Albermarle Street. During the next ten years he would relocate at least a couple of times, but he never left Albermarle Street. In 1890 he moved his business to the building at 117-123 Albermarle. He remained there until 1906.²⁸

For nearly thirty years Charles Clarke operated a saloon and brothel in Albermarle Street. Between 1890 and 1906 Clarke's place was the most well known and most written about business of its kind in the city. Clarke's

²⁷ Bruce, *An Illustrated History*, Raddall, *Warden of the North*, E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, *Atlantic Provinces* and Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkel, *History of the Canadian Peoples. Beginnings to 1867 vol. 1, 3rd ed.*, (Toronto: Addison Wesley Longman) chapter 12.

²⁸ *McAlpine's Halifax City Directory 1871-1914*, NSARM, mfm#s 3396 to 99 and 9708-10, 9712-13, 9715, 9718, 9720, 3407 and 3411. 1901 Census of Canada, Halifax Ward 3 C-1 p. 15 lines 16-20, LAC mfm# T-6451. While specific addresses are not always listed, doings at Clarke's places on Albermarle Street during these years were well documented in the local press.

establishment existed to the chagrin of temperance advocates and those who worked to keep young girls away from houses of ill repute. Liquor and sex were often sold under the same roof. As will be discussed more fully in Chapter Four, the economic importance of the drink trade in Halifax mitigated against the adoption of prohibition or harsh enforcement of the existing liquor laws. Perhaps, in part because of its close proximity to the drink trade, law enforcement was equally soft on prostitution during this time period. Brothels were raided from time to time typically resulting in fines being levied against the keepers. Only in a few rare cases were keepers sentenced to jail without the option of a fine. Rather than any real deterrent, fines appear to have been an accepted cost of doing business. And business was profitable. Keepers merely paid their fines and continued on. So far as the inmates of such places were concerned, few charges were laid against them. When the police did lay charges they were often dismissed by the court. The two newspaper articles below confirm the notoriety of Clarke's place. Here too we see that it was the associated doings – the drinking, the fighting, etc – which gained the most attention and discussion. Not prostitution, the *raison d'être* for Clarke's place, or its continued existence alongside many similar establishments within the upper streets.

Acadian Recorder 23 July 1886

The fireman from Cape Breton, who was arrested yesterday, is named James Owens, alias Harris. He reported yesterday that he met Mary Hickey on the street, she took him to Clarke's house; they went to a room upstairs, and while the girl was down getting a drink for him, he put his purse containing \$16 under the mattress; fell asleep and when he woke up he found the purse there but the money gone. The girl was

arrested for stealing the money and Clarke for keeping a house of ill-fame. This morning Owens said he could not state the girl took the money. The S.M. [Stipendiary Magistrate] showed him the warrant [arrest warrant or complaint] and asked if he did not swear to it yesterday? Owens said he was drunk at the time he did so. The S.M. dismissed the case, as also the one against Clarke, remarking the witness was unworthy of belief²⁹

Acadian Recorder 4 January 1894

In the Police Court this morning Charles Clarke, colored, 35, charged with keeping a disorderly house on Albermarle Street. He pleaded guilty and was fined \$4 and cost or 40 days. Elizabeth Cooper, 20 and Laura Simpson, 22, good looking girls, a man of 26 and another young man of 23, who wishes his name keep quiet, were charged of being inmates of the house. Deputy Chief Nickerson said he was going along Albermarle Street on the night of Dec 23 last, when he heard a noise in Clarke's house. On going inside he found that a fight was in progress. There were about 17 persons there, young men and girls. Three or four of the men had their coats off and were fighting, Clarke was trying to separate them. The accused were among the number present. The rest went out when they saw the officers. The accused were each fined \$6 and costs or 60 days. The fines were all paid promptly, and thus the city made more money today than any person in it.³⁰

Clearly those who entered Clarke's place took a variety of risks; the risk of being robbed, of being involved in a physical altercation, of being arrested and the risk of having it all made known to the readers of the daily press in the sensationalistic fashion that came to be known as "yellow journalism". Yet for all the while he was in business residents from all over the city and from all walks of life decided that the rewards on offer at Clarke's place were worth the risk. According to Inspector Banks of the Halifax police department, participation in the city's nightlife ebbed and flowed, not because of the risks, but due to the physical wear and tear. Commenting in September of 1897, Banks "stated that a

²⁹ *Acadian Recorder* 23 July 1886, NSARM, mfm# 5252.

³⁰ *Acadian Recorder* 4 January 1894, NSARM, mfm# 5266.

year ago a number of young men made it a practice of “seeing the city” either once or twice a week, but now does not even hear of them. Although some of them still reside here, they seem to have given up their evil ways and reformed, either of their own free will or necessity, as the gait is too lively for many to stand.”³¹ While some gave up “seeing the city”, either for a time or permanently, there was always someone out on town. It was an enduring characteristic of a segment of the city’s population dating back to its founding. Equally as old is the debate between suppliers who argued that a certain amount of “thirst” within the population was inevitable and those opposed to drinking, particularly its social consequences, who argued that the “thirst” would disappear if the means to drink were eliminated. The circumstances that favoured the suppliers and helped to maintain a steady flow of drink will be discussed in Chapter Four. For now we can see from the articles below that establishments such as Clarke’s were a constant and that they were frequented not only by young men but older more established gentlemen of the community as well as their daughters. And we can see that sometimes those who sought their entertainment in the upper streets became a source of amusement within the local press.

Acadian Recorder 10 July 1897

They Were Scared

Girls who did not want their parents to know where they were

A number of places were raided Saturday night by Inspector Banks. Among other shops he visited was one on Barrington St., north of Jacob St. There he found that a stampede had taken place. By the time the

³¹ *Acadian Recorder* 20 September 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5274.

officers succeeded in getting into the room back of the shop, the only occupants were three young girls besides the proprietress. These girls were terribly scared. Their faces paled when the officers walked in and they pleaded with them not to tell their parents. When the officers entered the front door several young men, sons of prominent people, went out a side door to the street. They, however, were seen going out by an officer who was stationed outside, and it is likely subpoenas will be issued for them to give evidence in a suit against the proprietress. The inspector did not capture any liquor, but it is understood that there were signs of former drinking, glasses, etc., being on the table. The parents of the girls would be shocked to learn where their children were Saturday evening. It is understood that only those already acquainted with the proprietress are allowed in the room back of the shop.³²

Acadian Recorder 14 July 1897

Sensation Re-Opened

Lawyers, doctors, politicians and business men may figure too prominently in the case

One of the biggest sensations of the ten years ago was the raid of a hotel in the north-end, when a large number of the city's rather prominent men were discovered therein. Among them were lawyers, doctors and business men. Warrants were issued against the proprietress but she had gone away, and so the sensation died.

Now however, it has been re-opened by the arrival in the city of the former proprietress. A reporter investigated the matter, but could not find a woman by the name wanted. It was learned, however, that she was known by another name. She came here about a week ago and put up at a city hotel.

The police were asked if the women would be arrested. So far they are in doubt. Their principal doubt is whether the warrant is still good. Even if it is, there will be a difficulty in getting the witnesses. A few of the police officers who made the raid are still on the force, and in case the matter is brought before the court several of those who were in the house at the time of the raid will likely be subpoenaed. Many of them are still in the city. The woman who is interested in this matter has been in Boston since the raid.³³

³² *Acadian Recorder* 10 July 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5274.

³³ *Acadian Recorder* 14 July 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5274.

We do not know that the sensation referred to in the second article occurred in Clarke's place, but it certainly could have. Clarke's place may have been one of the other places raided during the evening of 10 July 1897 and equally well known to the persons discussed in the first article. Clarke spent nearly thirty years in the saloon and bawdyhouse business. Much of that time he operated one of the most well known places of its kind in the city, notoriety due in part to tattle tale style reporting. True to form, the story above told on prominent members of the community for visiting local dives. Surely a few of these patrons at least were familiar with Clarke's place. The author of the first commentary claimed the "the parents of the girls would be [should be?] shocked to learn where their children were Saturday evening". That author may have been shocked to learn that perhaps not all of them were. Some of the fathers of the young men and women in the first article may have been among the "large number of the city's rather prominent men" referred to in the second piece. Certainly familiarity with Clarke's place and others like them was an ongoing reality which brings us to one of the most important points of similarity seen thus far. The point is that the actions most reviled by staunch reformers of the past and most commonly used by modern historians to identify an underclass – drinking, carousing, whoremongering – were not limited to dissipated members of a so called underclass. Such actions were widespread, too common to effectively prohibit in the past or to serve as useful indicators of difference, as proof of an underclass seen from the present. Residents of the upper streets, as well as those who lived in the more genteel south and west end neighbourhoods of the

city, were equally able to find such actions on their part as morally acceptable. Some of them declared otherwise in public to protect their name with those who claimed the moral high ground through their efforts to clean up the city. Yet, some of Halifax's most proper residents, if they did not use such places, were not above renting space to men such as Clarke, manufacturing the liquor they sold, and getting rich in the process. Moral distinctions were difficult to draw in all areas of Halifax. Further evidence of the commonality of negative actions and moral sameness will be discussed later in this chapter through the statistics presented in Tables Two, Three and Four and through the community profile presented in the following chapter. But for now let us continue meeting our primary characters.

By Choice or by Circumstances, There Was Always Money in Liquor and Sin to Help the Likes of Sarah Shepherd Survive

Like Charles Clarke, Sarah Shepherd was black. Unlike Charles, who appears to have never wed, Sarah had a husband, but we have no information regarding her married life. Sarah first appears in the record in 1890 as the widow of a John F. Shepherd living at 183 Maynard Street. She hailed from Guysborough County. Whether she lived in Halifax prior to the death of her husband, or came to the city only after John died is not known. We do know that between 1890 and 1906 she moved between various addresses in Halifax. For much of that time Sarah operated a saloon and or bawdy house. There is no evidence suggesting that Sarah was involved in such activities prior to the death

of her husband. The likelihood is that she became a saloon and brothel keeper as a way to make ends meet after John's death.³⁴

Sarah was a widow. She was also mother to at least one child, a daughter by the name of Ada. But so far as the local press was concerned, Sarah was just another malefactor in the upper streets and Ada merely a bad apple that had fallen not too far from a rotten tree. Neither deserved any quarter.

Acadian Recorder 28 May 1895

31 colored persons were in the court room to-day, either offenders, witnesses or prosecutors.

Ada Shepherd, colored, commonly called the "Junior Iron-horse", used provoking language to Bernard Bowen, a soldier, on Brunswick street, fined \$2 and costs or 10 days.

Annie Connors and Sarah Smith, colored, assaulting Sarah Shepherd, Ada's mother. Annie was discharged and Smith was fined \$2 or 10 days.³⁵

The article above is indicative of the racial distinctions and the public ridicule suffered by frequent offenders of that time. For some it could also suggest the existence of an underclass. Those who have claimed the existence of an underclass, past and present, could point to Sarah and Ada, a mother and daughter who were frequently involved with the Police Court and other institutions of social welfare, as an example of one generation passing its

³⁴ *McAlpine's Halifax City Directory 1871-1914*, NSARM, mfm#s 3396 to 99 and 9708-10, 9712-13, 9715, 9718, 9720, 3407 and 3411. 1881 Census of Canada, Halifax Ward 3 C-2 p. 20 line 4, LAC, mfm# T-6451. Like Charles Clarke, stories related to Sarah Shepherd and her daughter Ada often appeared in the press. Specific addresses were seldom identified, but both of them were often referred to as residents of the upper streets and so their actions fall within the catchment area of this study.

³⁵ *Acadian Recorder* 28 May 1895, NSARM, mfm# 5269(2).

negative actions on to the next thus ensuring its place at the bottom of society. But it must be remembered also that Sarah appears to have entered the liquor business and perhaps personal struggles with alcohol by force of circumstances not by choice. The example she set for her daughter was not entirely of her own making. Thomas Berrigan and Ellen Reardon came from stable homes but were unable to recreate that stability in their own lives. And the articles regarding Clarke's place suggest that those who came from more privileged backgrounds were exposed to the same fate. Children from all sorts of backgrounds have always followed the footsteps of their parents with positive and negative results. History is also filled with examples of children, again from all walks of life, ignoring their parents, again with both positive and negative results. In the period between 1890 and 1914, success or failure in the upper streets was hard to predict. For some, family support, education and personal strengths lead to success. But for others such advantages were overcome by illness, injury, death of a spouse or economic factors beyond their control. Regardless of where an individual started, it was possible to end up at the bottom of society. Some found themselves there permanently, most only temporarily.

Sarah and Charles were at or near the bottom of society much of their lives, perhaps more socially than economically. They are central characters here primarily because their involvements in the illegal sale of alcohol lead to prominence in their own time and within the surviving records. The larger story they represent is more easily uncovered and told through them. Their

appearance here as central characters does not suggest that most of the illicit liquor dealers and brothel keepers of Edwardian Halifax were black. Relative to their proportion of the overall population, blacks may have been overrepresented within the informal economy. This seems plausible given that racist attitudes excluded blacks from the better schools and the better positions within the formal economy.³⁶ However, the informal economy mirrored society as a whole, more white than black.³⁷ The majority of the customers in the upper streets were white. Charges for drunkenness and disorderly conduct were associated most often with typically white surnames such as Sullivan, Nowlan and Higgenbottom not family names such as Beals, Dillion or Bundy which were usually black. And for every Charles Clarke or Sarah Shepherd there were two or three whites doing the same thing; people such as John Hogan, William Forsyth or Mary J. O'Brien. Small time dealers, black and white, violated numerous laws regarding sale and

³⁶ David A. Sutherland, "Race Relations in Halifax, Nova Scotia During the Mid-Victorian Quest for Reform," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, 7. 1996: 35-54.. Sutherland documents the presence of blacks in Halifax during this time and their participation in the process of political reform during the 1830s and 40s. The black community initially had some influence. Blacks outside the city did gain clear title to their land and voting rights by supporting Joseph Howe. But as Irish immigration increased their strength as a minority dwindled and so did the attention they received from political elites.

³⁷ Here the formal economy refers to work sanctioned by law as well as trade unions, guilds, professional associations etc. and paid through legally binding contractual or less official agreements between the person or company hiring the labour and the person or persons doing it – carpenter, doctor or chimney sweep for example. Included within the formal economy is entrepreneurial activity – shop ownership or the importing of goods for resale – so long as such the particular activity is not extralegal in some regard. The formal economy refers to work recognized by all members of society as being within these bounds and as an honest and in some cases honorable living. The informal economy refers to activities that generate income, but are in some way illegal – selling goods without a license, prostitution or knowingly reselling stolen property. Oftentimes the same skills – ability to identify and appeal to a market, managing supply, money, staff, logistics, etc. – are required within both economies. Involvement within the informal economy can be very profitable, but also carry great risk of prosecution and or social stigma. On the other hand it can also be true that while a particular activity is technically illegal those engaged within it do not bear great disapproval from society or the law. Also recognized here is the possibility of being involved in both economies at the same time or to move from one to the other thus blurring the lines of distinction between the two.

consumption as they sold liquor in the upper streets. But they do not appear to have manufactured their own products to any large extent. Consequently, the greatest sums of money being made in the liquor business were through brewing and distilling. This end of the business was legal, exclusively white and the families involved were among the wealthiest in the city. Here we find familiar names such as Oland and Keith.³⁸

Despite the alarmist rhetoric that often appeared in the Halifax press to voice the concerns of the city's most zealous clergymen and sectarian social reformers, the liquor business, licensed or unlicensed, was prevalent and profitable. It was profitable in part through the likes of Thomas Berrigan, Ellen Reardon and Alfred Jones whose background will be presented shortly. But it was profitable more so because a large portion of the city's population drank. Furthermore, many of them wanted to drink at all hours, even on Sunday and they wanted to sing, dance and enjoy the company of the opposite sex in the process. Male drinkers were often willing to pay for that company if necessary, hence the common knowledge of Clarke's place and similar establishments seen above. All of this was true despite the high profile and vigilance of temperance advocates.³⁹ It was also true that illegal trading in liquor and sex could be rough

³⁸ Alexander Keith. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, March 2005, LAC, 11 April 2008 <<http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?Biold=39193&query=keith>>. Susannah Oland took over the family brewery after the death of her husband John in 1870 and managed it into a thriving business that continues to this day. Bruce, 220.

³⁹ "Liquor Selling in Halifax," *Morning Chronicle*, 25 February 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5503 and "Enforce the Law," *Morning Chronicle*, 2 March 1901, NSARM, mfm# 5525. The first article is an argument directed at the prohibitionists and defends the liquor trade. The second is an argument for greater enforcement of existing law in the absence of prohibition. Stories of both types were common in the press of the period.

and risky business. But there always seemed to be openings, regardless of skin colour, for those with the requisite nerve. Sarah Shepherd appears to have been forced into the informal economy by the death of her husband. Charles Clarke worked there his entire life. Many others dabbled in liquor in order to stake themselves in more restrained ventures. Alcohol spread profits small and large across all levels of Halifax society. At the same time there were social and personal losses associated with alcohol. Thomas Berrigan, the first person introduced in this chapter, represents such losses.

There was Money in Liquor, but There Was also Disease and Suffering as Experienced by Thomas Berrigan, Ellen Reardon and Alfred Jones

Thomas Berrigan was fourteen when his father died. Up to that point he appears to have been poor but not without a roof over his head and the support of family. The death of his father hastened Thomas into young adulthood and the world of work. The 1881 *Directory* lists him as a labourer boarding with his mother and older brother Patrick at 204 Albemarle. Presumably Catherine and Michael were there as well. The family appears to have remained together there until 1883. Over the next eight years, Thomas sometimes boarded with his mother and sometimes he lived at a separate address. Not long after the loss of his father, Thomas also began to have troubles with the law and alcohol. His first appearance in Police Court was on 27 December 1880. The charge was larceny and the sentence \$2.00 or 20 days in jail. He did not go to Rockhead, suggesting that the court waved the charge or that his family paid the fine. A month later,

Thomas was in court again for being disorderly. Again he appears to have avoided Rockhead. Such was not the case in February of the following year. This time he appeared for disorderly conduct. He was at Rockhead from 22 February to 11 March 1881. Between 1881 and 1894, Thomas returned to court on 52 occasions. Almost all of his charges were for drunkenness. His drinking likely had much to do with the separation from his family. By 1890, the year in which he turned 24, Thomas had become well known in the Police Court and Rockhead. He appears to have lost a permanent address and contact with his family. Thomas was living rough.

We saw that Ellen Reardon came to Halifax from the nearby town of Windsor when she was in her late teens. Perhaps she came in search of work in the needle trade or as a domestic in one of the city's better homes or hotels. It is uncertain whether or not she found work, but it is clear that she found Albemarle Street and the perils of alcohol. She appeared before the Police Court for the first time on 13 May 1880 for being drunk and disorderly. The court sent her back to Windsor. Perhaps the court felt that she was at risk in the city and would be better off at home.⁴⁰ At the same time, as Dennis Guest points out "Nova Scotia in 1763 and New Brunswick in 1786 passed poor law legislation modeled on the Elizabethan Statute. The responsibility for the relief of the poor fell on the parish

⁴⁰ This would have been in keeping with the conservative or Tory model of justice as described by Girard, "Rise and Fall".

in New Brunswick and the township in Nova Scotia.”⁴¹ Given that Ellen was from Windsor and without residence in Halifax, the Court had a clear basis in law supporting her removal. However, Ellen wanted no more to do with Windsor. By early 1881 she was a resident in one of Halifax’s homes for fallen women. She may have gone there voluntarily or she may have been sent by the court.⁴² In any case, she was before the Police Court again on 22 February 1881 for being drunk at the home. She soon left there, but remained in the city. During the next ten years as she lived through her 20s, Ellen’s name never appeared in the *City Directory*. Nor was she listed at an address in the 1881 or 1891 census.⁴³ During this time, the only place in which she is known to have lived is in the various social welfare institutions of the city. Like Thomas, Ellen had become known for living rough in the upper streets.

In the 1890s Halifax was still very much a sailor town. A run ashore in Halifax could easily land a sailor before the stipendiary magistrate. The court often

⁴¹ Guest, 11. More will be said about the application of the Poor Law, particularly its derivative *Settlement Act* which defined the terms of removal and financial responsibility for relief based on residency in chapter three.

⁴² The Court often sentenced individuals to institutions other than jail. In some cases sentences were recorded. Margin notes in the record tell us that individuals were sometimes moved from jail to other institutions. We do not know whether such moves were directed by the court or by institutional officials. During the 1880s and 90s smaller private institutions such as those for fallen women, retired or struggling seamen or Saint Patrick’s Home began or expanded operations in Halifax, some in the upper streets. Like their larger public counterparts they were staffed by a combination of inmates and non-professionals drawn from the working class and inspired and overseen by reform minded members of the middle class such as Isabella Binny Cogswell and Archbishop O’Brien. As suggested in the case of Ellen Reardon private and public institutions sometimes worked together. Both were examples of the Halifax penchant for indoor vs. outdoor relief, which reflected perhaps less funds to work with and a feeling within the middle class of Halifax that rehabilitation and change necessitated isolation from the hard drinking culture of the city. More will be said about these institutions, individuals, terms and ideas in the coming chapter.

⁴³ The 1881 Census of Canada, “Family Search,” March 2006, The Church of Jesus of Later-Day Saints, 7 March 2008 <http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/search/frameset_search.asp?PAGE=ancestorsearchresults.asp>. 1891 Census of Halifax, NSARM, mfm#’s 13663-64.

handled such cases by simply ordering the sailor back on board knowing that when his ship sailed he was not likely to be seen again. Alfred Jones was a British sailor. He appears to have first arrived in Halifax around 1890. Maybe he planned to stay, maybe not. In any case he became a permanent resident. Alfred was about ten years older and he likely found the bottle long before Thomas Berrigan and Ellen Reardon. Just as it did for Thomas, Ellen and so many others, Alfred's drinking often got him into trouble. Like Ellen Reardon, Alfred does not appear to have ever had a place of his own or any family in Halifax. The only place he is known to have lived is in Rockhead and the City Home. Alfred was born and raised in England. We know nothing of his life there. What we do know is that he ended up in Halifax along side Thomas and Ellen as a part of the rough life that existed in the city's upper streets.⁴⁴

Those who were caught in the rough life may have aged quicker and been more often in need of a bath and laundry services. But they did not look any different than anyone else. Like members of any species, outwardly humans appear much the same, two eyes, one nose, ten fingers, etc. At the same time, inwardly humans are very unique, DNA, blood type, tissue type, etc. Many of

⁴⁴ Alfred Jones was an incredibly common name in Victorian England. The name Alfred Jones appears 2139 times in the 1881 Census of the British Isles. Using the birth year of 1861 recorded in the 1901 Census of Canada and the occupation stableman (recorded as hostler in 1890 Police Court), 25 possible candidates appear. One of the 25 was a blacksmith's labourer who was in Her Majesty's Convict Prison, Dorset England during the time of the 1881 census. The occupations of stablemen, blacksmith's labourer and hostler are all related; suggesting the Alfred Jones in Dorset in 1881, Police Court in 1890 and a resident of Halifax in 1901 are all the same individual trying to make a living tending to horses in one way or another. See: 1881 Census of the British Isles, "Family Search," March 2006, The Church of Jesus of Later-Day Saints, 7 March 2008 <http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/search/frameset_search>. and 1901 Census of Canada, Halifax Ward 1 p. 12 line 81, LAC, mfm# T-6450.

those who lived rough in the upper streets of Halifax a century ago were in varying degrees dependant upon alcohol. Modern medical research continues to investigate the links between biochemistry and a predisposition to addiction.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, drinking remains the only way to confirm susceptibility to alcohol. Individuals choose to drink, but they do not choose to be dependant. Once dependence is indicated or obvious an individual can accept or reject treatment, but often times, just like cancer or tuberculosis, alcohol is stronger than the individual. Today this is much better understood within medical science. But within the realm of public opinion addicts remain largely responsible for their own plight. A century ago those who succumbed to alcohol were seen to be entirely to blame, to be victims of nothing more than poor choice and moral weakness. That is, if they were poor. Alcohol attacked members from all walks of life. Thomas Berrigan and John A. Macdonald were both victims of alcohol, but they were not viewed or treated in the same way. John A. Macdonald was protected by a host of circumstances. Thomas Berrigan and those like him had little or no protection. Thomas Berrigan, Ellen Reardon and Alfred Jones were condemned for their drinking in the absence of our medical knowledge regarding addiction. We know better. When we look back we must be careful not to draw too harsh a line of distinction based on alcohol consumption or associated negative actions. Alcohol dependency was not always a matter of choice or the primary explanation of poverty, regardless of what the contemporary press said or implied on such matters.

⁴⁵ Institute of Medicine: Committee to Identify Strategies to Raise the Profile of Substance Abuse and Alcoholism Research, *Dispelling the Myths About Addiction: Strategies to Increase Understanding and Strengthen Research*, (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1997).

The Actions Which Drew the Ire of Authorities were Widespread, not Limited to a Few Notorious Characters

According to the *Acadian Recorder* and the *Morning Chronicle*, Thomas Berrigan was a “well known character”. Men such as Thomas Churchill, James Connors, Alfred Jones, and John Kellum were just as well known. Like Thomas Berrigan these men were frequently before the Police Court and in Rockhead primarily for drunkenness or minor drinking related offences.⁴⁶ A second group of notorious characters included men and women who were frequently charged with violating the laws related to the sale of alcohol. This group included the likes of Charles Clarke, Sarah Shepherd, John Hogan and Charles Aucoin. The Halifax press identified a third group of “narrowwells” made up solely of women. The list included Annie Maxwell, Ellen Reardon, Margret McVicar, Annie Higgenbottom, and Ada Shepherd. Like their male counterparts in the first group, these women appeared before the court most often for drunkenness. Unlike the men, however, frequent female offenders were sometimes arraigned on charges of prostitution though such charges were often dismissed. A double standard, charging women for engaging in prostitution while not prosecuting their male customers, had long existed in Halifax as it did elsewhere in Canada.⁴⁷ Based on her examination of

⁴⁶ The charge most commonly laid along with a charge for drunkenness was profanity. Alcohol was addictive and often resulted in unemployment, family violence, and associated illnesses. To some extent charges for drunkenness were an effort to protect people and society from obvious harm. At the same time many were opposed to alcohol consumption on religious grounds. As will be discussed more fully in the following two chapters through the work of Ramsay Cook, Andrew C. Holman, Richard Allen and Graeme Decarie, those who pushed for social reforms, which included setting the limits of acceptable public behavior, were often devote Christians. It seems that charges for profanity were a way of further punishing those who overindulged as well as a reflection of the strong links between social reform, church and state which existed throughout late Victorian Canada.

⁴⁷ Alison Prentice et al, *Canadian Women: A History*, (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1996) 148.

Police Court Minutes and newspaper reports from the 1850s and 60s, Judith Fingard noted that "in cases where men and women were caught together in sexual acts. More often than not the men did not appear in court...The only men the law took serious cognizance of were the brothel-keepers."⁴⁸ Thirty years later there were still plenty of bars and brothels operating in the city. However, charges against keepers as well as inmates of bawdy houses were few. For example, in 1890 six charges were laid for keeping a bawdy house and only two for being an inmate of such an establishment. In 1904 once again six charges for keeping were laid, however in that year 10 women were charged with being inmates. No charges for engaging the services of a prostitute were laid in 1890 or 1904.⁴⁹ No reference to such a charge was discovered in any of the records examined during the course of this research. While a double standard seems to have persisted, given the small number of prostitution related charges and convictions during this period, its effect appears to have been slight.

Between 1890 and 1914 there were relatively few charges laid in relation to the sex trade. Charges related to severe bodily harm were equally uncommon. The vast majority of offences in the upper streets did not involve physical violence. The assault cases that were heard most often did not involve severe or life threatening injuries. Most offences were met with small fines and short jail sentences. But some matters were more serious and punished more harshly.

⁴⁸ Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life* 107. Referring to the work of Judith Walkowitz, Paula Petrik and Luise White, Fingard points out that the double standard seen in Halifax was also evident during this time period in cities elsewhere.

⁴⁹ Before the Halifax Police Court, NSARM, RG 42 Series D, 1890 & 1904.

During an evening in February of 1897 there was a “fracas on Albemarle Street”. A few days later Thomas Berrigan gave himself up at the police station. The press offered few details. In one report a women was supposedly stabbed. In

Table 2 <u>A Breakdown of the Number of Appearances Per Person Before the Stipendiary Magistrate for the Years 1890, 1895, 1900 and 1904</u>								
Persons before the Police Court	For the Year 1890		For the Year 1895		For the Year 1900		For the Year 1904	
Total	988	100%	1740	100%	1411	100%	1243	100%
Appeared once	777	78.6%	1037	59.6%	952	67.5%	775	62.3%
Appeared twice	117	11.8%	359	20.6%	238	16.9%	250	20.1%
Appeared three times	52	5.3%	152	8.7%	112	7.9%	103	8.3%
Appeared four times	16	1.6%	75	4.3%	58	4.1%	38	3%
Appeared five times	17	1.7%	43	2.5%	17	1.2%	31	2.5%
Appeared more than five times	9	.9%	74	4.3%	34	2.4%	46	3.7%

Sources: Before the Halifax Police Court, NSARM, RG 42 Series D, 1890, 1895, 1900 & 1904.

front of Judge Johnson in the County Court on 25 February 1897 Thomas Berrigan “pleaded guilty to a charge of assaulting Thomas Churchill, whom he was alleged to have bitten in the face”.⁵⁰ In this case Judge Johnson handed down a two year sentence in Dorchester penitentiary. However, sentences to

⁵⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, 25 February 1897, NSARM mfm# 5503.

federal prison and acts of extreme violence were the exception not the rule in Edwardian Halifax and that included the upper streets.⁵¹

As the event described above suggests, when violence did erupt in the upper streets it most often involved individuals known to one another. By the time Thomas Berrigan and Thomas Churchill were mixed up in the incident that sent Thomas Berrigan to Dorchester, the two men had known one another for years. During the 1880s and 90s their respective families lived near to one another on Albermarle Street. They were both in Rockhead in March of 1895. Not long after his time in Dorchester, Berrigan testified against Churchill in a Police Court trial. The two men crossed paths throughout their lives. They were also connected to a number of other individuals whose actions often gained the attention of the authorities and the press. In December of 1899 Thomas Churchill was sent to Rockhead for a month after assaulting Margret McVicar, an equally well known character. Thomas Berrigan, Alfred Jones and Ellen Reardon were often in Rockhead at the same time. When Charles Clarke began doing business in

⁵¹ Jim Phillips and Allyson N. May, "Female Criminally in 18th Century Halifax," *Acadiensis* Spring 2002: 71-96. Report of Chief of Police 1905-06, 1913-14. NSARM. mfm#'s 3362-63. There was violent crime in Halifax. An accurate sense of it would require examination of higher court records, something outside the scope of this study. While more serious offences were tried in higher courts, in some instances at least, first appearances took place in Police Court. In the records examined here, 3 individuals were arraigned on murder and sent on to a higher court; three men were also arraigned on rape charges. The Report of the Chief of Police for 1905-06 shows no arrests for murder and 9 arrests for rape. In 1913-14 there was one arrest for murder and one for rape. These numbers as well as the absence of frequent stories of violent crime in the press suggest violent crime was not a major concern in the city. None of the characters at the centre of this study faced charges for murder, rape, infanticide or other serious indictable offences. Moreover, persons convicted of such things were not sent to Rockhead. According to the work of Jim Phillips and Allyson N. May, violent crime was more common in 18th century Halifax and did at times involve the poorest members of the community. As they point out, the economy was then more prone to post war slump, the city was still in their words a frontier society often overrun by the military, policing was practically nil, and there was no street lighting to mitigate against nefarious activity at night.

Albermarle Street he was in the same building or right next door to the Berrigans. A wide range of characters were at home in the upper streets, which was a very small community. As a boy it would likely have taken Thomas about a minute to run from one end to the other. Residents of the upper streets lived in full view of one another with few secrets.⁵² Their familiarity sometimes raised contempt, particularly when drinking.

Table 3
Cases Before the Police Court According to Residency as Listed in the Halifax Police Court Ledgers
for the Years 1890, 1895, 1900 and & 1904

Year	1890		1895		1900		1904	
Total cases	1379	100%	3330	100%	2048	100%	1639	100%
Residents of Halifax	1135	82.3%	2348	70.5%	1162	56.7%	814	49.6%
Other	145	10.5%	427	12.8%	287	14.0%	313	19.1%
No place of residence listed	99	7.2%	555	16.7%	599	29.2%	512	31.2%

Sources: Before the Halifax Police Court, NSARM, RG 42 Series D, 1890, 1895, 1900 & 1904.

As the press covered events in the upper streets and the proceedings of the Police Court, it labeled those who were frequently involved with the authorities as “nefarious”, “notorious” or “old offenders”. The terms were never strictly applied

⁵² Farge, *Fragile Lives*. Farge's understanding and analysis of 18th century Paris is based on similar conditions. That is, living life in full view of one's neighbours. In the next chapter the affects of close proximity and high visibility in the upper streets with be discussed bearing in mind the findings of Farge.

Table 4					
<u>A List of the Most Frequently Heard Charges in the Halifax Police Court for the Years 1890 & 1904</u>					
In the year 1890 there were 1379 charges heard in Police Court			In the year 1904 there were 1639 charges heard in Police Court		
The most frequently heard charges were:			The most frequently heard charges were:		
Assault	192	13.9%	drunk & incompetent	495	30.2%
Drunk and incapable	158	11.4%	Assault	120	7.3%
Drunk and disorderly	119	8.6%	Theft	106	6.5%
Drunk and profane	52	3.7%	Disturbance	92	5.6%
Drunk, disorderly and profane	38	2.7%	Truancy	70	4.3%
Violation Liquor License Act	35	2.5%	Drunk	72	4.4%
Vagrancy	22	1.6%	Mischief	31	1.9%
Drunkenness	20	1.4%	Vio. Liq. License Act	28	1.7%
Disorderly conduct	13	0.9%	Threats	25	1.5%
Assaulting wife	12	0.8%	Resisting police	17	1.0%
Common drunkard	12	0.8%			
Drunk and fighting	11	0.7%			
Drunkenness and neglect	11	0.7%			
Disorderly and profane	9	0.6%			
Drunkenness and vagrancy	9	0.6%			
Drunk and loitering	8	0.5%			

Sources: Before the Halifax Police Court, NSARM, RG 42 Series D, 1890, 1895, 1900 & 1904.

according to set criteria. A comparison between newspaper reports and records from the Police Court show that for the most part such terms applied only to those persons who appeared four or more times a year for a number of years. Table Two breaks down the total number of persons before the Court for four years across a period of fourteen years.⁵³ Four appearances is used in this study as a dividing line in order to identify here the same individuals who were identified in the past as notorious. Following this criteria we can see that those deemed to be nefarious, the likes of Thomas Berrigan or Ellen Reardon, were a

small group, usually representing less than 10% of the total number of individuals before the court. Table Three shows a breakdown of cases before the court based on residency. In each year shown, the largest single group of offenders was residents and not short term visitors brought to the city by its steady flow of merchant and passenger shipping. Table four shows us that charges for drunkenness, or a drinking related offence, Four the most common, 33.6% in 1890 and 36.3% in 1904. While stories in the press sometimes suggested the opposite, these three sets of figures show very clearly that the overwhelming

Table 5		
Halifax, 1890-1904		
<u>A List of the 27 Offenders who Appeared in Police Court 4 or more times in the years 1890, 1895, 1900 and 1904</u>		
Thomas Berrigan	Annie Higgenbottom	Owen Nowlan
Thomas Churchill	John Hogan	Thomas Orman Jr.
Charles Clarke	Angus Ice	James Pendergrast
James Connors	Alfred Jones	Annie Peterson
Thomas Connors	John Kellum	Ellen Reardon
John Finlan	Thomas Kennedy	Sarah Shepherd
James Gilfoy	Georgina Mason	Ada Shepherd
Annie Haverstock	Annie Maxwell	Thomas Sullivan
Rebecca Henneberry	Margaret McVicar	Patrick Walker

Sources: Before the Halifax Police Court, NSARM, RG 42 Series D, 1890, 1895, 1900 & 1904.

majority of cases before the Police Court involved infrequent offenders. Each year only a small minority of cases before the Court involved frequent offenders. Of equal, if not more importance, is the fact that the actions which usually lead the frequent as well as the infrequent offenders to court were the same.

Table Five is a list of individuals who appeared in Police Court four or more times in a number of years between 1890 and 1914. In addition to the Police Court many of them were very familiar with Rockhead and the City Home. Ellen Reardon, who we have already met, went to Rockhead at least 110 times and was sentenced to 100 or more days in jail nearly every year for a period of thirty years. She may have had the highest rate and duration of recidivism the city has ever known. Perhaps no one appeared before the stipendiary magistrate more times in a single year than Patrick Walker who found himself in Police Court on fourteen occasions in 1900. John Kellum and James Pendergrast who were likely the oldest members of this group had been well known in the upper streets and the City's institutions of social welfare since the 1870s. Both were central characters in Fingard's study of the upper streets primarily because of their recidivism. Thomas Berrigan who was one of the youngest members of the group continued to be well known to the upper streets, to the authorities and to the press well into the 1930s. This group of 10 women and 17 men contained the poorest residents of Halifax between 1890 and 1914. They were the most set upon by the contemporary press and they were the cases most familiar to those on the front lines of relief and reform in the upper streets. And lives such as theirs are pointed to by some modern writers as historical evidence of an underclass in Halifax; of a "notorious" minority whose morals and actions separated them from the "respectable" majority. Yet our examination thus far shows a great deal of commonality and the difficulty of drawing useful and accurate lines of demarcation based on actions or morality.

The Closer We Look, the Lines Used to Demarcate an Underclass Become Less Clear and Meaningful: The Cases of Nicholas Berrigan, William Shields and Dennis Mahoney

A century ago the Halifax press highlighted the negative actions of a small group of upper street residents. Press coverage set them apart and lent support to the idea of an underclass. However, when we continue to draw comparisons between the so called notorious and their immediate neighbours harsh distinctions become increasingly difficult to support. Certainly the notorious drank more than was healthy and suffered from social and economic instability. But so did many supposedly respectable residents of the city - Nicholas Berrigan, William Shields and Dennis Mahoney for example. Nicholas Berrigan first appears in the Halifax Directory as a mariner living in a house at Bennett's wharf. Over the next ten years Nicholas appears in the Directory at a number of addresses along Lower Water Street and the wharf district of the city. His occupation changed as often as his address and included junk dealer, grocer, stevedore and labourer. Nicholas was an Irish Catholic. His wife Ellen was a Newfoundlander and their two oldest children Patrick and Dennis were born in Newfoundland. It appears that the family came to Nova Scotia in the late 1860s. Nicholas may have been related to Thomas Berrigan, but nothing in the records confirms any family connection.

Nicholas and Ellen had seven children who grew up in Halifax during the 1880s and 90s. Through the 1880s the family continued to move frequently while

Nicholas was employed primarily as a labourer and stevedore. In the course of raising his family, Nicholas had a few brushes with the law. In 1875 he was sent to Rockhead for 20 days on the charge of selling liquor without a license. The prison ledger noted his behavior as good. A few years later he was before the stipendiary magistrate accused of stealing the *Morning Herald*. No resolution was recorded so we do not know what came of that incident. Nicholas was before the court just one other time that we know of. In 1891 he was arrested for assaulting a man by the name of George Kingston, the case was withdrawn. In 1890 Nicholas moved his family to 12 Proctor's Lane. They remained there until 1896 when the family moved to 26 Starr Road. The family was still at Starr Road in 1906 when Nicholas was taken suddenly by a heart attack. In the last years of his life he worked as a watchman at the ICR. His obituary made no mention of his legal troubles, but did describe Nicholas as a kind husband and father.⁵⁴

Like Nicholas Berrigan, William Shields was a Roman Catholic born in Ireland. And just like Nicholas, William also died suddenly of a heart attack. William lived in Halifax for at least twelve years. He first appears in the Halifax Directory in 1900 as the operator of a secondhand clothing store at 162 Argyle Street. By 1907 he and his wife Elizabeth had moved to 109-111 Grafton Street. The following year Elizabeth is listed in the Assessment Rolls as the owner of 137 Grafton Street and was assessed for \$2000 worth of real property. William

⁵⁴ *McAlpine's Halifax City Directory 1871-1914*, NSARM, mfm#'s 3396 to 99 and 9708-10, 9712-13, 9715, 9718, 9720, 3407 and 3411. Before the Halifax Police Court 1877-1916, NSARM, RG 42 Series D vols. 26, 31, 34, 36, 38a, 41, 43 and Series B vol. 39, Registry of the City Prison, Aug 1873 – Dec 1911, NSARM, RG 35 – 102 Series 18 B. 1881 Census of Canada, Halifax Ward No. 2 Division 2 p. 51, LAC, mfm# C-13168. *Acadian Recorder*, 11 July 1905, NSARM, mfm# 5292. Medical Examiners report 11 July 1905, MR# 858, NSARM, RG 41 series D vol. 80 mfm# 9737.

was assessed that same year for \$400 worth of personal property. By this time the secondhand clothing business had been moved to 51 George Street where it remained in operation to at least 1914. William maintained his business during these years. He also drank and sometimes got into trouble as a result. In 1900 he was in Rockhead for ten days for being found drunk on the street. He was before the Police Court twice in 1904 and in Rockhead twice in 1905, all for drinking related offenses. As the owner of property and a business it would seem that William could have paid the optional fines and avoided Rockhead. Perhaps he had little or no money when arrested and his wife refused to bail him out. The answer remains a mystery. William died in 1912. Elizabeth carried on the business for at least the next couple of years.⁵⁵ What became of her after that is unknown.

While William and Elizabeth Shields were operating their business and while Nicholas Berrigan was raising his family, Dennis Mahoney was living in a two story wood frame house at 181-183 Albermarle Street. He lived there from 1886 until 1909 when he sold the building to Benjamin Davis. Like Nicholas, Dennis held a variety of jobs; teamster, checker and common labourer. As a property owner it is likely that he also made money by renting part of his space, which was

⁵⁵ *McAlpine's Halifax City Directory 1871-1914*, NSARM, mfm#'s 3396 to 99 and 9708-10, 9712-13, 9715, 9718, 9720, 3407 and 3411. Before the Halifax Police Court, 1877-1916, NSARM, RG 42 Series D vols. 26, 31, 34, 36, 38a, 41, 43 and Series B vol. 39, Registry of the City Prison, Aug 1873 – Dec 1911, NSARM, RG 35 – 102 Series 18 B. Halifax Assessment Rolls Ward 3 1890 to 1909, NSARM, RG 35.a vols. 5 to 13

very much the norm at that time⁵⁶. Dennis does not appear in the samples of the court and prison records used for this research. However, the newspapers tell us that he drank, and on at least one occasion with dramatic results.

Acadian Recorder 6 August 1894

A Missing Man

Dennis Mahoney, labourer, residing at 181 Albermarle Street, left home on last Saturday week, and has not been heard from since. He had been drinking considerably, but "left off" and was in a very unnerved condition. About 7 o'clock on the day in question, he went out; some hours later Chris Davidson saw him on the road to the 4-Mile House, in the same place when he was going and returning. Yesterday a dozen men were searching in the vicinity without result.⁵⁷

Acadian Recorder 11 August 1894

Dennis Mahoney, labourer, who disappeared from his home, Albermarle Street, this day fortnight, turned up after ten days. He had been drinking heavily, and his mind was temporarily affected; he wandered to the vicinity of the 4-Mile House, and went in and out of the woods there, probably getting food in the neighbourhood, until the cloud passed away from his reason, and he came back to town, having grown a full beard in the interval.⁵⁸

As we can see from the article below, bouts of intense drinking were not limited to men or to the poor.

Acadian Recorder 18 August 1897

A sad tale of drink – A legacy left to one goes to satisfy her appetite.

⁵⁶ D.A. Muise, "Context of Inequality". Muise points out that as rural Nova Scotians moved to the towns and cities for work they needed accommodations which gave urban property owners an opportunity for rental income.

⁵⁷ *Acadian Recorder*, 6 August 1894, NSARM, mfm# 5268.

⁵⁸ *Acadian Recorder*, 11 August 1894, NSARM, mfm# 5268.

A respectably connected woman was arrested a few days ago for drunkenness, and she was remanded until to-day for sentence. When the case was called, the Magistrate said a relative of her's had called on him in regard to the sentence. The relative wanted the women sent to some home to be reformed. The statement was made that a legacy was left to her a short time ago, and she did not stop drinking until every cent was gone. The women admitted spending part of the legacy in the manner named. The Magistrate said he did not like anybody to interview him in reference to any case before a sentence was given. If the relative came to court and swore to his statement, he (the Magistrate) would have no hesitation in sending her to some institution for her reformation. He fined her \$3⁵⁹

Nicholas Berrigan, William Shields, Dennis Mahoney and the unnamed women in the last story appear to have had infrequent brushes with the law caused by drinking. For a period of his life, Dennis Berrigan also found trouble while drinking, but more frequently than the others just mentioned. Dennis was the second son of Nicholas Berrigan. He was born in Newfoundland around the time of Confederation. He attended classes at the Colonial Market School in Halifax for at least three years in the mid 1870s. By 1887 he was listed as a painter boarding at his father's house on Upper Water Street. Dennis continued to live and work in Halifax well into the 1920s. Like his father and most men of that time, Dennis worked at a variety of jobs, labourer, store-keeper and porter. He seems to have always been able to find work. For a time he also found plenty to drink. Between 1879 and 1893 Dennis was before the stipendiary magistrate twenty eight times and in Rockhead on nine occasions, primarily because of his drinking. In March of 1893 Dennis Berrigan was at Rockhead with Thomas Berrigan. In the years leading up to that moment the actions of the two men had been very similar. A few months later, On 24 November 1893, Dennis Berrigan

⁵⁹ *Acadian Recorder*, 18 August 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5274.

was in Police Court again for being drunk and causing a disturbance. According to the Court's ledger he was discharged to take the pledge. Perhaps he went on to play in the Salvation Army band. Perhaps his health forced him to stop drinking or maybe he kept on drinking but managed to avoid further trouble. Whether he continued to drink or not, he never returned to Police Court or the city prison after 1893.⁶⁰

The men and women in the preceding stories were very common in the Halifax of a century ago. They were common all over the city, in the upper streets, along the waterfront and in the more affluent areas of the south end. For the most part they paid their taxes, raised their families and obeyed the law. But they were not temperate. They drank, often in the upper streets. As we saw in the articles regarding Charles Clarke's place, when men and women gathered in the upper streets trouble often ensued. When the likes of a Nicholas Berrigan found themselves in trouble they preferred to keep matters quiet, pay their fines and stay out of the papers. The press often obliged and reserved the naming and the name-calling for the poorer members of society.⁶¹ Meanwhile, the high, the low and those in between entered the upper streets headed for the same bars and brothels. There were no distinctions in these places. There was a set of activities and a level of morality understood and accepted by all those who chose

⁶⁰ Before the Halifax Police Court 1877-1916, NSARM, RG 42 Series D vols. 26, 31, 34, 36, 38a, 41, 43 and Series B vol. 39.

⁶¹ Kusmer, *Down and Out*. In the 9th chapter "A Changing Image: The Homeless in Popular Culture, 190-1930" Kusmer traces how journalistic depictions of the "tramp" have reinforced a separation within American society. "The nostalgic or comic tramp favoured in middle-class magazines separated the audience from its subject, turning the homeless man into a symbolic "other". 184.

to enter at the risk of criminal prosecution. Poor regulars committed more offenses per capita. However, the economically better-off members of society committed the vast majority of offenses. The tables above show that eighty percent of the cases before the Police Court involved local residents who committed one or two offenses per year, usually drinking related. These were persons akin to William Shields. In most years, less than ten percent of the cases heard in Police Court involved frequent offenders such as Ellen Reardon.

Tales of woe, regardless of who they involved, were titillating. They helped make the daily papers a source of entertainment. In a town the size of Halifax, many readers knew the people they were reading about, which heightened the voyeuristic appeal associated with news from the Police Court and the upper streets. In this regard the Halifax press was little different than papers read in cities across the country.

By the 1890s, an increasing proportion of the population was sufficiently literate to read journalistic prose, and most could afford the money and time to obtain and read an eight page penny newspaper, increasingly made more enticing through the use of cartoons and photographs...Most papers were unabashedly partisan and reported the news in a way that made no pretence to political objectivity, a feature that seemed only to entice sales...The *Montreal Star*, founded in 1869, pioneered "yellow journalism" in Canada, focusing on gossip and events close to home rather than on serious politics or events in Europe. *The Telegram* brought the same formula to Toronto in 1876.⁶²

⁶² Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkel, *History of the Canadian Peoples, 1867 to Present vol. 2, 3rd ed.*, (Toronto: Addison Wesley Longman) 176.

In Halifax, no one wanted to read articles detailing the average day of work at Bennett's Wharf or Mott's Soap Factory; or painful accounts of unemployment and job searching. The contemporary press ignored these realities of life. Likewise, when modern historians have examined the lives of the extremely poor, they seldom approach their subjects as workers or persons who saw themselves as workers and wanted gainful employment. They focus on criminal activity and examples of degradation. So far as Halifax is concerned, available sources are partly to blame. The few business records that have survived seldom include lists of employees or payroll ledgers. Log books from a number of merchant vessels have survived but they are not centrally located and they do not necessarily list crewmembers. Many editions of the *Halifax Directory* show the stated occupation of persons listed. Appearing in the *Directory* at the same address or neighbourhood over a number of years suggests enough employment to stay put, pay the rent and applicable taxes. But such evidence is not as convincing as pay stubs, a union card and voter registration. Unfortunately such pieces of evidence are rarely available. The assessment rolls identify the value of real and personal property as well as rent and tax payments. They offer strong evidence. Records for the years between 1890 and 1914 are not complete. Existing rolls identify most property owners and rates paid on real property. But there is much less information regarding tenants and payments of personal property and poll tax. Meanwhile, a collection of institutional records cast a shadow of doubt over all of those who appear there. That shadow of doubt is darkest over persons appearing in Table Five who have a large volume of damning evidence amassed

within the institutional records reinforced by an accumulation of negative press clippings.

However, even for these twenty seven individuals not all of the evidence is negative. John Hogan is a prime example. As early as 1871 Hogan had a grocery business at 59 Prince Street. He had a separate home address also on Prince Street. The following year he appears to be residing at 68 Grafton while maintaining his store at 59 Prince. In 1873 his home and business were both located between 64-66 Grafton Street. By 1891 he had moved his home back to Prince Street, then at 52 1/2, but his grocery and liquor store remained on Grafton to at least 1901. Over the years John Hogan's involvement in the liquor trade often took him to Police Court. At the same time he earned money through his grocery business and rental property and paid his taxes as well as his fines and helped to keep money circulating in the city's poorest neighbourhood.⁶³ Strictly speaking, much of Hogan's activities, along with the activities of similar characters such as Sarah Shepherd and Charles Clarke, were outside the law. On the other hand, even the shadiest upper street merchants demonstrated all the essential characteristics of work in its most praised form, entrepreneurship which was most boldly demonstrated in Halifax by men such as Max Aitken and John Stairs.⁶⁴ Like their grander counterparts, the Sarah Shepherd's and John Hogan's were self-motivated, disciplined and organized. They ordered and

⁶³ Before the Halifax Police Court 1877-1916, NSARM, RG 42 Series D vols. 26, 31, 34, 36, 38a, 41, 43 and Series B vol. 39.

⁶⁴ For an overview of entrepreneurial activity within Atlantic Canada and an introduction to characters such as Aitken and Stairs see: Gregory P. Marchildon, "John F. Stairs, Max Aitken and the Scotia Group: Finance Capitalism and Industrial Decline in the Maritimes, 1890-1914," *Farm Factory and Fortune* Kris Inwood ed. (Fredericton, NB: Acadiensis Press, 1993) 197-218.

inventoried stock, hired and supervised staff, set policies and prices and kept accounts. In order for them to remain open as long as they did, they must have been good at the technical aspects of their business. They must also have been able to maintain positive social relations with customers, the police, and their immediate neighbours.

While there is plenty of evidence, both positive and negative, for men like John Hogan and Charles Clarke, the positive evidence for most of those who appear in Table Four is scattered and inconclusive. For example, a man named Thomas Sullivan age 27 born in Halifax joined the crew of the *Cyprus* on 27 September 1878 as an able-bodied seaman. He made a voyage to Savannah Georgia and was paid a wage of \$16.00. Between 1869 and 1901 there were always two, sometimes three or four, Thomas Sullivan's listed in the *Halifax Directory*. None were ever listed as a seaman or a sailor; however, there was often a Thomas Sullivan listed as a carpenter. The "notorious" Thomas Sullivan was frequently identified as a carpenter in the ledgers of the Police Court. A Thomas Sullivan was initiated into local 83 of the carpenter's union in 1890. Carpenter was the occupation listed for the Thomas Sullivan who died at the Nova Scotia Hospital in 1912. The evidence is not conclusive. But it seems very possible that the Thomas Sullivan, who was frequently in and out of social welfare institutions for more than twenty years, was at the same time a unionized tradesman who often worked and maintained an address in the city.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ The Atlantic Canada Shipping Project, *Ships and Seafarers*.

As we work through the names in Table Four the evidence of positive activities gets thinner, but no less provocative. For instance, James Prendergrast is listed in the 1890-91 *Directory* as the caretaker of Saint Joseph's Temperance Hall. Thomas Berrigan's obituary identifies him as the night watchman at the City Home.⁶⁶ After years of being served by these institutions it seems that in their final days both men were able to provide some modest services in return. During the 1890s Annie Peterson was often before the Police Court and an inmate at Rockhead, but there is no record of her having an address at that time. Then in 1901 she appears in the *Directory* as a car cleaner boarding at 548 Upper Water Street. Like Thomas Sullivan, John Finlan was a member of local 83. Finlan was initiated in 1899.⁶⁷ On 24 October 1916 a Thomas Patrick Kennedy recorded as a 38 year old stevedore living at 212 Albermarle Street enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF). Two months later on 16 December 1916 his attestation was deemed correct by Lieutenant Colonel A.H. Parsons.⁶⁸ It seems certain that the Thomas Kennedy who joined the CEF was the same Thomas Kennedy who was frequently before the stipendiary magistrate and in Rockhead through the 1890s and up to the start of the War. He is not absolved of all of his transgressions simply because he enlisted in the CEF, particularly since his service record shows a number of alcohol related offences.⁶⁹ Nor does Thomas Sullivan's work as a carpenter excuse his excessive drinking. But focusing on the

⁶⁶ *Halifax Chronicle*, 12 April 1937, NSARM, mfm# 5708. Carpenters Union Local 83, NSARM, MG 20 vol. 1635 # 8. Death Registration 1912, NSARM, Book 9 p. 307 #1837.

⁶⁷ Carpenters Union Local 83, NSARM, MG 20 vol. 1635 # 8.

⁶⁸ Patrick Thomas Kennedy # 1060154, Soldiers of the First World War – CEF, LAC, RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5093 - 36

⁶⁹ Patrick Thomas Kennedy # 1060154, Soldiers of the First World War – CEF, LAC, RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166 Box 5093 - 1-11.

positive shows us that along with their negative actions even the most debilitated unstable members of society made efforts to hold an address and to work. In other words they do not show evidence of having rejected fundamental societal norms. Further evidence of efforts to hold an address and a job on the part of characters such as Thomas Berrigan, John Finlan and Annie Paterson will be presented in the next chapter. As we move forward the argument supporting their sameness or normalcy grows stronger and characterizations of them as members of a notorious underclass appear more pejorative and inaccurate.

Conclusion

The area of Halifax known as the upper streets, Albemarle Street in particular, was a rough neighbourhood. Incomes there were generally low and frequently interrupted. Housing was often crowded and run down. Many lives and families in the community were ravaged by alcohol abuse. Alarmed by what they saw and fearful the area could become as dangerous as the slums of London and New York were reported to be, reform minded authorities intervened. This chapter has followed five individuals who represent the lives and actions that were the primary cause of concern. Within their lives we have seen examples of excessive drinking. We have seen frequent returns to the Police Court and to the custody of Rockhead and the recurring need to depend upon the City Home for shelter. We have seen profit and destitution associated with the liquor trade and prostitution. At the same time we have seen indications of stable upbringing, school attendance, employment and the ability to maintain a private address. We

have seen property ownership and the payment of taxes. And we have seen business skills demonstrated through the formal and informal economies. The group represented by the five central characters was small. While they committed more offences per capita, they represented only a small percentage of the total number of offences committed each year. According to the statistical evidence drawn from the Police Court, the better-off “respectable” members of the city were responsible for the vast majority of petty crimes. Establishments of vice were concentrated in the upper streets but they drew customers from all over the city. We must remain cautious of theories and studies based primarily on negative actions which attempt to use those actions to identify and explain the extremely poor as different. When we examine the lives of those who lived rough in the past for evidence of positive as well as negative actions and when we examine rough lives in relation to those who were better-off the lines of distinction begin to blur. When focusing on their positive actions men such as Dennis Berrigan resemble characters that commonly appear in works of labour history, studies conducted by Bettina Bradbury and Greg Kealey referred to in Chapter One for example. Likewise, it is easy to see similarities between the likes of a Thomas Sullivan and the central characters of Judith Fingard’s *Dark Side of Life* when negative actions are at the centre of attention. However, in the wider or comparative view used here, the difference between a Dennis Berrigan and a Thomas Sullivan appears to have been more a matter of degree than kind. It seems plausible that such similarity was more widespread within Canada’s past. However, distinct fields of historical examination make it more difficult for us

to conceive of or to confirm that reality. So far, the actions examined here show that in the Halifax of a century ago the moral path was neither straight nor narrow. Some were always close to the centre. A few were always on the edge. And others weaved back and forth. But the rich and poor walked the same path. The next chapter is an in-depth community profile of the upper streets. It looks at how members of that community shared their physical, economic and social space. It continues to identify the similarities between the extremely poor and their better-off neighbours.

Chapter Three - Profile of a Community: the Upper Streets of Halifax between 1890 and 1914

Introduction

Societies can be defined by their fundamental values. These are the principles common to all members and used by them to decide what is good or right in terms of their own actions and the actions of others.¹ It is also true that groups and individuals within a society do not always agree. Moreover, as people interact with one another and work out their differences, values can be affected and changed over time. Defining and explaining a society, capturing all of its harsh and subtle distinctions at any given moment, is a very difficult task. P.B. Waite wondered whether the Canada of a century ago was a society at all. "The very word, society, applied to Canada in the late nineteenth century, jars. The sheer diversity of Canada makes one hesitate." Waite was most concerned by what he felt was a tendency within Canadian historiography to describe late 19th century Canada as a stereotypical Victorian society; a society signified by "a narrow, purposeful code of morality that eschewed liquor, [and] kept Sundays pure and undefiled by work or by merriment" As Waite points out alcohol consumption was high, particularly in urban areas. Politics, business and social events were often rowdy and sometimes violent; the antithesis of Victorian decorum. And while the starched collars and long gowns might suggest

¹ Here values are not understood as fixed universal truths. Rather they are seen to be more local and fluid and sometimes in conflict with one another. For example, a community may place a high value on providing a particular level of food, clothing and shelter to poor residents. At the same time it may be just as important to keep taxes low. In good economic times there may be no competition between the two values. But in hard times one value may take precedence over the other which could result in either lower benefits or higher taxes. As understood here values are very much relative, negotiated and sometimes in conflict. King, *Poverty and Welfare*.

otherwise, sexual proclivities in Victorian times ran the gamut just as they do now. Some places, particularly small rural communities, were closer to the stereotype, but for the most part the Canada of a century ago appears to have been loosely held together by a common set of un-Victorian values.²

The contrast between Victorian ideals and the actions of a great many Canadians can be seen in the historiography of Bruce Curtis, Allison Prentice and Joy Parr who have all examined the limits and accomplishments of Victorian social reforms in communities across the country. Many reformers were prim teetotalers who held power and prominence and worked zealously to stamp out the evils of drink, promiscuity and sloth. The goals of reform were varied, numerous, broad and contradictory. All, to a certain degree, sought a restructured state, one that operated on the rational principles of business and science and that more fairly distributed wealth and opportunity across society. They favoured education and greater professionalization which eventually did bring better services to the public in a great many fields, but also helped to accentuate class divisions. They were at the same time devout and in favour of secular governance, a set of distinctions not always easy or successfully maintained. And while reform did usher in some much needed changes for the better, it also contained elements of jingoism, male chauvinism and racism that fortunately were not able to become the strongest spines supporting the umbrella of purpose that was reform.

² Waite, 12-13.

In Halifax the principles and actions of reform were personified in the likes of John Naylor, Isabella Binny Cogswell, and Cornelius O'Brien. Social reformers came from a variety of backgrounds. John Naylor, for instance, was a well known auctioneer and real estate agent who served with tireless vigor as the Secretary-Agent of the Nova Scotia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty. Isabella Binny Cogswell was the daughter of the wealthy Henry Cogswell who was a member of the Legislative Counsel and the first president of the Halifax Banking Company. Isabella, who never married, used the money and business acumen she inherited from her father to better the educational opportunities and living conditions of the poor. And Cornelius O'Brien was the Catholic Archbishop of Halifax. Among other things O'Brien was responsible for the opening of nine parochial schools as well as Saint Patrick's Home for Boys, a reformatory and industrial school.³

Haligonian reformers concentrated on the upper streets. They fought to close their brothels and taverns and to save children and young women of that area from what they saw as moral turpitude. Meanwhile, the poorest residents of the community maintained their struggle to survive through work in the formal as well as the informal economy.⁴ This chapter is a profile of the upper streets as they

3 All three individuals can be found in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, October 2007, LAC, 27 April 2006 <<http://www.biographi.ca/EN/index.html>>. St. Patrick's was a Catholic established in 1885 and funded by the Church and the city. From that time the Police Court sometimes sentenced Catholic boys there rather than to Rockhead. As will be seen later in the case of William Pearson, the Home also accepted indigent boys sent to Halifax from outside the city. While prevailing ideas on child welfare said that rural settings were best for children, many rural communities in Nova Scotia lacked facilities or funds to support indigent children. Murray Beck, *The Evolution of Municipal Government in Nova Scotia, 1749-1973*, (Halifax: Nova Scotia Royal Commission on Education, Public Services and Provincial-municipal Relations, 1973) chapters five and six. Joy Parr, *Labouring Children*.

⁴ In the preceding chapter we saw negative actions. But we saw positive actions as well. In this chapter we shall see more positive activity, as well as mutual support and attachment to the

were between 1890 and 1914. It begins by presenting the rhetoric of reform, which was often alarmist and harsh. Having placed that in clear view, the chapter moves on to outline the systems of thought (Christianity, liberalism, science and theories of an underclass) used by all members of Halifax society to form what Gertrude Himmelfarb referred to as the “moral imagination”.⁵ The next three sections show the actions and interactions that took place in the upper streets between 1890 and 1914. Important trends are revealed. Everyone, including the extremely poor, demonstrated a willingness to work. Many upper street residents advanced economically, acquired property in their community and held it. And finally there was a great deal of stability within the population of the upper streets. That is, many people lived there for long periods of time. Certainly there were individuals ravaged by poverty, addiction and lack of family support. But the overall trends of the community suggest that during this time the upper streets were not the grim and precarious place depicted in the reformist rhetoric. Nor were they host to a dangerous underclass. The structure of this chapter – reformist rhetoric juxtaposed with lived experience – presents the opposing points of view as they actually were and also allows the principle argument of this chapter to be clearly unfolded and supported. In a nut shell, that argument says that as the majority of Haligonians turned to prevailing ideas in order to make sense of particular events and to develop approaches to matters of economics, poverty and the social order, they seem to have been guided most by tenets of accommodation and disinclined to make harsh distinctions. In other words the

upper streets. Consequently the upper streets will be referred to here as it seems to have been regarded by those who lived and worked there a century ago, as a community.

⁵ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty*, 19.

moral imaginations of Haligonians, particularly residents of the upper streets, grew to accept a wide range of actions, including the actions of the extremely poor. As we move along through this chapter new characters will be introduced and familiar characters from previous chapters will reappear. We will see the upper streets shaping lives and being shaped by them. And we shall see bold demonstrations of both the Victorian and un-Victorian actions identified by P.B. Waite. Judith Fingard was right when she suggested that the upper streets were contested terrain during this period. More importantly, that contest appears to have been a battle for agreement within a single morality, much as Steven King argues was the case in England between 1700 and 1850. It does not appear to have been a battle between distinct moral codes as suggested by Fingard's examination of the upper streets during the mid-nineteenth century.

Reform Leaders Spoke Urgently of a Desperate Battle against Poverty and Sin

In the years between 1890 and 1914, the upper streets were very much shaped by the will and actions of social reformers. Therefore a presentation of the roots and intentions of social reform as it existed in the Halifax of that time is a good place to begin constructing our profile of the upper streets. Reformist agendas were most influential during the later decades of the 19th century. According to Daniel T. Rodgers, they emerged largely from urban settings in Europe and made their way to North America then became widespread through the press, literature and reformist leaders who embarked on speaking tours

which sometimes included Halifax. By the later decades of the 19th century, there were numerous reform groups in pursuit of myriad agendas that could be complementary or contradictory. The North American version of reform appears to have been less elitist, more broadly based than its European parent. Perhaps more concerned with class equality as well. Certainly in the American context, there was greater concern for public scrutiny in order to avoid the appearance of too much government authority.⁶

Prohibitionists, suffragettes, child savers, educationists, and unionists all operated under the banner of reform. Some agendas were narrow. Prohibitionists, for example, were primarily concerned with the elimination or at least the strict control of alcohol. Their efforts were associated with Protestant churches. As Graeme Decarie points out, prohibition was a “secular movement with the support of many churches, not a religious one. However, it is true that church involvement often threatened to overwhelm the movement.”⁷ Prohibition had a specific goal, but it provided members and the church leadership that supported them a platform from which to speak about a host of social ills. Many of the social problems that vexed Canadian reformers were new and linked in complicated ways to each other and to the emergent urban context in which they were set. Consequently, the vision of some reform groups and the scope of their

⁶ Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*.

⁷ Graeme Decarie, *Canada's Visual History, Prohibition in Canada* CD-ROM, Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization & National Film Board of Canada, 1996. Here Decarie provides a useful overview of the movement from its early calls for temperance, then abstinence and finally a lobby for prohibition legislation. While the temperance movement initially helped lead some churches to prominence within social research and social welfare programs, their primary role soon transferred to government and other secular organizations, resulting in what Ramsay Cook terms the secularization of Canadian Society. See: Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators*.

proposed programs were more encompassing. For instance, trade union leaders wanted specific guarantees such as collective bargaining rights and safer workplaces. But they were also associated with calls for pension plans and unemployment insurance, and supporters of third parties more accepting of socialist ideas.⁸ While there were different programs, groups in Halifax often shared members and worked in support of each other. The same was true in cities across Canada.⁹ An ardent supporter of public education could easily be a unionist who also worked to support temperance. For example, Robert Sedgewick was a member of the Halifax Board of School Commissioner during the early 1880s and a Halifax city councilman from 1882 to '85. He was also largely responsible for the opening of Dalhousie Law School in Halifax in 1883 and the Canadian Parliament's passage of the Criminal Code of 1892; "two key elements in the formation of the modern Canadian legal tradition."¹⁰ Another more dramatic example in terms of the breadth of his activities was the Presbyterian minister, George Munro Grant. During the 1860s and 70s, before his appointment to the principalship of Queen's University in 1877, Grant was the Rector of Saint Mathew's in Halifax. During that time "he was involved in the direction of the School for the Blind, the Halifax Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, the Children's Home and Child Immigration Schemes, the Old Ladies' Home, the Halifax Industrial School, the Halifax Visiting Dispensary, and the Young Men's Christian Association, and helped raise money for them. In

⁸ Guest, chapters 4 to 9.

⁹ Richard Allen, *The Social Passion*, chapter 1.

¹⁰ *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, May 2005, LAC, 18 March 2008 <<http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?Bioid=41179&query=sedgewick>>.

addition, St Matthew's Church supported a city missionary, James S. Potter, who provided relief to the poor and operated the Night Refuge for the Homeless."¹¹

The various roles and involvements of a Sedgewick or a Grant were obvious. However, the widespread connections of some reformers were less visible, at least from the present, but no less important. When reformers in Halifax went after the bar and brothel keepers of the city they typically laid complaints with the police. Complainants were sometimes named in raid stories such as the stories regarding Clarke's place seen in the previous chapter. The business section of the *Halifax Directory* listed the executive members, and in some cases all members, of clubs and organizations in the city. Those who took action by laying complaints against liquor dealers and bawdyhouse operators could sometimes be identified in the *Directory* as a member of a temperance group, a religious body such as the YMCA, or the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty (SPC). The *Directory* and the local papers confirm that members of these organizations often sat on authoritative bodies such as the Education Department, City Council or the Nova Scotia Barristers Society. At the national level cross pollination helped to find and reinforce the commonalities within myriad agendas and to give reform the weight and force of a social movement. In the small confines of late nineteenth century Halifax, reformers may have appeared a bit incestuous, at least to some contemporaries. Likely there were few secrets among them or much that was not generally known about them within the city.

¹¹ *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, May 2005, LAC, 18 March 2008 <<http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?Bioid=40870&query=grant>>.

The cross membership seen within the Canadian context was also common within American reform, particularly within the groups who instituted settlement houses in New York and Chicago during the late 19th and early 20th century.¹² Settlement houses were centers of education, social work and employment programs set within poor neighbourhoods. They drew in a wide range of individuals from the middle and working classes who worked together to keep the houses running. Middle class settlement workers were often involved in other areas of reform such as public education, work to eliminate child labour and advocacy for more public housing. Herbert Hoover, and a number of others who eventually went with him to Washington, gained much of their knowledge of poverty and social programs in America via their involvement in settlement houses.¹³ That experience guided the Hoover administration's attempts to address the realities of the Great Depression within the United States. Though they did not rise to the highest seats of public office, Ontario based Charlotte Whitton and John Kelso gained national attention and were able to affect social welfare policy, particularly the protection of children, in Canada through their involvement with reform groups in Ontario.¹⁴ Meanwhile, it seems that the actions of reformers in Halifax had less national attention or impact. They appear to have been more concerned with local events, which may in part have been a reflection of the particularity of circumstances that existed within their city.

¹² Allen Freeman Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement 1890-1914*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.

¹³ Bonnie Fox Schwartz, *The Civil Works Administration, 1933-1934: The Business of Emergency Employment in The New Deal*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

¹⁴ Guest, *Social Security*.

The circumstances that most concerned Haligonian reforms were found in the upper streets. In the quotation below Thomas B. Akins refers to the upper streets as they supposedly were around 1813. Here he sounds very much like a contemporary of the later 19th century, suggesting that this particular passage was written with the zealous hindsight of social reform at its peak.

The upper streets were full of brothels; grog shops and dancing houses were to be seen in almost every part of the town. A portion of Grafton Street was known under the appellation of Hogg Street from a house of ill-fame kept by a person of that name. The upper street along the base of Citadel Hill between the north and south barracks was known as "Knock Him Down Street" in consequence of the number of affrays and even murders committed there. No person of any character ventured to reside there, nearly all the buildings being occupied as brothels for the soldiers and sailors. The streets of this part of the town presented continually the disgusting sight of abandoned females of the lowest class in a state of drunkenness, bare headed, without shoes, and in the most filthy and abominable condition.¹⁵

There were persistent social problems within the upper streets and from the middle of the 19th century reactions to them, particularly on the part of reformist leaders, were often shrill and melodramatic. They spoke with genuine concern, but also with an urgency designed to maintain the will and work of reform. Reformist leaders delivered their message through sermons, political speeches and inspirational talks given to the memberships of various reform groups. Not surprisingly the voice of reform echoed most loudly and passionately through the local press. Looking back at the Halifax of this time through the newspaper

¹⁵ Akins, 158. Just prior to this description Akins presents Bemish Murdoch's supposed recollections of the military presence at Halifax as a result of the War of 1812. "The moral condition of the town had become dreadful in the extreme. Eight or ten thousand soldiers, sailors, and prisoners of war let loose in a little town of less than 10,000 inhabitants can well be imagined".

rhetoric of reform one is left with a sense of crisis, of a fierce battle taking place between diametrically opposed forces, moral reformers on one side, and so called evil-doers many of them poor and desperate on the other. The remainder of this section presents the gauntlet as it was thrown down by reform within the Halifax press.

The reformist views of politicians, school commissioners, clergymen, doctors and overseers of public institutions often appeared in the local papers. Their stories and reports served a variety of purposes and target audiences and were often reinforced by sympathetic editorials and provocative news emanating from the United States and England. A letter from C.H. Smith to the mayor of Halifax printed in the *Chronicle-Herald* on 2 May 1895 illustrates how stories in the press spoke to reform minded Haligonians, on the one hand praising accomplishments while on the other calling for continued vigilance.¹⁶ Smith listed the great many institutions of relief operating in the city and the good work done by them. "Halifax boasts of its many charities and philanthropies. We pride ourselves on caring for the lame, the halt, and the blind from the cradle to the grave." Much good work had been done, but problems remained. Smith went on to tell the story of an aged pauper "lying in squalor and wretchedness in a dive on the upper streets." The man was suffering from erysipelas, a painful infection of the skin. According to Smith, because of the contagious nature of his illness the man was being shunned by the various relief institutions of the city. Smith spoke of

¹⁶ This may have been the barrister C. Hudson Smith. *McAlpine's Halifax City Directory 1895-96*, NSARM, mfm# 9712.

similar cases of neglect and called on the mayor and the citizenry to respond. "Until such cases as these are provided for and the sufferers treated with common humanity, Halifax should cease to boast of its charities, etc."¹⁷

Despite the many efforts to alleviate distress, many individuals struck down by illness, unemployment or addiction could be overlooked or ignored. At the same time, particular circumstances could be met with quick and decisive action. For example, on 4 September 1897 the *Acadian Recorder* recounted the tale of a young girl who had refused to depart for England with her family. Instead "she went to a house of ill fame on Prince Street." Some time later "persons who had been asked to keep an eye on her took out a warrant and took her from the house." She was "placed on board a steamer for England and provided for" and reportedly "expressed contrition and desire to lead a good life hereafter."¹⁸ Reformers were aware that young lives could go astray. But they also felt that the wayward could be pulled back onto a path of righteousness by a community acting with a firm hand in a systematic way. Sometimes individuals needed rescue. Other times sites of illicit activity needed to be removed. In August of 1897, for instance, the *Recorder* told the story of 91 Maynard Street. Apparently the house had "been a source of trouble for the police. Fights were frequent and cries of "murder" and for "help" were often heard". The story went on to identify residents of the house by name and give details of lurid events. Under pressure

¹⁷ The *Herald* dates back to the 1870s and was first published by John James Stewart. In 1907 the paper was purchased by William Dennis who had bought his first share in the company when he started as a junior reporter in 1875. He was well known for traveling the province for news and subscribers. The *Herald* remains in circulation and is still owned by the Dennis family. *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 2 May 1895, NSARM, mfm# 6710.

¹⁸ *Acadian Recorder*, 4 September 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5274.

from those living nearby the owner gave orders to have the place demolished. Two women refused to leave. Nevertheless, workers "began tearing down the shanty. Finally, when the building began to shake, the occupants were compelled to leave."¹⁹ There may well have been more to the story than what was reported in the press. But readers were offered a simple message; the rights of individual property owners and tenants could be overrun by the determination of concerned citizens to remove a site seen by them to be in conflict with the best interests of the community.²⁰ The story that appeared in the 5 February 1901 edition of the *Morning Chronicle* is a further illustration of strong measures being supported by the press. On that day the *Chronicle* informed readers of a woman locked in her room on Albermarle Street. When anxious neighbours suspected that the woman had taken some sort of fit and may be in distress "Inspector Henry of the S.P.C., was notified and he had the door broken open. The woman was moved in the ambulance to the Poor's Asylum."²¹ Such surgical measures were not an uncommon response to particular cases; however, in general social reform during this period can not be accurately characterized as heavy-handed. At the same time when decisive action was taken the Halifax press typically responded by implying a de facto reality: organizations of reform and their supporters were

¹⁹ *Acadian Recorder*, 4 August 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5274.

²⁰ Ordinance 55 of the City Charter in effect at this time permitted the city health inspector to cause the residents of any dwelling within the city to quit their premises if the inspector "by reason of the number of occupants, or want of cleanliness, or dilapidation or non-repair or other cause" deemed their space to be a "cause of nuisance or sickness to the occupants or the public." Under this ordinance, if the owner refused to correct the problem, the city could do so and bill the owner. The ordinance does not refer specifically to demolition, only that the city has authority to "remove" problems deemed a threat to the public. Halifax City Charter Ordinance 55 passed 1888, HRMA, 102 – 1D. In the case referred to above, it seems that the law was not required as the owner ordered the demolition. However, the owner did so under pressure from those who lived near the house in question, pressure that may have included a threat to call in the health inspector.

²¹ *Morning Chronicle*, 5 February 1901, NSARM, mfm# 5525.

agents of salvation above reproach who were battling desperately against the poverty and sin that were threatening to overrun the city.

The degree of incisiveness displayed by reform minded citizens in the stories above was typically supported by the Halifax press. That is, such actions were not questioned or opposed. They were further supported by the reprinting of stories from America that cried out for forceful reform. For instance, on 11 July 1906 the *Halifax Herald* reprinted Rev. Thomas B. Gregory's "Young Girl Sold at Auction in New York" which was drawn from an unnamed American source, possibly a New York paper. Gregory began by shocking his readers. "It cost ten billions of dollars and the lives of a million of men to wipe out black slavery in this country, and yet we are confronted with the astounding fact that today there exists in the metropolis of the nation a form of slavery compared with which negro servitude was a beautiful and blessed thing." He went on in similarly dramatic fashion to tell of white slavery; of young girls new to the country being "sold to the highest bidder for the most unholy use to which womanhood can be degraded." Gregory then asked, "how extensive is this infamy? How far reaching is this unspeakable shame?" He did not have the answer, but said, "as Americans it behooves us to ask the question and to keep on asking it until we have found an answer." While Gregory was uncertain as to the extent of the problem, he was certain about who was to blame. It was the high and the low members of society, who were each in their own way corrupt.

It should be the pressing business of the middle portion of America – the rank and file of the people, who are clean and pure of purpose – to throttle the “top” and the “bottom” and save before it is too late, the womanhood of the country. Upon the jungle and upon the drawing room let the red lightning shafts of the people’s indignation fall quick and terribly, and in such way, and in such way only shall the scions of our fine “old native stock” and the imported beastliness of the Old World be made to understand that the Real America is still true to its old time chivalry and will not tolerate the degradation of its womanhood.²²

American newspapers sometimes supported or called for aggressive measures. They also supported the more benign and traditional approach of charity. So did papers in Halifax. Each month the press published reports from various charity groups. These reports often acknowledged donors by name and noted their specific contributions. One of the more active and written about charities was the Halifax Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor (HAICP). The Halifax association, founded in 1866, was based on the New York example which began operations in 1843. Initially the HAICP provided outdoor relief - food, clothing, etc. Later it also provided relief via employment in the form of breaking stone that was sold primarily to the city for road construction and repair. The benevolence of the HAICP was often noted in the press. For example, the 17 January 1895 edition of the *Acadian Recorder* noted that “parcels of clothing, boots, etc., were received from Mrs. W.H. Troop, Mrs. H.W. Barnes, Mrs. Jno. McManus, Mrs. Graham, John McLeord and Jno. Silver & Co.”

²² *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 11 July 1906, NSARM, mfm# 6761. The piece in the *Herald* offered no introduction of Gregory who in this instance appears to be a firebrand who sees social classes as diametrically opposed monoliths. Such articles from American sources were common in the Halifax press during the time of this study. A collection of such contemporary American journalism has been assembled by Harvey Swados. His collection focuses on American magazines published from 1902 to 1912. He distinguishes between muckraking and yellow journalism. While the muckrakers were more accurate in their reporting, both groups often wrote sensationalistic prose that called for and supported social reforms. *Years of Conscience: The Muckrakers; An Anthology of Reform Journalism*, Harvey Swados ed. (Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1962)

The report went on to talk about the distribution of said items and other good works of the Association.²³ Agency reports depicted the battle against poverty and its associated social evils from the front lines. They were also an important source of public recognition for those who supported and worked for charitable groups. Such public acknowledgement could translate into social authority which has been linked to the formation of a Canadian middle class by Andrew C. Holman. Updates in the press were also a way of identifying ongoing need and calling for donations. A report from the HAICP that appeared in the *Recorder* on 9 April 1895 informed readers that “23 applications have been received from teachers in the public schools for boots and clothing for children whose parents were unable to provide them and who could not attend unless someone else furnished these wants.” The gravity of the situation was underlined with emotional imagery by pointing out that “the law compels attendance even if barefoot and nearly naked.” The report closed with more dire news. “Our subscriptions so far have fallen about \$300 short of last year, and at present we have not sufficient funds with our treasurer to pay outstanding accounts.”²⁴ The newspapers recognized charitable acts and pressed the ongoing need for charity; sometimes by implying that widespread desperation could threaten the social order.

The press praised good works. It also identified and issued warnings against harmful circumstances and actions. This was done in a variety of ways. A

²³ *Acadian Recorder*, 17 January 1895, NSARM, mfm# 5269.

²⁴ *Acadian Recorder*, 9 April 1895, NSARM, mfm# 5269.

common tactic was to publish horrendous stories that offered examples of unfortunate situations that Haligonians would do well to recognize and avoid. The May 6th 1895 issue of the *Chronicle-Herald* told the story of Mrs. Ellen Sullivan of New York City. At 10 AM on the morning of May 4th Mrs. Sullivan, age 61, entered the Charles Street police station with her middle-aged son John. She told the sergeant on duty of her son's ruination through drink and asked that he be imprisoned so that he might sober up. John was said to be in agreement with this plan and the sergeant sent mother and son to the Court at Jefferson Market where Mrs. Sullivan could swear out a complaint that would grant the court authority to take her son into custody. At Jefferson Market John was charged as a habitual drunkard and stood in the prisoners' line up to await arraignment. When his mother was called upon to swear to the complaint in open court she balked crying "Oh, I can't, I can't do it. Oh, Johnny, Johnny, my boy, what made you drink?" According to the story these were her last words. "As she stopped speaking she clutched at her left side, staggered and fell into the arms of a court attendant." Medical help was quick on the scene but unable to save her. A short time later "a court officer told the Justice that the prisoner's mother had just died of a broken heart." The story closed with Johnny walking sadly from the court where later "two men from the morgue brought a plain wooden box... The corpse was lifted into it, the lid nailed down, and the body was carried away."²⁵ The story was a stern warning to the drinking men of Halifax: don't end up like Johnny, put down the bottle before it's too late.

²⁵ *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 6 May 1895, NSARM, mfm# 6710.

The story of Ellen Sullivan and her son John warned individuals about the hazards of drink. A story that appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* on 17 February 1897 alluded to a much greater danger. Ignoring the poor could lead to the destruction of the social order. The *Chronicle* identified the author of the story as an Alfred R. Rowlet, but did not say whether or not it was reprinted from an American source. At the center of the story was “the average well to do Chicagoan, well fed, well housed and comfortably clothed and “too busy to notice the signs of distress which poverty and want weakly waved from every street corner.” In this story the well to do Chicagoan is surprised to learn “that fully 75,000 of his fellow townspeople were suffering for the barest necessities of life.” The story went on in painful and shocking detail about starvation, empty coal bins and “human beings who shivered numb and almost lifeless, in barren fireless rooms.” Touched by this despair the well to do Chicagoan investigates further. The investigation reveals high unemployment exacerbated by a recent cold snap. All sources of relief have been exhausted by an army of the destitute. Not an army of the “ordinary almoners whose faces had become familiar, but mechanics, bookkeepers and heads of families who had long been idle...There was talk of bread riots. Hungry men are apt to be desperate.” In an effort to show compassion and maintain order, the mayor of Chicago instructed his police chief to “feed and warm them first; inquire about it afterward.” The story praised the well to do Chicagoan, who, having become aware of the dire need, responded with donations of time and money. Thanks to the mayor’s leadership and the support of Chicago’s better-off residents a crisis was eased. However, the long

term problem of “what to do with the great army of idle and suffering men” remained. The story closed by telling readers that “Robert Trent Paine, the celebrated Boston philanthropist, has gone to Chicago to cooperate with the civic federation in devising a plan of permanent relief.”²⁶ In typical reformist fashion the story made mention of an undeserving poor, but warned Haligonians of a much greater threat, the threat posed to the social order by structural inequality. Perhaps the “great army” analogy in reference to the poor led some to imagine the possibility of an organized revolt and to imagine the poor as the enemy.

Alarming stories from elsewhere could be read as representative of realities or possibilities at home. Or they could be dismissed as meaningless allegories; Halifax was no Chicago or New York. Stories describing the misdeeds and deplorable circumstances of Haligonians were harder to ignore. As seen earlier, local stories could serve to identify need and summon response. They could also be a source of public humiliation for the poor. Coverage of Police Court proceedings was a prime example. We have already seen the uneven nature of that coverage. The press often ridiculed the likes of Thomas Berrigan presumably to deter excessive drinking and associated social ills and to sell newspapers by satisfying the voyeuristic curiosity of readers. While scathing commentary was often heaped upon repeat offenders some people on trial were able to avoid mention upon request. However, an appearance in Police Court usually meant seeing your name and offense listed in the paper. This kind of tattle-tale reporting probably did help to sell papers by providing fodder for

²⁶ *Morning Chronicle*, 17 February 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5503.

gossipy readers.²⁷ But it also jibed with the reformist agenda as much as it was a deterrent to actions that could lead to arrest and public embarrassment. And whether deterrence or sales was the greater interest, arrests for more provocative actions received more in-depth coverage. Juicier events were addressed more fully in feature articles separate from the Police Court column. Such features most commonly told of raids on bars and brothels. The article detailing the raid on Charles Clarke's place seen in the proceeding chapter typifies this sort of reporting. Raids were often conducted in response to complaints filed by reform minded citizens; citizens familiar with the liquor laws and laws regarding public morality.

The same citizens who reported infractions were sometimes indirectly involved with the enactment of the applicable laws. B.H. Eaton QC of the law firm Eaton and Beckwith who was president of the Law and Order Club and the Prohibition League epitomized this sort of crossover. Sometimes members of reform groups were in positions of public enforcement. For example, on the 4 February 1901 "a number of inmates of the houses of questionable repute on the upper streets were arraigned at the Police Court...The information in all of the cases was laid by G.P. Henry, of the City Health Board."²⁸ This appears to be the same inspector Henry of the SPC who we met earlier in relation to the breaking

²⁷ Conrad and Finkel, *1867 to Present*, 176. Paul Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late Nineteenth Century Canada*, (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1982) Rutherford argues that urbanization, increasing literacy and class conflict gave rise to a competitive newspaper industry that catered to public opinion and at the same time offered a message that would draw a readership suitable to advertisers. As Conrad and Finkel point out "yellow journalism" supported these goals.

²⁸ *Morning Chronicle*, 5 February 1901, NSARM, mfm# 5525.

in of a door on Albermarle Street. Of course if concerned citizens lacked official authority or were not sure how to lay a complaint they could check with the city inspectors' office. For example, on 2 March 1908 Rev. H.R. Grant and R.H. Murray secretary of the SPC visited the inspector's office to make inquiries regarding the "procedure in connection with the laying of information against violations of the license act. The inspector was informed that a number of informations would be laid against licensed dealers to-morrow and it is said "internal communication" will be the charge"²⁹ Reform groups, the legal system and the fourth estate shared members. They did not, however, act in unison. But at times it could appear that way, especially to tavern owners, liquor dealers and brothel keepers.

Reform groups used the press to identify need and call for aid and support. Frequent status reports from various groups appeared in the press; reiterating need and acknowledging the good work of particular reformers. When reform minded authorities responded decisively to specific problems or individuals the press was at least tacitly supportive. The *Acadian Recorder* and the *Morning Chronicle* followed the proceedings of the Police Court and three to four times a week published the names and stories of those who violated the liquor and public morality laws. So much as this coverage acted as a deterrent to particular actions opposed by reform groups it supported reformist agendas. In addition to these forms of press coverage, letters, lectures and sermons expressing the concerns of various reform groups often appeared in the local papers. When guest

²⁹ *Acadian Recorder*, 2 March 1906, NSARM, mfm# 5298.

speakers addressed a reformist group in Halifax their words were often reprinted in the press. For example, when Bishop Courtney, Rev. Dr. Forrest, Rev. F.H. Almon, Mr. William Roche and Missionary Theakston addressed a public meeting sponsored by the North End Mission on the evening of 12 December 1899 their words appeared in the *Chronicle* the following morning.³⁰ All speakers praised the various good works of the mission. Bishop Courtney focused on the Mission's efforts to protect the city's children. "If children could be taken from the city, from surroundings uncongenial to their best development and sent to the country, the best place for all children, and have a chance to grow into good men and women, then in God's name let us do what we can to help that work." The non denominational work of the mission was applauded. And Missionary Theakston was gratified by the Mission's effort "to help those who were dissevering and not the idler or loafer, whose sole effort was to tell a piteous tale to touch the heart or sensibilities of the listener."³¹

The arguments, goals and actions of reform were on full and continuous display through the Halifax press in the period between 1890 and 1914. The press reflected and helped to shape reformist views. The rhetoric of reform was for the most part vociferous and harsh. Reformists' calls for charity and pity for the poor were sincere but very much overshadowed by their relentless pursuit of evil; particularly in the upper streets of the city. Examining the Halifax of a

³⁰ Established in 1869 The North End Mission was an off-shoot of the Halifax City Mission which was dissolved the previous year. It was located at the corner of Gerrish and City Streets north of the upper streets community and brought charity, religious services, temperance meetings and child rescue to the working class families living in that area of the city. Fingard, *Dark Side of Life*, 127-130.

³¹ *Morning Chronicle*, 13 December 1899, NSARM, mfm# 5279.

century ago solely though the newspapers of the time, one can only imagine a climate of “us against them”; reformers on one side and the targets of reform on the other. Certainly the upper streets were a scene of contest. But for most that lived there the upper streets do not appear to have been as dire and as black and white as the rhetoric proclaimed. One reason that was so is that actions there were not guided solely by reformist rhetoric. The next section outlines the bodies of thought that were used to interpret events and guide actions for reformist leaders who ranted in the press, those who worked on the frontlines of reform and relief and those who were busy trying to survive in the upper streets, including the extremely poor. In the closing sections of the chapter we shall see that most Haligonians drew from these ideas templates for action and interaction that were not rigid, intolerant and zealously in pursuit of evil. As the chapter and its evidence unfold the lines of “us against them” drawn so starkly in the press becomes less visible and the reality of the upper streets more plain to see.

Making Sense of Reality; Christianity, Liberalism, Science and Theories of an Underclass

As Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook point out, Canada in the late 19th and early 20th century was a nation in the midst of a great transformation. That transformation was being brought about by a host of simultaneous occurrences that included a large wave of immigration and the growth of western Canada; a nationwide shift in population from rural to urban and infusions of foreign capital, particularly American and British. These changes were very much driven by a

much longer and preceding force of change. That is the establishment and advancement of scientific processes and knowledge. A host of discoveries regarding the natural world, great strides in engineering know-how and innumerable machines came forth in this period to change Canada and the world forever. Equally influential was the related growth in studies and theories of politics, government, economics, and human behavior all predicated upon science and scientific methodology. Emergent social-scientific knowledge provided important rationales and methodologies to reform agendas as well as the whole of the Canadian population seeking ways to understand and cope with the rapid changes taking place within and about it. Therefore, it makes sense to begin our examination of ideas in this area of secular thought.

In late 19th and early 20th century Canada, scientific ideas surrounding poverty and its causes and how best to eliminate it were largely inherited from England. They were rooted in social theories written by men such as Thomas Malthus and Henry Mayhew. As we saw in Chapter one, the writings of Malthus and Mayhew formed the base of the underclass theory which had a powerful influence over social welfare policy on both sides of the Atlantic. This section takes that discussion further to examine how Christian and liberal thought were combined with underclass theory within a complex nexus that affected social welfare policy and guided individual actions and interactions. In his late 18th century theory of population Malthus described the poor as a drain on the food supply and productivity of a nation, a segment of the population best left to

starvation. Fifty years later, Mayhew's detailed descriptions of the London poor struck fear into the hearts of better-off Londoners. His writings encouraged some of them, for the sake of their own physical and moral health, to maintain as much geographical and social distance from the impoverished as possible. Theories and descriptions which cast the poor as a dangerous underclass were frequently challenged from scientific as well as religious points of view. However, in the 1830s the British government faced widespread joblessness and poverty brought on by a volatile emergent capitalism. In 1834 high-ranking politicians and economists, who were influenced by Malthus, attempted to solve the nation's economic problems by emphasizing that the blame for poverty rested on the poor and introducing harsh amendments to the system of English Poor Laws. Among other things, the amendments were designed to eliminate idlers and more evenly distribute the labour force by restricting movement and forcing the jobless to accept whatever work and wages that were available to them in their local parish. As George Hart has shown, there were followers of Malthus resident in early 19th century Halifax. Their attitudes and actions may have contributed to the demise in 1827 of the Poor Man's Friend Society, an effort of private philanthropy, which began providing food and employment to the Halifax poor in 1820. "Malthus had little to say about charitable bodies such as the Halifax Poor Man's Friend Society. He did state that he had no objections to them so long as they limited their relief to genuine objects of charity... his followers in Halifax took all that he had written against the [old] English Poor Laws and applied it to the Poor Man's Friend Society."³² Fingard downplays Malthusian influences. She argues that

³² George F. Hart, "The Halifax Poor Man's Friend Society, 1820-27, an Early Experiment,"

the Society's failure had more to do with "the unsympathetic colonial attitude towards philanthropy in general and the withdrawal of such leaders as Walter Bromley".³³ Nevertheless, supporters of private charity in Halifax had to at least contend with the ideas of Malthus. And the spirit of the amended English Poor Laws formed the backbone of public relief in Halifax from its founding well into the 20th century.³⁴

Running counter to modern survival of the fittest interpretations of the world were tenets of Christianity nearly two thousand years old. According to them, Jesus spent his entire life among the poor and in concern for them. Near the time of his death Jesus said "For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always."³⁵ Jesus was not suggesting that poverty was inevitable and therefore to be accepted or ignored. He was reminding his followers that the poor were a permanent entitled segment of society, one that the rest of the population was responsible to care for. Actions based on the entitlement of the poor and an individual's responsibility for the wellbeing of others was evident earlier in the bible. For example, when Moses was establishing community laws for the Israelites he imposed tithing as a means

Canadian Historical Review, June 1953: 121-122.

³³ Judith Fingard, "English Humanitarianism and the Colonial View: Walter Bromley in Nova Scotia, 1813-25," *Canadian Historical Review*, June 1973: 134-35. As a young man Bromley served in the British Army and was for a time posted to Nova Scotia. He retired from the Army in 1811 and returned to Nova Scotia in 1813. For the next twelve years he followed his evangelical influences and was involved in a variety of philanthropic efforts. He left Halifax for Boston in 1825.

³⁴ Morris, *Dangerous Classes*, Humphreys, *No Fixed Abode* and Guest, *Social Security*. Morris discusses the links between notions of an underclass and social welfare policies in the United States. Humphreys identifies the same links in England. Guest points out that the English Poor Laws served as the foundation for social welfare policies in Canada.

³⁵ Mark 14: 7.

of providing for the poor. He also told the Israelites that all the gleanings of the harvest belonged to the poor.³⁶ And in the very beginning when Cain asked God if he were his brother's keeper the answer was a resounding yes.³⁷ The bible spoke often of community and of a person's connectedness and responsibility to their community, particularly the community of God. The teachings of Jesus as presented in the bible remained the foundation of Christianity and acts of charity remained a Christian duty. However, as Bronislaw Geremek has shown in his *Poverty: A History* Christian charity was not indiscriminant or static across time and place.³⁸ Various distinctions were drawn between the sick, the working and "shamefaced poor" and those who took vows of poverty; distinctions that were influenced by changing socioeconomic circumstances. According to time and place Christian charity flowed from compassion, reflected status or was given as atonement for sin. Certainly there were various distinctions drawn by the Christian congregations of Halifax. For example, in his sermon delivered at Saint Mary's on 25 August 1907 Father Hamilton spoke against profligacy leading to a need for charity. He warned against "children attending the shows, spending 25 or 50 cents or whatever it might be, with no thought whatever of the winter, when their parents were around looking for clothes, for fuel and food."³⁹ Earlier we saw Missionary Theakston praise the North End Mission for helping those "who were dissevering and not the idler or loafer."⁴⁰ There was rivalry between the churches of Halifax just as there was in many other Canadian cities of the past. There were

³⁶ Deuteronomy 26: 12, 24: 19-22; Leviticus 19: 9-10.

³⁷ Genesis 4: 9

³⁸ Bronislaw Geremek, *Poverty: a History* trans. Agnieszka Kolakowska (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994)

³⁹ *Acadian Recorder*, 26 August 1907, NSARM, mfm# 5269(2).

⁴⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, 13 December 1899, NSARM, mfm# 5279.

Protestant backed organizations such as the HAICP and those that depended upon Catholic support such as St. Patrick's Home for Boys. But all churches agreed that charity as rooted in the bible remained a principal duty of Christianity. And based on that agreement there was cooperation which could be seen in the Halifax City Mission and the North End Mission which were interdenominational efforts. In the Halifax of a century ago, treatment of the poor was influenced as much by sectarian beliefs as by modern secular thinking.

The thoughts and actions of the needy as well as those who worked to bring relief and reform to the upper streets were surely affected by theories of an underclass and tenets of Christianity. Thoughts and actions were also influenced by powerful elements of liberal thought which at times supported, and at times conflicted with other ideas. Liberal writers such as John Locke and John Stuart Mill helped to define people as equal rightful self-determining individuals. Liberalism asserted the right of free individuals to the fruits of their labour within a free market economy. Liberalism was a crucial underpinning of modern democracy, a form of government heralded by Christian churches for its protection of religious freedom. At the same time Christian leaders in Halifax such as Dr. H.H. Read recognized that democratic governments were not immune to abuse. Drawing on an unnamed, but what appears to be a liberal source Rand noted ""The free and equal self-development of all its citizens is the treasure in the keeping of the state," and "unless the foundation be laid in

Justice, the social structure can not stand””. Linking these ideas to his Baptist faith Rand went on to say that

The key note of our religion is given in the angel’s song, and its highest ethics are embodied in the golden rule. These form the imperative guides to our conduct as citizens, and when we apply them to the examination of all political as well as personal questions, and allow them to illuminate the path of our public duties, then, and then alone, will we properly discharge those duties that rest upon us as citizens as well as Christians.⁴¹

Links between Christianity and liberalism went further. The Protestant faith, particularly Calvinism, stressed work as a duty essential to maintaining a state of grace. Work as a duty to oneself, society and God was a transformation of the Catholic idea of good works. The Protestant conception of work as a duty fell in line with the responsibility liberalism placed on the individual to earn a living through work. By the late 19th century the phrase ‘God helps those who help themselves’ had become words to live by. The phrase came from Benjamin Franklin a contributor and developer of liberal thought, but was commonly employed as a biblical quote. The coincidence of the phrase illustrates a harmony between Christianity and liberalism which helped to engrain work as a virtue within European and North American societies. The lingering popularity of the expression points to the success and continuation of that process.⁴² It also

⁴¹ *Acadian Recorder*, 10 January 1895, NSARM, mfm# 5269. Rand was a physician in the city. His wife was on the general committee for the Home of the Aged. *McAlpine’s Halifax City Directory 1895-96*, NSARM, mfm# 9712.

⁴² Ernest Barker, *Social Contract: Essays by Locke, Hume and Rousseau*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1947). *Modern Political Thought*, Adrian Little, John Gingell and Christopher Winch eds., (New York: Routledge, 2000). Information on liberal thought was drawn from these two texts.

points to the contrast between modern charity which is often more discriminatory and the indiscriminate charity depicted in the bible.

Elements of liberalism and Christianity melded to foster a strong work ethic. At the same time the liberal notion of individuals as actors of rational choice lent support to law makers who argued for harsh social welfare policies. In keeping with rational choice, if levels of relief were kept low and difficult to access, individuals would rationally choose to work in order to maintain a higher quality of life. The resultant higher levels of employment, so the argument went, would reduce crime, increase government revenues, reduce taxes, and help maintain the social order and its inherent freedom and protection. Theories of an underclass also leaned on liberal principles, albeit precariously. Within 19th century underclass theory, joblessness and criminal actions were a matter of individual choice; an argument able to stand in the absence of widely accepted structural explanations. According to underclass theory, the idle poor misused their freedom, made misguided choices and by refusing to earn their keep violated the quid pro quo obligations explicit in liberalism's social contract. A growing underclass were a drain on the material resources, labour supply and productivity of a nation and thereby posed a very real threat to its social and economic order. Liberal thought was used to defend harsh treatment of the poor, to stigmatize and blame them, and to argue for their social and moral isolation

from the rest of society. A link between poverty and danger became as ingrained in the public mind as the work ethic.⁴³

The struggle to balance traditional and newer ideas of the Enlightenment, carried on through the 18th and 19th centuries and the early years of the 20th century. This tension went beyond matters of individual responsibility and treatment of the poor. It was to reorder the political and economic structure of whole societies across Europe. North American changes in the treatment of the poor have to be replaced within this larger context of political change. In the case of Halifax, the city at Chebucto began as a colonial possession of England ruled by a crown appointed governor and council. Its operating funds came primarily from crown grants and excise taxes and duties on goods moving in and out of the city. By mid 19th century Haligonians were becoming dissatisfied with the corruption and lack of accountability within the colonial system of administration. Prominent individuals outside of government were becoming more liberal in their views; most notably newspaper editor Joseph Howe. Extension of the franchise and responsible government in Nova Scotia had much to do with Joseph Howe's sense of liberalism and allegations he published in his newspaper in 1834-35. In a letter published 1 January 1835 Howe accused the crown appointed magistrates who then ran the city of pocketing money designated for the poor. The men he accused filed a charge of libel against him. Howe's eloquent six hour defense delivered before the Nova Scotia Supreme Court 1 March 1835 not only won his acquittal, but it bolstered demands for the end of rule by colonial

⁴³ Morris, *Dangerous Classes*, Humphreys, *No Fixed Abode*, and Kusmer, *Down and Out*.

appointment. Howe's acquittal and continued criticism of the status quo helped to bring about important political developments such as the incorporation of the city of Halifax in 1841 and an elected provincial assembly in 1848. Democratic rights come with fiscal responsibilities, and from the 1840s and 50s Haligonians faced new taxes on business and on real and personal property. Later a poll tax also came into being. Thereafter a large segment of the population held direct political as well as economic interest in civic affairs, which included relief of the poor. In keeping with the principle of public accountability fundamental to democracy, new laws were enacted to control the disbursement of public funds. Along with these came increased efforts to more clearly define the roles and responsibilities of public officials. Compared to current examples, regulations and procedures of the past were sparse and loosely written. Nevertheless, they represented an effort to build a transparent methodology, an effort to ensure that resources, most importantly tax dollars, used to provide all manner of services including social welfare programs, were used in accordance with the most widely held views on poverty, economics and how best to protect and manage the social order.⁴⁴

Thus a very complex nexus of views helped to give rise to democratic institutions and practices. Those same views surrounded and affected the delivery of both public and private relief under that particular form of government. The accent on specific views could vary depending on whether the source of

⁴⁴ For an overview of the early politics of Nova Scotia see: J. Murray Beck, *The Politics of Nova Scotia Vol. 1 1710-1896*, (Tantallon Nova Scotia: Four East Publication, 1985). For a closer examination of Howe's early years in politics see: J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe, Conservative Reformer Vol. 1 1804-1848*, (Buffalo: McGill University Press, 1982).

relief was public or private, Catholic or Protestant, funded by one private group with a particular mission or an agency that received support from a variety of sources, public and private. An important element of such transformation was the advent of systems of management predicated upon science. Proponents of scientific management insisted its methods could improve the efficiency and outcome of any administration or organization. This included public administrations such as school systems or poor relief. The rising faith in science and scientific management was evidenced in Halifax through the leadership of men such as Joseph Howe, as well as Charles Tupper, who introduced *The Free School Act*, and Alexander McKay, who served for many years as the superintendent of the city schools. All three supported the increased study and application of science and technology. So did Andrew Downs who "created the first zoological garden in British North America [1847]... An authority on birdlife and an expert taxidermist, Downs supplied specimens to many museums in America and Europe."⁴⁵ Under the leadership of these men, and others like them,

⁴⁵Carl Berger, *Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983). p. 4. Berger presents the rise of natural science; the growth of natural history societies which shared the work load of collecting and recording and at the same time used scientific study as a base for social activity and moral education; and finally the struggle between the growing body of scientific knowledge, particularly Darwinism, and religious views. Much of the third section of the book – Nature – focuses on William Dawson's criticisms of Darwin. Dawson was born in Pictou Nova Scotia. He completed his education in Edinburgh and returned to Nova Scotia in 1842. He served as superintendent of education for the province from 1850 to 1853. He went on to be principal of McGill from 1855 to 1893 and served as the first president of the Royal Society of Canada. Dawson did much to further scientific study, but clung to his religious views by refusing to accept Darwin's views on the origin of the human species. Nevertheless, as Berger points out, most citizens and theologians, were eventually able to come to terms with scientific study, including Darwinism. The struggle identified by Berger involved the formulation and spread of new ideas and the incorporation of those new ideas into existing patterns leaving individuals guided by a blend of views. The struggle described by Berger appears similar to what Gertrude Himmelfarb referred to as the formation of a moral imagination. In his work *The Regenerators*, mentioned earlier, Ramsay Cook claims that the debate between science and religion in late 19th century Canada resulted in what he called the secularization of society. In shifting focus away from traditional doctrine and the after life and toward the improvement of people and life on earth,

the study of science and manual training (industrial arts) expanded within the public schools. Secondary education became available to the public through the Halifax Academy in 1878. More specialized training became accessible in Halifax with the opening of the Victorian School of Art and Design in 1888 and the Nova Scotia Technical College in 1909.⁴⁶

As reform agencies, both public and private, grew in terms of staff and numbers served, they tended to follow the emerging methods of science and scientific management that surrounded them and to increase the professionalization of their staff. One of the leading examples of this trend was the Victoria General Hospital of Halifax.

The late 1880s and early 1890s witnessed not only a considerable improvement in the treatment facilities, nursing care, and management of the Victoria General Hospital, but also a greater commitment to scientific management. Influenced by a contemporary fascination with principles of scientific management and efficiency, turn of the century Hospital administrators worked to transform the institution from a charity hospital for the poor to a modern hospital attractive to a much broader clientele.⁴⁷

the Social Gospel inadvertently conceded greater relevance to government and other secular institutions better able to affect the lives of the majority of Canadians. Greater faith and involvement in these institutions resulted in new ways of thinking and acting, ways that decreased the hegemony of organized religion. What Cook termed secularization might also be thought of as the formation of a new perspective or moral imagination.. See: Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators*. The upper streets of 1890-1914 might also be thought of as a context in which the extremely poor and their better-off neighbours were similar in their moral imaginations and consequently were able to share physical and social space without major conflict.

⁴⁶ For an overview of the evolution of all forms of education in the city and the professionalization of teaching see: See: Terrance Burns, "Public School Education of Catholics in the City of Halifax", James Bingay, *Public Education in Nova Scotia* and Patricia Ann Emenau. "The SPG in Nova Scotia: Survey of a System of Parochial Education," MA thesis, Dalhousie University, 1967.

⁴⁷ Colin D. Howell, *A Century of Care: A History of the Victoria General Hospital in Halifax 1887-1987*, (Halifax: The Victoria General Hospital, 1988) 36.

Following the management example set by the General Hospital and other organizations, the city modernized the activities of its Charities Committee which had been overseeing relief efforts since the 1860s.⁴⁸ From the 1880s annual reports complete with financial statements were the norm for most public and private institutions of social welfare, most of which reported to the Charities Committee. In 1914 "an act was passed in the Nova Scotia Legislature giving the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals the powers of a Children's Aid Society."⁴⁹ In 1916 the city created a new bureau of social services headed by Jane Wisdom who had received professional training as a social worker in New York City. Professional training for social work would eventually be available in Halifax through the Maritime School of Social Work, which opened its doors in 1941. Over time, standardized methods of assessment, strict recording procedures and casework management models provided by research in the fields of medicine, psychology and sociology took over. And with that the distribution of aid was no longer an unencumbered ad hoc need response scenario based on the availability of resources and worker judgment. While scientific methods won out, the victory was often hard fought. Those who followed traditional practices were sometimes offended when called to defend their actions, particularly if those actions showed success. New methods also

⁴⁸ The Committee was established by Council in the 1860s and presided over by aldermen. The chiefs of police and fire as well as superintendents of the City Home and Rockhead reported to the Committee and their reports were published within the city's annual report.

⁴⁹ For a brief history of the Children's Aid Society in Halifax see their website: Children's Aid Society of Halifax Foundation, December 2007, Children's Aid Society, 14 December 2007 <<http://www.hfxcasfoundation.org/History%20of%20CAS.html>> For a brief history of social work in Nova Scotia see the web site of the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers at: NSASW History Project, December 2007, Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers, 14 December 2007 <<http://users.eastlink.ca/~haroldbeals/>>

met with opposition on religious grounds, while those who were open to change at times struggled to acquire the necessary skills. These changes and conflicts that took place within the delivery of social welfare can help us to make sense of events and interactions in the upper streets during the time of this study.

As we end this discussion of ideas, it is clear that much more could be said regarding the complexity of connections between Christianity, liberalism, scientific knowledge and theories of an underclass. However, the outline presented here provides some helpful specifics as to how these systems of thought were interwoven and used to support and direct relief and reform efforts in the upper streets. As we focus on the human interactions within those efforts, it is important to reemphasize that within this study it is supposed that the ways of thinking presented above were not confined to elite politicians, priests and social theorists; that ideas regarding poverty, individual responsibility and the social contract were held by all members of society. They were introduced in school and in church and later they were reiterated through the press, political activity, union membership and involvement in various clubs and activities. The majority of citizens did not have time or inclination to become familiar with the vast literature on Christian, liberal or scientific thought. Few people developed integrated and systematic social criticisms. But all Canadians were influenced by their experience and particular elements of thought. The process of receiving new information and fitting it within existing patterns of thought to form new templates for action as it happened in England was studied by the

aforementioned Gertrude Himmelfarb. In her examination of the ideas surrounding Victorian poverty Himmelfarb referred to this process as the formation of the moral imagination, an “imagination that makes sense of reality, not by being imposed on reality (as ideology is) but by so thoroughly penetrating it that the reality has no form or shape apart from it.”⁵⁰ Residents of Halifax had moral imaginations of their own. The interactions presented and discussed later in this chapter offers evidence in support of that claim and the common presence of the ideas noted above. It is the contention of this study, and this chapter in particular, that as reform minded and needy residents came together beyond the rhetoric of reformist leaders each side depended upon their own sense of right and wrong as well as the moral imagination of the broader community to understand the actions of the other. Unfortunately, sources that reveal this process of engagement are limited.⁵¹ Newspapers, institutional ledgers and annual reports show direct actions. If they seldom provide a clear view of the interactions that took place between agents of reform and relief and their clientele, settlement declarations do just that.

⁵⁰ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty*, 19.

⁵¹ The term engagement as it is used here is based on Juergen Habermas's theory of communicative rationality. Here Habermas roots rationality within communication between individuals seeking a mutual understanding. Mutual understanding is possible only by fusing the perspectives of those involved, by reaching agreement on what has been said between them. It is the contention of this research that authorities and those who came before them engaged in communication often for the purpose of reaching a mutual understanding. That they drew upon ideas familiar to both of them in order to validate what was said and that agreement and mutual understanding was often possible. See: Juergen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, Trans. William Mark Hohengarten, (Oxford: Polity Press, 1992).

Frontline Reformers Worked With the Impoverished, not Against Them

Settlement declarations were sworn attestations to facts that confirmed place of residence, eligibility for relief as well as which group of taxpayers would bear the cost of that relief. In England settlement laws used to assign responsibility for relief costs and to reduce transiency date back to at least 700 AD. In 1662 “tramping” was on the rise. In response, Charles II tightened the settlement laws. Henceforth, those who “tramped” to the next town ran a much greater risk of being forcibly returned if they did not quickly find work or pay the local rates. The English Poor Laws, old and new, revolved around settlement. That is the ability to remove the indigent back to their home parish or to at least bill that parish for the cost of their relief.⁵² The English Poor Laws provided the model for social welfare policy in Halifax. Laws regarding settlement, and the practice of establishing settlement via declarations, were being applied in Nova Scotia by the early 19th century.⁵³ Settlement declarations continued to affect eligibility for social welfare and program funding in Halifax and all of Nova Scotia throughout the 19th century. Laws regarding settlement remain a part of social welfare legislation in Nova Scotia to this day.⁵⁴

The rules of settlement have always been myriad and complex. Here the rules are less important. The primary concern is the interactions that took place

⁵² Humphreys, 66-75. Here Humphreys discusses the technicalities of the law, its detrimental affects on the national economy by limiting the movement of labour, the impossibility of the crown to gain universal application as well as the negative affects of the “tramp” label which the settlement laws magnified.

⁵³ Senior Scribes of Nova Scotia, *Poverty Poor Houses and Private Philanthropy*, (Halifax: Health Canada, 1996) 13-20.

⁵⁴ Appendix A details current law drawn from the *Social Assistance Act*.

at the time settlement declarations were completed. So far as the rules are concerned, it is helpful to know that in accordance with the *Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia 1900*, there were five ways in which an adult could gain settlement. For most, settlement was based on residence or payment of local rates.⁵⁵ No public assistance could be legally issued without settlement being established. Based upon properly established settlement, costs for relief were passed back and forth between municipalities via the mail and a routine administrative process. Persons with no family or settlement anywhere in the province were the responsibility of the province and bills for their relief were sent to the legislature at Halifax.⁵⁶ Settlement was determined in the course of an interview usually done upon request for assistance. In earlier times the interview was conducted by a local merchant or member of the clergy who served as a justice of the peace or an "overseer of the poor"⁵⁷. As the delivery of public services became more specialized and professionalized, interviews were more often conducted by licensed social workers. Meanwhile, the starting point of the interview has always

⁵⁵ Wallace Graham, indexed by, *The Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1900 Vol. I and Vol. II*, Halifax: Province of Nova Scotia, 1900, c. 50 ss. 17-21. These sub-sections of the *Poor Relief Act* defined settlement. According to sub-section 17 males over the age of 21 who had lived five consecutive years in one district without application for relief gained settlement in that district. The term of five years was enacted in 1858. This was later reduced to one year. In 1900 males who had paid one year of the local rates, or served one year as a hired servant or two years as an apprentice gained settlement in the jurisdiction where such activities took place. Male persons elected or appointed to a local office gained settlement in that locality. The means by which women and children gained settlement were spelled out in ss. 18-21.

⁵⁶ *Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia 1900*, c. 44 ss. 23 (3) "if such pauper patient has no legal settlement within the province, such expenses shall be paid out of the provincial treasury." This sub-section was drawn from the *Revised Statutes* of 1892 and refers to indigent patients at the Nova Scotia Hospital. It does not mention other institutions or districts. However, the ledger books of the City Home as well as letters and bills forwarded to the legislature from the city and jurisdictions across the province tell us that in practice relief costs for persons with no settlement in Nova Scotia were forwarded to the legislature from all areas of the province, not just the Nova Scotia Hospital. According to documents in NSARM, RG series C this appears to have been the practice from at least the mid 1860s.

⁵⁷ Senior Scribes of Nova Scotia, 16 & 19.

been the applicant's place of birth. For a person such as Thomas Berrigan the interview need go no further. Thomas always sought assistance in Halifax, the place where he was born, and that, as far as we know, he never left. For the transient poor interviews could be much more lengthy and difficult; Ellen Reardon, for instance. Ellen Reardon had her first contact with public relief not long after arriving in Halifax. She was born in Windsor, and at the time of her first involvement with authorities in Halifax, she does not appear to have been paying rent, property tax or a mortgage anywhere in Halifax. Consequently, her place of "settlement" was the town of Windsor. Ellen lived her entire adult life in Halifax. She was often in receipt of public assistance. It is likely that she was often forced to recount the details of her recent whereabouts and family history to public officials in order for them to complete a settlement declaration and assist her. As far as we know, she never had a private address and as such never gained settlement in Halifax. At the same time, Ellen appears to have considered the upper streets of Halifax to be her home. But, according to the law her home was Windsor. So long as she remained outside Windsor and unable to claim a private address elsewhere she was legally homeless. In the course of this research, no records were found to confirm that it happened, but according to the rules of settlement all of the costs for Ellen's assistance in Halifax would have been billed to the town of Windsor.

During the twenty-four years of interest here, Halifax provided public relief through various institutions to thousands of people. The majority of services were

provided to persons identified in the records as residents of Halifax. What percentage of them actually had settlement in the city, and therefore were properly the financial responsibility of city taxpayers, we have no way of knowing. This is in part because settlement was established through an oral exchange between applicants and staff. A century ago settlement was not established through a series of documents presented by the applicant, copied and then stored for contemporary reference which, if they survived, could now be fodder for historical study. It was also true in many cases that a great deal of personal history was associated with the establishment of settlement. Accurately recording long narratives may well have been beyond the literary skills or time available to frontline staff at Rockhead, the City Home and the various smaller institutions. By the 1890s, settlement forms had been developed to reduce these problems. Such forms were in use at the City Home and perhaps at other institutions as well. So far as settlement forms completed at the City Home are concerned, few appear to have survived. Most likely because they were too numerous to easily store and, compared to the large heavily bound ledger books used by many institutions, they would have been more easily lost or damaged.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ In the course of this research, no settlement declarations were uncovered in any materials related to the City Home or the provision of relief in general within the city of Halifax. As materials for the biographies of central characters was being gathered a review of records pertaining to relief in Halifax County for the 1890s was undertaken. What appear to be handwritten copies of settlement declarations for seven individuals were discovered. These were sent to The Overseers of the Poor in Halifax County from the City Home, the Home claiming that based on settlement the County was financially responsible for the relief provided to these individuals. The small number of forms discovered for this ten year period may mean that few survived, that few individuals with settlement in Halifax County entered the Home or that the Home seldom pursued claims generally or against Halifax County in particular. At this point there is not way to know for sure. Settlement declarations are a rich source because they offer a glimpse at direct exchanges between the poor and those who administered relief. As mentioned, few appear to have survived. A complete survey of Halifax County records held at HRMA may uncover more declarations for this or other time periods. Contact with smaller institutions around the province, for example the

Whether the details of settlement were recorded in some fashion or not, "because of its location as a seaport, a naval and military centre, and the capital, Halifax had to care for large numbers of transients from other parts of the province and out-of-province poor persons who became stranded in the city."⁵⁹ Sheer volume likely meant that for the most part applicants were taken at their word. Moreover, in the absence of rapid communications technology, verifying residency outside of Halifax would have been difficult to manage on a large scale and very time-consuming. As can be seen in the Parsons case mentioned below, investigating an individual claim was difficult and slow, and seems to have been undertaken more so in small towns where resources were less and individual expenditures were more scrutinized.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, some officials felt that the city needed to be more vigilant in regards to settlement. For example, James H. Dow, superintendent of the City Home, complained to the Charities Committee in

Mahone Bay Settlers Museum, indicates that some declarations are among their holdings. The time and expense to fully pursue the potential of settlement declarations was beyond this project, but may be possible and very revealing to future studies. It also appears that Fingard did not uncover any settlement declarations related to her time period. She offers no discussion of settlement or its affects on her subjects. No settlement declarations or letters related to settlement disputes are listed in her sources. Fingard, *Dark Side of Life*. Senior Scribes of Nova Scotia, *Poverty*, 19-20 outlines the history of settlement law in Nova Scotia, but makes no reference to settlement declarations or associated letters. Humphreys gives an overview of the evolution and effects of settlement law in England. His work is largely based on secondary sources. The authors he relies on may have read settlement declarations in their work, but Humphreys makes no reference to them. Humphreys, 66-75. King offers a brief description of settlement laws in England, but he downplays the importance of removal based on settlement 1700-1850 arguing that low rates or refusals to assist, the means more commonly used to encourage paupers to move on of their own accord, had much greater affect. King, *Poverty and Welfare*, 22-25.

⁵⁹ Senior Scribes of Nova Scotia, 21.

⁶⁰ Poor Relief Records, NSARM, RG 25 Series C vols. 3-7. The settlement declarations and bills for relief costs in this file which came from small towns across the province were often signed by two and as many as six officials, usually JP's, Overseers of the Poor and town treasurers. In these records there are no long letters disputing settlement that were sent from Halifax to towns around the province. Minutes from the meetings of the City Home Commissioners also held in this file (vol. 5) show some disputes over settlement but these minutes do not suggest protracted disputes or persons regularly being removed or refused admittance owing to settlement disputes.

a letter circa 1900 about the high number of individuals in Halifax who were receiving public relief despite having no settlement in the city, individuals such as Ellen Reardon.

During the year just about to close a large number of persons were landed in Halifax without any apparent means of support, and eventually, through sickness or inability to obtain employment, found the way to this institution, were admitted, and thus became a burden upon the public. During the twenty-two years that I have been connected with the Poor's Asylum I have observed that this class of patients, or the transients, as we call them, have been increasing year by year, so much so that to-day we have in this institution about ninety (twenty of who are harmlessly insane) who have not settlement in the City of Halifax or the Province of Nova Scotia....I would respectfully suggest that your Committee would confer with the Local Government in order that it would be brought to the notice of the Dominion Government the necessity of strict legislation being provided similar to the law now in force in the United States, otherwise additions will have to be built to our public institutions.⁶¹

As we shall see, disputes over settlement and reimbursement were not limited to Halifax. The evidence suggests that a number of administrative and legal battles went on behind the front lines of relief services across the entire province.⁶² Those battles were important. Eventually they helped to highlight the

⁶¹ Poor Relief Records, NSARM, RG 25 series C vol. 4. Shortly before writing this letter Dow had visited almshouses in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. According to Dow institutions there had recently instituted what he called an "Alien Pauper Law" which according to Dow seems to have been used to deny access based on residency. In conclusion Dow suggested legislation else additions to the city's institutions would be necessary. No version of the American law appears to have been proposed or passed, nor were additions to the poorhouse constructed. Nevertheless, Dow's visit and actions based upon it are a reflection of the movement of ideas identified by Rodgers in *Atlantic Crossings*.

⁶² Poor Relief Records, NSARM, RG series C vols. 3-7 and Halifax County Overseers of the Poor, 1897-1898, HRMA, RG 35-312 series C vols. 10 & 11 contain settlement forms and letters disputing settlement and bills for assistance issued that were exchanged between various towns across Nova Scotia from the 1860s to the early 1900s. These letters do not quote or make specific references to the applicable statutes. However, they do reflect clear knowledge of the law. In most cases it appears that the authorities who signed the letters actually wrote them based on their own knowledge. However, in some cases letters appear to have been written by legal professionals hired or employed by the Overseers of the Poor.

need for improvement in municipal-provincial relations and the need to change the manner in which social welfare programs were funded.⁶³ They were a part of the evolution of social services at a legislative level in Nova Scotia. While circumstances and laws varied, social welfare legislation was evolving across the country, particularly from the 1920s to the 1970s.⁶⁴ That evolution eventually led to the existence of a Canadian welfare state that served Halifax, Nova Scotia and the entire nation. But all that came after the time of interest here, and after the exchanges that took place on the front life of relief and reform work in and about the upper streets of Halifax.

Superintendent Dow's letter noted above, the few declarations uncovered thus far, as well as the many names of people and places listed in the 'chargeable to' column of the City Home's ledger books over the years, tell us that settlement declarations were taken as part of the process of providing public relief in Halifax. Identifying 'chargeable' individuals came about through the process of establishing settlement. Settlement typically assigned financial responsibility for a relief applicant to a group of taxpayers based on residence. But it was also used to assign financial liability for the indigent to members of

63 J. Murray Beck, *The Evolution of Municipal Government*, chapters 5 & 6. Beck does not focus on settlement disputes. But like Guest, he very clearly outlines the increasing scale of public responsibility for social welfare programs. Between 1879 and 1973, many Nova Scotian municipalities were unable to provide adequate social welfare services largely due to a lack of funds at both the municipal and provincial levels. Strict adherence to settlement law and disputed declarations were necessitated by that reality. Beck also traces the politics of provincial municipal relations and legislative changes municipal funding in Nova Scotia.

⁶⁴ Guest, chapter 3 to 11.

their family whenever possible.⁶⁵ Further evidence of the use of settlement at the City Home is provided by the fact that names were recorded in two separate ledgers, "City" (municipal) and "Province" (provincial), according to which body of government was financially responsible, a determination made according to settlement. Rockhead did not keep separate ledgers but it did record the residence of all inmates, most likely in relation to funding arrangements that were in part controlled by settlement. Below is the settlement declaration given by Minnie Slaunwhite upon her entrance to the City Home 28 January 1898. Here the lines indicate blanks in the form that were filled in at the time of completion. Because Minnie indicated that her place of settlement was Halifax County, the City Home billed the Overseers of the Poor in Halifax County for her relief costs. Below her declaration is a note that was sent along with it to the Overseers of the Poor in Halifax County.

County of Halifax, to Wit:

The Examination of Minnie Slaunwhite aged 21 years, at present residing in the City of Halifax, the said County of Halifax, touching the place of her last legal settlement taken upon oath before me, James H. Dow Esquire, one of her Majesty's Justices of the Peace in and for the said County, this 28 day of January in the year of our lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Ninety eight.

Who upon her oath, declares as follows:

I was born at St. Margaret's Bay. My father's name is Jacob Slaunwhite and my mother's name before marriage was Mary Dashman. I came to

⁶⁵ *Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia 1900*, c. 50 ss. 25-26. "If possessed of sufficient means, the father, grandfather, mother, grandmother, children, and grandchildren respectively of every pauper shall relieve and maintain at their own expense such pauper in such manner as the [municipal] council directs, and in the case of refusal shall pay a sum not exceeding two dollars per week for such pauper to be recovered in the name of the overseers as a debt."

Halifax the last time about the 16th of January. I gave birth to a female child on the 21st of January. On the 22nd January I was sent to the Halifax Poor's Asylum where I still remain being confined to my bed. I have no money.

Sgd. Minnie Slaunwhite

Office of Charities Committee
Poor's Asylum
Halifax, N.S., January 28, 1898

Mr. W.H. Wiswell
County Clerk

Dear Sir

Enclosed you will please find copy of affidavit, and statement of amount of expenses incurred on behalf of Minnie Slaunwhite by the overseers of the poor for this city up to date. This statement does not include cost of nursing, medical attention etc. the amount for such service will be contained in the bill, which will be rendered when she leaves the institution. At the present time she is not fit to be removed. We will notify you when she recovers sufficiently to be sent to her home.

Yours Truly

B. Mulcahy
Secretary

Minnie's case was typical and she is illustrative of the sort of "transients" Dow referred to in his letter to the Charities Committee quoted above. The willingness to work with these so called "transients" and "notorious characters" will be returned to later in this chapter. What is of greater interest here is the context of the exchange between Slaunwhite and Dow. First it is important to note that Minnie Slaunwhite was sent to the City Home. She claimed to have no money when she met with Dow, and may well have had little or no money upon arrival in

the city. This being the case she was likely sent to the home from the Victoria General Hospital or one of the women's homes in the city. Wherever she was, she seems to have been there from the 16th to the 22nd of January. If Minnie Slaunwhite was in one or another of the city's institutions during this time, she was there long enough it would seem for settlement to have been determined, which said institution would have been obliged to do. Given Dow's concerns regarding costs it would not have been surprising to see the Home deflect such cases by asking the forwarding institution to relocate persons directly to their place of settlement, in this case Halifax County. Nevertheless Slaunwhite was admitted to the Home and appears to have been there nearly a week before meeting with Dow.⁶⁶

One can imagine Dow interviewing Slaunwhite. In most cases he would likely have done so in his office. Here it seems, due to her health, Dow took Minnie Slaunwhite's declaration at her bedside. Dow would have been prepared with pen and form. He likely sat in a plain wood chair pulled up for the occasion. Slaunwhite probably sat propped up by pillows, perhaps uncomfortable and nervous. Maybe they knew one another a little bit beforehand depending on how much of a presence Dow tended to be about the institution. Certainly by the end

⁶⁶ Declarations had to be given on oath before a justice of the peace. The fact Dow, who was superintendent of the Home, and not some less senior member of staff took her declaration suggests that he may have been the only justice of the peace within the institution and therefore took all declarations, meaning he may have met personally with every resident or that declarations were recorded only for those who upon entrance claimed their settlement to be outside of the city. Here one gets the sense of a porous system out of necessity. Perhaps it was his inability to use settlement to control access to the Home that was behind his call for legislative changes. We can only speculate. Today those who work for the government of Nova Scotia providing public assistance must be sworn in as public notaries so that they can legally sign settlement declarations.

of the session, Dow had learned more about Slaunwhite. Establishing settlement typically required sifting through a great deal of personal history. As Slaunwhite told her life story, Dow would have punctuated the narrative with questions of detail the law required him to ask.⁶⁷ The interview may have lasted a few minutes or much longer depending on the personalities involved and the quality of the central narrative, the characters and circumstances encountered along the way. Slaunwhite's story may have triggered Dow's memory and inspired him to share some of his past. Or he might have done so just to put her at ease. It is possible that by the end of the interview, each individual knew more about the other; knew perhaps that despite their different circumstances at that moment, morally they were not all that far apart.

For all we know Minnie Slaunwhite entered the City Home claiming to have settlement in Halifax. Perhaps she recanted under pressure from Dow, which was his only purpose in taking what may have been a second declaration. There is no way to tell. What does seem to have happened, as Dow listened to Slaunwhite's story and filtered it through his knowledge of the law and his own morality on such matters, is that Dow appears to have accepted the story Slaunwhite presented here, at least enough to bill Halifax County based on her information. Moreover, the facts of the case as he presented them were very few compared to the more detailed histories visible in declarations done elsewhere.

⁶⁷ *Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia 1900*, c. 50 ss. 22 (1). "Any person applying for relief to the overseers of any poor district in which he has not a settlement, shall be examined on oath before a justice of the peace as to his settlement." Guest refers to the effect of the New Poor Law in welfare legislation across Canada. Whether or not cities across the country applied settlement and took settlement declarations as was done in Nova Scotia was not seen within the literature used in the course of this research.

Perhaps his brevity was an indication of his confidence in the key bits of information and that settlement would not be disputed or that his concern for the individual and her circumstances outweighed his concern for detail.⁶⁸ Whatever Dow thought of Minnie Slaunwhite and despite his apparent concerns about overcrowding, he does not seem to have been in a hurry to move her along. He waited six days to see her, and after doing so declared her unfit to be removed. Whoever moved her into the City Home the week before obviously felt differently.

Minnie Slaunwhite's case was common. The process and character of service delivery represented by her case occurred daily within institutions of relief all over the city. In order for Dow to provide Slaunwhite with public assistance he had to listen to her, deem her worthy and then craft a presentation of her circumstances agreed to by both of them. That presentation also had to measure up to the law and to prevailing ideas related to public relief that would surely come to bear as Dow's work was overlooked by the Overseers of the Poor in Halifax County. In Slaunwhite's case negotiating assistance appears to have been relatively unproblematic. Such was not always the case.

Of course Slaunwhite most likely did not see her circumstances as unproblematic. She was broke and ill, with an infant and perhaps other children to be responsible for, which she may have had to do alone. Nevertheless,

⁶⁸ The key information regarding settlement was her recorded age, 21, old enough to have settlement in her own right according to the law. Her birth place was recorded as St. Margaret's Bay. Beyond a few days in Halifax, no time or residence elsewhere are recorded. In the event of any question of settlement in her own right, the names of her parents are provided, which we are left to assume were in St. Margaret's Bay and easily located. *Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia 1900*, c. 50 ss. 17-21

compared to cases such as that of William Pearson Jr., known through similar documents, Slaunwhite's case was straightforward; at least so far as settlement and financial responsibility were concerned. For Pearson nothing appears to have been straightforward, in his life or his dealings with relief services. William Pearson Jr. was born to Eunice Melancon around 1874 in the small village of Tusket near the town of Yarmouth, about 200 miles south of Halifax. His father, William Pearson Sr., deserted his mother before he was born. For the first two years of his life, William Jr. lived with his mother and grandmother in Tusket. Then his mother moved with him to the town of Yarmouth. Sometime within the next two years, Eunice got married, formally or informally, to Mathew Aikens. For the next several years, the family lived in and about the town of Yarmouth and the village of Tusket. By 1890, Mathew Aitkens had left for the United States. He may have left for work, or some other reason other than deserting his family. The information we have does not provide the answer. In any case, a short time after his departure, Eunice Melancon died. And shortly after that, it was reported in Yarmouth that Mathew Aitkens had also passed. William Parsons Jr., who would have been about sixteen years old at his time, was suddenly on his own.⁶⁹

Perhaps William had taken some schooling. Perhaps he had picked up some work experience by the time Mathew Aikens and his mother passed away. Regardless of his capabilities, by April of 1891 he was sent to Saint Patrick's Home for Boys in Halifax. Available records do not say why. It may have been

⁶⁹ Poor Relief Records, NSARM, RG 25 series C vol. 7. This file contains declarations and bills regarding half a dozen cases including The case of William Pearson.

that his grandmother was no longer alive or able to provide for him. With no family or independent means of support he may have been sent to Saint Patrick's by the overseers of the poor in Yarmouth. Or he may have been placed there by the court as a result of criminal activity. Boys of this age were often sent to the Industrial School or Saint Patrick's when they ran afoul of the law or were without family support. Both institutions were used as a form of punishment and incarceration and as a form of refuge for the indigent. How long William remained at Saint Patrick's is unknown. In any case, nothing in the available records indicate that he returned to Tusket or Yarmouth. From 1894 until 1901 he was known in Halifax under the names Aitkens, Aikens, Akins and Atken and during those years he worked for the Halifax Street Railway as a driver.⁷⁰ He never seems to have been known by Pearson in Halifax. However, in the town of Truro on 27 December 1900 he married Isabella Smith under the name William Joseph Pearson.⁷¹ The marriage lasted only ten days. William died of tuberculosis on 6 January 1901 in the City Home under the name of Aikens. According to the records of the Home he died at the age of twenty seven.

70 Before the Halifax Police Court, NSARM, RG 42 Series D, 1890, 1895, 1900 & series B, 1904, City Prison Inmate Registers, NSARM, RG 35-102 Series 18 B, 1895, 1900, 1905 & 1910, City Home Register, NSARM, RG 35-102, 1900, 1905, 1910 & 1915. and *McAlpine's Halifax City Directory*, 1871-1914, NSARM, mfm# 3396 to 99, 9708-10, 9712-13, 9715, 9718, 9720, 3407 and 3411. A Henry Akins from Boston made one appearance in Police Court in 1895. Between 1894 and 1901 all other entries in the institutional records for the last names Aitkens, Aikens, Akins and Atken were for a William in his twenties identified as a Catholic from Yarmouth. In the *Directory* for these years some women with these last names appeared. A Thomas B. Aikens is listed in 1898. Otherwise the only male listed during these years is William Aikens or Aitkens.

⁷¹ An image of William's marriage registration can be found online at: *Nova Scotia Historical Vital Statistics*, October 2007, Nova Scotia Archives and Records Managements, 10 October 2007 <<https://www.novascotiagenealogy.com/>>

Shortly before he died, William received medical attention in Truro paid for by the town's overseers of the poor. In the process William would have completed a settlement declaration. No record of it has been discovered to date, but letters pertaining to it have. These documents, presented in Appendix B, provide much of what is known about William's life.⁷² At the same time they point toward important tendencies regarding the operations of reform and relief in Halifax. As the record shows, William completely misrepresented his circumstances to the overseers of the poor in Truro. This sort of misrepresentation was undoubtedly common, particularly in Halifax which handled the greatest volume of cases. William claimed settlement in Yarmouth, obligating the town of Yarmouth to pay for his assistance in Truro and Halifax. Officials in Yarmouth eventually investigated and disputed the information provided by William. Minutes from the meetings of the City Home Commissioners show that as they dealt with smaller jurisdictions and the provincial legislature questions regarding settlement arose and particular cases were looked into.⁷³ However, enquires and disputes between various administrative bodies that took place behind the frontlines of relief do not appear to have barred individuals from assistance in Halifax; at least not from the City Home. And while Dow complained to his superiors about too relaxed an approach, leniency on his part appears to have been part of the so called problem. An article appearing in the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* on 10 July 1908 offers a further case in point.

⁷² Poor Relief Records, NSARM, RG 25 series C vol. 7.

⁷³ Poor Relief Records, NSARM, RG 25 Series C vol. 5. The absence of evidence pertaining to settlement disputes within the city's records and the small amount of it that seems to exist with the county's records may mean that city officials had decided that the costs recoverable via settlement were too small for the time and effort involved.

A letter was received from the overseer of the poor at Newport [small town 30 miles south of Halifax] stating that the man who was maintaining a colored women belonging formerly to Creighton Street Halifax had wearied of well-doing and that henceforth her maintenance would be charged to the city. A bill for one week's board was sent in and an intimation was made that the city would be held responsible for her board till [sic] she is brought to Halifax. The clerk wrote to ascertain the legal residence of her husband and the reply came back that his legal residence is in Dorchester penitentiary. The woman is not quite in her right mind. She will be brought to Halifax as soon as possible.⁷⁴

Earlier we saw that in the process of helping the needy through the harsh winter of 1897 the Mayor of Chicago reportedly said to his chief of police "feed and warm them first; inquire about it afterward." This seems to have been the standard practice in Halifax. Everyday public officials at Halifax attended to people, just as Dow and the staff at the City Home attended to Slaunwhite and Dr. Beil attended to William Pearson. Part of the process meant establishing settlement in order to eventually attempt to assign responsibility for relief. Oftentimes the documentation we have regarding settlement reflects a negotiated truth, perhaps one not wholly accurate, but one officials supported because they supported the individual or their need. Superintendent Dow's letter as well as his own actions, tells us that need often trumped the legal fine points at the City Home. Officials knew they may be lied to. They knew that the judgments they made regarding individual character and worthiness may be later called into question. Despite that eventuality, and the rhetoric in the press which depicted a battle between reform and relief and those in need, the bulk of the evidence suggests that those who worked on the front lines of relief in Halifax

⁷⁴ *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 10 July 1908, NSARM, mfm# 6767.

Table Six				
<u>A Breakdown of Inmate Stays in the City Home Between 1 May 1910 and 31 April 1911 by Number of Stays</u>				
22 Persons	10 Persons	4 Persons	2 Persons	1 Person
3 Stays Each	4 Stays Each	5 Stays Each	6 Stays Each	
66 Stays	40 Stays	20 Stays	12 Stays	Seven Stays
9.07 % of Tot. Stays	5.50 % of Tot. Stays	2.75 % of Tot. Stays	1.60 % of Tot. Stays	0.96 % of Tot. Stays
Joseph Bennett	Patrick Byrnes	Sarah Delauchery	Ellen Callanan	Isabella King
Annie Carston	Emily Caffin	Robert Hennebury	Ellen Jackson	
Thomas Churchill	Henry Conrod	John Hogan		
Ada Donavan	Bridget Doyle	James McNab		
Hedley Goddard	Alfred James			
Joseph Harrington	Alexander Lang			
Mary Hefferman	Ellen Reardon			
John Hennebury	Sarah Shepherd			
Edward Hennesey	Annie Swab			
Charles Hogan	Edward Tobin			
Robert Little				
Annie Maxwell				
Angus Mcdonald				
Jane Newington				
Joseph Nobrega				
Michael Nolan				
Thomas Orman				
Patrick Power				
Charles Smith				
William Smith				
Thomas Sullivan				
Hughena Turner				
Total Number of Stays 727				

Source: City Home Register, NSARM, RG Series C Vol. 4, 1910-11.

were lenient and inclined to extend the benefit of the doubt at a time when the strict letter of the law would have allowed them to do otherwise.

The settlement declarations presented here offer direct and indirect evidence regarding the contact and agreements reached between relief workers and the

needy in Halifax and a tendency toward leniency on the part of city officials. Ledger books from the City Home offer more direct evidence of leniency. Admissions and discharges were recorded in these ledgers. Some individuals needed flexible use of the institution. Their needs were accommodated by the officials at the Home. For example, Ellen Reardon was admitted and discharged from the home four times between 1 May 1910 and 31 April 1911.⁷⁵ Her stays were short, a week to a month long. Similarly Alfred Jones was in and out of the Home five times between 10 June 1905 and 19 February 1906.⁷⁶ His longest stay lasted sixty-nine days, his shortest visit ended after seventy-two hours. Many others found that the City Home had a revolving door. Evidence of this can be seen in Table Six which shows figures for the year ending 31 April 1911. In that year there were 727 separate stays at the institution. Forty individuals had three or more stays that year, or 20.51 % of the total. Some individuals were forced to move frequently between the City Home and the hospital, or their family home, due to illness or some unusual circumstance. However, the familiar names listed in Table Six tell us that many individuals frequently came and went from the City Home because they were unable to maintain a private residence in the community as a result of unemployment, addiction, lack of family support or all three. Minutes from the board meetings of the Home tell us that residents were also able to leave the Home for short periods with staff permission. However, early on it was noted that "a number of the inmates of the house come in or

⁷⁵ City Home Register, NSARM, RG Series C Vol. 4, 1910-11.

⁷⁶ City Home Register, NSARM, RG Series C Vol. 4, 1905-06.

returned on Sunday night, many of them being very drunk and troublesome.”⁷⁷ Sometimes inmates away from the Home found trouble worse than drink as did Michael O’Neil on the evening of 17 September 1907 when he was struck by a tram car. “One of his thighs and his forearm were broken, his head terribly cut and his body bruised.”⁷⁸ Despite O’Neil’s mishap there is nothing in the records to suggest that the practice of giving inmates permission to come and go was discontinued. As for those who returned to the institution drunk, the board resolved that they could be put on a “mush diet for one week”.⁷⁹ There is no record of such punishment being meted out. Even if it was, the revolving door policy remained in place and assumedly individuals continued to be admitted while in an intoxicated state. It seems that officials decided this was better than refusing admission, particularly in the winter months.

The leniency and flexibility visible at the City Home was also visible within the Police Court. Recall that the Police Court was a low level court. Serious criminal matters were sometimes initially arraigned there, but were then moved on to higher courts for trial. Stipendiary magistrates ruled on minor criminal matters and violations of city ordinances. The statistics shown in Table Seven for the

77 Record Book of the Commissioners of the Halifax Poor Asylum 1845-60, Poor Relief Records, NSARM, RG 25 series C Vol. 5, 433. During the process of preparing and designing this study, all the institutional records for this time period were surveyed. As noted earlier, there was very little change regarding the volume of cases and the visible trends. Four sets of City Home records that spanned the time period under study were selected; one of them being the year 1910-11 presented here. The patterns and characters identifiable in table six are representative of the period 1890-1914.

⁷⁸ *Acadian Recorder*, 18 September 1907, NSARM, mfm# 5297.

⁷⁹ Record Book of the Commissioners of the Halifax Poor Asylum 1845-60, 433.

year 1890 were typical for the Police Court in the quarter century preceding World

Table Seven					
<u>A Breakdown of Releases by the Police Court for the Year 1890</u>					
Total Appearances 1379			Total Released 406 – 29.44%		
Men			Women		
Total Appearances - 1167			Total Appearances - 212		
Type of Release	#	%	Type of Release	#	%
Discharged	198	16.97	Discharged	34	16.03
Discharged No Prosecutor	29	2.48	Discharged No Prosecutor	6	2.82
Discharged To Take Pledge	26	2.23	Discharged To Take Pledge	4	1.89
Cond. Disch./ Sup. Sentence	9	0.77	Cond. Disch./ Sup. Sentence	8	3.77
Case Dismissed	58	5	Case Dismissed	14	6.60
Withdrawn	13	1.11	Withdrawn	3	1.42
Acquitted	4	0.34			
Release Totals	337	28.90	Release Totals	69	32.53

Source: Before the Halifax Police Court, NSARM, RG 42 Series D, 1890.

War One. Here we see that approximately thirty percent of all cases before the Court resulted in some form of release. We see also that this percentage was true for both men and women. The percentages of releases due to the complaint being withdrawn or because the complainant failed to appear were relatively few. In 1890 forty-two men were released because the complaint against them was withdrawn or their accuser failed to show. Such releases represented 12% of all male releases. In the cases against women the numbers were nine and 13%. All other releases were a result of decisions made by the court after listening to testimony and weighing the evidence. In general cases of drunkenness, profanity and ordinance violations such as driving a hack without a license were met with

the greatest leniency. In cases of assault, particularly on the police, magistrates often handed down a six term in Rockhead, which was a stiff sentence in the Police Court of this time period. Matters before the stipendiary magistrates were handled less formally than contemporary higher courts or modern proceedings. The vast majority of individuals appeared without the benefit of counsel. They spoke for themselves in response to questions from the bench. Press reports sometimes described these exchanges in detail. They tell us that the Police Court operated through a dialogue between defendants and the judge. Stipendiary magistrates were not immutable; they often extended the benefit of the doubt or acted upon requests. Sentencing was not consistent. By this time stipendiary magistrates were tenured legal professionals. However, as Philip Girard points out, the courts at this time continued to follow what he called "the Tory or conservative model, where the judge is seen as the bulwark of authority, responsible for maintaining peace and order."⁸⁰ The modern circumstance wherein prosecution and defense are conducted by lawyers before a judge acting as neutral arbiter between individual rights and state interests was yet to develop. Cases before the Police Court seldom involved lawyers. Decisions were based less on strict guidelines and more upon what judges perceived to be the best interest of the public on a case by case basis

⁸⁰ Girard, 64. In keeping with Girard's interpretation of the administration of justice in 19th century Halifax, the leniency evident in Police Court indicated that stipendiary magistrates did not view the majority of offenders who came before them as serious threats to the peace and order of the city.

Three cases heard on 17 August 1897 illustrate the dialogue and the consideration that was common in Police Court. The first of these cases heard that day involved a young woman arrested for drunkenness.

When the case was called, the magistrate said a relative of her's had called on him in regard to the sentence. The relative wanted the women sent to some home to be reformed... The magistrate said he did not like anybody to interview him in reference to any case before a decision had been given. If the relative came to court and swore to his statement, he (the Magistrate) would have no hesitation in sending her to some institution for her reformation. He fined her \$3.

In a court very much ruled by discretion it would have been easy for the judge to heed the relative's request. Instead he dealt directly with the defendant and handed down a fine and apparently no jail time. The second case involved Margaret McVicar. As the following excerpt suggests, she was known to the court. We met Margaret briefly in the previous chapter when she was assaulted by Thomas Churchill. Her name is also included in Table Four of Chapter Two which lists those who appeared most frequently before the Court. On 17 August 1897 when she was called to appear on charges of drunkenness and obscene language the Judge said:

He had given her too many chances by imposing small fines. The accused, thinking she was to be sent to prison without the option of a fine, begged to be let off easily, as she had not been before the court for 4 months; before that time she had been frequently arrested. She was fined \$9 or 45 days.

In this case the judge was having second thoughts regarding past leniency. Rather than defy authority the defendant responded by pointing out what she felt would please the court and what may have been a genuine effort to stay within the boundaries it set for appropriate action. The judge does not appear to have been completely convinced. On the other hand, considering the defendant was a frequent offender the sentence does not suggest the court had completely run out of patience. The final case involved Mary Upton, who was, like Margaret McVicar, familiar with the court. On this day Mary appeared on a charge of drunkenness.

She is rather good looking, and seems to be very unfortunate; she has been keeping away from the police station for sometime. Several city ladies are interested in her welfare. She is well connected in P.E.I.; each time she comes before the court she seems to repent. Efforts are to be made to send her home.⁸¹

Here again it seems that the person before the court was struggling, but nonetheless making more of an effort to abide by the law than to break it. Persons in the community had not cast her beyond redemption. The judge did not have to support that view. He could have sent the defendant to prison. But instead he elected to at least once more send her home.

In general the Police Court was lenient during these years. Nevertheless, defendants ended up in Rockhead which was an interruption in personal freedom, but not an interruption in the pattern of leniency and flexibility at the

⁸¹ *Acadian Recorder*, 18 August 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5274.

lower level of the criminal justice system. As we have already seen in Chapter two through the data presented in Table Four, the inmate population at Rockhead was not filled with violent sociopaths. Most were sentenced for drunkenness and drinking related offences. Resultant sentences were typically short. For example, in 1895, 80% of the sentences handed down were for 30 days or less.⁸² Fifteen years later in 1910 the majority of sentences continued to be short; just under 70% of sentences were for a period of 30 days or less in that year.⁸³ Not only were sentences short to begin with, they often ended early when fines, which were almost always an option, were paid by friends or family members. It was also common for prison officials to discharge prisoners before the end of their sentences, assumedly on account of good behavior; which, like the reported efforts of Margaret McVicar and Mary Upton to stay out of court, suggests an effort to work with authority not against it.

During this time period, good behavior or working with authority as an inmate of one or another of the city's public institutions very much meant actually working, physical labour. The ledgers at Rockhead suggest that it operated at half to three quarters of its intended maximum capacity of 120 inmates. Records of admissions and discharges at the City Home show that it typically held 300 to 350 inmates. It was designed to house approximately 400. Rockhead and the City Home had high turnover rates which likely added to what would have been

⁸² City Prison Inmate Registers, NSARM, RG 35-102 Series 18 B, 1895. Numbers here are based on sentences handed down in Police Court. In many cases actual time served may have been shorter.

⁸³ City Prison Inmate Registers, NSARM, RG 35-102 Series 18 B, 1910.

an already substantial volume of work needed to keep these places running. Paid staffs were small. Many positions, menial labour as well as those of responsibility were filled by residents. Such was the case in keeping with a desire to maintain a work ethic among residents as well as a want for efficient use of resources and cost control in line with emergent notions of scientific management. In the years between 1890 and 1914 there is no indication within the institutional records that residents refused to work or had to be disciplined in order to work. Nor did this research uncover any articles in the press confirming the unwillingness or refusal of inmates at the City Home or Rockhead to work, to contribute the labour that was needed to operate these places. This is important for two reasons. First, the fact that those who could work did so, apparently without coercion, may help to explain the leniency exhibited by those who were hired to oversee these institutions. And second, according to underclass theory, members of the so called lower classes, inmates of the City Home and Rockhead for example, had no work ethic. The records of Rockhead and the City Home suggest that they did. Recall as well that we saw in Chapter two that “notorious characters” such as Thomas Sullivan and Annie Peterson also sought and gained work in the community. It seems that the extremely poor were more accustomed to work than can be seen through reformist rhetoric or underclass theory. This study and this community profile in particular is an effort to focus beyond these obfuscations and to more completely retrace the contours of the upper streets community from the 1890s to the onset of the Great War. The work of the extremely poor was an important contour of that time and place and recognition

of it is essential to this study. The focus here is on interactions between relief authorities and those in need. A discussion of their work is included because work was considered a moral imperative and used to assess character, particularly in the case of the needy. Moreover, within the institutions of relief it was a practical necessity.

So far as work at the City Home was concerned, the men were "kept employed in the wood yard and in various other kinds of work." The women did "all the sewing and mending required as well as the general house work."⁸⁴ There was also a small farm that helped to supply the needs of the institution and an area used to mix concrete that was sold locally. There was plenty of work associated with the Home, still superintendent Dow noted in 1898 that it was "impossible to find work for a great many, owing to the large increase in the number admitted last year."⁸⁵ At times there may have been more capable hands

⁸⁴ City Home Report 1911, NSARM, mfm# 3362.

⁸⁵ City Home Report 1911, NSARM, mfm# 3360. James Whalen's study of the almshouse in Saint John New Brunswick during the 19th century does not offer any details of inmates, staff or their interactions. However, the general circumstances of that institution as documented by Whalen show similarities with the City Home in Halifax. Like the City Home the institution in Saint John was designed to be as self sufficient as possible through inmate labour. "The Almshouse Act of 1838 authorized commissioners to engage those inmates who were capable in some type of employment. The only paupers excused from work were those pronounced incapable by the almshouse physician" (11). Also similar to Halifax "Between 1847 and 1851 the members of the Grand Jury [element of local government] made constant complaints about the lack of work for the inmates" (12). Whalen makes no mention of violence. He does not examine the reasons why, but he notes a high rate of admission and discharge. While the reasons may have been different, both of these features were also visible at the City Home. Whalen, "The Nineteenth-Century Almshouse". By the mid to late 19th century, inmate labour as a feature of institutional relief had long been established in England. According to Steven King "by 1776 there were 1,900 workhouses in England" (38). In theory inmates were supposed to work in these institutions and in order to support themselves and to demonstrate their worthiness. Circumstances varied from little or no work required to backbreaking work primarily as a deterrent. "While some workhouses were tumbledown affairs and represent the conscious repression of paupers, it seems clear that by the later eighteenth century workhouses were part and parcel of the characterization of the

than work. It was also true that much of the time at least a third of the residents were “insane”, or elderly, or both, and were not able to work. In general there would likely have been a higher percentage of capable hands at Rockhead, and here too necessary work filled the days. While security was a greater concern at Rockhead than it was at the City Home, the prisoners moved about the grounds as they performed a variety of duties. The inmates operated a small farm and a stone shed as well as carpentry and blacksmithing shops. The earnings of these enterprises were listed by the governor of the institution in an annual report to the chairmen of the city prison committee. In the report for the year 1894, for instance, it was noted that stone broken by the men at the institution and sold to the city at 3 cents per bushel returned \$1014.80.⁸⁶ The women also worked. The value of their house work for the year ending 30 April 1911 was recorded at \$500.00.⁸⁷ The ideas used by Haligonians, including the extremely poor, to guide and judge their own actions as well as the actions of others, said everyone was responsible to work. Judging by the institutional records, there was more agreement than disagreement on this matter between institutional authorities and residents. Consequently, the great deal of work that needed to be done in order for these places to remain in operation got done.

As stipendiary magistrates sanctioned defendants and as officials at Rockhead and the City Home determined eligibility for relief and presided over

southern and eastern poor law as a relatively flexible and humane institution” (164). King, *Poverty and Welfare*.

⁸⁶ City Prison Report 1894, NASRM, mfm# 3358.

⁸⁷ City Prison Report 1911, NASRM, mfm# 3362.

the work and daily needs of inmates they were much of the time dealing with persons who came from and would return to life in the upper streets. In the course of performing their duties these officials weighed their own actions, as well as the actions of their clientele, against what they held to be morally and socially acceptable and against more widely held community standards. Those who stood before these officials did the same.

What the evidence suggests is that when residents of the upper streets came into contact with reform, as it operated through public institutions, it was often possible for the parties involved to communicate and to reach agreement. It was possible for officials to find even those most socially and mentally unstable and at the mercy of addiction and destitution as worthy and eligible for relief and reasonable considerations. For instance, those who left the City Home with permission then returned drunk where not refused readmission. Nor does front line staff appear to have imposed the mush diet penalty for such action, even though the City Home Commissioners who wrote the "rule" apparently felt that they should. At the same time we see those most and least dependant striving to work and to be economically and socially independent within the bounds of the law as best they could. As Margaret McVicar pointed out to the stipendiary magistrate in August of 1897 "she had not been before the court for 4 months; before that time she had been frequently arrested".⁸⁸ Not evidence of a significant change perhaps, but an effort nonetheless on the part of a frequent offender to be more law abiding. Like Margaret McVicar, Thomas Sullivan, who

⁸⁸ *Acadian Recorder*, 18 August 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5274.

we first met in Chapter Two, was no stranger to the court. But he also appears to have been a unionized carpenter who was often able to work and pay his own way in the community.⁸⁹ Despite the harsh rhetoric of reformist leaders, for the most part the actions of those who delivered reform and relief in the upper streets did not indicate fear of a group which they approached and treated according to Victorian notions of an underclass. Precise reasons for the extreme views can only be suggested here. For whatever reason leaders seem to have been genuinely afraid. Individuals such as Archbishop O'Brien, Robert Sedgewick and John Naylor, for instance, lived in the south end of the city. Like the wealthiest members of Halifax who also lived well south of the upper streets, home for the leaders of reform was physically away from the upper streets. While the leaders of reform likely had greater contact with the extremely poor than did their wealthy neighbours, leaders of reform do not seem to have been able to cross what they felt was a moral distance between themselves and those they targeted. Perhaps it was because they had not come from the upper streets or any place in the city near to that community physically, socially or economically. Meanwhile, beyond the overzealous minority, the majority of Haligonians who did have roots in or near the upper streets were able to share physical as well as moral space with a wide range of characters, including the extremely poor. The persons at or near the bottom of Halifax society, those who according to contemporary social theorists had rejected prevailing norms and were therefore a drain on societal resources and a threat to the social order, were often met with second chances, light sanctions, and easy access to the available material and services of relief.

⁸⁹ Carpenters Union Local 83, NSARM, MG 20 vol. 1635 # 8.

When those with the least stability and capability were forced inside one or another public institution they often worked there as best they could to earn their keep; which, by virtue of the volume of work required to keep them running, was likely the cardinal rule within these places.

Historians have described horrific conditions in public institutions elsewhere, in British workhouses, for instance, and in basements of American police stations used to house the destitute.⁹⁰ It seems that relatively smaller numbers of extremely poor persons and higher degrees of acceptance and cooperation helped to make matters less severe in Halifax. However, places such as Rockhead, the City Home, and the Saint Patrick's Home for Boys provided a

⁹⁰ See for Example: Humphreys, *No Fixed Abode* and Kusmer, *Down and Out*. Humphreys relies on legislative records and statistics gathered from public authorities. Here we see much larger numbers than were the case in Halifax. Some parishes in England were dealing with 10 to 15 thousand transient paupers each year. Through the 19th century the *English Poor Law* relieved between 2.5 and 13 percent of the population. Poverty in England was criminalized more so than was the case in Halifax, which seems to be related to less severe class and moral divisions within Halifax society. In England, laws and official rhetoric were also more intent on drawing distinctions within the poor population. The itinerant poor were often forced into workhouses where conditions and treatment were most severe. Humphreys presents some horrific conditions. He also acknowledges that treatment varied widely. Humphreys attributes general fear and hostility to politicians and bureaucrats who maintained and often stepped up pressure on poor individuals. Officials were gaining awareness of structural causes, but remained without means to address them; partly because the public was reluctant to pay higher taxes and partly because officials disagreed on the magnitude of the problem and how best to address it. Kusmer's study of poverty in America is based on accounts from those who were homeless or who worked with or studied that segment of the population. It also relies very much on post WWII secondary literature. As it was in England, the scale of poverty a century ago was much larger in many US settings than it was in the Halifax of that time. Humphreys acknowledged variation in the treatment of the poor in England. Kusmer recognizes variation in the American context and roots it in the differences between the harsh approach of the Charity Organization Society (COS) and the more flexible approach of public and other private organizations such as the Salvation Army (SA). The COS brought a more professionalized bureaucratized approach that was more tied to the lingering idea of "tramps" as a threat to the social order and the COS was determined to systematically root them out. Organizations such as the SA acted more on the notion of charity as a Christian duty and an awareness of structural causes of poverty. In Kusmer's assessment the persistence of harsh treatment and deplorable accommodations in some police lockups and wayfarers lodges that were used to shelter the homeless 1890-1920 had much to do with the dominance of the COS, particularly within the emerging field of professional social work. The emergence of professional social work in Halifax did not include an equivalent to the American COS.

level of care that seems abominable by today's standards. Separation by criterion such as age, sex and condition only began in such places during the 1890s.⁹¹ Renovations in the late 19th century improved ventilation. But, problems related to patient hygiene and close proximity lingered.⁹² Nutritional levels were held down by low budgets and limited production capacity on institutional farms. And while a generally evenhanded approach seems to have prevailed, there were moments of zealousness and harshness more common to other places and more in line with the Victorian stereotype as identified by P.B. Waite. Recall that in the documents regarding the case of William Pearson, we read that detective Power went all the way to Yarmouth to arrest William on a charge of stealing, a charge that was never prosecuted. A Halifax-Yarmouth round trip in those days involved two 6-8 hour trips by train and at least one overnight stay in Yarmouth. Power was known for such actions; so Power appears as an exception, fortunately for the homeless his colleagues on the police force and the persons working within other areas of the city's administration seemed to have been less inclined to pursue small matters with such vigor. At the same time, not all homeless people responded positively to the less vigorous approach of the authorities. Ellen Reardon, who may have been the most chronic recidivist known to Halifax, was stark proof of that. But there were also persons such as Dennis Berrigan, whom we saw released from Police Court in chapter two on a promise never to drink again. Perhaps he sought help, perhaps not, either way Dennis Berrigan never reappeared in court to make a mockery of the chance he was

⁹¹ Senior Scribes of Nova Scotia, 111-115.

⁹² Senior Scribes of Nova Scotia, 115-118.

given. There seems to have been more Dennis Berrigans than Ellen Reardons; a satisfactory level of success in keeping the homeless away from relief without an intolerable level of failure. Stories in the press were often alarmist and filled with talk of an urgent struggle against poverty, drink, and lax morals. What ever, front line staff understood of such press coverage; they continued to work with those who lived in the upper streets not against them.

We have seen how many of those who worked on the front lines of reform and relief as well as many of those in positions of greater authority were able to extend the benefit of doubt and to cooperate with those who suffered from occasional or chronic poverty; in part because of values or experiences they held in common. Meanwhile there were residents of Halifax who had, as far as we know, no experience of the upper streets and, from what we can see, nothing in common with the people who lived there; Alban Bertram de Mille and Mather Almon Abbott, for example. It is important to see the segment of society to which they belonged and its distance physically and seemingly morally from the upper streets. That distance may well be linked to harsh attitudes such as those reflected in reformist rhetoric. Both de Mille and Abbott were born in Halifax in 1874. They grew up in the spacious economic comfort and privacy of the city's south end along the North West Arm. They took private instruction in the city and then as young men went on to King's College, Windsor. After graduating with a B.A. in 1893 de Mille taught at King's for ten years, then moved on to a distinguished teaching career at various schools in the United States. Mather

Abbott also graduated from King's College with a B.A. in 1893. He went on to Oxford, graduated again in 1896, and then he too became a teacher in the United States. Toward the end of his career he received honorary degrees from Princeton and Yale. De Mille and Abbott were friends as boys and throughout their lives. When Abbott died in 1934 de Mille wrote his recollections of Abbott, their boyhood in Halifax and their time together at King's.⁹³

About the time Thomas Berrigan's childhood was cut short by the death of his father, de Mille and Abbott were learning to swim and sail in the seclusion of chain rock beach. "All of us, in those days, lived in and on the water...and we could spend our days naked as God had made us, and happy as He intended we should be." In the winter they took sleigh rides and tobogganed. "I can see Mather now, in his white blanket suit with scarlet toque and stockings, flying downhill on his toboggan in a whirling cloud of snow." By the time Thomas Berrigan was a regular in the Police Court, de Mille and Abbott were at King's College. According to de Mille, Abbott "kept clear of the usual college weaknesses – drinking and so forth; he was never, in those days, a total abstainer, but exercised a wise temperance that had its due influence because it was based so obviously on sound common sense." While they tried to keep it quiet, we saw earlier through the press that some of the city's prominent people were consumers of upper street vice. At the same time the lives of de Mille and Abbott suggest that there were members of Halifax society who appear as "pure"

⁹³ A.B. de Mille, "Random Recollections: Mather Abbott's Boyhood, 1874-1893," (Halifax: Nova Scotia Historical Review, 1992)

in their actions and morality as the likes of a Thomas Berrigan were said to be “vile” in theirs. Perhaps de Mille and Abbott could have extended their Christian charity to Thomas Berrigan should they have ever met. But it is hard to imagine either man sharing values and experiences with Thomas Berrigan or his cohorts. Nor is it easy to imagine the likes of de Mille or Abbott acting like Joseph McDonald who in 1895 appeared before the stipendiary magistrate charged with being a common drunkard and failing to support his wife and ten children.⁹⁴ According to Mrs. McDonald, her husband had not contributed to the household during the past four weeks. In reply Mr. McDonald “swore that he supported his family... but the last few weeks he has been celebrating his birthday”. Joseph McDonald and Thomas Berrigan went to extremes, but a large segment of the population could empathize with them which may be explained by the fact that their actions were similar at times. Meanwhile, there was a segment of the population who appear to be unconcerned with the poor and incapable of empathizing with them because their actions and comfortable lives were completely dissimilar. Fortunately for those who sometimes or frequently experienced poverty and struggles with drink, this segment of the population was small and was seldom directly involved with reform. The leaders of reform appear to have been somewhere in-between. Physically and morally they were closer to the de Mille’s and Abbott’s of the city. However, their chosen mission to address poverty and its associated ills separated them by experience from most elites.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ *Acadian Recorder*, 8 May 1895, NSARM, mfm# 5269(2).

⁹⁵ So far as the noninvolvement or indifference of rich Haligonians is concerned, Isabella Binney Cogswell was a notable exception. As we saw earlier she belonged to the city’s elite. Nonetheless, she devoted her time and money to reform and worked on its frontlines. In his

However good their intentions may have been, they could not overcome their physical, social and moral distance sufficiently to arrive at a tone that reflected more genuine empathy and less fear and moral indignation. Perhaps the empathy they could not find helped the poor and extremely poor to find empathy for each other.

The Poorest Residents of the Upper Streets Cooperated with Frontline Reformers, They also Cooperated with Each Other

Public institutions such as Rockhead and the City Home were not luxurious, but they provided shelter that was essential to many, particularly during the winter months. Maintaining a residence in the community could be difficult. Incomes were often interrupted by job loss, injury, seasonal unemployment or illness. At the same time, housing was often scarce and expensive in Halifax. Sharing accommodations with relatives was common in all parts of the city including the upper streets. Living with family could lower individual costs, eliminate the need to hire child or nursing care, and ease psychological distress. Nuclear families often drew in uncles, aunts or cousins. Newlywed couples

examination of American child savers of the progressive era Anthony M. Platt portrayed social reformers generally, and child savers in particular, as occupying an intermediary or an in-between position; a position largely created and solidified by the actions of reform. While the leaders of reform held real concern for the poor, they were not without self-interest. Reform helped to create an esteemed and well-off professional class. Though it called for regulation and greater redistribution of wealth, reform supported the existing social order and therefore garnered much support among America's economic and political elites. Platt argued that without political support and direct economic contributions from wealthy individuals, American progressivism would have accomplished much less. Findings here suggest that for much of the population in Halifax income and placement within the social order were only quasi-stable; subject to the vagaries of a weak local economy, illness, injury or availability of family support. A small group of elites were economically and socially secure. The degree to which reformers in Halifax had their support and the importance of that support to the ability of reform to mitigate the negative affects of the existing socio-economic order as well as negative actions within the community remains unclear and worthy of further study. Anthony M. Platt, *The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969)

sometimes remained with family for a period before moving out on their own. Adult siblings, cousins, and in-laws often lived together, again to share costs or to care for an aging family member no longer able to survive on their own. Shortly after the death of his father, for instance, Thomas Berrigan went to work to help maintain shelter for his family. Over the remaining years of her life Mary Berrigan lived with one or more of her sons, not only in Halifax but also in the United States. Catherine Oldfield had much in common with Mary. Her husband John died in 1871 or '72. Over the next few years she lived on Grafton and later Creighton Street. From 1888 to 1903 she lived at 16 Albermarle Street. Over the years various members of her family took shelter with her at that address assumedly in economic and familial support of one another.⁹⁶

A residence often served as a base that various members and generations of a family could return to over the years as need be. Having a base of affordable secure shelter with support services built in often helped individual family members survive or get ahead economically. Charlotte Hosterman's sons remained in the family home well into their adult lives. With that support they were eventually able to do well economically and to care for their mother in her twilight years. Their story begins in the 1860s when Charlotte's husband Charles Hosterman Sr. owned a foundry and the family lived in Sambro, a coastal community about 15 miles south of Halifax. Charles Sr. died in 1870. By 1875 Charlotte was teaching school in Halifax and raising her five sons in a home on

⁹⁶ *McAlpine's Halifax City Directory 1871-1914*, NSARM, mfm# 3396 to 99 and 9708-10, 9712-13, 9715, 9718, 9720, 3407 and 3411.

Oxford Street. As her sons grew older they were listed in the *Directory* as boarders at the family home on Oxford Street, then as employees or business owners at residences of their own in various parts of the city. In her later years Charlotte moved from Oxford Street to live on Gottingen Street with her son Harold who owned a dry goods business there. Her eldest son Charles Hosterman Jr. was a partner in a carriage works at 92-96 Grafton Street. In the late 1890s the carriage works leased the building which was at that time owned by the Cogswell family. By 1905 the Hosterman's had purchased the building, the back of which faced Charles Clarke's place at 121-123 Albermarle, in the next street up the hill.⁹⁷

The family home on Oxford Street that supported the Hosterman brothers into early adulthood was not unique. Similar bases of long-term family support could be found all over the city, including the upper streets where individuals were able to secure housing and economic success by living with family much of their adult lives. Members of Patrick Dillon's family did just that. Patrick began doing business in liquor and groceries at 49 Albermarle Street in the 1860s. His nephews, sons and their children took turns living at that address over the next thirty years. Members of the Sanford family which owned and operated a marble works at 82-84 Argyle Street often shared an address. The same was true of the Griffon's who sold dry goods and liquor on Albermarle and later on Young

⁹⁷ *McAlpine's Halifax City Directory 1871-1914*, NSARM, mfm# 3396 to 99 and 9708-10, 9712-13, 9715, 9718, 9720, 3407 and 3411 and Assessment Rolls Ward 3, NSARM, RG 35 A vols. 3, 4, 5, 6, 11 & 13.

Street.⁹⁸ Shared accommodations, often to the point of crowding, in order to survive or get ahead were common across North America and Europe. It is visible within urban settings across 19th and early 20th century Canada through the work of Bettina Bradbury, Peter Baskerville and Eric W. Sager. It can also be seen in David Ward's work on American slums and Carl Chinn's work on poverty in England.⁹⁹ Shared accommodation as a means of survival and economic advancement was as common and important in the upper streets of Halifax as it was elsewhere. Even more important, so far as this study is concerned, is that the same strategy was evident at all levels of society. There were no reports of individuals regularly bedding down in the streets, camping out in parks or taking over abandon buildings. In the upper streets it seems that everyone, including the least stable members of the community such as Sarah Shephard and Thomas Berrigan used conventional housing rather than makeshift alternatives and securing conventional housing often meant sharing.

The poorest members of the upper streets community including Thomas Berrigan, James Gilfoy, John Kellum, and Sarah Shephard all shared addresses at various times in their adult lives with members of their families. Owing to their addictions, low levels of employment, and perhaps the reluctance or migration of family members, shared accommodation was not as possible, permanent or as

⁹⁸ *McAlpine's Halifax City Directory 1871-1914*, NSARM, mfm# 3396 to 99 and 9708-10, 9712-13, 9715, 9718, 9720, 3407 and 3411 and Assessment Rolls Ward 3, NSARM, RG 35 A vols. 3, 4, 5, 6, 11 & 13.

⁹⁹ Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families* and Peter Baskerville and Eric W. Sager, *Unwilling Idlers*. David Ward, *Poverty, Ethnicity, and the American City, 1840-1925: Changing Conceptions of the Slum and the Ghetto*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and Carl Chinn, *Poverty Amidst Prosperity: The Urban Poor in England, 1834-1914*, (New York: Manchester University Press, 1995).

uplifting a force in their lives as it was for the likes of the Hostermans or the Dillons. Nevertheless, as far as housing was concerned, the poorest members of the community shared whenever they could. They paid rent for a space on their own or with family or friends. When that was not possible they turned to the City Home or perhaps Rockhead. According to Judith Fingard, in the 1870s members of the Kellum family had routinely asked for shelter at the city prison when the cold weather put an end to their white-washing business. The samples of Police Court ledgers used for this research show no cases involving homeless persons explicitly requesting shelter at Rockhead. There is no way of knowing how many crimes were committed as a way of gaining shelter. What is clear is that when the likes of Thomas Berrigan and Ellen Reardon were arrested for vagrancy they were not being pulled from shantytowns, tent-cities or hobo jungles. There is no record of the destitute trying to establish themselves in make-shift housing or camps of any kind; in any sort of organized living arrangement separate from the larger community.¹⁰⁰ Nor is there any evidence of anyone opting to live in the streets without shelter. Everyone depended upon the available sources of private and public shelter. And whether the roof was private or public it was most often shared and dependant upon compromise and cooperation with fellow residents,

¹⁰⁰ *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 4 July 1908, NSARM, mfm# 6767. An article in the *Herald* on this day titled "Thirty-Four Days of Starvation in Halifax" told the story of Thomas Meikle, a sailor and holder of a "mates certificate", who was "unable to secure employment and too proud to seek alms." Despondent he retreated to Point Pleasant Park "apparently caring not what became of him or how soon the end came." For thirty four days he wandered in the park by day and slept in an abandoned building at night. He was eventually discovered in that building by a passer by who assumed he was dead and called the police. He was found to be alive and taken to hospital. According to the story in the paper "it was thought he will recover and will not be much the worse of his trying experience". Meikle' unemployment was not unusual, but his reaction to it was. It is also important to note that during his time in Point Pleasant Park, a large secluded area in the south end of the city and a logical site for persons seeking to establish some form of self-made alternative housing, he seems to have been alone.

landlords or city officials. Some compromised and cooperated more successfully than others, but no one chose to or was forced to live apart from the community.¹⁰¹ Housing, neither the means used to secure it, nor the complete lack of it, did demarcate a particular group. More specifically it did not identify a presence that could be accurately described as an underclass, not in the upper streets or anywhere else in the city. For that to have been possible a segment of the population would have to have chosen or have been forced to live in long term physical, social and moral isolation from the rest of the community. Such was not the case in the Halifax examined here.

Shared accommodation demonstrates an effort to share physical and social space for the purposes of survival and economic advancement. According to Baskerville and Sager it was a strategy visible across the working classes within various 19th century Canadian cities. Their findings show that in general the strategy was more widely used in western cities where levels of immigration were higher. Among the poorer segment of society, however, the strategy was more common across Canada.

The ability of poor families to take in a lodger would have been limited by the size of their dwelling places. Nevertheless, many families below the poverty line made the effort, and, no matter the city in which they resided, poor families were more likely to have a lodger than were other

¹⁰¹ Court sanctioned incarceration was forced physical separation. However, the sentences to Rockhead in this time were short, inmates for the most part were known to one another and while at Rockhead they followed patterns of work similar to those followed outside the institution. A sentence to Rockhead a century ago did not involve the long-term alienation from mainstream society, high security and inactivity we associate with modern imprisonment.

families. And despite the probable space constraints, such families were more likely to accommodate multiple lodgers.¹⁰²

Table Four seen in the previous chapter identified a small number of upper street inhabitants who held what we called the least effective social space and were

Table Eight

Average of Property Values in the Upper Streets of Halifax for Selected Years, 1891-1909

Year of Assessment	Number of Props.	Value of All Prop.	Ave. Prop. Value
1891	184	\$426,400	\$2317
1893-95	132	\$273,200	\$2069
1900	131	\$286,500	\$2187
1905	117	\$307,100	\$2624
1909	93	\$202,700	\$2179

Source: Assessment Rolls Ward 3, NSARM. RG 35 A vols. 3, 4, 5, 6, 11 & 13.

seldom able to maintain a physical space in the community, shared or otherwise. Nevertheless, the figures in Tables Eight and Nine, and the stories of individual success behind those figures, show that the community as a whole was able to advance economically. The presence of less stable residents did not prevent that advancement. More importantly, from the standpoint of this study, is that the least able members of the community were allowed to remain - and to move forward - with the rest of the community as best they could, and that at least a minimum of social entitlement, support and benefit was extended to them.

While the figures in Tables Eight and Nine are rough and incomplete, the positive trends they indicate match the positive outlook and relative prosperity of

¹⁰² Baskerville and Sager, 141.

the times as documented within the regional historiography. As he concluded an examination of the region, reform in particular, during the first decade of the 20th century, Ian McKay said that "The 1910s were the region's last years of abundant hope."¹⁰³ The values presented in Table Eight reflect the sum of assessed values as listed in the valuation books for the years noted. In the period between 1891 and 1909, the actual number of buildings in the upper streets changed very little. There appears to have been a balance between construction and demolition and between the union and division of addresses for tax purposes. In 1891 the values of 184 properties were recorded in the valuation books. That number is near to the actual number of properties existent in the community over the next twenty five years.¹⁰⁴ Assessment records for residential properties are often incomplete. On the other hand, very few gaps appear in the records for many larger commercial properties, Halifax Breweries, Moir & Sons, and Robert Taylor's Shoe Factory for example. These larger enterprises held or increased their assessed value over time. Taylor's Shoe factory at 97-101 Brunswick Street, for example, was assessed at a value of \$9000 in 1891. When it was assessed nearly twenty years later in 1909, its value remained the same. The brewery at 165-175 Albermarle Street was sold by John Lindberg to the Oland Family around the turn of the century. In 1891 the place was assessed at \$20,000. The 1900 assessment was significantly higher, \$30,000, perhaps in connection with

¹⁰³ Ian McKay, "The 1910s: The Stillborn Triumph of Progressive Reform," *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise eds., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993) 229.

¹⁰⁴ The assessments for many residential properties do not appear in the valuation books that we have. For 1909 there is information on only about half of the properties in the community. The reason is unclear. Sometimes more than one book was used and perhaps not all of the books have survived. Some owners may have been tax exempt for some years. For whatever reason, the records for many residential properties are incomplete.

the change of ownership. In 1909 the brewery was assessed at \$24,000, down from the 1900 valuation, but up nearly 17% from the 1891 figure. Snow's Funeral Home at 90 Argyle provides a final example. Like Taylor's Shoe Factory, the

Table nine					
<u>Figures Regarding Property Ownership and Residency in the Upper Streets</u>					
Owners 1891 to 1914				Total # of Tenants in 1900-01	Total # of Tenants in 1909-10
Total 153					
Res.		Non. Res			
90	58.8%	63	41.2%	308	267
Tenants with Five or More Years of Residency in the Community					
Total 130					
5 to 9 years		10 to 14 years		15 or more years	
69		39		22	
Owners Who Held Property in the Upper Streets for 15 or More Years					
26					

Source: Assessment Rolls Ward 3, NSARM. RG 35 A vols. 3, 4, 5, 6, 11 & 13. *Halifax Directory* 1900 to 1914.

assessed value of Snow's Funeral Home remained constant. In 1891 Snow's paid taxes on real property valued at \$4000. The same was true in 1909. The higher value of commercial properties draws up the averages presented in Table Eight. However, the stability seen in the value of commercial property reflects property values across the community. As the figures in Table Eight suggest, there was some fluctuation in property values, but no dramatic widespread increases or declines.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ A review of City Council Minutes for this period shows that assessment and city revenue was a matter of grave concern. Council was under constant pressure from property owners to keep taxes low. At the same time they faced pressure from all citizens for improved services, particularly roads, sewers and public schools. Between 1881 and 1901 the city's debt more than doubled (from \$1,484,158.62 to \$3,374,642.24) largely due to provision and maintenance of

Property values remained stable. This helped to support long term residency, which was also characteristic of the upper streets during this time. The stability represented in Table Nine is an important finding. According to the valuation books for ward 3 (electoral division which at this time included the upper streets), 153 individuals held property in the upper streets for various lengths of time between 1891 and 1914. Ninety of those owners, nearly sixty percent of them, lived within the upper streets, if not for all, at least for a portion of the time they owned property there. The remainder always lived elsewhere in the city, save a small number who lived further away. Very few owners used their property exclusively as single family homes or commercial space. Most properties were a mix of rental units used for family dwellings and small scale commercial enterprises; grocery stores, taverns, clothing shops, etc. Use of the *Directory* in conjunction with the valuation books identified 308 adult tenants in the upper streets in 1900-01. Ten years later there were 267. In most cases these individuals were heads of households or families. Census and school returns

these services. Consequently assessment for general purposes increased from \$110,000 in 1891, to \$120,000 in 1895 and then to \$130, 000 in 1898. In part due to better services, the total value of real estate in the city also rose from \$14, 976,540 in 1884 to \$17,043,375 in 1901. Lack of surviving data prevents a complete accounting of upper street property values during this time. But the material we do have suggests that values remained steady or increased, and this is supported by the city wide figures presented in Council in 1901. See:, *Minutes of the City Council of the City of Halifax*, Wallace Graham and F.H. Bell revisers, (Halifax: T.C. Allan Co., 1894, 1897 & 1901). In terms of management, owing to the tax exemption of large tracts of military property in the city, poor financial management as evidenced above, and petty squabbling within city council, a clear vision for the city and coordinated urban planning to support it had not developed by the early 20th century. In keep with the broader enthusiasm for scientific management and social reform, the city experimented with a Board of Control, 1906-1919. In the end a lack of support for new ideas on the part of older city politicians and the inability of those who supported reform to overcome political resistance and public apathy the Board accomplished little and was disbanded in 1919. See: Henry Roper, "The Halifax Board of Control: The failure of Municipal Reform, 1906-1919" *Acadiensis* 14. 1985: 46-65. In the following chapter more will be said regarding the links between management of city's finances, reform and the treatment of the poor in Halifax.

show that families in the upper streets typically had four or five children. Thomas and Mary Berrigan, for example, had four children. Catherine and John Oldfield had five. So did Patrick and Catherine Dillon. In addition to the adults identified in Table Nine, there would have been at least 600-800 children below the age of 16 in the community most years.¹⁰⁶ Many of these children likely grew to adulthood within the community. Thomas Berrigan did. So did John and William Dillon and the Lowrie sisters, Ann and Sarah. The assumption that many children grew to adulthood in the upper streets is supported by the long term residency identified in Table Nine. Here we see that 61 adults, most of whom were heads of households with children, lived in the community for ten or more years between 1891 and 1914. We see also that there were 26 long term property owners, persons who held property in the upper streets for 15 or more years. Owners held their property and families raised their children in the upper streets, despite the presence of economic hardship and cases of severe poverty personified in the likes of Ellen Reardon, Alfred Jones and a handful of others. Thus the upper streets of this time did not constitute a transient community. Moreover, the presence of hardship, intermittent for many, chronic for a few, did not prevent the community as a whole from moving forward, economically in the two decades preceding World War One. And, as the community moved forward it did not intentionally roll over or exclude any particular group. In fact a great deal of economic success necessitated cooperation between the most and least capable

¹⁰⁶ More extensive use of the Directory would have identified more adults who lived in the upper streets between 1891 and 1914. Using the census returns in conjunction with the school records could have produced a more exact count of children. More extensive use of these records could have bolstered the findings of this research but would not have altered its conclusions. In light of this fact, and the enormous time involved, more extensive use of these records was declined.

residents of the upper streets. Much of that cooperation, as we will now see, came about through relationships between landlords and tenants and the payment of rent which was at the heart of those relations.

Social and Economic Advancement did not Negate Cooperation with the Least Fortunate

Some of the city's wealthiest residents owned rental property in the upper streets, B.H. Collins for example. Brenton Haliburton Collins came from old money. His father Enos Collins was a member of the Provincial Legislature, co-founder of the Halifax Banking Company, and an original member of the Halifax Club. In 1874 B.H. Collins bought the Dunorlan Estate in Tunbridge Wells England. By 1876 he had left Halifax for good. However he continued to hold prime properties (the Aberdeen Hotel and the site of Sanford's Market) in the upper streets to his death in 1924.¹⁰⁷ More old money could be found in the upper streets though the Uniacke and Cogswell families. These individuals are akin to de Mille and Abbott whom we met earlier. We see here that while this small and wealthiest segment of the population was physically, socially and often, in their minds so it seems, morally distant from the upper streets, there were economic ties that linked the top to the bottom of Halifax society. However, most upper street rents were paid to much more common folk, individuals who bought rental property with money earned as carpenters, blacksmiths or masons. For most who received it, rental income was merely a means of subsistence,

¹⁰⁷ Information on B.H. Collins was drawn from the assessment rolls and the *Directory* as well as: Dunorlan Park, October 2007, Tunbridge Wells Museum & Art Gallery, 10 February 2006 <<http://www.tunbridgewellsmuseum.org/section.asp?catid=740>>

though it helped move some into the ranks of business management and positions of public authority within the city, authority over matters of social welfare policy. E.W. O'Donnell was a prime example.¹⁰⁸

Edward W. O'Donnell lived in the city from 1869 to at least 1909. As a young man he worked as a mason and carpenter. From 1881 to 1883 he operated a liquor store at 133 Grafton. Through the 1890s he acquired a number of properties in the upper streets and by 1896 he was operating a contracting and real estate business out of an office on Albermarle Street. From 1893 to 1901 he served as an Alderman for Ward 4 and regularly sat on the city's charities committee. In 1895-96 he was also a member of the prison committee.¹⁰⁹ While B.H. Collins collected his rent money indirectly through the Eastern Trust Company, O'Donnell collected rent in person, at least in his early days as a landlord. Assessment rolls indicate that O'Donnell collected weekly rent from some tenants. From others he appears to have collected on a monthly basis. As he went about his business he did so without the benefit of modern guidelines such as the 1989 *Nova Scotia Residential Tenancy Act* which specifies landlord duties and tenants' rights or The Residential Tenancy Board, a government agency set up under the *Act* to mediate landlord-tenant disputes in Halifax and across Nova Scotia. As O'Donnell addressed matters of late or non-payment of rent, damage and maintenance, as well as tenant behavior and complaints it

¹⁰⁸ For links between involvement in social reform and the formation of middle class identity see: Holman, *A Sense of Their Duty*.

¹⁰⁹ *McAlpine's Halifax City Directory 1871-1914*, NSARM, mfm# 3396 to 99 and 9708-10, 9712-13, 9715, 9718, 9720, 3407 and 3411 and Assessment Rolls Ward 3, NSARM, RG 35 A vols. 3, 4, 5, 6, 11 & 13.

appears as though he established his own guidelines and settled such matters face to face without third party mediation.¹¹⁰ Given that he owned at least five properties, and often held interest in other buildings within the community, he must have spent a great deal of time negotiating with tenants. Such negotiations across social, economic and circumstantial differences are not hard to imagine. Recall that earlier we saw settlement negotiated between authorities and applicants for relief. Steven King argues that during the 19th century, poor relief in England was very much a matter of negotiation.¹¹¹ In O'Donnell's case and those like him, success in the business of property management was to some extent dependant upon the ability to maintain a state of agreement with tenants. In other Canadian cities where populations were larger and growing rapidly through immigration, some landlords likely settled or avoided disputes by easily replacing one tenant with another. Such a management style would have been less of an option in Halifax.

O'Donnell was not alone. There were many others much like him. Individuals who acquired capital through a variety of endeavors then used it to become landlords and were thereby forced to deal with the public: Peter Lowrie, Patrick Dillon, John Hogan, William Forsyth, Edward Weatherdon, William Sutton, Dr. William M. Cameron, Alex Baxter James M. Geldert Jr. and W.J.G. Thomson. As these men bought and rented property in the upper streets, they dealt with a

¹¹⁰ Oftentimes agents or trustees for particular properties appear in the assessment rolls. It appears that these individuals handled dealings with tenants on the owners' behalf. No such intermediaries were ever listed for O'Donnell's properties. Perhaps this changed in later years as his interests and activities expanded. Available records are incomplete; moreover, a more extended use of available sources was beyond the period and the limitations of this study.

¹¹¹ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, 93-104

variety of characters, including members of the community who were least able to pay rent and hold an address. Among those homeless people we have already met, in 1891 E.W. O'Donnell rented a space to Thomas Orman at 65 Albermarle Street. In 1905-06 Sarah Shepherd rented a room from Edward Weatherdon at 130-134 Albermarle Street. Weatherdon also rented space in the same building to Henry Kellum for over a decade. Henry was either brother or nephew to John and Martha Kellum, two individuals very well known to public and private relief agencies. Given what we know about the tendency to share living space, particularly within families, it is likely that Weatherdon dealt not only with Sarah Shepherd, but with her daughter Ada as well. And during his long association with Henry Kellum he must have had to deal with Martha and John at least on occasion. Similarly, E.W. O'Donnell likely dealt with members of Thomas Orman's family, some of whom shared Thomas' struggles with liquor and joblessness. Between them the landlords noted above held at least 37 residential properties in the upper streets. Because the records are incomplete and because they do not document unofficial tenancy, it is impossible to know for certain the volume of contact between this dominant group of landlords and those poor individuals most well known to the various agents of relief and reform. However, the smallness of the upper street community, the necessity of shelter, and the long term presence of both parties, makes it seem likely that they were familiar with one another.¹¹²

¹¹² Information on tenants such as Thomas Orman or Henry Kellum is drawn for the *Directory* and Assessment Rolls as well as the institutional records and newspapers reports.

While the primary need and profitability of housing are likely the greatest catalyst for contact between these two groups, it was not the only one. A number of the landlords being discussed here were also involved to some extent in the liquor trade. Patrick Dillon and John Hogan were full time liquor dealers. Their businesses were carried on by their children. William Forsyth and Peter Lowrie were full time grocers who undoubtedly stocked alcohol.¹¹³ Like so many others in the community, E.W. O'Donnell dabbled in the liquor trade. We saw earlier that he operated a liquor store on Grafton Street from 1881 to 1883. The group of individuals most well known to the Police Court, and to other institutions of social welfare in the city, faced hundreds of charges for drunkenness. They bought their liquor in the upper streets. They bought some of it from casual dealers such as E.W. O'Donnell and some of it from longtime sellers such as John Hogan. The press coverage regarding Clarke's place presented in the previous chapter identifies the difficult realities associated with the liquor trade. Given their long history as retailers of alcohol, Hogan and Dillon certainly faced difficult confrontations with their customers from time to time. Forsyth, Lowrie and O'Donnell probably had similar experiences but to a lesser degree due to their lesser involvement. Liquor dealers and their customers often conducted business outside the law. That is dealers sold liquor without a license or sold liquor in a manner that violated the conditions of legal sale. Such actions could and often did result in charges. For example, as we saw in Table Four of Chapter Two, in

¹¹³ Laws regarding the sale of liquor were difficult to enforce. Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life*, 26-27. Laws mentioned in the Police Court records regarding grocers indicate that to sell liquor legally grocers had to at least sell liquor in bottles and not permit consumption on the premises. During the course of this research no records of or references to credit were discovered. However, it is likely that shop owners and grocers extended credit to customers they trusted. Perhaps liquor dealers did as well but one can imagine the dangers of such practice.

1890 the Police Court heard 35 charges for such actions in that year. Those who informed the police about illegal sales could receive half of any fines imposed by the court in the event of a successful prosecution.¹¹⁴ Whether it was for the money or in response to a previous disagreement buyers sometimes informed on sellers. The dispute between Franora McDonald and Mrs. McGrath which wound up before the stipendiary magistrate on 1 November 1897 is typical of these matters. Here we see also that both the prosecution and the defense were represented by lawyers. This was not yet typical. That is legal representation for an appearance in Police Court was not pro forma at this time. Whether the court or individuals decided which cases would have legal representation is not clear.

The case of Mrs. Franora McDonald was before the police court again this morning. J.T. Bulmer appeared for he defense and F.J. Tremaine for the prosecution. Mrs. McGrath was the only witness for the prosecution. She testified to buying liquor from [the] accused. Mrs. McDonald went on the stand and swore she never sold any liquor to either Mr. or Mrs. McGrath, nor has she ever sold any intoxicating liquor to any person within three months. She has only been convicted once of selling liquor without a license. The case was dismissed.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ *Acadian Recorder*, 6 October 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5274. A case in the Police Court on this particular morning involved a charge against Thomas Keating for selling liquor in his establishment after hours. He was convicted and fined \$20 and costs on the testimony of Joseph A. Sellers who claimed "he did not lay the information for money, but from a sense of duty." The details of the case behind the following comments of the magistrate and policemen Banks were not reported, but clearly the court suspected Keating's motives. "The magistrate said in open court, he had no sympathy with the prosecution. He respected a man who did his duty out of a sense of honor, but he could not see how a man could do as the prosecution had done out of a sense of duty or honor... Inspector Banks was interviewed by a reporter. He said it was the funniest case he had ever heard of. Sellers had laid the information, and half of the fine was due him, but under the evidence he did no think it was his (the Inspector's duty) to pay \$10 to the informant. Therefore he did not offer it, but if Sellers had have demanded it he would have had to give him \$10." We will never know what motivated Keating. Whether informants were commonly paid is also impossible to know. Such payments were not recorded in the Court ledger. This was the only mention of such payments uncovered by this research.

¹¹⁵ *Acadian Recorder*, 1 November 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5274. F.J. Tremaine who represented the prosecution in this case also served as property agent for William Sutton who was a long time liquor dealer in the upper streets and owner of a number of properties in the community; a further illustration of the nuanced relationships that were characteristic of the upper streets.

As was the case here, official involvement often vindicated no one. That being the case, the two sides had to find some way to resolve disputes and to get along on their own because contact between them was immanent.

The landlords and liquor dealers of the upper streets had frequent contact with a great many residents of the community, including the likes of Thomas Berrigan and Sarah Shepherd. E.W. O'Donnell had contact with many residents both as a liquor dealer and as a manager and owner of property in the upper streets. The records do not indicate that James M. Geldert Jr. was involved in the liquor trade. But he did own and rent property in the upper streets. Both men also served terms as city alderman, O'Donnell from 1893 to 1901 and Geldert from 1895 to 1901.¹¹⁶ In their capacity as aldermen both men served on the prison and police committees. In addition to budgetary and administrative matters, the police committee adjudicated complaints from citizens against particular officers. It also investigated internal allegations of officer misconduct.¹¹⁷ In both instances members of the community were often called to appear. When they served on the prison committee, O'Donnell and Geldert had the authority to release prisoners at Rockhead as they deemed fit. O'Donnell and Geldert came to their

¹¹⁶ *McAlpine's Halifax City Directory* and Assessment Rolls Ward 3. The city's 18 aldermen were elected for three year terms. Each year one third of the council faced election. Duty on a series of standing committees such as the police or prison committees was an aldermanic responsibility. Committee assignments rotated. Whether movement was voluntary or according to a set Rota is not clear. Henry Roper, "The Halifax Board of Control".

¹¹⁷ Halifax Police Committee Minutes 1884-1890 and 1904-1911, HRMA, 102-92. Residents of the upper streets familiar to this study appear in these records. The frequency of reprimands issued against officers for tardiness, leaving their post, or intoxication while on duty further confirms that problems with discipline and alcohol affected persons in all walks of life.

official capacities carrying first hand knowledge and experience of the community gained through private business dealings conducted there. Sometimes the matters before them involved individuals familiar to them from such dealings. Their official duties sometimes added to their knowledge of particular individuals and the upper streets in general. For example, when Thomas Orman was sentenced to 75 days at Rockhead on three charges in August of 1895, O'Donnell was on the prison committee and in that capacity may have been visiting the prison.¹¹⁸ If they did have contact at the prison during this time, both men likely recalled that a landlord-tenant relationship had existed between them in 1891. Such moments were likely awkward and common for Geldert and O'Donnell.

It is probable that similarly awkward moments were also common for policemen such as George Kahn, Herbert Meehan and Maurice Kennedy who lived in the upper streets. Presumably the same was true for the many men and women who served in the Salvation Army and lived in the barracks at the corner of Brunswick and Prince Streets. All forms and levels of reform and relief work required the judgment of others and being subject to judgment in return. Oftentimes it involved the imposition of official sanctions such as jail sentences or the denial of passionate requests for relief. Persons who dealt with the public in official capacities sometimes had private dealings with the same individuals as

¹¹⁸ *Halifax City Charter with the Ordinances and By Laws 1907*, 297-300. Here the duties of the prison committee are spelled out as well as the general rules regarding the operation of the prison. "The committee shall at the first meeting in each year, assign to each of its members in rotation two months of the civic year, during which months it shall be the duty of such member to visit the prison at least once in each month... to see that the laws and regulations governing the same are carried out and enforced" 297(2).

shop owners and landlords. Persons who had official and or personal business within the upper streets commonly lived in that community or could be found there on a regular basis. Wearing many hats undoubtedly produced conflicts and hard feelings from time to time, or even alliances and sympathies. But we have no evidence of attacks against the person or property of those such as E.W. O'Donnell, John Hogan or Herbert Meehan; no evidence of their inability to live within the community and at the same time earn a living as figures of authority. If property, business and persons of authority had felt threatened they would have fled. The number of people and the value of property in the upper streets would have declined. As we can see in Tables Eight and Nine, neither was the case. The well-off could socialize in the city's finer hotels and restaurants. However, they too were sometimes drawn to establishments of vice in the upper streets. Perhaps wantonness overcame their fear of physical harm. The evidence suggests that personal safety was a lesser concern. Entering Clarke's place and others like them was primarily a moral decision. The available evidence suggests that the upper streets of this time period were able to accept and to find space for a range of residents and visitors. Respected Haligonians owned property and legitimate businesses in the upper streets, but the respected also took part in the community's illicit activities. Those who worked on the front lines of reform and relief were able to co-exist with families succeeding to various degrees within the formal economy; liquor dealers, brothel keepers and prostitutes making their way through the informal economy, also with varying degrees of success; as well as those who were largely dependent upon public and private relief as a result of

various forms of instability. In part because of its cooperative nature the community was able to move forward. It did not move rapidly nor perfectly, but according to the actions visible within the community neither did it intentionally exclude any particular group; not socially, not economically and not morally.

Conclusion

What emerges through the evidence and events presented in this chapter is the context of the lives introduced in Chapter two. The upper streets of a century ago truly were a heterogeneous and contested terrain. That contest was largely provoked by the pursuit of reformist agendas that gained authority during the decades immediately preceding the Great War. Large and complex bodies of religious and secular thinking underpinned reformist agendas and particular programs. The same bodies of knowledge were used by all members of Halifax society to form a moral imagination which they used to make sense of their world, the people and actions they encountered on a daily basis. As life unfolded for residents of the upper streets it was filled with moments of interaction interpreted through their moral imaginations. Such moments of engagement and communication in search for mutual agreement occurred as settlement declarations were completed in the course of providing assistance. They came about as individuals represented themselves before the Police Court or public committees or in dealings with landlords. More came as residents at the City Home and Rockhead worked through their time there as carpenters, blacksmiths,

farmhands, seamstresses and nursemaids. The provision of relief to persons of the upper streets of this time appears to have been a matter of negotiation characterized by tolerance and flexibility similar to that seen in some parts of England through the work of Steven King.¹¹⁹ Outside of relief, life in a marginal volatile economy necessitated further patience and leeway on the part of everyone, particularly landlords and small business operators. In a small crowded urban community in a time before visa cards and computers, there was no digitized credit score, only face to face assessments of moral worthiness. There was harsh rhetoric in the papers and amongst over zealous officials. But there was also longevity and growth among upper street business and property owners which suggests that they found a great deal of moral worthiness within their community.

For those like Detective Power and SPC Secretary-Agent John Naylor, the rhetoric seems to have rung true. The fanaticism with which they, and others like them, sometimes acted is the source of the Victorian stereotype. Fortunately, particularly for the least stable members of the community, the majority saw the world more in shades of grey. There was certainly a great deal of difference in material comfort and social standing between a Thomas Sullivan, a Charles Clarke, a Dennis Berrigan, an E.W. O'Donnell and a Brenton Haliburton Collins. But the moral distance between them, what Judith Fingard termed the difference

¹¹⁹ Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare*.

between “rough and respectable” was not so great.¹²⁰ The press identified all manner of Haligonians in Clarke’s place and other similar establishments, even members of the city’s elite. Through his dealings in the upper streets and his time as an alderman, O’Donnell experienced what has been seen here in the records. The vast majority of cases before the Police Court did not involve frequent offenders. Thomas Sullivan was dubbed notorious by the local press. But for a time in his life, Dennis Berrigan acted in ways that were indistinguishable from those of Thomas Sullivan’s. And just like Dennis Berrigan, Thomas Sullivan demonstrated a willingness and ability to work. The Halifax press ignored the similarities that existed within the range of characters that filled the docket of the Police Court. It focused on the negative actions of a few and thereby gave readers an opportunity to infer difference, to infer the existence of a dangerous underclass. Judging by the stories from elsewhere reprinted in the Halifax press, this style of reporting was also common within the United States.¹²¹ In her study of the 1860s and 70s, Judith Fingard also focused on the negative. She argued

¹²⁰ In *Unwilling Idlers*, Baskerville and Sager discussed the process of separating “those who would prefer to be idle... [and] respectable men who had to endure enforced idleness” (40). In gaining support for structural arguments and for the reduction of the blame on individuals for being out of work, organized labour groups in some cities worked hard to distinguish their members from unorganized workers and particularly from rough characters. The fact that Thomas Sullivan and John Finlan, both notorious characters, were members of Carpenters Union local 83 suggests that divisions within labour may have been less severe in Halifax. See: Carpenters Union Local 83, NSARM, MG 20 vol. 1635 # 8. Through the 1880s and 90s, the Victorian General Hospital was able to transform itself from a hospital for the poor avoided by “respectable Haligonians” into a modern institution able to attract middle class paying patients. There was separation by ward, but the indigent and the wealthy fought illness under the same roof. See: Howell, *A Century of Care*. Throughout this chapter we have seen that association with the upper streets did not prevent respectability. There likely were members of Halifax society who would not have been caught dead in the upper streets or in the company of those associated with that place, for instance, Alban Bertram de Mille or Mather Abbott whom we met earlier in this chapter. But, the findings here indicate that in the Halifax of a century ago, such individuals were a small segment of the population. See: A. B. de Mille, “Random Recollections”

¹²¹ Further evidence of such reporting in the US was identified by Harvey Swados. See: *Years of Conscience*, Harvey Swados ed.

that 92 habitual offenders who resided in the upper streets of that time constituted the *Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax*. This study finds something different. Certainly there was plenty of hardship, destitution and destructive activity in the upper streets during the years between 1890 and 1914. But there was also a great deal of stability in important areas; total population, property values, long term residence and long term property ownership. During this time legitimate upper street businesses showed viability and growth and a willingness to deal with all members of the community. Those who owned property and did business on a daily basis in the upper streets did not act as if they were afraid of any particular group of people. Those on the front lines of relief as well as many of those in positions of greater authority continuously extended the benefit of the doubt to those most frequently involved with the institutions of correction, material support and rehabilitation. Thomas Berrigan, Ellen Reardon, and their cohorts were the hardest part of the upper streets, but a part nonetheless, not apart. Their community did not act as if they were a dangerous underclass. Instead it afforded them a level of support and tolerance that seems to have encouraged the poor and destitute of Halifax to follow prevailing norms as best they could.

The context described here was a product of 19th century urbanization. In his introduction and first chapter of *Cities and Urbanization* Gilbert Stelter outlines

various uses of that term as developed by urban geographers.¹²² Urbanization is most commonly used to describe and discuss issues related to the dramatic growth of urban populations during the past century. Less familiar is ecological urbanization used in reference to the design of urban spaces which are often driven by political and or economic agendas. As Stelter points out Halifax was created following what he calls the "Georgian New Town" model. Its central square for military spectacles and fortifications in and about the town reflected a clear purpose. Halifax stood as an outpost of Britain's mercantile economy; an economy backed by the world's leading military power. Structural urbanization refers to the manner in which activities and organizations within cities tend to align themselves within a hierarchy and the affects of that hierarchy. Particularly during the first half of the 19th century, the military sat atop the urban structural hierarchy as Halifax's dominant organizational and social presence. The final variation discussed by Stelter is behavioral urbanization which focuses on the individual and how the thoughts, actions and interactions of individuals are affected by the urban space in which they live. Behavioral urbanization distinguishes between rural and city dwellers and also between residents of particular cities who are affected by the aforementioned aspects of urbanization as they exist for them. It seems that the context of tolerance and flexibility identified through this research could be further explored and explained independently and comparatively with an approach informed by urban studies, and the focus of behavioral urbanization in particular. In chapter One I argued

¹²² Gilbert Stelter, "Introduction," and "The Changing Imperial Context of Early Canadian Urban Development," *Cities and Urbanization: Canadian Historical Perspectives*, Gilbert Stelter, ed., (Toronto: Copp Clark Pittman, 1990) 1-15, 16-38.

against the establishment of extreme poverty as a separate field within Canadian historiography. I argued that studies of extreme poverty done through labour history would be more likely to emphasize the real and important connections between the extremely poor and those around them. I think urban studies afford the same opportunity.

Chapter Two traced the lives of those who held the least advantage within the city of Halifax leading up to World War One. It showed that while their level of disadvantage was uncommon, they held much in common with the majority. They went to school, worked, paid taxes and rent. However, such actions were interrupted for them more than they were for most by alcohol consumption, lack of family support, and joblessness. They showed signs of weakness and poor decision making, but no signs of intentional threat or danger to the social order. In the opinion of this researcher conceptions of an underclass do not accurately characterize the actions or interactions of the extremely poor or offer us much help in understanding them. This chapter has examined the context of the biographies constructed in Chapter Two. It has revealed a community stable in a number of important ways; a community that extended aid and leniency to the likes of Ellen Reardon and Thomas Berrigan. Meanwhile, the forms of instability that persisted in their lives did not shake the foundations of their community. In his recent study of New York City, Kim Hopper argues that homelessness forces individuals to stretch conventional values in response to a forced situation.¹²³ Similarly many of those who survived through the informal economy and lived

¹²³ Kim Hopper, *Reckoning With Homelessness*, 120-129.

rough much of their lives in the upper streets were at least to some extent merely responding to a forced situation. Throughout this chapter we have seen the bending of law and the stretching of morality. For most it was a matter of recreation, business or occasional necessity. For a few it was the only means of survival. The strong tolerance also seen throughout this chapter indicates widespread recognition that what separated the majority from the minority was a matter of degree not kind. The tolerance and recognition seen here was rooted in the past suggesting that those who lived rough in the upper streets during earlier times may not have been as clearly demarcated as they appear in Fingard's *Dark Side of Life*. Chapter Four continues to develop explanations for the level of tolerance and similarity of actions seen within the upper streets during the decades immediately preceding the Great War. Explanations begin with the declining presence of the British military in the city.

Chapter Four – The Imprecision of Underclass Theory

Introduction

A Conception of an “Underclass” from American Sociology

Through the past two chapters we have followed lives that were identified by the most widely read newspapers in Halifax and social theorists of their time as notorious and as examples of a dangerous class. We met five such characters through their life stories and then a profile of the upper streets showed us the context of their lives. Some historians have reconducted these conceptions. In her study of an earlier period, Judith Fingard referred to similar characters as members of an underclass. However, Fingard did not draw upon Victorian notions for her understanding of an underclass. She turned, instead, to late 20th century American sociology, specifically *The Underclass* by Ken Auletta and *The Truly Disadvantaged* by William Julius Wilson which were based largely on data from New York and Chicago gathered during the 1980s.¹ Both of these authors wrote in defense of America’s poor urban Blacks by identifying the structural causes of their poverty. In the course of their work both authors conceived of their subjects as members of an underclass. The underclass as they saw it was predominantly Black. They explained its existence by ingrained racial prejudice rooted in slavery, prolonged joblessness, lack of middle class Black role-models and supportive institutions. “The concentration effects of having single-parent

¹ Ken Auletta, *The Underclass*, (New York: Random House, 1982) and William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

families, criminals and the unemployed crowded into one area,"² became environmental factors which produced a group uniquely disadvantaged and isolated from mainstream society, which answered to the definition of an "underclass". According to Auletta and Wilson, the choices and actions of the underclass were determined by their environment; represented learned behaviors. They did not believe that poverty was explained by a set of values and beliefs, in other words a subculture that had become ingrained and was being transmitted from one generation to the next regardless of context.

Recent Debate Surrounding Conceptions of an Underclass

Neither Auletta nor Wilson linked their work to Victorian debates concerning the causes of poverty or mentioned the influences of Malthus or Mayhew. Neither author discussed the part played by their work in rejuvenating an old concept. However, Wilson, more so than Auletta, recognized the modern-day risks and political consequences of using the concept of an underclass, mainly because it had previously been used to differentiate and blame the poor. In response to criticism of his work, particularly its use of the underclass concept, Wilson acknowledged the presence of a "growing number of social scientists who believe that the term underclass has taken on so many connotations of undeservingness and blameworthiness that it has become hopelessly polluted in meaning, ideological overtone and implications, and should be dropped – with the issues involved studied via other concepts." Wilson went on to say:

² Joe R. Feagin, reviewer *The American Journal of Sociology*, 94. No. 1. 1988: 179-182. This is Feagin's review of *The Truly Disadvantaged*.

In my formulation the concept of underclass derives its meaning from a theoretical framework that links structural, social-psychological, and cultural arguments. What distinguishes members of the underclass from those of other economically disadvantaged groups is that their marginal economic position or weak attachment to the labour force is uniquely reinforced by the neighbourhood or social milieu. Indeed, I believe that there is a difference, on the one hand, between a jobless family whose mobility is impeded by the macro structural constraints in the economy and the larger society but nonetheless lives in an area with a relatively low rate of poverty, and on the other hand, a jobless family that lives in an inner-city ghetto neighborhood that is not only influenced by these same constraints but also by the behavior of other jobless families in the neighborhood. The latter influence is one of culture – that is, the extent to which individuals follow their inclinations as they have been developed by learning or influence from other members of the community. In other words, it is not sufficient to recognize the importance of macrostructural constraints; it is also imperative to see the merits of a more subtle kind of analysis of life of poverty....

Unless the concept of underclass is defined as a part of a theoretical framework, as I have done, its meaning will become hopelessly polluted and, as Herbert Gans has warned, will be used increasingly to discredit the urban minority poor. Indeed, one of my concerns is that because of the atheoretical way that the concept is often defined by scholars and nonscholars alike, its use has become exceedingly controversial, so much so that the debate has often obscured the important theoretical and empirical issues discussed above. The crucial question is whether a theoretically defined concept of underclass, which is by its very nature complex, will be overshadowed in the long run by nonsystematic, arbitrary, and atheoretical usages that often end up as code words or ideological slogans, particularly in journalistic description of inner-city behavior. If this proves true, research scholars ought to give serious consideration to dropping the term and carefully selecting another that also allows one to describe and highlight the important theoretical linkage between a disadvantaged group's position in the labour market and its social environment. However, to repeat the concept of "estranged poor" [as Hochschild has done] does not capture this important theoretical distinction.³

³ William Julius Wilson, "The Truly Disadvantaged Revisited: A Response to Hochschild and Boxill," *Ethics*, 101, No. 3, 1991: 593-609. *The Truly Disadvantaged* appeared in 1987. Responses to it rolled out over the next four years. The articles by Hochschild and Boxill to which Wilson responded were published in the same 1991 issue of *Ethics* noted here. Judith Fingard would not have had opportunity to see and consider much of the fever raised by *The Truly Disadvantaged* prior to the publication of *The Dark Side of Life* in 1989.

Wilson shows an awareness of and a willingness to address the current pitfalls of the underclass concept. But neither he nor Auletta examined the origins of the term, or similar signifiers, or the continuation of their social, political and economic consequences from the past into the present. In contrast to Wilson and Auletta who focus on the present, some authors have been concerned with the origins and longitudinal effects of the concept. In *Dangerous Classes* by Lydia Morris and *Poverty Knowledge* by Alice O'Connor, written a decade after Wilson and Auletta's books, we find thorough historical reviews of the underclass concept rigorous assessments of and its usefulness in understanding or ever resolving current social problems in Britain and the United States.⁴ Both authors discuss the characteristics used by current and past observers as evidence of inherent weakness; the hallmark of an underclass. These characteristics have typically included a combination of the following elements: lack of employment or material possessions; non-affiliation with unions, churches or social clubs; involvement in petty crime; single parenthood; abusive drinking; begging and a disheveled appearance. Being identified through these characteristics further hinders access to public services (civil rights), the ability to vote or participate in political parties (political rights) and the ability to "live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in society"⁵ (social rights). The criteria used to identify an underclass, may signify exclusion from mainstream society. However, they are not a reflection of a deliberate rejection of society. Nor do

⁴ Lydia Morris, *Dangerous Classes* and Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy and the Poor in Twentieth-Century US History* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁵ O'Conner, 44.

such circumstances by themselves prove the existence of a distinct subculture. "As a concept then, the underclass is useful in capturing status exclusion, despite the unfortunate implication of moral blame... [however] it is less useful or convincing in explanatory terms."⁶ Moreover, in my opinion, focusing on difference and the responsibility of the poor for their own plight discourages a view of them as part of society and deserving of help.

Wilson himself had borrowed the underclass concept from Gunnar Myrdal's *Challenge to Affluence* published in 1962.⁷ As we have seen the conception of an underclass is much older and was from its inception a pejorative. Wilson acknowledged the harmful potential of the underclass concept, but failed to assess the concept in light of its long track record of actual harm. As Morris and O'Connor point out, Wilson's fears of the underclass concept being used to stigmatize and blame the poor has happened in the past and the present. A recent and perhaps the most widely read and debated analysis of poverty in America that identifies and attempts to explain the existence of an underclass is Charles Murray's *Losing Ground*.⁸ In a nut-shell Murray argues that between 1960 and 1980 America's great society did more to ingrain and increase poverty than reduce it. Liberals have accused Murray of misinterpreting his data and of racism. Conservatives have heralded his work for its effort to rationalize

⁶ O'Connor, 164.

⁷ A Swedish economist and politician, Myrdal offered his view of the American economy as he saw it in the early 1960s based largely on federal social and economic policy. He referred to an underclass made up of the old, the young and racial minorities, an impediment to economic progress, but did not trace the origins of the underclass concept or debate the use of the term.

⁸ Charles Murray, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950- 1980*, (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

government spending and localize program delivery. Whatever Murray's intentions were, and regardless of whether you support or suspect his explanations, marking the poor as different, as members of an underclass, has usually worked to push them away from society and public empathy. Similarly, Oscar Lewis's concept of a "culture of poverty" while it acknowledged structural causes to deprivation, also left the poor wide open to blame and abandonment.⁹ This has also been well argued in challenges to the concept of a culture of poverty posed by Hylan Lewis and Walter B. Miller.¹⁰ The debate surrounding conceptions of an underclass and a culture of poverty continues, mostly within disciplines that focus on current public policy, particularly economic and social welfare policies.

The Value of the Underclass Concept to Historical Analysis of the Upper Streets

In the preface to her study of Halifax, largely based on prison records between 1864 and 1873, Fingard explained why she felt it best to approach her subjects as an underclass and according to Auletta and Wilson's development of that concept. She pointed out that the underclass concept "has been criticized as a cultural rather than an economic concept and has also rekindled the debate between behaviorists and environmentalists as to the causes and solutions of poverty, deviancy and dependency." Nevertheless, Fingard felt that "in terms of

⁹ Oscar Lewis, *Five Families; Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* (New York: Basic Books, 1959).

¹⁰ Walter B. Miller. "Implications of Urban Lower-class Culture for Social Work" *Social Service Review*, 33. 1959: 219-236. Hylan Lewis, *Blackways of Kent*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955).

both definition and controversy” the concept provided a “useful description...allowing, of course, for nineteenth-century differences.” She went on to say the underclass, or its Marxist equivalent, the sub-proletariat, is “more descriptively accurate than working-class identities such as casual labourers or labouring poor. They are also less pejorative than the Victorian favorites of ‘dangerous classes’ and ‘undeserving poor’”¹¹

Fingard said no more to justify her use of the underclass concept. Nor did she explain how the concept she borrows from Auletta and Wilson is more “descriptively accurate” or “less pejorative”. She says of her subjects that “they were the residents of specific, rough and disreputable streets of the city, limited in their lifetime opportunities because of racial prejudice, gender inequalities, educational deprivation, chronic poverty, pathological disorders, or, by association with those so limited.”¹² Fingard demonstrates that the lifetime opportunities of her subjects were limited by broader social realities such as racial prejudice and their own negative actions such as alcohol abuse. But, as

¹¹ Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life*, 10. Fingard refers to behavioral and environmental approaches to the causes of poverty. In their own efforts to distinguish between historical analysis of poverty, Morris and O'Connor most often referred to structural and individual approaches to the causes of poverty rather than behavioral and environmental approaches. Morris identifies the social position of those said to be an underclass as a rough equivalent to Marx's sub-proletariat. However, neither Morris nor O'Connor employ the term sub-proletariat when referring to the subjects of poverty research, perhaps because they saw it as a pejorative similar to the term underclass that served to exclude the poor. This study supports structural or environmental rather than individual or behavioral approaches to poverty. Here the actions identified and used by underclass theory to demarcate and stigmatize a particular group are being examined in comparison to the actions of other groups in order to show that the differences between groups was a matter of degree of actions not a class of values. As stated in the opening chapter, the primary subjects of this research are referred to as the “extremely poor” in the belief that the language used to identify particular persons or groups is important. Some terms carry and perpetuate inaccurate and pejorative views.

¹² Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life*

seen through her work, the upper streets which provided the context of their lives and opportunities does not appear to have ever been an area isolated, concentrated or dominated by a single racial or ethnic group over a long period of time. Diversity and turnover within the population of the upper streets is visible within Fingard's study. For example, Chapter Four depicts the rotation of military personnel and prostitutes, some black some white. David A. Sutherland examined race relations in mid-Victorian Halifax and the political participation of Black Haligonians. Jim Philips and Allyson N. May examined female criminality in 18th century Halifax and Philip Girard reviewed the city's criminal justice as it operated from 1815 to 1886. These studies did not focus specifically on the upper streets. However, they address social problems that were centered there. Social exclusion to any great extent; an essential element to the conception of an underclass as developed by Auletta and Wilson, is absent from their perceptions. Neither the community as a whole nor individuals within it appears to have ever been isolated or alienated in a way or for a length of time consistent with the theory of an underclass as developed by Auletta and Wilson. In other words the context that existed for the subjects of Auletta, Wilson as well as Oscar Lewis, the context that produced the ingrained perspective, learned behavior and alienation which were key to their conceptions of an underclass does not appear to have existed for Fingard's subjects. Such a context clearly did not exist either for the subjects of this study. There was a group at the bottom of society in mid-Victorian Halifax who were limited in a number of ways. The same was true in the period between 1890 and 1914. However, findings here do not indicate

environmental circumstances consistent with the conception of an underclass as developed through examinations of inner-city neighbourhoods in late 20th century America. As seen in Chapter Three, reformist leaders voiced a moralizing fear-mongering Victorian notion of an underclass in the Halifax press. However, that conception did not accurately describe or explain extreme poverty nor did it result in the physical or social isolation of the poor, at least during the time examined here. So far as the subjects of this research are concerned, no variation of the underclass concept recognizes the affinity of the extremely poor or provides a quality of insight worth the associated controversy. It may thus be true that the so called notorious characters of earlier times were less demarcated in their own time than some contemporary theorists suggested or as they appear when approached historically as an underclass. A closer look at the origins of underclass theory, its perceptions of the poor and their actions, helps us better assess the demarcations first drawn by it. While contemporary authors, including those just mentioned, often do not acknowledge the fact, Victorian perceptions and demarcations remain at the base of current conceptions of an underclass. Looking at how some modern researchers have perceived the actions of the contemporary homeless raises questions about past demarcations. The following sections review the most important amongst them. They also discuss how approaches that focus on similarities rather than differences may produce a more accurate and less pejorative understanding of the extremely poor.

The Benefits of Focusing on Similarities Rather than Differences

Thomas Robert Malthus was born into a prosperous family. He was educated at home and at Dissenting Academy before entering Jesus College at Cambridge in 1784. By the time he wrote *An Essay on the Principle of Population* in 1798 he had earned a Master's degree and was a fellow at Jesus College. Malthus wrote from a position of privilege and with little sympathy for the poor. He was concerned for the future of society, in his mind a more important and greater good. He believed that humanity's ability to feed itself would decline as populations grew. Therefore population growth had to be checked. As Malthus saw it, the lower classes were the least valuable segment of society, a segment that was by its very nature prevented from becoming too large.

Notwithstanding, then, the institution of the poor laws in England, I think it will be allowed that considering the state of the lower classes altogether, both in the towns and in the country, the distresses which they suffer from the want of proper and sufficient food, from hard labour and unwholesome habitations, must operate as a constant check to incipient population.¹³

Malthus saw the English Poor Laws as a dangerous interruption in the natural order of things. They not only extended the lives of the "lower order", but perpetuated their "idleness" and drained the nation's resources. Malthus felt the Poor Laws needed to be drastically amended or removed altogether.

¹³ Thomas Robert Malthus, "An Essay on the Principle of Population," *Population the First Essay: With a forward by Kenneth Boulding*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959) chap. 5.

The poor laws of England were undoubtedly instituted for the most benevolent purpose, but there is great reason to think that they have not succeeded in their intention. They certainly mitigate some cases of very severe distress which might otherwise occur, yet the state of the poor who are supported by parishes, considered in all its circumstances, is very far from being free from misery...The parish persecution of men whose families are likely to become chargeable, and of poor women who are near lying-in, is a most disgraceful and disgusting tyranny. And the obstructions continually occasioned in the market of labour by these laws have a constant tendency to add to the difficulties of those who are struggling to support themselves without assistance...

The evil is perhaps gone too far to be remedied, but I feel little doubt in my own mind that if the poor laws had never existed, though there might have been a few more instances of very severe distress, yet that the aggregate mass of happiness among the common people would have been much greater than it is at present.¹⁴

After reading Malthus, British Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger withdrew his support for the extension of poor relief in England.¹⁵ Thirty years later Malthus's writings strongly influenced Whig reformers who brought in harsh amendments to the Poor Laws in 1834.¹⁶

Malthus was an academic, an economist and social philosopher. Henry Mayhew was a journalist, one who was also interested in socio economic matters. After a series of ups and downs related to various journalistic endeavors during the 1830s, Mayhew began writing a series of articles which appeared in London's *Morning Chronicle* through the 1840s. The articles were based on Mayhew's observations and interviews with London's poor and destitute. The

¹⁴ Thomas Robert Malthus, "An Essay on the Principle of Population"

¹⁵ Raymond G. Cowherd, *Political Economists and the English Poor Laws: a Historical Study of the Influence of Classical Economics on the Formation of Social Welfare Policy*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1977).

¹⁶ King, *Poverty and Welfare*.

series was marked by titillating and lurid detail and a sensationalistic style calculated to shock readers, hold their attention, and of course sell newspapers.¹⁷ It was a style similar to that seen earlier in Halifax press. The articles were later compiled into three volumes titled *London Labour and the London Poor* published in 1851. From some readers Mayhew's work drew sympathy for the poor. Others rather decided to avoid a group that was clearly different from honest hard working members of society and a potential threat to the social order, at least according to Mayhew's accounts. Out of what appears to be sympathy for the poor, in his response to Mayhew's work novelist and literary critic William Makepeace Thackeray chided the voyeuristic nature of Mayhew's accounts which for Thackeray created a:

A picture of human life so wonderful, so awful, so piteous and pathetic, so exciting and terrible, that readers of romances own they never read anything like to it; and that the griefs, struggles, strange adventures here depicted exceed anything that any of us could imagine. Yes; and these wonders and terrors have been lying by your door and mine ever since we had a door of our own. We had but to go a hundred yards off and see for ourselves, but we never did. . . . We are of the upper classes; we have had hitherto no community with the poor. We never speak a word to the servant who waits on us for twenty years.¹⁸

Malthus and Mayhew identified the poor as a social evil. Harsh responses toward the poor were evident prior to their writings. However, the supposed credibility and popularity of their work was largely responsible for intensifying Victorian conceptions of the poor as individuals who were different from

¹⁷ Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Mayhew's Poor: A Problem of Identity," *Victorian Studies*, 14. 1971: 307-320

¹⁸ *Punch* 9 March 1850, quoted in Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty*, 350.

respectable members of society and who belonged to a dangerous underclass. Malthus and Mayhew, and their Victorian followers, were disinclined to see the poor or their actions in terms of commonality with the majority. Modern researchers who employ conceptions of an underclass, even when they do so in support of the persons they describe with that term, also tend to set their subjects apart and define them according to differences and abnormalities.

However, some current research with the homeless takes a different approach. It does not view subjects as members of an underclass or as different or dangerous. It presents them as people with histories of work and community involvement who have families and talents similar to those in all segments of society. Its inclusive and empathetic tone is reminiscent of the sense of the entitlement of the poor visible within much Christian teachings. Here we see problems among the homeless caused by addictions, mental illness and lack of marketable skills, but we are reminded that the same problematic characteristics can be found within all ranks of society. We are also reminded that the majority of homeless persons can best be characterized by their effort to remain a part of society and not by a choice or desire to live in isolation. *I Have Arrived Before My Words* edited by Deborah Pugh and Jeanie Tietjen and *Street Lives* edited by Steven Vanderstaay are two very good examples of this type of research and presentation of homelessness.¹⁹ Like a great deal of current research on

¹⁹ Deborah Pugh and Jeanie Tietjen, *I Have Arrived Before my Words: Autobiographical Writings of Homeless Women*, (Virginia: Charles River Press, 1997) and Steven Vanderstaay. *Street Lives: An Oral History of Homeless Americans* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1992). Pugh and Tietjen worked through a project co-funded by the US federal government and the

homelessness, these works rely heavily upon and present the direct words of the homeless. Here the voice of the homeless is of course subject to editorial selection and commentary. It is also true that works such as these are clearly sympathetic to the homeless while at the same time advocating specific changes to social welfare policies. But that does not prevent them from showing the faults and foibles of the poor and homeless. These works by Tietjen and Pugh, and Vanderstaay, as well as works based on similar methods and views offered by Kim Hopper, Jim Ward and Sheila Baxter, are not neutral. Nor do they claim a complete understanding of the homeless or their plight. They do, however, present a more rounded image of their characters than is typically visible within studies that employ a conception of an underclass or sub-culture of poverty. In the passage below, which is drawn from the work of Steven Vanderstaay, "John" is allowed to speak for himself and as he does we are able to know more than the worst of him. Unlike the solely negative image offered by underclass theory, here we can see an individual moving through ups and downs. We can see an individual aware of his faults and his will to overcome them. And perhaps we can see ourselves and wonder about "John" and how he is and care about him as we would for other human beings.

John
San Francisco, California

National Endowment for the Arts – WritersCops. The program operated workshops in New York, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. By helping homeless individuals construct their autobiographies it is an effort to put "people before the problem" of homelessness in America. Vanderstaay's work is based on tape recorded interviews conducted in shelters and soup-kitchens across the United States over a six year period. The names in most cases are pseudonyms. As indicated in his notes Vanderstaay's commentary is informed by extensive use of contemporary literature and research on homelessness in America.

Let me tell you a little about my background. I'm a vet. I spent ten years in the military, including Vietnam. I came to California to start my life after the military because my mother and sister were here. Everything was good. We were doing all right, my wife and me, our kids... [then] I got caught up in crack. I put us in this situation [homeless], and I can hardly stand myself for it.

I've been clean four and a half months now, no counselor or anything. My wife decided one day she was gonna leave me. We had already lost my job, the apartment, everything. That snapped me out of it. Now I'm gonna put it behind me and be the person that I was before I started on the drug.²⁰

A number of provocative and important findings are emerging from current research. Perhaps one of the more troubling revelations is the frequency with which successful persons from all walks of life fall into homelessness. In North America the ranks of the homeless include former accountants, lawyers, teachers and small business owners, well educated people who abided by the law and contributed to their communities. The ranks of the homeless often include people who epitomized the successful norm before illness, injury, corporate downsizing or a variety of unforeseen circumstances left them on the street.²¹ Also emerging from this work is greater awareness of and attention to the psychology of extreme poverty. In some cases it seems that a fall from economic and social stability into extreme poverty for a prolonged period can produce a psychologically altered state, an affect similar to other extremely traumatic experiences such as military combat, being kidnapped or lost in the

²⁰ Vanderstaay, 151.

²¹ Vanderstaay, *Street Lives*, Hopper, *Reckoning*, Layton, *Homelessness*. and HRM, *Homelessness in HRM*. The characters and analysis within these studies make it clear that within the North American setting a wide range of the population, whether they realize it or not, are susceptible to homelessness.

wilderness.²² Some completely recover, and may return to their previous state of mind upon regaining their former position, others do not. Such findings are scary. They are also denied or ignored by the majority. It is the capacity of the majority to ignore and deny that have lead some researchers to conclude that investigators looking for solutions to poverty need to shift their focus from the impoverished to study the ability and willingness of the majority to shun the poor and their reality. Meanwhile, for those who are not in denial, it is apparent that the impoverished are oftentimes indistinguishable in terms of their efforts to work, abide by the law and contribute to society from those who appear more stable. Despite the advent of the modern welfare state, research from various sources in cities across Canada and the United States show a high percentage of the population living two or three paychecks away form the street.²³ It is a disquieting thought, but the range of characters visible within contemporary homeless populations confirms that it can happen to anyone.

²² Hopper, *Reckoning*. In his analysis of this aspect of homelessness Hopper uses the term liminality – a stage between well known roles left behind and the unknown demands of a new life or situation. Often liminal experiences have guides or terms of reference to ease the upset of unfamiliarity. For example, counselors whose job it is to guide newcomers though summer camp or experienced staff able to direct new employees. Some instances do not. For example, crises such as sudden illness, job loss or a divorce. When the return to normalcy stalls, when liminality becomes a prolonged state of instability, a substitute normalcy or unreality takes shape. “What began as a moratorium on business as usual morphs into a form of life in its own right” p.21.

²³ Over the past 25 years, after-tax income and social assistance benefits have declined for many individuals in Canada and the United States. At the same time, vacancy rates have fallen and rents have soared in many urban areas. As a result an increasing percentage of the population is spending 30 to 50 percent of their income on shelter costs. Those with no savings or family support to see them through a short or medium term decrease or loss of income are faced with a terrible choice, food or shelter. According to *Homelessness in HRM* noted above “When a household pays more that 30% of gross income on shelter other essential needs may not be satisfied, quality of life may begin to be affected, and unexpected expenses may compromise housing stability. Households that pay more than 50% of their income on shelter are considered to be economically at risk of losing shelter. In the year 2000 there were 16,595 households in HRM that paid more than half of their income on shelter.” 53. Layton and Vanderstaay paint similar pictures in cities across Canada and the United States. Layton refers to the Canadian context circa 2000. Vanderstaay describes things as they were in America from 1980 to the early 1990s. Layton, *Homelessness*, chaps. 4 & 5 and Vanderstaay, *Street Lives*, chap. 3.

Better research and understanding of current circumstances has helped the recognition of the shared humanity, the connectedness and the sameness that exists between the poor minority and the better-off majority. They have helped support the contention that the poor and homeless are just as entitled as everyone else. However, too few studies of extreme poverty in Canada's more distant past begin with that premise or are supportive of that conclusion. The emphasis there is typically on negative actions such as law breaking or substance abuse and difference which as O'Connor reminds us "is less useful or convincing in explanatory terms". Historians who choose to examine poverty and destitution are obliged to present the negative actions of their subjects. However, historians are not obliged to rely on interpretations emphasizing deviance or difference as they explain negative activities. With ideas borrowed from works such as those done by Hopper or Vanderstaay, historians can accurately present negative activities associated with extreme poverty in the past in terms of their practicality, normalcy and commonality. At the same time actions commonly identified as positive, actions too often ignored or given short shift in historical examinations of poverty, need more attention. So far as the history of poverty in Canada, and more specifically Atlantic Canada, is concerned there is an overemphasis on the negative actions of the poor, an imbalance that impairs our understanding of the past and by extension our understanding of the present.

The central characters of this study, and the segment of society they represent, occupied the positions of least advantage in the upper streets of

Halifax a century ago. We have seen plenty of negative actions on their part, what modern researchers refer to as “difficulties” or “personal challenges”²⁴, addictions or violence in the home, for example. But positive deeds or “survival or coping strategies”²⁵ such as work, payment of rent and taxes and the use of public institutions have also been identified, so much as the existing records allowed. As we have seen in the earlier chapters, those at the bottom certainly were a rough crowd, but not a group that was completely alienated from society or one that had rejected mainstream morals and patterns of life for some alternative social structure of their own. Rather it was in the course of trying to fit within existing norms as best they could that Thomas Berrigan, Ellen Reardon and their cohorts posed some challenges to authority and to the sensibilities of their immediate neighbours.

The broader context into which they were trying to fit, that is the context of declining economic and political strength, racial and gender inequality, and the fact that neither local or national levels of government were yet able to recognize or cope with structural unemployment, which were the principal causes of destitution in Atlantic Canada, have received increased attention within Canadian historiography during the past thirty years.²⁶ Meanwhile, the responses to

²⁴ Vanderstaay, 57-51.

²⁵ Hopper, 120-129.

²⁶ See for example these collections: E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces*, P.A. Buckner and David Frank Eds. *The Acadiensis Reader vol. I: Atlantic Canada Before Confederation*, (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990), John G. Reid, *Six Crucial Decades: Times of Change in the History of the Maritimes*, (Halifax: Nimbus, 1987), David G. Alexander, *Atlantic Canada and Confederation: Essays in Canadian Political Economy*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983) and David Jay Bercuson, *Canada and the Burden of Unity* (Toronto:

extreme poverty found in the upper streets of Halifax are yet to be as fully appreciated or understood. As has been argued in the opening of this chapter and throughout this study, the underclass concept brackets a group of individuals and particular actions and sets them aside from the majority. Such a harsh demarcation was not the case in Halifax a hundred years ago, and is an analytical impediment for today's students. Moreover, no variation of the underclass concept explains why the least conventional members of Halifax society were met with a high degree of leniency and patience. The remainder of this chapter attempts to do just that. It suggests that the context of the upper streets as seen during the time of this study was to a large extent made possible by the city's association with the British military – its long time service as a port and fortress followed by the opportunities that came about with the withdrawal of British forces. Our explanation begins there.

The Decline and Withdrawal of British Troops from Halifax

Halifax was established as part of Britain's military and economic empire. During its first century the city's fortifications were often improved and expanded. The Citadel was completed in 1856.²⁷ It was designed to wreak the havoc of artillery fire on would-be invaders. As it turned out it was never needed for that purpose. But British military personnel, primarily members of the army who were posted to the garrison at Halifax, managed to wreak havoc on the economic and

Macmillan, 1977). See also: S.A. Saunders, *Studies in the Economy of the Maritime Provinces*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1939).

²⁷ Cameron Pulsifer, "Something More Durable: The British Military's Building of Wellington Barracks and Brick Construction in 19th-Century Halifax," *Acadiensis*, Autumn 2002:50-68.

social reality of the town for more than a century. At any given moment during times of peace, between 1749 and 1883, there were approximately 2000 officers and men of the British Army posted to Halifax. They drilled, took rifle practice, and stood sentry duty. Sometimes they performed as a construction crew building and maintaining the main fort as well as smaller military installations in and about the city. Always they were an important market. In addition to building materials for construction projects, the British Army purchased from local merchants much of the provisions necessary to maintain its force at Halifax, – food, clothing, blankets, stationary, cookware, boots etc. A good many Haligonians made a living off of the British Army in this way. Some were also willing to travel with the army to do so. For example, in the year 1759, Halifax was “the rendezvous for part of the fleet and army both before and after the siege of Quebec; not a few of the more enterprising settlers followed the camp and enriched themselves during the war.”²⁸

There were ways to profit from the military presence other than selling provisions. Officers and men received regular pay. What they did not save or send home they likely spent in the local market. What personal items, haircuts, clothing and such, that the army did not provide was available in local shops along with tobacco, meals and newspapers. There was a living to be made for a few in such trade. But greater sums lay elsewhere. The regiments at Halifax were filled with men away from home, in a place they would soon leave for good as they returned to England, or were sent on to combat or another posting

²⁸ Akins, 59.

overseas. It was a population often filled with high levels of anxiety, loneliness, and frustration, a population often looking to vent. Rather than sell newspapers or haircuts, many locals sold what soldiers away from home have always been willing to buy most, revelry. And so, the men of the garrison were able to spend their money and time off duty on drinking, gambling, womanizing and any other hedonistic pursuit on offer.²⁹

The area known as the upper streets begins at the base of Citadel Hill. During the 19th century, soldiers were housed in barracks located just south of the Citadel near the corner of Sackville and Brunswick streets, less than a minute's walk from Albermarle Street, the centre of the upper street community. From the early 1800s to the 1880s the upper streets, were, for the most part, given over to wild pursuits. They were filled with bars, brothels and dance halls as well as cheap boarding houses that catered to persons who wanted easy access to such things or who could not afford anything else. As we saw earlier, a description of the upper streets circa 1813 claimed that "no person of character ventured to reside there". The nearby soldiers were steady consumers of upper street vice, despite occasional orders from their commanders to avoid certain establishments or streets altogether. Enlisted men were also forbidden to marry local women without permission. Permission was seldom granted, but marriages

²⁹ Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life*, 97-99. According to Fingard, soldiers often disobeyed command by marrying local women. However, soldiers were poorly paid and in most cases only temporary residents of the city. As a result marriage to a British soldier often did not end involvement in prostitution, during or after marriage. Here Fingard relied on reports from the Halifax City Mission and the local press as well as Myna Trustram's work on military wives and Judith Walkowitz's study of prostitution. Myna Trustram, *Women of the Regiment: Marriage and the Victorian Army*, (New York: Cambridge, 1984) and Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State*, (New York: Cambridge, 1980).

were common. "One study of marriage patterns indicates that 16 per cent of all marriages contracted in Halifax from 1871 to 1881 were between rank-and-file soldiers of the British army and local women. The 8th regiment – King's Liverpool – on service in Halifax in the mid 1890s produced one hundred marriages in eighteen months, which involved about one-eighth of the men."³⁰ Unable to afford more expensive locations and wanting their spouses as nearby as possible, soldiers rented spaces for their wives in the upper streets. Along with the soldiers and their wives the upper streets also drew a steady crowd of sailors and local residents out for a night on the town as well as a smattering of the transient labourers and immigrants that flowed through the city and this situation seems to have lasted more than a century. Below is Thomas H. Raddall's description of the upper streets 1750-1755. It has much in common with Akins' description of the upper streets around 1813 as well as Fingard's findings for the middle of the 19th century.

On the waterfront the seamen resorted to dens along "the beach" and when for a bit of spice the tars went roistering up the hill to Barrack Street, or the redcoats ("lobster-backs") came down to sample the delights of Water Street, there were scuffles and sometimes riots, with the seamen swinging their cudgels (a favorite challenge was D'ye want a rub-down with my oaken towel") and the soldiers drawing bayonets, and all the queer denizens of those parts diving to cover. Thus in its earliest days the heart's core of Halifax became sandwiched between two slums, a situation which remains a reproach and a problem to its citizens.³¹

³⁰ Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life*, 98-99. Here Fingard refers to the *Morning Herald*. 13 January 1885 and 14 October 1894 and to Melody Himmelman. "For Whom the Bell Tolls": Marriage Patterns, Halifax, 1871-1881" (B.A. honours essay, Dalhousie University, 1978).

³¹ Raddall, 46.

The soldiers and sailors at Halifax drank and caroused, but an equally hearty appetite for vice seems to have existed within the city's civilian population from the outset. As early as the winter of 1750 a harsh ordinance was put into effect to deal with those who violated the liquor license law. A first offence was to be met with "one hour in the public stocks, and for the second offense [offenders were to] receive twenty lashes. These severe regulations were found to be absolutely necessary, in consequence of the demoralized state of the settlement from settlers and others who infested the town and who were not settlers." In hard times some were faced with a Hobbesian choice, enter the informal economy or starve; Ellen Reardon, Sarah Shepherd and Alfred Jones for example. Others, such as John Hogan, Catherine Dillon and E.W. O'Donnell, appear to have participated in the liquor and sex trades because there was money to be made there from the army, but just as much from the civilian population. In an economic as well as moral sense a mutually acceptable relationship seems to have existed between the army, civilian revelers and local purveyors of vice. However, the local destitution and human wreckage that came of these relations was lamented by contemporary observers as well as historians looking back³². Both tend to blame the soldiers for lowering the morals of the town which seems unfair given that the soldiers were indistinguishable from many of the locals, at least so far as actions in the upper streets were concerned.³³

³² If the soldiers were frequently in uniform, while in the upper streets they would have been easy to identify and to blame for problems there. In the course of this research it was seen that individuals were often referred to within the press and institutional records as military men. Whether that identification was based on being in uniform or other means was not specified.

³³ Akins, *passim*, Fingard, *Dark Side of Life*, chapter four, and Jim Phillips and Allyson N. May, 88.

A most likely explanation for the lopsided picture is the exaggerated presence and influence of the military surrounding times of war. During its first century, Halifax was used by the British as a rallying-point from which to launch or conclude a conflict. In such times military personnel greatly outnumbered the civilian population, sometimes at a count of five or six to one. A return to Raddall's *Warden of the North* provides a sense of Halifax in time of war as England mounted its final assault on the French fortress of Louisburg in 1757-58.

At this time the population of Halifax was 1,755, overwhelmed by the presence of 3,000 soldiers and rangers and by [admiral] Boscawen's thousands whenever the fleet was in. Under this impact the morals of the town went gutter-low, and the war had barely begun...In 1757 the town experienced a huge new male incursion when Lord London brought his army and Lord Holborne his fleet to prepare for the second conquest of Louisburg. There were eleven battalions of British redcoats, two battalions of the Royal American Regiment and a corps of rangers...All of these were encamped on the shoulders of Citadel Hill and the rough knoll to the west of it...London's army numbered something like 12,000 men... In the early autumn of 1757 Halifax saw another kind of troops, a battalion of Montgomery's highlanders, some of whom were quartered in Dartmouth...[London] kept his troops at Halifax the summer long, complaining that the local rum made them ill...The fleet under Holborne consisted of eleven warships and fifty transports, manned by at least 4,000 seamen. The effect of this swarm added to the soldiers in the huddled wooden town may be imagined.³⁴

In the early summer of 1758 the fleet sailed, taking the army with it, to attack Louisburg. The battle for Louisburg ended in British victory. Thomas B. Akins tells what happen next.

After the siege, which was protracted for two months, part of the fleet and army returned to Halifax, and some of the vessels remained to refit.

³⁴ Akins, 51.

The colony was sacked for provisions and the town turned into a camp for the troops. A number of the provincial soldiers and others, having enriched themselves with the spoils at Louisburg, became settlers in the town.³⁵

In order to take Louisburg, a large force of British regulars had to occupy Halifax for the better part of a year, an occupation that undoubtedly left its marks on the city. Such occupation and affects would reoccur in times surrounding the American Revolution, the war of 1812 and the American Civil War. Every generation seemed to have to take its turn and it is easy to see why the British military, particularly its army regiments who were permanently posted to the city, were linked to destitution, particularly female destitution, in the upper streets during the first century of the city's history.

Prior to the building of the Citadel and the permanent presence of the British Army, a militia comprised of local residents stood in defense of the town. There were some skirmishes with the local Mi'kmaq that caused great concern in the very early days. Alarming rumors of French or American attack surfaced from time to time. But, no invading force ever laid siege to the city or took its fort. Nonetheless, during the opening age of the city, residents often had a front row seat in a theater of war. Such repeated and often prolonged exposure greatly affected character and action which is the focus of the following section. The important point being made here is that the influence of the presence of the British Army at Halifax began to decline dramatically after the American Civil war. During the time of this study, destitution in the upper streets remained prevalent.

³⁵ Akins, 54.

But the military presence, and therefore the degree to which moral degradation and destitution could be associated with the military was also declining. In the closing decades of the 19th century, the British were involved in the Crimean Conflict and the Boer War. Men left Halifax to fight, but the city was not called upon to serve as a staging area as it had been so often in the past when thousands of military personal were encamped in Halifax for weeks or months at a time.³⁶ By 1881 the military presence in the city had been reduced to the servicemen permanently posted to the Citadel. According to the records of the Public Record Office, London, War Office there were 1767 officers and men posted to the city, a figure representing 4.8% of the city's population. Three years later that number was reduced to 1203. Over the next fifteen years levels held between 1200 and 1400. Then in 1900 postings were reduced yet again. That year the War Office listed 625 officers and men all tolled. The Army now made up 1.5% of the city's total population.³⁷ Six years later permanent British military postings to Halifax ended forever as full responsibility for the garrison was handed over to the government of Canada.³⁸ Military defenses of the Empire were becoming less necessary. Moreover, London was anxious to reduce the costs associated with British colonies and former colonies. The physical and social vacuum that appeared in the wake of the military's decline provided increased opportunity for reform.

³⁶ Raddall, 199 & 241.

³⁷ In 1881 the population of Halifax stood at 36,100. In 1901 the population had grown to 40,832. 1881 and 1901 *Census of Canada*.

³⁸ *Public Records Office, London. War Office* 73 Vols. 24 to 60. Monthly Returns: Distribution of the Army, LAC mfm#'s B-1755 to 1766. The War Office was a part military part civilian administrative unit in London. One of its functions was to keep lists, which were published annually, showing the strength and location of Military units throughout the empire. The Public Records Office is now the National Archives.

The Growth of Reform in the Upper Streets

As we have seen earlier, organizations such as Saint Paul's Church and the Halifax Dispensary established a base of charity and reform prior to the decline of the Army. However, so long as the military presence in Halifax remained large, the physical and social space available to reform in the upper streets was limited. Space there was finite and unable to accommodate a large number of troops, the resultant high number of bars, brothels and military wives and at the same time offer space for the expansion of reform and charity work. However, as we have just seen, circumstances in the upper streets began to change around 1880. The school system was quick to take advantage of the declining military presence. Halifax Academy opened its brand new doors at the corner of Sackville and Brunswick Streets directly opposite the now much less used army barracks, circa 1878. It was the crown jewel of the public school system which at that time was only thirteen years old. The academy offered secondary classes and drew into the upper streets the brightest young men from around the city and the province, a move that would have been less possible and perhaps less wise just ten years earlier.

The Academy was soon joined by the Visiting Dispensary, the City Morgue, the Central Engine House, Jost Mission and the Salvation Army Barracks all of which became housed in fine new structures of red brick along Brunswick Street during the final thirty years of the 19th century. The Inglis School on Albermarle Street, Saint Paul's Vestry and Sunday school on Argyle Street, as well as a

home for fallen women, both on Brunswick Street also came into being during this period. Certainly these examples of redevelopment and social service expansion reflected a desire for reform and movement away from the riotous life that had prevailed in the upper streets for decades. By this time the will and force of reform was likely strong enough that all of these changes would likely have come about even if the British Army had remained longer than it did. But had the Army remained in full force it seems unlikely that there would have been space for all of these institutions within the upper streets in the late 19th century. Important institutions of reform such as the Salvation Army and the Visiting Dispensary may have been forced to locate elsewhere. We can only speculate as to whether or not they could have exercised the same level of influence upon the upper streets from elsewhere in the city. It is not fair to say that reform of the upper streets was possible only because the British Army faded away. But it does seem that the level of change achieved by the early years of the 20th century had much to do with that fact.

Economic Growth within the Upper Streets

Reform of the upper streets accelerated in the vacuum left by the Army. Parallel to the efforts of reform were a range of commercial interests also emerging within the community which represented an important economic shift within the upper streets away from the informal economy. These interests included Robert Taylor's shoe factory, Mott's Soap Factory, Moir & Sons Co., Halifax Breweries, Sanford's Marble Works, Lampier's Carriage Factory, the

Aberdeen Hotel, Snow's Funeral Home and Sanford's Market as well as medical practices and a wide variety of small shops. Upper street businesses particularly the smaller ones, would have catered to the local market. But to varying degrees all merchants in the upper streets would have been affected by the broader realities of provincial and regional economics. The economic historiography of Nova Scotia and the Maritime region from the 1880s to the onset of The Great War reports periods of recession as well as growth, however, in general these were optimistic times.³⁹ Nevertheless, important socioeconomic trends were leading the region toward economic stagnation and dependence which became an unfortunate and lasting reality from the 1920s. The Maritimes remained fragmented politically, socially and geographically which hampered the development of effective regional political and economic strategies. In various ways disadvantageous railway policies, out-migration, pluralistic labour patterns and a lack of available finance capital operated against the sustainability of large scale industrial growth in the region. Changes in technology and methods of production were drawing more people into towns and cities. Yet Halifax and Saint John were unable to establish economic, political and cultural dominance within the region or to prevent being dominated by the greater population, political

39 Julian Gwyn, *Excessive Expectations: Maritime Commerce and the Economic Development of Nova Scotia, 1740-1870*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) This most recent and comprehensive work on the Nova Scotian economy for this time period refutes the notion of a pre-confederation golden age and argues that geographic disadvantages prevented Nova Scotia from ever having anything more than an overall weak economy occasionally punctuated by ephemeral prosperity such as that brought about by privateering during the American Civil War. See also: E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, *Atlantic Provinces*, Alexander, *Atlantic Canada*, Bercuson, *The Burden of Unity*, Saunders. *Studies in the Economy and* David Sutherland, "Halifax Merchants and the Pursuit of Development," *Canadian Historical Review*, 59. 1978: 2-17. This article predates the period of interest here. But it identifies some of the permanent geographical realities of Halifax as well as its vulnerability to American and British trade policies that continued to be of great importance during the time of this study.

hegemony and economic strength of central Canada. The Maritimes had some natural advantages such as deepwater harbours, proximity to fish stocks, mineral deposits such as coal and gypsum and some significant stands of timber. However, the Maritimes were not blessed with the vast amount of rich soil and longer growing seasons found in areas of central Canada and particularly within the United States. Most, if not all, of these factors were hindering the region to some extent prior to World War One. But in the decades immediately preceding the War, areas within the region showed modest economic growth, subject of course to pressures of class, gender and ethnicity. Halifax as a whole, including its upper streets, was a case in point.

The broad economic historical picture of the region is drawn largely with the help of statistical information found in government sources rather than business records of specific firms. So far as Halifax is concerned, records from some large concerns such as the Bank of Nova Scotia, Moirs Co. and Stairs, Son & Morrow Ltd. have survived. But the business records of the many small and medium size firms that operated within the upper streets during the time of this study have not survived. To date there are no studies showing exactly what percentage of the business activity that emerged in the upper streets between 1890 and 1914 was dependant upon local, regional, national or international trade. Nor do we know how many bars and brothels went out of business during this time. Unemployment levels and the distribution of employment between large and small firms have not been explored. Much has been said about the presence of

the British Army. But more work is needed to show clearly the links between business activity in the upper streets during this time and the declining presence of the Army. Here the best that can be done is to provide a sense of economic activity in the upper streets through some of the known facts. We know that the population of the city as a whole increased 38% between 1871 and 1901.⁴⁰ The information compiled in Tables Eight and Nine in Chapter Three indicate that the population in the upper streets was at least steady if not growing. The same trend was evident so far as property values were concerned. There were also significant levels of long term residency and resident property ownership in the upper streets. Vacancy rates appear to have remained low. For example in 1901 the *Halifax Directory* listed nine vacant spaces in the uppers streets. Five years later, 21 spaces were listed as vacant; the numbers for the years 1911 and 1914 were eight and twelve respectively.⁴¹ As documented in the minutes of City Council, the city's debt increased from \$1.48 million to \$3.37 million between 1881 and 1901 largely due to the extension and maintenance of public services such as roads and sewer lines.⁴² Council minutes did not indicate what percentage of the increase was spent within the uppers streets. However, the state of property values there and the lack of specific complaints uncovered

⁴⁰ Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkel, *History of the Canadian People, 1867 to the Present*. Vol. II 3rd ed. (Toronto: Pearson Education, 2002), p. 123.

⁴¹ *McAlpine's Halifax City Directory 1901-1914*, NSARM, mfm# 9715, 9718, 9720, 3407 and 3411. Neither the Directory nor the assessment rolls list the total number of rental units in any give year. However, according to the assessment rolls there were approximately 180 properties in the upper streets during the period of this study. At least 140 of these contained at least one residential unit. Many contained several. It would be safe to assume that there were at least 200 living spaces of various sizes within the upper streets between 1890 and 1914. Assuming the Directory was not completely accurate and that 25 units were typically empty at any given moment, the vacancy rate would have hovered around 12%.

⁴² Wallace Graham and F.H. Bell revisers, *Minutes of the City Council of the City of Halifax*, (Halifax: T.C. Allan Co., 1901) 139.

during the course of this research suggest that services in the upper streets were being maintained as well as other areas in the city. And as we saw in the last chapter, from the 1880s it was increasingly possible for individuals to establish economic and social prominence by doing business in the upper streets.

In the light of these facts what can we safely assume of the upper streets economy between 1890 and 1914? Fewer soldiers likely meant fewer soldiers wives looking to rent space in the upper streets. Soldiers were well known for buying liquor and sex in the upper streets. Upper street purveyors of vice must surely have seen a decline in their business. So much as soldiers shopped in the upper streets; there would have been less trade in sundry items as well. The findings of this research suggest a shift in economic activity in the upper streets from "rough" to "respectable". The shift was not complete. Many of the bars and brothels as well as the drinking and cavorting that had long been associated with the upper streets continued up to the start of World War One. But during the time of this study, the volume of unlawfulness in the upper streets purveyed by the likes of Charles Clarke was increasingly being matched by legitimate business enterprises; small concerns such as the O'Connell Brothers Blacksmith shop and large establishments the likes of Robert's Taylor's shoe factory. Further study of the existing sources and work with them is required before the economic shift identified here can be fully understood. How much of that shift was driven by the declining military presence; how much of it came from the pressure of reform; and how much of it was a matter of individual choice is impossible to say at the

moment. As was the case with reform, the shift in economic activity does not appear to have come about only because the British Army faded away. But it does seem fair to say that, as was the case with reform, the level of economic shift achieved by the early years of the 20th century had much to do with the decline and departure of the British Army. Perhaps equally important, was the market provided by small, but steady population growth and infrastructure improvements which were both an aid to and a reflection of business and social improvement.

For many local residents change for the better was evident. Nevertheless, from the 1890s to the start of the Great War rowdiness remained plain to be seen in the upper streets by those who lived and grew up there and by those who came solely for business or pleasure. But more so than ever before, respectable activities were visible and growing in volume. The actions of residents and non-residents alike were a mix of legal and illegal activities. This is supported by statistics from the police court presented in Chapter Two, particularly those in Table Two regarding the frequency of appearances before the court. It is supported by comparing the lives and actions of men such as Thomas and Dennis Berrigan. And it is supported by the fact that individuals from all ranks of Halifax society were known to enter Clarke's place and others like it. Clear moral distinctions were difficult to see among those who lived in the upper streets or among those who came there from elsewhere in the city. In this regard many Haligonians of this time seem to have been as grey as their weather. Perhaps

the blurred lines were somehow linked to the costal fog. More likely it had to do with old habits dying hard.

The British Army very much set the tone in Halifax; a powerful example that normalized public revelry for more than a century. It is the contention here that many Haligonians followed the military example while it was present and long after the departure of the redcoats, who appear as influential in their absence as they were in their swagger through the city, particularly its upper streets. The next section, therefore, details the example set by the British Army.

Forces that Challenged and Tempered Reform

Socialization in Victorian Halifax

The vacuum created by the military's departure hastened the winds of change. At the same time habits learned during the long military presence lingered. We know well by now that Halifax was founded as a military stronghold and that the military was a very visible and at times overwhelming presence in the city, particularly during its first century. We have also seen the presence of drink from the outset and a willingness of some to sell liquor to the many others who were eager to drink it. And we have seen that booze and soldiers were well acquainted. However, a problem that has not been well enough examined is the impact of the example set by the actions of the military, a powerful and long-term

one, which was accompanied and reinforced by the strong impact of the seafaring life naturally associated with a large ocean port.

The process being referred to here is one that can well be understood as “socialization”, a term from the field of sociology dating back to the 1820s.⁴³ The term and the process it describes have been explored and clarified since the Victorian era in order to speak of the ways by which individuals take direction from and watch, imitate and interact with the most prominent characters within their lives, the ways by which individuals acquire a set of skills, knowledge, values, roles and morals, in other words the norms, that will prepare them to fit within their society. For example, the active participation of individuals in their own socialization is now commonly recognized within sociology, psychology and anthropology. All authors agree that norms have a range. They are not fixed and precise. For example, people can be more or less politically active. The accent on particular norms can also vary according to personal, local or national events. Norms vary from place to place and each generation has its own set of priorities. For example, momentous events such as World War One and Two or The Great Depression largely defined the individuals who experienced them directly. Those who did not experience the dramatic social context of those times were not shaped by them in the same ways; they were shaped or socialized by other forces. However, it is very much the transmission of fundamental norms that

43 For a history and overview of the concept of socialization see: John A. Clausen ed. *Socialization and Society* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968) and Vincent B. Van Hasselt and Michel Hersen eds. *Handbook of Social Development: A Lifespan Perspective* (New York: Premium Press, 1992).

keeps a society intact across time; political institutions, religious beliefs, or respect for elders for instance. It is also true that the means by which norms are transmitted are affected by institutional and technological change. For example, as we saw in the last chapter, within the upper streets of Victorian Halifax public school attendance was generally low. Families who often shared spaces well into adulthood appear to have been a more important instrument of socialization. Over time, if larger Canadian studies are to be believed, public schools became more central to the socialization process.⁴⁴ While socialization continues throughout the lifecycle, views and habits acquired in youth are often those most ingrained. This was certainly the view of Victorian child savers and public school supporters and it remains at the heart modern social work and education. What this section tries to argue is that from the 1770s to the 1880s, the actions of the military were a constant and sometimes overwhelming example to the older as well as the younger residents of the city.

In attempting to understand the magnitude of the military example at Halifax during its early years, the work of Thomas B. Akins is most helpful. Akins first offered his history of the city at a meeting of the Halifax Mechanic's Institute in 1839. The paper he presented that night titled the "History of the Settlement of Halifax" was published in 1847 in pamphlet form. In 1857 Akins was appointed the first provincial archivist, a position created by the then premier Joseph Howe

⁴⁴ For examinations of this process see: Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Bruce Curtis, *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836-1871* (London, ON.:Althouse Press, 1988)

after an emotional plea for the need to protect the public record delivered to the Nova Scotia Legislature in person by Akins.⁴⁵ Akins held the post until his death and for 34 years worked diligently to collect and preserve as much as possible all papers related to the government of the province. From the 1840s until a few years before his death in 1891 he also continued to add to, edit and rewrite his history of Halifax, which extended from its founding to the year 1820. In 1895 his unfinished work in progress was published without change by the Nova Scotia Historical Society. Akins witnessed the presence of the British Army as it was during the early and middle decades of Victoria's reign. Moreover, his account of events in the latter years of the 18th century, though tempered by his own time, came from a vantage point much closer than our own.

According to Akins, it was common practice for many years to begin and end the day in Halifax with a formal military ceremony.

The troops mounted guard every morning on the Grand Parade and went through the salute and troop before relieving guard. This formed a great attraction to strangers and people from the country. The band usually played for half an hour before the ceremony of inspecting the guards commenced. At sunset and at gun fire at 8 o'clock in the evening, the drum and fife proceeded from the Town Clock, in Barrack Street, to Government House or the general's quarters, and back again to the barracks. This had been an ancient custom in the Halifax garrison and was partly kept up until about the year 1845. Guard mounting on the

⁴⁵ Brian C. Cuthbertson, "Thomas Beamish Akins: British North America's Pioneer Archivist," *Acadiensis*, 7, 1977: 86-102. Cuthbertson discusses Akins' leading role as an archivist. He also pays particular attention to the debate that swirled around Akins and the integrity of his work as the provincial archivist in the last years of his life. In 1888 Henri-Raymond Casgrain claimed that Akins had intentionally kept important documents related to the expulsion of the Acadians out of the public records of the Province. As Cuthbertson shows documents were missing not because of Akins, but because of omissions made during copying in London.

parade at 10 o'clock in the morning during summer continued until Governor Le Marchant left Halifax in 1856.⁴⁶

It is easy to imagine the sharp rat-a-tat-tat of the snare drum echoing through the narrow streets as the ranks marched proudly behind their standard down the hill toward the Grand Parade. Most days the ceremony was likely carried on by only a few officers and men pressed and polished in their full dress red uniforms. On special occasions perhaps an entire regiment turned out. On some days there would have been veterans among the guard, men who fought in the Napoleonic Wars or British campaigns in the Punjab or the Crimean. As a town of the British Empire these events were followed closely in the local press and Haligonians new of the sacrifices they involved. As the men stood there motionless in the morning mist or the evening rays, they stood for monarchy and country and for comrades lost and buried beneath battle fields far away. They stood wearing campaign medals from Waterloo or South Africa along with medals for valor and meritorious service. In between these moments of formal ceremony, the day was marked with military precision by the firing of the noon gun at the citadel. At least three times a day the citizenry of this British colonial town were reminded of the military presence and its place atop the social pecking order won through service to the crown. The recollections of Alban deMille, whom we met earlier, reflect the military's influence on the order and timing of things in Halifax; for all resident of the city, most particularly for children. De Mille was born in Halifax in 1874. These recollections appear to have been written in the 1930s, after the death of his friend Mather Abbott in 1934. As can be seen here his memories of his

⁴⁶ Akins, 208

boyhood are vivid and detailed. They point both to the lasting impressions of youth and to the firm impression of the military on the youth of late Victorian Halifax.

Halifax was a garrison town and naval station; near the Dockyard stood Admiralty House – the headquarters for the British North American Fleet. A regiment of Royal Garrison Artillery and two line regiments were always on the station; it was a delight for us boys to watch big gun practice from the forts at Point Pleasant... Four of five forts lay seaward from the harbour, and in the middle of the town rose the great Citadel, with its star-shaped glacis, built by freed slave from the Barbadoes. Across this we would walk on occasion to the Garrison Chapel. It was a thrilling experience to hear 1,000 soldiers sing “The Son of God goes forth to War” From the Citadel was fired every day the “Twelve O’clock Gun; on Sundays, as Mather and I sat side by side in the choir of old St. Luke’s Cathedral, we waited with keen interest for its familiar voice. ‘Bang!’ – a relieved grin from the choir-boys; then ‘click-click-click’ all over the church as the men opened and shut their watches and the preacher (rather nervously) hurried on to the end of his sermon.⁴⁷

In addition to the routines of the daily colour guards, the twelve o’clock gun and artillery practice, more lavish military functions of all sorts were a common and prominent feature of life throughout the first century of the city’s history. These included full dress parades, grandiose dinners and dances to celebrate local events or grander occasions such as the birthday of the reigning monarch. Some events had a more somber tone, the passing of well-known individuals for example. In 1788 the daughter of Admiral Sawyer, commander of the fleet at Halifax, died unexpectedly at the tender age of 18. William Dyott, who we shall

⁴⁷ A.B. de Mille, 75-76. Mark Moss links socialization and the military in Victorian Ontario. However, he argues that boys were socially conditioned to enlist in World War One through clubs, sports, hunting, etc. He does not explore the social influence of the military in a context such as that at Halifax. Mark Moss, *Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

meet more formally in a moment, declared "I think in my life I never saw so much grief as throughout the whole congregation... I believe sorrow was never more universal than on the occasion."⁴⁸ Below is an excerpt from his detailed description of the funeral procession. Dyott was an army officer which explains perhaps his attention to the uniforms in the procession. It seems reasonable to assume, however, that the spectacle of the uniforms punctuated the affair for civilian witnesses as well. Local children who were present may have been doubly affected by the grandeur and formality of the uniforms matching past but also by their parent's reactions to them and to the ability of the military to lend weight to an occasion.

At the head of the procession was the Bishop and Rector; then the body with eight bearers... The under bearers were the Admiral's barge crew in white trousers, white shirts, with a piece of love ribbon tied round the left arm, black velvet caps and white ribbons tied round them... The bearers had on full uniform; white hat-bands and scarves, black sword-knots, cockades, and crape round the left arm... There were also three or four of the family, and some officers belonging to the Admiral's ship with hatbands and scarves. After them followed almost all the officers belonging to the fleet; many of the garrison; all the people in town that were acquainted with the Admiral.⁴⁹

Sometimes military functions were selective affairs at private hotels or halls attended by "the great people", civilians well known in local politics and business. Often they were more public affairs held on the Grand Parade, the common or some other large venue. Like the ritual of the colour guard, these moments

48 Reginald W. Jeffery, *Dyott's Diary 1781-1845: A Selection from the Journal of William Dyott, Sometime General in the British Army and Aide-De-Camp to his majesty King George III*, (London: Archibald Constable, 1907), p.48.

⁴⁹ Jeffery, 47-48.

reinforced the social status of the military. But unlike the colour guard, festive events gave the troops a chance to exercise a particular social license that appears to have been granted to them by the local population, presumably in recognition of the fortitude required by military service and the sacrifice that often went with it, a sacrifice made in part to protect civilian populations like that at Halifax.⁵⁰ The idea of a particular social license being held by military personnel during the Victorian era does not seem to have been explored within Canadian historiography. It is suggested by the findings of this research and the state of affairs in early Halifax then a small colonial town without much in the way of civilian policing and therefore dependant upon the British Army for the maintenance and restoration of the social order should it be interrupted by civil unrest or outside attack. Scott Hughes Myerly has shown the public ambivalence toward the army that existed within British society. In the early Victorian period soldiers were more known for drunkenness and bad behavior. In the later half of the 19th century efforts were made by civilian and military leaders to professionalize soldiering by providing better training, living conditions, and better food, clothing and hygiene. Alan Ramsay Skelley argues that grand military spectacles were an effective means of social control and elements of them were often imitated by civilian organizations. Public perceptions of the army varied between distain and great respect, nevertheless the British soldier appears to have retained a unique status within British society. Certainly the British military

⁵⁰ Alan Ramsay Skelley, *The Victorian Army at Home: The Recruitment and Terms and Conditions of the British Regular, 1859-1899* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1977) and Scott Hughes Myerly, *British Military Spectacle from the Napoleonic Wars through the Crimea*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996)

held an important and unique place within early Canadian society, particularly within garrison towns such as Halifax where the idea of a particular social license is indicated by the findings of this research and seems worthy of further investigation.

The moment below described by Akins was typical of early Halifax and the moments in which actions on the part of military personnel may have been excused or accepted on account of their position within the town's social order. Here we see the military and the town in celebration of Wellington's victory at Waterloo. As we shall see, sordid acts on the part of the troops were common during this period. Akins does not speak of such things here. However, a celebratory mood and the illumination of the town combined with privilege and a penchant for extremes tells us that low points were likely common and as plain for all to see as a ceremonial colour guard.

On the 3rd of August [1815], the man-of-war brig *Vesta* arrived from England with the news of the Battle of Waterloo. The town was illuminated in honour of the victory, and the inhabitants kept up their rejoicing till a late hour in the evening. Preparations were made for a public dinner on the occasion, which took place at Mason Hall on the 15th.⁵¹

Akins' circumspection forces some reading between the lines in order to gain a sense of the public actions and the examples set by the military, particularly its officers, at such festive occasions. William Dyott's account of Prince William Henry's naval service in Halifax leaves much less to our imaginations. Prince

⁵¹ Akins, 169.

William was a son of George III and a future King of England. At the time of the Prince's first arrival in Halifax in 1787, William Dyott was a young army officer. Years later he would rise to the rank of general and serve as an aid to William's father. Dyott's diary spanned "sixteen volumes of varying sizes [covering] sixty-four of the most interesting years of English history." An edited version of Dyott's diary was assembled by Reginald W. Jeffery in 1907. Jeffery declared that Dyott's description of "Nova Scotia and the social life at that period is of considerable interest to all who wish to study the early story of that portion of the British empire. Dyott has also sketched the military life of the day with a clear and impartial hand. He wrote, as he himself once said, either for his own amusement in his old age, or, should he ever have any, for the amusement of his children."⁵²

The section of Dyott's diary dealing with the Prince's time in Halifax is filled with detailed accounts of grand occasions and prodigious drinking much of it done within large gatherings of civilians as well as military personnel. Visits to local dins are often mentioned such as this one on a fall evening in 1787 after a dinner with the 57th regiment.

We had an amazing company; all the great people, but not very pleasant. His Royal Highness retired about eight; and as he went out he called me to accompany him. We strolled about the town, went to some of the houses of a certain description, and to be sure had some pretty scenes.⁵³

⁵² Jeffery, xiii.

⁵³ Jeffery, 44.

Information in Dyott's diary also served as the basis for Thomas Raddall's discussion of the romantic affair between Prince William and Mrs. Wentworth which was, according to both Raddall and Dyott, conducted with the knowledge of her husband John. It was an affair that seemed to serve a variety of purposes and which ended with the Wentworth's moving into Government House upon the death of Lieutenant-Governor Parr, with a nod from the Prince. Dyott's writings also show that he and other officers continued at times to live a "life of debauchery"⁵⁴ after William's departure from Halifax confirming a royal lead was not required for such activities.

At the same time Dyott refers to the positive actions on the part of the military. For example, their efforts to entertain the citizenry and then protect the town from fire on the evening of 22 November 1789. Actions such as these as well as descriptions of battles fought overseas read about in the local press and the military's decorum one can imagine on display at events such as the funeral of Admiral Sawyer's daughter served to offset negative impressions. It is the contention here that an ambivalence created by the juxtaposition of these contrasting impressions afforded the social license referred to earlier.

A ball and supper given by the Navy and Army to the town. A very jolly evening; danced after supper. Just as the company was departing, they were alarmed by a cry of fire, which proceeded from the stores and warehouses of the greatest tradesmen in town, being in flames. The garrison were immediately ordered to attend; the seamen from the fleet also assisted, and by very great exertion the threatened dreadful conflagration was in some degree prevented. As it was expected, a great

⁵⁴ Jeffery, 68-69.

part of the town had been destroyed. A large lot, containing four houses, were entirely consumed. They were detached, and it was with great difficulty the flames were prevented catching the houses opposite, amongst which stood the Government House. The buildings are all of wood, and a most dreadful appearance the fire had, as it burnt like paper. I thought at one time a great part of the town must have been consumed. The damage is supposed to amount to near £20,000. Happily no lives were lost.⁵⁵

As we can see, the presence and the actions of the British Army were prominent in the early history of Halifax, even if the citizenry was never a first hand witness to the Army in action, that is combat. The city was, however, a frequent witness to the results of battles on the high seas, some by the Navy, but most particularly those contested by local sailors operating as privateers.

The city was not only a witness, it benefited greatly from the spoils of privateering. The following information regarding the Charles Mary Wentworth is drawn from *Nova Scotia: Shaped by the Sea* written by Lesley Choyce. As a popular author Choyce is more antidotal than analytical. Nevertheless, his facts are drawn from some of the regions best academic historiography. Here he neatly encapsulated the lure and profit of privateering.

The Wentworth was a real money maker for all involved and the stories about her were good enough to lure many a landlubber into signing up for a privateer on the high seas. One of those privateersmen, Enos Collins, made a considerable amount of money in the business and invested it wisely as a merchant on the Halifax waterfront. He died one of the wealthiest men in North America. Some of his stores and warehouse buildings of stone still stand today along a part of Halifax Harbour rightfully developed as "Privateers Wharf."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Jeffery, 61.

⁵⁶ Lesley Choyce, *Nova Scotia: Shaped by the Sea*, (Toronto: Penguin, 1997) 147-148.

Judgments regarding the ethics and character of privateers aside, surely some Haligonians respected the end results, even if begrudgingly. Like soldiers, privateers forced the residents of Halifax to come to terms morally with individuals who on the one hand acted outrageously and outside the law and on the other brought many positive economic and social benefits to the city.

Clues as to local views on the ethics and character of British soldiers later in the 19th century is visible in a collection of short stories titled *Tales of a Garrison Town* published in 1892.⁵⁷ The collection was written by Arthur Wentworth Eaton and Craven Langstroth Betts. Eaton was a poet, minister and teacher from Kentville Nova Scotia. He was educated at Dalhousie and Harvard. During the late 19th and early 20th century he was a professor of literature at New York College. Less is known about Betts. He too was a poet and some of his poems have survived. How he came to work with Eaton is not clear. In any case, of interest here are the views of soldiers and soldiering displayed within their *Tales of a Garrison Town*. There are fourteen stories in the collection. Most have soldiers as primary or secondary characters. Within these stories the soldiers of the British regiments at Halifax are far from perfect. They are marked by typical human frailties such as, jealousy, lust and profligacy. And consequently they suffer ups and downs. For example, early in the story "Court-Martialed" the lead character sergeant O'Neil is disgracefully demoted in front of the ranks for his repeated drunkenness. Later on, at the risk of his own life, he saves the

57 Arthur Wentworth Eaton and Craven Langstroth Betts, *Tales of a Garrison Town*, (New York: D.D. Merrill, 1892).

colonial's daughter from drowning. As a result of this action his rank is restored and he vows to never drink again. The stories are filled with plain messages regarding human strengths and weakness. Whenever soldiers appear they turn out to be men of admirable character. The sacrifice of soldiering is identified. But it is always cast as a noble service. Perhaps reflecting a long history of doing so in Halifax, so far as soldiers were concerned these authors acknowledged detrimental and illicit actions but choose to accentuate lawful honorable activities. To the extent their work was read by Haligonians, soldiers as seen within these stories reinforced positive perceptions and challenged negative ones.

This chapter attempts to explain the context of engagement and leniency described in Chapter Three, the context of the lives introduced in Chapter Two. The explanation began with the decline of the long time presence and influence of the British Army. As we saw, the physical and social space created in the upper streets by that withdrawal was taken up by agents and organizations of reform. Many bars and brothels remained, but they were increasingly being matched by new more conventional enterprises such as Robert Taylor's Shoe Factory and Snow's Funeral Home. This discussion of socialization and the lingering effects of the military presence is an attempt to understand the persistence of negative actions which emergent more positive activates in the upper streets hand to contend with. For the first century of the city's history, Halifax was well known as an army garrison and naval port. For much of their early history, Haligonians began and ended their day with military ceremony; they

set their watches by it. Special occasions public and private were hosted or attended and punctuated by the troops. Beyond the ceremonial, the Army was there to defend the town. As things turned out it was never called upon to repel a foreign invasion. But the Army did on occasion come to the town's rescue. The same was true of the Navy. And sailors, whether they were in the employ of the crown or private interests, enriched the town through privateering. At the same time soldiers could be outrageous; whether they were of royal blood or common stock. Residents of the city were often witness to that reality. As Prince William is reported to have said to Dyott during one of their visits to the upper streets "everybody had an eye on him."⁵⁸

In regards to the socialization of Haligonians during the Victorian era, the findings of this research are preliminary. But they are important enough to suggest that long term exposure to the particular circumstances presented here forged two important characteristics within Halifax's civilian population. First, the residents of the town acquiesced to public rowdiness, particularly hard drinking and prostitution, on the part of service personnel. Second, long term exposure to such rowdiness normalized it for many residents. By the time the presence of the British Army began its decline, a substantial percentage of Haligonians had been raised into varying degrees of rowdiness; a rowdiness that produced the Police Court statistics seen in Chapter Two. As reformers moved into the spaces left behind by the British Army they were not confronted by something as convenient as an underclass. It may be that they were met by something much more

⁵⁸ Jeffery, 44.

widespread and formidable, a specter that loomed large in the hearts and minds of many Haligonians. It wore a red coat and carried a bottomless flask and it would stand for only so much order and decorum.

The preceding discussion of socialization as well as the evidence presented in Chapter Three suggests that as the will and physical presence of reform developed within the upper streets from the 1890s it was not confronted there by an underclass. The upper streets were merely a concentration of a characteristic evident within much of the city's population, a penchant for hard drinking and rowdy actions, or at least an increased tolerance for them. Certainly the number of bars and brothels there declined with the departure of the military. However, owing to the ongoing actions of many Haligonians, the liquor trade and its associated activities remained economically important in a city with limited business opportunities. Reformers positioned themselves against social evils, most particularly the social evils associated with drink. At the same time the importance of the liquor trade to the local economy blurred matters even for supporters of reform. In Halifax responses to alcohol consumption were mitigated in a way that was unique in Nova Scotia and perhaps all of Canada. Having underlined the kind of socialization that contributed to that uniqueness, we now turn the attention to the response mounted by reform, a response that can be thought of as an effort to re-socialize the citizenry of Halifax.

The Socioeconomic Importance of the Liquor Trade

The force most dedicated to public order and exorcizing the evils of drink operated under the temperance banner. The first notes of temperance were heard in Canada as early as the 1820s. By the middle of the 19th century the chorus was loud and strong and included a number of Protestant churches as well as national organizations such as the Women Christians Temperance Union and the Sons of Temperance. In the early years temperance groups used what Andrew C. Holman in his study of Ontario referred to as arguments of moral suasion which focused on individual salvation or improvement through moderation or complete abstinence. "The reward of shedding oneself of the fetters of drink and its evil consequences, early temperance advocates held, was personal freedom. The rhetoric of liberty was a powerful tool in the hands of temperance reformers, and in 1850s and 60s North America the words resonated loudly."⁵⁹ Over time concentration shifted away from the individual to attack alcohol – its distribution, sale and consumption – as a social problem that was presented as a grave concern to all Canadians. Many temperance supporters began to seek legislation in the form of strict licensing, tight regulations regarding sale and consumption and eventually laws of prohibition. "Temperance organizations did not abandon moral argument wholesale in favour of legislative solution to the drink problem beginning in the 1850s as some historians have argued. Rather, the two strategies (moral suasion and prohibition) coexisted, not

⁵⁹ Holman, 134. See also: Decarie, *Prohibition in Canada*. For an overview of prohibition in the Maritimes during this period see: E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces*, chaps. 3 to 6.

uneasily, in the 1850s and 60s.”⁶⁰ Calls for legislative action in the form of prohibition divided communities across the country. In Quebec many supported drinking in moderation diminishing support for prohibition until distilled beverages were prohibited in 1919.⁶¹

Temperance had its followers in Nova Scotia, including Halifax. Rooted as it was in the Protestant faith there were a great many spiritual arguments against drinking. “Sustained alcohol use was seen to lead inevitably to the extinction of all moral and religious principle.”⁶² But here as elsewhere the temperance movement was bolstered by secular reasoning as well. In the latter 19th century supporters of temperance were increasingly men of science and business. Consequently, temperance groups became more often aligned with other reform agendas, most notably labour and women’s suffrage. By the turn of the century a great deal of medical and social-scientific evidence had been presented in support of prohibition. Yet there remained “some out of date doctors of the old school who, when in doubt, prescribed alcoholic liquor.”⁶³ The melding of religious and scientific arguments within the temperance movement was part of a larger phenomenon which Ramsay Cook referred to as the secularization of society, a process that he argued ultimately undermined the influence of religion within matters of social welfare and Canadian society in general, even if early

⁶⁰ Holman, 136.

⁶¹ Decarie, 5.

⁶² Holman, 134.

⁶³ *Morning Chronicle* 22 February 1901, NSARM, mfm# 5525

research was not intentionally trying to secularize Canadian society.⁶⁴ Many men and women of science were often deeply religious. So far as studies of alcohol were concerned, doctors, social workers and other helping professionals were simply trying to understand and explain the links between chronic drinking and disease. They were also under pressure to provide answers regarding the connections between drinking and crime, particularly violence in the home.

Male intemperance kept needed earnings from the household, and hours spent at the tavern or saloon were hours away from wife and family, the sentimental centre of social and emotional life. Most noted by contemporaries, however, was that male alcohol abuse often led to physical violence and that, in too many cases, it was acted out at home.⁶⁵

In Nova Scotia the arguments, moral and scientific, for temperance and prohibition appear to have had no widespread effect by the middle to late decades of the 19th century. Across the province social drinking as well as drinking on the job remained common. Employers often facilitated drinking. In Nova Scotia there was often a daily allowance of rum “for workers, in forests, shipyards and construction”.⁶⁶ This was linked to the fact that by then sailors in the British Navy had been receiving a daily tot of rum “every day since their country had seized Jamaica in 1655.”⁶⁷ In small doses alcohol boosted morale by easing the mental and physical stress of heavy work. “Liquor was believed by

⁶⁴ Cook, *The Regenerators*.

⁶⁵ Holman, 138.

⁶⁶ Bruce, 243.

⁶⁷ Craig Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003) 30-35. Here Heron outlines the normalcy of drinking across Canada at home and at work through the 18th and up to the late 19th centuries. In Heron’s analysis it appears that the routines of factory work and wage labour, which replaced the seasonal rhythms of work, may have had more to do with changes in consumption levels than the efforts of Temperance.

many to stave off illness, broaden mental capacity, invigorate the constitution and make hardy specimens of labourers whose work was physical and dangerous.”⁶⁸ “To progressive reformers, debilitating diseases, including alcoholism bred social inefficiency. Alcoholism was a special evil, breaking up homes, encouraging crime, and contributing to accidents and absenteeism in the workplace”⁶⁹ A story recounted in Rev. George Patterson’s 1877 history of Pictou County Nova Scotia offers a case in point. At one point in that history a parishioner tells the Rev. about himself and a group of other men “working at a job for a fortnight in the heat of summer drinking each their quart bottle of rum a day, and not at the time feeling the worse for it, though they felt unfit for work of any sort for the following week or two.”⁷⁰ Temperance groups were faced with the fact that, in the cellars of Nova Scotia, “rum kegs were as commonplace as barrels of fish.”⁷¹

We know well by now that problems associated with the liquor trade were most acute at Halifax. Meanwhile, Council and the Provincial Legislature remained reluctant to enact prohibition. Under the federal Scott Act of 1878, for instance, the city had long been able to hold a plebiscite on probation. Supported by a majority in such a vote, prohibition would have become the law. On 22 February 1897 an anti-prohibition article titled “Liquor Selling in Halifax” appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*. As its author pointed out Council could “have put the Scott Act to a vote in Halifax. They have not done so because of a pretty general

⁶⁸ Holman, 131.

⁶⁹ E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces*, 187.

⁷⁰ Rev. George Patterson, *A History of the County of Pictou, Nova Scotia* (Pictou, N.S.: J. M’Lean, 1877) quoted in Bruce, *An Illustrated History of Nova Scotia*, 243.

⁷¹ Bruce, 243.

belief that it would not have the remotest chance of carrying."⁷² It was also true, according to Henry Roper and the differences of opinion between aldermen visible in the contemporary press, that Halifax Council was often divided and quarrelsome, particularly on this issue which placed a further obstacle to the enactment of prohibition in Halifax.⁷³ The Provincial Legislature was less rambunctious but not necessarily more inclined to enact social welfare legislation. For example,"a Nova Scotian equivalent to the controversial British Contagious Diseases Act of the 1860s which involved the licensing and regular medical examination of prostitutes in garrison and naval towns"⁷⁴ was never enacted despite the pleadings of Halifax military authorities. On the other hand, in 1886 the Legislature passed new law to replace the defunct McCarthy Act. Under the new law "liquor was sold in quantities no smaller than one pint to be drunk off the premises."⁷⁵ The intent of the law was to close the taverns, the centre of drinking and associated social ills. However, "the abolition of the tavern was more theoretical than real, enforcement being what it was." This was particularly so in Halifax. No doubt the ineffectiveness of anti-tavern legislation, Council's failure to legislate prohibition, and the economics of the liquor trade in Halifax, had much to do with the exemption granted to Halifax under the provincial Temperance Act of 1910.⁷⁶ The actions of the Council and the Legislature seem best explained by their constituencies. The Council was only concerned with issues in Halifax where the liquor trade was most crucial to the

⁷² *Morning Chronicle*, 25 February 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5503.

⁷³ Roper, "Halifax Board of Control".

⁷⁴ Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life*, 109.

⁷⁵ E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces*, 11-112.

⁷⁶ Beck, *Politics vol. 2*, 53-63.

economy. Meanwhile, the Legislature had to balance competing interests and views from across the province. In smaller communities the dependence upon the liquor trade was slight, support for temperance was high and politics revolved around matters such as roads, freight rates and protection of local industry. Both levels of government, however, were constantly faced with more demands than resources.

While prohibition was yet to be enacted, a variety of liquor laws were in place. However, liquor laws already on the books were not vigorously enforced, hence the failed attack on the city's taverns noted above. Moreover, as we have seen in our examination of the Police Court for the period between 1890 and 1914, when liquor dealers were hauled before the stipendiary magistrate they simply paid their fines and returned to business as usual. With prohibition seemingly out of reach, temperance supporters pushed for better enforcement of existing law. In a letter to the editor of the *Morning Chronicle* on 2 March 1901, D. Stiles Fraser repeated the often heard claim of weak enforcement. "Let there be a proper campaign for proper law enforcement by the proper authorities...This is a matter in connection with which there has been too much fooling in the past."⁷⁷ Such half-heartedness and inaction suggests that Council was aware of the obstacles posed by the city's military legacy and proclivity for hard drinking. Certainly the contemporary press made that connection which falls in line with the findings of this research and the argument presented earlier regarding the link between hard drinking and the city's military history. Lest it forget, local

⁷⁷ *Morning Chronicle*, 2 March 1901, NSARM, mfm# 5525.

papers occasionally reminded Counsel that "Halifax has a population of not less than 45, 000. She has among her own people very many of all classes of society who use liquor and who will not give it up, certainly without a struggle, and who will not respect any law which seeks to coerce them into so doing. It is a seaport, a naval and military station; a more unlikely spot for prohibition to succeed could not possibly be discovered."⁷⁸

Most importantly, owing to steady demand, liquor was a mainstay of the city's economy. In scenarios predicted by temperance advocates, cutting the supply would raise some short term difficulties; however, greater economic and social prosperity would be the long term result. Anti-prohibitionists disagreed strongly and backed their case in the press with thought provoking statistics. The article "Liquor Selling in Halifax" claimed that city real estate in the form of factories, warehouses, shops and hotels, which were completely or largely dependent upon the liquor trade and conservatively valued at \$1,873,360 would decrease in value by at least one third should prohibition be enacted. The article went on to say that as of 1892 there were 692 persons earning a total of \$305,232 working in establishments where liquor was sold "of whom a very considerable number at any rate would be thrown out of employment in the event of an effective measure of prohibition." There were further potential job losses to freight handlers, teamsters, insurance brokers and the like as well as dire tax implications. "The taxes paid the city in respect of properties engaged in the trade amounted in 1892 to \$16, 628, which, when added to the \$11, 000 derived from licenses,

⁷⁸ *Morning Chronicle*, 25 February 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5503.

made up over \$27, 000 of revenue which the city stands a good chance of losing in good part, and which would have to be made up from other properties.” As noted in the previous chapter, residents were reluctant to pay more taxes meanwhile the city could ill afford any decrease in its tax revenue. Further economic consequences included the probable loss in wholesale trade to St. John and Montreal as well as the high costs that would come with having to enforce a prohibition law.⁷⁹

The article was signed Temperance. The author, as well as the source of the information, remains unknown. Certainly the writer was well informed, very likely involved in the liquor trade and or local politics. While the accuracy of the numbers presented can not be confirmed through this research, the importance of the liquor trade they suggest seems plausible in light of the community profile presented in the previous chapter. There we saw stable property values and steady tax payments from large establishments such as Halifax Breweries and the Aberdeen Hotel, as well as numerous smaller operations including Dillon Brothers Liquors, Hogan’s and Forsyth’s Grocery Store. All of these businesses were completely or largely dependent upon the sale of alcohol. So far as the upper streets were concerned, liquor certainly was a major generator of business, employment and tax revenue.

⁷⁹ *Morning Chronicle*, 25 February 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5503.

In addition to the potential economic consequences of prohibition, the article reminded readers of the past ill effects of attempting to abolish taverns via the License Act of 1886, at least so far as Halifax was concerned.

The license act of 1886 was intended to abolish altogether the "saloon". As everybody knows it is in that respect as absolute a dead letter as though it were not upon the statute book. The licensed shops are all open saloons, with the exception of a few which never did anything except a bottle trade. There is no attempt at concealment, and with the exception of a few prohibitionists nobody appears the least concerned over the manner in which the law is violated.⁸⁰

Andrew C. Holman confirms the difficulties of establishing prohibition within the 19th century, via the Scott Act or any other measures, in his study of Ontario.⁸¹ Authorities in Halifax were aware of the particular circumstances in their city owing to its military history. They were also aware of events in Ontario, as well as events within the Maritimes and the United States where support for prohibition could not be maintained within larger urban communities.

Canadian cities and towns under the Scott Act – Fredericton, Moncton and Portland, N.B., that of the Ontario counties, which after adopting it [prohibition] by large majorities repealed it after a few years experience... Massachusetts and Rhode Island, which after trial[s] of prohibition both abandoned it. There is probably no subject of human experience on which there exists a greater amount of evidence, and it is all one way. Whatever may be the result of the law in small and scattered communities, the world has yet to see the first city of a size anywhere approaching that of Halifax in which it has not been a complete failure for any good and only fruitful of great evil.⁸²

⁸⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, 25 February 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5503.

⁸¹ Holman, *A Sense of Their Duty*

⁸² *Morning Chronicle*, 25 February 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5503.

So far as matters related to the liquor trade in Halifax were concerned, the anti-prohibitionist author of "Liquor Selling in Halifax" felt that, "nobody is in a better position to know than Alderman O'Donnell."⁸³ E.W. O'Donnell was one of a group of economically successful individuals we met in the last chapter. He had been a liquor dealer in the upper streets in the early 1880s. By the late 1890s he had acquired a number of properties in the upper streets and was operating a contracting and real estate business out of an office on Albermarle Street. In regards to the liquor trade and all of the social and economic matters related to it, O'Donnell and others like him certainly were in a position to know and they brought their knowledge to Council which at that time consisted of 18 members. Each year six seats were up for election to a three year term. Henry Roper's examination of the Council during this period shows it to have been generally divided between older members he describes as conservative and younger businessmen anxious for progressive reforms, particularly in regards to the management of the city's finances. O'Donnell would have belonged to Roper's conservative group, the group more associated with the realism visible within anti-prohibition arguments like the one noted above and the flexibility within institutions of social welfare as seen earlier in this study.

O'Donnell, as well as the empirical view he represented, was clearly on display March 14, 1901 when Council met before a large group of temperance supporters to debate amendments to the city's liquor laws. Temperance supporters were pressuring Council to pass its authority over liquor licenses to

⁸³ *Morning Chronicle*, 25 February 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5503.

some sort of commission or to the Nova Scotia Legislature. As we have seen, supporters of temperance in turn of the century Halifax felt Council was too lax in its supervision of the liquor trade. They felt some sort of new licensing body containing representatives of the movement would provide stricter control. The lengthy description in the paper the following day evidenced Council's unease with heavy handed measures, for example perjured testimony against saloon keepers on the part of liquor inspectors and the police who were known, or were thought to be, temperance supporters. Partly in fear of such pressure and tactics, Council was unwilling to relinquish its authority. At one point in the proceedings that evening Alderman O'Donnell praised the work of temperance in regards to some individuals, but noted "the nuisance was as bad as ever again."⁸⁴ O'Donnell's characterization of particular individuals as a nuisance did not indicate that he, or the city's administration as a whole, denied the severity of alcohol problems for some and the family violence and abuse exacerbated by alcohol or that the handling of the liquor trade in general did not need improvement. But his choice of words and council's longstanding refusal to support drastic actions was a clear indication that many of those in authority did not share the alarmist view of the upper streets held by the city's more zealous reformers, temperance advocates in particular. Recall that O'Donnell was a former saloon keeper. In his social history of alcohol consumption in Canadian history, Craig Heron said of saloon keepers that most "came from modest backgrounds. They lived alongside workers and shared more in the rhythms and values of working-class respectability than in the prim prudery of the middle

⁸⁴ *Morning Chronicle*, 15 March 1901, NSARM, mfm# 5525.

class.”⁸⁵ Earlier we saw an anti-projectionists state that in Halifax there were individuals from “all classes of society who use liquor and who will not give it up, certainly without a struggle.” It is impossible to determine the extent to which the so called “respectable” members of Halifax society drank. This comment as well as the range of characters we saw found in raids on Clarke’s place in Chapter Two tell us that at least some of them did. Perhaps O’Donnell and other individuals in positions of authority drank responsibly, that is without negative physical or social consequences. And if that was true it may help to further explain O’Donnell’s views and Council’s reluctance for prohibition.

No doubt O’Donnell’s views also stemmed from the fact that for many years he lived and earned a living within the upper streets. His seat on Council did not erase his ties to that community. As we have seen in chapter three men such as Councilman Geldert, William Sutton, Robert Taylor and many others who held positions of social, political and economic advantage during the 1890s and early 1900s also owned property, collected rent, and ran businesses in the upper streets. Such involvement disinclined their support for harsh policies, particularly policies that threatened the liquor trade which underpinned the economy of the entire city, but most particularly in the upper streets. In her study of the upper streets which was rooted in the 1860s and 70s, Fingard also identified the ability to move from rough pursuits in the upper streets to a more respectable living earned through the formal economy. Her case in point was Isaac Sallis. In those times, she argues, Sallis and the transition he accomplished was an exception.

⁸⁵ Heron, 106.

Through the 1890s and the years of the 20th century prior to World War One, it seems from our data that that process was much more common which falls in line with the overall economic picture of the times visible within the regional historiography. Men such as Edward O'Donnell, Peter Lowrie, Patrick Dillon, John Hogan, William Forsyth, Edward Weatherdon, William Sutton, Dr. William M. Cameron, Alex Baxter James M. Geldert Jr. and W.J.G. Thomson owed their success and prominence in whole or in part to the upper street liquor business. The bottom rungs on the ladder leading up to social and economic wellbeing in Halifax were submerged in alcohol. Much of the city's respectability had rough roots, roots impossible to conceal or deny in a relatively small static population. Fingard argued that the move from rough to respectable was accompanied by a shift in values and morality; at least so far as public image was concerned. The move certainly brought better economic and social circumstances, perhaps some new activities as well. But ties to the upper streets remained. Though he may have downplayed the fact in certain circles, Sallis held and profited from property in the upper streets until his death. So did many of the men named above. One could hardly expect them to be hardliners, on the liquor trade in particular, the upper streets in general or the people who lived there. Besides the obvious political threat posed by such hypocrisy, drastic measures directly opposed their economic self-interest.

The institutions of reform and relief that entered the upper streets in the wake of the British Army were most often founded and overseen by the city's

administration which included men such as O'Donnell and Geldert who had strong ties to that community. But they knew well the range of characters and actions to be found there and, for this, were also responsible for the limits of reform. Certainly they supported change; less drunkenness in the streets, less abuse of women and children, better public services and greater opportunities for everyone within the legitimate economy. But they also knew that such things would not come about overnight or through heavy handed actions. Nor do they appear to have been convinced that elimination of the drink trade was necessarily the best thing in the short or long run. From their knowledge and experience they applied a more patient flexible approach, one that extended to the front lines where we saw it in action at the Police Court, Rockhead and the City Home. Reform would eventually have its way in the upper streets, but more so through the slow growth of new examples and opportunities than harsh attacks against the community as a whole or any group in particular. Such attacks were seen elsewhere across the country in communities of all sizes. For example, Dr Charles Hastings, Toronto's medical health officer claimed to be responsible for deporting Toronto's entire gypsy population "whom he viewed as prone to ""sleeping and living like animals.""⁸⁶ Hamilton's public health officer, James Roberts, called for a corps of inspectors to go about systematically "looking for trouble." Roberts believed that only the "drunken, lazy and

⁸⁶ Charles J. Hastings, *Report of the Medical Health Officer Dealing with Recent Investigations of Slum Conditions in Toronto, 5 July 1911*, quoted in John C. Bacher and J. David Hulchanski, "Keeping Warm and Dry", 149.

improvident" experienced homelessness".⁸⁷ And in Vancouver where homeless persons attempted to house themselves along the waterfront "the city razed shacks along the False Creek and Burrard Inlet shorelines from the 1890s to the 1950s."⁸⁸

The explanation of the upper streets, the context of that community from the 1890s to 1914, began with the withdrawal of the British Army. Into the resultant social and physical space moved a variety of reformers and new business activities. Excessive drinking continued and extreme poverty remained visible. However, more constructive activities and success within the formal economy were becoming increasingly visible as well. Change was coming but its pace was slowed by the fact that many Haligonians continued to drink hard and be rowdy, seemingly a consequence of growing up and being socialized in this particular garrison town. The fondness for drink combined with a relatively limited economy made the liquor trade particularly important in Halifax. Through that trade, to varying degrees, a number of individuals were able to move from rough to respectable. Some, like E.W. O'Donnell, came to positions of authority where they faced demands for action, sometimes from overzealous reformist leaders. Men like O'Donnell were not opposed to reform; they were, however, opposed to harsh responses, particularly to the liquor trade, which their experience told them would accomplish but little good. The liquor trade raised the most important issues facing the city in these times, but not the only ones. Attention now turns to

⁸⁷ James Roberts, "Unsanitary Areas," *The Public Health Journal*, April 1912, quoted in John C. Bacher and J. David Hulchanski, "Keeping Warm and Dry", 149.

⁸⁸ Jill Wade, "Home or Homelessness?", 25.

examine the broader range of issues and approaches to them that also help to explain and understand the context of upper streets and the city as a whole.

Social Issues and Responses at the Turn of the 19th Century

The Range of Concerns and Approaches amongst Reformers: Historiography and Typology

Issues addressed by business reform were distinct from those associated with the liquor trade and somewhat later in their appearance. "Organized temperance societies appeared in British North America very early in the nineteenth century, about the same time they appeared in the United States and Britain."⁸⁹ One of the earliest groups in Canada appeared in Pictou County, about 100 miles east of Halifax, about 1827. Meanwhile business reform, which was part of what has been termed the progressive era, became a distinct element of reform in the early years of the new century.⁹⁰ Business reformers concerned themselves with management practices predicated upon notions of scientific efficiency. Here we find trends toward centralized control, the division of labour, departmentalized corporate structure, professionalization of staff and increasingly sophisticated management of capital resources. These trends were developed within enterprises primarily concerned with the production of material goods and profit. However, some businessmen who had found greater financial success through the application of these practices within private industry believed that the same practices applied to the management of public affairs would yield less

⁸⁹ Decarie, 1.

⁹⁰ E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, *Atlantic Provinces*, 155-156.

waste, greater efficiency, and improved public services, in other words social profit. Nevertheless, those who argued for the betterment of society through a business style rationalization of public affairs faced some daunting paradoxes. By the late 19th century the hegemony exercised by wealthy industrialists was becoming increasingly recognized, sometimes unfavorably. Moreover, industrialization was largely responsible for the human misery all reformers were trying to alleviate. According to the influential writings of Karl Marx, political and economic control needed to be decentralized. In his view private business was the antithesis to an egalitarian society. While some business reformers, argued for the public ownership of utilities such as electricity and water, the majority of Canadians, reform minded businessmen included, were leery of socialism due to its harsh criticism of private ownership, religion and the established churches. A common influence among many business minded reformers and social critics was the writings of American political economist Henry George. His popular selling 1879 book *Progress and Poverty* sought a more just society through business regulation. His solution to the social ills of the time was a unique system of taxation that focused solely on land value. Due to the popularity of his book, George was invited to speak to various reform groups, politicians and business leaders across North America and Europe during the 1880s and 90s. His followers become known as Georgeites or single taxers. For some Canadian social critics such as Goldwin Smith, George's questioning of the established socioeconomic order opened the door to more radical considerations such as socialism. For others George provided "a doctrine that fitted snugly into the

emerging modernist Protestantism", a doctrine W.A. Douglas, a leading Georgeite from Toronto is said to have described as a Christian science of political economy.⁹¹

Women may have been involved less in business reform groups as generally they were less involved in business affairs. The prevailing view in Canada as well as Britain and the United States said that women belonged in the home serving as guardians of their children, family and, given the family's social and economic importance, by extension guardians of the nation. It was this broader vision of the role and importance of women that helped give rise to the "women movement" which in Canada began to organize itself through a variety of lay and denominational agencies from the middle of the 19th century.⁹² As did women elsewhere, Canadian women during Victorian and Edwardian times participated in various charity and reform groups. In the important area of temperance they formed the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), an exclusively female organization though at least in the Canadian context admitting of honorary non voting male members.⁹³ Involvement in reform, particularly the WCTU, increasingly convinced more women, and the men who supported them, that significant lasting social change depended upon female suffrage. That is, women needed to be able to formally force the action of male politicians through

91 Cook., 122. Further information regarding business activities and reform was drawn from Sutherland. "Halifax Merchants and the Pursuit of Development", James Frost, "The 'Nationalization' of the Bank of Nova Scotia, 1880-1910," *Acadiensis*, 7. 1982: 3-38, David Alexander, "Economic Growth in the Atlantic Region, 1880 to 1940," *Acadiensis*, 8. 1978: 47-76 and James H. Timberlake. *Prohibition and the Progressive Movement 1900-1920*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).

⁹² Prentice et al, *Canadian Women*, 169-178.

⁹³ Prentice et al, *Canadian Women*, 172.

the vote and to elect female representatives who would, supposedly, be more supportive of reform. Female suffrage came in piecemeal fashion from the 1870s. In "Nova Scotia the WCTU locals succeeded in pressuring their legislature to introduce a municipal suffrage bill in 1884. The bill failed, but three years later unmarried women were at least granted the municipal franchise."⁹⁴ In Nova Scotia it was not until 1920 that "universal suffrage for men and women over twenty-one finally became a reality."⁹⁵ So far as voter participation at the municipal level in late 19th and early 20th century Halifax is concerned, according to Henry Roper's study of efforts to reform City Council referred to earlier, voters were apathetic.⁹⁶ This seems to include men and women. During the course of this research the participation of women in reform was clearly evident. Further research is required in order to determine to what extent the overall character of reform identified here was a result of that participation.

Another approach to social problems that can in many ways be seen as different from either temperance or business minded reform is that of philanthropy. At a basic level 19th century philanthropy, evident across North America, was similar to charity work; the better-off members of society helping those in need. A key difference between the two was found in the purpose of giving. Traditional charity tended to be more present focused and to address specific needs – food for the hungry, shelter for the homeless, etc. Philanthropy was more often future oriented and aimed more at the problems behind the

⁹⁴ Prentice et al, *Canadian Women*, 177.

⁹⁵ Beck, *Politics of Nova Scotia Vol. 2*, 77.

⁹⁶ Roper, "Halifax Board of Control," 53.

needs – lack of educational facilities, medical research, etc. Some philanthropists were content to donate their money to particular causes and let others handle the operational side of things. Others took a more hands on approach either through participation in the management of organizations they supported or more front line work within them. We saw earlier that temperance moved from a program of moral suasion to advocate for prohibition. Similarly, 19th century philanthropy went through a series of changes. Earlier in the century philanthropy was directed more by the established churches. Later philanthropy moved away from church direction. It became more of an expression of individualism, a way in which the wealthy could support causes of their own choosing, regardless of religious or secular authority. Increasing individualistic direction behind philanthropy raised the concerns of some traditional charity groups and politicians who felt that philanthropists were at times too sentimental in their giving and that greater circumspection was required in order to avoid pauperizing the poor, making them dependant upon gifts rather than their own labour. This was not the only criticism faced by philanthropists. Some unionists and churchmen such as Methodist leader Hugh Price Hughes pointed out the source of wealth behind philanthropy, the sweat of labour. They argued that occasional donations at the idiosyncratic whim of philanthropists were not as just or effective as a permanent state of higher wages, shorter hours and improved working conditions would be. Such criticism was valid and part of the larger reformist effort to ease the harsh social effects of industrial capitalism. Meanwhile, 19th century philanthropy made important contributions to British, American and

Canadian society. And while it operated with less church direction over time, it remained linked to notions of Christian duty.⁹⁷

Christian duty was the driving concern behind the Social Gospel, which was a distinct element of reform, both for its Christian underpinnings and the shift within Christian theology that it represented. That shift is well documented through Ramsay Cook's study of 19th century social criticism. In the *Regenerators*, Cook shows how protestant Christianity led by Methodists and Presbyterians, moved away from traditional theology and its focus on individual salvation and the rewards of the afterlife to a greater interest in life on earth and improving society as a whole. In the emergent Protestant theology of the later 19th century, Christian duty was moved beyond the traditional notions of good works and charity to allow for a rejection of the socioeconomic status quo and work for social change, toward the realization of the kingdom of God on earth. Emergent theology could never be completely reconciled with scientific explanations, particularly Darwin's theory on evolution. However, Protestant churches increasingly supported and contributed to the advancement and application of social scientific knowledge. Traditional charity did not disappear. The distribution of relief and mission work continued. In the later case it often reflected a blend of strategies. Social Gospelers also moved beyond efforts directed by particular churches to join in all varieties of relief and reform as well as politics. In that way the push for social change throughout the late 19th and

⁹⁷ Ellen Frankel Paul ed. *Beneficence, Philanthropy, and the Public Good* (New York: Blackwell, 1987). This collection of essays provides a good overview of the approaches and goals of philanthropy.

early 20th century became heavily imbued with Christian thought and participated in as a function of modern notions of Christian duty. Following the change within the current of Christian thought that underpinned the broader movement for social change, the moralizing that characterized reform of the early 19th century had by the later decades of the period largely given way to more progressive endeavors of social engineering. And as seen though the *Regenerators*, the authority of the established churches also gave way, not only within matters of social welfare, but Canadian society in general. The increasing role of government and public bureaucracies within social affairs that led to the emergence of the Canadian welfare state had much to do with what Cook referred to as the secularization of Canadian society.⁹⁸

Concerns and Approaches of Reform in Halifax

As indicated in the outline above, reform was not a static or monolithic phenomenon. It was marked by change and encompassed a range of views and characters who sometimes cooperated and sometimes went their separate ways. But all of those who participated in reform had in common a desire for a society less afflicted by destitution, dissipation and disease; one where socioeconomic opportunity was more widespread and more assured. In the Halifax seen through this study there was an eclectic mix of reform groups. We have already been introduced to most of them. The task here is to more clearly locate them within the broad spectrum of reform so that we can better see what range of reform

⁹⁸ For information on the social gospel see: Cook, *The Regenerators* and Allen, *The Social Passion*.

existed in the Halifax of this time. The following section will comment on the effect of that existent range.

As we have already learned, Halifax had its share of temperance supporters. We have also seen church officials at the forefront of temperance work. Recall the visit to the liquor inspector's office by Rev. H.R. Grant on 2 March of 1906. He was there inquiring as to the "procedure in connection with the laying of information against violations of the license act."⁹⁹ The military history of the city, the tendency toward hard drinking forged by that history and the importance of the liquor trade to the local economy, suggests that, in Halifax, The Sons of Temperance and the WCTU fought an uphill battle. The non application of the Scott Act and the long standing Halifax exemption under the Nova Scotia Temperance Act confirms that anti-prohibition forces held greater sway in Halifax during the time of this study.¹⁰⁰

Beyond the efforts of those sought temperance or prohibition, Halifax saw a number of relief and reform efforts funded and operated by organized religion. Following traditional notions of charity and salvation, Saint Paul's Anglican Church collected donations and operated a Sunday school. Saint Vincent de Paul's Sisters of Charity cared for orphans and the sick. From the evangelical strain there was the Salvation Army which appears to have begun operations with the soup and salvation model established by the Army's founder William

⁹⁹ *Acadian Recorder* 2 March 1906, NSARM, mfm# 5298.

¹⁰⁰ Beck, *Politics of Nova Scotia* vol. 2, 53-63.

Booth. As time passed the Army instituted a host of other programs based on practical needs. For example, thrift stores that sold donated items at low cost to the poor and a home for unwed mothers which evolved into a maternity hospital. In Halifax the Salvation Army continues to fund and operate a hostel, a number of thrift stores and a portion of the IWK-Grace Hospital. The Army followed paths of traditional charity and individual salvation but its programs also moved beyond the individual to address the needs of the community as a whole. In the early days access to services was sometimes dependant upon participation in religious services, 'singing for your supper'. Such practices faded as the Army extended its partnerships with various levels of government. However, Army staff continued to wear their uniforms which served as obvious reminders of their religious affiliation.¹⁰¹

No doubt men and women who were devoutly religious worked for The Halifax Visiting Dispensary and the Halifax Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor. However, neither organization was directly affiliated with or controlled by a religious institution. The Dispensary was initiated by a group of concerned medical professionals. The HAICP was started by a cadre of concerned citizens. Both organizations received funding from a variety of sources, public and private. Judith Fingard's work paid particular attention to the efforts of the Dispensary and the Association. The Dispensary began operations in 1856; the HAICP came into being ten years later. In their early years both

¹⁰¹ R.G. Moyles *The Blood and Fire in Canada: A History of the Salvation Army in the Dominion, 1882-1976* (Toronto: P. Martin Associates, 1977)

agencies brought services directly to the homes of the poor, particularly the Association which had teams of visitors supervised by committees and assigned to particular districts of the city. In 1884 the Association incorporated and replaced its volunteer visitors with a paid inspector. From that point forward, the Association acted on referrals from other agencies such as the Dispensary, the WCTU, etc. more so than contact initiated by HAICP staff. In Fingard's assessment this was in part due to waning enthusiasm on the part of volunteers. Also identified by Fingard are the Association's effort to distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor and attempts to impose proper behavior such as school attendance. The sorting process, however, proved too difficult.

With deserving and undeserving people coexisting within the same family unit, however, the association eventually decided to relieve the families of the undeserving because it was preferable to err on the side of mercy than to let the innocent suffer, a sentiment reflected by Archbishop O'Brien advice to the St. Vincent de Paul Society that it was "better to be imposed on ten times than to refuse one deserving case."¹⁰²

Physicians who worked for the Dispensary were among those who had much to do with the advancement of medical science and the professionalization of doctors within the city and the province as a whole. The HAICP through its incorporation and coordination of services with other agencies reflected emergent trends of scientific management. In these ways both agencies reflected the more modern character of late Victorian reform. The Association was also the only agency in Halifax to provide outdoor relief through work in its stone shed and intermittent operation of a laundry and an employment agency for domestic

¹⁰² Judith Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life*, 163.

servants. However, in the area of housing, Fingard criticized the Association for its short-sightedness and inability to eliminate or find alternatives for some of the deplorable housing that was at times the choice or only option for some individuals.¹⁰³ Judging by contemporary press coverage, during the time of this study these two organizations remained active and important to many residents of the upper streets well into the 20th century; though as time passed they became less intrusive upon the lives of their clientele.

The influence of business reform was also evident within Halifax. The Bank of Nova Scotia epitomized the tremendous financial profit that could be earned with the help of modern business practices. However, as James Frost has shown, what was good for the Bank was in the long-run harmful to Halifax and the entire Maritime region. Policies followed by the Bank funneled capital away from the region, capital that became unavailable for the development and maintenance of local industry.¹⁰⁴ No doubt influenced to some extent by examples set by the likes of the Bank of Nova Scotia, efforts to modernize and improve the financing of the city's water and sewer systems and its public schools are evident within the minutes of Council and the Board of School Commissioners. There may have been individuals who supported radical business approaches to the management of public affairs in Halifax. However, during the course of this research, no calls for approaches such as Henry George's single tax were discovered within the minutes of Council or the School

¹⁰³ Judith Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life*, 167.

¹⁰⁴ Frost, "The 'Nationalization'"

Commissioners or within the press of the day. Halifax derived some benefits from business reforms during the time of this study. It also benefited from the grace of private philanthropists. As noted earlier, Isabella Binney Cogswell devoted her life and fortune to the relief of poverty in Halifax. The Rockefeller Foundation and Carnegie Corporation funded medical and education projects within the city, most notably during the early 1920s. Nevertheless, it seems that the evolution of social welfare programs in Halifax from the late 19th to the early 20th century was not dramatically affected by business style reforms or private philanthropy.¹⁰⁵

Nor does the city appear to have been affected by radical politics, that is, an effort to educate the poor politically or encourage them to vote. Reform's efforts to help the poor and to gain female suffrage are well documented within Canadian historiography. However, in the course of this research no references within that literature were found regarding efforts on the part of reform groups to actively engage the poor in the democratic process. Through the work of Baskerville and Sager we saw that the poor were largely pushed aside by the Canadian labour movement.¹⁰⁶ Had they been more included perhaps the poor could have benefited from the political education that was part of the labour movement's emergence during the late 19th century. And perhaps the lack of political participation among today's poor identified in the contemporary literature on homelessness would be less evident.¹⁰⁷ Such things are speculative. The fact

¹⁰⁵ Raddell, *Warden of the North* and Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security*.

¹⁰⁶ Baskerville and Sager, *Unwilling Idlers*.

¹⁰⁷ Vanderstaay, Hopper and Layton. These authors identify activism on the part of the homeless in some places, particularly on the issue of housing. However, in general the homeless do not

is, as we saw earlier, that universal suffrage did not come to Nova Scotia until 1920. As for those who could participate in the city's municipal affairs during the time of this study, regardless of their gender or socio-economic status, many appear not to have done so. Reform provided the poor in Halifax with food, clothing, shelter and moral suasion. But they do not seem to have helped the poor make the connection between their general condition, public services and the franchise.

The evolution of social welfare during the time of this study appears to have been most affected by the character of the city's public institutions, most particularly the Police Court, Rockhead and the City Home. These institutions dealt with the greatest number of individuals, some of whom were known to and dependant upon all three institutions for much of their lives. They were operated solely with public funds, and perhaps because of that, they did not operate under a declared banner or philosophy. They were not particularly innovative. Mostly they followed traditional notions of charity, what Philip Gerard termed a Tory notion of justice. At the same time they were also tremendously flexible. Examples of their flexibility, as we have already seen, can be found in the case by case informality of the Police Court, the dependence upon inmate labour at Rockhead and the City Home, and the application of the settlement law within these two institutions. At the same time, all three public entities were changing slowly to become more in tune with modern scientific approaches and in so doing

vote, do not vote as a block nor do modern welfare agencies do much to promote either, perhaps because the history of doing so does not exist.

were part of the process of secularization as identified by Ramsay Cook. For example, in order to improve living conditions and daily order, inmates at Rockhead and the City Home were eventually separated by age, sex, and health. As we saw in the last chapter, in 1916 the city hired Jane Wisdom a professionally trained social worker to head its newly created bureau of social services. Henceforth, staff of public institutions became increasingly better trained and decisions regarding eligibility and treatment became guided more by casework models and less by worker discretion. It could perhaps be argued that the approach of these institutions was taken from the examples set within private agencies. However, these institutions were the oldest and largest institutions in the field. They were the places individuals such as Ellen Reardon fell back on when they failed at smaller private places. And they were overseen by men such as Edward O'Donnell who had known ties to and empathy for the upper streets. A definitive statement requires further research that more closely examines the approaches and interactions of all social welfare institutions operating within this time period. However, findings here suggest that these public institutions were primarily responsible for setting the tone of relief and reform in the upper streets and the city as a whole.

"Moderate" or "Small-r" Reform

In writing about the Maritimes in the years between 1910 and 1920, Ian McKay termed the period "The Stillborn Triumph of Progressive Reform". Perhaps it is an apt summation of matters from a regional perspective, and

perhaps it is fair to say that anyone who writes of the region during this time writes “an elegy for a vanished continent of aspiration, long lost beneath a sea of misfortunes.”¹⁰⁸ Similar tones of lament can be heard in the work of E.R. Forbes, T.W. Acheson, Colin Howell, Phillip Buckner and D.A. Muise. These historians and many others have well documented the better-times and harder times of the Region, from the fortunes made in the late 18th century to the dependency that was becoming entrenched by 1920. Here the debilitations of the Maritimes are laid bare – unfortunate geography; declining population and political influence relative to central and western Canada; deindustrialization; political fragmentation; and lack of financial and human capital. These realities are plainly and painfully visible to contemporary Maritimers. But to the eyes of the Region’s enthusiastic reformers of the past they were perhaps invisible as some historians have argued, certainly they were less obvious and ill addressed. Yet, there was a particular positive aspect to things in Halifax; one that remains only hinted at within the Regional historiography.

That advantage lays within the very weaknesses noted above, weaknesses that were felt in Halifax just as they were elsewhere in the Region. Regardless of zealous rhetoric and occasionally zealous actions, reform goals of all variety in the city were hamstrung by a lack of money. Also failing to materialize on a regional level, to the disadvantage of Halifax and cities and towns across the Maritimes, was a kind of unifying vision that appeared on the national stage through the Marsh Report or a well directed overarching administration such that

¹⁰⁸ E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces*, 229.

benefited the implantation of unemployment insurance.¹⁰⁹ At the same time Halifax faced problems that were much smaller scale and less intense than those seen in Toronto, Montreal, New York or London. In writing about the survival tactics of the Victorian poor in England including larger urban areas as well as small rural parishes, Steven King termed their strategy an economy of makeshifts. The makeshift moniker seems equally applicable to reform and relief efforts in Halifax, a context of making do. Certainly there were some notable characters among Halifax reformers. Isabella Binney Cogswell walked the talk her entire life and inspired others to do the same. "Her most consuming efforts were devoted to the moral improvement of her fellow citizens – never ostentatiously, never condescendingly, but always persistently."¹¹⁰ Dr. William Johnston Almon, who helped found the Halifax Visiting Dispensary was a leading figure in relief work and medical practice. "On 5 Feb. 1848, before amputating the thumb of a woman in the Poor's Asylum, Almon arranged that she be anaesthetized by having her inhale chloroform from a rag applied to her nose and mouth... Almon was among the first doctors in North America to use the anesthetic."¹¹¹ And John Naylor, a central character in Judith Fingard's study of the upper streets, was a tireless and sometimes overbearing force but his work for the Society of the Prevention of Cruelty paid long term dividends to the city and the nation. "Under Naylor's tutelage, the Nova Scotia SPC became the pioneer in anti-cruelty work in Canada: the first in the field, the most

¹⁰⁹ Guest, 105-126.

¹¹⁰ *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, October 2007, Library and Archives Canada, 21 January 2008 <<http://www.biographi.ca/EN/index.html>>

¹¹¹ *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, October 2007, Library and Archives Canada, 21 January 2008 <<http://www.biographi.ca/EN/index.html>>

comprehensive in scope, and the promoter of the earliest child-protection legislation (1880 and 1882)."¹¹²

The overall picture, however, is less brilliant. Surveys of the evolution of social welfare policy and programs in Canada such as that done by Dennis Guest confirm that relatively few leading figures in the field, or innovative solutions to social ills, emerged from Halifax or the Maritime region. Through the time of this study all institutions of reform struggled to secure sufficient funding, particularly small private organizations such as the Sailor's Home and the HAICP. Foresight and innovation were too often absent. For example, settlement houses never appeared in Halifax. Consequently the city never benefited, at least directly, from the advantages and knowledge gained through examples such as Toynbee Hall in London, Hull-House in Chicago or Evangelia House in Toronto.¹¹³ While these cities were larger, settlement houses were small community based operations; seemingly well suited for an area such as the upper streets. In the area of housing, the Hydrostone Project was an early example, and in Halifax the sole example, of public housing and innovative urban planning. The project was overseen by the Halifax Relief Commission and provided new housing for those left homeless by the Explosion.¹¹⁴ Here is what

¹¹² *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, October 2007, Library and Archives Canada, 21 January 2008 <<http://www.biographi.ca/EN/index.html>>

¹¹³ For an overview of settlement houses in Canada, particularly in Toronto see: Cathy James, "Reforming Reform: Toronto's Settlement House Movement, 1900-20," *Canadian Historical Review*, 82. 2001: 55-90.

¹¹⁴ "A Vision of Regeneration," Reconstruction after the Halifax Explosion, 1917-1921, October 2003. Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management, 21 January 2008 <<http://www.gov.ns.ca/nsarm/virtual/explosion/intro.asp>>

appears to have been a missed opportunity for Halifax to play a leadership role in the area of public housing; which to that time appears to have been untouched by reform.¹¹⁵ Whatever pressure there may have been to expand public housing prior to or based upon the demonstrated success of the Hydrostone Project, or to ensure better access to private housing, particularly for the poor who tended to be more often overcrowded into poorly maintained buildings, they were unsuccessful during this time period.

Reforms to the business of public affairs were called for and attempted but they were slow in coming and not known for daring or tremendous success. For instance, during the late 1890s and early 1900s, the city began to do a better job of addressing its debt through better auditing and procurement procedures and the establishment of sinking funds to retire the borrowings for specific projects. In 1894 a series of changes to the city's taxations system which included an income tax was proposed to Council in a resolution put forth by Alderman Wallace Redden. Such a move certainly would have been progressive and very possibly good for the city's overall financial health. Council adopted the resolution but the changes to the tax system were never made.¹¹⁶ During the same time period the Board of School Commissioners also established sinking funds to erase the costs of new buildings. However, it was also true that in 1892 the Board abandoned the long standing arrangement of leasing school buildings from the

¹¹⁵ John C. Bacher and J. David Hulchanski, "Keeping Warm and Dry"

¹¹⁶ Wallace Graham and F.H. Bell revisers, *Minutes of the City Council of the City of Halifax*, (Halifax: T.C. Allan Co., 1894) 130-134. Council minutes do not indicate why the resolution was not acted upon once adopted. Approval for such changes would have required approval from the Legislature which may not have been forthcoming.

Catholic Church, an arrangement that had been serving Halifax particularly well, politically and financially, since 1865. Had the arrangement continued the Board's debt would have been considerably less.¹¹⁷ The practice of medicine advanced and the city had its share of world class physicians. However, as the work of Colin Howell shows, the way forward through the 1890s and 1900s was often hobbled by conflicts between traditional and progressive views. As seen earlier social work became a legitimate profession but this too was slow by comparison.¹¹⁸ In 1916 the city did hire Jane Wisdom, a professionally trained social worker to head its newly created bureau of social services. At the same time the city would not open a school of social work until 1941. Meanwhile, Canada's first school of social work opened at the University of Toronto in 1914. McGill University opened its school of social work four years later. Today all the edifices of the modern welfare state are visible in Halifax, but few of them originated there.¹¹⁹

So where was the advantage in all of this? It came, perhaps surprisingly, from what reform did not do and it benefited the poor and destitute. What reform agencies in Halifax did not do was adopt harsh approaches to poverty. Their compassion, leniency and acceptance have been documented throughout this study. This seems in part to have been because reform agencies in Halifax evolved more slowly and so, at least in this time period, were not sites that forged

¹¹⁷ David Hood, "Some Fiscal Realities of School Reform in Victorian Halifax" *Nova Scotia Historical Review*, 16. 1996: 61-80.

¹¹⁸ Howell, *A Century of Care*.

¹¹⁹ Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security*.

or reinforced harsh divisions between the middle and working classes. In his study of class formation in Ontario, Andrew Holman discussed how agencies of relief and reform in that province were sites of structuration, a term Holman borrows from the work of Anthony Giddens. Giddens argued that classes are formed through socioeconomic interactions. "How economic classes come into relationship with one another is called structuration: the process whereby economic classes become *social* entities."¹²⁰ Within Victorian and Edwardian Canada, agencies of reform were principal sites of socioeconomic interaction between the poor and better-off members of society; they were sites of class formation. Guided by Giddens' notion of structuration, Holman studied the activities of temperance groups in two Ontario towns, Galt and Goderich. Holman found that temperance, and by implication reform in general, helped to produce in the minds of reformers a separation between themselves and those they sought to reform. Agencies of reform helped to formulate a middle class distinguishable by its thoughts and actions. Further research is needed to confirm a cause and effect relationship between less class antagonism as a result of the slow pace of reform and leniency toward the extremely poor. What can at least be seen through the findings of this study is that the two phenomena accompanied each other.

¹²⁰ Holman, 14. Giddens talked of structuration as both "mediate" and "proximate". Mediate structuration "means the degree to which social mobility is possible in society... Proximate structuration describes how classes are distributed in society by three media: workplace divisions of labour; workplace authority relationships; and patterns of consumption. Where these relations are consistent within a setting of 'mobility closure', they reinforced each other and reaffirm the significance of class." This study found a high degree of social mobility, which, according to Giddens' notion of mediate structuration, suggests a context in which class holds less significance.

This has not been a study of class formation. However, this study has paid a great deal of attention to social interactions within Halifax, particularly as they occurred within the context of relief and reform. As seen here, interactions within that context were not likely to produce harsh distinctions. Reformers, particularly front line staff, were drawn from a population long exposed and arguably conditioned to be at least more tolerant of hard drinking and associated activities; the very activities that were a principle target of reform. Within the largest and most active institutions of social welfare, paid staffs were small and the ability to operate on a daily basis was dependant upon inmate cooperation and labour. Some leaders and administrators of reform had obvious socioeconomic ties to the area and individuals most involved with relief and reform agencies; ties that tended to facilitate engagement not separation. A wide range of reform and the often harsh rhetoric of particular reformist agendas were present in the Halifax examined here. However, their ability to act was hampered by the range of disadvantages that stalled the progressive action of the entire region, most notable a lack of funds. Forced to make do, to act only so much, agencies of reform and relief in Halifax were seldom at the forefront of Canadian reform, nor do they appear to have been the potent sides of class formation and separation as seen in Ontario by Holman. The contention here is that the more moderate variety of reform that operated in Halifax helped to afford more physical and social space for the poor and destitute than similar groups appear to have been afforded in other cities during this time. In that space the poor and destitute of Halifax made their way forward, strived for economic independence, as best they

could and in the process clashes between various groups though not avoided all together were very much defused. The circumstances discussed below also contributed toward a moderate approach to reform and to less divisiveness; within the city as a whole and most particularly within the upper streets.

No Extreme Pressure on City Authorities

The authorities at Halifax were in support of broad based social reforms; less risk to children and better schools, improved public health and less disease and greater employment. We saw evidence of this in the city's debt incurred through the building of public services, the modernization of the Victorian General Hospital and the efforts of charity groups such as the HAICP. Certainly temperance supporters as well as some business minded reformers were convinced that reform had to begin with better control of the liquor trade. At the same time authorities were dissuaded from a harsh approach in the upper streets, the epicenter of the liquor trade and associated ills. They were well aware of the city's long military history and the social ills exacerbated by that presence. They could see as well that despite the military's decline plenty of hard drinking and rowdy behavior continued, a reality linked to the lingering influence of the military example. As we have seen, some city officials were further cautioned by their own as well as more widespread social and economic connections to the upper streets. Fortunately for them, and the city as a whole, officials were afforded time for caution by the overall economic climate which provided opportunities even for the least unemployable residents of the upper

streets. The evidence presented in the previous chapter shows that these residents were relatively few in number, and that they did the best they could to pursue the opportunities before them, which helped to ease fears of a so called dangerous class as well as the pressure faced by authorities to implement more aggressive social reforms.

Of course there were some forceful tactics. We saw evidence of this in Chapter Three. But, the overbearing tactics seen in Halifax involved particular cases. There were no sweeping hard-hitting measures as seen elsewhere, for example the morality squads that patrolled the streets of Toronto, the source of the city's facetious nickname "Toronto the good". While there was plenty of poverty and harmful activities in the upper streets, the number of persons who were completely or intermittently dependant upon the city's services of social welfare were relatively small. The available records cannot provide an exact count, but it is possible to gain a fair assessment of things. According to their ledger books, on most days during the period of time included within this study there were typically 300 inmates at the City Home and approximately 60 at Rockhead. The sum of all those residing in the various smaller institutions throughout the city was likely no more than another two to three hundred. Of this total population the most unstable, persons such as those listed in Table Five in Chapter Two, were a small group of no more than 50 individuals at any given time.

The city's welfare institutions provided only the bare necessities, but their benefits were available even to those most difficult to house. All inmates were met with reasonableness and for the most part they responded with cooperation. When the least stable and neediest individuals were not in one or another of the city's institutions of social welfare, they were in the upper streets where they also did the best they could to cooperate. There is not much hard evidence of education, employment or the payment of rent and taxes amongst this group. But there is some verification of such things along with a great deal of circumstantial evidence indicating positive actions on their part. As they struggled to survive in the community they had the advantage of at least moderate economic growth. Few of the extremely poor had the skills or stability for permanent work, but most were capable of temporary or casual employment. A century ago mechanization was rapidly increasing, but there was still a high demand for physical labour. More physical labour meant more injuries and with medical science less able to prevent illness there were more work days lost to illness. It was also a time of relatively few formalities. The numerous small businesses in the upper streets such as Hogan's, Peter Lowrie's grocery store or the O'Connell brothers' blacksmith shop were owner-operated and able to hire casual labour on-the-spot whenever necessary. In the case of larger operations such as Moirs or Robert Taylor's shoe factory decisions were likely made by managers rather than owners, but just as easily. Additional ad hoc opportunities existed outside the upper streets, particularly along the waterfront. There are no records to prove that Thomas Berrigan or his cohorts were able to get odd jobs or day labour. On

the other hand, we know for sure that they occasionally paid rent and taxes and regularly drank. Some of their money was certainly obtained through the informal economy, perhaps more so for women than men. The fact that the most down and out men and women were not often in court for begging, theft or robbery assaults suggests that they seldom molested the public for money. In light of all the available evidence, it appears that the poorest residents of Halifax participated in the workforce as best they could as odd-jobbers and casual labourers.

A lack of solid evidence regarding work, residence, payment of taxes, social connections built through memberships in unions, churches, etc, makes it difficult to cast those at the bottom of society in a positive light. A lack of such evidence has often been used to support the idea that poverty is a result of refusing to follow societal norms. Moreover, being reared within an environment dominated by refusal is said by some proponents of underclass theory to instill a culture of poverty. However, as Lydia Morris and others have argued, lack of work, residence, etc. proves exclusion, not a choice to opt out of or rail against society. In the course of this research, no evidence was found indicating that the least stable residents of Halifax during the 1890s and early 1900s offered any sort of ongoing resistance, be it haphazard or organized, to the existing social and economic order other than their inability to fit well within it. Nor were they isolated within an environment dominated by such refusal. Occasionally, homeless individuals or small groups took shelter in Point Pleasant Park or on the common,

but there were no permanent squats in these places or anywhere else in the city, no places where any sort of alternative lifestyle or culture could develop. Sometimes, destitute individuals would commit crimes of desperation in order to gain shelter. The most common offence of this kind was window breaking. Ellen Reardon was a "notorious glass breaker". But, she also claimed that she "worked for a living as much as anyone on Albemarle street". Attacks on property by Ellen and those like her reflect desperation and discontent, but no serious or calculated threat to the social order. In the Halifax of the past there were no signs of ominous social unrest in any segment of the population including the extremely poor.

The economy of Halifax in the decades leading up to World War One was strong enough to maintain long established wealth, to allow some movement from the working to the middle classes and to allow most of the poor to get by without falling into destitution. Those who did fall into destitution could retain some semblance of independence via casual labour. The economy was also strong enough and the geography was small enough to afford various services public and private to ease the severity of poverty and destitution and to facilitate a return to independence. In the light of modern standards and levels of professionalism, services of the past seem crude. But in their time they were progressive. Moreover, the system of social welfare as a whole was not overcrowded and it was easily accessible, particularly for those who lived in or about the upper streets where many of the services were located. During the

time examined here, as well as earlier time examined by Fingard, the City Home was never full to capacity nor was Rockhead. There were no reports in the press regarding lack of needed space at smaller institutions such as the local orphanages, the Halifax Industrial School or the Sailors' Home. It seems that none of the various institutions that provided social welfare services were ever full and forced to turn people away. In addition to institutional care, organizations such as Saint Vincent de Paul's, the Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor, the Visiting Dispensary and many others were constantly providing relief in the form of goods and services to the poor in their homes. And if all of the available official options were inaccessible or undesirable for whatever reason the numerous horse barns, sheds and storehouses that filled the backyards of many city properties could at the very least provide a night's shelter in dire circumstances.

Being poor in the city's upper streets a century ago was a hard life. Being in the position of Ellen Reardon, Sarah Shepherd or Thomas Berrigan was the hardest life of all. Not only were they poor and often overcome by alcohol, they had few marketable skills and little in the way of family support. But their plight was not as severe as it might have been. This was in part because they were a relatively small group. Matters were also kept from being worse by their own efforts to work and to be as independent as they could. And finally the economy was strong enough to provide some opportunities even to those least employable and at the same time afford a wide array of public and private social welfare

services. There were many city officials inclined to follow a kinder gentler path of reform. The economic circumstances outlined here helped them along that route by providing opportunity and means to do so.

So far in trying to understand and explain the unique nature of reform within the Halifax of a century ago, we have identified seven interrelated factors – the powerful influence of the British Army; the equally important departure of the Army; the significance of the liquor trade to the Halifax economy; the economic and social links between prominent individuals and the upper streets; the overall strength of the city's economy; the relatively low levels of destitution; and the positive actions of the extremely poor. This brings us to the final explanatory factor identified within this study and that is the static nature of the population; a reality that affected the delivery of social services within the Halifax of this time.

A Static and Familiar Population: The Demography of Halifax

In much of Canada the time between the 1870s and the onset of World War One was a time of particularly great change and social upheaval, particularly within urban centres. Changing relations between capital and labour, advancing science and technology and transforming social roles, particularly for women and children all had their effects. These factors were magnified and nuanced by huge increases in population as a result of immigration. Most of the immigrants came from Europe. Mennonites and Doukhobors came from western Russia. There were Ukrainians, as well as newcomers from Poland, Germany and Austria-

Hungary, many of them Jews fleeing discriminatory policies. Their impact on Canadian cities was enormous; numerically, socially and culturally. For example, "Montreal's Jewish community quadrupled between 1901 and 1911. The Jewish presence in Quebec put tremendous pressure on Protestant English-language schools, which the Jews attended because they could not get provincial grants to create their own schools."¹²¹ In the late 1890s and the first decade of the 20th century, Winnipeg was greatly affected by immigrants from the Ukraine. "Prior to 1910, the vast majority of Ukrainian migrants were men, the most of whom began their Canadian experience clustered in tenements in the north end of Winnipeg ... As soon as they could, they moved to their own farms...Ukrainians quickly earned a reputation for hard work and determination, though their cultural practices brought widespread criticism from their Canadian born neighbours."¹²² Waves of immigrants during this period had similar effects in numerous cities across the country, including Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver.

In many cities the population growth during this time was remarkable and cities sometimes staggered under the weight. For example, the population of Montreal in 1871 was 115, 000. By 1901 the population had grown to 328, 172, nearly triple. By 1921 the city's population had nearly doubled again by reaching 618, 506. The figures for the same years in Toronto were 59, 000; 209, 892; and 521, 893. In proportional terms Winnipeg experienced the most significant

¹²¹ Conrad and Finkel. *History of the Canadian Peoples. 1867 to the Present*, 115 and Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896 – 1921 A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974) 1-25.

¹²² Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, 117.

change of all. In 1871 there were a mere 241 souls at Winnipeg. Thirty years later in 1901 it was an urban space with 42, 340 inhabitants and by 1921 that figure had grown to 179, 087. Meanwhile, growth at Halifax was dramatically different. In 1871 Haligonians numbered 29, 582. Over the next thirty years the city's population grew to 40, 832, an increase of 38%, significant, but nothing compared to the 185% growth experienced during the same period in Montreal, the 250% increase seen in Toronto or the 17,000% expansion that occurred at Winnipeg.¹²³

Growth at Halifax was much smaller and more gradual. The source of growth was also much different. In Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and many other cities across Canada, the principal source of population growth was immigration. Such was not the case in Halifax. As advances in farming techniques and machinery reduced the number of hands needed to farm and urban factories cried out for workers, Nova Scotia experienced the same rural-urban shift in population experienced elsewhere. As the largest urban center in the region, Halifax was the destination of many young Maritimers following this pattern. It may have been the pursuit of greater opportunity and prosperity that brought Ellen Reardon to Halifax as she followed this larger trend. During the first century of the city's history, immigrants, sometimes in large numbers, came to Halifax. They were primarily British, Scotts or Irish. The American Revolution brought Loyalists to the city, black and white. While these immigrants landed at Halifax, only a small

¹²³ Conrad and Finkel, *History of the Canadian Peoples. 1867 to the Present*, 123. A similar story based on the *Census of Canada 1871-1901* regarding population growth and immigration patterns can be seen in E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces*, 138-148.

percentage of them became permanent residents of the city. Most moved, or were sent, on to farm other areas of the province or they left Nova Scotia altogether to pursue their fortunes elsewhere. "The Maritime provinces were largely overlooked by late-nineteenth-century immigrants. Many thousands of Europeans first landed in Canada at Halifax or Saint John; for most of them, however, it was only a brief stop en route to central or western Canada."¹²⁴ Alfred Jones represents the exception to the rule. While the decades immediately prior to World War One brought torrents of immigrants to many Canadian cities, at Halifax immigration by that time had slowed to a trickle. While newcomers poured into other places to double and triple their populations, growth at Halifax was gradual and primarily attributable to rural-urban migration and natural growth. Moreover, growth in Halifax and the entire Maritime region was stunted by the out-migration of its young people drawn away by the higher wages and greater opportunities available in the cities and factories of central Canada and New England.¹²⁵ Out-migration drained away young talent and creativity, but for those who stayed it eased somewhat the competition for jobs, housing and social services.

Waves of immigration helped lead many Canadian cities to prosperity. Immigrant labour in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors produced a wealth of goods and services. Some were sold in the growing domestic market, a market grown largely by immigration. Many staple products were exported to the United

¹²⁴ E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, 140.

¹²⁵ E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, 138-148.

States and to a lesser extent markets around the world. There was, however, a downside to all of this. Cities could not or would not keep up with the infrastructure demands of rapid growth, particularly in the areas of housing, sanitation and social services. The lion's share of new wealth went to owners not workers who were forced to endure frequent unemployment, crowded living conditions, illness and all the social ills associated with such things. Writing in 1896 businessman and social reformer Herbert Ames described Montreal as two cities, the city above the hill on the base of Mount Royal, and the city below the hill in the poor section of west-end Montreal. According to Ames in the city above the hill "there were tall and handsome houses, stately churches and well built schools." In the city below the hill "the tenement house replaces the single residence, and the factory with its smoking chimney is in evidence on every side" Some 38,000 inhabitants were jammed into the city below the hill where "residents suffered disproportionately from disease, crime, drunkenness, poverty and early death." Slum conditions in the "back-lane cottages of St. John's Ward and in areas close to the railyards, factories and packinghouses" in Toronto were little better than those found in the city below the hill. And "as in Montreal, Toronto's leading citizens spent as much energy bemoaning the morality of those living in poverty as the economic and political conditions that produced their sad condition."¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Herbert Ames, *"The City Below the Hill": a Sociological Study of a Portion of the city of Montreal, Canada*, (Montreal: Bishop Engraving, 1897) quoted in Conrad and Finkel, *History of the Canadian Peoples. 1867 to the Present*, 126

There was plenty of hardship to be found in congested Canadian cities of a century ago. But it can not be assumed that hardship and poverty were absent from smaller rural locations during that time or earlier periods, despite the benefits of rural life claimed by 19th century child savers. Robert Humphreys challenges the idyllic image of rural life in England leading up to 19th century industrialization.

Allegedly, before the industrial era, labouring people enjoyed a cozy, if simple, cottage. They are said to have enjoyed the daily pleasure of a nourishing diet made up of untainted food mainly grown in their own garden and smallholding. Nothing could be further from the truth. For most people this idyllic picture was illusory. The joys that did exist prior to intense industrial urbanization were mainly restricted to a privileged select minority.¹²⁷

In his discussion of a regional approach to an analysis of poverty in Victorian England Steven King found that poverty existed in both town and country as well as similar causes to poverty across settings. He noted that in the north and west “on balance the connection between the towns and cities and surrounding rural and rural industrial areas was much more intimate, reflecting a substantial interdependency of their respective poverty problems.” As for southern England he argued that “while they [towns] may have had more vagrants the towns suffered the same basic structures of dependency as did rural areas.”¹²⁸ Both Humphreys and King suggest that the causes and conditions of poverty were generally the same across 19th century England. However, both also show that responses varied according to the health of the local economy at any moment in

¹²⁷ Humphreys, 56.

¹²⁸ King, 9.

time and that in general those deemed to be part of the “resident poor” were treated better than transients. Their studies fall in line with findings here where the causes and conditions of poverty in Halifax appear similar to those identified in cities across Canada. In the Halifax of this time, the local economy was relative good, easing pressure on both officials and the poor. Moreover, there were few recent immigrants within the upper streets. The poor and extremely poor were for the most part permanent residents of the community and were for the most part treated with leniency by public officials.

According to contemporary observations and complaints, the slums of Montreal and Toronto in the later decades of the 19th century appear to have been larger versions of the upper streets of Halifax circa 1870. However, unfit areas in late-Victorian Toronto, Montreal and other major Canadian centres, in addition to being larger, were also filled with more ethnic and religious differences than were visible in the upper streets of Halifax at any time. The poorest area of Halifax also had the benefit of occasional and then permanent reprieve through the departure of the British Army. There do not appear to have been any respites available to the poor in other Canadian cities other than those provided by sustained employment and increased wages as they occurred on an individual bases. Reform, relief and better conditions eventually came to cities across Canada as it did in Halifax. However, it seems that along the way the poor were responded to more harshly wherever there was more of them and they were more ethnically and or religiously different from the majority. Or it may be

that if the poor in other Canadian cities of the past are approached in the manner of this study, more similarities between them and their immediate better off neighbours as well as leniency on the part of public officials may become more visible.

The poor and the extremely poor in the upper streets of Halifax during the time of interest here were characteristically similar to each other and their better-off neighbours. Language, and to a large extent, history were shared. There were differences between Catholics and Protestants, but there were no significant minorities of Mormons, Doukhobors, Mennonites or Jews to further religious, social or political difference. The Blacks in the upper streets were a visible minority. Racial discrimination encouraged some of them to establish a small separate community at Africville in the city's north end.¹²⁹ There is plenty of room to criticize the historical treatment of Blacks and Natives throughout Nova Scotia. At the same time Halifax was not plagued by the violent racial tensions that divided many of America's cities. The research behind the community profile presented in the previous chapter revealed a great deal of cooperation and tolerance within the upper streets. Local businesses drew their labour and their customers largely from the community, a draw that included to some extent those with the least employability and income. Certainly there were conflicts between property owners and tenants, but they were not severe enough to prevent many individuals from holding and renting property in the upper streets over the long-

129 Donald H. Clairmont and Dennis William Magill, *Africville: the Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community*, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1999).

term. Like business owners, landlords were willing to deal with the least stable members of the community. Those who held positions of authority within public and private agencies of social welfare, as well as policemen and members of the Salvation Army, were able to live in the upper streets unmolested. The crime that did exist there was petty and seldom involved extreme violence. Moreover, it was not disproportionately directed at or committed by a clearly distinguishable group – racial, religious or socio-economic. The cooperation that existed in the upper streets may not have been entirely to do with the sameness outlined above, but that sameness most likely helped to reduce barriers to cooperation.

Because of the unique demographics of Halifax during the late 19th and early 20th century, the poor, but more so the destitute, remained a small and familiar group within the upper streets. They were well known. They were known for frequently being drunk, for regular appearances in Police Court and for often darkening the doors of Rockhead and the City Home. They were known to sometimes be related, but not as families of perpetual destitution. They were known to associate with one another, which appears to have been in equal measures help and hindrance. The extremely poor were known for often being a pain and a pity. On the other hand they were known to work, at menial tasks in the community and as earners of their own keep within the city's various social welfare institutions. They were known to pay rent and taxes when they were able. They were also known for being a fluid group, its members came and when according to changes in habit, mental health and economic fortunes. They were

known too for being little different in their actions from many of those who were better-off socially and economically. With all that was known of the extremely poor by those who knew them most they were not known as a threat or treated as one. They were treated with what might be described as a devil you know familiarity. It could be argued that reform and relief lead tolerance into the upper streets. However, in the opinion of this research, during the 1890s and early 1900s the attitudes that came out of the upper streets and into the front ranks of relief and reform as well as positions of authority behind it gave to social welfare delivery in Halifax a tolerance and an empathy that was not possible or seen elsewhere in Canada during the same period.

Conclusion

During the time examined by this research the social welfare system of Halifax treated poor and destitute residents of the city with a relatively high degree of understanding, flexibility and leniency. Those in charge knew the city's military and seafaring legacy. They knew that many livelihoods and lifestyles in the city revolved around hard drinking. During the 1890s and early 1900s, many individuals rose to prominence precisely because of the widespread fondness for drink. Officials were concerned about the physical and social ills of the liquor trade. But they also realized that the tendencies ingrained in the population would be resistant to harsh measures. They could see also the need for additional services and that they were coming, albeit gradually. Numerous and varied examples of reform were present in the Halifax of this time. Rhetoric from

particular reform groups could be harsh. Actions of reformers were sometimes overzealous. Fortunately, it was also true that reform and reformers were moderated by the broader socioeconomic circumstances of the region and by the politics that accompanied it. Like all Maritimers, they were forced to make do. Meanwhile, the severity of problems was being eased by a relatively good economy. There was poverty, but the destitute were few in numbers and socially they were pitiable and sometimes a nuisance, but never a real threat to the order of things in the city. In sharp contrast to hardliner views, the upper streets exhibited a great deal of cooperation, cooperation that extended to the least stable residents of the community. The conciliatory approach of the community leached into public and private agencies of reform and relief as they operated within the upper streets. The poor and destitute were known in the upper streets and elsewhere in the city. To a small group of alarmists they were a threat, but not to most. To view them historically as an underclass imposes a false separation that is at odds with their lived experience and the character of social service delivery in Halifax during the late 19th and early 20th century as seen within this study. Nor in the opinion of this researcher, is the lived experience of the poor in cities across Canada well served or accurately presented using theories of an underclass. The next and final chapter summarizes findings here and discusses how the poor and extreme poverty of the past in Halifax as seen here can inform circumstances in contemporary Halifax and elsewhere.

Chapter Five – Epilogue and Conclusions

Introduction

This study set out to examine the lives of those who struggled at the bottom of Halifax society between 1890 and 1914. From the outset it was informed by the work of Judith Fingard and a small group of others who have written about the poor and destitute in Halifax during earlier times.¹ It set out with great interest in the actions of its central characters, to determine the extent to which their actions could be accurately described as unsavoury or atypical. The sources available and used for this study were much the same as those available and used by others who have approached the topic. Like many previous works this research relied heavily on individual biographies to present the realities of poverty as authentically as possible, most particularly to present the interactions between those I defined as the extremely poor and the institutions of social welfare available to them. What sets this study apart is its use of a greater volume of material. The ability to handle such a quantity of material was made possible by using computer technology to create a database that enabled one to hold and cross reference a number of sources. The community profile created by using this database in conjunction with other online databases displayed important trends across a 24 year period. That profile also showed interactions between residents of the upper streets on a scale not previously attempted or

¹ Judith Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life and, principally* James M. Whalen, "The Nineteenth Century Almshouse System in St. John County", Brereton Greenhous, "Paupers and Poorhouses: The Development of Poor Relief in Early New Brunswick" and R.E Knoll, "Confines, Wards, and Dungeons".

possible for a single researcher until recently. This study also examined types of relations which were not within the focus of earlier studies; tax and rent payments for example. At the same time those who have studied the extremely poor in Atlantic Canada during earlier times worked with approaches and concepts that did not allow them to consider fully the positive actions of their subjects. Both sides are presented here. Also presented here more clearly than has been seen to date is a constitutive portrait of relations, that is, the engagement that took place between the extremely poor of Halifax and members of the city's middle class. This has been aided largely by the work of Steven King. And following the example of contemporary literature on homelessness, this study assumed from the beginning that the extremely poor of the past could be better studied and more accurately depicted as the weakest members of the working class, not as a group apart as they have been approached by previous authors. As a result characters appear more as they were, varying degrees of positive and negative actions; members of the community who were able to engage and affect those around them and to be affected in return. The characters at the centre of this study acted in much the same way as those who came before them and occupied a similar position within the social order. However, the context of their actions was different and continued to change throughout the course of their lives. Certainly the changed context and the better opportunities it brought gave more opportunities for the extremely poor to work, pay rent and taxes, to exhibit at least some degree of positive actions as I defined them in the opening chapter.

This chapter briefly reviews the lives and circumstances of our five central characters and offers, when it is possible, more information about how their lives ended. At the same time this chapter endeavours to summarize the findings of this study. It finishes by looking at the meaning of those findings for the Halifax of the present day, particularly for the city's approach to the extremely poor and its provision of social welfare services.

Harsh Demarcations not Real or Analytically Helpful

The first character introduced in this study was Thomas Berrigan. We saw that Thomas lived a rough life, as far as we know he was homeless much of the time. But as we are about to see he ended his days offering what support he could to an institution which had aided him throughout much of his life. Through the 1870s and 80s Thomas grew up on Albermarle Street with his older siblings Patrick and Catherine and his younger brother Michael. He came from a family of poor Irish Catholics. His father was a labourer. His mother may or may not have worked outside the home. The Berrigan children had a poor upbringing but what appears to have been a stable one. Neither of their parents were ever listed in the ledgers of the Police Court or Rockhead. Nor were they in the local press which was quick to report on negative activities as defined in Chapter One. The family residence was consistently listed in the *Halifax Directory* suggesting steady income and roots in the community. The Berrigans were the archetypal working poor so often described and praised within Canadian labour history. Also visible within labour history is the physically demanding and unsafe working

conditions that were common throughout the Victorian era and early decades of the 20th century. We know too from labour history as well as other branches of social history that medical knowledge and care was less advanced in those times, so were habits, possibilities and standards of public sanitation, nutrition and personal hygiene.² As a result life was cut short for many and so the untimely death of Thomas' father in 1880 was as common as his family's poverty.

The loss of a parent is traumatic for a young person in any era. It is doubly tragic when it happens in a time and place where grieving children are forced into the workplace as the only means of replacing the income of their lost parent. Such was the fate of Thomas Berrigan at the age of fourteen. How much that fate had to do with his drinking at a young age and his early start on a long career of dependency and destitution is impossible to say from the sources that we have regarding lives such as those of Thomas Berrigan. His older brother Patrick Berrigan had a few drinking related brushes with the law prior to the death of his father Thomas Sr. For a few years after the loss of his father Patrick Berrigan was a regular in the Police Court, but he also kept employment and close ties with his family. And by his mid twenties his rowdiness appears to have ceased. Catherine and Michael Berrigan were never known to be in conflict with the law.

² Colin Howell, *A Century of Care*, Terry Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty* and Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare*. Until medical knowledge better understood the links between overcrowding, ventilation, personal hygiene and disease institutions such as poor houses had no policies or standards in such areas. But that does not suggest that officials had no regard for the health of poor individuals or that illness and injury did not qualify individuals as deserving in the eyes of authorities. King has shown that medical expenses took up a large portion of relief costs in Victorian England. Findings here as well as the work of Colin Howell show that the sick and injured poor in the Halifax of a century ago had easy access to medical care and were treated by the same doctors as were the rest of the city's population.

Thomas Berrigan appears to have been the only member of his family that had a life long struggle with alcohol. The loss of his father does not excuse him. On the other hand neither can Thomas Berrigan's family be blamed for having raised him to be a burden upon society. As we have seen hard drinking was a long established way of life in Halifax. Thomas Berrigan may simply have been overcome by that conditioning and lifestyle. The same may well be said of many others. Thomas Berrigan lived a rough life, and in light of that fact, an amazingly long one. He lived to be 71. He died on May 9th 1937 at the Victoria General Hospital. As near as police investigators could tell he rose from his bed at the Salvation Army hostel during the night of May 8th. He then fell though the swinging doors of the dormitory and fractured his skull. Witnesses said he had been drinking the night before and had to be helped to the hostel. At the time of his death Thomas was the night watchman at the City Home. He ended his days doing what little he could to support a system that had supported him throughout his adult life.³

We saw that Ellen Reardon was also supported by the city's social welfare system most of her adult life and we shall see, like Thomas Berrigan, her life also came to an end within an institution of social welfare. We know little about her life as a child. She came from Windsor, apparently the only member of her family to do so, despite the fact that she had six siblings. She arrived in Halifax in 1880 when she was 18 or 19 years old. Likely she came in search of work; perhaps

³ *Halifax Chronicle*, 12 April 1937, NSARM, mfm# 5708. Report of the Medical Examiner, 23 April 1937, NSARM, RG 41 Box 94 # 954.

too she planned to stay with relatives or friends in the city. Whatever her intentions, she began her career of hard drinking and rough living shortly after arriving in Halifax. Early in that career the Police Court banished her back to Windsor, perhaps due to the fact that Windsor was her place of settlement, more likely because the Court felt she would be better off at home. Ellen disagreed. If she did return to Windsor after leaving as a teenager it was not for long. From her first appearance before the stipendiary magistrate on 13 May 1880 until her death in the City Home on the 25th of June 1913 Ellen Reardon was, more than anywhere, inside one or another of the city's institutions of social welfare. In her younger years she was known to the homes for fallen women. In the late stages of her life she used the revolving door at the City Home. But most of all she was in prison. Ellen Reardon was sent to Rockhead at least 110 times and was sentenced to 100 or more days in jail nearly every year for a period of thirty years.⁴ She may well have been the most notorious offender in the history of the city.

Of course Ellen lived some of her life on the outside, in the upper streets. In response to a vagrancy charge in 1897, we saw her vehemently declare that she "worked for a living as much as any one on Albemarle street."⁵ At least some, perhaps most, of her work was in the bars and brothels. Given the high volume of informal economic activity on Albermarle Street in those years her statement in court can be accurately understood to mean that many people in the upper

⁴ Before the Halifax Police Court 1877-1916, NSARM, RG 42 Series D vols. 26, 31, 34, 36, 38a, 41, 43 and Series B vol. 39.

⁵ *Acadian Recorder*, 4 Aug 1897, NSARM, mfm# 5274.

streets earned their living through liquor, prostitution and associated activities. As we have seen, in Ellen's day the vast majority of vice was consumed by local residents from all areas and classes within the city making moral distinctions between purveyors and patrons seem rather phoney or pretentious.⁶ With or without the distinctions, Ellen and many like her lived hard lives, but not lives lived in isolation from or rejection by the majority. They were familiar with and often engaged by a great many residents of the upper streets and adjacent neighbourhoods and the persons from those places who served on the front lines of reform and relief. I have argued that, because of this proximity, the better-off members of the city's population working in such capacities did the best they could to provide easy access to the basics of subsistence and at least encouraged individuals caught in the rough of life to seek an alternative path of survival.

At one point in his life Alfred Jones, like some of the other characters seen within this study, did have an alternative, a legitimate source of income, as he was a British sailor. Poverty, even extreme poverty, was not an indication of moral weakness, nor were capable individuals immune. Jones came to Halifax in mid life. We know nothing of his life previous to that. Based on the knowledge that hard-drinking was typically associated with the seafaring life, Jones may have begun drinking as early in life as Thomas Berrigan and Ellen Reardon. On the other hand he may not have become involved in sailing and rowdiness until

⁶ This statement is bolstered by the blurred line between control and disease and the questions of responsibility and demand as presented in the definition of vice offered in chapter one.

later in life. We just do not know. What is clear is that sailing brought him to Halifax and that from 1890 until his last recorded appearance in Police Court in 1914, the last record of his presence in the city, Alfred Jones lived a rough life in the upper streets. He was older than Thomas Berrigan and Ellen Reardon with a different past and perhaps more employable skills, but for the later part of his life he was no better off. Jones appears to have suffered a slower decline. Perhaps the trajectory of his life can be accurately described as a fall from independence, if not grace. At one point in his life he held legitimate employment and was part of a traditional occupation which held some deserved allure. Jones could at least claim to have once been something; Berrigan and Reardon if pressed would have been forced to admit that they did not achieve a great deal of economic success or independence. How much such failings are a matter of individual responsibility was as much a subject of debate in Halifax one hundred years ago as it is now within contemporary Halifax and cities around the world.

As they always have, past debates in Halifax surrounding an individual's responsibility for their own destitution raised questions of morality and choices, questions that are passionately debated and often cast the likes of Thomas Berrigan, Ellen Reardon and Alfred Jones in a negative light. The debate always became all the more incendiary when it moved on to decide what help if any the indigent should receive and who should pay. As purveyors of opportunities and activities often linked to poverty, the likes of Sarah Shepherd and Charles Clarke were subjected to a certain amount of moral scrutiny and suspicion. However,

moral apprehensions aside, the liquor and sex trade kept a roof over their heads and money in their pockets which allowed them to be taxpayers rather than a burden on the public purse. Clarke appears to have never been anything other than a keeper of a bawdyhouse and saloon. Shepherd seems to have been forced into the informal economy by the death of her husband. Both were Black which also limited their range of options socially and economically. Both were drinkers themselves, a factor which may also have contributed to their decisions to enter the liquor trade. As we saw in Table Five of Chapter Two, both were frequent offenders and both appeared before the court for drunkenness, Shepherd more so than Clarke. Their drinking may also help to explain why they did not move from their illicit enterprises into more legitimate economic pursuits as William Sutton, E.W. O'Donnell and others were able to do. Even without that movement, both were successful economically. Clarke remained in business for more than thirty years.

The fact that the likes of Sarah Shepherd and Charles Clarke were numerous and successful in Halifax to varying degrees from the 1870s to the onset of World War One is a testament to the entrepreneurial skills existent within those otherwise seen as the city's purveyors of vice during those times as well as the perennial appetite within the local population of all classes for the activities they managed. Whether or not the overall appetite for vice and social problems associated with the liquor trade would have dissipated with the prohibition of alcohol in the 1890s as advocates for temperance then suggested will never be

known. Given that prohibition in the 1920s raised as many problems as it resolved, it seems reasonable to assume that the same would have been true thirty years earlier when hard-drinking was all the more prevalent.⁷ Over time with the departure of the British Army, when the strong will and presence of reform was particularly felt by upper street residents through organizations such as the Salvation Army and the City Home, and an economy able to provide more opportunities for legitimate enterprises, with the prosperity of such years, a new breed of more temperate less rowdy residents began to fill the upper streets and the city as a whole. In the long run the Nova Scotia government would take over the liquor trade; at least so far as the wholesale and retail distribution of alcohol is concerned.⁸ By the 1930s storefront brothels had disappeared from Halifax. The exact cause is not visible from the sources available here. What can be said is that during the 1930s few individuals had money to spend on such activities, port traffic in Halifax was down and the region saw an increase in the strength of religious fundamentalism during this time.⁹ Prostitution did not disappear completely and the concerns raised over strolls has ebbed and flowed over the years. The horrors of child abuse, violence against women and mental illness are now better understood, reported and addressed, in part due to the efforts of late

⁷ Graeme Decarie, *Canada's Visual History, Prohibition in Canada*.

⁸ Murray Beck. *Politics of Nova Scotia vol. 2*, 132-136. The Nova Scotia Liquor Commission was created in 1930 through legislation brought in under Conservative premier Edgar N. Rhodes. Newspaper reports of the day suggested the new commission reflected popular support for government control as well as the government's desire to increase revenue. The papers also reported that "although late in October [1930] nine counties had voted to retain the Nova Scotia Temperance Act, an overall majority of 15,929 opposed it, of which 15,669 came from Halifax county." 133. Beck does not offer any further details of the vote, for instance who was eligible to participate and what percentage of eligible voters actually voted. Nor is it clear that the figure for Halifax county included city voters, but given that the population outside the city at this time would have been very small, it likely represents the will of Halifax city; a will that appears to have changed little since the 1890s so far as the prohibition of alcohol is concerned.

⁹ E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces*, 272-305.

19th century reformers. See for instance the history of social welfare in the city as traced on the web site of the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers website. New, or perhaps just variations of traditional vices, in association with the internet have appeared to confound modern law enforcement and health professionals alike. Not surprisingly, addictions of all sorts continue to ruin the lives of some Haligonians just as they do in cities around the world.

Harmful patterns of self-indulgence and addiction remain. However, the consequences for unsanctioned purveyors of vice have changed dramatically. Here the present is unlike the past. In the Halifax of one hundred years ago, common vices were technically illegal, but they were not met with harsh prosecution. In the absence of a permanent criminal record as we understand it today, movement from the illicit to the legitimate economy was less awkward. Those who made that move were inclined to finish their lives with material comfort and economic security. Those who made their living exclusively within the illicit economy usually did not fare as well. Sarah Shepherd for example, died of heart disease on June 24th 1921. According to her death certificate she was 73 years old. Her last employment was listed as house duties. At the time of her death Sarah was living with her daughter Ada at 131 Market Street.¹⁰ It seems that by then the ignominy of “iron horse” and “junior iron horse”, the unkind nicknames given to them by the press as we saw in Chapter Two, had faded. But Sarah did not end her life in any appearance of comfort. She did manage, at least, to hold on to what family she had and to maintain her independence.

¹⁰ Death Registration, 1921, NSARM, Book: 72, 639.

Charles Clarke seems to have fared better than Sarah economically, but his death by suicide, noted here for the first time, suggests that he did not come to the end of his days happily. On 23 September 1907 Clarke was found in a pool of blood in the front hall of his place on Albermarle Street. When police arrived on the scene he admitted to having cut his own throat. He died four days later in hospital.¹¹ Suicide was common in Halifax during the time examined here, usually by hanging or jumping into the harbour.¹² Clarke's suicide is not necessarily a comment on his or the general socio-economic circumstances of the upper streets. Nothing in this research suggests that suicide was more common among any particular segment of the population, including the extremely poor. Exactly what led Clarke to take his own life we can never know. What we do know is that he had a very long career, one that never landed him in jail despite being outside of the law. Clarke's place and others like them were raided every so often, but unlicensed bars and brothels were largely condoned. Such is no longer the case. Today all levels of government in Canada tightly control alcohol sales. Canada refuses, however, to sanction the numerous other so called recreational drugs that have become popular and profitable over the last half century. The high percentage of individuals incarcerated in Canada and more so in the United States for drug related offences is a clear indication that

¹¹ *Acadian Recorder*, 23 and 27 September 1907, NSARM, mfm# 5297.

¹² For example John Oxner a blacksmith aged 50 hug himself in a shed in his backyard at 19 Maynard Street in May of 1895. *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 3 May 1895, NSARM, mfm# 6710. While at the police station in February of 1901 a women by the name of Riley "tore the strings off her apron, tied them tightly around her throat and then fastened the ends of the strings to a bench. She thought that by this means would end her life. The officers, however, frustrated her attempt". *Morning Chronicle*, 5 February 1901, NSARM, mfm# 5525.

prohibition is not working any better now than it did in the 1920s and 30s.¹³ As for the sex trade, it remains illegal and prosecuted in the Canadian context, but by no means has it been eradicated. Some have argued that the safest course of action is legalization and movement of the matter from criminal justice to public health as has happened in some areas within the United States and Europe.¹⁴ Here again the present appears different from the past as the notion of legalization was not evident in the materials examined here.

According to the findings of this study, in the time between 1890 and 1914 the moral difference between those who occupied the positions of least economic and social advantage in Halifax and their better-off neighbours was small, more a matter of degree than kind. The central characters of this study, Thomas Berrigan, Ellen Reardon, Alfred Jones, Sarah Shepherd and Charles Clarke, and those like them were not isolated outcasts. Their actions were more similar than different from the majority. Their actions did not, as most historians of poverty contend, suggest a unique perspective forged through experiences that were

¹³ According to Statistic Canada between 2002 and 2006 approximately 200 of every 100,000 Canadians were charged each of these years for violations of federal drug statutes. Approximately 230 of every 100,000 were charged with impaired driving during the same period. These statistics do not indicate those who committed the same actions and did not get caught or the number of other offences that were committed in part due to intoxication. Persons Charged by Type of Offense, 18 July 2007, Statistics Canada, 22 April 2007 < <http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/legal14a.htm>> One of the most provocative arguments for the ineffectiveness of prohibition can be found in a short article by Gore Vadel published in 1970. "Drugs: Case for Legalizing Marijuana," *The New York Times*, 26 September 1970.

¹⁴ Deborah R. Brock, *Making Work, Making Trouble: Prostitution as a Social Problem*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1998) and Marcel-Eugène LeBeuf, *Control or Regulation of Prostitution in Canada* (Ottawa: Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2006). As these authors point out, the idea of legalization has been around for a long time. On the one hand, prostitution is depicted as an activity that should not be sanctioned by the state on moral grounds. Meanwhile, demand has ebbed and flowed in Canada based on time and circumstances, suggesting a range of moral views on the issue, past and present.

distinct from the majority. For those whose penury and lack of social advantage was rooted in addiction theirs was a matter of disease, a sentence not a choice. This important distinction was made clear at the outset in the definition of vice and has helped guide the approach to central characters throughout this study. A harsh moral distinction based on court appearances and jail time remains difficult to defend when the actions causing those events were widespread. I have argued throughout that no conception of an underclass accurately describes the characters examined here or helps us to better understand the course of their lives. It could be argued that the extremely poor occupied a unique place within society and therefore are worthy of a distinct field of historical study. However, in my opinion, such separation, like the use of underclass theory, only encourages a false distinction which serves to undermine the worthiness that the subjects of this study struggled to maintain. Better they be included within the field of labour history. Starting with this suggestion has allowed this research to find interesting elements and therefore I believe it is a fruitful approach; one that more accurately reflects the lived experience of those who were not beyond, but were rather the weakest members of the working class

The Poor Benefited From Less Attention

Throughout this study much has been made of the flexibility and tolerance that characterized the delivery of social welfare services in Halifax between 1890 and 1914. That flexibility and tolerance, with a touch of paternalism, what Phillip Girard, as we have seen in Chapter Three, termed a system of Tory justice, was

a product of the unique confluence of circumstances that existed within the Halifax of that time. As the historiography of the Atlantic Region shows, the overall economy during this period was relatively strong. Certainly all of the trends that, by the 1920s, would leave the Region with a persistent out migration problem, a weak manufacturing base and very much dependent upon federal transfer payments were present. It was also true that circumstances varied from one place to another. But for the moment of this study, the economy of Halifax was not experiencing the peak of war time as it had so often in the past, nor was it in the shadows of depression. It was at the very least strong enough to afford hope, recall the quote from Ian McKay in the previous chapter. City officials borrowed against that hope to provide public services such as roads, sewers and schools. Reformers of all varieties acted on and gave cause for further hope through their efforts to address an array of social ills.

Reformers at Halifax were bolstered by the extent to which similar feelings of hope and a desire for reform pervaded the whole region. As argued in Chapter Four, largely because of the departure of the British Army, by the late 1870s Halifax reformers were afforded increasing social and physical operating space within the upper streets, the city's epicentre of poverty and destitution. In the preceding chapter it was also argued that from approximately the same time, a variety of small and medium size legitimate businesses were also able to take advantage of the increasing space in the upper streets. These business activities can be seen as a part or partner of reform so much as their presence set an

example of positive actions within the community. Some individuals, such as E. W. O'Donnell and James M. Geldert Jr., grew from their roots in the liquor trade to success in other areas of business. Their business interests remained local and so they stayed in Halifax and interested in the welfare of the city. They became part of the city's administration where they faced calls for reform, sometimes delivered in shrill tones. They supported change, but not harsh policies, particularly where the upper streets were concerned. In their experience such measures were neither necessary nor likely to be effective. Hard drinking was culturally ingrained; an unsurprising legacy for a garrison town and seaport. Given that reality and Council's reluctance to harshly address it, the liquor trade remained good trade in Halifax. Some lives were torn asunder by drink in plain public view and they appeared similar to the ruined lives visible in larger cities. But in Halifax the numbers were not as great as seen in other places, or as the local temperance rhetoric sometimes suggested. For the most part, those least able to participate in the legitimate economy, primarily due to addiction or a combination of factors, did the best they could to fit in and to follow societal norms. Recall in Chapter Two we saw the so called notorious Thomas Sullivan working, holding union membership and an address in the community. Others like him did the best they could to work, pay taxes and rent, as we saw in Chapters Two and Three. Similarly, contemporary research shows that, contrary to popular conceptions, the homeless work as much as they can.¹⁵ As the homeless in the Halifax of the past struggled to fit in they had the benefit of being known and familiar. In the last chapter I argued that this was possible due to the

¹⁵ Kim Hopper, *Reckoning With Homelessness* and Steven Vanderstaay, *Street Lives*.

city's slow population growth. While locations across North America such as Toronto, Montreal and New York were being overwhelmed and forever changed by a diverse mass of immigrants, the population at Halifax grew only gradually. Moreover, the growth that did occur came more so from local births and migration into the city from nearby rural areas than it did through immigration from far away places notably different in language, culture and ethnicity.¹⁶ At the same time out migration, while it robbed the region of talent, also eased pressure on welfare budgets and the poor who remained in the region. Unfortunately the full extent of out migration in this regard can not be accurately determined from the sources used here, perhaps from any set of sources. For those who remained in the city, however, findings here bear similarity to those of Steven King. In his study of poverty in England during this time, King demonstrated that at the parish level poor rates were often a matter of negotiation between the resident poor, the better-off members of the community and the overall health of the local economy. The resident poor in the small confines of late Victorian and Edwardian Halifax were also able to negotiate with welfare authorities owing in part to the relative health of the local economy. Halifax was not inundated by a transient population during the time of this study. However, both King and Humphreys show that across England the transient population was often large and received the least favourable attention. What appears to be a similar kind of alienation as a result of being unfamiliar within a large urban population is

¹⁶ Conrad and Finkel, *1867 to Present*, 115 and E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces*, 138-148.

evident in the work on contemporary homeless.¹⁷ In this regard past and present may be more alike. While migration out the Atlantic Region has been well documented, movement within the region, particularly by the poor, needs further investigation. Findings here suggest that it may be possible to trace the movement of the poor within Atlantic Canada. Unfortunately such a large scale effort was not possible here. However, it seems promising and if undertaken in the future with an approach to the poor similar to that employed here, it may be possible to comment on the character of Atlantic Canadian and perhaps Canadian society in general, in new and important ways.

The group at the very bottom of Halifax society during the time of this study, the group most affected by drink and with the lowest levels of education and marketable skills, was a relatively small group. The data presented in Chapter Two suggests that the group totalled no more than fifty individuals at any one time in a city whose population grew from approximately 38,000 to 46,000 during the time of this study. As just noted, because the extremely poor were few in number they were treated less harshly and afforded greater opportunity to negotiate with authorities. Size is important in another regard. Looking back such a small group hardly seems appropriately described as a social class of any sort. In their own time contemporaries who lived closest to them showed no signs that they viewed the homeless or extremely poor as a dangerous underclass. Had fear of a dangerous underclass been acute and widespread the long term property ownership and residency evidenced in Chapter Three would not likely

¹⁷ Kim Hopper, *Reckoning With Homelessness* and Steven Vanderstaay, *Street Lives*.

have been the case. The vitriol that was common in the press motivated reform to some extent, but it does not appear to have convinced the general readership in Halifax that a dangerous underclass existed or that drastic measures were called for. Even if some were inclined to initiate or support severe actions against the poor and destitute, there was, in a growing but nevertheless marginal economy, limited funds to support such action. The city was having a hard enough time paying for roads, schools and hospitals without spending more money on policing, incarceration or other severe measures designed to curb public drinking, the sex trade or prompt the idle.¹⁸ And given the widespread penchant for revelry and that even the least capable were not completely idle, severity seemed both unlikely to succeed and unnecessary. In larger centers the scale of destitution was often larger and the response often harsher, more aligned with harsh tones in the press. Did the extremely poor and homeless act differently when there were more of them? Or did greater size merely exaggerate fear and pejorative descriptions? I am inclined to believe the latter. However, further research that approaches the homeless of the past in the manner employed here is required before that can be said for sure.

The preceding summary has reviewed some of the most influential circumstances that enveloped the upper streets in the decades leading up to 1914. Perhaps the most important product of these circumstances was what might be called a state of grace; a moment of reprieve that allowed many

¹⁸ *Minutes of the City Council of the City of Halifax*, Wallace Graham and F.H. Bell revisers, (Halifax: T.C. Allan Co., 1894, 1897 & 1901).

amongst the poor and the destitute freedom to struggle forward as best they could without the volume of stigma and rejection that was heaped upon similar characters elsewhere. Within that assent and helping to maintain it as part of upper street life during this time to the benefit of the poor and their better-off neighbours was the process of engagement as discussed in Chapter Three. And it seems plausible that this process of engagement was linked to the lack of sharp class distinctions as suggested in Chapter Four. From the standpoint of this study further research of both ideas and the links between them appears promising. Examinations of this period through a framework of analysis that supports the idea of an underclass would underestimate the level of engagement between the poor and their better-off neighbours by suggesting harsher class distinctions than was actually the case. In such a conception the morality of the majority promoted self-reliance, law abidance and making a positive contribution to one's community. Meanwhile the poor and destitute are said to have shunned work, ignored the law and acted as a drain upon society. Yet we saw in Chapters Two and Three strong family ties among the poor and efforts to increase economic independence through shared accommodations. We saw school attendance even among poor families, evidence of their efforts to follow emergent trends and afford themselves greater awareness and opportunities. Through the press coverage of the Police Court we saw examples of the poor attempting to check their actions and better remain within the bounds of the law. When inside one or another public institution we saw much evidence of their willingness to contribute the labour essential to the running of those places. In

response to such efforts we say a great deal of latitude on the part of public officials. As has oft been repeated here, no evidence supporting a claim of separate or conflicting moralities was uncovered during the course of this research. Certainly the likes of Thomas Berrigan and Ellen Reardon pushed the boundaries of prevailing norms; what Kim Hopper called “value stretch” in his examination of modern day homelessness.¹⁹ But the pushing of boundaries was widespread. Recall that the vast majority of cases before the Police Court did not involve repeat offenders; they involved the more respectable members of the community. From the press coverage on raids of Charles Clarke’s place and others like them we know that the socially prominent participated in upper street vice and had been doing so since the time of Prince William. Men such as Edward O’Donnell, William Sutton and many others rose to legitimate economic success and social importance through the illicit economy of the upper streets. Pushing boundaries was common across society, not just within its bottom layer. The central characters of this study pushed the boundaries farther than others and in that regard some difference can be seen between them and those around them. But they did not push so hard as to land themselves beyond a point where they could continue to engage with those who lived closest to them as well as city officials and those who worked the front lines of relief and reform; to a point where they could be seen as a class apart. Throughout this period it was possible for the least capable members of the community to receive charity, to find shelter in public institutions, and when they were able, to work and pay rent within the community. In other words they were able to negotiate a social and

¹⁹ Kim Hopper, *Reckoning with Homelessness*.

physical space for themselves within the upper streets in much the same way as Steven King has suggested the Victorian poor in Britain were often able to do.²⁰ To a large extent this was the case because circumstances dictated that less be done about them, which appears to have been best in the long run.

The peculiar demography of Halifax and the Atlantic region as a whole during this time period has been documented and used by some historians to explain various phenomena. For example, James Frost has argued that declining population and industrial growth relative to central Canada led the Bank of Nova Scotia to invest local savings outside the region and to eventually move its headquarters from Halifax to Toronto, both of which according to Frost were detrimental to the regional economy in the long run.²¹ T.W. Acheson has argued that large-scale out migration combined with unfavourable federal policies during this period helped create what he termed a client economy, one that lacked confident business leadership and dominant urban centres in which they could thrive. However, in the course of this research no study was found to have linked regional and community demographic patterns to the operation of social welfare policy at the local level as has been done here.

²⁰ Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare*.

²¹ James Frost, "The 'Nationalization' of the Bank of Nova Scotia, 1880-1910," and T.W. Acheson, "The Maritime and 'Empire Canada,'" *Canada and the Burden of Unity*, David Jay Bercuson ed. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1977) 87-114.

If Thomas Berrigan were Alive Today

Some historians are of the belief that their work and responsibility ends with accurately presenting the past. Those who subscribe to this view believe that it is up to the consumers of history to interpret and use what historians have to offer as they see fit. I, like many, do not share such a view of historiographical writing or of the responsibility of the historian. I am of the view that historians, having studied the past in careful detail, are in the best position to interpret that past and as such are responsible to say how they think the past best speaks to the present within their area of research. Clearly saying one's piece accordingly does not prevent being ignored or misunderstood. But, in my opinion, not doing so only increases the chances of such things and further risks a sideline role for historians in the realm of current social criticism and direction.²²

In keeping with my view of responsible historiography I want to end this study by stating what I believe its findings have to say to the present. One way of doing so is by asking the question: what if Thomas Berrigan were alive within contemporary Halifax? One thing I know for sure is that he would not be alone in his fight against drink. After working in Halifax as a social worker for more than a dozen years, seven of which were devoted to work exclusively with homeless persons, I know that struggles with alcohol and a host of other addictions

²² John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* and Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 262-269. Here Berger notes that historians' interest in speaking to the present ebbs and flows, often in relation to the times they live in. During the 1930s and 1960s, times of change and turmoil, history was more about social criticism. Currently, according to Berger, academic historians have "become more isolated from the society in which they lived and in general have failed to respond to the enormous popular interest in the past – either in satisfying it, or educating it" 269.

continues to be a problem for a significant portion of the city's population, for men and women from various backgrounds, education levels and socioeconomic status. Certainly Thomas Berrigan could benefit from the greater knowledge regarding addictions and treatment. However, while substance abuse and dependence remain a prevalent problem, public intoxication is less widespread or tolerated than it was in days gone by.

During the time of Fingard's study the British Army represented a larger percentage of the population than was the case here. The local economy was not as diverse or as strong in the 1860s and 70s as it would be during the period from 1890 to 1914. Largely owing to these factors, opportunities for reform and legitimate business activities existed and were being pursued in the upper streets more so in the time of this study than was the case during the earlier decades of the 19th century. In part because of his drinking, Thomas Berrigan was dependant upon the services of social welfare available to him, services more numerous and experienced than those available to his predecessors. Likewise there are today a number of persons partly or wholly dependent upon the various social welfare programs public and private that are currently available within the city of Halifax.²³ There are now a greater range of services and a greater number of highly trained professionals to be found within them than was true in past times. However, in today's context Mr. Berrigan might find social services less accessible and flexible than they use to be. Applying for assistance is typically a daunting process. Application forms are long and complicated. Documents

²³ HRM, *Homelessness in HRM*.

confirming income, residence, citizenship and a host of other particulars are typically required. And when assistance is granted it is usually conditional and revocable for actions deemed to be non-compliance. Appeals procedures exist, but they tend to support rather than challenge worker decisions. Shelters for the homeless, such as the Salvation Army Booth Centre which began operations in 1960 and the Metro Turning Point which opened its doors in 1975, remain the last resort and they seldom turn people away. But by no means can the system of social services in modern day Halifax match the degree of flexibility and simplicity that characterized the system that was in place one hundred years ago.

Modern programs and services are also more rigid and risk adverse. When Thomas Berrigan was a young man there was very little in the way of knowledge, law or regulation regarding the opening or administration of social welfare services. Groups, public or private, having found a need and a willingness to address it, were limited primarily by funding, personnel and material requirements. Rules of the game, the do's and don'ts were very much a matter of learning the way forward. Room to experiment and to fail was much greater than it is today. In the modern context of public social services, a context overlain with myriad layers of bureaucracy and entrenched approaches, adherence to policy is strongly encouraged. Extending the benefit of the doubt to clients or seeking innovative solutions to the problems they face is fine so long as management approval is granted *a priori* and doing so will not challenge policy or draw negative attention to the department or worse still its current minister. In such an

environment serving the manual often takes precedence over serving the client. There is more room to manoeuvre within private agencies. But given that much of their funding typically comes from the public purse and that private agencies are also bound by volumes of public regulations, their reins are short.

To be fair much has changed since Thomas Berrigan was a regular consumer of social welfare services. Gone is the familiarity that existed in his time. Today's population of Halifax remains small compared to Toronto or New York, but it is ten times larger than it was a century ago. Those at the bottom of Halifax society are no longer a sedentary well known group of Haligonians. They are a very transient crowd made up largely of Maritimers. But the poorest rank frequently contains persons from all across the country as well as political and economic refugees from places such as Cuba, nations that were once satellites of the Soviet Union and elsewhere.²⁴ Owing somewhat to an influx of refugees, but more so due to regular immigration, Halifax is now more ethnically diverse than it once was. The indigenous Black population has grown. Unfortunately, the inner city public housing as well as the out-laying communities where many of them live tends to work against contact with those who do not live there. Today there are more well educated and prominent Black members of Halifax society. But whether Black-White relations are better or worse remains an open question. Those working in the helping professions are better trained. But for many their clients are not only less familiar to them they are more numerous as well.

²⁴ Knowledge of the contemporary homeless population in Halifax stems from my own work at the Metro Turning Point 1993 through 1999 and interviews with over two thousand homeless persons during that time.

Opportunities for engagement are far fewer than they use to be. The widening of the gap between rich and poor, an oft raised concern within the contemporary literature on social welfare policy, is not as large in Halifax as it is elsewhere. However, the social and economic distance between various segments of the city's population appears to now be greater and more entrenched than was known to Thomas Berrigan. In his time Haligonians lived much closer together physically and with less economic distance between them and according to the findings of this research with a higher level of tolerance for the poor than is obviously evident within the modern context. Something that is very visible sadly enough is more crime and more serious crime. Family violence is now more reported. Whether or not it happens to a greater extent now than it did in the past or if it contributes more so now to school drop out rates and homelessness can not be stated here. However, one suspects that here again Halifax trails far behind larger metropolitan centres. But the Police Court is long gone and with it the flexible system of Tory justice that once characterized law enforcement as well as the delivery of social welfare services within the city of Halifax.

During my time at the Metro Turning Point a number of my clients died; men who were homeless much of their lives and frequent substance abusers. They lived rough. Much of the time in the very same streets as did Thomas Berrigan. While the socioeconomic position occupied by these men in their respective times was the same, their lived experiences, for all the reasons noted above, were not. If Thomas Berrigan were alive today he might yearn for the greater

tolerance and flexibility of his own time. Since time can not be reversed he would be forced, along with the rest of us, to ponder how we can regain the advantages known to the past. Or put another way: how can the past as studied and presented here best inform the present? From the outset of this study, Thomas Berrigan and those like him were assumed to be more similar than different from their better-off neighbours. That approach was informed by my own experience as well as contemporary literature on homelessness, an example of the present informing the past. Meanwhile, within the modern context, some continue to argue that the poor and homeless are different. Proponents of an underclass such as Charles Murray in particular, imply or directly claim that there has always been poverty and it has always been marked by and is more or less the product of difference. In an attempt to use the past to inform the present, what this study says in response is that such was not the case, at least not in Halifax. In that context, past poverty and destitution were not products of difference. By implication the same may still be true. This study shows sameness in the past. It does not prove sameness in the present, but it does at least challenge the idea of difference as a perpetual reality and encourages closer examination of the current context and its negative assumptions. Perhaps by more often imagining the possibility of sameness and looking for it in the present we can recreate the tolerance and flexibility that was evident in the past.

Findings here suggest that a high level of sameness between the poor and destitute minority and the better-off majority remains a better standpoint to study

poverty than a presumption of deep cultural difference. Three other constants are also suggested. They are, however, controversial and some would say not sufficiently proven here. Few of us can well explain or prove the theory of gravity. But we accept it as a constant; only the suicidal leap from bridges. Thomas Berrigan, Ellen Reardon and many others high and low in the Halifax of the past fell to addiction. The same is true of some percentage of individuals in all societies past and present. The same will always be true. Such is the nature of the human condition. No two people are exactly alike, not even twins. Everyone has skills and abilities. But some have far more than others. Consequently, some are far more successful than others. Finally, it will always be true within a political and socioeconomic system based on competition that some people will be losers, often times to the point of destitution. Anyone who has attended school, held a job, and spent a few late nights in a bar has experienced these realities in their own time and has a gut sense of their timelessness. However, reconciling these truths, particularly in the areas of education and social welfare, is no simple matter; it is one we continue to struggle with despite great advances in these areas in countries around the world over the past century. So far as Halifax is concerned, students continue to fall out of the education system in part because the system has not yet solved the question of how to maximize all levels of inherent ability at a cost taxpayers are willing to support. For those who learn quickly and have supportive encouraging families the system works. Those without such fortune often fall through the cracks and end up on the welfare rolls. So do those who fall prey to addictions. And so do those who are simply

squeezed out of a tight labour market where redundancy is often common. A short stay on the rolls followed by a return to work and solvency is socially acceptable. Longer or permanent dependency is less forgivable regardless of the circumstances. Most people recognize that there are structural causes for social problems. Nevertheless, Halifax, at least in terms of its social welfare system, has become more begrudging and reluctant to extend the benefit of the doubt to the least able and fortunate residents of the city. This study shows that greater levels of tolerance and flexibility within the social welfare system of the past benefited those in need and the city as a whole. Perhaps it can also encourage those who oversee the current system as well as the general public to see the needy as more similar than different and that it is for the greater good to better include and support even the weakest members of the community.

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Appendix A

Current Law in Nova Scotia regarding settlement as it appears in the *Social Assistance Act*¹

Statement respecting settlement

10 (1) Where a person makes application to a social services committee for assistance, the committee may require the person, as a condition of furnishing the assistance, to make a written statement under oath respecting the person's settlement and respecting matters relevant to the determination of the person's settlement.

Transmission of statement with demand for payment

(2) Where a municipal unit, pursuant to Section 11, seeks to recover from another municipal unit or the Minister any amount expended by it for the assistance of a person in need, it shall transmit the statement of the person made under subsection (1) with its demand for payment to the other unit or to the Minister. R.S., c. 432, s. 10.

Recovery by person not liable to support

¹ *Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia 1989*, "The Social Assistance Act," c. 432 ss. 105-106, 150.

11 (1) A person who is not liable for the support of a person in need, but has necessarily incurred expense for the assistance of the person in need, may recover the expense from the municipal unit in which the person in need has a residence or a settlement, if the person has, before incurring such expense, requested the social services committee to furnish such assistance and no provision has been made for the person in need.

Recovery by municipality

(2) A municipal unit in which a person in need does not have a settlement but which

(a) has necessarily incurred any expense for the assistance of the person in need; or

(b) has been required to pay on the account of the person in need an amount under subsection (1),

may recover the expenses or the amount paid from the municipal unit in which the person in need has a settlement or from the Minister if the person has no settlement in the Province.

Extent of liability of Minister or municipal unit

(3) A municipal unit or the Minister is not liable under this Section except to a municipal unit for the rent or for the use and occupation of any house or other building leased or occupied by any person in need. R.S., c. 432, s. 11.

Appendix B

Letter from Thomas E. Corning, Recorder Town of Yarmouth, to John Killam, Secretary Poor Committee Town of Yarmouth, regarding the settlement of William Pearson.

Source: NSARM, RG 25 series C vol. 7.

Statement as to place of settlement of William Pearson, alias
Smith.

The younger
William Pearson was born at Tuskat in the Municipality of
Tuskat in the County of Yarmouth, not at Yarmouth. Tuskat is in
the Town of Yarmouth. His father was
William Pearson a Ship Carpenter and Sailor who came to Tuskat it
was said from St. John New Brunswick. His mother was Eunice Melancon
a daughter of Frank and Rose Melancon of Tuskat. Eunice Melancon
was born at Tuskat Kelbrook where her parents lived for a long time
and without doubt had a settlement there. Pearson the father
lived in Tuskat two or three years but whether he ever paid any taxes
or otherwise gained any settlement there is uncertain. Pearson the
father never lived in Yarmouth or owned any property in Yarmouth, nor
did he ever gain any settlement in Yarmouth as stated by Pearson the
son. There is no doubt on this point. Pearson got Elizabeth
Melancon with child at Tuskat and was arrested under the Bastardy Act
and to escape imprisonment it is alleged a marriage was solemnized
between Pearson and Elizabeth Melancon by the Justice of the Peace
before whom the Bastardy proceedings were taken and by others by an
Episcopal Clergyman. The records of the Episcopal Church at Tuskat
and Yarmouth have been searched but no record of any such marriage
can be found.

Shortly after the alleged marriage, the same or next day, Pearson
left Tuskat, ran away and has never since been in Tuskat or the
County of Yarmouth so far as can be ascertained. The alleged marriage
took place in the summer and in the early fall the child was born to
Eunice Melancon or Pearson in the house where the grandmother Melancon

back on board of some of the vessels in the West India trade.
 Eunice Melancon, alias Pearson did not live in Yarmouth before the
 alleged marriage to Atkins long enough to gain a settlement there.
 It is not known where Atkins came from or whether he ever gained
 a settlement in Yarmouth, previously to alleged marriage or afterwards.
 Atkins and Eunice Melancon, alias Pearson, alias Aitkins lived
 together several years at Yarmouth and at Tusket, where Atkins left
 her and it was said went to the United States. Shortly after Eunice
 Melancon, alias Pearson, alias Aitkins died in Yarmouth and the body
 was taken to and interred in the Roman Catholic Cemetery at Bellbrook
 near Tusket. Word reached Yarmouth shortly afterwards that Atkins
 had died either at sea or in the West Indies. The son William
 Pearson continued to live in and about Yarmouth and Tusket, but
 chiefly in and about Yarmouth until April 1891, when he was sent to
 St Patrick's Home, Halifax. He escaped or was discharged from the
 Home and having committed some offence in Halifax was sent to the
 Penitentiary at Dorchester. He was in Yarmouth a few days last year
 (the first time since he was sent away to the Home at Halifax in
 April 1891) but was arrested by Detective Power and carried to Halifax
 on a charge of stealing. Pearson the son, while his mother was living
 with Atkins, lived part of the time with his grandmother Melancon at
 Tusket, but the most of the time with his mother in Yarmouth and Tusket.
 Pearson deposition is almost entirely false. He was not born in
 Yarmouth as stated by him. His father did not die at Yarmouth; never
 lived in Yarmouth. It is not known whether ^{father} dead or alive ^{has} run away.
 His father never owned any property or paid any taxes in Yarmouth.
 So far as can be ascertained from search of the records and enquiry
 Atkins never owned any property or paid any taxes in Yarmouth or
 otherwise gained a settlement there. The place of settlement of
 Eunice Melancon at the time of the birth of the child was without
 question in Tusket and she certainly never gained a settlement else-
 where, except possibly by marriage with Atkins, if she were legally
 married to Atkins. Pearson the son never lived in Yarmouth after
 he was twelve years of age. His mother was about twenty five
 years old when Pearson was born.

Bill from Town of Truro to Board of Public Charities Halifax including medical treatment given to William Pearson.

TOWN OF TRURO.
STATEMENT

1901

W. H. King
M Board of Public Charities
Halifax N.S.

To TOWN OF TRURO, Dr.

1900	to Cash paid	
1901	Dr. Geo. B. B. B.	
	for attending	
	W. J. B. B.	\$ 23.00
	attended at	
	W. B. B.	8.00
	both hands	
	Pain	
	E. G. E.	\$ 31.00

HALIFAX

Source: NSARM, RG 25 series C vol. 7.