Journal of the Canadian Historical Association
Revue de la Société historique du Canada

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Volume 5, Number 1, 1994

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/031081ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/031081ar

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Publisher(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0847-4478 (print)
1712-6274 (digital)

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Cite this article

Sutherland, D. A. (1994). Voluntary Societies and the Process of Middle-class Formation in Early-Victorian Halifax, Nova Scotia. *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, *5*(1), 237–263. https://doi.org/10.7202/031081ar

Article abstract

Through the second quarter of the nineteenth century Halifax, Nova Scotia evolved from garrison town to commercial city. That transition, combined with a mass influx of immigrants, spawned unprecedented social dislocation and conflict. Those situated between the extremes of wealth and poverty responded, in part, by flocking into a host of voluntary societies set up to promote social stability as well as material and moral progress. Most influential among all these societies were those which stressed the element of fraternal bonding. They led with respect to forging the disparate "middling" elements of the community into something which, in terms of cohesion and consciousness, could be termed a "middle class".

Voluntary Societies and the Process of Middle-class Formation in Early-Victorian Halifax, Nova Scotia

DAVID A SUTHERLAND

Résumé

Through the second quarter of the nineteenth century Halifax, Nova Scotia evolved from garrison town to commercial city. That transition, combined with a mass influx of immigrants, spawned unprecedented social dislocation and conflict. Those situated between the extremes of wealth and poverty responded, in part, by flocking into a host of voluntary societies set up to promote social stability as well as material and moral progress. Most influential among all these societies were those which stressed the element of fraternal bonding. They led with respect to forging the disparate "middling" elements of the community into something which, in terms of cohesion and consciousness, could be termed a "middle class."

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Au cours du second quart de 19e siècle, le statut de la ville de Halifax en Nouvelle-Écosse est passé de celui de petite ville de garnison à celui de ville commerçante. L'arrivé massive d'immigrants s'est ajoutée à cette transformation pour créer un niveau de conflit sociaux et de dislocation sans précédent. Au sein de la couche de la population située entre les extrêmes de pauvreté et de richesse, l'une des réactions courante fut de se diriger vers un ensemble d'associations liées à la promotion de la stabilité sociale, du progrès matériel et moral. Au nombre des plus influentes de ces associations se trouvaient celles qui mettaient l'accent sur les solidarités fraternelles. Elles allaient exercer un rôle crucial dans le regroupement des éléments disparates des niveaux intermédiaires de la communauté en une formation qui, en termes de cohésion et de conscience, apparaît bien comme une «classe moyenne».

This inquiry begins with a story, set in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in the summer of 1848. At dawn, on the morning of August 8th, a steamship named the *Unicorn* came puffing down the harbour. Packed with some 400 men and women, it was headed for Lunenburg, on Nova Scotia's south shore. The passengers on board were members and guests of the Union Engine company, the key component of Halifax's volunteer fire-fighting establishment. Following custom, the firemen were out for a day of recreation and frivolity. When the *Unicorn* reached open water it began to pitch and toss with sufficient

Initial research for this project was supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Special appreciation is owed to Sue Brown, Larry Stokes, and others of the Friday seminar group at Dalhousie, who commented on an earlier version of this paper.

vigour to render many seasick. As the suffering became ever more widespread rumours spread that nausea could best be remedied with a large dose of brandy. Accordingly, at eight in the morning the steward obliged by opening the bar. Several of the passengers, along with a number of the crew, drank steadily until the vessel reached Lunenburg, at about noon.

Tumbling ashore amidst considerable mirth, the company spent the next couple of hours delighting in the hospitality offered them by residents of that friendly little outport. Then everyone trooped on board to pay a call at the neighbouring community of Chester. En route liquor was sold "as freely as at a race course," including to those in charge of navigation with the result that the *Unicorn* grounded on her way into harbour. She broke free, however, and made it to port. There more good times were had until about dusk when the *Unicorn*'s captain summoned all for the return journey to Halifax. On the way "drinking and drunkenness" increased such that the vessel narrowly avoided colliding with George's Island, at the centre of Halifax harbour. Tie-up occurred up at midnight but festivities continued until two in the morning, when passengers finally gave a last salute and found their way home.

One of the first to leave was a lawyer by the name of Alexander James. At age 32, an officer in both the Mechanics Institute and the Sons of Temperance, as well as a prominent supporter of the newly ascendant Liberal party, James was appalled by what had taken place on board the *Unicorn*. Such was his fury that on reaching home he sat up all night writing a letter of protest aimed primarily at Archibald Scott, who had kept bar on board the pleasure craft. Scott, an insurance broker, also worked for Samuel Cunard, proprietor of the *Unicorn*, as agent in charge of arranging excursion parties. In return for relatively low charter fees Scott obtained monopoly rights to sell food and drink while the vessel was on hire.

All this was perfectly legal but James, in his letter of denunciation, which appeared anonymously in Halifax's *Morning Chronicle*, insisted that Scott's behaviour violated prevailing standards of propriety. First of all, it was said that male consumption of alcohol should not have been permitted in the presence of ladies. Secondly, when drinking turned into intoxication, the bar should have been shut. Finally Scott, an elder in St. Matthew's Presbyterian church, should not have been so flagrantly involved in such a display of gross debauchery.

Scott, aged 44, was a prominent Haligonian, sufficiently well-respected by his peers to have secured office in both the genteel Halifax Horticultural Society and the Lay Association in Support of the Church of Scotland. He also ranked as a militant supporter of the Conservatives, a party now mourning its loss in the general election of 1847 which carried Nova Scotia into the era of "responsible government." Outraged by what he saw as a slur on his character Scott demanded, through his attorney, that the *Morning Chronicle* reveal who had written about events on board the *Unicorn*. The paper complied and when James refused to retract what he had written, Scott sued for libel. The case came to court in August, 1849. A series of witnesses appeared, essentially to establish

whether Scott had used undue influence to persuade men to drink. In the end it was decided that he had not. But while finding for the plaintiff the jury gave him damages of only one penny, thereby providing Alexander James with a redeeming moral victory.[1]

The firemen's excursion and the controversy it provoked occurred against a background of massive dislocation in the Nova Scotian capital. After 1815 protracted war had given way to sustained peace, forcing Halifax to look beyond its imperial military garrison to trade as the mainstay of future economic activity. But commerce proved to be a fickle friend, exposing this east coast port to a pattern of boom and bust that persisted into the 1850s. At the same time locals experienced a dizzying population upheaval, involving both large-scale growth and relatively novel ethnic and sectarian diversity, in particular that associated with a mass influx by Irish Roman Catholics. New wealth flourished alongside unprecedented concentrations of mass poverty. Technological innovation ranging from gas street lamps and harbour steamers coexisted with the dire threat of "modern" diseases such as cholera. Out of it all came an effort to transform Halifax from an eighteenth-century town into a nineteenth-century city, an effort which involved a host of reform enthusiasms ranging from evangelical religion to political liberalism. The struggle to extract progress from flux spawned a contradictory blend of ambition and anxiety among Haligonians. Their mood vacillated between boosterish claims of possessing a destiny for greatness and complaint that Halifax would forever be doomed to a "dull, stupid, phlegmatic" existence.[2]

Most outspoken of in expressing both hope and fear about the future were those who belonged to what contemporaries referred to as the "middling element" of the community. Primarily made up of professionals, tradesmen, artisans and clerks, they were prime beneficiaries of Halifax's development through the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Growing in absolute numbers, increasingly literate, with ever more disposable income and leisure time, members of this strata tended to become, over time, increasingly self-conscious and ambitious. The local press, itself the creation of those with middling rank, helped foster what by the 1830s can begin to be referred to as a middle-class identity. Discussion in print of scandals involving the exercise of power by their supposed betters, along with censure of riot and arson committed by the "lower orders," transformed individual dissatisfaction into alienated public opinion. That in turn prompted bold insistence that community affairs should now be entrusted to the

1. A detailed report of the trial is found in Halifax *Novascotian*, 13 August 1849. See also Halifax *Sun*, 11 August 1848.
2. Halifax *Acadian Recorder*, 12 January 1850. Contemporary attitudes are explored in D.A. Sutherland, "Joseph Howe and the boosting of Halifax," in Wayne A. Hunt (ed.), *The Proceedings of the Joseph Howe Symposium* (Sackville, New Brunswick, 1984): 71-86. An overview of Halifax and the Maritime region during the second quarter of the nineteenth century is provided by P.A. Buckner and J.G. Reid (eds.), *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: a History* (Toronto and Fredericton, 1994), chs. 12-14. Also invaluable for establishing context is T.W. Acheson, *Saint John: the Making of a Colonial Urban Community* (Toronto, 1985).

"self-made" men who had emerged as the true "bone and sinew" of Halifax society. Out of this potent blend of pride and prejudice came political agitation that led, in 1841, to Halifax's incorporation as a city, complete with a mayor and council elected to office by those whose success had made them ratepayers. Coinciding with and complementing that achievement was a surge of institutional activity outside the realm of government, activity which ultimately came to play a central role in the process of middle class formation.[3]

Here the focus is on what has come to be known as "voluntary societies," formally structured private-sector organizations with a membership recruited through free choice. A few such societies had always existed in Halifax, but in the early-Victorian era their numbers grew dramatically, reaching a total of over sixty by mid-century. Simultaneously, voluntary societies became increasingly diversified in the range of their activities, moving into virtually every sector of human endeavour, from philanthropy to recreation. As well, they acquired an ever higher profile, to the point that their activities came to dominate press coverage of local news. In all of this Halifax was simply emulating a situation found elsewhere in the cities of Britain and the United States.[4]

Urbanization and the pursuit of modernization rather than the relatively narrow dynamics of industrialization seem to have provided the basic stimulus for the surge in voluntary society activity. Rapid growth, especially when associated with mass immigration, meant that many city residents found themselves isolated in a sea of strangers. For such people voluntary societies could function as a substitute for lost kinship connections. Similarly the sense of being caught up in a breakdown of traditional patterns of deference drew people to associations that promised to function as instruments of social control. Again idealism, rooted in such things as religious commitment or enthusiasms for science and technology, prompted like-minded people to set up organizations devoted to the pursuit of virtue and enlightenment. Finally, there were those who saw in associational life an opportunity to assert that their community was no longer a provincial or colonial backwater but instead had come to embrace the prevailing "spirit of the age."[5]

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3. The reform impulse in early nineteenth Halifax and the extent to which it involved use of the press is discussed by J.M. Beck, *Joseph Howe: Conservative Reformer, 1804-1848* (Montreal and Kingston, 1982). For shopkeeper agitation on behalf of municipal reform in Halifax, see D.A. Sutherland, "Thomas Forrester," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (hereafter *DCB*), VII: 307-309.
4. Developments in the United States and Britain are examined by Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton, 1989) and R.J. Morris, "Voluntary societies and British urban elites, 1780-1850: an analysis," *The Historical Journal* 26: 1 (1983): 95-118. See also Mark C. Carnes, *Secret ritual and manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven, 1989).
5. The linkage between urbanization and class formation is explored by Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge, MA., 1989); Stuart M. Blumin, *The Urban Threshold: Growth and Change in a Nineteenth Century American Community* (Chicago, 1976); Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle*

Analysis of the membership lists that have survived for voluntary associations in Halifax suggests that they did not attract a cross-section of the urban population.[6] Journeymen workers, unskilled labourers and common servants failed to join up, most likely because of poverty and lack of leisure time. Members of Halifax's traditional ruling elite, what might be called the "gentry," appeared relatively infrequently, probably because their privileged status meant they already possessed both self-assurance and what was needed for effective self-assertion. In contrast lawyers, doctors, clerics, manufacturers, retail shopkeepers, master craftsmen, manufacturers, and clerks — those occupations generally seen as being the core of the nineteenth century middle class — demonstrated an avid enthusiasm for society life. As a result, they dominated the mainstream of associational life in Halifax, at least at the level of the general membership.[7]

In an attempt to discern more precisely why those of middle rank were drawn to voluntary societies in early Victorian Halifax a detailed inquiry has been conducted into their activity, using both organizational records and reports in the press. Rather than look at every society, emphasis has been placed on those which placed a high value on active participation. Thus the Halifax Bible Society, which met only once a year and where most members did little more than pay subscriptions, has been neglected in favour of entities which strove to promote strong brotherhood bonds among their rank and file.[8]

Substantial information is available for several fraternal-style organizations which flourished in Halifax through the 1840s, an era of seminal importance for associational life in the Nova Scotian capital. These were the Union Engine and Axe Companies, the

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Class: the Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865 (Cambridge, 1981); Paul E. Johnston, *A Shopkeepers Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York, 1978); R.J. Morris, *Class, sect and party: the making of the British Middle Class, Leeds, 1820-1850* (Manchester and New York, 1990), as well as Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: men and women of the English middle class, 1780-1850* (Chicago, 1987).

6. The following sources have provided the backbone of the information on society membership in Halifax: Charitable Irish Society (Halifax), minute books, 1834-1850, Public Archives of Nova Scotia (hereafter PANS), MG20, vol. 67; St. George's Society (Halifax), membership and dues book, 1838-1867, PANS, MG20, vol. 338; North British Society (Halifax), minute books, 1768-1886, PANS, MG20, vol. 231-232; Mechanics Institute (Halifax), minute books, 1831-1846, PANS, MG20, vol. 222(A); *Rules and Constitution of the Charitable Irish Society* (Halifax, 1840 & 1854); *Rules of the St. George's Society* (Halifax, 1852); *Bye-laws of Saint Andrew's Lodge no. 137 of Free and Accepted Masons* (Halifax, 1862); *Rules and Bye-laws of the Royal Union Chapter no. 137* (Halifax, 1863); *Rules and Bye laws of Royal Sussex Lodge no. 704* (Halifax, 1851); *Bye-laws of St. John Lodge no. 161* (Halifax, 1863); *Rules of the Halifax Mechanics Institute* (Halifax, 1832); *The Constitution, Fundamental Rules and Bye laws of the Nova Scotia Philanthropic Society* (Halifax, 1843).
7. See Table One.
8. *Nova Scotia Bible Society, Annual Report* (Halifax, 1847). See also *British Colonist*, 14 April 1849, 2 February 1850.

Freemasons, the Mechanics' Institute, the Charitable Irish Society, the North British Society, the St. George's Society and the Nova Scotia Philanthropic Society. Other organizations existed where membership brought extensive involvement but with respect to size, durability and prominence, these seven tended to prevail.[9]

Entry into the Charitable Irish Society, for example, involved far more than offering an annual donation. Attendance at both annual and quarterly meetings was compulsory. Absenteeism, regardless of cause, rendered members vulnerable to a fine and persistent non-attendance led to expulsion. The Mechanics' Institute did not go so far as to insist on attendance at its weekly lectures, but members were pressured through press announcements to turn out on a regular basis. As for the firemen, a portion of them got together every time flames threatened the community, a phenomenon which occurred as often as forty times a year. In addition to the foregoing, all these societies sponsored an elaborate round of social gatherings. Banquets, balls, picnics, soirees, and excursions became an ever larger part of the fraternal experience through the 1840s. Members were not obliged to attend these special occasions but a majority appear to have done so, perhaps because of peer pressure, but more likely in order to enjoy themselves.[10]

Individual identification with the group was further encouraged by means of welfare schemes. For example, the Union Engine Company collected 7½d. per quarter to maintain a fund "for relief of Members who may be injured at the time of duty."[11] The

9. R.P. Harvey, "Black Beans, Banners and Banquets: the Charitable Irish Society at two hundred," *Nova Scotia Historical Review* 6 (1986): 16-35; T. M. Punch, *Irish Halifax: the Immigrant Generation* (Halifax, 1981); J.S. Macdonald, *Annals of the North British Society* (Halifax, 1868 and 1905); R.S. Longley and R.V. Harris, *A Short History of Freemasonry in Nova Scotia, 1738-1966* (Halifax, 1966); E.T. Bliss, *Masonic Grand Masters of the Jurisdiction of Nova Scotia, 1738-1965* (Halifax, 1965); C.B. Fergusson, *Mechanics Institutes in Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1960); D.C. Harvey, "Nova Scotia Philanthropic Society," *Dalhousie Review* 19: 3 (October 1939): 287-295; B.E.S. Rudachyk, "The Most Tyrannous of Masters: Fire in Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1830-1850" (M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1984).

10. In 1840 the Charitable Irish Society met as follows: 17 February (quarterly meeting, 125 present); 17 March (annual dinner, 106 members and guests present); 20 April (banquet to celebrate the Queen's marriage, 137 members and guests present); 18 May (quarterly meeting, 75 present); 17 August (quarterly meeting, 96 present); 2 October (special meeting to pass a motion of congratulations to the Queen for having escaped an assassination attempt, 90 present); 17 November (quarterly meeting, 114 present), Charitable Irish Society minutes, 1840, PANS MG20, vol. 67. In 1847 the following round of activity was reported in the Halifax press: January (sleighing party by the Union Engine Company); February (ball by the same); March (St. Patrick's Day banquet by the Charitable Irish Society); April (St. George's Day banquet by the St. George's Society); June (picnic by the Philanthropic Society); August (picnic by the Charitable Irish and North British societies); September (picnic by the St. George's Society); Oober (opening of the Mechanics Institute's autumn/winter lecture series); December (St. John's Day banquet by the Freemasons), as noted by the following Halifax newspapers: *Acadian Recorder*, *Morning Post*, *Sun*, and *Times*.

11. Rudachyk, "Fire in Halifax," 125.

Nova Scotian Philanthropic Society provided members with sick benefits of up to 10s. per week. In the event of death application could be made for help in meeting funeral costs and the society would consider offering assistance to widows and orphans. The Freemasons went one step further by insisting that all members turn out in full regalia for the funeral of one of their "brethren."[12]

Rules and conventions existed within all these organizations for the purpose of stimulating friendship and co-operation among the membership. For example, the Mechanics Institute banned discussion "on party or domestic politics, or on controverted religious topics." Moreover, the executive vigorously expressed its disapproval of the "injudicious habit," especially among young members, "of making numerous expressions of applause," lest speakers not so flattered take offence. Similarly the Freemasons of St. Andrew's Lodge insisted that "no private disputes or altercations shall be permitted during Lodge hours on any subject." Putting things somewhat more positively, the Charitable Irish Society told its rank and file they had an obligation "to conduct themselves with kindness and affection," to "promote friendship and harmony," and to "aid and assist a member when in adversity or trouble;" and if a member seemed likely to suffer from "imprudent conduct," they were to intervene or seek assistance from the Society. The quest for "brotherhood" often fell short of complete attainment. Problems persistently arose over delinquency with respect to attendance at meetings and payment of dues, and on occasion meetings fell prey to what one veteran member described as "miserable political jealousy and intrigue." Periodically, executive authority had to be invoked to curb "bad language" and "disparaging remarks" among the membership.[13]

Each organization professed to have a relatively open admissions policy. Most liberal of all was the Mechanics Institute, which welcomed anyone, male or female, who could pay an annual membership fee of 10s. All other societies excluded women from their ranks. They also insisted that applicants be at least nineteen years old and have risen beyond the rank of apprentice. Freemasons further required members to be self-employed. In order to join one of the four ethnic societies one had to have been born either in the British Isles or Nova Scotia, or be descended from someone born in those places. While religion was never formally mentioned as a criterion for admission to any of these seven organizations, the Union Engine Company had a reputation for

12. The Philanthropic Society declared that its members were "unwilling to have, their indigent brethren subsisting solely on the bounty of benevolent strangers," *Constitution*, 1. During the 1840s Alexander Keith, head of the Freemasons, gave high priority to establishment of a benevolent fund; see Longley/Harris, *Short History*, 58. Attendance at funerals by Freemasons and later others is noted by Halifax *Morning Herald*, 8 September 1843; Halifax *Sun*, 26 October 1847; Halifax *British Colonist*, 26 October 1848; Halifax, *Times*, 15 December 1848.

13. Mechanics Institute, *Rules*; Mechanics Institute minutes, 7 April and 10 May 1840, PANS, MG20, vol. 222(A); Saint Andrew's *Bye-laws*, 10; Charitable Irish, *Rules*, 11; Macdonald, *Annals* (1905), 233.

discriminating against Roman Catholics. All societies appear to have granted their members an unrestricted right to join other organizations.[14]

Prospective members invariably had to meet formal minimum requirements with respect to affluence and popularity. Initiation fees of either 10s. or 20s. were the norm, except for the Freemasons who charged £5 just for the privilege of applying to enter. Normally one had to be nominated by an existing member in good standing. Applications were then reviewed either by a special committee or by those attending one of the quarterly meetings. Veto power over candidates for membership varied by organization. For example, the Charitable Irish Society required approval by two-thirds of those present and voting, while at St. Andrew's Freemasons Lodge three negative ballots translated into rejection. Only the Freemasons combined admission with formal ritual, and that organization also was unique in providing for promotion through a series of ranks. Every step up the ladder cost members 40s. At each quarterly meeting those in attendance had to pay an instalment on their annual dues, along with a charge for refreshments. The cost ranged from a low of 1s.3d at one of the Masonic lodges to a high of 4s.3d at gatherings of the North British Society. Additional fees were charged for regalia and the various special events mounted by each society.[15]

Every year a few members resigned or had to be struck off the records. But these losses were more than compensated for by success in finding new recruits. For example, through the nine years after its founding in 1834, the Nova Scotian Philanthropic Society took in 398 members while losing, through death, resignation and departure from Halifax, only 71. Among the seven organizations under review individual membership, at any one time, ranged from a low of approximately 100 to a high of about 300. By mid-century they collectively held the allegiance of approximately 1300 individuals. In other words, mainstream fraternalism, as represented by these seven societies, accounted for perhaps

14. After considerable debate over membership policy the Mechanics Institute opted to grant admission to anyone buying an annual admission ticket. The growing presence of women at lectures was described as a "cause for congratulations" since the "ladies" would "powerfully enforce . . . the importance and delights of intellectual pursuits." See Mechanics Institute minutes, 6 May 1840, 5 October 1841, 2 May 1842, PANS, MG20, vol. 222(A). Allegations that the firemen practised discrimination are to be found in Halifax *Sun*, 24 April, 13 November 1846; *Sun*, 5/10 March 1847.

15. At mid-century common labourers in Nova Scotia earned a daily wage of 2 to 3 shillings; skilled workers made 4 shillings. See Lt. Gov. Harvey to Col. Sect. Grey, 8 May 1848, PANS, RG 1, vol. 120, f. 129. The seasonality of employment and high cost of living in the colony likely meant that none but master craftsmen (what contemporaries referred to as "mechanics") could participate in fraternal life. This theme is explored by Julian Gwyn, "'A little province like this'": the economy of Nova Scotia under stress, 1812-1853," in D. H. Akenson, ed., *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, vol. 6 (Gananoque, 1988): 192-225; see also Judith Fingard, "The winter's tale: the seasonal contours of pre-industrial poverty in British North America, 1815-1860," Canadian Historical Society, *Historical Papers* (1974): 65-94.

six per cent of Halifax's overall population.[16] Scholars now suggest that those with taxable amounts of property made up no more than one fifth of the total population. Accordingly it would appear that the fraternal portion of voluntary society activity in Halifax had come to embrace half or more of those situated between the gentry and the poor.[17]

Just because entities such as the Charitable Irish Society drew most of their rank and file from the middle ranks of urban society did not mean that their leaders also came from that strata. Studies of voluntary societies in other cities suggest that organizational leaders tended to be superior to the rank and file with respect to income and status. To some extent that was also true in Halifax, facilitated by the fact that nominations to high office tended to be controlled by committees of insiders. Moreover, some societies preferred to have the same incumbents in office year after year, especially when those officers were recruited from among Halifax's gentry. On the other hand, significant numbers of men with occupations traditionally defined as non-genteel (brewer, for example) and without kinship ties to established "old families" rose to positions of leadership in Halifax's fraternal organizations.[18]

Complete identification of those who joined up is impossible given gaps in available data, but it appears that membership began when men were in their early thirties, a time when most would be consolidating their position in terms of both career and family life. Voluntary societies proved especially attractive to those who had been born outside Halifax and who thus most likely lacked strong kinship networks within their adopted home. Protestant Dissenters and Roman Catholics as well as those of Scottish and Irish background, all of whom were deemed to be somewhat disreputable according to oligarchic convention in Halifax, flocked into fraternal organizations. In other words, entities such as the Freemasons flourished essentially because of their ability to draw in young, assertive, and upwardly mobile elements of the community. Recruits were attracted by what these voluntary societies had to offer concerning conviviality, mutual support, and an opportunity to develop the skills and reputation needed for advancement into the leadership ranks of Halifax society.[19]

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16. Philanthropic Society, *Constitution*. While data are incomplete, membership at mid-century probably stood approximately as follows: Union Engine Company and Axe Fire Company (124), Mechanics Institute (100), Freemasons (300), St. George's Society (140), North British Society (200), Charitable Irish Society (230), Philanthropic Society (250). In 1851 Halifax had a population just over 20,000.
17. See not only the research of Blumin and Morris cited above but also Edward Pessen (ed.), *The Many-Faceted Jacksonian era: new interpretations* (Westport, CT., 1977).
18. Morris, *Class, sect and party*, 161-203. The Halifax situation is detailed in Tables Two and Three.
19. Biographical information on voluntary society members has been gleaned from the following: *Cunnabell's City Almanack and General Business Directory* (Halifax, 1842); *Nugent's Business Directory of the City of Halifax* (Halifax, 1858); Nova Scotia census, 1838, PANS, RG1, vol. 448; Camp Hill Cemetery burial books, PANS, MG5, microfilm; Holy Cross Cemetery burials, PANS, MG5, microfilm; Halifax County Registry of Deeds. In addition invaluable assistance in identifying obscure people has been provided by Halifax genealogist, Terrence M. Punch.

Most of those drawn into Halifax's fraternal world led lives of quiet obscurity. But a few of their "brothers" did much better, often in ways which suggested that their success derived substantially from voluntary society activity. Consider, for example, the case of James R. DeWolf. The son of a Methodist outport merchant, DeWolf trained in Scotland for a career in medicine and then moved to Halifax in 1844, at age 26. Setting up in what had become a highly competitive profession, DeWolf sought security and connections, both through marriage and membership in various of Halifax's voluntary societies. In particular he threw himself into the Nova Scotia Philanthropic Society with such energy that he became its president in 1848, a post which allowed him, despite being a relative newcomer, to preside a year later over Halifax's centennial celebrations. Other honours followed, climaxing in 1857 with DeWolf's appointment as Superintendent of Nova Scotia's Hospital for the Insane.[20]

Another who rose to prominence largely through voluntary society activity was Lawrence O'Connor Doyle. Although born in Halifax and the son of a leading local merchant, Doyle suffered the twin disadvantage of being Irish and Roman Catholic. Opting for a career in law and politics, Doyle inserted himself into virtually every organization set up to promote the interests of Halifax's expanding Irish Roman Catholic community. In 1843 the city's Charitable Irish Society, long under the control of Protestant notables such as the Uniacke family, elected Doyle as its president at age 39. Thereafter the Charitable Irish featured in the struggle to end Protestant ascendancy in Halifax's public affairs, a struggle which in 1848 carried Doyle into the first provincial executive to function under the rules of "responsible government."[21]

Accompanying Doyle into office on that occasion was William Young, who had come from Scotland to Halifax as a youth during the war of 1812. After failure of the family business amidst Nova Scotia's postwar economic slump Young, a Presbyterian, turned to law and then entered politics. He, too, saw fraternal activity as a means of buttressing his career. In his case it involved membership in Halifax's prestigious North British Society, an organization which by the 1840s was also in the process of being taken over by relative newcomers. In 1848, at age 49, Young ascended to its presidency, and such was his gratitude for what this organization had done to foster his career that, years later, he left it a bequest of $100,000.[22]

Another who fostered the notion that success lay through participation in voluntary societies was William Caldwell. The son of an Irish Methodist immigrant who settled in Nova Scotia's rural interior, Caldwell moved to Halifax toward the end of the 1820s. Setting up as a master blacksmith Caldwell quickly joined the Union Engine Company. A decade later, at age 46, he became Captain of the Company. The prestige of that office, as well as the network of connections it brought, proved crucial in allowing Caldwell to

20. Colin D. Howell, "James R. DeWolf," *DCB*, XIII: 272-3.
21. C.B. Fergusson, "Lawrence O'C. Doyle," *DCB*, IX: 224-227.
22. J.M. Beck, "William Young," *DCB*, XI: 943-949.

be elected mayor of Halifax in 1850.[23] Much the same path was followed by Andrew Mackinlay, who came to Halifax from Scotland in the mid 1820s. Going into business as a bookseller, Mackinlay, a Presbyterian, prided himself on being an exponent of intellectual enlightenment. As such he developed an enthusiasm for the Mechanics' Institute and rose to serve as its president from 1838 to 1849. Success in discharging that office, combined with a strong enthusiasm for public service, propelled Mackinlay into politics and led to his election as mayor of Halifax in 1845 when in his mid 40s.[24]

A final example of how leadership could be forged within the fraternal world is provided by the career of Alexander Keith. Born in Scotland, and a Presbyterian by faith, Keith came to Halifax in 1817 at age 22 where he went into business as a brewer. Having joined the Freemasons prior to emigration, Keith transferred his membership to a local lodge immediately on arrival in Halifax. That affiliation proved extremely valuable as Keith struggled to develop his brewery into what eventually became one of the most successful manufacturies on Halifax's waterfront. His dedication to the Freemasons, an organization then suffering considerable disarray, brought promotion, climaxing in 1840 when Keith was selected Grand Master of the Nova Scotian order. The new leader moved aggressively over the next decade to expand membership and end quarrelling among the various Masonic lodges. Successful both as a capitalist and as a lodgeman, Keith found himself co-opted into politics. After winning election as mayor of Halifax in 1843, he secured appointment to Nova Scotia's prestigious Legislative Council.[25]

The extent to which Keith or any of the others owed their advancement to voluntary society activity cannot be established with precision. It is clear, however, that fraternal leaders were in the public eye. By the 1840s local news in the Halifax press was dominated by society activities. Typical of the era was what the triweekly *Morning Post* had to say in April 1845 about a banquet put on by an elite group of Freemasons. Readers learned that some sixty gentlemen had dined starting at 7 p.m. Those at the head table appeared in regalia, and the walls of the hotel room were adorned with a host of banners and insignia. A military band played lively airs and mid-way through the proceedings a touring company of singers performed for the crowd. At 9 p.m. toasts began to be delivered, interspersed with songs and speeches. Twenty times in succession members raised their glasses in honour of everything from the spirit of Freemasonry to the fair daughters of Nova Scotia. At one in the morning the entire company proceeding out into the street "two-and-two, arm in arm, after the band, which struck up the Freemason's march." They then accompanied Grand Master Alexander Keith to his residence. Amidst deafening cheers, participants saluted their leader, first with "auld lang syne," followed

23. When Caldwell first entered municipal politics, he was assailed by Liberal opponents for being "merely" a blacksmith: see Halifax *Morning Post*, 1/4 October 1840. For the later phase of his career see Halifax *Sun*, 21 May 1847; Halifax *British Colonist*, 3 October 1850; Halifax *Novascotian*, 7 October 1850. Mention of Caldwell's family background appears in A.W.H. Eaton, *The History of Kings County* (Salem, MA, 1910), 594-595.
24. L.K. Kernaghan, "Andrew Mackinlay," *DCB*, IX: 510.
25. K.G. Pryke, "Alexander Keith," *DCB*, X: 395-396.

by the national anthem. As the bandsmen proceeded back to barracks, playing as they went, Halifax Freemasons staggered on home, as the reporter put it, "to forget even convivial scenes in the balmy luxury of sleep."[26]

Similar festivities were put on at least once a year by most Halifax voluntary societies. Invariably held at a hotel, so as to have access to first-class catering service, attendance (male only) usually ran in the 50 to 150 range. Members came, along with invited guests, who usually included the presidents of other fraternal organizations, officers from the garrison, and leading public officials, such as the mayor. Special delight was taken when organizers managed to secure the presence of and a speech by Nova Scotia's lieutenant-governor. Typically, "mirth, fellowship, and conviviality prevailed." It was an occasion, a reporter noted, when "sectional distinctions and local prejudices are forgotten, and countrymen meet as friends." The *Morning Herald*, commenting on the combination of speeches, songs and twenty-six toasts featured in 1843, when the Charitable Irish Society met on St. Patrick's Day, observed that "a more jovial party never sat around the festive board." Protracted large-scale consumption of alcohol took its toll, however, prompting a participant in a similar affair to observe that "a few . . . yesterday morning were complaining of head-aches and nausea."[27]

The street processions which often accompanied these festive occasions heightened public awareness of voluntary society activity. For example, in June 1843 Halifax's six Masonic lodges celebrated the feast day of their patron saint beginning at 10 a.m. with a rally at city centre. The members paraded through the streets to St. Paul's Anglican cathedral church for a special service. Next came a parade to Alexander Keith's home for a salute to their leader. Attracted by colourful banners and regalia, as well as music provided by a regimental band, "thousands" of Haligonians thronged the downtown to get a glimpse of the spectacle.[28] A similar pattern of events took place at the annual meeting of the St. George's Society in 1849. Accompanied by a military band, wearing insignia, and waving banners, the members marched through town at mid-day to pay respects to their patron, the lieutenant-governor. Observed by "vast crowds," made up of both men and women, the members then proceeded back to the centre of the city to give three cheers for the Queen.[29] Much the same happened when Halifax's Charitable Irish Society celebrated St. Patrick's day in 1850. The affair began with morning high mass presided over by the archbishop. Marching out of church in the wake of a military band, members saluted the residences of three of their leading figures and then called on

26. Halifax *Morning Post*, 26 April 1845. The paper's publisher/reporter was J.H. Crosskill, a Freemason who delighted in providing his readers with local colour. Thanks to his own drinking, brawling and womanizing, Crosskill personally generated a large share of news about town. See, for example, Halifax *Acadian Recorder*, 22 February 1840, 24 July 1841, 25 June 1842, 6 February 1847 and Halifax *Morning Herald*, 26 July 1841.
27. Halifax *Morning Herald*, 20 March 1843. See also ibid, 26 April 1843 and Halifax *Morning Post*, 3 December 1844.
28. Halifax *Morning Post*, 28 June 1843.
29. Halifax *Times & Courier*, 26 April 1849.

the lieutenant-governor. Having affirmed their allegiance by singing "God Save the Queen," the host strolled back through town, cheering in front of the Roman Catholic cathedral before dispersing in preparation for the evening's festivities.[30]

A final example of how public display could be used both to enhance a society's morale and also make a statement to the public at large was provided by Halifax's African Abolition Society. One of three friendly societies established during the 1840s to serve the small and acutely marginalized Black population resident in the Nova Scotian capital, this organization rallied in August 1850 to commemorate the abolition of slavery throughout the British empire. After a meeting which featured such toasts as one to "Africa, the land of our Forefathers, may she . . . at last vanquish her foes," the members marched through town escorted by "half the population of the city." Preceded by a military band they made their way to Government House, there to cheer the lieutenant-governor, a gesture deliberately designed to make the point that Blacks should be recognised as full subjects of the crown.[31]

Even more effective in giving voluntary societies a high public profile were the summer excursions which, through the 1840s, became a highlight of Halifax's social season. The custom apparently began in June 1839 when the Philanthropic Society organized a picnic to commemorate Halifax's founding, ninety years earlier. Having rented one of the cross-harbour ferries, members of the Society proceeded into Bedford Basin to land at Prince's Lodge, the site of what in the 1790s had been the estate of Queen Victoria's father, the Duke of Kent. There, an "abundance of substantial viands, and lots of good liquor to moisten them" had been laid on. After lunch participants played games, walked in the woods, enjoyed a bottle of wine or listened to music provided by a military band. At dusk they came back to town, proceeded to the Grand Parade, and ended by singing a song especially written for the occasion by Joseph Howe, publisher of Halifax's leading newspaper.[32]

The success of this venture proved infectious. Soon every Halifax voluntary society was holding some form of summer outing. Most popular were picnics, with the preferred site being Prince's Lodge, thanks to its bucolic charm and aristocratic connections. Over time the ceremony became ever more elaborate. For example, in 1847 when the St. George's Society held its first picnic, the affair began with a morning march through the downtown streets. Once on board their steamer, members and guests progressed around the harbour, saluting various warships with cheers and patriotic songs such as

30. Halifax *Acadian Recorder*, 23 March 1850.

31. Interracial harmony on this occasion was marred by partisan political controversy over whether Joseph Howe, now the Provincial Secretary, had compromised the dignity of his office by being overly-familiar with Halifax Blacks. See Halifax *British Colonist*, 3/6 August 1850; Halifax *Novascotian*, 5/12 August 1850. Black demands for civil rights is explored by Judith Fingard, "Race and respectability in Victorian Halifax," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 20: 2 (May, 1992): 169-195.

32. Halifax *Novascotian*, 12 June 1839.

"Rule Britannia." They then moved on to the shores of Halifax's North-West Arm for an afternoon of games and dancing. Dinner was served under a massive tent pavilion while an orchestra played in the background. At dusk the whole company strolled back to town, their way lit by torches. Preceded by a military band they made their way to Masons Hall for refreshments and then danced until midnight. All this came immediately in the wake of equally extravagant outings by the Charitable Irish and North British societies. Well over one thousand people had participated in these events, many of them consisting, as one contemporary put it, of "intelligent, well dressed persons of the middling class of life."[33]

All the foregoing activity took place in the near-total absence of factional strive. The only occasion on which violence threatened to mar proceedings occurred in August, 1848. Roused to bitter suspicion by news of the failure of rebellion in famine-ridden Ireland, a group of Irish "Repealers" attempted to disrupt a street parade by Halifax's North British Society to seize what they mistakenly believed to be an Orange banner. Significantly, the incident received hardly a mention in the local press, presumably because local editors feared provoking violence.[34] With this exception, private and public ceremonies put on by Halifax's voluntary societies demonstrated their growing ability to forge a sense of unity that went beyond the boundaries of a single organization. Instead of accentuating ethnic, sectarian and political fragmentation, fraternalism actually bridged those gaps, especially within the middle rank sections of Halifax society.

At the same time, however, an undercurrent of dissatisfaction developed among certain Haligonians over the extent to which the ceremonials of fraternal life were in conflict with what they wanted as the standards of public morality. More than anything else this concern focused on prominent and heavy use of liquor to promote the bonds of brotherhood. Debate over consumption of alcohol persisted through the 1830s at a low level, but burst forth a decade later into a powerful campaign seeking not just moderation, but total abstinence and even prohibition. One consequence was a dramatic upheaval in the character of voluntary society activity in Nova Scotia's capital.[35]

Seeking both to heighten their public profile and build internal morale, temperance leaders emulated the behaviour of other voluntary organizations. For example, in June

33. Halifax *Times*, 14 September 1847; Halifax *Acadian Recorder*, 21 August, 4 September 1847; Halifax *Sun*, 3 September 1847.
34. Macdonald, *Annals* (1905), 264-265; Halifax *British Colonist*, 17/19 August 1848. Contemporaries would have been aware of the ethnic/sectarian violence then building in neighbouring New Brunswick. Analysis of that situation is provided by Scott W. See, *Riots in New Brunswick: Orange Nativism and Social Violence in the 1840s* (Toronto, 1993).
35. For the surge of temperance activity across America see Ian R. Tyrrell *Sobering Up: from Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860* (Westport, CT, 1979); W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: an American Tradition* (New York, 1979.) See also Sandra Barry, "Shades of vice and moral glory: the temperance movement in Nova Scotia, 1828-1848" (M.A. thesis, Acadia, 1986).

1842 the new St. Mary's Temperance Society, led by Lawrence O'C. Doyle, marched 1200 strong through downtown Halifax to pay their respects to the lieutenant-governor. After being received "graciously" members resumed their procession, which featured "medals, sashes, rosets, and other badges, and several splendid flags," two military bands and a troop of horsemen. A core group of 400 then went by steamer to McNab's Island, at the mouth of Halifax harbour, for a picnic complete with sports and dancing. Returning to Halifax they marched in style to St. Mary's Cathedral for a salute to the Roman Catholic clergy. It all came off, one newspaper commented, with "order, comfort, and respectability."[36]

Organizations set up on such a vast scale quickly failed. They were too large to offer intimacy and also suffered from collapses in revenue when hard times prevented the poor they sought as recruits from mustering fees. Far more durable were the Sons of Temperance, which arrived from the United States in 1847 to set up a proliferation of small, highly motivated "divisions." Their weekly (later monthly) meetings gave members a chance to dress up in formal regalia, drink tea, listen to lively music, and be addressed by impassioned speakers, several of whom were professional orators brought in from the American lecture circuit. In July of that year the Sons hosted a mass picnic, where participants engaged in "dancing, and singing, playing at ball, pitching quoits, and other enjoyments," all without a drop of rum, beer or wine.[37]

Exactly who joined the Sons of Temperance is difficult to establish since membership lists have not survived. But those who served as officers are known and they tended to have a lot in common with those entering non-temperance fraternal organizations. For example, the young lawyer Alexander James, who caused such a ruckus over the fireman's excursion to Lunenburg, combined membership in the Mechanics' Institute with executive office in the "Mechanics' Division" of the Sons of Temperance.

Alongside the Sons were two parallel organizations set up to cater to the special interests of two special constituencies which by the 1840s had begun to assert themselves. The first involved male youth, meaning those old enough to have joined the work force but who had not yet stepped into marriage. In 1847 activists founded the Young Man's Total Abstinence Society and within a year it boasted a membership of some two hundred. The organization's appeal derived largely from its entertainment programme. Meetings occurred monthly and through the winter featured speeches, debates and choral music. Members of the general public could attend most proceedings, on payment of a small entrance fee. Young ladies received a particular welcome and for them special events were arranged, including picnics in summer and dances in winter. Such mixed gatherings, at least one of which lasted until 3 a.m., generated complaints. But the society also won

36. Halifax *Novascotian*, 23 June 1842; Halifax *Morning Post*, 23 June 1842.
37. Sons of Temperance activity is reported in the Halifax *Sun*, 7/11/28 February, 12 April, 28 July, 21 August, 6 October, 22/24 November 1848; Halifax *Presbyterian Witness*, 26 August 1848.

widespread approval. As a supporter observed, "we like to see the young fellows enjoy themselves, and we think those social parties, where the inebriating cup is discarded do good."[38]

Women did more than simply add life to male-organized events. As early as 1844 they had established a Female Temperance and Benevolent Society which quickly grew to over one hundred members. Lieutenant-Governor Harvey agreed to serve as their patron and in 1849, when the women convened a public meeting at Masons Hall, they had enough influence to secure the presence of a military band. Moreover the mayor attended, along with a gender-mixed audience described as "representing the wealth, intelligence and beauty of the city."[39]

Members of the Young Men's and the Ladies Benevolent societies maintained a close working relationship. For example, in 1848 the women organized a fund-raising soiree to help the men in their effort to establish new meeting facilities. In return the men "rapturously passed" a vote of thanks to their sisters in the cause. Co-operation extended to include the new Sons of Temperance. Speakers were mutually shared, picnics were opened to one another, and on one celebrated occasion a committee of women appeared before a mass rally of "Sons" to present them with a new banner. In a gesture daring by the standards of the day, Mrs. Crane, president of the Ladies Society, addressed the crowd in, as the reporter conspicuously noted, "an audible voice." In reply her committee received an oration which stressed the extent to which women had become essential for the achievement of public virtue.[40]

Temperance agitation and self-assertion by both young men and women gradually began to transform the mainstream of fraternal life in Halifax. In 1841, for example, the Charitable Irish Society inaugurated the tradition of allowing toasts at its annual banquet to be drunk using water. Five years later the Charitable Irish barred alcohol from its summer picnic, a move anticipated in 1842 by the Philanthropic Society. Similarly, organizers of the June 1847 outing put on by Dartmouth's Mechanics Institute stressed that in order to promote "healthful and rational amusements," they would impose "the most stringent regulations . . . to prevent the sale of intoxicating liquors."[41]

As for young men, at the beginning of the 1840s both the Charitable Irish and the Philanthropic Societies established youth auxiliaries. Immediately those auxiliaries

38. Items on the Young Men's Temperance Society appear in the Halifax *Morning Post*, 28 October, 31 December 1847; Halifax *Sun*, 15 September, 11 October 1847, 17 November 1848; Halifax *Presbyterian Witness*, 18 March 1848; Halifax *Novascotian*, 21 August 1848.
39. *Halifax Female Temperance and Benevolent Society* (Halifax, 1844); Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 13 March, 20 August 1844; Halifax *Novascotian*, 19 March 1849.
40. Halifax *Presbyterian Witness*, 29 January, 8 July 1848; Halifax *Novascotian*, 10 July 1848.
41. Halifax *Acadian Recorder*, 20 March 1841; Halifax *Morning Post*, 9 June 1842; Charitable Irish Society minutes, 17 August 1846, PANS, MG20, vol. 67; Halifax *Acadian Recorder*, 12 June 1847.

began agitating for inclusion of women as guests at their public outings. After some chauvinistic grumbling about how the presence of women could compromise the spirit of true brotherhood, the elders gave in. By the end of the decade it had become an accepted custom to invite females to society outings in order to impart to the occasion "a higher tone."[42] Nevertheless, membership was not an option offered to women. They were accepted only as guests and even then, as the firemen's controversial outing of 1848 demonstrated, their presence did not necessarily mean abandonment of "rough" forms of male celebration.

Despite lack of consensus as to how define "respectability," especially as it pertained to alcohol, Halifax's voluntary societies became ever more confident of their ability to shape not just their own affairs and also the affairs of the larger community. This self-confidence led to increasing experimentation with events open to the general public. For example, in August 1846 the Mechanics Institute hosted a festival on McNab's Island where people could come to see such wonders of the age as steam engines and hot air balloons. The mayor declared a holiday from business to assure a mass turnout. It was a bold move, since early-Victorian crowds had a tendency to turn rowdy, but on this occasion decorum prevailed. Emboldened by other successes fraternal leaders began to plan for the celebration of Halifax's centennial, seeing it as an ideal opportunity to present themselves as central to what it meant to be a Haligonian.[43]

Preparation for this, the largest public ceremony in the pre-Confederation history of Halifax, began in April 1849 when the Philanthropic Society sent a circular to its peer organizations asking for co-operation in staging the centennial. Next, some thirty society leaders met and decided to hand matters over to a small executive committee headed by J.R. DeWolf, president of the Philanthropic Society. Almost immediately controversy erupted, fed in large measure by the stress of hard times and political uncertainty associated with the transition to Responsible Government. One disgruntled Tory newspaper asked, "with one half the population starving and the other half running away, with bankruptcy, famine, and disease rife among us, is it time to rejoice?" Nevertheless, planning went ahead, helped by the fact that DeWolf, the chief organizer, was a high profile Conservative and thus could appeal for support from those who otherwise might have seen the centennial as a partisan event put on by the new Liberal government.[44]

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42. Halifax *Morning Post*, 9/11 June 1842, 10 June, 3 August 1843, 18 August 1845, 9 June 1846; Halifax *Morning Herald*, 9 June 1843; Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 4 June 1844; Halifax *Sun*, 11 June, 11 July 1845; Halifax *Acadian Recorder*, 21 August, 4 September 1847.
43. Halifax *Sun*, 5/10 August 1846; Halifax *Morning Post*, 4 August 1846; Halifax *Times*, 11 August 1846; Halifax *Acadian Recorder*, 7 October 1848; Halifax *British Colonist*, 3 October 1848; Halifax *New Times*, 2 October 1848; Halifax, *Novascotian*, 2 October 1848.
44. Halifax *Times & Courier*, 9/17 April, 12/26 May 1849; Halifax *British Colonist*, 15 May, 2 June 1849. For context see Bonnie L. Huskins, "Public celebration in Victorian Saint John and Halifax" (Ph.d thesis, Dalhousie, 1991).

Festivities were scheduled for June 8th, to commemorate the entrance into Chebucto harbour of the city's founder, Lt.Col. Edward Cornwallis.[45] It would be a public holiday, with all offices and businesses closed so that citizens could become involved, either as spectators or participants. The morning dawned with sunshine. Citizens woke up to a 100-gun salute fired by Halifax's Volunteer Artillery company. Then came a "merry peel" of bells from various churches as well as the tower of the town clock. From nine a.m. until noon soldiers of the garrison conducted military manoeuvres, climaxing in a mock attack on Citadel Hill. Meanwhile something like five thousand celebrants, all male, were forming up at the Grand Parade. At mid-day they moved out into the streets. In the words of the *Acadian Recorder:*

> The procession was upwards of a mile long, and it took nearly half an hour, from the time the van went by until the rear came up . . . It was the most imposing spectacle of the kind that was ever seen in Halifax. The City Council and Magistrates, mounted, preceded; then followed a Printing Press, and the Fire Engines, elaborately ornamented, drawn by splendid horses, and two carriages, one carrying Micmac chiefs and a moose calf, the other, a number of the oldest men in the country . . . . After these came the Volunteer Artillery, N. S. Philanthropic Society, Temperance, African, St. George's, Charitable Irish, North British, and Highland Societies, Free Mason, and Truckmen mounted.[46]

Downtown Halifax was packed with both residents and visitors from the interior. Despite the numbers, decorum prevailed. According to the *British Colonist*, "the most extreme courtesy marked the crowd . . . and the most refined lady might have passed to and fro without her ear being in the slightest degree offended." Women of respectable status did appear but mostly in upper story windows, from where they could cheer on the marchers with "bright eyes and healthful cheeks, and welcome smiles."[47]

As the parade moved out onto the Commons it encountered "such a vast concourse of people as was never before witnessed in Halifax." Women turned out either on horseback, in carriages or within the security of a square formed by the marchers. At 2 p.m. the Volunteer Artillery company hailed the arrival of the lieutenant-governor by firing a 21-gun salute. After Sir John Harvey had reviewed the procession a series of speeches were given, the main one by Beamish Murdoch, long-time president of the Halifax Temperance Society. He was followed by Provincial Secretary (and former president of the Charitable Irish Society) Joseph Howe who read a poem composed specifically for the occasion. Both speakers stressed the theme of how "mother" Halifax deserved the affection of her residents. In Murdoch's words, "other lands may boast

45. Cornwallis actually arrived on June 21st. But in 1839, when celebrations of the founding began, it was apparently thought that the event had occurred some two weeks earlier. See Halifax *Novascotian*, 6/12 June 1839; Halifax *Church Times*, 8 June 1849; Thomas H. Raddall, *Halifax, Warden of the North* (Toronto, 1971), 22.
46. Halifax *Acadian Recorder*, 9 June 1849.
47. Halifax *British Colonist*, 12 June 1849. On the presence of women at urban festivities see Mary Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880* (Baltimore, 1980).

greater wealth, other cities a more numerous population; but where can you find a city or a province whose sons and daughters love her and cling to her, as fondly, as proudly, as exclusively, as we do to Halifax, to Nova Scotia." It was Murdoch's way of telling the assembled throng that they owed a fundamental allegiance to one another as residents of a new community, one that could thrive through mobilization of a common sense of unity.[48]

That evening revolving gas lights on public buildings gave Halifax's downtown core a "mid-day splendor." Illuminated signs spelled out such patriotic words as "1749" and "VR." A shower of fireworks erupted from Citadel Hill, to be matched by half an hour of salvoes fired from a warship anchored in the harbour. Several private parties had been organized, including one by the firemen, who turned their Engine House into a ballroom and there "passed the evening right merrily." Most lively of all was the dinner/dance put on at Masons Hall by a combination of the North British and Highland Societies. Attracting a numerous array of men and women drawn from "the middle classes and *élite* of the city and garrison," this affair went roaring on until 3:30 in the morning. Despite such *joie de vivre*, the city avoided disorder. Next morning one local editor summed up the event by saying that "the occasion passed off as peacefully, soberly, and happily as a "small tea party."[49]

Civic pride prompted talk of the need for an enduring symbol of Halifax's having come of age. Discussion quickly came to focus on the building of a public hospital. As a last gesture before disbanding, the centenary committee endorsed the project. Moreover Dr. DeWolf and several other fraternal leaders who had been active in the centennial formed themselves into a lobby designed to convince government that it should fund the enterprise. The press immediately rallied in support of the idea. In the words of one editor, "something was needed to denote to posterity that so much philanthropy existed in the breasts of the generation of 1849."[50] A decade would pass before enthusiasm had been converted into institutional achievement but the hospital issue illustrated a major shift in contemporary thinking and behaviour. By mid-century Halifax voluntary societies had begun to assume responsibility for setting the agenda for employment of the power of the state.[51]

Of course it would be an exaggeration to suggest that Halifax had experienced an entire change of personality. Visitors to mid-Victorian Halifax repeatedly commented on what they saw as the dirt, disorder, and relative stagnation of Nova Scotia's capital. For

48. Halifax *Times & Courier*, 9 June 1849. Murdoch's career is explored by K.G. Pryke, "Beamish Murdoch', *DCB*, X: 539-540. Overlooked in that account is the fact that Murdoch died an alcoholic. See PANS MG100, vol. 74, #29.
49. Halifax *Sun*, 13 June 1849; Halifax *Novascotian*, 18 June 1849.
50. Halifax *British Colonist*, 12/21 June 1849; Halifax *Novascotian*, 25 June 1849; *Presbyterian Witness*, 7 July 1849.
51. The transition from voluntaryism to advocacy of state intervention is discussed by R. J. Morris, "Voluntary Societies,"116-118.

example, in 1850 a Boston editor complained that Halifax displayed "a sad want of the freshness, liveliness and cheerfulness which marks a New England town."[52] However, such acerbic observations overlooked fundamental elements of change that had taken place through the second quarter of the nineteenth century. One of the most significant of these changes involved emergence of a Halifax middle class.

At the beginning of this era Halifax society possessed a "middling element" but it was one which lacked organizational capacity and could muster only the rudiments of collective consciousness. By the mid 1830s people in this category had begun to come together, in terms of both structure and mentality, but their actions and statements tended to be more negative than positive. Basically they had a better idea of what they were against than what they were for. Driven by a sense of victimization and vulnerability, those of modest means turned to political protest in the hope that liberal/democratic reform might improve their lot. But often that proved divisive, opening up ethnic, sectarian, and party divisions among those manoeuvring across the middle of Halifax's social hierarchy. At the same time however, these people acquired an enthusiasm for voluntary societies, seeing them as both a shelter from adversity and an opportunity for advancement. Over time fraternalism evolved from the pursuit of individual self-help to a campaign for collective self-assertion. Societies and their members made a strategic transition from the private to the public sector. New notions of both respectability and citizenship began to be articulated, notions infused with bourgeois assumptions about the importance of work, thrift, sobriety and stewardship. In other words by 1850 middle class formation, as regards both structure and ideology, was well under way in Halifax.

TABLES

The following abbreviations apply throughout: CIS = Charitable Irish Society; GEO = St. George's Society; MAS = Freemasons; MI = Mechanics Institute; NBS = North British Society; PHIL = Nova Scotia Philanthropic Society; UE/A = United Engine Company and Axe Fire Company

Occupational categories have been constructed as follows: (included here are those job descriptions which appear frequently)

Artisans (ART.): baker, blacksmith, block maker, butcher, carpenter; cabinet maker, carriage maker, cooper, hatter, mason, moulder, painter, plumber, printer, ropemaker, saddler, sailmaker, shipwright, shoemaker, tailor, tanner, tinsmith, watchmaker, wheelwright

Retailers (RET.): bookseller, confectioner, dealers, druggist, grocer, shopkeeper, tobacconist

52. Halifax, *Novascotian*, 29 July 1850. See also Isabella Lucy Bird, *The Englishwoman in America* (London, 1856), 21-23.

Merchants/Professionals (M/P.): architect, auctioneer, brewer, cleric, distiller, doctor, engineer, founder, lawyer, notary public, publisher, wholesaler

Other/high (O/H.): bank officer, broker, gentleman, government officer (imperial or provincial), military officer

Other/low (O/L.): boarding house keeper, clerk, farmer, foreman, innkeeper, librarian, policemen, sea captain, soldier, surveyor, teacher, truckman

Unknown (U.)

Table One:
Occupational distribution by voluntary society for all members
(per centages exclude the unknowns)

	CIS		GEO		MAS		MI	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
ART.	78	30	25	20	35	27	22	25
RET.	73	28	17	14	18	14	15	17
M/P.	49	19	58	46	38	29	38	44
O/H.	41	16	19	15	17	13	10	13
O/L.	17	7	6	5	23	17	2	1
U.	192		27		115		17	
Total	450		152		246		104	

	NBS		PHIL		UE/A	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
ART.	70	37	129	42	137	77
RET.	38	20	34	11	25	14
M/P.	58	31	85	28	5	3
O/H.	17	9	15	5	2	1
O/L/	6	3	42	14	8	5
U.	96		104		60	
Total	285		409		237	

Overall distribution of the general membership by occupational grouping:

	No.	%
ART.	496	39
RET.	220	17
M/P.	331	26
O/H.	121	10
O/L.	104	8
U.	611	
Total	1883	

Table Two:
Occupational distribution by voluntary society for those serving as officers.

	CIS		GEO		MAS		MI	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
ART.	1	7	0	0	7	24	0	0
RET.	4	27	2	15	4	14	2	25
M/P.	9	60	8	62	10	35	4	50
O/H.	1	7	3	23	6	21	2	25
O/L.	0		0		2	7	0	
U.	1		0		11		2	
Total	16		13		40		10	

	NBS		PHIL		UE/A	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
ART.	1	6	8	50	20	83
RET.	8	47	1	6	2	8
M/P.	7	41	6	38	0	0
O/H.	1	6	1	6	1	4
O/L.	0	0	0		1	4
U.	1		0		4	
Total	18		16		28	

Overall distribution of officers by occupational grouping:

	No.	%
ART.	37	30
RET.	23	19
M/P.	44	36
O/H.	15	12
O/L.	3	3
U	19	
Total	141	

Table Three:
Distribution of voluntary society officers according to whether the possessed kinship and/or business connections with the inner circle of oligarchy.

	Insiders		Outsiders	
	No.	%	No.	%
CIS	5	31	11	69
GEO	12	83	2	17
MAS	11	30	26	70
MI	3	33	6	67
NBS	8	44	10	56
PHIL	6	38	10	62
UE/A	2	8	24	92

Appendix :
Voluntary societies found in Halifax, Nova Scotia during the 1840s as listed by Belcher's Farmer's Almanack and/or The Nova Scotian Almanack.
Coding: >> = lasted beyond 1850

NAME	FOUNDED	TERMINATED
AFRICAN ABOLITION SOCIETY	1843?	>>
AFRICAN FRIENDLY SOCIETY	1830s	>>
AFRICAN UNION SOCIETY	1849	>>
ATHENAEUM SOCIETY	1850	>>
AUXILIARY COLONIAL SOCIETY	1830s?	1843
AUXILIARY NAVAL & MILITARY BIBLE SOCIETY	1845	>>
AXE FIRE COMPANY	1760s	>>
BAPTIST BOARD, FOREIGN & DOM. MISSIONS	1830s	>>
BAPTIST EDUCATION SOCIETY	1820s	>>
BARRISTERS SOCIETY	1820s	>>
BENEFIT BUILDING SOCIETY	1850	>>
BIBLE SOCIETY	1820s	>>
CARPENTERS SOCIETY	1790	>>
CATHOLIC LITERARY INSTITUTE	1848	>>
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE	1822	1842
CHARITABLE IRISH SOCIETY	1786	>>
CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE SOCIETY	1840	1844
COLONIAL CHURCH SOCIETY	1830s	>>
DIOCESAN CHURCH SOCIETY	1830s	>>
FEMALE TEMPERANCE SOCIETY	1848	1850
FREEMASONS	1750s, etc.	>>
HALIFAX AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY	1820s	>>
HALIFAX BETHEL UNION	1846	1846
HALIFAX LITERARY & SCIENTIFIC ASS'N	1840?	1845
HALIFAX MARINER'S SOCIETY	1830s?	1841
HALIFAX TEMPERANCE SOCIETY	1831	>>
HAND-IN-HAND FIRE COMPANY	1790s	>>
HARMONIC SOCIETY	1842	1846
HEART AND HAND FIRE COMPANY	1820s?	1841?
HIGHLAND SOCIETY	1838	>>

NAME	FOUNDED	TERMINATED
HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY	1830s?	>>
IRISH EDUCATION SOCIETY	1845	1845
LADIES TEMPERANCE & BENEVOLENT SOCIETY	1844	>>
LAY ASS'N . . . CHURCH OF SCOT'LD	1845	>>
MECHANICS INSTITUTE	1831	>>
MICMAC MISSIONARY SOCIETY	1849	>>
NORTH BRITISH SOCIETY	1768	>>
NOVA SCOTIA PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY	1834	>>
SABBATH ALLIANCE	1850	>>
SABBATH SCHOOL UNION	1841	1846
SEAMAN'S FRIEND SOCIETY	1847	1849
SOCIETY . . . ENCOURAGEMENT OF TRADE	1841	1842
SONS OF TEMPERANCE	1847	>>
ST. GEORGE'S SOCIETY	1838	>>
ST. JOHN'S YOUNG MEN'S ASSOCIATION	1845	>>
ST. MARY'S TOTAL ABSTINENCE SOCIETY	1841	>>
ST. MARY'S/ST. PATRICK'S TEMPERANCE SOCIETY	1844	>>
STAR FIRE COMPANY	1810s?	>>
SUN FIRE COMPANY	1790s	>>
UNION ENGINE COMPANY	1768	>>
VOLUNTEER ARTILLERY COMPANY	1830s?	>>
WESLEYAN AUXILIARY MISSIONARY SOCIETY	1820s	>>
WESLEYAN FEMALE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY	1828	>>
YOUNG CHARITABLE IRISH SOCIETY	1845	>>
YOUNG MEN'S DEBATING CLUB	1847	>>
YOUNG MEN'S ENTERPRISING ASSOCIATION	1850	>>

NAME	FOUNDED	TERMINATED
YOUNG MEN'S TEMPERANCE ASSOCIATION	1847	>>
YOUNG MEN'S PRESBYTERIAN ASSOCIATION	1842	1845
YOUTH PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY	1841	>>

Note: the foregoing does not include voluntary societies established to serve the cross-harbour village of Dartmouth.