

## The Golden Age and the Exodus: the Case of Canning, Kings County

Alan A. Brookes

Volume 11, numéro 1, autumn 1981

URI : [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad11\\_1art04](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad11_1art04)

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (imprimé)

1712-7432 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Brookes, A. A. (1981). The Golden Age and the Exodus : the Case of Canning, Kings County. *Acadiensis*, 11(1), 57–82.

ALAN A. BROOKES

## The Golden Age and the Exodus: the Case of Canning, Kings County

During the last three decades of the nineteenth century more than a quarter of a million inhabitants, approximately 40% of the total number of people living in the region in 1871, emigrated from the Maritime provinces. Although a smaller outward flow had taken place earlier, it had been offset by the "Great Migrations" from Britain which had contributed to a steady population expansion between 1815 and 1860. From 1870 to 1900, the trend was dramatically reversed. By the 1880s, decadal population growth was reduced to 2% in Nova Scotia, 0.09% in New Brunswick, and 0.18% in Prince Edward Island.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, the exodus responsible for this alarming change in regional fortunes became a major political issue in its day. To many Maritimers, the "constant drain of the bone and sinew" of the population was the ultimate proof of the evils of Confederation and the National Policy of protective tariffs introduced to stimulate the growth of manufacturing. When combined with the other federal policies of railway construction and westward expansion, "N.P." came to stand for "nasty poultice" and "national poverty" in the provinces by the sea.<sup>2</sup> The transition from a "Golden Age" of "wood, wind and sail" in the 1850s and 1860s to an era dominated by integrated, centralized land-based, industrial capitalism brought "lamentations and exodus" — key ingredients in the landslide victory of the Liberals in the "Repeal Election" of 1886 in Nova Scotia.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, only the broad, regional characteristics of this exodus have been examined.<sup>4</sup> The extent and timing of the outward movement is known. It claimed a reasonable ethnic and religious cross-section of Maritime society. The majority of the migrants were the young and single of both sexes, especially the sons and daughters of farmers, and Maritimers from traditional crafts families. As the number of emigrants expanded in the 1870s and 1880s, the proportion of older people, married couples and whole families increased, yet young single men and women still predominated. The areas most affected were the outports, the coastal communities strongly tied to the old commercial economy which

1 Alan A. Brookes, "The Exodus: Migration from the Maritime Provinces to Boston during the second half of the Nineteenth Century" (PhD thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1979), ch. 2; M.C. Urquhart and K.A.H. Buckley, eds., *Historical Statistics of Canada* (Toronto, 1965), pp. 14, 22.

2 *Pioneer* (Montague, P.E.I.), 26 December 1879.

3 See Colin D. Howell, "W.S. Fielding and the Repeal Elections of 1886 and 1887 in Nova Scotia", *Acadiensis*, VIII (Spring 1979), pp. 28-46.

4 See Alan A. Brookes, "Out-Migration from the Maritime Provinces, 1860-1900: Some Preliminary Considerations", *Acadiensis*, V (Spring 1976), pp. 26-56.

derived few benefits from the new industrial expansion. A large majority of those who left the Maritimes went to the United States, especially to New England and its metropolis of Boston. While undeniably useful, these general characteristics do not provide an adequate understanding of why and how the exodus took place. Such an understanding, which is vital if any assessment is to be made regarding the effects of the "mercantile-industrial transition" on population and society, can only be realized through more detailed examination of particular Maritime communities during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Evidence available for the Canning electoral district of Kings County, Nova Scotia, an outport area situated at the eastern end of the Annapolis Valley, offers a rare opportunity to conduct a specific, local enquiry of this kind. Because Sir Frederick Borden, Liberal MP for Kings, was convinced that the Tories had manufactured the 1891 federal census to minimize the negative impact of the National Policy on population growth during the previous decade, he instructed his local supporters to obtain sworn affidavits from residents of the Canning district testifying to the enumeration of relatives who actually had been permanent residents of the United States for some time.<sup>5</sup> The affidavits, collected during the fall and winter of 1892-93, provide unique information on 190 emigrants, drawn from 46 families. They record names, ages, precise dates of departure, and exact places of origin and destination. When supplemented by information from the manuscript schedules of the censuses of 1871 and 1881 and other sources, these data make it possible to confront the basic questions as to who left the Canning district and why. The affidavits also provide the opportunity to trace the migrants forward and thus reconstruct the outward migration streams from the area. In contrast to the usual practice of linking migrants backwards from their destinations, this forward tracing also allows for a more reliable assessment of the role of family and friends in the migration process.

North America was celebrated for its high rates of natural increase in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>6</sup> Population growth was delicately tied to the supply of land and according to several studies of communities in colonial Massachusetts and Connecticut an abundance of land ensured "prodigious increases" among the first and second generations of settlers.<sup>7</sup> By the third and

5 For the parliamentary debate on the issue and ten of the affidavits, see Canada, House of Commons, *Debates (1894)* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1895), pp. 4129-44. The remaining 36 letters are in Ms. File, "Emigration: To U.S.", Public Archives of Nova Scotia. See also Sir Richard Cartwright, *Reminiscences* (Toronto, 1912), pp. 325-6.

6 For general trends see J. Potter, "The Growth of Population in America, 1700-1860", in D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley, eds., *Population in History* (London, 1965), pp. 631-89.

7 See Philip J. Greven, Jr., *Four Generations: Population, Land and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, 1970); Kenneth Lockridge, "Land, Population and the Evolution of New England Society, 1630-1790", *Past and Present*, 39 (April 1968), pp. 62-80; and Charles S. Grant, *Democracy in the Connecticut Frontier Town of Kent* (New York, 1961).

fourth generations, however, poverty, out-migration and a reduction in the levels of fertility began to occur as a result of "the pressure of a population swollen by a fantastic birth rate against a limited supply of land".<sup>8</sup> It was from the overcrowded farms of eastern Connecticut and Rhode Island that the first "Anglo-American" Planters arrived in Kings County, Nova Scotia, in group migrations between 1761 and 1764. Given the promise of transportation assistance and free farms, they eagerly accepted the invitation to take up the "fertile" lands left vacant after the Acadian Expulsion of 1755. Between 21 July 1761 and 31 December 1764, 145 families received grants in Cornwallis township, the area which included what was to become the Canning electoral district. Most families were awarded a "full share" of 500 acres, in a combination of dyked marsh, "valuable uplands" and woodlots.<sup>9</sup> In turn, the quantity and quality of these grants was soon reflected in the population growth. According to the genealogies compiled by A.W.H. Eaton, the average number of children born to first-generation settlers in Cornwallis was between 7 and 8. Over one-quarter of the original grantees for whom full-information is available (20 of 74) had families of ten or more offspring.<sup>10</sup>

During the 80 years which followed the arrival of the Connecticut planters, the inhabitants of Kings maintained this very high level of fertility, and the population multiplied steadily. T.C. Haliburton, a resident of nearby Windsor, attested in 1829 that:

the population of the . . . [province] has increased prodigiously, within the last twenty years, and that with the exception of the coast of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the emigration to the country has been very insignificant . . . . The means of subsisting a family are easily acquired. Wilderness lands are obtained upon such moderate terms, that an industrious man is soon enabled to provide for his family . . . . The people therefore marry at an earlier period of life, and in great numbers than in Great Britain, and the increase is proportionately large. It is estimated that there are in Europe, on average, four children to each marriage, and in Nova Scotia, seven.

Under his description of Cornwallis Township, Haliburton added that

The process by which the wilderness is converted into a fruitful country, although necessarily slow is uniform. As the population becomes too numerous for the cultivated part, the young men either extend the frontiers of the Townships, or penetrate into the depth of the forest.

8 Grant, pp. 98-9.

9 A.W.H. Eaton, *The History of Kings County*, (1910, reprinted Belleville, Ont., 1972), ch. 5; and Thomas C. Haliburton, *History of Nova Scotia* (1829, reprinted Belleville, Ont., 1973), II, p. 122.

10 See "Family Sketches", in Eaton, pp. 542-883.

Haliburton acknowledged that "every year pours forth, in an increased ratio, new labourers", and he noted that any "calculation formed upon this rate of increase [of seven children per family] . . . plainly shews that . . . the country . . . will at no very distant period be exceedingly populous".<sup>11</sup> Yet he did not choose to form any Malthusian conclusions. In the 1820s the pressure of population upon land was building only "slowly" and apparently had not reduced fertility rates. Kings County's population had grown from 1,361 in 1767 to 7,155 in 1817, and to 10,208 by 1827. Eleven years later it had reached 13,709.<sup>12</sup>

If one estimates a generation as twenty-five years, then the inhabitants of the Canning district were doing somewhat better than their New England ancestors. Cannings' second generation were born principally between 1750 and 1775, some arriving in Nova Scotia as small children. Sufficient land had then been available, probably as a consequence of the very large original grants of good quality soil, to allow them, their children (the third generation), and most of their grand-children (the fourth generation, born 1800-25) to continue the tradition of large families. Eaton's genealogies, though incomplete beyond the first generation, tend to support such a pattern, with the exception of a slight reduction in the number of children in the third and fourth generations.<sup>13</sup> Planter John Rand, for example, had 8 offspring in Cornwallis. John Jr., born in 1768, also had eight, but his son Eben (born 1820) had only five. Similarly, Stephen Strong had 11 children, a second generation son had 13, and the four third-generation lines traced had 12, 7, 6 and 7. At a reunion of the family of Charles Tupper (1st generation) in 1837, there were present all 14 of his surviving children, 83 grandchildren and 83 great-grandchildren.

There is some indication, nevertheless, of an out-migration among the fourth (born 1800-25) and fifth generations (born 1825-50) during the 1840s. This was a decade of panic and uncertainty throughout the Maritime provinces as Britain shook the staple trades upon which the region was so dependent by removing preferential tariffs from colonial goods and allowing the Americans access to the West Indies market.<sup>14</sup> From 13,709 in 1838, the population of Kings County grew to only 14,138 in 1851.<sup>15</sup> It was during the 1840s that Enoch Steadman (fourth generation) removed from Cornwallis to Boston. Enoch's great-grandfather, John Steadman, who had arrived in the township in 1760 from Rhode Island and had assisted in the initial surveying of the area, had 12 children, the fifth of whom was a son, Enoch. In turn, Enoch and Allison Steadman had 8 off-

11 Haliburton, *History of Nova Scotia*, II, pp. 288, 126 (emphasis mine).

12 Eaton, *op. cit.*, p. 458.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 542-883, for all of the following information on Cornwallis families.

14 For a detailed account of the emigration from a district in the adjacent county of Annapolis, see Ira M. Sutherland, "Clements Township — Its History and Its People, 1783-1870" (MA thesis, Acadia University, 1957), pp. 68-73.

15 Eaton, *op. cit.*, p. 458.

spring. The eldest, Benjamin, also had eight children; his first son, born in 1820, was Enoch Steadman, the fourth generation out-migrant who "became a prosperous business man in Boston [Holt, Steadman & Co., teamsters] and retired about 1880, with a comfortable fortune". Levi W. Rockwell's life followed an almost identical pattern. He was born in 1822, the fourth-generation descendant of planter Jonathan Rockwell of East Windsor, Connecticut. There were seven offspring in the second generation, eight in Levi's branch of the third generation, and ten brothers and sisters in his own fourth-generation family. Levi Rockwell left for Boston in the 1840s where he, too, amassed "a large fortune" in the produce and real estate markets. The youngest child, George (born 1832), followed his older brother to Massachusetts in the 1850s. Together with men like Judson Ellis, who in 1848 left Cornwallis for Boston and a more modest career as a cabinet maker, Enoch Steadman and Levi Rockwell provide important examples of an emigration among the fourth generation of inhabitants of the Canning era. They also demonstrated to their contemporaries the rewards that awaited young emigrants in the "Boston States".<sup>16</sup>

The widespread practice of seasonal, temporary "working away" which had also developed by the 1840s provides further evidence of population pressure. The seasonal employment of redundant sons and daughters on neighbouring farms, in the fisheries, the carrying trade, or perhaps a local shipyard, generated valuable supplementary income for farm families and made Nova Scotians versatile "jacks-of-all-trades". Haliburton remarked in 1849 that "The Nova Scotian . . . is often found superintending the cultivation of a farm, and building a vessel at the same time; and is not only able to catch and cure a cargo of fish, but to find his way with it to the West Indies or the Mediterranean . . . He is irregular in his pursuits, 'all things by turns, and nothing long'." In the same essay, which he entitled "The Seasons: or Comers and Goers", the "old judge" likened the province in springtime to a railway station, with society being awakened to a state of motion following the end of the winter "freeze-up" of navigation.<sup>17</sup> Although extensive local evidence is hard to procure on this temporary "flitting to and fro", contemporary commentators and the press testified frequently to its existence.<sup>18</sup>

While some of the inhabitants of the Canning district continued to leave the area both permanently and temporarily throughout the 1850s and 1860s, the "Golden Age" of these decades brought a renewed prosperity and granted a reprieve to many members of the fourth and fifth generations. In September of 1852 potatoes were being sold for about 40 cents a bushel in Kings County. By the end of the year the price had almost doubled to 75 cents, and the following

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 804, 834-5.

17 Thomas C. Haliburton, *The Old Judge* (1849, reprinted Toronto, 1968), pp. xxviii, 202-13.

18 See Brookes, "The Exodus", pp. 80-3.

spring it rose to between \$1.00 and \$1.25.<sup>19</sup> With the onset of reciprocal free trade among the British North American colonies and the American states in 1854, a potato boom ensued in Canning where a "great part of the shipping of the potatoes of the county for the [principal market of] Boston . . . was done".<sup>20</sup> As well as the prosperity this highly land-intensive crop brought to farmers, there were obvious advantages to merchants, shippers and shipbuilders, and the village of Canning, along with nearby Kingsport, became the major shipbuilding centre of Kings County. In the peak years between 1850 and 1875, "it was no uncommon sight to see two ships on stocks at the same time" in Canning.<sup>21</sup> As a consequence of this activity, the population of Kings County again began to increase rapidly; from 14,138 in 1851 it grew to 18,731 in 1861, and to 21,510 by 1871.<sup>22</sup>

High rates of fertility rather than immigration were again responsible for the growth in population.<sup>23</sup> As during the prosperous "Golden Age" of the 1850s and early 1860s, Canning's families grew large. According to a cross-sectional estimate derived from the 1871 manuscript census, the median age at which the district's women married was 20 years, an average only fractionally younger than the North American trend for the period.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, the fertility rate of Canning's wives was quite exceptional. The ratio of children 0-4 years per 1000 married women aged 20-49 in the district in 1871 was 1218:1000. When standardized for the age distribution of the wives it was still 1139:1000. In their study of five Massachusetts communities in 1880, the highest ratio discovered by

19 Eaton, *op. cit.*, p. 456.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 152. See also, Margaret Ells, "Canning in the 'Seventies'" (unpublished prize essay, Dalhousie University, 1929), p. 5.

21 Eaton, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 458.

23 Although there are no reliable figures on the number of immigrants who came to Canning, it is clear from Table 3 and from the census data that few of the immigrants from the British Isles could have settled in the area since the population was largely native-born.

24 All information on Canning is derived from a cross-sectional analysis of individuals enumerated in Manuscript Schedules of Population for Canning, Nova Scotia, in Canada, First Census (1871), microfilm at Public Archives of Canada. The median age of marriage in Canning was estimated by subtracting the age of eldest child, plus one year, from the ages of wives 35 years or under with co-resident children. Median age of marriage for American women between the late 18th century and the 1920s ranged from 20.5 to 21.6 years. Estimates for Massachusetts, Buffalo, and Ontario in the 1850s and 1860s have all placed the average between 20 and 23 years. See Robert V. Wells, "Demographic Change and the Life Cycle of American Families", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 2 (1971/72), p. 275; Thomas P. Monahan, "One Hundred Years of Marriage in Massachusetts", *American Journal of Sociology*, 56 (1950/51), p. 541; Laurence A. Glasco, "The Life Cycles and Household Structure of American Ethnic Groups: Irish, Germans and Native-born Whites in Buffalo, New York, 1855", *Journal of Urban History*, 1 (1974/75), p. 353; and David Gagan, "Land, Population and Social Change: The 'Critical Years' in Rural Canada West", *Canadian Historical Review*, 59 (1978), p. 318.

Hareven and Vinovskis was under 800:1000 in rural Boxford.<sup>25</sup> The married women of Canning who were in their 20s in 1871 were already likely to have two children. One-third of these wives had three or more offspring. On average, mothers in their 30s had four children and those in their 40s had five. Completed families were probably even larger, for the older children of women in their 40s would have left home already. By comparison, none of the groups of wives aged 40-49 in 1860 in the three Hudson Valley communities studied by Stuart Blumin had an average of more than four offspring living with them.<sup>26</sup> Among the married women in their 40s in Hamilton in 1861, Michael Katz found that only 36% had five or more children living at home; in Canning a decade later, 55% of wives in their 40s had five or more children with them.<sup>27</sup> Plainly, Canning's "Golden Age" families were distinguished by their size.

As this large sixth generation of residents began to "come of age" during the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s, so simultaneously the economy of the Canning area declined precipitously. After more than a century of continuous settlement, the pressure of population upon the land had already grown critical. By 1871, 82% of the Canning district's acreage was being farmed and holdings had become small.<sup>28</sup> While the Cornwallis planters of 1761 had been given 500 acres for themselves and their families, by 1871 seven in ten farms had no more than 50 acres. In 1866, when the Americans terminated the Reciprocity Treaty and raised tariff barriers, the Kings County potato trade collapsed. During that same year, and again in 1868, the commercial section of Canning village was severely affected by fires from which the town never fully recovered.<sup>29</sup> The completion of the Windsor and Annapolis Railway in 1869 transformed patterns of transportation in the area and sealed the fate of Canning and the other bypassed communities of the district such as Medford, Blomidon, Sheffield Mills and Scotts Bay, as the inland shire-town of Kentville, located on the railway line, rose to assume commercial as well as administrative control of Kings County.<sup>30</sup> The result of these changes was a loss of population. Though a natural increase of at least 14% (if not 20% or more) could have been expected, Kings County's population grew by only 9% from 21,510 to 23,469 during the 1870s;

25 The Massachusetts figures, and a discussion of the advantages of using this particular ratio in calculating rates of fertility (and of standardizing for age) are in Tamara K. Hareven and Maris A. Vinovskis, "Patterns of Childbearing in Late Nineteenth-Century America: The Determinants of Fertility in Five Massachusetts Towns in 1880", in Hareven and Vinovskis, eds., *Family and Population in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, 1978), pp. 88-94.

26 Stuart Blumin, "Rip Van Winkle's Grandchildren: Family and Household in the Hudson Valley, 1800-1860", *Journal of Urban History*, 1 (1974-75), pp. 300-1.

27 Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), p. 247.

28 Canada, *First Census* (1871), vol. 3 (Ottawa, 1876), pp. 90-1.

29 Ells, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

30 See Eaton, *op. cit.*, p. 201; and Carman Miller, "Family, Business and Politics in Kings County, N.S.: The Case of F.W. Borden, 1875-1896", *Acadiensis*, VII (Spring 1978), pp. 64-5.



over the same decade the inhabitants of the Canning district expanded by just 12%, from 2,898 to 3,260.<sup>31</sup> By the 1880s the exodus was well under way and the county's population actually declined to 22,489; the Canning district's population fell to 2,989. In Canning village the number of residents rose from 1,459 to 1,584 in the 1870s, then declined to 1,453 in the 1880s. By 1901 the village contained just 1,407 souls.<sup>32</sup>

More than any other segment of the population, the youth of the Canning district were affected by the end of the "Golden Age" and the subsequent decline of local economic opportunities. Even by 1871, the young males of the district were faced with a lengthy transition from childhood and dependence upon their families of orientation, to adulthood, independence, and the establishment of their own families of procreation. At this time, the most common tendency for Canning's young men was to finish schooling between 16 and 18 years; hardly any of the district's males were still "at school" over the age of 18 in 1871 (Table 1).<sup>33</sup> Small numbers of farmers' sons had already commenced full-time work at 13 or 14 with many joining their ranks at 16 or 17. Although some of the younger boys hired out as labourers or "servants" with neighbours or took apprenticeships as blacksmiths or carpenters, the large majority lived at home and were employed by their fathers after leaving school. Out of 426 males aged 13-30 in Canning in 1871 only 41 (or less than 10%) were boarding. The transition from living and working at home to marriage and the establishment of a separate household began to be attained by some at the age of 22 or 23 years, but was not achieved by most young men until 26 or 27. Any young male in Canning in 1871 faced the prospect of a ten year wait before he could become independent; when economic conditions worsened in the next twenty years it is likely that the transition to adulthood took even longer. During these years, the "youth" lived with his mother and father in a large, crowded family, and probably worked very hard without the reward of any formal wages.

The transitional period between leaving school and establishing one's own household was much shorter for Canning's women, though there is some evidence that it may have been extended over time. In 1871 most of the district's young females attended school until aged 17 or 18 (Table 2). Between the ages of 17 and 20, they were likely to remain at home helping around the house. In contrast to urban places like mid-nineteenth century Hamilton, Canada West, op-

31 According to Canada, *Seventh Census* (1931), vol. 1 (Ottawa, 1936), p. 109, 14% is the *absolute minimum* natural increase that could have been expected. Given the particular fertility rates discovered in Canning it is likely that the actual increase would have been much greater, unless a dramatic reduction of rates took place during the 1870s and 1880s. Even then, the 14% estimate would be a conservative one.

32 Canada, *Seventh Census* (1931), vol. 2 (Ottawa, 1936), p. 32.

33 All data and examples taken from Manuscript schedules of Population, for Canning, Nova Scotia, in Canada, *First Census* (1871).

Table 1: Household status of males aged 13-30 years in Canning, 1871 (real numbers).

Age	At Home				Outside Parental Home							T
	AS	ESF	EDF	UNS	ST	BSH	BDH	OHU	OHM	ST		
13	20	0	0	4	24	0	2	0	0	2	26	
14	29	1	0	7	37	2	2	0	0	4	41	
15	17	2	0	4	23	3	1	0	0	4	27	
16	21	5	0	6	32	1	1	0	0	2	34	
17	12	9	3	4	28	2	0	0	0	2	30	
18	10	12	3	0	25	4	0	0	0	4	29	
19	3	12	3	4	22	2	0	0	1	3	25	
20	1	21	2	0	24	3	1	0	1	5	29	
21	0	5	3	3	11	1	1	0	1	3	14	
22	0	10	5	0	15	1	2	0	4	7	22	
23	0	3	1	1	5	1	1*	2	6	10	15	
24	0	8	2	2	12	1	3	0	5	9	21	
25	0	3	6	2	11	1	0	0	8	9	20	
26	0	5	0	0	5	1	1	0	4	6	11	
27	0	6	0	0	6	0	0	0	15	15	21	
28	0	2	1	0	3	1	0	0	17	18	21	
29	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	11	11	14	
30	0	2	0	0	2	1	1	0	22	24	26	
<hr/>												
426												

\*married

Key: AS = at school; ESF = employed same occupation as father; EDF = employed different occupation than father; UNS = unemployed and not at school; ST = sub total; BSH = boarding same occupation as household head; BDH = boarding different occupation than household head; OHU = own home and unmarried; OHM = own home and married; T = total.

Source: Manuscript Schedules for Canning in Canada, First Census (1871), PAC.

Table 2: Household status of females aged 13-30 years in Canning, 1871 (real numbers).

Age	At Home				Outside Parental Home					T
	AS	E	UNS	ST	BE	BUS	OHMC	OHMNC	ST	
13	17	0	2	19	1	2	0	0	3	22
14	23	0	6	29	0	0	0	0	0	29
15	13	0	8	21	6	1	0	0	7	28
16	16	0	7	23	2	3	0	0	5	28
17	8	3	13	24	7	0	0	0	7	31
18	13	0	19	32	2	1	1	1	5	37
19	6	1	9	16	1	1	2	2	6	22
20	1	0	10	11	2	3	8	3	16	27
21	1	0	5	6	0	1	10	0	11	17
22	1	1	6	8	1	0	12	0	13	21
23	1	1	9	11	0	3	13	0	16	27
24	0	1	8	9	0	1	17	0	18	27
25	0	1	6	7	1	2	17	2	22	29
26	0	0	5	5	1	0	14	1	16	21
27	0	1	2	3	0	0	13	0	13	16
28	0	1	3	4	0	0	19	2	21	25
29	0	0	1	1	1	2	8	0	11	12
30	0	1	4	5	2	0	20	1	23	28
										447

Key: AS = at school; E = employed; UNS = unemployed not at school; ST = sub total; BE = boarding and employed;  
BUS = boarding, unemployed or at school; OHMC = own home, married with children; OHMNC = own  
home, married, no children; T = total.

Source: Manuscript Schedules for Canning in Canada, First Census (1871), PAC.

portunities to “work out” and live in lodgings were few, and like their male counterparts only about one in ten could be found boarding in 1871 (47 out of 447).<sup>34</sup> Limited opportunities for employment existed in domestic service and a mere 23 females, primarily between the ages of 13 and 20 years, were working as servants. At 20 or 21, Canning’s women married and began families of their own; 65% of the 21-year-olds were married and by 27 this proportion had reached 92%. Moreover, only 12 of 166 (7%) married women under 31 in the district in 1871 were without children, and half of these were under 21. Even at 19 or 20, many wives had already given birth to their first child.

Though data from the 1891 census are not available, it is possible that for young women the three or four year period between leaving school and marriage may have been extended during the 1870s and 1880s as a result of changing attitudes as well as economic opportunities. In February 1892 the nearby *Wolfville Acadian* offered some thoughtful criticism to George Johnson, the Dominion Statistician, who had reported

that the average number in the family has decreased in the Eastern Maritime Provinces, this being due in part to the decay of early marriages and the interesting tendency to celibacy; this latter, he thinks is “due to the spread of education which enables females to become better wage earners and therefore less interested in marriage” . . .

Whether Mr. Johnson is right in his views as to the increasing tendency to celibacy or not, or to whatever extent, greater or less, education has to do with the result; this we do know that our country girls have of late years become inspired with a large measure of self-reliance and an evident disposition to ignore the old fashioned notion that their only or best destiny was to marry, and as a consequence have sought employment in the factories of Canada and the United States . . . .<sup>35</sup>

Another column in the same paper warned young women “not [to] go to the cities in search of employment as you will be doomed to disappointment”.

That the exodus provided an increasingly attractive alternative to Canning’s sixth-generation males and females, is well demonstrated by the information in Frederick Borden’s affidavits.<sup>36</sup> Between 1868 and 1879, a total of 25 individuals

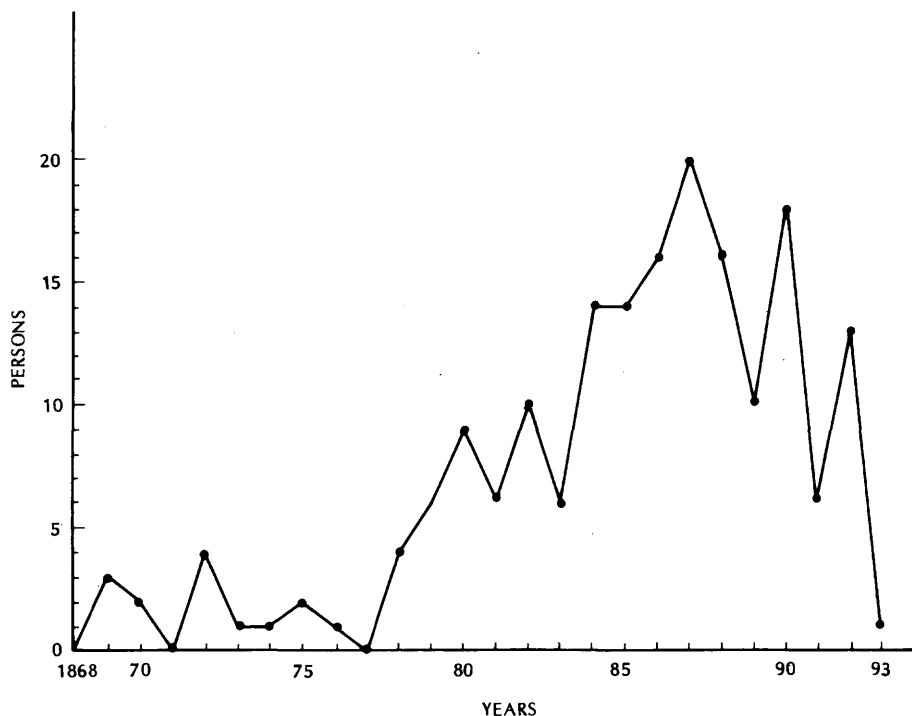
34 In Hamilton in 1871, 76% of the males and 64% of the females aged 15-19 years were living at home; in Canning the proportions were 90% and 79%. Katz, *The People of Hamilton*, p. 261.

35 *Acadian* (Wolfville, N.S.), 5 February 1892.

36 Although the affidavits, do have certain limitations, and were collected for admittedly partisan political purposes, there seems no reason to doubt their validity as an historical source. Some parents, for example, may not have bothered to mention children who had died in the period between migration and the writing of the affidavit, and Canning emigrants who left no immediate family to testify to their absence may have gone unrecorded. The fact that the affidavits were written to swear to the emigration of relatives to the U.S. excludes those who

left home, compared to 165 in the next 13 years (Figure 1). Following the initial flow of departures in the late 1860s, a noticeable decline occurred in the mid-1870s, years of economic uncertainty in the United States. The outward movement began to regain momentum in 1878 and reached a peak between 1884 and 1888. The late 1880s gave evidence of a slightly reduced, but still substantial emigration, sensitive to external as well as internal conditions. Throughout, the exodus from Canning was dominated by the young and single. The median age

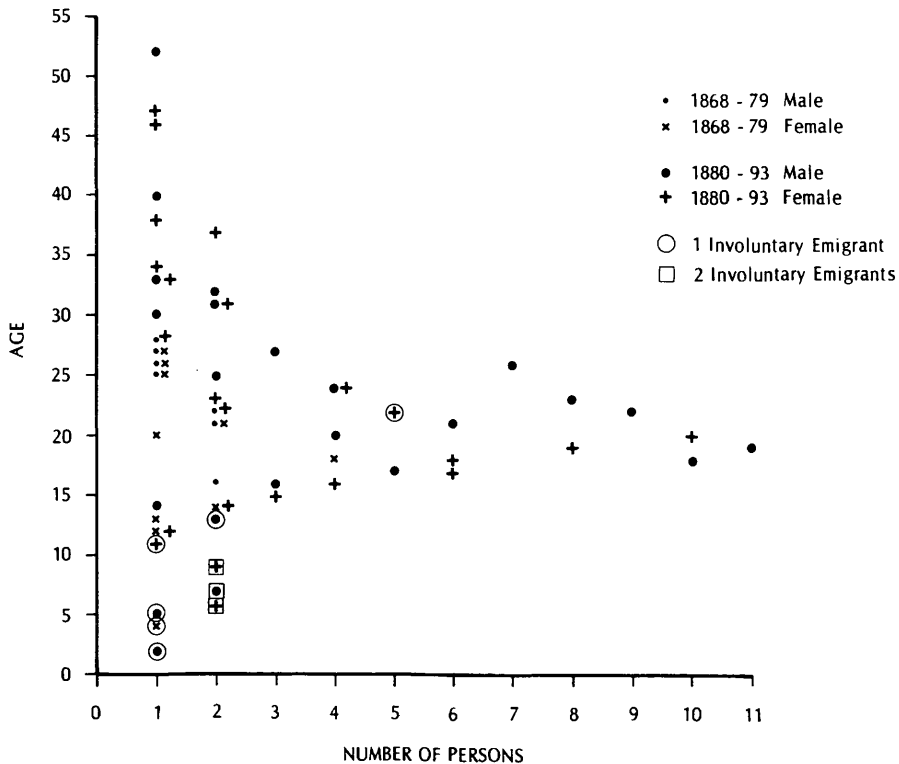
FIGURE 1 DATES OF DEPARTURE OF CANNING EMIGRANTS, 1868 - 93.



left Canning for other parts of Nova Scotia or Canada. Nevertheless, all of these limitations serve only to underestimate the volume of the exodus from the district. Moreover, we know from other sources that most out-migrants did go to the U.S. in these years, and the dates of departure of Borden's sample very closely parallel the trend of population decline in the district as a whole. The social and economic characteristics of Borden's 190 emigrants also appear to represent a fair cross-section of the district's population.

for those who left before 1880 was 21. The several families who departed in the 1880s raised the number of involuntary migrants to 12, and, although the range of the emigrants was expanded to cover a spectrum from 12 to 52 years, the median age at departure was lowered to 20. Over the entire 26 years covered by Borden's affidavits, the most common time to leave was between 18 and 22 years, inclusive (Figure 2). Fully 73% of the 183 individuals who recorded specific age of departure in the affidavits left Canning between 16 and 26, the critical years which encompassed the search for autonomy. There were, however, some important differences between male and female patterns. Men were more numerous than the women (104 to 86) and more varied in their ages of departure. Thirty-six per cent of the males left between 16 and 20 years of age, 34% when they were 21 to 25, and 13% when they were in their late 20s. In contrast, almost half of the females who emigrated did so between their 16th and 21st birthdays; only 19% departed in their early-20s and just 4% left between 26 and

FIGURE 2: AGE OF DEPARTURE BY SEX, 1868 - 79 and 1880 - 93



30 years of age. Such variations correspond closely to the different durations of "youth" observable in the Canning district in 1871 — from 16 to 26 years for males, but only 16/17 to 20/21 for young women.

The reason for the departure of so many young people is not to be found in their geographic location or their ethnic or religious origins. The emigrants came from all parts of the Canning district and, given the small numbers involved, their families represented a reasonable ethnic, religious and occupational cross-section of the population. Ninety-three of those who departed were from the town of Canning and six were from Lower Canning; the smaller villages of Scotts Bay, Sheffield Mills, Medford, and Blomidon provided 33, 31, 16 and 11 persons, respectively. In 1871, 82% of all the inhabitants of the district claimed English origin, compared to 90% of the emigrants' families (Table 3). A decade later, the proportions were 70% and 71%, respectively. The Irish comprised exactly the same proportions of the community and the sample at both dates (10% and 12%), while the small number of Scots were under-represented in 1871, and slightly over-represented in 1881. The Baptists and the Methodists were the largest religious denominations in the Canning district and accounted for almost three-quarters of the emigrants' families, although there were fewer Baptists and more Methodists in Borden's sample than in the community. Lesser numbers of Congregationalists, Catholics, Presbyterians and Anglicans also joined the exodus.

The occupations of the emigrants' fathers convey the impact of the economic changes of the 1870s and 1880s on the traditional sectors of the Canning economy. Twenty-one of the fathers were farmers in 1871, another was a farmer and fisherman.<sup>37</sup> There were six ship-carpenters, two shipwrights, one sailor, and a shipwright and Justice of the Peace. Crafts families were further represented by two house-joiners, two blacksmiths, a carpenter, and a mason. The two merchants-fathers demonstrate that the exodus was touching those in the service as well as the primary and secondary industries of the area.

The single most distinct characteristic of the emigrants is that they were drawn from Canning's larger households. In 1871, the average (mean) household size in the district was 5.29 persons, compared to 7.43 for the sample members (Figure 3). A decade later, the emigrants' households still contained two more people than the community average (7.78 to 5.59 persons). Despite the presence of several boarders, the difference was largely attributable to a greater number of children in the families which provided emigrants. In 1871, for example, there was an average of 3.31 children in Canning's families, compared to

37 Though the evidence is fragmentary (agricultural schedules existing for only one of the two divisions of the Canning enumeration district in 1871), it appears that the emigrants may have grown up on the smaller farms of the area. Of the 14 farmers located in the surviving schedules, 11 occupied less than 50 acres. Moreover, four of the farmer-fathers were tenants, and on 9 farms all of the land was being worked.

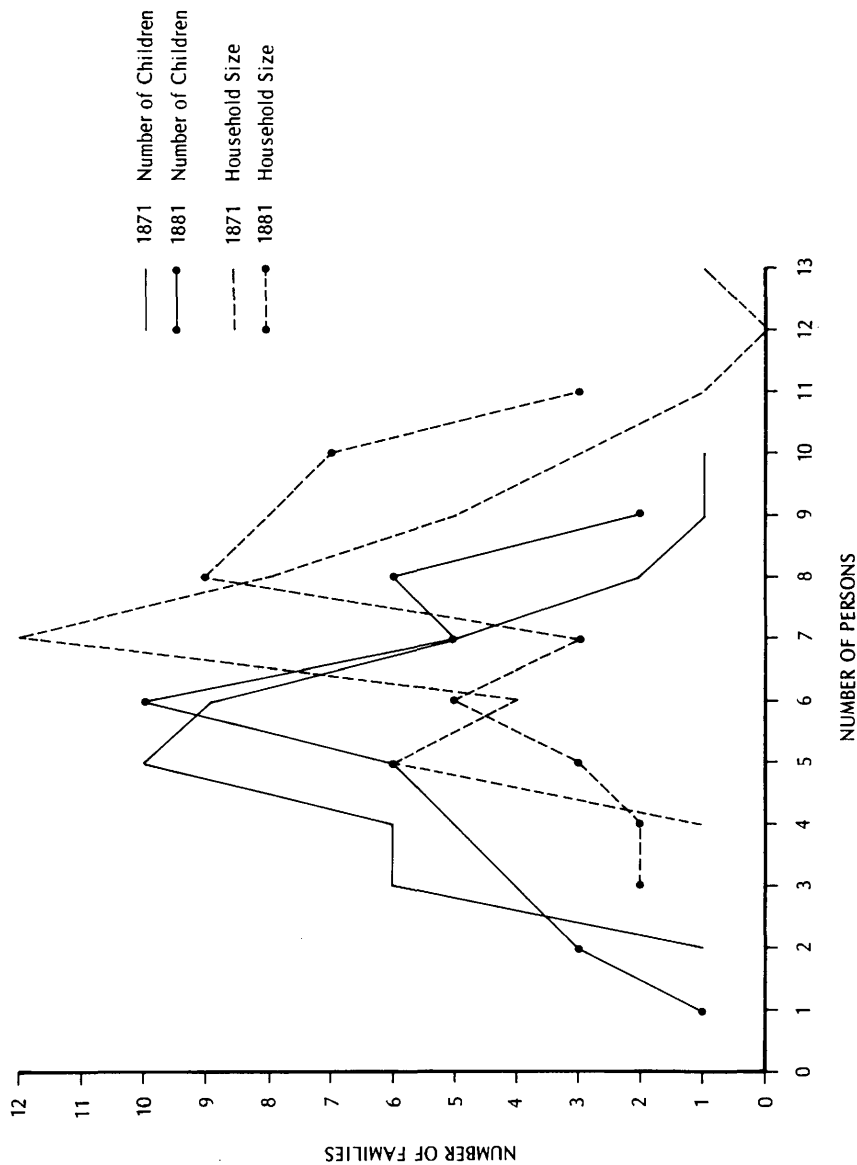
Table 3: Socio-economic characteristics of Borden's sample and of the population of Canning, 1871 and 1881.

	1871		1881	
	<i>Canning</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Canning</i>	<i>Sample</i>
<i>Origins</i>	%	%	%	%
English	82	90	70	71
Irish	10	10	12	12
Scottish	6	0	8	12
French	1	0	5	2
Other	1	0	4	0
<i>Religions</i>	%	%	%	%
Baptist	49	46	48	43
Methodist	20	27	20	29
Catholic	10	7	7	10
Presbyterian	5	2	4	2
Anglican	4	2	3	2
Congregat.	10	10	11	10
Others	2	5	7	5
<i>Birthplace</i>	%	%	%	%
Nova Scotia	95	95	96	93
Ireland	3	2	1	5
England	1	0	0	0
Scotland	0	0	0	0
United States	0	2	1	2
Other	1	0	1	0
<i>Household Size</i>				
$\bar{x}$	5.29	7.43	5.59	7.78
<i># Children</i>				
$\bar{x}$	3.31	5.31	3.59	5.47
N	2,898	41	3,260	42

Source: Borden affidavits and Canada, *First Census (1871)*, vol. I (Ottawa, 1876), pp. 72-3, 226-7, 322-3.



FIGURE 3: HOUSEHOLD SIZE AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN: EMIGRANT FAMILIES, 1871 AND 1881

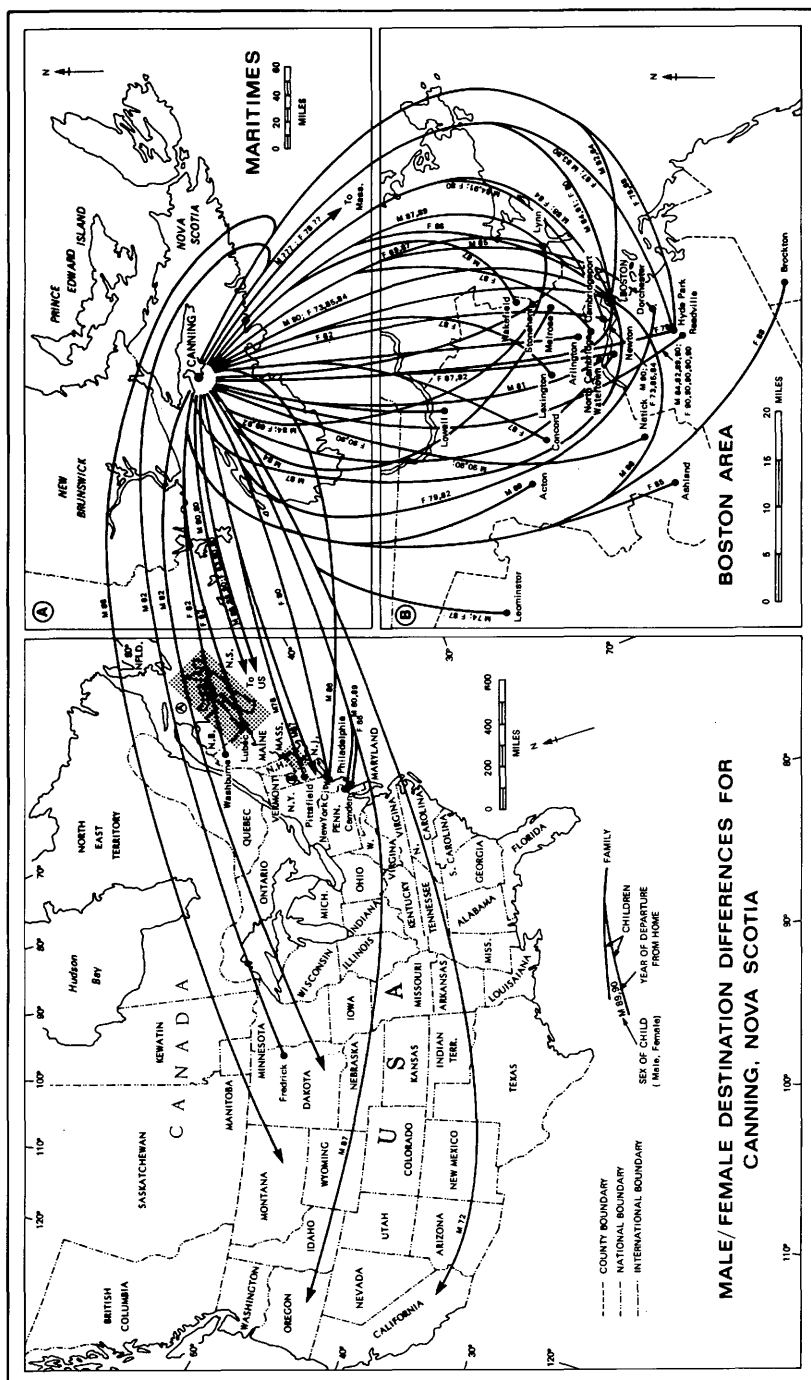


5.31 for the sample households. The respective proportions for 1881 were 3.59 and 5.47 children.

While it is apparent that the emigration of older children may have become necessary to ease over-crowding in larger households by the 1870s, it was also an inescapable part of the life-course of malleable families as they expanded and contracted over time. Canning's younger households grew bigger during the 1870s and 1880s, while the older ones either became smaller or accommodated boarders to take the place of departed offspring. Lemuel Rogers (aged 32) and his wife Maria (25 years), for example, had a family of three children in 1871. Ten years later, the three daughters remained, but they had acquired four brothers and another sister. Similarly, Henry and Mary Hudson (aged 30 and 27 years) of Scotts Bay were blessed with five children during the 1870s and increased their family to nine members by 1881. In contrast, Benjamin and Sophia Eaton (aged 42) already had a completed family of six in 1871; by 1881 only the youngest daughter, Eunice, remained with her aging parents. James and Julia Rogers were also in their early 40s at the beginning of the decade and had four sons and three daughters on their farm in Scotts Bay. Ten years later only the youngest son and daughter were still home. However, four of the five vacant places had been taken by James' mother, Abigail, a farm labourer (16-year-old James McDonald), and two boarders, Oliver Cogswell, the school teacher, and A. Starr Black, the Methodist preacher. In-between, households like that of Joseph and Charlotte Jackson added two new children during the 1870s, but also lost their eldest son and daughter as they came of age. William, the second son, had married and remained in his parents' home along with his new bride, producing a net gain of one person for the Jacksons over the decade. Leaving home, even if it meant emigration, had become a natural part of the life-course of Canning's large families.<sup>38</sup>

New England was the prime destination of Canning's youthful emigrants. Over half (99) of the 190 individuals listed in Borden's affidavits were in Boston or its adjacent suburbs in 1892-3 (see Figure 4). A further 42 individuals (22%) were resident elsewhere in Massachusetts and 9 (5%) were in Northern New England. Few had moved beyond the Northeastern United States. Only 8 (4%) were resident elsewhere in the Eastern U.S.A. and only 3 (2%) in the Midwest; the remaining 21 (or 11%) were in the American West. Distance, opportunity, connection, and familiarity explain the clustering of Canning's emigrants in Boston. Commercial and social ties between the Maritimes and New England had existed since the eighteenth century. They were strengthened by the increase of reciprocal trade between 1854 and 1866. By 1870 there were 6,215 Nova

38 Manuscript Schedules of Population, for Canning, N.S., from Canada, First Census, 1871. For the value of the life-course approach in studying families see Glen H. Elder, Jr., "Family History and the Life Course", in Tamara K. Hareven, ed., *Transitions* (New York, 1978), pp. 17-64.



**FIGURE 4A**

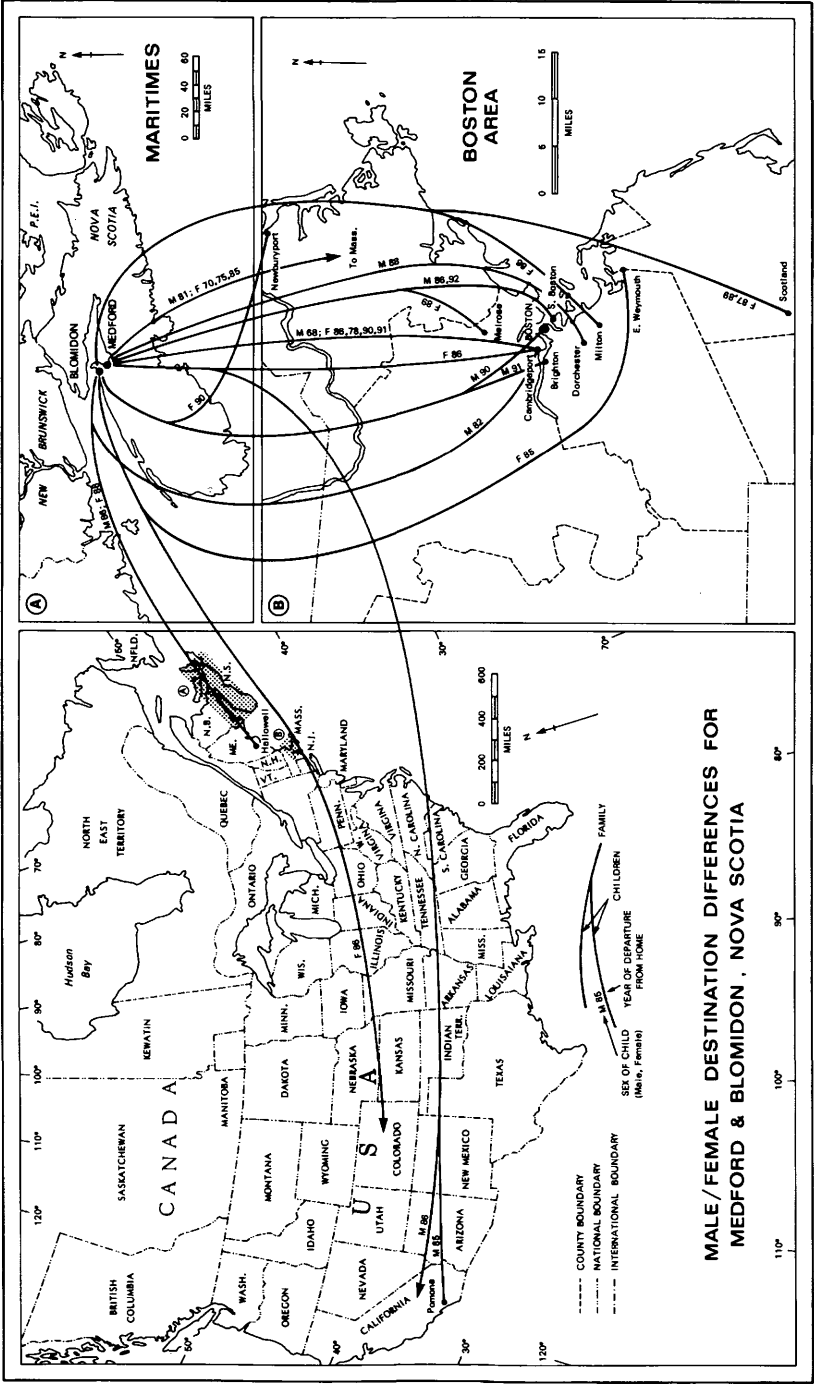
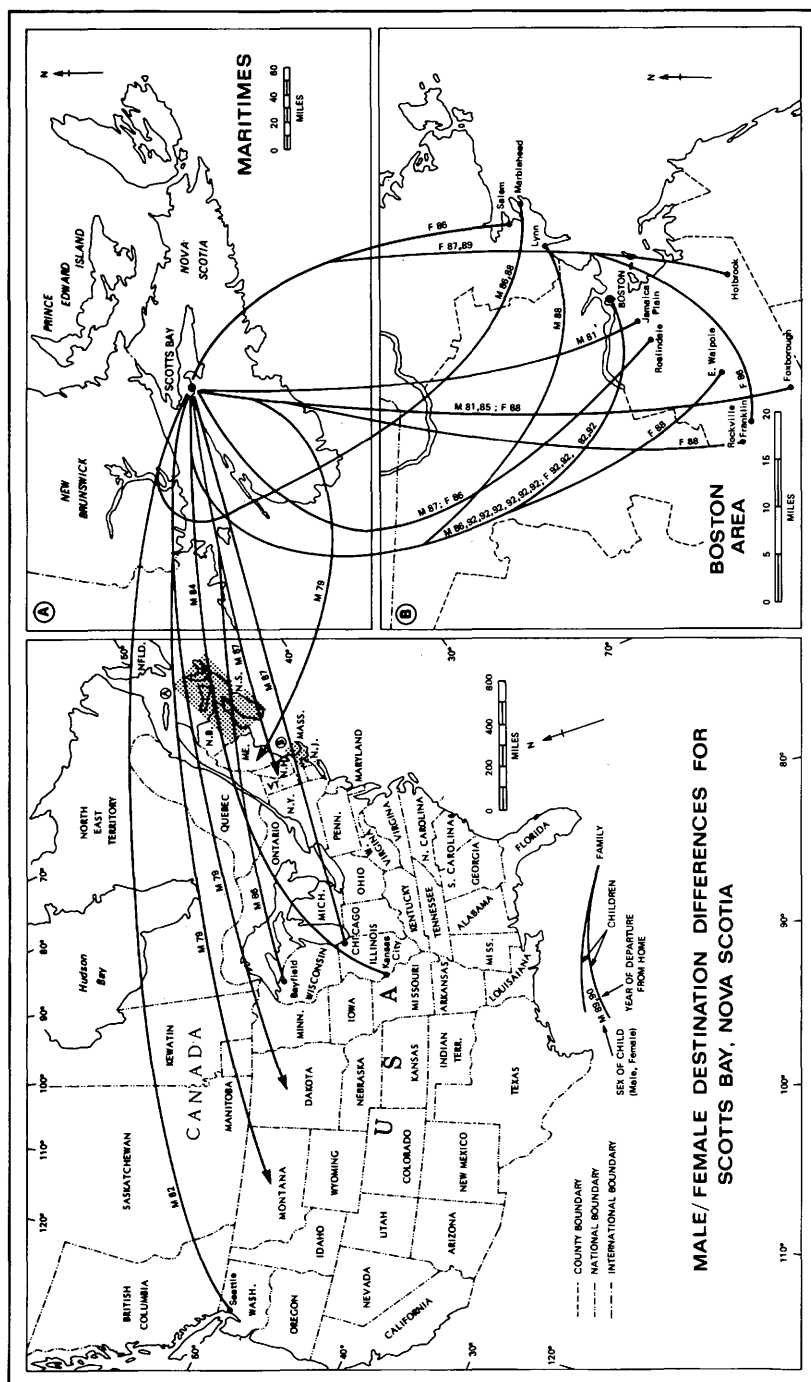


FIGURE 4B



**FIGURE 4C**

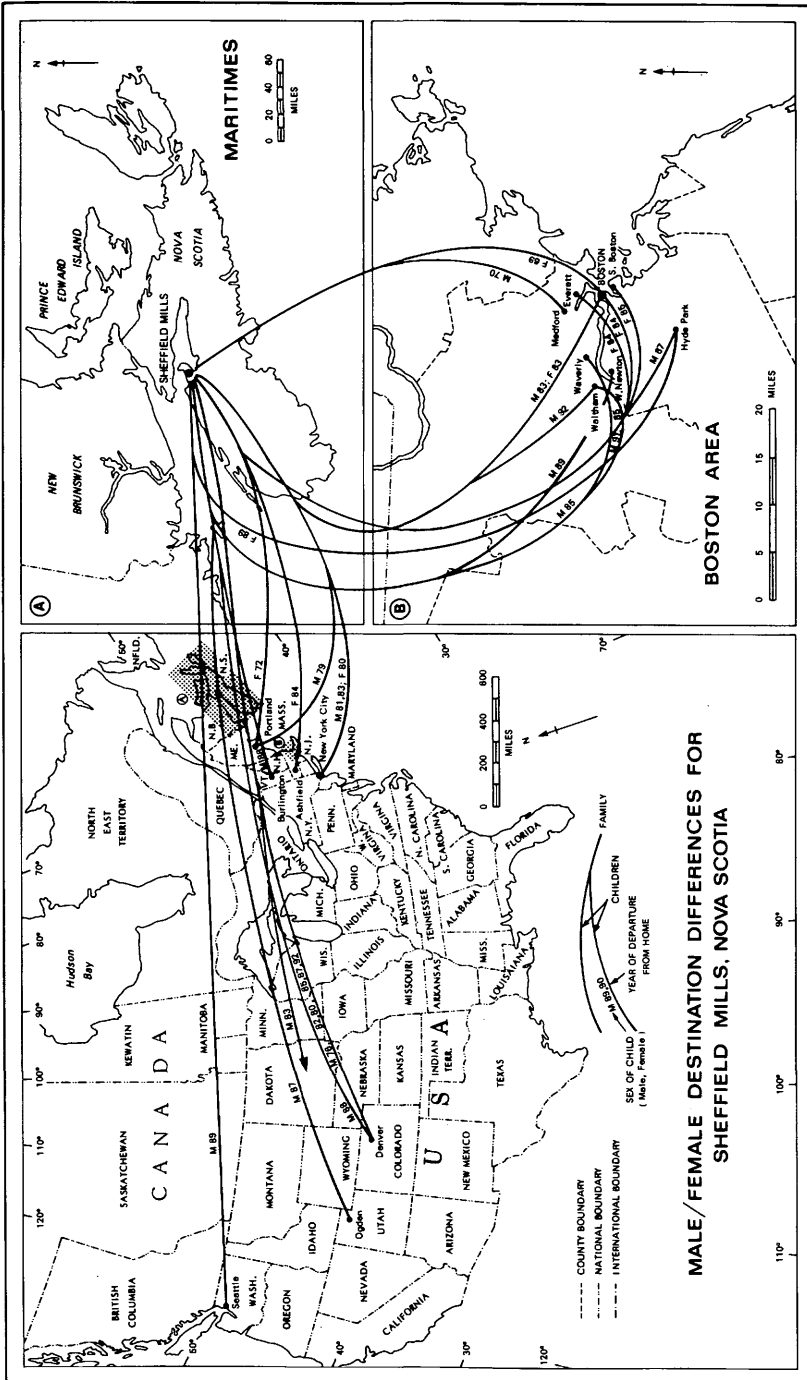


FIGURE 4D

Scotians in Boston.<sup>39</sup> As the tide of emigration from the Maritimes grew after 1870, it built upon this earlier tradition of migration. The expanding metropolis of Boston offered opportunities in crafts, industrial, clerical and domestic work. Sailing vessels linked the ports of Massachusetts to those of the Bay of Fundy and Nova Scotia's South Shore. By 1880 steamships and railroads enhanced Maritimers' accessibility to New England.<sup>40</sup> From Canning, migrants might take either of the trains that left Kentville each day for Annapolis or travel to Halifax by the thrice daily rail service (Figure 5). From Halifax, tri-weekly steamship services ran to Boston. From Annapolis, steamers provided at least daily links to Digby. From Digby the emigrant could take either the twice daily Western Counties Railway to Yarmouth and the steamer to Boston, or the daily steamer to Saint John. From Saint John steamers departed tri-weekly via Eastport and Portland to Boston; and CPR trains ran twice daily, via Bangor and Portland, to Boston.

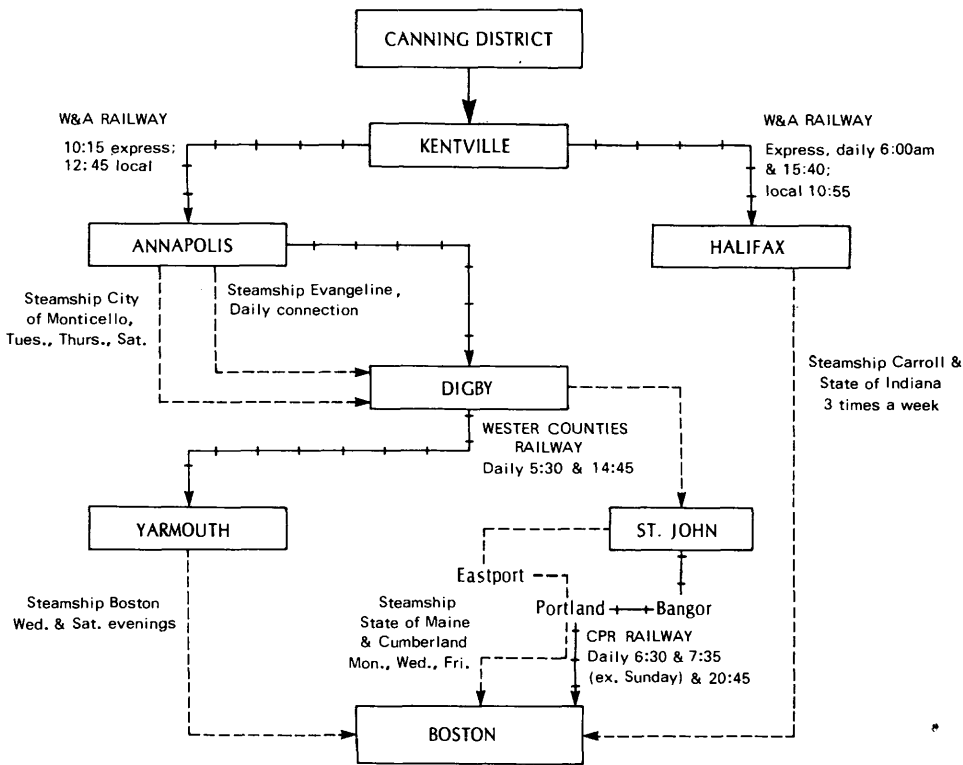
Despite the overwhelming attraction of Massachusetts, the distribution of male and female migrants from Canning within the United States differed. Females tended to travel shorter distances. In 1892, 59% of the women were in the Boston area; a further 29% were elsewhere in Massachusetts, but these areas included only 46% and 16% of male emigrants from Canning. Equal proportions of males and females (5% each) moved to northern New England, but there were very few female migrants from Canning beyond these areas. Only Almira Simmons who lived in New York City; Mary Burns who was located in Philadelphia; and Maude Rogers, in Ralston, Colorado, had moved beyond New England.

Kinship and family ties were crucial determinants of emigrant destinations (see Figure 4). Of the 41 families which contributed more than one emigrant to the 190 recorded by Borden, 34 had at least two members living in the same area in 1892. The children of John and Sarah Burns migrated as they came of age: John F., the eldest, moved to Camden, N.J., in 1880; the next eldest, Simon, went to Melrose, Mass., in 1884; Mary, the only daughter, left Canning for Philadelphia in 1886 to live just across the Delaware from John; Henry B., the next in line, headed for Oregon in 1887; and two years later the youngest, David, moved to join his oldest brother and sister in Camden. Of the six members of the Ahern family who left Canning, three settled in Boston, and three in nearby Hyde Park, Massachusetts. Six of the seven Meeks resided in Denver, Colorado, the other in South Dakota. Although the dates of departure for the Weaver family of Scotts Bay covered a twenty-three year period from 1868 to 1891, six of the eight children involved in migration were reported to be in Cambridgeport, Massachusetts; in 1892, a seventh was across the Charles River in Boston. The eighth Weaver, Harry, who was probably the family adventurer, had gone

39 See Brookes, "Out-migration from the Maritime Provinces", pp. 42-4.

40 See Brookes, "The Exodus", pp. 125-36.

FIGURE 5: TRANSPORTATION ROUTES FROM CANNING TO BOSTON



SOURCE: Wolfville Acadian, 15 May, 1891, p.2, col.4.



to Frederick, South Dakota. Such family clustering at area, if not place of destination, was quite remarkable. Given the size of the Canning district and the similar ages of the emigrants, many probably knew each other, even if they were not direct kin.

Canning families were durable and malleable institutions. They must have undergone adjustments as a result of the geographical dispersal of their members, but they patterned their migrations and did not disintegrate. Although churches regretted that they knew not whether emigrants who remained in their church rolls were "living to God a sweet smelling savor of Christ or whether they are as stink in His nostrils", the destinations, vocations and activities of out-migrants were well known to their relatives.<sup>41</sup> Even when children emigrated on their own to the Far West, familial ties were maintained. On 21 March 1892, Sarah Ann Sanford testified that

my son Eben A. Sanford left this Province twelve years ago and has never been in his native province since. He has owned and worked a farm in Southern Decota for years. And never proposes or even intimates that he can return even on a visit. At the time of taking the Dominion census last spring he was in Montana on business. He is 27 years of age.

Continuous contact was much easier for those who emigrated to the "Boston States". Family and friends were settled around them, and face-to-face kinship contacts could be sustained with those left behind in Canning. Several of the affidavits mentioned return visits, such as that of Hugh Brady who travelled back to his "old Nova Scotia home" from Dorchester, Massachusetts, in 1891. Once the first emigrants had weighed the economic and social merits of various destinations and most likely chosen Boston, their departure perpetuated a greater outward flow, as brothers, sisters, parents, cousins and neighbours took advantage of reliable personal contacts and moved along the established migration stream to join them.

From the comparative evidence that is available, the pattern of population growth in the Canning district which culminated in the exodus of the late nineteenth century was not untypical of regional trends. Not only does the Canning example fit well into what we know of the general characteristics of the emigration but it matches closely the patterns uncovered in Charlotte and Pictou Counties, despite the fact that the two areas were very different from Kings County.<sup>42</sup> Whereas Cornwallis township was a pre-Loyalist, "Anglo-American"

41 Upper Canard, Cornwallis, N.S., First Baptist Church Records, 1832-1877, manuscript at Acadia University Archives.

42 See T.W. Acheson, "A Study in the Historical Demography of a Loyalist County", *Histoire Sociale*, 1 (April 1968), pp. 63-65; and L.D. McCann, "The Mercantile-Industrial Transition in the Metal Towns of Pictou County, 1857-1931", *Acadiensis*, X (Spring 1981), pp. 29-64.

area, Charlotte was essentially settled by Loyalists and British immigrants, and Pictou by Scots. Canning was primarily dependent on agriculture, the carrying trade and shipbuilding; Charlotte was a "lumbering county" and Pictou a "commercial" county with extensive coal mining activity by the Reciprocity era. Kings was "not a manufacturing county", but extensive National Policy industries grew up in both Charlotte and Pictou during the 1880s. Regardless of these differences, the patterns of population growth and decline displayed only minor variations in the three areas.

As T.W. Acheson has shown, Charlotte was settled between the 1760s and 1780s. The charter group was then overwhelmed by British immigrants after 1815. An economic collapse in the timber trade following the removal of "colonial preference", combined with the maturation of the fourth generation of inhabitants, brought a substantial emigration in the 1840s. The Golden Age of "Reciprocity and a rapidly expanding timber industry" brought a slight recovery in the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>43</sup> Then, as in Canning, the exodus began in the late 1860s and continued until 1941. Charlotte's population also peaked in 1881. The rural areas and older commercial centres of the county were most adversely affected by the exodus. Though "N.P." incentives were directly responsible for the development of the St. Croix cotton mill in St. Stephen-Milltown, the rise of the new was not enough to compensate for the loss of the old economy. "Despite a rate of natural increase which should have doubled the population between 1860 and 1900, the county contained 1,000 fewer residents in 1901 than it did in 1861".<sup>44</sup> Similarly, Pictou County received its first settlers in the 1760s. It expanded steadily through subsequent small immigrations and large natural increases; it began to lose some of its natural increase in the 1840s, recovered in the Golden Age, and reached a population peak in 1881.<sup>45</sup> While the industrialization of the county in the 1880s led to an increase in the number of urban dwellers, the exodus steadily reduced the rural population of Pictou. The overall effect on the county was a loss of most of the natural increase and population stagnation. From 32,114 in 1871, Pictou's population grew to only 39,018 by 1931. Though areas such as the Canning district may have been affected more severely by the exodus because of the absence of any large-scale manufacturing to counteract the trend, with regard to population the difference between the "wood, wind and sail" and the "iron, coal, and rail" counties was one of degree and not of kind.<sup>46</sup>

43 Acheson, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

45 McCann, pp. 34-6; and Canada, *First Census (1871)*, vol. 4 (Ottawa, 1876), pp. 82, 94, 125, 232, and 346.

46 This was clearly not the case in voting patterns, however. See Howell *op. cit.*, pp. 37-8; and D.A. Muise, "Parties and Constituencies: Federal Elections in Nova Scotia, 1867-1896", *Canadian Historical Association Report* (1972), pp. 83-101.

If the Canning district was in many ways typical of regional population trends in the outports, then it is not surprising that Maritimers and their historians have often viewed the 1850s and 1860s as a "Golden Age" and the subsequent decades under Confederation and the National Policy as an era of gloom and doom. In human terms, the Golden Age was hardly "mythical". It reversed the beginnings of an "overflow" triggered by the maturation of the fourth generation of inhabitants and the sudden onset of economic uncertainty. Reciprocity, potatoes, wooden sailing ships and the Boston market granted a reprieve to many members of the fourth and fifth generations; it allowed them to stay at home with their families and friends, to continue their tradition of high fertility rates, and to produce large families of their own. Confederation, railways, and tariffs that encouraged the growth of factories outside their district, coincided with a very precipitous reversal of local fortunes in Canning. While it is possible to argue that the Golden Age and the potatoes had encouraged Canning's population to increase beyond the capacity of the natural resource base to support them in less prosperous times, there can be little doubt that by bringing industrialization to the nation "almost at one bound", the National Policy hastened the decline of the outports.<sup>47</sup> In dramatic fashion, the "nasty poultice" transformed what might well have been a steady, "natural overflow" into a mass exodus which peaked in the "National Policy decade" of the 1880s.

By definition, the mass migration touched all parts of the Canning district and all types of inhabitants, yet it had its greatest impact on the sixth generation, the youth of the 1870s and 1880s. During the last third of the nineteenth century they established a tradition of leaving school, leaving home, and having to leave the region in search of employment and autonomy which remains today an integral part of the outport Nova Scotian's rites of passage. Amidst the disruptions of the "mercantile-industrial transition" and the exodus, the family and kinship ties did not break down, for the members of Canning's families aided each other in the dispersal. Such assistance determined that noticeable kinship clusterings emerged among the emigrants from Canning, Medford, Blomidon, Scotts Bay and Sheffield Mills in particular areas of the United States. The most popular destination was Boston, the metropolis associated with the good times of the Reciprocity era. In comparison, Canada seemed a less friendly place. When Sir Frederick Borden tabled the case of Canning in Parliament, Hugh Cameron (Conservative, Inverness) replied that the government would not "give a straw" for the affidavit of "Sarah somebody". Such evidence, Cameron asserted, would "not satisfy any intelligent schoolboy of twelve years of age in any part of the Dominion of Canada".<sup>48</sup> For hundreds of thousands of Maritimers, the choice between the burgeoning "Boston States" and the rapidly declining outports of Nova Scotia was not hard to make.

47 Gregory S. Kealey, ed., *Canada Investigates Industrialism* (Toronto, 1973), p. 41.

48 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates (1894)* (Ottawa, 1895), pp. 4143-4.