

The Response of Truro's Families to Economic  
and Social Change: A Nova Scotian Community,  
1861-1891

by Mary Ellen Wright

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Abstract

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Submitted December 1986

This thesis is a micro-study of the community of Truro, Nova Scotia, during a period of rapid economic change. Truro, in common with other Nova Scotian communities, experienced economic and social upheaval in the last quarter of the 19th century. The thesis examines the ways in which the families of Truro responded to their changing economic and social circumstances. Using census and other statistical material, family papers and diaries, and the local newspaper, the thesis attempts to examine families from both a demographic perspective and from a perspective which takes into account the emotions, expectations and perceptions of individual family members. It also suggests directions for the further exploration of family life in the Maritime provinces as an aid to providing a better understanding of the role of families in the economic and social history of the region.

## Acknowledgments

I have discovered that thesis-writing is a collective undertaking: one person writes and everyone else cheers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank some of the people who cheered for me.

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My thesis advisor, Dr. Colin Howell, and my readers, Dr. John Reid and Dr. Richard Twombly, provided useful criticisms which helped to shape the final form of this thesis. I would like also to thank them for their patience.

My parents saw me through the final phases of the thesis-writing process, dealing with my uncertain temperament and providing food and shelter for myself and my two cats. My good friend, Karen Smith, went beyond the call of friendship in opening her home to me and providing moral - and financial - support. Without her I might not have finished this thesis. Tina Parsons typed most of the early drafts from my appalling handwriting. To all of these people, my enduring gratitude.

When I was about eleven, I discovered that my ancestor's had been written up in the "Miller Book", our local County history. The realization that real human beings inhabited the past came as a revelation to me; one from which I have never recovered. I studied history in university, and was then fortunate enough to get a job at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. During my years at PANS, I was exposed, day after day, to the

world of genealogical research. As I helped to reconstruct families of the past, I became aware of broader patterns within the endless variety of individual family experiences, and it is from this awareness that my thesis has sprung. I would like, if I may, to thank the genealogists, and to dedicate this thesis to them.

## CHAPTER 1

### The Study of Families

Families have historically formed one of the bases of society. Their structure and function both reflect and affect the operation of society on a larger scale. They have been one of the principal agents of the physical, social and economic reproduction of humanity, and ideas about what families should be, what they should do and even who they should contain have informed the philosophies, aims and activities of a wide spectrum of social agencies and institutions.

A vast and growing literature exists on the study of families in the past. Historians have approached the subject from many directions. Attempts have been made to define the demographic boundaries of both the family and that group of people, comprising kin and non-kin, which has been called a 'household'. Other research has examined the emotional boundaries of family life. Another body of research has attempted to integrate more explicitly the economic and social activities of family life into the economic and social activities of the wider community.

If we are to understand the forces which created



and shaped individual lives in the past, we must examine families from all directions. We must know who the family contained, when and on what basis admission and status were granted within the family circle, and what was expected of family-life, both economically and socially, by both family members and the outside world.

How can we understand how families operated in the past? The scope of material available for examination is frighteningly broad. In addition, each person brings to the study of family history a subjective understanding of the structure, function and history of his or her own family. We take it for granted that, with some internal variation, all family structures are very much like our own, which usually includes a mother, a father and one or more children, all living, at one time or another, under a single roof. There is a general perception that this family pattern was not always the same: that at one time several generations, members of one family, lived and worked together in one domestic economic unit, and that close relations, living nearby, provided aid and assistance to each other when necessary. There is some popular understanding that societal pressures such as the abandonment of the subsistence farm and the availability of wage work, caused the disruption of family life, and this is perceived to be an unfortunate occurrence.

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Much of the literature which deals with the study of families in the past has at its root a desire to examine and evaluate this received wisdom. Scholars have examined the structure and function of families and family life in order to test these popular theories, and have in many cases come to conclusions which radically reverse the way we see families in the past.

Such is the case with the work of Peter Laslett. Laslett was the first English-language scholar to 'discover' the demographic approach to the study of families in the past. His work, and that of the Cambridge Group for Studies in Population with which he has been closely associated, has laid out the by now almost universally accepted physical boundaries of the family in what he broadly terms "Western Europe".<sup>1</sup> (He later narrows these geographical boundaries to the British Isles, France and Scandinavia; we might extrapolate to include those parts of North America which were colonised by those countries.)

Laslett's two principal works are The World We Have Lost (1965) in which he lays out the rationale for the historical study of the family and presents some preliminary findings, and Family Life and Illicit Love in earlier generations (1977), in which he consolidates and more carefully documents his original work.

In The World We Have Lost, Laslett sets about, not

specifically to examine the family but "... to write out in a straightforward way the introductory facts about the structure of English society as it was before the Industrial Revolution".<sup>2</sup> He rejects the notion of a single cause--changes in the mode of production--for the changes in people's lives which took place in England in the eighteenth century. "We can now begin", he suggests, "to look upon industrialization as a series of modifications which took place in the lives of very large numbers of individual communities ... not a single process at all."<sup>3</sup>

Laslett argues that the fundamental change came in the relationship between family and society, and that the changing boundaries of that relationship shaped the reactions of individuals and groups to their changing world. He characterizes "the world we have lost" as having been life lived on a human scale -- small gatherings in small buildings, little continuity beyond the individual lifespan in either business or family relations. "Time was", he muses, "when the whole of life went forward in the family, in a circle of loved and familiar faces, known and fondled objects, all to human size. That time has gone forever."<sup>4</sup>

Laslett's most useful contribution to the study of families in the past has been his revolutionary findings about demographic structures. Contrary to conventional

wisdom and established myth, Laslett is able to document, for England at least, the presence of an overwhelming preponderance of nuclear families in the pre-industrial period. The family was almost exclusively nuclear - indeed - "nuclear capability", that is, the ability to set up a separate household, was a precondition of marriage in pre-industrial society. Several discoveries follow from this. First of all, age at first marriage was high. People who got married were " ... older, certainly very much older in relation to their expectation of life."<sup>5</sup> Women were in their mid 20's, men were nearing 30, and a sizeable proportion never married at all. The necessity of being able to support one's own household and the resulting delay in marrying created a large group of dislocated men and women, no longer children but not, by their society's definitions, in a position to be called adults. These dislocated persons form the population which creates Laslett's second long-term trend: the presence in most households of non-family members as servants. This might make for large households, but, as a result of late marriage and the probable early death of at least one partner, actual families were small. Women bore an average of five children; perhaps two of these died. We have here a much different family structure than conventional wisdom supposes, smaller, older, full of

strangers. For Laslett's purposes, household composition is family composition. The communal nature of society lived "on a human scale" blurs the boundaries between kin and outsiders, and thereby diminishes the loyalties of, say, children to non-resident parents. Laslett's proclamation of the dominance of nuclear family structures, and his emphasis on demographic data as the only way to see "the truth" about family life in the past, spawned a host of critiques. These critiques have noted several flaws in Laslett's approach. Perhaps the most serious of these flaws is his neglect of the idea of process in the formation of families. Laslett's sources capture English families at various points in time, but we are never given the opportunity to follow families over time. While "the family" in general may operate in the way Laslett has described, we have lost the sense of movement and change which makes up family life. People marry: they have children who grow and change and leave and perhaps return: death or marriage changes the pattern: even the movements of the servants supposedly so common in Laslett's lost world change with the requirements for their labour, which in turn changes with the size and age of the families of their prospective employers. It is as important to understand these changes as it is to recognize the basic "truths"

of family structure as Laslett has purported them to be.

Laslett's insistence on the uniform structure of family life over time and space prevents him from making use of information which might help to explain the mechanics of family life in his lost world. An important review of Laslett and his imitators by Lutz Berkner, appropriately titled "The Use and Misuse of Census Data"<sup>6</sup>, points out the strengths and weaknesses of the demographic approach to the study of families in the past. He suggests that demographic data is only as good as its source material. Census takers, the compilers of poll tax lists and even parish priests may have had subjective reasons for altering or augmenting supposedly objective figures, and the overall political agendas of governments and social agencies can be seen to have defined what kinds of information were collected at all. Berkner points out the importance of critically examining source material in the context of the period in which it was generated. Laslett, by arguing for the universality of his findings about the family, diminishes the importance of the response of families and individuals to changing economic circumstances. "Why then", asks Berkner, "should historians be concerned about finding the familial institution, the household size of the predominant household type, when what is interesting is the way in which family structure differs within regions and among social classes

in response to economic, social, political and legal changes?"<sup>7</sup> Laslett's failure to note the importance of the family's changing response to social and economic circumstances leaves him open to the kind of critique offered by Christopher Lasch, which suggests that if in fact the nuclear family has always prevailed there is no point in studying its minor variations.<sup>8</sup>

Subsequent historians of the family have taken pains to place their demographic information in the context of the place and time in which it was generated. This has resulted in a number of very narrow studies of particular communities during specific periods in their histories. Scholars have striven to understand how families responded to such economic circumstances as the diminishing supply of arable land, the increasing availability of wage labour for men and women, and the pull of industrial centres for migrant families and individuals. Setting aside the often tedious debate about specific issues of methodology, what all of these studies emphasize is the changing response of families to their economic or social circumstances. This response is visible in ways which can be statistically measured: in the timing of marriage, the number of children, the living arrangements, as demonstrated in census schedules, of elderly parents, unmarried daughters, and orphaned children. If extended beyond a single source or census year, statistical examination of the patterns of

Family life can reveal information, usually economic in nature, about the strategies families used to cope with the changing number, age, and physical needs and abilities of their members.

Various historians have discussed the ways in which families—and "the family" adapted to the change from an agrarian to an industrial economy. Popular wisdom has indicted this change as being responsible for the disintegration of the kind of old-fashioned family relationship so lovingly described by Laslett. There is, however, considerable evidence to demonstrate that this was not the case. Michael Anderson, in his study of cotton mill workers in 19th century Lancashire<sup>9</sup>, has found that family ties were maintained or even strengthened by a move from the country to the city. Anderson examined such things as co-residence or propinquity of kin, the naming of children for family members, and the frequency and circumstances of visits between kin in order to test statistically the strength of the kinship bond. He has argued that, in the unfamiliar settings of urban residence and industrial workplace kin turned to a familiar source for help and support. Emergency situations which might require outside assistance were even more likely to occur in the context of urban wage labour in an industrial situation, and the transiency which was a common feature of life in a 19th century city meant that



neighbours could not be relied upon to provide everyday support.

Anderson has suggested that kin relationships in his milltown families were calculative rather than normative; that is, that they were maintained by choice out of consideration of possible benefits rather than by pressure to conform to community standards of appropriate behaviour.<sup>10</sup> Tamara Hareven's study of a 20th century milltown<sup>11</sup> suggests that industrial workers had by this later period integrated "normative" aspects of family relationships into the culture of their workplace.

Hareven's objective is to integrate the study of the life courses of families and individuals into a broader study of patterns and expectations of the world of work. Her community of Manchester, New Hampshire is a company town: the Amoskeag mill is its major employer. Within the context of the narrow range of opportunities available in such circumstances, Hareven seeks to discover how the timing of events in individual life cycles controlled and were controlled by the demands of the workplace.

Hareven's sources - the company records of the Amoskeag mill as well as more usual census and other statistical sources - allow her to examine the connection between demographic events, such as birth, marriage and migration, and the world of work. She emphasizes the role of kin in the migration of individuals to the milltown as

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well as the mill's use of kin in recruiting and training employees. "Kin", she argues, "not only facilitated migration to industrial communities but also served as agents of adaptation and modernization by providing role models and offering direct assistance."<sup>12</sup>

Neither Hareven nor Anderson argue with Laslett's statement that the nuclear family was, at any one time, the single most common form of household. What they, and other scholars, have added to the "universal" image of family life is three-fold: a sense of change over time, as families formed, expanded, contracted and dispersed according to the individual life-cycles of their members; a sense of context, as families responded to the exigencies of survival in their world; and a sense of community, as families related to kin, neighbours, and fellow employees:

Both Anderson and Hareven deal essentially with the practical response of families and individuals to the changing circumstances of their lives. Neither deal, in any extended fashion, with the emotional baggage of social upheaval. Attitudes toward relationships between family members, and between families and their means of subsistence, shaped cultural responses to economic change. These attitudes, examined through the use of what Berkher calls "soft" sources (as opposed to the "hard" evidence of census and other demographic data)<sup>13</sup>, provide us with

a key to the question of what people thought was happening to them and how they felt about it. More importantly, it gives us an idea of how families participated in broader social issues such as the control of the means of production and the position and duties of men, women, and children in the family and society.

The "soft sources" of family history provide us with documentation of what Michael Anderson, in an overview of the literature of family history, has called the "sentiment" of family life.<sup>14</sup> Using such tools as newspapers, diaries, advice literature and the records of self-styled "observers" of family behaviour, scholars can trace the evolution of family life in terms of the emotional responses, private and public, of groups and individuals to changes in the interaction of families and society.

One of the first historians who has explicitly addressed questions of sentiment as they relate to family life is Edward Shorter, whose book, The Making of the Modern Family, was published in 1975.<sup>15</sup> Shorter's theme is the privatization of the family, and his object is to examine the "reason why" <sup>16</sup> families separated themselves from the larger society. He attributes this separation to a surge of sentiment in three areas: in courtship, where romantic love triumphed over practical material considerations; in the mother-child relationship, where

the survival of the mother became subordinate to the welfare of the child; and in a definition of family boundaries that excluded community involvement from intimate processes of family life (such as child rearing).

"Market capitalism was probably at the root of the revolution in sentiment", Shorter tells us,<sup>17</sup> and he places the working class at the crest of the wave. The need for individual rather than communal labour, he argues, created an individual consciousness in members of the industrial work force that was transferred to their private lives. This notion of individual worth, combined with available wage labour, made freedom of choice an available option for men and women who planned to set up families. Romantic love thus became a valid reason for marriage. Motherhood became a viable occupation: as wage labour freed wives to stay home from the fields it became possible to carefully nurture children rather than to just bear them and get on with the business of survival. As individual family units were formed, supported by the individual labour of one spouse and the individual nurturing of the other, it became first possible, then desirable, to exclude the corrupting influence of the outside world.

It is useful to examine Shorter's work because it illustrates some of the problems inherent in using

literate source material to study a largely illiterate group of people. He has used the evidence of doctors, bureaucrats, local historians and folklorists to make his case about what happened to the family in 18th and 19th century France and Bavaria. There are several difficulties with this. First of all, these 'scientific' observers are unlikely to have applied to their own class the kind of paternalistic observational critique that they applied to those they perceived to be their subordinates. The doctors and bureaucrats may in fact have been noting a phenomenon which they had already observed, perhaps unconsciously, in their own ranks. A second problem stems from the fact that these outside observers saw results but not necessarily causes. Shorter's analysis of the mother-child relationship suffers from this problem of perspective. Women might not want to involve themselves emotionally with children for whom they were unable to provide the wherewithall for survival. Did this apparent neglect stem from indifference to their children's well-being, or was it a form of emotional self defence? Shorter's sources do not offer evidence that would allow him to deal with these kinds of questions.

Subsequent scholars have taken a much more critical view of the kind of source material used by Shorter and have, as a result, come up with a much more perceptive

analysis of what that material was really saying.

Commenting on the literature which, in early 19th century America, proclaimed the glorification of a "women's sphere", Nancy Cott notes:

... I inclined to concur with G.R. Taylor that such popularized dialectic writings "by and large... do not bring about changes, though they may hasten and clarify a change, which is already in progress. They are only bought because they express something which people, however obscurely, feel." The literature becomes popular, in other words, because it does not have to persuade -- it does not innovate,<sup>18</sup> it addresses readers who are ready for it.

In her book, The Bonds of Womanhood, Cott examines the roots of the "separate spheres" ideology which came to dominate many aspects of family life in the mid-to-late 19th century. For her, the increased emphasis on the internal dynamics of family life that "separate spheres" represented was a result, not a cause, of changes in the economic dynamics of family-community relations. "The literature of domesticity", she suggests, "... enlisted women in their domestic roles to absorb, palliate, and even to redress the strain of social and economic organization."<sup>19</sup> Because women's task had become the maintenance - physical, emotional and moral - of labour power, the ideology of service and self-effacement became an important aspect of women's educa-

tion, both in the home and outside it. As domesticity became a woman's profession as well as her duty, it was natural that, in an effort to give it legitimacy in the wider world, writers would give the cult of domesticity increasing attention. Women's work and women's lives remained, for most of the 19th century, outside of the pressures of industrial organization: they remained, so to speak, on a human scale. Thus the "women's sphere" - the home - became increasingly seen as an attractive shelter from the strain and turmoil of the marketplace.

It has been suggested that the withdrawal to the nuclear family came, not because the family had become more attractive, but because society had become less so. Certainly social theorists in the past have suggested that the family was, or should become, a sanctuary, where members buffeted by an increasingly callous and unrelenting competitive society were to be regenerated and made fit to return to their duties in the world outside. This "sanctuary" theory has, in its turn, been refuted by Christopher Lasch, who argues that capitalism has shaped the family sanctuary to its own needs, constantly redefining and, in effect destroying, and "haven" that might be available in a "heartless world".<sup>20</sup>

Lasch's book, Haven in a Heartless World, is essen-

tially a review of the evolution of sociological theories of family structure and family function. Lasch uses these theories as a tool to examine the ways in which capitalism has penetrated the family sanctuary. He argues that capitalism has shaped the family to its own needs while providing, through sociological theory, suitable instruments of indoctrination, and implies that individuals and families had little or no control over the adaptive process. In an introductory chapter on "Social Pathologists and the Socialization of Reproduction", Lasch draws parallels between the process of industrialization, in which first the workplace and then work skills were appropriated by industrialists, and the intervention of experts in family affairs. The socialization of production, he argues " ... proletarianized the labour force in the same way that the socialization of reproduction proletarianized parenthood, by making people unable to provide for their own needs without the supervision of trained experts."<sup>21</sup>

In a 1975 review of writings on several aspects of the history of the family, Lasch rejected most of the work which had been produced to that date on families in the past. His grounds were that scholars of the historical family were obsessed with methodology and saw the evolution of family life in terms of its increasing modernization. He called for a theoretical



reinterpretation of not just how the history of the family is studied but why it is studied. The questions he suggested have to do with the evaluation of the family as a social institution, and address the issue of the intervention of outside agencies in the family unit. What are the roots of the present dehumanization of the family, he asks. Did the tendencies of family autonomy and family demoralization always co-exist? How did they evolve?

Lasch asks us to address the family simply as a social institution or organization. This conforms to his belief that individual families do not and did not control the ways in which they intersect with intervening agencies. It might be suggested that Lasch himself is an intervenor, examining abstract conceptions of "family" outside the stream of family life as it was lived day to day by countless numbers of families. The evolution of a culture of family life, and the history of that evolution in its physical, mental and moral dimensions, must also be examined from the perspective of those inside the domestic unit. We need to know about common experiences of individuals in families in order to understand how and why they respond to the ideology of the family institution. To return once more to Peter Laslett's words: "Only if we can gain a fair idea of the frequency with which men and

women would set aside these rules and conventions [of family relations] can we judge how strong they were."<sup>22</sup>

We have discussed some of the international literature on the history of the family. In order to place the body of this thesis in a familiar context, we must now discover what scholars have said about the family as it has existed closer to home.

Canadian literature on the history of the family is hardly extensive. The best known work in this country was produced in 1975 by Michael Katz. The People of Hamilton, Canada West<sup>23</sup> is a book about urban life in a mid-19th century Canadian city. In dealing with his two major themes - social inequality and physical and social mobility - Katz examines the demographic aspects of the life cycles of families and individuals. He attempts to place them into the context, not of a single-industry community as do Hareven and Anderson, but of a more diverse commercial centre where the business of "making a living" might be far more complex and varied.

Katz's dazzling methodology conceals several deficiencies. With few exceptions, we are not given any context within which to study the lives of the people of Hamilton. For example, while the timing and extent of available education is discussed,<sup>24</sup> the content is not. This is true for numerous social institutions:

information about how people were educated and molded to respond to broad issues of social and economic inequality or the effect of transience on family ties is not made available to us here. In essence, Katz reveals to us how the people of Hamilton lived their lives, but he does not tell us how they felt about it.

Katz's study of a mid-19th century Ontario city is paralleled by David Gagan's work on the rural communities of Peel County, Ontario.<sup>25</sup> Gagan's object, comprehensively stated in his introduction, is to deal with

the facts of life in a mid-19th century agrarian society as they pertain to the making of livings, the material circumstances in which people lived, their demographic arrangements, the stages of life through which they passed, the structures and functions of the families and households in which they lived and, finally, the sources of discontinuity which forced them, from time to time, to adjust their expectations and to reconsider the facts of their lives.<sup>26</sup>

The period covered by Hopeful Travellers runs from the 1820's to the 1870's: in the life of the communities of Peel County this runs from the period of first settlement to the advent of commercial agriculture. The key to both the social and economic evolution of the families and communities of Peel County, Gagan argues, is the availability of improvable land, and he links this key

component to changing demographic trends. The timing of marriage, delayed as land became hard to get; the value of children as labour versus their demands for land and their increasing tendency to be an economic burden rather than an asset; the increasing cohesiveness of the nuclear farm family - all of these trends are connected by Gagan to the availability and productivity of farm land in an increasingly commercialized agricultural setting.

Gagan attempts to place his farmers and their families into the context of the wider world. He discusses the response of agriculture to the rise of cities: indeed, this is an inseparable part of his argument. He does not seriously attempt to document the pull of cities for displaced rural people, but perhaps this is outside the scope of his inquiry. What neither he nor, for that matter, Katz, ever tries to do is to draw the parallels between the life strategies of, let us say, the people of Hamilton and their cousins in Peel County. As Michael Anderson suggests, people do not abandon familiar ways of coping when they move to a new place. In Peel County, people married young when land was cheap, but when it was expensive they waited or left. In Hamilton, access to a steady job made marriage possible, so that when times were hard, marriage was delayed. We might gather, then, that

economy security is an important key to demographic patterns, and that a change in the relations of production forces families to respond to new problems, but in old ways.

Both Katz and Gagan deal almost exclusively with issues of demography and the economy. In the realm of family life, however, it is not only a question of the number of people in the house, but, as we have seen, it is also a question of how they relate to one another, and to outside agencies. It is at these levels that families respond in new ways to changing circumstances and expectations. In so far as these less tangible forces have been examined in Canada, there has been a tendency to focus on the intervention of social institutions in family affairs. Such is the case with many of the essays in Childhood and Family in Canadian History.<sup>27</sup>

This collection, edited by Joy Parr, covers such diverse topics as the philosophy of childhood in 18th century New France<sup>28</sup>, the role of children in the work place<sup>29</sup>, and the changing ideas about what constituted a "proper place" for children.<sup>30</sup> Most of the work presented in this collection deals, in one way or another, with the intervention of the outside world in the world of family life. The intervention might be economic, as in the case of the emigrating family members examined by Alan Brookes<sup>31</sup>; or

social, as in the case of Verónica Strong-Boggs, "intruders in the nursery"<sup>32</sup>. The essays deal with - indeed, emphasize - the variety of family experiences: "the family", Parr suggests in her introduction, "[is] a highly malleable social relation."<sup>33</sup>

As yet, we have not discovered any characteristics of family life which are uniquely Canadian. The indications from the works we have examined here are that Canadian families responded to changes in the nature of the marketplace, and changes in the climate of feeling about the place of individuals in society, in ways similar to those illustrated by American and British scholars. The major difference here was the timing of transitions: Canadian families were exposed to the pressures of industrialization and urbanization at a later date than their British and American peers. They did not, however, live in ignorance of the vast transformations that were going on elsewhere. Unlike Peter Laslett's English villagers of the 17th century, Canadians of the 19th century could view the delights and dangers of life in a factory town long before they had the opportunity to experience them. We might argue that those who became involved in industrial work processes in urban settings had had the auspices of newspapers, schoolbooks, and even word of mouth. Such must certainly be the case with Maritime families. We are

certainly aware that, though contacts with kin and neighbours who travelled for employment to the "Boston States", Maritimers were aware of the industrial work situation and the urban lifestyle from at least the 1860's.<sup>34</sup>

Alan Brookes has demonstrated that kin linkages were in many cases instrumental in the processes of migration and adaptation.<sup>35</sup> In addition, absent kin sent letters and, frequently, local newspapers to their families at home.

What, exactly, do we know about the families of this region's past? Missing, for the most part, from our regional historiography is any attempt to examine the day-to-day lives of Maritimers as they were lived inside the boundaries of the domestic unit. Secondary literature has begun -- but only just -- to address some of the demographic questions raised by Laslett, Hareven, Katz and others. These questions, as we have seen, can reveal much, for example, about the history of human response to capitalist initiatives.

The demographic information provided so far by Maritime historians has produced no challenges to the accepted scholarly wisdom. Maritime families responded to changing familial requirements by marrying or not marrying, producing many or few children, and accommodating or not accommodating outsiders in their homes. Sheva McDjuck's

work on the people of Moncton, New Brunswick is perhaps the most comprehensive portrait of a regional population.<sup>36</sup> Medjuck notes the elastic nature of Moncton households as the tide of available wage labour ebbs and flows.

In her most recent article<sup>37</sup>, Medjuck examines the ways in which women exerted control over the physical size and economic circumstances of their families. The role of women in the home has not as yet been closely examined in the Maritime region. We know from examination of regional newspapers that Maritime women of the 19th century were subjected to the same bombardment of information about "woman as she should be" as were their American sisters. The ways in which Maritime women assimilated the "separate spheres" ideology, and applied it to their everyday life, has only recently come under investigation. Margaret Conrad's recent publication Recording Angels: the private chronicles of women from the Maritime Provinces of Canada, 1750-1950<sup>38</sup> makes a beginning attempt to evaluate the sources for understanding women's lives. She notes, among other things, that women document the day-to-day mechanics of making a living in the Maritimes: in many women's documents " ... the daily rhythm of life continues to occupy the centre stage."<sup>39</sup>

The scarcity of literature on the Maritime family is in itself some justification for a further examination



of life in that most common of institutions. Popular wisdom suggests that family ties have remained especially strong in the Maritimes: we expect - and, in fact, strongly believe - that the assistance of kin in times of need is provided, to use Michael Anderson's phrase, on a normative rather than calculative basis. The roots of this strong sense of family are buried in our past.

If in fact family structure and family function can be, as Medjuck and others suggest, closely linked to economic circumstances, then we Maritimers, with our particular history of economic fluctuations and stress, have an especial need to study that link. We need also to examine the impact of an urban, industrial ideology of family life and function on a region that, in the 19th century at least, remained largely rural.

This thesis cannot and does not pretend to address these broad questions in any comprehensive way. What will be presented here is a micro study of one particular community at a crucial time in its development. Such studies are full of peculiarities which pertain to available source material, geographic, political, and economic eccentricities, and the nature of ethnic and religious predispositions and prejudices. It can be argued, however, that it is by an accumulation of such studies that broader truths about families and their function can be evolved. The specific temporal focuses

of this study is the period between 1861 and 1891: the specific geographical focus is the central Nova Scotian community of Truro.

On April 1, 1871, David Nelson left his store in Truro, Colchester County, Nova Scotia. He had been appointed the census taker for Truro census district, division 1, in the taking of the first census for the 4-year-old Dominion of Canada. Nelson travelled from house to house in his census district, carefully noting where he left off each day. His notations on the census schedule, down to the last quarter acre of land and half bushel of potatoes, reflect his attention to the responses people made to the questions he was required to ask.<sup>40</sup>

Nelson's careful documentation of the quantifiable aspects of the lives of Truro's people is one of many avenues into their world. The 1871 census, taken in the midst of what had been a time of great change for Truronians, reflects both the continuity of old values and the turmoil of change and, to some eyes, invasion.

David Nelson's census, and those of the census takers who preceded and followed him, are one of the most important sources for seeing inside the houses of Truro's families. The 1861 census lists the name of the head of the household and the number, age, sex and marital status of all of the inhabitants of his house. The censuses for

1871, 1881 and 1891 include the name and ages of all household members, their marital status, their occupation, religious affiliations, birth places and, in 1871 and 1881, their ethnicity and whether or not they were attending school.

Using the census data, we can examine a number of questions about the way families lived their lives. We can, for example, examine who lived in the house. How many people lived together in one place? Who lived with whom, and under what circumstances? Did the lives of families in Truro reflect, in ways, the changes in their economic and social milieu that were represented by industrialization, immigration and the securely placed picket fences of Adams Archibald's description?

Other sources, available for Truro, can address other questions. Using, for example, the government marriage registers, available from 1864 to 1891, we can look at questions of social and physical mobility and the timing of an important social event in the lives of most individuals. Who married whom, when did they marry, and why did they marry when they did? These questions offer us insights into what kinds of expectations people might form of married life. Integrated with what people said - and were told - about marriage and the married state, the data from marriage records can give us a picture of the social conventions of that aspect of

family life.

Other aspects of family life - the role of children, the place of the elderly, and the rights and obligations of family members as practiced or perceived by the people of Truro - must be examined by less easily accessible means. Family papers and private journals are scarce for Colchester County, although they have been included when they are available. Newspapers, textbooks, popular literature, and even maps and directories can help us to understand the inner lives of Truro families.

The years from 1861 to 1891 saw the transformation of Truro societies. Our task now is to see that transformation as it was seen and experienced by the citizens of Truro.

## Footnotes - Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup> Peter Laslett, Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), (hereinafter, Laslett, Family Life), chapter 1, "Characteristics of the Western family considered over time".

<sup>2</sup> Peter Laslett, The World We Have Lost, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), (hereinafter Laslett, WWHL).

<sup>3</sup> Laslett, WWHL, p. xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Laslett, WWHL, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Laslett, WWHL, p. 83.

<sup>6</sup> Lutz K. Berkner, "The Use and Misuse of Census Data" in Journal of Interdisciplinary History, v. 4, #3, 1975, pp. 721-738.

<sup>7</sup> Berkner, p. 735.

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Lasch, "The Family and History" (part 1 of a 3-part review essay) in New York Review of Books, Nov. 13, 1975, p. 38.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Anderson, Family Structure in 19th Century Lancashire, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

<sup>10</sup> Anderson, p. 67.

<sup>11</sup> Tamara Hareven, Family Time and Industrial Time: the relationship between the family and work in a New England industrial community, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

<sup>12</sup> Hareven, p. 114.

<sup>13</sup> Berkner, p. 726.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Anderson, Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500-1914, (London: MacMillan and Co., 1980). See passim for his useful categorization of the literature of family history.

<sup>15</sup> Edward Shorter, The Making of the Modern Family, (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1975). (Hereinafter, Shorter, MMF).

<sup>16</sup> Shorter, MMF, Chapter 7.

<sup>17</sup> Shorter, MMF, p. 253.

<sup>18</sup> Nancy Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Women's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Cott, p. 70.

<sup>20</sup> Christopher Lasch, haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged, (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1977).

<sup>21</sup> Lasch, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> Laslett, p. 103.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Katz, The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-19th Century city, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975).

<sup>24</sup> Katz, Chapter 5, "Growing up in the 19th Century: Family, household and youth", passim.

<sup>25</sup> David Gagan, Hopeful Travellers: Families, Land and Social Change in Mid-Victorian Peel County, Canada West, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

<sup>26</sup> Gagan, p. xix.

<sup>27</sup> Joy Parr (ed.), Childhood and Family in Canadian History, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982).

<sup>28</sup> Peter Moogk, "Les Petits Sauvages: The Children of Eighteenth-Century New France" in Joy Parr, ed., Childhood and Family in Canadian History, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), (hereinafter Childhood), pp. 17-43.

<sup>29</sup> Rebecca Coulter, "The Working Young of Edmonton, 1921-1931" in Childhood, pp. 143-159.

<sup>30</sup> Chad Gaffield, "Schooling, The Economy and Rural Society in 19th Century Ontario" in Childhood, pp. 69-92; Susan E. Houston, "The Ways and Strays of Late Victorian Juvenile Delinquents in Toronto" in Childhood, pp. 129-142.

<sup>31</sup> Alan Brookes, "Family, Youth and Leaving Home in Late Nineteenth-Century Rural Nova Scotia: Canning and the Exodus, 1868-1893" in Childhood, pp. 93-108.

<sup>32</sup> Veronica Strong-Boag, "Intruders in the Nursery: Childcare Professionals Reshape the Years One to Five, 1920-1940" in Childhood, pp. 160-178.

<sup>33</sup> Joy Parr, "Introduction" in Childhood, p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> Alan Brookes, "Outmigration from the Maritime Provinces, 1860-1900: Some Preliminary Considerations" in Acadiensis, v. 5, #2, 1976.

<sup>35</sup> For an examination of this as well as many other aspects of the migration process, see Alan Brookes, "The Exodus: Migration from the Maritime Provinces to Boston during the second half of the 19th century" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1978).

<sup>36</sup> Sheva Medjuck, Wooden Ships and Iron People: the lives of the people of Moncton, New Brunswick, 1851 to 1871 (York University: unpublished PhD thesis, 1978); see also her "Family and Household Composition in the 19th Century: the Case of Moncton, N.B., 1851 to 1871", Canadian Journal of Sociology, v. 4, #3, 1979; "The Importance of Boarding for the Structure of the Household in 19th Century Moncton, N.B. and Hamilton, Canada West" in Histoire Sociale/Social History, v. XIII, #25, 1980; and "Women's Response to Economic and Social Change in the 19th Century: Moncton Parish 1851 to 1871", in Atlantis, v. 11, #1, 1985.

Another extensive demographic examination of the population of New Brunswick communities is: F.K. Donnelly (ed.), Family and Household in Mid-Nineteenth Century New Brunswick, (Saint John: Division of Social Science U.N.B.S.J., 1986). It should be noted, however<sup>37</sup>, that while the authors of this book have access to excellent, and in some cases unique, source material from which exhaustive tables have been compiled, they seem to be unable or at least unwilling to draw even tentative conclusions from their work. Medjuck's useful work is not even referred to in this publication.

<sup>37</sup>Sheva Medjuck, "Women's Response to Economic and Social Change in the 19th Century: Moncton Parish, 1851 to 1871" in Atlantis, v. 11, #1, 1985.

<sup>38</sup>Margaret Conrad, Recording Angels: the private chronicles of women from the Maritime provinces of Canada, 1750-1950, (Ottawa: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 1982).

<sup>39</sup>Conrad, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup>Canada, Census 1871, MSS abstracts for Truro, division 1, p.1.



## CHAPTER 2

### Community Life

In the years between 1861 and 1891, Truro was transformed from an agrarian, ethnically cohesive county town to a bustling center of industrial and community activity. This transformation extended to its general population as well as to its commercial interests. Social as well as economic changes were made to the character of community life.

It is essential, if we wish to understand the nature and scope of Truro's transformation in the late 19th century, to examine its early history. The character of Truro's residents was, even in the late 1800's, strongly influenced by the values and perceptions of its first settlers, and both its strongest and its most influential kin networks were descended from them. We must also try to acquire something of a sense of place, so that we may better understand the practical aspects of social transformation as they were seen by the citizens of Truro.

Although Acadian settlements had existed in the area of Cobequid Bay, the area had been uninhabited for several years when Scotch-Irish and American settlers arrived from the New Hampshire area in 1760. Joined by

Protestant, Irish settlers from the northern Ireland communities around Londonderry in 1761, these people for many years formed the bulk of Truro's inhabitants.

The Scotch-Irish Protestants whose descendants populated most of Colchester County had always disavowed any connection with Ireland<sup>1</sup>, although by 1871, when ethnicity was a category on the census schedules, some confusion had developed over this.<sup>2</sup>

There is evidence that as early as 1779, immigrants were arriving from Scotland to the Cobequid townships by a somewhat more direct route. William McDonald of the "Royal Highland Immigrants" had purchased land in the adjacent township of Onslow in that year.<sup>3</sup> By the early years of the 19th century the fringes of the wave of Scottish immigration which had populated the communities along the Northumberland Strait had begun to appear in the Cobequid area. The Reverend George Patterson, a "Pictou boy" who was not always sympathetic to the pretensions of Truro society, described the reception of these newcomers:

[The first settlers of] Truro were not long settled til they aimed at a finer style of dwellings and living than was at that time common in the rural districts of the Province. Some years after when the Highlanders came to settle in Pictou, they treated them kindly but, with their better education, richer farms and improved circumstances, they were disposed

to look down upon the newcomers in their  
rude dwellings and homely apparell.

By the time the Pictou Highlanders had made their way over Mount Thom to settle amongst their pretentious neighbours, the village of Truro had begun to assume its status, retained today, as the county town of the district of Colchester. An anonymous traveller, writing in Halifax's Acadian Recorder of April 16, 1825, described its charms:

The frame of society at Truro is entirely changed within the last thirty years. The old people have observed this change with other feelings than those of satisfaction. It is become a gay and fashionable place and abounds with mechanics and shopkeepers and is a kind of metropolis to the surrounding country. It has some good schools and a library. It has a Presbyterian meeting<sup>5</sup> house and an English church.

Truro maintained the air of prosperity referred to in the descriptions of Patterson and the anonymous correspondent for the Acadian Recorder. Captain William Moorsam, a British military engineer whose duties required extensive travel throughout the province, arrived in Truro from Halifax sometime in the 1820's. Truro, he noted, was provided with

a bona fide courthouse, neat church provided with an Episcopal minister, and the right of sending a representative to the House of Assembly, are signs of urban dignity not to be disputed. About twenty well-built and comfortable wooden houses and three times that number of respectable cottages compose the sum total of the place.

Andrew Speden, a tourist who visited Truro in the early 1860's concurred in essence with Moorsam's observations of forty years and earlier:

The village or town of Truro, Nova Scotia, is the most perfected model of rural architecture I met with. Its center is a beautiful park or square, consisting of several acres, and surrounded by superior buildings, in which the chief business is transacted. Nearly all of the dwelling houses are of beautiful cottage structure, ornamented with floral gardens, and overshadowed by the loveliest trees, the whole resembling that of an American village.

In 1861, notwithstanding the opening of the Nova Scotia Railway line, Truro was still essentially an agricultural village. Many of the household heads who appeared in the census of that year were listed as farmers in the provincial directory three years later.<sup>8</sup>

Pigs and geese still ran at large on the common land, in the very centre of the business district, and attempts to restrain them had been laughed out of the Court of Quarter-Sessions.<sup>9</sup> A former student of the Normal College

said of the Truro of this period: "The town was only a little village - the two main streets with only a few houses - and what was then called the Common (now a beautiful square) was the business part."<sup>10</sup>

The landscape of Truro changed considerably during the prosperous years which followed completion of the railway lines to Halifax and Pictou in 1866.<sup>11</sup> "You would hardly know Truro now", wrote farmer and customs collector Thomas Crowe to a son in California. "We have a 100 stores or more, we have our Shoe Factories, our Last Factory, our Foundry, our millieners [sic], Dress makers and Taylores."<sup>12</sup> Crowe and his sons were among the many local residents to benefit from the building boom. Sons Sidney and John, both living in Truro, were employed as house-builders throughout this time: indeed, John could hardly get his own house built for working on those of other people.

Changes of religious affiliation are one of the indexes we can use to determine the character of Truro society. Church affiliation imparted a membership in an exclusive community: while communication could take place between the members of some denominations, its kind and quality was severely limited, in the first half of the 19th century at least, by theological dogma. Access to situations involving social interaction, which might be church services, prayer meetings, sewing circles and Bible

study groups, was one of the advantages of being affiliated with any particular denomination: community social welfare networks, in both formal and informal situations, were often connected to church affiliation as well. Religion was such a powerful force in the community that its practice could take precedence over other life and death issues, as witnesses this entry in the diary of Israel Longworth, a young lawyer from Prince Edward Island who moved to Truro in the mid-1850's:

After Mr. Davis [the Methodist minister] had finished his first prayer in meeting this evening, Mr. Nelson stood up by the door and said he did not know whether it was prudent for him to say so but there was a great cry of fire in the village. Mr. Davis advised the men to go at once.<sup>13</sup>

The first settlers of Truro were tenaciously Presbyterian. In the early years of the settlement their anti-Burgher sympathies were the cause of serious political difficulties when, for what they claimed to be reasons of religious principle, they refused to swear oaths of allegiance to the British Crown.<sup>14</sup> By the 1820's the strength of religious feeling had softened enough in the community to enable the Anglicans to erect a church. The Methodists followed suit in 1844 and the Baptists, long confined to their stronghold across the bay in Onslow, had built a chapel in Truro by 1853.<sup>15</sup> In 1861 98% of

Truro's population was Protestant; 65% were Presbyterians.<sup>16</sup> The construction of a Roman Catholic church in 1871 was a symbol of the infiltration of outside elements into Truro society: most of its members appear to have arrived after railroad construction had begun in the 1850's. By the 1890's, the religious composition of Truro society had diversified considerably. The Presbyterians still had the largest single percentage at 45%; they were followed by Baptists at 17%, the Methodists 14%, the Anglicans and the Roman Catholics with about 10% each and a few miscellaneous groups such as the Salvation Army.<sup>17</sup>

In Truro, as in other communities, the role of the church extended beyond the Sunday services and Wednesday prayer meetings. There is some evidence that, as late as the 1860's, Presbyterian church dignitaries were playing the role of mediator in both private and public disputes.<sup>18</sup> The Methodists too involved themselves in the private business of their church members. Israel Longworth recorded this story of a pair of adulterers in his diary:

George Archibald followed [them] and saw them go into [the man's] shanty. Then, as [the man] was a member in the Methodist Church, George went and informed [James] Killer, Samuel Nelson, James Crowe and Leander [Crowe] and they went to the shanty but were refused. [The man] came to the door and, on being told what had taken place stoutly denied it. Killer went round and

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found that [the woman] had gotten out by the window. He blew her up. She called him uncle and said she would tell [her husband]. Killer got home before her and told [the husband] himself. [Husband] allowed her to stay all night and she left his bed and board the following morning.<sup>19</sup>

Assorted other entries in Longworth's diary testify to the public nature of private life: he refers to the investment losses of his neighbours, the courtship habits of his friends, and to a wide variety of social occasions involving a broad spectrum of Truro society.

The changes in the composition and outlook of Truro's population are reflected in the men who were chosen to hold political office. An examination of the names of elected municipal officers, as they appeared every year in Belcher's Almanac, shows us that control of these offices was maintained for the most part by the descendants of early settlers in the years before confederation. Lists of justices of the peace for Colchester County include such names as Edward Blanchard, David Crowe, John Fulton, Alexander Kent, all descendants of families who had arrived in the area by the 1790's.<sup>20</sup> The same is true for the offices of the local militia: for example, James Kent was the lieutenant colonel from the 1820's into the 1860's.<sup>21</sup> Even more startling in its consistency is the record of Truro's members of the legislative assembly. With the exception of Samuel Bradstreet Robie, who



represented Truro township from 1799 to 1806;<sup>22</sup> Truro's MLA's invariably came from those families who had arrived in Truro in the period of first settlement.<sup>23</sup>

The first man to break this pattern was Hiram Hyde. Hyde arrived in Truro in about 1840. He began his career there by driving the mail coach from Halifax to Pictou, advanced to owning a stage coach line, and subsequently became a prosperous lumber merchant.<sup>24</sup> Hyde represented Truro township in the legislature from 1855 to 1859. Adams George Archibald, who dominated the politics of Colchester County for most of the last half of the 19th century, held a seat in the legislature from 1851 to 1867, representing Colchester County. Archibald's political presence, whether in elected or appointed office, was a major force in Truro's political life. He was in favour of Confederation: it was after his departure from the provincial legislature for a federal seat in 1867 that representatives of a new breed of Truronians began in earnest to take control of Truro's political reins of power. In the years from 1867 to 1904, Truro's interests in provincial politics were represented by a series of merchants and lawyers who had more or less tied themselves to the "new Truro".<sup>25</sup> These men were enthusiastic about Truro's place in the new Dominion.

By the 1880's municipal politics reflected the changing structure of Truro society. The town of

Truro was incorporated in 1875. There was more room for promotion of the interests of industry and commerce than there had been under the old system, and the composition of town government reflected this. Professional men like lawyer Israel Longworth and Dr. D.H. Muir held the position of mayor; so did merchants Richard Craig and D.J. Thomas.<sup>26</sup>

In 1871 the train tracks ran from Truro in the direction of Amherst, Halifax, and Pictou, and industrial development had begun. The Halifax Acadian Recorder of November 15, 1871 said of Truro "(t)his town or rather village, bids fair, at the present time to become very soon the first manufacturing town in the Maritime Provinces."<sup>27</sup> The article went on to point out the advantages of Truro's location, and mentioned such industries as the Stanfield Woolen Mill - "the largest of its kind in Nova Scotia" - the car factory; and such nearby industries as the Acadia Iron Works in Londonderry, the Portaupique chair factory and the Onslow Cheese Factory. Articles in the Halifax Citizen of December 2 & 9, 1871, and the Acadian Recorder of January 4, 1872, refer to the Truro Furniture Factory, the Truro Iron Foundry and the Truro Boot and Shoe Factory, all recently opened and rapidly expanding.<sup>28</sup> The Provincial Normal School, established in 1855, attracted prospective teachers from around the province, as well as some noted educationalists

and professors.<sup>29</sup>

The character of Truro society was also changing. Although none of the 4800 people who lived in Truro census district in 1871 were very far removed from an agricultural past, an increasing number of individuals were involved in wage labour.<sup>30</sup> Included in this new class of workers were the beginnings of what was to be a sizable population of railway employees. Perhaps the most visible symbol of the coming changes in the composition of Truro's population was the arrival, in the early 1860's, of a number of families of blacks. There had been a very small black presence in Truro in the 18th century: indeed, the Rev. Daniel Cork, Truro's first clergyman, was censured by some of his Presbyterian brethren for owning a slave.<sup>31</sup> There is little reference, however, to the presence of black families in Truro prior to the 1861 census. Robert Connolly and Samuel Jones appeared in that year in the census manuscript: by 1864, Hutchinson's Nova Scotia Directory lists eight men who are identified as being of "African" origin in the 1871 census.<sup>32</sup> According to evidence available from marriage records, almost all of these people came from black communities in the Tracadie area of Guysborough County.<sup>33</sup> In 1871 there were 117 blacks in Truro. This migration continued throughout the 1870's and '80's: by 1891 most of the blacks whose

marriages were recorded in Truro gave Truro as their birthplace.<sup>34</sup>

There are few references to blacks in the Truro newspapers of the late 19th century, and very little evidence of their status in Truro society. The men tended to be labourers in the 1860's and '70's; factory workers in the 1880's and, increasingly, railway employees in the 1890's. The women were recorded as servants with roughly the same frequency as their white sisters; the children were as liable as white children to go to school, although it is unlikely that they attended the Model School which was attached to the Provincial Normal School.

We have no evidence about the quality of life for blacks in Truro. The very rare newspaper references are condescending in their praise of the local "coloured folk", but by the same token we do not find the slurring remarks which appear regularly in the "Police Court" columns of the Halifax papers.<sup>35</sup>

As a visible minority, we might expect that blacks might have had a harder time adjusting to the ways of Truro society than would their white counterparts. It is, however, difficult to measure the truth of this hypothesis, for we have little specific comment on the adjustment problems of any of the new arrivals to the town. Most of our evidence comments on the ways that long-time Truro residents weathered the upheaval of the industrialization

process.

By 1881 the transformation of Truro society was well underway. The town had been made a separate census district from the surrounding rural areas: included in its population of 3500<sup>36</sup> were a large number of factory workers, day labourers and railway employees. The town had been incorporated in 1875. At that time, an editorial in the local newspaper commented on Truro's increasing prosperity:

It is but a few years since Truro assumed any proportions as a town, and it is within the memory of many now living, when the waving pine and spruce and the rustling poplar, with their deep forest shades, covered our streets. A few years has produced a wonderful metamorphosis and where the sounds of the brute creation were nightly borne on the air, we are startled by the din of steam engines and huge machinery working and creaking at the bid of our fellow men. A shorter time is it since the eastern part of our town with its handsome streets, houses, stores and public offices sprang up and during all this change from the "Forest primeval" to the present time, our people have been carefully watching our manufactories.

On the occasion of Truro's natal day celebration in 1882, Sir Adams George Archibald, a local man who had by this time become Lieutenant-Governor of the province, described the physical characteristics of the town. He repeated the praise bestowed upon Truro by previous travel writers, but gave credit to the inhabitants for

Truro's air of prosperity:

Happily, refinement and good taste have kept pace with the population, and we may say of Truro what can scarcely be said of any other town of its size in the province, that the poorest house or cottage in it has its little garden patch in front, ornamented with flowers and separated from the street by a neat paling, the whole indicating the good taste and thrift of the owner and his love of order and neatness.

Pigs and chickens, obviously, had been restrained at last, and the "neat palings" with their hinged gates, were a symbol of a new sense of privacy that was less likely to tolerate the kind of intrusion chronicled by Israel Longworth.

Archibald's reference to the "poorest" houses and cottages is significant, for it refers to what must have been an increasingly visible factor in the development of Truro's sense of community. The definition of "community" was class-differentiated for Truro, as elsewhere. The railway workers in the east end of town had interests which were defined by their occupations and their somewhat isolated location within the town. The merchants and businessmen, many of them migrants to Truro, had social and economic interests in common which involved boosting a certain image of their town. The "old families" had a common interest in the status quo: the

traditional municipal offices of sheriff, registrar of deeds, etc., belonged to them by an almost hereditary right. Each group received different things from the larger community, and each group had different life expectations which the community was required to fulfill.

One of the most tangible ways in which we can measure class disparity is in the spatial arrangement of Truro society. Kenneth MacKenzie was the son of a local lawyer and grandson of county sherriff Edward Blanchard whose family connections were endlessly involved with Archibalds, Dicksons and other "old" Truro families. He described, from his memories of Truro in the 1870's and '80's, the physical and, implicitly, the social geography of the town:

The town then stretched east and west along a gravel bench between "the Marsh" and "the Interval" on the north and the southerly hills. The main street, Prince, with the shops, the Post Office, Churches and Banks, ran east the length of the town from "Nigger Island" on the edge of the Marsh to and beyond Inglis Street, a short busy block running south to the Railway Station. North of Prince Street and parallel, is Queen, so close to the "Interval", (that part of the lowland above the tide), that the back of the lots dropped down to it. Our garden - we lived at No. 56 - was in the red Fundy soil. Queen Street ended to the west at the Parade, now called Victoria Square. The Prince of Wales Hotel, where that Prince of 1860 stopped, faced Queen Street. North from that ran Elm Street to an elm tree, and then bent west as Robie Street, running along the gravel ridge past the Cemetery to

the Boardlanding Bridge, where the higher lands, north and south of the River, drew together.

To the east, along the River and the bridge to Bible Hill, the industrial era in my time showed a belated head in a small brick building beside which on fine days clothes lines carried silhouettes of masculine forms on which were stretched what have since gained fame and fortune as Stanfield's Unshrinkable Underwear. North-east I could see Penny's Mountain past which ran the road to Earltown.

We can note from this description that the blacks had been relegated to a marshy, undesirable spot on the edge of town, that the business district was beginning to shift from the Parade Square in the west end of town to the railway depot in the middle of town, that industrial workers such as Stanfield's provided visible proof of industrial employment. We can note that the elite of Truro lived away from the central core, albeit only a few streets away. We might postulate that small shopkeepers, tradesmen and hotelkeepers lived nearer to their place of work: certainly they did not form a part of MacKenzie's childhood world.

The census indicates that the population of Truro had increased to over 5000 by 1891.<sup>40</sup> The citizens of Truro were experiencing a housing crisis, as individuals and families arrived in search of employment:



One great drawback Truro has experienced is the lack of capital to put up dwellings of moderate expense for the ever-increasing population that comes to the town. A man of means could make a fortune by investing in land that can be obtained at reasonable figures and erecting a class of houses that would rent from \$100 to \$200 a year. One citizen told me there are over twenty families now seeking houses in Truro, but who could not obtain dwelling houses on account of the lack of such within the town's limits. 41

In the same article, the Colchester Sun notes the ready availability of housing of the better sort:

There is no place in the province of Nova Scotia so well adapted as a location for homes. In the town and in the outskirts are many pretty residences with more or less land attached. A number of them, perfect gems of country houses, can be purchased with their charming appurtenances. 42

The persistent noting of the presence of the railway in descriptions of the town 43 reflects its importance to Truro's economy, both as an employer and as a transporter of manufactured goods from other Truro industries to the wider world. Railway employees, most born outside of the Truro area, were a major factor in Truro economy and society. These families, some in their second generation of railway employment, had in almost every case arrived in Truro from elsewhere. Leaving their old networks of kin and friends, these people sought to establish

new bonds. Often those bonds were those of occupation and experience - bonds which could not be shared by the political and commercial elites or by the middle-class shopkeepers, teachers and clerks. The residents of Truro had changed, then, from a group of families who were known to, and often related to, each other, to a much larger society whose useful alliances had more to do with the workplace and less to do with the home.

## Footnotes - Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup>J.M. Murphy, The Londonderry Heirs, (Truro: privately printed, 1960), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Families with names like McNutt and Johnson were by 1871 as likely to list themselves "Irish" as "Scotch" in the "origin" column of the 1871 census return.

<sup>3</sup>Colchester County Deed Book 1, p. 441.

<sup>4</sup>MG1 vol. 742, (George Patterson, "Presbyterian Pioneers"), #9, p. 117.

<sup>5</sup>Acadian Recorder, April 16, 1825, p. 2, col. 6.

<sup>6</sup>William Scarth Moorsam, Letters from Nova Scotia: comprising sketches of a young country, (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1830), pp. 318-319.

<sup>7</sup>Andrew Learmont Speden, Rambles Among the Bluenoses, or Reminiscences of a Tour through Nova Scotia and New Brunswick During the Summer of 1860 (Montreal: John Lowell, 1863), p. 204.

<sup>8</sup>Hutchinson's Nova Scotia Directory, 1864, pp. 286 - 291.

<sup>9</sup>Israel Longworth's diary (privately held), Jan. 11, 1860.

<sup>10</sup>MG1 vol. 261 (W.D. Dimock papers), #40, S.N. Jackson to "Weekly News" (n.d.).

<sup>11</sup>David Stephens, Truro: A Railway Town, (Hantsport: Lancelot Press, 1981), p. 38.

<sup>12</sup>MG1 vol. 244 (Crowe family papers), #222, Thomas to David, Oct. 4, 1869.

<sup>13</sup>Longworth, Feb. 11, 1860.

<sup>14</sup>For an account of Truro's response to the American Revolution, see Mary Ellen Wright, "Of a Licentious and Rebellious Disposition: the Cobequid Townships and the American Revolution" in Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society Collections, vol. 42, pp. 27-40.

<sup>15</sup>Dates taken from the entry on "Truro" in Place Names and Places of Nova Scotia, (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1957), pp. 684-685.

<sup>16</sup>Census of Nova Scotia (1861), pp. 118-119.

<sup>17</sup>Census of Canada (1891), vol. 1, pp. 240-241.

<sup>18</sup>The records of First Presbyterian and St. Paul's Presbyterian (now united as First United Church of Truro) are closed to the public but discussion with people who have seen the records suggests this to be the case.

<sup>19</sup>Longworth, April 11, 1859.

<sup>20</sup>Belcher's Almanac for selected years, 1824-1860.

<sup>21</sup>See the militia lists in Belcher's Almanac, 1824-1860.

<sup>22</sup>Shirley B. Elliot (ed.), The Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia 1758-1983, (Halifax, Nova Scotia Dept. of Government Services, 1984), p. 190. (Hereinafter MLA's)

<sup>23</sup>In fact, the seats for Truro township and Colchester County were held by members of one particular family - the Archibalds - for 65 out of the 101 years between 1766 and 1867.

<sup>24</sup>MLA's, p. 100.

<sup>25</sup>Of the MLA's who lived in Truro, Samuel Réttie (1871-74) was a merchant, J.B. Dickie (1874-78) was a bank representative and F.A. Lawrence (1886-1904) was a lawyer with business interests. (MLA's p. 351)

- <sup>26</sup> Chronicle-Herald, July 28, 1960, p. 28.
- <sup>27</sup> Acadian Recorder, Nov. 15, 1871, p. 2., col. 1.
- <sup>28</sup> Halifax Citizen, Dec. 2, 1871, p. 5, col. 3. Dec. 9, 1871, p. 5., Acadian Recorder, Jan. 4, 1872, p. 2, col. 3.
- <sup>29</sup> One Hundred Years of Teacher Education (Truro: Nova Scotia Normal College, 1955), introduction.
- <sup>30</sup> Census of Canada (1871), vol. 1, p. 11.
- <sup>31</sup> T. Watson Smith, "The Slave in Canada" in Nova Scotia Historical Society Collections, vol. 10, pp. 55-56.
- <sup>32</sup> Hutchinson's Nova Scotia Directory 1864, entry on "Truro". The 1871 census lists 117 blacks in Truro in that year.
- <sup>33</sup> For more about the Guysborough blacks, see George Rawlyk, "The Guysborough Negroes: A Study in Isolation" in Dalhousie Review, vol. 48, #1, 1968.
- <sup>34</sup> The 1891 census does not record ethnic origin: the census abstracts list approximately 50 families whose surnames or religious affiliation ("C[oloured] C[hurch] Baptist") identifies them as being black.
- <sup>35</sup> The Truro papers did not carry police proceedings.
- <sup>36</sup> Census of Canada (1881), vol. 1, p. 15.
- <sup>37</sup> Colchester Sun, Oct. 6, 1875, p. 2, col. 3.
- <sup>38</sup> Adams G. Archibald, "Speech upon the occasion of the 122nd anniversary of the settlement of Truro by the British" (pamphlet in micro: Biography, Longworth, Israel, papers vol. 3, unpaginated).
- <sup>39</sup> Kenneth MacKenzie, Sabots and Slippers, (Toronto: privately printed, 1954), pp. 68-69.

<sup>40</sup>Census of Canada (1891), vol. I, p. 24.

<sup>41</sup>Colchester Sun, Aug. 6, 1890, p. 1, col. 2,  
"Pretty Town of Truro".

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>For one example, see the Truro Daily News, May 12,  
1891, p. 3, col. 2.

## CHAPTER 3

## The Married State

When I mean to marry? - Well -  
 'Tis idle to dispute with fate;  
 But if you choose to hear me tell,  
 Pray listen while I fix the date.

When daughters haste with eager feet,  
 A mother's daily toil to share;  
 Can make the puddings which they eat,  
 And mend the stockings which they wear.

When maidens look upon a man,  
 As in himself that they would marry,  
 And not as army soldiers scan  
 A sutler or a commissary;

When gentle ladies who have got  
 The offer of a lover's hand  
 Consent to share his "earthly lot"  
 And do not mean his lot of land.

When young mechanics are allowed  
 To find and wed the farmers girls,  
 Who don't expect to be endowed  
 With rubies, diamonds and pearls.

When wives, in short, shall freely give  
 Their hearts and hands to aid the spouse  
 And live as they were wont to live,  
 Within their sires' one-story houses.

Then maiden - if I'm not too old -  
 Rejoyced to quit this lonely life,  
 I'll brush my beaver, cease to scold,  
 And look about me for a wife!<sup>1</sup>

This poem, printed in the Colchester Sun of January 31,  
 1877, is a concise example of the conflicting expectations

Truro men and women had of married life. It is illustrative, too, of a changing community, one where "young mechanics" might expect to come into everyday contact with "farmer's girls", and where daughters might have options to sharing "a mother's daily toil".

The possibility of marriage was a factor in every meeting of single men and women. The solemn words of the marriage ceremony, prefacing as they did the entry of men and women into what was commonly known as the "married state", were familiar to all parts of nineteenth century society. The sacrament of marriage was "... not by any to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly and in the fear of God".<sup>2</sup> The marriage ceremony was a rite of passage as well as a religious ritual: it marked passage into adulthood and a recognized place in community life. It entailed the setting up of a separate residence or, at least, the reorganization of existing residential boundaries: it changed the rules of socially acceptable behavior for men as well as for women: it marked the assumption, at least potentially, of new responsibilities to do with childraising and the support and maintenance of a family. Entry into the married state usually meant entry into new kin relationships, often meant a change in economic circumstances, and even, for women, entailed a change of name. For women, too, especially for those who had never been involved in wage labour, entry into the



married state signified the assumption of a job for which they had served a long apprenticeship, usually under the watchful eyes of female relatives.<sup>3</sup> The management of a house, the ordering of household activities, the thrifty allocation of finances, goods and services, the bearing, rearing and training of children - all of these were crucial to the success of the new household and a woman's ability along these lines was scrutinized carefully, if not by her potential mate, then by his family and friends.<sup>4</sup>

The marriage ceremony was not just a union of two individuals, nor was the uniting of two people in marriage a random act influenced only by sentiment and proximity. The timing, requirements and preconditions of marriage were shaped by social and economic forces working in the larger society, and were influenced by class perceptions and expectations formed from birth.

What determined the boundaries of the married state? Romantic love, a desire for independence, shared experiences and expectations, economic necessity and the bounds of socially acceptable behavior - all of these shaped the timing and formation of marriage bonds in nineteenth century society. In fact, the forces which combined to be present at any marriage ceremony make the event a useful focus for studying the organization of family and community.

The marriage data used in this study was compiled from the Nova Scotia government marriage registers for Colchester County.<sup>5</sup> Registered information included the name, age, marital status, residence and birthplace of the bride and groom; the names and occupations of their fathers and the occupation of the groom; the date and place of the ceremony; the name and religious affiliation of the ministers who performed the ceremony; the names of the witnesses and the signatures or marks of the bride and groom. The registers themselves run from 1864 to 1914 for Colchester County: the years included in this study were 1864, 1871, 1881 and 1891. (These were selected in order to correspond with available manuscript census material.) The licenses were recorded geographically: that is, they were recorded in the communities in which the marriages took place, regardless of where participants resided. The statistics used here were taken from marriages recorded for the area comprising Truro Township, including the communities of Salmon River, Bible Hill, Brookfield, Johnson's Crossing, (now Hilden) and several smaller communities, as well as the town of Truro.<sup>6</sup> One of the idiosyncracies of the provincial marriage registers up to about 1900 is that Roman Catholics, for some unknown reason, often did not record their marriages with the government.<sup>7</sup> According to census figures, Roman Catholics represented about 5% of the population for the area under study, so their absence does not seriously affect the figures presented here.

Let us then begin at the beginning of the marriage relationship and examine, as best we can, the selection process.

The Colchester Sun, the local paper for the 1870's, '80's, and '90's, printed little direct advice to women about the selection of a mate, except to recommend that they avoid marrying anyone who drank, smoked or was set in his ways.<sup>8</sup> There was, however, a fair amount of advice to men about what to look for in a wife. In the 1870's, the emphasis in this advice was clear and direct. It was strongly recommended that men choose their wives for utilitarian qualities; the implication being that it was as easy to love a useful woman as a useless one, and much more sensible. The Sun of Sept. 5, 1877, recommended a wife who "works for a living":

You who are looking for wives and companions, turn from the fashionable, lazy, haughty girls and select those who work for a living and never - our word for it - will you repent your choice. You want a substantial friend and not a dolly; a help-mate and not a help-eat, a councillor and not a simpleton.<sup>9</sup>

"An Old Farmer", whose advice was published in the Sun of Sept. 24, 1878, laid out "the road of usefulness and prosperity". In third place on his list of precepts was this admonishment:

When you get ready to marry, select a girl who is your equal - one that will be industrious and will save what you make, and who will be a help next to you.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond utility, women, as maintainers of the moral fibre of society, were expected to maintain a high moral tone. The Sun's article of Jan: 30, 1878 on "Trained Housekeepers", which commented on the necessity of women learning the "trade" of housewifery, continued:

...[H]ousekeeping must not be considered the Alpha and Omega of [wifely] duties. Deeper than this lie other qualities quite as indispensable and still more necessary to a husband's or even a wife's happiness. ... The best dower, therefore a mother can give her daughter is the dower of perfect womanliness, for a womanly woman can enter into her husband's weaknesses; adapt herself to his fancies and by a pleasant fiction at least adopt his tastes.<sup>11</sup>

By the 1890's, the qualities of "womanliness" had acquired an increasing value. They were well-defined for Truro readers in an article reprinted from the New York Evening World in the Sun of June 4, 1890:

The foundation of society rests on its homes. The success of our homes rests on the wives. Therefore, first of all, teach our girls how to be successful wives. Begin in their infancy to develop their characters. Teach them that jealousy is

an immorality and gossip a vice. Train them to keep the smallest promise as sacredly as an oath, and to speak of people only as they would speak to them. Teach them to look for the best quality in every one they meet, and to notice other people's faults only to avoid them. Train them to do small things well and to delight in helping others, and instill constantly into their minds the necessity for sacrifice for others' pleasure as a means of soul development. Once given a firm foundation of character like this, which the poorest as well as the richest parents can give their girls, and no matter what necessity arises they will be able to rise above it.<sup>12</sup>

While utilitarian qualities were still valued in the Truro of the 1890's, the emphasis had shifted from the kinds of skills a farm wife might find useful to skills more suited to an urban lifestyle. The Sun of March 11, 1891 talked about financial management in an article called "The Domestic Purse Strings". It encouraged men to select and encourage women who were capable of coping with domestic financial arrangements, and asked that men give their wives credit for some sense. In a comment directed at women readers, the author warned that "[a]ny girl should beware of the man who considers women irresponsible creatures", and suggested that couples come to some sort of agreement over domestic finances before the wedding took place.<sup>13</sup>

Women were encouraged to make the most of their appearance and newspapers of the time, the Sun among them, printed

more and more advertisements for aids to beauty as the nineteenth century drew to a close. Men, however, were encouraged not to fall for the lure of a pretty face. Another article in the Sun of March 11, 1891 was entitled "Plain and Pretty Women: Why the Latter So Often Make Matches That are the Saddest of Failures":

Pretty women have less opportunities than plain ones for becoming what they were originally intended to be - sweet, noble, patient, helpmates - simply because men (on whom the fault should rest) have caused women to entertain the idea that life is neither a serious nor an earnest thing.<sup>14</sup>

The limited evidence we have would indicate that, for men at least parental approval was not a significant factor in the selection of a spouse. Since men were usually financially independent and past the age of consent before they even contemplated marriage, it might be expected that they at least would have more freedom to make selections as they pleased. A factor in the choice of a wife may have been the approval of her parents. Wills for Colchester County from 1860 to 1890 reveal that some effort was usually made to provide a daughter with a dowry. The dowry, often in the form of livestock or furniture,<sup>15</sup> served a number of purposes. It was a token of affection; it contributed to the establishment of the new household; it recognized the contribution

of the daughter to the parental household: and by allowing her to make a tangible contribution to the value of her husband's property, reinforced a woman's dower right in her husband's estate. Often the property brought by a woman into her marriage was conveyed, usually to a daughter, by a widowed man as "everything her mother brought into my possession at the time of her marriage".<sup>16</sup> Sometimes a will referred to something a daughter had already received as being part of her share of the estate.<sup>17</sup>

The inheritance of property by sons from father was not evidently tied to parental approval or otherwise of a son's marriage. While they regularly referred to the marital status of female heirs, wills generally did not distinguish a son's marital status except by reference to any grandchildren which might ensue from an alliance. While the property willed to a daughter might well depend on her marital status - after all, she might need to be permanently provided for if she remained unmarried<sup>18</sup> - property willed to a son was more likely to depend on how much assistance he had already received.<sup>19</sup> It is impossible, with the available evidence, to connect the receipt of any such assistance with the event of marriage, although it may well have been the case that informal arrangements to do with use of land, workshop facilities and investment income may have been formalized by the instrument of the will. None of the Colchester wills in this sample refers to any major settlement of real estate, for example, as being

related to a son's marriage.<sup>20</sup>

Very little personal correspondence has survived for the Truro area, and such journals as exist, all kept by men, are almost all in the form of reminiscences at the end of a long life.<sup>21</sup> Such information as we have indicates that the period of formal courtship and engagement was short, but was often preceded by residential proximity.<sup>22</sup> The family correspondence between Thomas M. Crowe of Truro and his sons in assorted North American communities records two marriages: that of John in 1859, which took place in Truro, and that of James in 1864 in Collingwood, Ontario. Thomas, writing of John's wedding to a "Miss Chisholm", describes the roundabout way in which the connection was made:

You will be surprised to hear that John is being married on this day Monday to a Miss Chisholm of Wallace, daughter of Wm. Chisholm of that place. Her mother is sister to aunt Caty Smith, also of Mrs. Eben Smith's. She went a year to the Normal School in Truro and suppose John became acquainted with her while in Truro. I believe she is a very worthy girl.<sup>23</sup>

Neither Thomas, writing of John's wedding to James, nor James, writing home about his own marriage in August of 1864,<sup>24</sup> makes any mention of how long either relationship had existed: neither woman had figured in any correspondence previous to the announcements of the marriages. Thomas did not subsequently make any comments about the brides of either of his



sons, but he obviously approved of the institution of marriage, especially as a device for stabilization of reckless young men. He had evidently made his opinions in this regard clear to his son William, as evinced by the following reply:

It appears that what mother calls settling down is getting a wife. I have heard of it being the means of sobering some down, but in my case I think I would be as unsettled as ever even I had one. And for its making a man a better member of society, I think there is some room for debate, though I must admit if it does so it is a very simple qualification. I think I am as contented as a great many I see round me that is settled down.<sup>25</sup>

We have an account of one courtship, albeit a disastrous one. This took place in Folly Village, about fifteen miles from Truro, and it is recorded in some detail because it became the subject of a breach of promise suit on the part of the prospective bride. The case was brought to the Supreme Court in Truro:

Mr. Gourley very cleverly opened the case and alluded to the early courtship and undoubted engagement of marriage between Capt. Campbell and Miss Esther Fletcher. The Defendant prospered in business and to-day was a man of much wealth. The Plaintiff was fatherless, and with only a mother's protection. Defendant should have been a protector rather than the cause of making her whole after life one of disappointment and sadness. On different occasions the Plaintiff had entreated Defendant to fulfill his promise and marry

her. This he promised to do on different occasions. When he returned from a distant voyage on one occasion she especially importuned him in the presence of her mother and her infant child to carry out his promise. He told her he could not just then but that he never would marry any other woman. Again and again he deceived the Plaintiff with such false promises. After his mother died he would marry her; again, after his sister's death he certainly would; both mother and sister passed away and still Plaintiff got no reparation for the great injury done her. Last winter, Capt. Campbell married another woman and this action was at once instituted by the Plaintiff and substantial damages were asked for the outrageous and cruel way in which Plaintiff had been treated by Defendant.<sup>26</sup>

The suit, originally for \$30,000, was settled out of court for \$3,000 and expenses. Several aspects of the courtship process are illustrated here. First of all, a father must normally have had a role in censoring his daughter's courtship activities. From the account of the case as given above, we can see that the presence of only a female parent was considered to be a disadvantage to a woman; "a mother's protection" was not deemed a sufficient shield. Perhaps a father might have been in a position to ask questions about a suitor's prospects and intentions—questions which societal standards might have prevented a female parent from asking. Secondly, a promise of marriage was a serious contract, especially for a woman whose subsequent marriage prospects were closely allied with her reputation. The

woman in this case appears to have had a child by her unfaithful suitor. A third point involves the timing of the marriage arrangements: Captain Campbell evidently believed that the health, and possibly the opinions, of his mother and sister were acceptable excuses for the postponement of his marriage: obviously Miss Fletcher and her mother were forced to be content with the explanations offered.

The role of parents in the selection of spouses is unclear from the evidence available for Truro. In most cases, it might be assumed that censorship of available partners was indirect. Parents, after all, had some control over the kinds of associates their children might be permitted to have. In the 1860's and '70's, the nature of available social occasions created a natural selection process which organized people by cultural interests and religious persuasion. Israel Longworth was 25 in 1859, when his diary begins. He was a single man, living apart from his parents, a lawyer, a Methodist and a temperance advocate. Social occasions for him included sleigh rides, temperance lectures, backgammon games, skating, church functions including the regular church service on Sunday and prayer meeting on Wednesday nights, and other private gatherings, including a few private dances. Longworth's associates in Truro were mainly male: for instance, on Feb. 11, 1859 he notes "The company adjourned to the Temperance Hall [after a sleigh ride] and had a dance. But there were too many boys to the girls for general

comfort."<sup>27</sup>

A sampling of available outings from the Colchester Sun for the 1870's indicates a somewhat broader range of available social activities. In addition to the regular Sunday services and mid-week prayer meetings for all denominations, there were various community concerts organized by one or another of the fraternal organizations of Truro.<sup>28</sup> Out-of-town performers came to Truro as well, either as musicians or as lecturers on various subjects or for various causes. Truro had a literary club and a Philharmonic Society. Less formal entertainments included Murray's Circus and a skating carnival, of which a correspondent wrote that "[T]here was present quite a number of the elite of Truro", almost all of them single men and women.<sup>29</sup> Less formal still were the kinds of meetings described in an 1874 editorial entitled "The Post Office":

Ladies and businessmen find it almost an impossibility to reach the window. We find that every third young man who goes to enquire for letters hangs about the door and sidewalk, and that when a young lady goes for, we may suppose, love letters she is attended by a bodyguard of two or three companions.<sup>30</sup>

Another popular Truro rendezvous was the wooded valley that was eventually designated a public park.<sup>31</sup> The adjacent waterfall had been a popular courting spot for generations: "Who can say" commented one observer "how often the fates of

young people have been decided under the soothing influence of those descending waters?"<sup>32</sup>

Most of the occasions where the young men and women of Truro could easily meet and socialize were fairly formally structured in the Truro of the 1870's. Parents were able to control the connections their children made by selecting the events they could attend. Most events were at night: an escort or perhaps even a vehicle might be required to enable a young woman to attend. Parents simply did not permit their daughters to attend.

By the 1890's, however, children could not so easily be controlled. The rising popularity of spectator and participatory sports at the end of the nineteenth century were the means of gathering crowds of young men and women together on a regular basis. Cricket, baseball, and lacrosse were popular in Truro: lacrosse appears especially to have attracted crowds. The Sun noted of one game:

We were pleased to see the number of the fair sex present and by the heartiness of their applause, that Canada's national game is appreciated by the young ladies of Truro.<sup>33</sup>

In a milling crowd (as opposed to the formality of a concert hall) it was difficult to control the intermingling of classes. As early as 1878, the Sun was commenting on the poor attendance figures at recent concerts.<sup>34</sup> Recreation, as

opposed to entertainment, had become an increasing factor in the lives of Truro's young people. The opening of Victoria Park in 1887, and the subsequent frequency of events which took place there, offered Truropians an informal setting for social - or private - gatherings.

We have looked at some of the considerations that a man might take courting with him, and that a woman might consider before she consented to marry. The more immediate economic considerations of occupation and income also entered the calculations of couples who were choosing mates. More specifically, a man's occupation played a role in determining when he could marry. Available occupations for women had an impact on the timing of marriage, especially in the last decades of the nineteenth century. By this time, the increased availability of waged work for women made spinsterhood a financially if not socially acceptable condition. The occupational ranking of parents also had an impact on the selection of marriage partners and in the definition of social and economic expectations of the married state.

From 1864 to 1891 there was a drop in the age at time of marriage for both bride and groom. For grooms, the lowered age at time of marriage corresponded to the availability of wage labour. Even farmer's sons, who consistently married later than their peers in town, were marrying much earlier in 1891 than they had been in 1864.

Age at time of marriage - grooms:

	Farmers( # )	Trades/Labour( # )	Service*( # )	Total
1864	33.4	28.9	36.8	33.6
1871	34.3	28.8	32.5	31.0
1881	30.9	29.4	24.5	28.9
1891	27.6	27.5	31.4	28.8 <sup>35</sup>

\*Note: Most of the small sample of men from this group who married were well over 30.

Beginning with the arrival of the railway in 1858, Truro offered an increasing diversity of wage labour. The building boom of the early 1860's, increased industrialization in the 1870's, and the jobs made available by the railway itself, all offered a chance for young men to make and save money for the support of a future wife and, possibly, the establishment of a future farm, business or trade.<sup>36</sup> Truro boys, like other Nova Scotians, often went away to seek their fortunes: the correspondence between Thomas Crowe and his sons is full of references to young men leaving for and returning from central Canada, the Boston States, New York and the gold fields of California.<sup>37</sup> Most of the men who left Truro were replaced, however, usually by other Nova Scotian men who had come to Truro to work on the railway.<sup>38</sup> Increasingly evident in this period was the steadily rising proportion of men to women aged 16-20, which has interesting implications for the demography of Truro in the early twentieth century.

Men 16 - 20 per 100 women 16 - 20:

1861	90.1
1871	80.0
1881	103.2
1891	141.5 <sub>39</sub>

As we have seen, the young men of Truro benefitted from a considerable amount of advice about how to choose a wife. Questions of sentiment are difficult to measure at this distance, especially since we have very few personal papers for the Truro area, and we can judge neither the beauty or relative plainness, nor the actual moral worth of women now long dead. We can, however, document the impact of such factors as mobility and family background on the question of who married who.

The marriage registers for Colchester County provide a useful index of geographic mobility, as the required information included place of birth as well as place of residence. During the years from 1864 to 1891, grooms were divided approximately equally between being local men and people from elsewhere in Nova Scotia.<sup>40</sup> A higher percentage of women - about 70% - were born in the place where they resided when married. In 1891 this figure had dropped to 55%, signifying the number of families who had moved to Truro as a result of the community's growing prosperity.



The most mobile group amongst the men over the years examined was, as might be expected, those who were involved in trades and labouring occupations. The least mobile, again as might be expected, were the farmers. All farmers in the sample were farmer's sons: all of them married farmer's daughters, evidently heeding the advice literature. Farmer's daughters, on the other hand, did not follow so consistent a path, and indeed because less and less likely to become farm wives as the number of farmers available in the Truro marriage market decreased.<sup>41</sup> The increasing inclination, emphasized by availability, was for a woman to marry a man who received a wage, and for them to buy, not produce, the things needful for sustenance. As early as 1869, Thomas Crowe was writing to his son David, complaining about the modern women:

And the Ladyes are all learning to play the piano, only one in ten can wash, bake, milk a cow or make butter and many of them couldn't make their own shemis or mend their own stockings.<sup>42</sup>

Allowing for the normal bias of old age, Mr. Crowe's observations illustrate the changing expectations of Truro women.

If we look at the occupations of parents in relation to their children's marriages, patterns emerge to do with the industrialization of the community of Truro. In 1864, over half (54.3%) of all marriages recorded were of farmer's sons

to farmer's daughters and 68.6% of all marriages involved farm families. By 1891, only 14% of all marriages involved two farm families, although 62% involved one farmer's child. What this statistic indicates is the increasing diversity in background and, possibly, expectation that brides and grooms brought to their marriages.

Since brides tended to be about 5.5 years younger than their spouses, it could be expected that brides would be younger in correspondence with the decreasing age of the groom: neither the groom's occupation nor her father's occupation affected the age of marriage of the bride. The median age of marriage for brides in this period was a remarkably consistent 23 - half the women who married in any of the given years were 23 years of age or younger. By 1891 the average age at marriage for the bride was 24.3 years, indicating a narrower range of ages during which marriage was likely to take place.<sup>43</sup> In 1864, 74.3% of all brides married were under 30; by 1891, 92.3% of women married were under 30.<sup>44</sup>

The popular perception, well-remembered today, of the death of marriage hopes of a woman who had reached her thirtieth birthday, was a cold fact for the women of the 19th century.

With very few exceptions a woman who did not marry was denied the independence of her own household,<sup>45</sup> excluded at many levels from the society of women her own age,<sup>46</sup> treated with a mixture of pity and contempt,<sup>47</sup> and threatened with the prospect of a lonely and poverty-stricken old age.<sup>48</sup> Although

the sample used here includes very few widows and widowers, census figures indicate that widowers remarried almost as a matter of course, usually to single women within the prime range of the marriage market. On the other hand, widows were much less likely to remarry. The census indicates an increasing margin of widows over widowers at ages where women were more likely to die in childbirth.<sup>49</sup> Single women over 30 outnumber single men over 30 at an increasing rate throughout this period in the Truro census district.<sup>50</sup> Young, single women were the prime commodity on the marriage market, and they appear to have had an increasingly short shelf life throughout the period under study here.

But throughout the period under study here, the women of Truro had, in increasing numbers, selected, for a time at least, occupations other than that of unwaged domestic apprentice. In 1871, when occupational figures for women were first available, about 6% of all women were recorded as working at wage labour, most as either teachers or servants. In 1881, 35.8% of single women worked for a wage, and by 1891, 59.2% of all single women in Truro were employed outside their homes. The changing character of the community of Truro accounts in some measure for this radical change in the lifestyle of Truro women. In 1861, Truro was still at the beginning of its transformation from a small market town to a centre of manufacture. Truronians were just beginning to come to terms with the ways in which their community was

changing as a result of the opening of the age of steam.<sup>51</sup>

In 1864 Truro had just begun to change from a village where farming was still a major occupation. The 1864 provincial directory lists farmers, craftsmen and a few municipal official and professional men, but very few industrial occupations.<sup>52</sup> Subsequent census years reflect the increasing demographic impact of the ICR on the town of Truro, both directly, in the increasing number of railway employees who made their homes there, as well as the increasing number of employees in the burgeoning manufacturing industry, and indirectly, in the increased service sector of stores, banks and government offices, educational facilities and boarding houses. The number of farm households dropped from 25.6% in 1871 to 6.8% in 1891: many "retired farmers" are included in the 1891 figures.

The impact of this change in the nature of Truro's economy is evident in the lives of Truro's single women in several ways:

First of all, the nature of the marriage market changed. Men came to town to work for the railroad or in the factories. Not only was there a more diverse selection of marriage partners, but the increased proportion of wage labourers made young men able to support families at an earlier age. The job of "wife" thus became available to women at an earlier age, as is reflected in the marriage figures already cited.

A second, and significant, result of the industrialization of Truro was the increased availability of wage labour for women. This had two effects. Women were exposed to a broader range of men in job situations, such as factories, offices and stores. For example, the Colchester Sun of Sept. 5, 1888 recorded the wedding of Lizzie Bentley:

For a number of years she was a saleswoman in the store of Wm. Cummings, Sons & Co., and whence, by the way, a good many girls are married.<sup>53</sup>

Opportunities for women to support themselves independent of the married state may well have influenced the timing and mate-selection of women in Truro, even to the point of making spinsterhood a more viable option. A lengthy article on "The Domestic Purse Strings", reprinted in the Colchester Sun of Mar. 11, 1891, commented on the necessity of giving married women some money of their own, and pointed out that "[Y]oung women who are self-reliant and earn good salaries often shrink from marriage, because they cannot bear to be so dependent."<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the opportunity to make good money elsewhere had lured some 14,000 Nova Scotian women to Massachusetts alone<sup>55</sup> by 1885.

Many of the women who left for Massachusetts went to take up positions as domestic servants. The role of domestic servant was also familiar to women who remained in Truro. In

the 1880's and 90's about 40% of all working women were servants. The overwhelming majority of these were single women living in their employers' homes. Most of the servants in Truro homes were "Truro girls" or girls from the surrounding countryside [as best as may be determined from a survey of surnames].<sup>56</sup> They appeared in the homes of the Truro elite, but also in the homes of railway workers with large, young families. Servants do not as a whole seem to have been treated as distinct from family members. As far as can be determined they ate with the family and worked with them; certainly most women who had servants did not themselves lead a life of leisure. The women of Truro do not seem to have been concerned with the "servant question", at least in terms of feeling a lack of properly trained help.<sup>57</sup> Servants, as daughters, were in many ways domestic apprentices. Only when the principal woman of the house was removed by death, illness or the birth of a child did servants - or daughters - take charge of the domestic world, and in those cases it was often a widow or older single woman, if one was available, who filled the principal domestic role. While a move to Massachusetts, even as a domestic servant, offered a woman the prospect of new horizons, becoming a servant in her home community entailed no significant change for a "Truro girl".

The increasing proportion of unmarried women over 30, evident from the census figures for the years from 1871 to 1891, indicates both the attraction of an urban centre for unemployed rural spinsters and the possibility of an independent lifestyle for women who could not find or did not want husbands. The pressure on a bride in the nineteenth century had been to make a careful but speedy selection from the marriage market, considering that the man she chose was to provide her with both her life's work and her financial security. By the time of the 1891 census, societal pressure to marry had, if anything, increased, but economic options had increased as well for the unmarried women of Truro.

So the young couple, having examined their economic and social options and having been conditioned and advised as to the life they might expect to have together, entered into the state of matrimony. What could they expect to find there?

## Footnotes - Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup> Colchester Sun, Jan. 31, 1877, p. 1, col. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Book of Common Prayer (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1962), p. 564.

<sup>3</sup> "It is absurd" proclaimed the Colchester Sun of January 30, 1878 (p. 1, col. 8) "to neglect a girl's domestic education until she is ready to become a wife. The idea that a woman must learn to keep house by her own experience is both foolish and hurtful: Does a man put off learning a business until he is able to start for himself?"

<sup>4</sup> The members of the Brookfield division of the Sons of Temperance held a debate on the evening of April 12, 1892. The subject? "Which would you rather have, a dirty, good natured wife or a clean cross one?" The consensus was that it was better to be clean than happy. (Brookfield Bicentennial Committee. Fragments of the Past - History and Notes of Brookfield and Area. Brookfield, privately printed, 1984, p. 83):

<sup>5</sup> Public Archives of Nova Scotia (PANS) RG 32, Series WB, Vol. 56-57; Colchester County marriage registers, 1864-1887, 1888-1910.

<sup>6</sup> The area was defined to include the communities covered by Truro census district in 1861 and 1871.

<sup>7</sup> This is true for all counties except Halifax but is readily observable in such counties as Antigonish and Digby.

<sup>8</sup> See the Sun, Sept. 18, 1878, p. 4, col. 6, "A World of Caution", re: drunkards, Aug. 14, 1881, p. 1, col. 1; "How He Won A Wife", in which a man refuses to give up his pipe in order to win the girl he wants to marry.

<sup>9</sup> Col. Sun, Sept. 5, 1877, p. 3, col. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Sun, Sept. 24, 1878, p. 4, col. 4.

<sup>11</sup> See note 3 above.



<sup>12</sup> Sun, June 4, 1890, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Sun, Mar. 11, 1891, p. 3, col. 3; reprinted from the Forum. The article was written by Alice E. Ives.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 4, col. 6.

<sup>15</sup> See as examples PANS RG 48 Colchester Will Book C, p. 31, Alexander MacDonald, April 14, 1864; pp. 259-60, William Smith, July 30, 1869; p. 451, Peter Blair, June 19, 1876; Book D, pp. 184-86, George Reading, Nov. 17, 1882; pp. 175-76, Charles Nelson, March 23, 1885.

<sup>16</sup> See Colchester County Will Book C, pp. 235-36, Rev. Alexander Forrester, Jan. 27, 1864; pp. 326-327, John Christic, July 16, 1872.

<sup>17</sup> See Colchester Will Book C, p. 451, Peter Blair, June 19, 1876.

<sup>18</sup> See for example Colchester County Will Book D, pp. 184-86, George Reading, Nov. 17, 1882; "unmarried daughters to have a double portion [of the residue of his estate]".

<sup>19</sup> See Reading, above.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of residence arrangements, see chapter 3.

<sup>21</sup> See Kenneth Mackenzie, Sabots and Slippers (privately printed, 1954); PANS Micro: Biography, R.G. Graham Journals, vol. 1, 1850-1910. I was also given access to the diary of Israel Longworth, a Truro lawyer, for the years 1859-1861; this diary is in private hands.

<sup>22</sup> See Mackenzie and Graham, above; both were writing in reference to their parents.

<sup>23</sup> PANS MG 1, Vol. 244, Crowe Family Papers, #59, Thomas to James, Aug. 26, 1859.

<sup>24</sup> MG 4, Vol. 244, #160, James to Thomas, Sept. 1, 1864.

<sup>25</sup> MG 1, Vol. 244, #123, William to Thomas, Nov. 10, 1862.

<sup>26</sup>Sun, June 12, 1889, p. 2, col. 14.

<sup>27</sup>Longworth, Feb. 11, 1860.

<sup>28</sup>The Colchester Sun of Feb. 6, 1874 (p. 1, col. 1) listed the YMCA, the Masons, three lodges of AF & AM, the IOOF, the COC and the Temperance League.

<sup>29</sup>Sun, Feb. 7, 1874, p. 2, col. 3.

<sup>30</sup>Sun, July 22, 1874, p. 2, col. 6.

<sup>31</sup>Victoria Park was formally opened on July 1, 1887. (University Women's Club of Truro, Cobequid Chronicles, Truro: privately printed, 1975, pp. 84-85).

<sup>32</sup>"Adams George Archibald's Speech on the occasion of the 122nd Anniversary of the Settlement of Truro by the British" (pamphlet in Micro: Biography: Longworth, Israel, papers, vol. 3, unpaginated).

<sup>33</sup>Sun, July 9, 1890, p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>34</sup>Sun, Aug. 4, 1878, p. 2, col. 3.

<sup>35</sup>All marriage tables compiled from R.G. 32, series WB, vol. 56-57, Col. Co. Marriage registers, 1864-1891.

<sup>36</sup>I acknowledge with gratitude the work of my fellow Saint Mary's student Terry White, whose thesis on the economic and political development of Truro during this period was recently completed. I have especially benefited from a draft copy of chapter 5, "Hustling Hub: Truro and Truro Industry, 1862-1925".

<sup>37</sup>See especially the letters of David Crowe in the California gold fields and the western desert, MG 1, Vol. 244, 1858-1871; see also the social notes of the Colchester Sun throughout the 1870's, '80's and '90's.

<sup>38</sup>Manuscript census from 1871 to 1891 record the birth place of each individual.

<sup>39</sup> All census tables compiled from census abstracts for Truro district, 1861-1891. It is not possible to trace these single men and their impact on subsequent decades of Truro's history because the census schedules for 1901 and beyond have not yet been released. Published census figures, while they indicate population changes, do not follow the life courses of individuals.

<sup>40</sup> Only one of the grooms in all the marriages recorded was from outside of Nova Scotia: he was a merchant from Portland, Maine.

<sup>41</sup> We do not know if women left Truro to look for farmer husbands, although a prime market was certainly available in Western Canada by the 1880's.

<sup>42</sup> MG 1, Vol. 244, #232, Thomas to David, Oct. 4, 1869.

<sup>43</sup> Age at time of marriage - brides:

	Ave.	Mean
1864	28.2	23
1871	25.6	23
1881	25.1	23
1891	24.3	23

<sup>44</sup> A recent cover story in Newsweek (June 1, 1986) proclaims that single women over 30 have a significantly reduced chance of ever marrying. It is amusing to note that the statistics given in support of this new phenomenon differ little from similar statistics for the nineteenth century.

<sup>45</sup> Very few single people made up separate households in Truro during the period under study:

	Males	% as single household	Females	% as single household
1861	2	.5		
1871	12	2.9	7	1.7
1881	4	1.0	14	3.4
1891	6	1.0	12	2.0

<sup>46</sup> They might especially be excluded from discussions and activities to do with the birth and rearing of children.

<sup>47</sup> See Kenneth F. MacKenzie's rather unsympathetic description of his aunt Sarah Blanchard MacDonald who kept house for MacKenzie and his father after Mrs. MacKenzie's death, in Sabots and Slippers (op. cit.) pp. 125-126. Although Sarah eventually married, McKenzie calls her "a spinster in spirit".

<sup>48</sup> Only six single women made wills between 1861 and 1891. Three of the wills do not give details of the estates, but simply leave everything to another unmarried sister (Col. Will Book D., pp. 108-109, Charity McNeil, Oct. 24, 1877; pp. 471-472, Sarah Blair, Sept. 5, 1888; pp. 515-516, Mary S. Allen, Jan. 15, 1876; this last was not probated until Mary's sister died in 1895). The other three left more detailed wills. Elizabeth Dunlop (BKC pp. 213-215, April 7, 1867), left 600 pounds worth of bequests, but specified that if the estate did not cover those bequests they were to be reduced in proportion. Margaret Christie (BKD pp. 373-375, May 12, 1887) left \$460 plus a house and its contents. Diadema McNeil (BKD pp. 382-383, April 29, 1889) left \$4000 and other personal property.

<sup>49</sup> Widowed men per 100 widowed women to age 50:

1861	27.8
1871	43.3
1881	28.3
1891	17.3

<sup>50</sup> Single men per 100 single women over 30:

1861	103.0
1871	89.6
1881	74.0
1891	64.0

<sup>51</sup> For a more detailed treatment of the economic development of Truro from 1867 to 1925, see T. White, "A Central Nova Scotian County and the Landward Pull: the Case of Colchester, 1867-1925" (unpub. M.A. thesis, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, N.S., 1986).

<sup>52</sup> By 1890, McAlpine's Nova Scotia Directory lists over 100 different occupations not including the various kinds of occupations available on the railway. Hutchinson's Nova Scotia Directory of 1864 lists less than 40.

<sup>53</sup> Sun, Sept. 5, 1888, p. 2, col. 2.

<sup>54</sup> Sun, Mar. 11, 1891, p. 3, col. 3.

<sup>55</sup> Dominion Statistician's figures, quoted in Sun,  
Aug. 14, 1889, p. 3, col. 6.

<sup>56</sup> They had names like Fisher, McKenzie, Miller and even Archibald - all local names, although common elsewhere.

<sup>57</sup> For the situation in Ontario re: domestic servants, see Marilyn Barber, "The Women Ontario Welcomed: Immigrant Domestic for Ontario Homes, 1870-1930", in Ontario History, v. 72, no. 3, Sept. 1980, pp. 148-195. For further information re: working away from home see Alan A. Brookes and Catherine Wilson, "Working Away" From the Farm: the Young Women of North Huron, 1910-1930", in Ontario History, vol. 77, no. 4, Dec. 1985, pp. 281-300.

## CHAPTER 4

### Living Arrangements

We left our young couple poised on the edge of a new stage in their lives. Marriage for them might entail among other things a change in living arrangements. They might, for a few months or a couple of years, take up residence in the home of one or the other of their parents. They might, especially in the later years of the nineteenth century, begin their married life in rented rooms or even in a boarding house. They might rent or even build their own house; they might even leave town altogether for better opportunities elsewhere.

For many young couples the beginning of married life was not the first break they had experienced in the circle of the nuclear family. Numerous studies have documented the overwhelming predominance of nuclear families in populations of the past.<sup>1</sup> At any one time, a majority of households consisted of "Mom, Pop and the kids", as Edward Shorter so elegantly puts it.<sup>2</sup> The problem with studying any one time, however, is that it freezes the ceaseless motion of individuals into a snapshot of what was taking place on, say, April 1, 1881. What is missing from this snapshot is the expansion and contraction of family boundaries to cope with

birth, death, marriage, illness, aging and various economic and social emergencies. The ten-year period between censuses is too long to catch all the changes in households. Take, for example, the household of Israel Longworth, a Truro lawyer, who was 36 in 1871. That year Israel's household consisted of his wife Mary and four daughters, aged 1 to 5 years. According to his obituary, 8 daughters were born to Israel and his wife, yet in 1881 only 1 year old Susan was listed. Longworth's obituary indicates that 7 of his daughters were swept away by a diphtheria epidemic which hit the Truro area in the mid-1870's.<sup>3</sup> By 1891, Mrs. Longworth had also died, and her place was being filled by Agnes McCurdy, a single woman of 56 who was listed as a housekeeper.<sup>4</sup> Another example includes William Archibald, a Truro farmer who was 45 in 1871. In addition to his wife and five children, William Archibald's household in 1871 included his parents, a sister, his mother-in-law and a brother-in-law. By 1881 his father had died, his mother and sister had formed a separate household which included one of his daughters and her husband, his mother-in-law and brother-in-law and two more of his children had left, and William himself had been widowed, had remarried and at age 55, was the father of three children under 5. By 1891, all of the children of William's first marriage had left home and his sister, as well as his mother-in-law and brother-in-law from his second marriage, had moved in.<sup>5</sup> A third example is that of Eli Paris, aged 37

in 1871, who was listed as a tanner in that year's census and as a labourer in subsequent years. In 1871 Eli was living with a woman who was probably his second wife<sup>6</sup> and five children ranging in age from 4 to 15. In 1881 none of the children listed in the 1871 census were present in his household, his wife had died, and he was left with a three year old boy. Also living in the house was a single woman aged 39 whose status was unknown. By 1891 Eli had remarried and his new wife had given him three more children.

It is difficult to follow people over time in the available historical records. Women, especially, tend to disappear because of the change of name at marriage. Another difficulty is that, in most cases, we do not know what has happened to the people who disappear. The changing of the census boundaries for Truro between 1871 and 1881 probably accounts for the loss of a number of households: old people died, widowed people remarried and, of course, people left town.<sup>7</sup> Cross-census tabulations give us examples of life-course patterns and help us to understand some of the dynamics of family life. A detailed examination of the information captured for us by the individual census year, however, provides us with indications of what people could expect at the various stages of their lives.

Since we have examined the events leading to entry into marriage, we will begin our examination of family life by surveying the boundaries of the married state. We have



already examined the beginning of married life: we need now to look at its duration and the ramifications of the loss of a spouse.

Throughout the period under study, women were marrying for the first time in their early twenties, men in their late twenties. The median age of the adult population of Truro during this time was between 30 and 39: at least 60% of those aged 16 or over were under the age of 40. In the absence of any kind of systematic recording of deaths,<sup>8</sup> we are left to calculate life expectancy from the ages of the living as recorded in census data. In those terms, and they are approximately the same for men and women:<sup>9</sup> a person of 40 had a one in four chance of reaching the Biblically prescribed limit of three-score and ten, or 70 years of age.<sup>10</sup> Theoretically, then, a married couple might expect to live together for at least twenty years, assuming that they were in their twenties when married, and the odds were high that they would see at least some of their children into adulthood.

In the early years of the period under study more men than women survived to age 50, a fact which is not surprising, given the perils of childbirth. By 1881, the numbers had evened out and women were as likely as men to reach their 50th birthday. However, census figures for Truro indicate that many more women than men were deprived of their spouse by death. Since we have already established that men and

women died in roughly equal proportions, these figures indicate that men were much more likely to remarry than were women, and increasingly so as the century wore on.<sup>11</sup> By

1891, widowed males appear to have been almost four times as likely to remarry, and it was not uncommon for men in their seventies to have children under the age of 5 years.<sup>12</sup> The result of this remarriage of older men to younger women was of course that the women were left widows, often with several children, in their mid-forties, with little chance of remarriage.<sup>13</sup>

So we see that men and women had different long-term expectations of their married life. Men could, if they chose, remain married for the rest of their lives, albeit not necessarily to the same woman.<sup>14</sup> 80% of all men over 60 were living with a wife: 75% had children living with them. The census takers in the years from 1871 to 1891 classified 85% of all men over 60 as being heads of the households in which they resided. Of those 15% who were not called "heads of household" (by virtue of being listed first of the household members on the census form) almost half (26 out of 57, or 45.6%) were widowers: another 22.8% were single men. Most of the married men who did not head their own household were living with non-family members. Looking at the census abstracts, it would appear that men ceased to be perceived as the head of the household only in cases of infirmity or extreme old age,<sup>15</sup> with the exception of men who had never

married and thus, were perceived never to have had a household of their own.

For women over 60, on the other hand, widowhood was a very probable circumstance. In the years from 1871 to 1891 less than 40%<sup>16</sup> of all women over 60 were living with a husband: 70% were living with children. Only 20% of all women over 60 were listed as heading their own households. Of those, over 90% were widows: only 5.3% were heads of households containing other married people. The perception of the census takers indicated nineteenth century society's official attitude towards household hierarchy: adult males preceded adult females in status, and any married woman preceded a woman who had no husband present. A different hierarchy may have obtained when it came to actual living arrangements, when consideration was given to the senior woman in the house.<sup>17</sup>

When nineteenth century families were in transition - when children married or when a parent or spouse died - living accommodations were often rearranged. The physical mobility that was a feature of nineteenth century society extended even into the individual household. The number and identity of people in a household depended on many factors: the timing and spacing of progeny, the health or otherwise of relatives, the death of parents or children, the availability of alternate housing, and the economic circumstances of family, community and the wider world.

The average size of a Truro household dropped considerably over the years between the 1861 census and the census of 1891.<sup>18</sup> In 1861 the average household size was 6.2 members: in 1871 it was 6.0, in 1881, 4.8 and in 1891 it had dropped to 4.6, following trends in evidence throughout North America.<sup>19</sup> In Truro, the decrease was most evident in farm households: the average number of people in a farmer's house dropped from 8.5 in 1871 to 3.8 in 1891, although it must be noted that the number of farm families itself decreased from 25.6% of the population in 1871 to 6.8% in 1891: many of these were headed by "retired" farmers. Households whose heads followed trades and labouring occupations showed a less dramatic but less readily explicable drop from 5.4 members in 1871 to 4.8 in 1891.

Who lived in these households? We know that, especially in the latter part of the century, boarders and servants were common, but first we must discuss a more significant component of most households -- the children.

Popular tradition has it that families were large in the nineteenth century. Thus it is surprising to discover that the average number of living children per family in Truro was 3.7 in 1861, dropping to 2.9 by 1891. Census figures did not take into account the death of children, which was, as we know, a common occurrence. In Truro, a diphtheria epidemic appears to have hit a number of families in the 1870's, killing an unknown number of small children.<sup>20</sup> No

records exist for Truro that would accurately reflect infant mortality or the death of children, so we are forced to rely on census abstracts for our picture of marital fertility.<sup>21</sup> Family size at the end of a woman's childbearing years<sup>22</sup> hovered between 3.5 and 3.9 in Truro between 1861 and 1891: by 1891 about 10% of all married women in this age cohort had no children living at home at all.

If a woman had married in her early twenties, it was possible that some of her children might have left home by the time she had reached her forties. The problem of these missing children can be counteracted in part by examining those families who remained in Truro from 1871 to 1891. The average size of these families, including all children ever listed, was 5.6: the median number of children was 5. This is still not a large family. However, we must recall that memories owe little to the perceived truth or otherwise of statistics, and much more to actual experiences, in this case the experiences of children growing up in large families. If we look at family size from a child's point of view, we can see that, according to the decennial census figures, one half of all children lived in households containing five or more children in 1861 and 1871, four or more children in 1881 and 1891. Looking at the households which persisted in Truro for the years under study, we discover that half of the children in these households grew up with at least six brothers and sisters.

How frequently might a new baby come to the average household? The interval between births appears to have been a fairly consistent two years, at least according to the ages of children as recorded on the census.<sup>23</sup> If a woman married at 23 and had her last child at 45, she could theoretically bear at least eleven children. Many women did indeed bear children with this kind of regularity, although often the last couple of children came at more widely spaced intervals. An obvious rule of thumb here is that, for women, the later the marriage the smaller the family. No doubt some couples were infertile. However, by 1891 it is obvious that some form of birth control was being practiced. Not only had the average family size dropped to 2.9; but there was a substantial drop in the number of completed families with seven children or more<sup>24</sup> at a time when more and more women were marrying at a young age. No advertisements for birth control methods or devices appeared in the issues of the Colchester Sun which have survived for this period, but Halifax papers carrying many such advertisements were widely read in Truro, and traditional methods such as abortion, herbal remedies, coitus interruptus and abstinence were no doubt in use.<sup>25</sup>

Tradition tells us that while children might not always have been welcome in a household they were always useful. The day-to-day tasks of washing dishes, fetching firewood and running errands could be performed by children: the children of farmers could be even more productive in such

tasks as feeding and tending the animals and weeding and harvesting the crops. "Chores" were part of each child's daily routine, and were not rigidly divided into gender-specific tasks: although inside work was traditionally a woman's job, mothers of large families of sons got help where they could. Robert Graham, describing his father's childhood in Brookfield in the 1840's notes that

... [T]here being no girls in father's family, the boys helped the mother in the house, and father being one of the younger ones, seems to have been the mother's principal helper. He was a good cook and a splendid butter-maker.<sup>26</sup>

Less than 1% of all children fifteen and under were listed in the various censuses as being employed outside their homes. While this is almost certainly a gross under-representation of the number of children who were contributing to the family income, it is worthy of note that, according to the census at least, almost all of the children of school age in Truro had attended school during some part of the year when the question was asked on the census schedules of 1871 and 1881.<sup>27</sup>

When did children cease to be children? There was a legal age of consent, at which time the children could marry without permission, or come into inherited property.<sup>28</sup> Many children, males as well as females, remained in their

father's house until well after this arbitrary age. They stayed at home, theoretically at least under parental authority, until they could legitimately leave home. The only acceptable way for a young adult to set up a separate residence was to marry or to leave town altogether. No one in the Truro census district set up a separate residence, even in a boarding house, if their parents were still in town.<sup>29</sup> When, for example, the children of Thomas Crowe wished to embark upon independent courses of action they either married, in the cases of Sidney, George and Caroline, or left home, as in the cases of David, Tom, William and James.<sup>30</sup> John, the last Crowe son to become an independent adult, remained in his father's house until he married at age 36.

We have examined some of the demographic boundaries of family life: it is time now to deal with physical accommodation of family members. We will return for an example to the Crowe family. In the fall of 1859, John Crowe, age 36 and Jane Chisholm, age 25, were married. Thomas Crowe, commenting on the marriage to one of John's brothers, mentioned in passing that "they are living with us as yet, but intend living by themselves in a part our house in a few weeks".<sup>31</sup> In December of 1862 John and his wife were still living on the Crowe homestead: their family had been augmented by the birth of two daughters.<sup>32</sup> In March of 1863, Thomas wrote:



John, wife and three daughters as well, they still live in the house with us as he has not got his own quite ready to move into. Their children are a healthy, noisy and mischievous set, but we have got used with them and I don't know how we would do without them to drive away dull hours.<sup>33</sup>

By February of 1864 John and his wife had moved with their children into their own house, almost five years after their marriage had taken place.<sup>34</sup>

The joint residence of young couples with one or another of their parents for a period after their marriage was not an uncommon occurrence. In any given census year about 3% of all households in Truro included young married couples in co-residence with one set of parents. The census takers may have distinguished related nuclear families sharing a table from related nuclear families who shared a house only, as was the case with Thomas Crowe and his son. In this case the 1861 census lists the two households separately.<sup>35</sup> It may well be that many families shared residences while still maintaining separate establishments. This kind of arrangement was recommended for farmer's sons who were waiting to inherit. In an article reprinted from The Country Gentleman, The Colchester Sun of February 6, 1874 suggests that:

when pretty Mary White will name the happy day see that a few rooms in the great old house shall be set off for a cosy nest for the young pair.

The article goes on to describe the sort of arrangements Thomas and John Crowe must have made for their families:

I would not ask you to take the young couple home, for every married pair should have their own home. It never is well for old and young to try to conform each other. The young bride cannot adapt her ways to those of the old mother, and harmony can never exist. Give them a separate outfit, Neighbour B. - their own table, cooking stove and kitchen appurtenance - and nothing but the wood pile and well of water and ice-house in common, and then you will all be happy; and when the grand-children come, they will renew your youth.<sup>36</sup>

There is evidence of other kinds of living arrangements involving nuclear families and other relatives. The census abstracts for 1861, 1871 and 1881 do not give clear evidence about the relationship of people living in a household to the household head.<sup>37</sup> In 1891, however, the census indicates the nature of those relationships more or less accurately. 15.7% of all households have one or more relatives living in the house in addition to members of the household head's nuclear family. This is almost 40% (39.1%) of all households containing outsiders. What's more, an examination of the 136 households which persist from 1871 to 1891 indicates that 36.0% of these households extended their boundaries at one time or another.

The most common addition to a nuclear family was the widowed mother of one spouse or the other. Other frequent additions included grandchildren (with or without a widowed parent), brothers and sisters of one spouse or the other, and, occasionally, more distant relatives such as aunts or nieces and nephews.

Detailed arrangements for the sharing of living quarters are sometimes revealed in the disposition of property and effects made in a person's will. In most of these cases, a man was making provisions for his widow's comfort and support when he allowed her specific parts of the house. Robert Christie of Truro, writing in March of 1867, left to his wife Margaret one half of the house with its contents, "being the part which I at present occupy, for her own use and to be entirely under her own control and at her disposal absolutely".<sup>38</sup> Robert's son George got the other half of the house: the will indicates that he was already in residence there. Robert Densmore of Brookfield whose will is dated May 27, 1879, was even more explicit about accommodations for his wife. "Robert's son George was left the homestead and all its effects, except for "the large room and the bedroom off the first floor and the bedroom on the second floor at the Southeast corner" which, with their furniture, were left to George's mother.<sup>39</sup> James Miller of Truro, whose will was signed on September 2, 1896, left his house and estate to his wife Kate, and to his wife's nephew Jack Fraser. The will

stipulated that his wife and her nephew were to share the house, but that his wife was to have the downstairs bedroom. There was mention of a son who, from internal evidence, must have been very young when the will was made; he was not allotted a bedroom.<sup>40</sup>

Unmarried daughters were also given specific accommodation in wills. Daniel Cock, of Truro, whose will was dated October 15, 1880, left a life use of the house to his wife, Mary Ann. After she died, the house and farm were to go to his sons Daniel and Albert, with the provision that "... if either of them [Janet and Agnes Cock, his unmarried daughters] remains single at the time of my wife's death, they shall have the use and control of the Southeast parlor and bedroom above it, with access thereto inside the dwelling house as long as they or any of them remain unmarried."<sup>41</sup>

It is important to note that most of the wills recorded for the Truro area during this time period were for "old" Truro families: very few of the newcomers who begin to appear in the census abstracts and provincial directories after 1881 had probated estates by the 1890's. Although labourers, tradesmen and the odd railway employee did leave wills, the majority were left by farmers whose families had been on the land they were leaving for sixty to one hundred years.<sup>42</sup> This means that information about residence and inheritance practices as gleaned from Truro wills has a bias towards the kind of household in which extra hands might be

in fact welcome, and also a bias towards stable kinship networks where a sense of family allegiance was strengthened by economic ties to the land. A detailed examination of wills probated after 1891 might reveal a more diverse section of Truro's population, as young men who had migrated to Truro in the 1870's and '80's aged and died.

A cursory examination of the data collected from census abstracts, however, reveals that shared residence with kin was at least cross-occupational and occurred in town as well as in the country. The available information does not allow us to determine the economic status of all extended-family households. The pattern that emerges seems to be that of need rather than expedience or social standing. The boundaries of the nuclear family were extended to include widowed parents, widowed children<sup>43</sup> or orphans of children or siblings<sup>44</sup> and other family connections who, for one reason or another required accommodation. In the Truro area at least, the relatives who could demand permanent accommodation seem to have been limited to the direct line (i.e., parents - children - grandchildren), or to people one generation removed from the direct line (i.e., aunts, siblings and the children of siblings) of either the male head of household or his spouse. Although in some Truro families the ramifications of family connections must have been endless,<sup>45</sup> reciprocal kinship relations such as shared residence seem, from the limited evidence, to have been restricted to the

above categories.<sup>46</sup>

Within these categories, again, there may well have been some sort of hierarchy that determined exactly who sheltered whom. We would expect, and the evidence of wills indicates, that children living on the family homestead would shelter their widowed parents, for example. Another tradition indicates that the youngest daughter would remain at home unmarried in order to care for her aging parents; we might extrapolate from this that younger married children would be more likely to open their homes, but this cannot be documented from the census data. Documentary evidence from one family gives some indication of what rewards children might expect from special care or concern for their aging parents. Edmund Sullivan, a Truro cabinet maker, was a widower of 63 when he wrote his will in 1883. He and his wife had produced nine surviving children. In 1881 three daughters were living at home: his second daughter, Sarah, aged 31 and his third and fourth daughters, Katie and Sophia, aged 22 and 16. When he wrote his will Edmund made general provision for all his children, but made special provision in a codicil for his eldest son, William, who had taken over the family shop, and for Sarah. "I make this extra provision" he writes:

for these two of my children under the strong conviction that they are fairly entitled thereto in consideration of their faithful service to myself and family, and will further add that I consider this extra provision for

my daughter Sarah but a small reward for all her Dutiful and affectionate regard for the welfare and comfort of myself and family, and trust that the rest of my children will feel as I do that in making this last bequest I have done nothing but what is lawful and right towards their sister.<sup>47</sup>

Another example of the distribution of people requiring special care amongst family members is the case of John Birrell, aged 48 in 1871. John was listed on the census abstract as being "of unsound mind". He lived in a household with his younger brother, 41 year old James Birrell, who was married with three small children. Also residing in the house was 33 year-old Kate Birrell, presumably an unmarried sister. By 1881, Kate had married James Kent and moved into a home of her own: her brother John had moved with her, and was still listed as a member of the Kent household in 1891. Kate had no children, while her brother James had three in 1871: depending on how unsound of mind John Birrell really was, it may have been easier for Kate to give him the care and attention he required.<sup>48</sup>

The temporary accommodation of family members in need was a common feature of life in Truro households. Jane Chisholm, who met her future husband when she was staying at her aunt's home while attending Normal School,<sup>49</sup> was no doubt one of hundreds of girls who took advantage of conveniently located kin to pursue schooling, employment, or even a

husband "in town". Social news published in Push, the school paper of the Truro public schools in the 1890's, indicates that children under the age of 15 were being sent to town for schooling, or sent away to help with family emergencies.<sup>50</sup> Robert Graham, whose memoirs recorded life in the community of Brookfield in the 1870's, '80's and '90's, refers to an old bachelor uncle who was "at our home ill" for brief periods in the 1880's, and mentions other family members who took up temporary residence in the houses of their relatives.<sup>51</sup>

Census abstracts give an indication of the mobility of family members even within the boundaries of the family unit. Perhaps the most stable and familiar part of family life in nineteenth century Truro was the constant movement of family members in and out of the domestic circle. Family alliances could be dissolved or strengthened by changing patterns of residency. A lonely child could anticipate the arrival of cousins or even nieces and nephews to replace absent brothers and sisters: grandparents might take over some of the nurturing of the younger children in a large family: the stress of caring for aged or infirm relatives could be distributed amongst household members: the crises of illness and death could be coped with by relocating into the more sheltered environment of someone else's house.



Many Truro households, however, contained people who were not members of the family, extended or otherwise. Truro was an attractive destination for people seeking employment. The railroad especially seems to have drawn ambitious young men to Truro's boarding houses and hotels. The census abstracts for 1861, '71 and '81 do not clearly identify the relationship of household members to the household head; the 1861 census does not even name household members. Assuming, as we are obliged to do, that everyone with a surname different from that of the household head was an outsider, we discover that their number rose from 5.6% of the population of Truro to 11.6% in 1881 and 15.6% in 1891. 17.4% of all households had an outsider in them in 1871, and that percentage had risen to 32.6% in 1881. By 1891 over 40% of all households contained at least one person who was not a member of the household head's nuclear family. Before 1891, the only outsiders whose role in the household can be determined were those who were listed as servants. Roughly as many men as women appeared as servants in Truro households: they make up about 35% of all outsiders in 1871 and 40% in 1881. By 1891 all the members of a household were more or less identified.<sup>52</sup> From the information available from the census abstracts a much clearer picture of the impact of industrialization or residence emerges. The breakdown of outsiders in Truro households is given in the following table:

	SERVANTS		BOARDERS		RELATIVES	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Males	27	9.4	222	77.1	39	13.5
Females	137	34.2	152	37.9	112	27.9

Over 75% of these outsiders were single, and most were under 25. Women tended to live under some sort of familial supervision, either in the homes of kin or as servants. Men were more inclined to live in large households with no kin. A number of establishments in Truro appear to have catered to men who worked on the railroad, although it may have been chance that led five or more railwaymen to live in one boarding house.<sup>54</sup> Certainly the railway was one of the largest employers of single men. By 1891, living in boarding houses became more common, as opposed to living as a boarder in a family house. Men especially did not seem to adapt a surrogate family when they were sequestered by distance from their own kin.

Co-residence was not the only factor which determined the influence of family members on each other. The role of non-resident kin in family life is more difficult to document. It may well be that memories of the closeness of family relationships come as much from the ability of kin to pool labour and share in family occasions from the privacy of separate dwellings as they do from actual shared accommodations. In the nineteenth century, as now, kin were inclined

to visit each other and keep track of each other's whereabouts, to hand on clothing, tools and recipes and to share the duties of harvesting and childcare.<sup>55</sup>

The maintenance of kin networks seems to have depended very much on geographical proximity. Thomas Miller, writing his Historical and Genealogical Register of the First Settlers of Colchester County in the 1860's, lost track of family members who moved any further from Truro than the Stewiacke River Valley, a distance of only about twenty miles. Thomas Crowe obviously perceived himself to be the one connecting link between his absent sons and the family in Truro. "I have often thought" he wrote to his son David in 1863, "that was I no more, that our scattered Family would never hear from each other - this should not be."<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, there are some indications that kin chose to settle near each other when they could. The persistence of "local names" in communities all over Nova Scotia demonstrates the tendency of people to settle in familiar places, where the difficulties of life could be lessened by calling on the support and assistance of others to whom they were bound by blood.<sup>57</sup>

The evidence of census abstracts for the Truro area shows that, if the census takers were being systematic about the performance of their duties, kin were less likely to reside near each other as the century progressed. In 1861 a small sampling of family names indicates 17 incidences of

residential proximity, if the census taker is to be believed. (This includes only possible kin with the same surname.) A survey of subsequent census abstracts shows that while taking kin into the house became, if anything, more common, living next to them became less common. Of course, in a town the size of Truro, even in 1891, no one was very far away if they lived within the boundaries of the district.<sup>58</sup> By the 1880's however, the influx of people whose roots were outside the Truro area had made the presence of kin in close geographical proximity an increasingly less likely possibility.

What kind of impact might the absence of kin, outside of the home circle, have on families in Truro? We might first predict that the burden of childrearing, previously distributed amongst near kin such as grandparents and aunts, might be redistributed to allow those absent relatives to be replaced by an outside force.<sup>59</sup> The move to an urban environment, with the possibility of available wage labour, would reduce both the necessity and the ability of men and women to call upon a domestic or readily accessible auxiliary workforce to accomplish such subsistence activities as reaping and preserving the harvest, cutting and hauling firewood, or other such labour-intensive activities. Co-operative effort might focus on the stresses of the new life style, perhaps resulting in such things as unions, commercial organizations, church activity groups and organizations for social improvement. All of these would involve not family,

but community activity, and this in a milieu where family and community were entities much more distinctly separated than the old communities full of "local names".

Parallel to the externalization of some of the family's functions, other family functions might become increasingly private. In a rapidly changing social environment, blood was the connection which could not be broken: we might expect that the kind of emotional support that previously came from a broader range of relationships might increasingly come from within the nuclear family unit. We might expect that the ties between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, might become stronger in expectation if not in fact, and that the emphasis on these close ties would put a strain on the family.

The emergence in the nineteenth century of the nuclear family as a haven in a heartless world,<sup>60</sup> was a response to the separation of work and home in industrial communities. Truronians were not alone in experiencing the transformation of work from a vocation to something performed to maintain a lifestyle. This study of Truro ends in 1891, when the industrialization of Truro, and in fact, Nova Scotia, was at its height.<sup>61</sup> Nova Scotians had just begun to feel the long term effects of the new economy. The work world had become increasingly alienating as workers lost control of the skills and time it took to do a job well. Emotional fulfilment, then, had to come from inside a family unit whose primary

"job" had become one of ensuring emotional, rather than physical survival.

## Footnotes - Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup> See the works of Peter Laslett, who more or less invented the quantitative study of families in the past.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Shorter, The Making of the Modern Family (New York: Basic Books Inc.: 1975), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> For Longworth's obituary see Truro Daily News, Feb. 20, 1902, p. 4: my own family history refers to several small children who died of diphtheria in Truro during this period. (Wright family history, unpublished MS, privately held.)

<sup>4</sup> See census abstracts:  
 1871 Tr[u]ro p. 75 d[well]ing] 258 f[amily] 289  
 1881 Tr p. 110 D503 F 534  
 1891 Tr 3 p. 36 F 132 (all for Israel Longworth).

<sup>5</sup> See census abstracts:  
 1871 Tr p. 6 D 20 F 21 (William Archibald)  
 1881 Tr p. 19 D 86 F 91 (William Archibald) and p. 19/20 D 86 F 92 (Ann Archibald)  
 1891 Tr 4 p. 25 F 97 (William Archibald).

<sup>6</sup> She was 29, while the oldest child was 15: however, the Truro census abstracts are full of inaccuracies for the local black community, of which Eli was a member. See census abstracts:

1871 Tr p. 73 D 252 F 281  
 1881 Tr p. 126 D 576 F 613  
 1891 Tr 1 p. 47 F 232

<sup>7</sup> Percent of households traceable 1871 - 1891 (N = 136)  
 All tables are drawn from the unpublished census abstracts for Truro, 1861 - 1981.

1871 18.6%  
 1881 20.3%  
 1891 14.8%

<sup>8</sup> Government death records were kept between 1864 and 1877, but the records are notoriously incomplete. After 1877, the registration system broke down and recording did not recommence until 1908.

<sup>9</sup>Men age 50+ per 100 women age 50+:

1861	146
1871	104
1881	92
1891	94

<sup>10</sup>Percent of population over

40	40%
50	30%
60	20%
70	10%

Figures are approximate, from census schedules.

<sup>11</sup>Percent widowed, 50+:

	M	F	M/F Ratio
1861	9.8	25.8	2.6
1871	12.0	24.3	2.0
1881	14.6	44.2	3.0
1891	11.5	41.5	3.6

<sup>12</sup>See Hiram Hyde's family for example: in 1891, Hiram, aged 72, was married to Ellen, age 30, and they had a daughter Teresa, age 2. 1891 Tr 2 p. 13 F 56.

<sup>13</sup>See the households of Samuel Nelson and Alexander MacKenzie. In 1871 Samuel, age 40, was married to Melissa, aged 29: by 1881, Melissa was alone with two children (1871 Tr p. 19 D 56 F 70; 1881 Tr p. 26/27 D 118 F 129). Alexander, aged 45 in 1871 was married to Mary age 23: by 1881 Mary was a widow with four children (1871 Tr p. 87/88 D 229 F 336; 1881 Tr p. 37/38 D 160 F 177).

<sup>14</sup>My grandfather's reminiscences include the story, possibly apocryphal, of a group of women who were "laying out" the wife of a local man. One of the younger women expressed concern for the widower. "Oh laws", was the response from the others - "don't worry about him, he'll be married again before the year is out." Married again he was indeed - to the young woman who had worried about him. (Wright family history, unpublished MS, privately held).

<sup>15</sup>Most of the men who had relinquished their status as household head were over 80.



<sup>16</sup> Women 60+ in complete couples:

	%	#
1871	42.1	51
1881	34.1	40
1891	38.7	65

<sup>17</sup> This will be discussed further below.

<sup>18</sup> These figures exclude households which call themselves boarding houses or hotels.

<sup>19</sup> For a comment on this trend in a Canadian context see Angus McLaren "Birth Control and Abortion in Canada", in CHR vol. 59 #3 (Sept. 1978), pp. 319-40.

<sup>20</sup> See note 3 above.

<sup>21</sup> Information on extramarital fertility is even less reliable. Birth records kept by the government of Nova Scotia from 1864 to 1877 were estimated as being about 2/3 complete by the end of that period. No illegitimate births were recorded for the Truro area during this period, although a notebook kept by Brookfield midwife Jane Soley Hamilton records several (see Joan Kennedy, "Jane Soley Hamilton, Midwife" in Nova Scotia Historical Review, v. 2, #1, 1982, pp. 6-24).

<sup>22</sup> Defined here as age cohort 40-49. I have excluded from these figures any women who was widowed during her childbearing years.

<sup>23</sup> There is, however, a considerable margin of error in age records in the census abstracts; a child who was "5", for example, could be almost 5, just turned 5, or almost 6.

<sup>24</sup> Number of children per woman at end of childbearing (40-49):

#/ child	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Ave #
1861	5.1	3.1	7.2	9.3	8.3	17.5	10.3	16.5	10.3	6.2	6.0	3.7
1871	7.6	5.1	2.5	13.6	11.9	12.7	17.0	10.2	9.3	8.5	1.7	3.0
1881	13.2	12.4	14.0	14.7	8.5	12.4	10.6	4.7	8.8	8.0	---	3.5
1891	9.3	12.6	9.8	14.8	13.7	10.9	12.6	6.6	4.9	3.3	1.6	3.9

<sup>25</sup> See McLaren, op. cit., pp. 322-323.

<sup>26</sup>PANS Micro: Biography, Graham R.G., vol. 1, p. 21.

<sup>27</sup>School attendance was compulsory between the ages of 7 and 12; by 1891, Truro children were required to attend school between the ages of 6 and 16. (Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia 1884, Chapter 29, Section 76; RSNS 1900 Cap. 55 sect. 3).

<sup>28</sup>The legal age of majority was 21 (RSNS 1864 Title 23, cap. 121, sect. 1) or at marriage.

<sup>29</sup>The one exception to this rule might be that of servants who were boarding in the homes of their employers. Laslett defines servants as family members: certainly people who worked as live-in servants did not control their own lifestyles. (Peter Laslett, The World We Have Lost, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965, esp. Chapter 1, "English society before and after the coming of industry").

<sup>30</sup>MG 1, Vol. 244, Crowe family papers, passim.

<sup>31</sup>MG 1, Vol. 244, Crowe family papers #60; Thos. to James, Sept. 29, 1859.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., #124, Thos. to James, Dec. 9, 1862.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., #132, Thos. to James, Mar. 21, 1863.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., #147, Thos. to James, Feb. 18, 1864.

<sup>35</sup>See 1861 Tr. Pl. Abstract 5 Households 12 and 13.

<sup>36</sup>Colchester Sun, Feb. 6, 1874, p. 4, col: 1-2.

<sup>37</sup>I have made use of the special knowledge of kinship networks in Colchester County acquired during my six years employment at PANS to clarify some of these relationships for the purpose of my tables.

<sup>38</sup>C[olchester] C[q] W[ill] B[look] C, pp. 95-98: Robert O. Christie, Mar. 1867.

<sup>39</sup>CCWB:D, pp. 394-395, Robert Densmore, May 27, 1879.

<sup>40</sup> CCWB D, pp. 529-532; James Miller, Sept. 2, 1896.

<sup>41</sup> CCWB D, pp. 16-21, Daniel Cock, Oct. 15, 1880.

<sup>42</sup> Of the four examples used here, three were farmers and one a railway conductor: all were descendants of men who had settled in the Truro area prior to 1800.

<sup>43</sup> For widowed children returning to parental homes, see Sidney Crowe (1891 Tr 2, P 26, F 120) and William McCully (1891 Tr 3, P. 28/29, F 130).

<sup>44</sup> For orphaned children see Sylvester Chambers (1891 Tr 1 P 13, F 64): Chambers had taken in a niece. A further description of living arrangements for widows and orphans comes in this obituary from the Colchester Sun of April 18, 1888 (p. 2, col. 2).

On Friday last many in this community were quite surprised and grieved to learn of the death of Mrs. Clara Faulkner (nee Clara Wilson). Surprised because the deceased was but a few days previously attending to her arduous duties with her usual energy and application; grieved, because she was a great favorite with all who knew her. - She has left a little daughter who will miss, oh how sadly, the guiding hand of a kind, thoughtful and indulgent parent. She leaves behind, too, her own mother, with increased responsibilities, who will feel sadly and keenly her lonely position. The home circle was a small one and it is sad indeed to think that it has been broken in this way.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Miller's genealogy lists 73 pages of Archibalds: this does not include family connections with Taylors, Millers, Fishers, Blanchards, and other local families.

<sup>46</sup> Only the 1891 census gives the relation of individuals in the households to the household head. These are not always accurate: for example, William McCully's grandchildren, the children of his widowed daughter, Annie Magee, are listed as McCully's son and daughter (1891 Tr 3, P. 28/29 F 130).

<sup>47</sup> CCWB D, pp. 122-126, Edmund Sullivan, Sept. 5, 1879; codicil Dec. 27, 1883, see also 1871 Tr p. 5/6 D 19 F 20. 1881 Tr p. 26 D 115 F 126, Edmund Sullivan.

<sup>48</sup> See 1871 Tr. p. 64 D 215 F 243  
 1881 Tr. p. 86 D 387 F 414  
 1891 Tr 2, p. 20/21 F 95. (James Birrell):

<sup>49</sup> For an account of their courtship see Chapter 2.

<sup>50</sup> Push v. 1, #1-10, (Jan.-June 1894) was the paper of Truro schools below the grade 9 level. (See PANS Library, V/F, vol. 92, #4a). It recorded among other things, the whereabouts of students and teachers. For example:

"Miss Kate McCallum, grade 8, has suddenly been called to her home in Camden on account of the illness of her mother". (v. 1, #3, p. 2, col. 1, Feb. 9, 1894).

"Miss Bertha McNutt of Nuttby is now attending school in town". (v. 1, #4, p. 2, col. 1, Feb. 16, 1894).

"Miss Upham [teacher] has been called away to nurse her sick sister at Moncton". (v. 1, #9, p. 2, col. 2, Mar. 22, 1894).

<sup>51</sup> PANS Micro: Biography: Graham R.G., Journal, vol. 1, pp. 50, 109.

<sup>52</sup> See note 46.

<sup>53</sup> An "outsider" for the purpose of this paper, is a person living in a household who does not appear to be a member of the household head's nuclear family. The 1891 census form identifies such people as "lodgers". However, a number of these "lodgers" are in fact kin whose relationship to the household head has been incorrectly recorded.

<sup>54</sup> Household heads often did not specify that they ran a boarding house. Duncan Gillis (1891 Tr 2, p. 10/11 F 45) had 10 people in addition to his own wife and children living in his house. Hotels, on the other hand, were always noted. Often they housed staff as well as lodgers (see Andrew Learmont, 1891 Tr 4 p. 9/10 F 34, Learmont had 6 servants, 11 lodgers, a wife and a son in his household).

<sup>55</sup> An indication of the closeness of non-resident kin relationships can be found in the will of Edmund Sullivan:

It has occurred to me that possibly some difficulty might arise after my death in the distribution of my personal effects chiefly owing to this fact: Some of my children have personal property of their own on or about my premises. In order therefore to avoid as far as possible all difficulty or dispute in this matter [the executors are to settle all questions of ownership before the estate is divided]. (CCWB D, pp. 122-126, Edmund Sullivan, Codicil, Dec. 27, 1883).

<sup>56</sup>MG 1, vol. 244, Crowe family papers, #137, Thomas to David, July 7, 1863.

<sup>57</sup>Michael Anderson argues that in rural places kin could not extricate themselves from the economic and social ties which abound them together: if nothing else, kin were expected to help each other. In urban places, however, kin could select which ties they would maintain. (Anderson, Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire (Cambridge: University Press, 1979), p. 135.

<sup>58</sup>The boundaries of the town of Truro included considerably less than one square mile of ground. For a map of the town in 1874 see A.F. Church, Colchester County, 1864, (pub. 1874) in PANS Map Collection. A later, "bird's-eye" type map was published in 1889.

<sup>59</sup>For an example of crisis strategies adopted by working-class families in a large city, see Bettina Bradbury, "The Fragmented Family: Family Strategies in the Face of Death Illness and Poverty, Montreal, 1860-1885" (In Joy Parr, ed., Childhood and Family in Canadian History (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1982), pp. 109-128.

<sup>60</sup>Christopher Lasch, Haven in a Heartless World (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1979). The following paragraph owes its analysis to pp. 6-7.

<sup>61</sup>For Truro, see Terry White, "A Central Nova Scotian County and the Landward Pull; the Case of Colchester County, 1864-1925" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1986). For Nova Scotia, see T.W. Acheson, "The National Policy and the Industrialization of the Maritimes, 1880-1910" in Acadiensis, v. 1, #2 (Spring, 1972), pp. 3-28.

## CHAPTER 5

## Outside The House

In the industrializing communities of the nineteenth century, familiar social structures were of necessity giving way to social formations more suited to the new economic situation. Families, like other social and economic organizations, assumed new functions and relinquished old ones.<sup>1</sup> Truro families, like their peers elsewhere, were changed economically, demographically and socially by the industrialization process.

The families of Truro had demonstrated themselves to be adaptable to the social changes which came as a result of the changing economy of the nineteenth century. Some of the new strategies they had adopted came out of a climate of feeling which dictated new forms of family life. Others had to do with the changing requirements of economic survival - fewer children, but earlier marriages; fewer kin connections but more outsiders in the household; a longer lifespan for both parents and children. By 1891, Truro had reached the peak of its prosperity; the sleepy agricultural village of the 1850's had become the railway hub of Nova Scotia and a bustling manufacturing town.<sup>2</sup> The decline of industry in the Maritimes after the turn of the century affected Truro

as well, but the enduring prominence of the railway, combined with Truro's involvement in education<sup>3</sup>, its position as the service center for a large agricultural hinterland<sup>4</sup>, and the maintenance of several large factories<sup>5</sup> enabled Truronians to weather the hard times ahead with more comfort than was afforded to such towns as Amherst.<sup>6</sup>

An examination of Truro's local paper gives some indication of the changing focus of family life. The local newspaper of any community is a revealing index of social change. Explicitly (through such things as advice literature), and in other more subtle ways, the nineteenth century newspaper promoted the attitudes and values that a changing society perceived to be crucial to its steady progress towards a perfect world. It was one of the most accessible, and therefore one of the most powerful mythmaking agents available to promoters of social value systems.<sup>7</sup> Examining the information printed in the pages of Truro's local weekly paper can give us an insight into the ideas about family values which were current in nineteenth century Nova Scotia. It also allows us in some measure to place the families of Truro into the context of the new climate of feeling about the family as it evolved elsewhere.

The Colchester Sun was first published in 1872. In its early years, the Sun had a circulation of about 1000;

by the 1890's this had risen to 2,500. The paper throughout this period was being published by W.B. Alley, an American who had arrived in Trukø in 1871. It was Conservative in politics and, in the early years at least, essentially parochial in its interests. The cost of a subscription ranged between \$2 and \$3 per annum during the period under study here.<sup>8</sup>

The Sun's format was more or less typical of newspapers of the period, barring, perhaps, the relatively small quantity of patent medicine advertisements. Its content presented a picture of a community whose image of itself had not yet begun to reflect the transformation that had taken place in its economic and social structure. The Sun of the 1870's was a paper which obviously served a largely rural audience. The paper contained much local news, especially commenting on the progress of crops, the price of cattle and the sale of real estate. Advertisers tended to offer local goods and services and were inclined toward matter-of-fact statements of available goods and current prices. The limited sample available for the early 1870's would seem to indicate that the Sun did not go in for target marketing aimed at mothers and wives: nor did it publish any amount of patent medicine testimonials or advertisements for beauty aids.

In the late 1870's the Sun began to publish descriptions of local industrial establishments. These descrip-



tions covered the physical appearance of the establishments, the manufacturing processes used, and the nature and quantity of goods produced. In contrast to descriptions of agricultural produce which invariably commented on the expertise of the producer, the Sun's descriptions of industrial production gave no indication that humans were involved in the production process. The articles sometimes mentioned the number of employees in any given factory: they did not give any indication of their skills.<sup>9</sup>

At roughly the same time as the Sun was publishing descriptions of Truro's industrial development, it carried a series of articles reviewing the efforts of Truro's residents to keep their town tidy and attractive. The articles, published in July and August of 1877, took the form of a walking tour. The reporter began by describing the "cottage" of Sir Adams George Archibald, located in a semi-rural suburb on the hill overlooking the town. He proceeded from there to essentially walk the boundaries of settlement in Truro: from Brunswick Street to Foundry Hill, from there to Arthur Street, thence to Willow Street, then past the "square" along Prince to Walker Street, and from Walker along Queen Street to the square again.<sup>10</sup> Descriptions of the properties included in this circuit featured attractively maintained grounds and gardens, recently painted houses, and an abundance of

shade trees. "Generally", the reporter commented, "we have but little fault, with our townsfolk, as every one appears to do his best to make the grounds and buildings he may possess attractive not only to the hundreds of strangers who visit us during the summer season, but also to the good people of Truro themselves, who are watching almost with jealous eye, the improvements around the gardens and houses of one another."<sup>11</sup>

Glaringly absent from the Sun's glowing description of Truro was the area immediately surrounding the railway depot. Forrester, Outram, Walker and other streets were lined by boarding houses and hotels whose residents comprised the poorer section of Truro's society. Absent as well was any commentary on the houses of the black community, already ghettoized to the edges of urban settlement. The Sun's readers did not expect to find this kind of evidence of Truro's changing society in the paper's pages.

Family advice literature published in the Colchester Sun of the 1870's was almost exclusively devoted to the problems of convincing children to remain on the farm. Many of these articles were gleaned from such American periodicals as the Rural New Yorker. They set up a stark comparison between the pleasures of country life and the perils of joining the industrial workforce:

If discontented farmers, farmers' wives, sons and daughters, who think the delights of city life something worth realizing, could walk through our streets today and read one-thousandth part of the misery and apprehension that haunt the hearts of all classes ... they would thank God for the peaceful seclusion, and abundance gathered in the garner of their home. Thousands of men and women are at the beginning of winter suddenly thrown out of employment! Few, comparatively, of these have aught laid up in store ... Boys and girls of the country! be grateful for plenty and shelter. You will, perhaps, never know how to value it until you want and cannot get either. How many of these in the city are country born; and how many would gladly go back to the homestead for refuge ...<sup>12</sup>

The advice literature offered suggestions as to how to "keep young folks contented"<sup>13</sup> on the farm:

By making agricultural society attractive, fill the farm-house with books and periodicals. Establish central reading-rooms, or neighbourhood clubs. Encourage the social meetings of the young. Have concerts, lectures, improvement associations. Establish a bright, active, social life, that shall give some significance to labour. Above all, build as far as possible in villages. It is better to go a mile to one's daily labour than to place one's self a mile away from a neighbour.<sup>14</sup>

In proposing ways to combat the social and physical isolation of farm life, advice literature had begun to suggest that people could no longer fulfil themselves through the satisfaction of daily work. Farming began

to be perceived as a business rather than as a way of life. Farmers were encouraged to "invest" in comfortable houses, household conveniences and efficient farm machinery in order, perhaps, to earn the "interest" of filial devotion to the farmstead. Complaining that the most intelligent and best educated country boys were leaving agriculture for trades and professions, the Rural New Yorker, as represented in the Sun of January 30, 1878, stated emphatically:

[N]o boy or man, no matter what his talents or education may be, need leave the farm in order to find abundant opportunity for the use of both. Few kinds of business require so much study, and so much thought as farming, and few kinds of farming, and few kinds of business will pay so well for the study and thought bestowed on it.<sup>15</sup> Farming well done pays.

Advice from the British Sportman, reprinted in the Sun of January 24, 1877, was even more to the point:

Success is the object which should be aimed at in choosing a profession. The question should then be very carefully considered: Can I succeed better at some other business, and what are the chances that I will so succeed? What is the business or occupation in which I will succeed best? You have been raised on a farm, you know all the in's and out's about farming, any other business you know nothing about. You will have to begin and learn again, and it will be a number of years before you will be fully master of any

other occupation. It will therefore be better for you to stick to the farm; you are, or you ought to be, pretty well master of it.<sup>16</sup>

We know that by the 1870's the industrialization process was well underway in Truro. Several factories had opened, the railway lines to Pictou, Halifax and Central Canada were in use, and the influx of industrial workers had begun. Yet if the articles in the Colchester Sun are to be taken as a witness, families were still expected to form themselves along the old lines, and to have utilitarian rather than sentimental relationships. In evidence, however, is the increasing infiltration of the industrial mindset into the houses of people who had been born or were living on farms. The virtues of a country upbringing were recognized by employers in town: several advertisements for male servants specified that "one from the country" would be preferred.<sup>17</sup>

While articles in the Colchester Sun give us only an indirect indication of the changes experienced by Truro society in the 1870's, the advertisements, especially those which deal with local concerns, are much more revealing. Boarding housekeepers, advertising their desirable features, were apt to include in their ads that they were situated near the ICR depot.<sup>18</sup> cooks and servants for hotels were in increasing demand<sup>19</sup>; shoemakers, clerks and teamsters were regularly sought

by employers<sup>20</sup>. Also in increasing evidence were more frivolous services: Mrs. A. MacIntyre, for example, was offering lessons in "Oriental Painting" from her home on Revere Street in 1877<sup>21</sup>, and Thomas Mayo, a local photographer, advertised that he had available "a superior light for taking children's likenesses"<sup>22</sup>.

Over the course of the next decade, the pages of the Colchester Sun began to reflect the changes in lifestyle that industrialization was bringing to Truro citizens. Advertisements asked for "ten girls to learn dressmaking"<sup>23</sup> or "a few more Boys and Girls at the Peg Factory"<sup>24</sup>. There was less information about agricultural production and, perhaps more significantly, more advertisements selling the wares of dressmakers, bakers<sup>25</sup> and greengrocers - things which rural households were expected to produce for themselves, but which wage labourers, either through affluence or lack of time, were enabled or forced to buy.

Another prominent feature of the Sun by the 1880's was the presence of a large number of advertisements for patent medicines, beauty aids and labour-saving devices. These advertisements usually promoted their products as being of use in the solution of a broad spectrum of physical, mental, moral, or domestic household problems. Many of them were aimed at women. Most of the ads emphasized the fragility of the female constitution,

especially when subject to overwork. Dr. Pierce's Pellets, for example, were especially designed for "'worn out', run-down, debilitated school teachers, milliners, seamstresses, housekeepers and overworked women generally"<sup>25</sup>. The role of the women of the house was described in an advertisement, directed at husbands, which illustrated the chaos of a "Home Without a Mother":

The room's in disorder  
 The cat's on the table  
 The flower-stand upset, and the mischief  
 to pay;  
 And Johnny is screaming  
 As loud as he's able;  
 For nothing goes right when mamma's  
 away.  
 What a scene of discomfort and confusion home  
 would be if mamma did not return. If your  
 wife is slowly breaking down, from a combina-  
 tion of domestic cares and female disorders  
 make it your first business to restore her  
 health.<sup>26</sup>

Patent medicine advertisements such as this one emphasized the role of "mamma" in the household. Whereas advice literature in the Sun of the 1870's had generally stressed a woman's role as wife and partner, the literature and advertisements of the 1880's had assimilated the concept of "separate spheres". The separation of men's and women's duties and responsibilities was especially evident when it came to the rearing of

children.

The advice literature of the 1870's had suggested to Sun readers ways of integrating children into the family production unit. Recognizing childhood as a separate stage of life, the literature had nonetheless suggested that children were part of adult society. By the end of the 1880's, the world of the child had been increasingly separated from that of the adult. Increasingly directed at mothers rather than fathers, the advice literature published in the Sun of the 1880's and '90's had to do with practical suggestions about the physical, intellectual and moral nurturing of the child rather than with advice about the maintenance of the family as a unit. Mothers who were not as heavily involved in subsistence production had more time to spend with children (the Sun appears to have assumed that women who worked for a wage were either unmarried or illiterate). The increased survival rate for small children as general public health increased enabled bonds of emotion between parents and children to be more firmly formed, and as we have seen, family size was decreasing throughout the last half of the nineteenth century, enabling parents to devote more attention to individual children.

Children themselves spent an increasing amount of time in school. As early as 1867, the Nova Scotia



Council of Public Instruction had changed the official summer recess from "a week at seed time and a fortnight at harvest" to a three week period at the discretion of the district inspector of schools.<sup>27</sup> Children were thus separated from the rhythm of work on the farm. By 1895, children who lived in incorporated towns such as Truro were obliged to attend school if they were between the ages of 6 and 16 or as far as grade seven, although the act permitted parents to remove children over the age of thirteen "... if necessity requires him or her to work"<sup>28</sup>

What kind of education were children receiving in school? An examination of some of the textbooks used in Nova Scotia schools during the last half of the 19th century gives us some indication of the values and ideas that Truro children were bringing into their family circles.

The surface emphasis of the 19th century school curriculum was on reading, writing, and speaking English clearly, correctly, and with fluency and ease, and on being able to perform practical arithmetical calculations. To these ends, children were exposed to a range of literature by famous authors whose works they were expected to memorize and imitate, and were set a wide variety of mathematical problems to do with weight and volume, currency exchange and other

such subjects. By the 1860's a strong component of natural science had been introduced into textbooks used in Nova Scotia. Reading Book No. V of the Nova Scotia School Series included poems and articles organized under the headings "Plants", "The House We Live In" (referring to the human body), "The Animal Kingdom" and "Birds".<sup>29</sup> Children were expected to use their powers of observation to learn about their world: the scientific application of natural principles to everyday life was increasingly believed to be important.

By the 1870's, textbooks had begun to respond to the changes evident in the Nova Scotian economy. J.B. Calkin, principal of the Provincial Normal School from 1869 to 1900, began his elementary geography textbook with a lesson on "The School District or Section". The first illustration showed a schoolhouse in a rural agricultural setting, which Calkin described at length. He follows this, however, with an equally lengthy description of a fishing village, several resource-based communities, and ends by describing an urban school setting:

In other parts of our Province, again, the children have quite another kind of home. They live in a town or city. There are no fields, or hills, or brooks, or forests; but only houses and shops,

with narrow streets between them. Many of the people are merchants, whose business is to buy and sell; others are manufacturers, who make furniture, clothes, and many kinds of things; others are printers, who print books and newspapers. 30.

W.R. Mulholland, whose arithmetic text was in use in Nova Scotia schools from the 1860's to the 1890's, also reflected in his lessons the changing world for which Truro's schoolchildren were being prepared. Using local examples, Mulholland set problems which increasingly involved commercial transactions and large volumes of products. Emphasis was on the acquisition and augmentation of personal property and, contrary to what we have observed to be the case in Truro, men were the only wage earners whose income was reflected in mathematical problems. 31

By the 1880's Nova Scotia textbooks reflect the agenda of educational reformers, one of whose objects was to improve standards of family life and health by introducing new ideas to the school-age children of the community. The process by means of which this might take place is illustrated in this story from Book II of the Royal Readers series:

#### A Good Example

A poor boy once went to a ragged school, where his face was well washed. When he

returned home, the neighbours looked at him with astonishment.

They said, "That looks like Tom Rogers, and yet it can't be, for he is so clean."

Presently his mother looked at him, and seeing that his face was so clean, she fancied that her own face was dirty, and forthwith she washed it.

The father soon came home from his work, and, seeing his wife and his son so clean, he thought that his face was dirty, and so he followed their example.

Father, mother, and son being clean, the mother began to think that the room looked dirty; so she went down on her knees and scrubbed the floor clean.

A woman lived next door. Seeing so great a change in her neighbours, she thought that her face and her room were very dirty; so she, too, speedily set about cleaning them.

This story shows how two houses and their occupants were made tidy and comfortable, simply by the example of the clean face of one ragged school boy.

Children, as well as grown-up people, should always set a good example. We never know how much good may be done in that way; nor can we tell how much harm results from a bad example. <sup>32</sup>

The strategy of effecting the physical and moral improvement of society by educating its youngest members was especially in evidence in the field of health education. Public health measures were being introduced into Nova Scotia schools by way of stories in the various volumes of readers as early as the 1860's, but the public health movement did not make itself felt in the province until much later. <sup>33</sup> In 1893, in response

to legislation<sup>34</sup>, the Council of Public Instruction produced two Health Readers. The legislation had required that pupils be educated about public and personal health and hygiene, with special reference to "... the nature of alcoholic drinks and narcotics, including tobacco, and ... to their affect upon the human system."<sup>35</sup> Unlike the popular temperance literature, which tended to stress the moral dangers of alcohol, the Health Readers attempted to establish the need for temperance on a purely scientific basis. The "scientification" of what had previously been principally a moral issue, is symbolic of a change which, while it can be demonstrated in other aspects of society, is especially evident in school textbooks. Efficiency and logic had become familiar catchwords, and industrial metaphors had become common in descriptions of the operation of society as a whole. "Do you begin to see" queried the Health Reader, "that your body is a busy workshop where many kinds of work are being done?"<sup>36</sup>

The voice of the professional had become audible in Truro family circles by the late 1880's. The Sun of Oct. 2, 1889, noted the formation of a Mother's Circle in conjunction with the kindergarten of the Normal School. The meeting resolved:

That the ladies in connection with Truro kindergarten feel that mutual help and counsel may be secured in their maternal

duties by meeting with Miss Twichell once a month.

Miss Twichell, evidently the teacher of the kindergarten, addressed the group of mothers at some length in the course of the meeting.<sup>37</sup>

By the end of the 19th century, the school had assumed most of the educational functions in a child's life. When school was not in session, children were expected to play rather than spend most of their time working. "The time will soon come", commented "Observer" in the Sun of July 10, 1889:

when our schools will have their annual summer vacations. This means a few weeks of rest, recreation and change for the teacher as well as a generally pleasant time for the pupils. My advice to the pupils would be take all the fun and good times that you can get during the vacation; and then, refreshed and invigorated, go back to school.

Advertisements for toys, books and other child-oriented products stressed the importance of children to the emotional well-being of married couples. Emphasis was placed on the physical and mental well-being of the child rather than on the economic survival of the family as a whole. Children's periodicals were regularly advertised in the Colchester Sun. They carried such titles as Our Little Ones, Little Men and Women, and Babyland. The last-named was specifically aimed at children of from six

months to six years of age. It evidently assumed that women would have leisure time to spend amusing their children. "The baby", its advertisements proclaimed,

is the ruler of the household, and as is befitting, "Babyland" is the official organ of the baby's kingdom. It is a charming little monthly of 8 pages filled with pictures to please a baby's eye, and little jingles and stories to please his ear. 39

That the citizens of Truro had begun to distance themselves from their rural roots is evident from an excerpt from the New York Herald, which was published in the Sun of September 6, 1893. The article concerned the welfare of children who were vacationing in the country, implying that country life was now an unfamiliar thing. "The little ones" it directed,

should not be allowed out of doors in the very early morning, before the world is well aired and while the mists still cling closely to the earth's surface. They should come in at night before the dew begins to fall or the chill to settle upon the air. When they go out in the wet grass their feet should be protected by overshoes, and they should be warned never to sit down on the damp ground even for a moment. When the sun is at its hottest in the middle of the day, they should be kept out of its direct rays. 40

Children whose family lifestyle obliged them to be out

early and late, tending to livestock and who, in the harvest season, must be out in the heat of the day working with their families, did not enter the consideration of the New York Herald. The publication of the article in the Colchester Sun is an indication that in an urban setting children were not expected to be compelled into risking their health for the sake of their family's livelihood.

As outside interests, such as the educational system for children, or the factory for men, took over some of the utilitarian functions of family life, the protective, emotional functions of the family gained increasing prominence. This is evident even in such frivolous arenas as newspaper fiction. In "The Wife Tamer", a humorous story published in the Sun of Jan. 3, 1877, a rich widow and a young doctor marry for purely utilitarian purposes: "... he wanted a rich wife; as to her, she was anxious to leave her widow's weeds and go into society again."<sup>41</sup> "Hermia's Housecleaning", published in the Sun of May 16, 1877, is a rehash of the Martha-and-Mary bible story, with the "Martha" figure - practical, sensible Hermia - getting a husband rather than the cultured, frivolous "Mary" figure.<sup>42</sup> These stories conclude in a single issue: they are short and to the point. The serial stories of the 1880's, on the other hand, often continued for months. They



featured protracted emotional dilemmas, often predicated on a single character flaw. The standard ending presented a scene of repentance, either on a deathbed or in some sort of confrontation scene, after which the offender was welcomed back (sometimes posthumously) into the bosom of a family or a spouse. Some of these serials were placed within the context of the temperance movement, whose motivating ideals included the strengthening of family life by the removal of alcoholic temptation. The newspaper fiction published in the Sun of the 1870's tended to reflect real or at least semi-plausible situations and events. By the 1890's, stories usually centered around at least one wealthy and/or titled character, often contrasted with a poor but spiritually noble person.

In March of 1891, Truronians saw publication of a second local paper. The Truro Daily News was devoted almost exclusively to the activities and interests of the town of Truro: agricultural statistics, rural life-style articles and social news from outside of town formed only a miniscule part of its coverage. The advent of the Truro Daily News might be taken as a symbol of the narrowing focus of Truro's interest. Truronians perceived themselves to be citizens of a prosperous, attractive, modern industrial town, with excellent public utilities, the best in educational

institutions, and all other appropriate amenities. They were proud of their town, and proud of the kind of society the town contained. The spirit of boosterism had penetrated even to the local elementary schools where marks and attendance were matters of fierce competition.<sup>43</sup> The Truro of the 1870's, where work for children was as important as study, had been replaced in the 1890's by a town where the rightful, and indeed lawful employ of children was to be in school, and where the duty of parents was to procure for their offspring a sheltered and happy childhood. Women, now frequently employed outside of their homes for at least some part of their lives, had become targets of extensive advertising campaigns for products purportedly designed to ease the strain of everyday life. Men's interests were being focussed on business, politics and appropriate recreation which was to be pursued in the leisure time newly available as a result of the ability to escape from the demands of agricultural pursuits.

What had the home become, in the eyes of Truro society? Reverend J.D. Talmage, an American minister whose sermons were regularly published at length in Truro papers, painted this glowing picture of the joys of a happy home:

What care you for the hard knocks in the world as long as you have a bright domestic circle for harbour! One cheerful word in the evening tide as you come in has silenced the clamor of unpaid notes and the disappointment of poor investments. Your table may be quite frugally spread but it seems more beautiful to you than many tables that smoke with venison and blush with Burgundy. Peace meets you at the door, sits beside you at the table, lights up the evening stand, and sings in the nursery. You have seen an aged couple who for scores of years have helped each other on in life's pilgrimage going down the steep of years. Long association has made them much alike. They rejoiced at the same advent, they bent over the same cradle, they wept at the same grave. In the evening they sit quietly thinking of the past, mother knitting at the stand, father in his arm chair at the fire. 44

Safe from the pressures of business, men could be regenerated for their continued struggle with the world of work: Children, educated and disciplined by professionals in the outside world, could find love and nurture abundantly provided by a woman whose maternal duties were themselves being increasingly focussed and professionalized. An era of increasing specialization in the social and economic spheres, the members of families were being scientifically prepared for their special functions:

## Footnotes - Chapter 5

<sup>1</sup>For a discussion of how and why this took place, see Christopher Lasch, Haven in a Heartless World; The Family Besieged, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1979), especially chapter 1, "Social Pathologists and the Socialization of Reproduction".

<sup>2</sup>Terry White, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>The Normal School opened its doors in 1857; the School of Agriculture, at first a part of the Normal School, became a separate establishment in 1888.

<sup>4</sup>Truro served as the market town for a sizeable area, including Northern Colchester and Eastern Halifax Counties. The Truro Weekly News, which began publication in 1877, published social news and business advertisements for much of Eastern Nova Scotia.

<sup>5</sup>Including the Stanfield Woolen Mill, which is still a major employer in Truro.

<sup>6</sup>For the situation in Amherst see Nolan Reilly, "The Origins of the Amherst General Strike", (unpublished paper presented at CHA, June 1977).

<sup>7</sup>Paul Rutherford, A Victorian Authority: the daily press in late nineteenth-century Canada, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 156.

<sup>8</sup>Gertrude E.N. Pratt, A Survey and Listing of Nova Scotia Newspapers, 1752-1957, (Halifax: Dalhousie University School of Library Service, 1979), pp. 103-104.

<sup>9</sup>See Colchester Sun, Feb. 7, 1877, p. 2, col. 2, "The American Last Factory", and July 18, 1877, p. 2, col. 4, "Goodwillie's Sawmill".

<sup>10</sup>Sun, July 18, 1877, p. 2, col. 2; Aug. 1, 1877, p. 2, col. 2-3; Aug. 29, 1877, p. 2, col. 2-3; Sept. 5, 1877, p. 2, col. 2.

<sup>11</sup>Sun, July 18, 1877, p. 2, col. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Sun, Feb. 6, 1874, p. 4, col. 1. (reprinted from Rural New Yorker, n.d.)

<sup>13</sup> Sun, Oct. 17, 1877, p. 1, col. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Sun, Jan. 30, 1878, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Sun, Jan. 24, 1877, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Sun, April 3, 1878, p. 2, col. 8; June 27, 1888, p. 2, col. 8.

<sup>18</sup> Sun, Nov. 7, 1877, p. 3, col. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Sun, Jan. 3, 1877, p. 3, col. 2; May 2, 1877, p. 3, col. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Sun, Nov. 21, 1877, p. 3, col. 3; Dec. 5, 1877, p. 3, col. 3; Feb. 13, 1878, p. 3, col. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Sun, Oct. 25, 1877, p. 3, col. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Sun, Jan. 3, 1877, p. 1, col. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Sun, May 9, 1888, p. 3, col. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 4, col. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Sun, Sept. 7, 1887, p. 4, col. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Sun, Dec. 17, 1890, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Nova Scotia, Journal of Education, July 1864, p. 125.

<sup>28</sup> Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1895, cl sect. 84.

<sup>29</sup> Nova Scotia School Series, Reading Book 3, (Halifax: A. and W. Mackinley, 1866), title page.

<sup>30</sup> J.B. Calkin, The World: an introductory Geography, (Halifax: A. and W. MacKinley, 1876), pp. 7-8.

<sup>31</sup> W.H. Mulholland, The Elementary Arithmetic (4th Ed), (Halifax: A. and W. MacKinley, 1873).

<sup>32</sup> Royal Reader Book 2, (Halifax: A. and W. MacKinley, 1881), pp. 136-137.

<sup>33</sup> For a reference to the situation in Ontario see Neil Sutherland, "To Create a Strong and Healthy Race: School Children in The Public Health Movement, 1880-1914" in S.E.D. Shortt, Medicine in Canadian Society: Historical Perspectives, (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1981).

<sup>34</sup> Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1892, Chapter 54, "An Act to Provide for the More Thorough Study in the Public Schools of the Effects of Alcoholic Drinks on the Human System".

<sup>35</sup> Health Reader 1, (Halifax: T.C. Allen and Co., 1893), p. x.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>37</sup> Sun, Oct. 2, 1889, p. 2, col. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Sun, July 10, 1889, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Sun, Sept. 5, 1888, p. 2, col. 6.

<sup>40</sup> Sun, Sept. 6, 1893, p. 3, col. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Sun, Jan. 3, 1877, p. 1, col. 1-3.

<sup>42</sup> Sun, May 16, 1874, p. 1, col. 3-4.

<sup>43</sup> Push (op. cit) noted perfect attendance records, success in spelling bees and the success of various schools in selling copies of the periodicals.

<sup>44</sup> J.R. Talmage, "Samson's Lost Strength" in Sun, Oct. 2, 1889, p. 1, col. 1-4.

## CONCLUSION

What do we now know about Truro's families and how they lived their lives in the closing years of the 19th century? We have discovered that, if Truro is a representative case, the industrialization process had significant social ramifications, as well as the more obvious economic ramifications, for the people of Nova Scotia. The timing of important demographic events, such as marriage and the birth of children, had always been tied to the ability of men to provide economic support for the women they married and the children they fathered: the increased availability of a steady wage made it possible for men to become economically independent at an earlier age than had been possible in a rural economy. Children, on the other hand, had become an investment in the future rather than an asset in the present: it became an advantage to have fewer children and to nurture them more carefully. Women's lives had become increasingly polarized: the world of waged work had become more readily available to them, but the pressure to immerse themselves in the separate sphere of the domestic world had strengthened as well.

What did all this mean for families? We can see a pattern of change in which the family, from being as much

a utilitarian economic unit as a sentimental institution, had, by the end of the 19th century been transformed into a specialized unit to emotionally and morally replenish its members for the struggle with the outside world. We can recognize, however, that the boundaries of family life, in Truro at least, were not as narrow as a survey of any one year's census abstracts might indicate.

Strategies for the support and maintenance of kin varied with the circumstances in which families found themselves. The attraction of industrial centres like Truro for migrant families and individuals meant that family ties were made tenuous by distance: as those migrants made roots in their new homes, expanding generations reproduced the familiar family network in their own community.

The response of Truro families to the changes in their world reflected, in their timing, the peculiarities of the regional experience. The nature of those responses, however, was shaped by a knowledge of how people elsewhere had dealt with similar social and economic changes. The people of Truro and other industrializing Nova Scotia communities did not have to create an industrial culture from scratch. Newspapers, novels, educational material and even sermons, imported either directly or in form from American and British sources, articulated the ideology of science and industry



as it applied to community and family life--and they had begun to appear in Nova Scotia long before the industrial development of the province had commenced.

In this thesis we have addressed questions about family life as they apply specifically to the people of Truro. We might, by extrapolation, apply our findings to communities such as Amherst, Pictou, Moncton and other Maritime communities which were caught up in the wave of industrial development that characterized the region's economy in the 1880's and '90's. There are, however, a number of questions which cannot be addressed here. If we are to understand the way our regional character has been created, we must not depend exclusively on urban industrial centers for our understanding of family and community life. The rural communities which, in the 19th century, contained the majority of the region's population, also responded to the stimulus of economic and social change. They, too, read the American papers: their relatives, writing from Halifax, Boston and Toronto, told of the ways in which their lives had changed as the result of being exposed to industrial ideology and the urban lifestyle. Communities like the Truro of the 1880's and '90's marked the boundaries along which the urban and the rural lifestyles met. Surrounded by agricultural communities, Truro was full of people who had come from the farm to

work in the city. These people did not come to town with only the clothes they stood up in: they brought cultural baggage which furnished their lives with expectations and duties.

We have talked in this thesis about the cycles of family life, and the importance of examining families over time rather than at static points in their lives. Ironically, the available source material has allowed us to examine the people of Truro only during the rise of industry in the region and not during its decline. If family members called upon each other during times of social and economic crisis, we might expect a strengthening of family ties as the region's economy declined. Conversely, as the social welfare system increasingly assumed what had previously been family responsibilities, the strength of family ties might be expected to diminish. Here in the Maritimes, it is said, kinship networks have remained strong: it is supposed to be one of our regional characteristics. Examining the roots of this strong sense of family, and its social and economic function in the past as well as the present, might give us some index with which to measure the development of the invisible economy which is sometimes labelled "subsistence", "semi-proletarianized"<sup>1</sup> or occupationally plural<sup>2</sup>, but which, by any name, has to do with the business of making a life and living in the

Maritimes.

## Footnotes -Conclusion

<sup>1</sup> See R. James Sacouman, "Underdevelopment and the Structural origins of Antigonish Co-operative Movements in Eastern Nova Scotia", in Acadiensis, vol. 7, #1, 1977.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. L.D. McCann of Mount Allison University's geography department, has used the phrase "occupational pluralism" in several as-yet unpublished papers.

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