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The Irish Experience in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Saint John, New Brunswick, and St.
John's, Newfoundland: A Comparative Analysis

By
Doyle Lahey

A Thesis Submitted to
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts (History)

June, 2010, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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ISBN: 978-0-494-68822-9
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ISBN: 978-0-494-68822-9

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■ ■ ■
Canada

Every Morning, My Young Lad,¹

Every morning, my young lad,
pray guidance from the Trinity.
Wash well, and take your book
in clean hands without a mark.

Study each line clearly, wisely,
get things often off by heart
- a short lesson, a sharp mind.
Study every word, my child.

Don't stare around at everyone.
Attend to your assigned work.
Root it deeply in your head.
Stay at it, though the fight is hard.

On ample learning's mighty ocean
be, my boy, a good sailor.
Be a wise sage if you can
answering out in front of all.

Take a copious draught each day
from wisdom's noble spring.
It won't taste sour in your mouth.
Knowledge is a hold on bliss.

¹ Poem from: *An Duanaire, 1600-1900 : Poems of the Dispossessed* (Mountrath, Portlaoise, Ireland : Dolmen Press, 1981), 18-19.

The Irish Experience in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Saint John, New Brunswick, and St.
John's, Newfoundland: A Comparative Analysis

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My girlfriend Claire deserves special recognition. She had to endure through my high levels of stress and anxiety while I was writing this thesis. Her confidence in my abilities never wavered and I cannot thank her enough for all the happiness that she has brought into my life, and for picking me up when I was down.

Last, but certainly not least, are my Father and Mother. It would be impossible, and indeed a lengthy endeavor, to attempt to list all the ways in which they have both helped me throughout my academic career. Their love and encouragement saw me through my toughest days, while their financial assistance helped me maintain a healthy body mass index. *Go raibh mile maith agat agus nár laga Dia thú.*

ABSTRACT

The Irish Experience in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Saint John, New Brunswick, and St. John's, Newfoundland: A Comparative Analysis

By Doyle Lahey

June 1, 2010

Many historians of the Irish experience in Canada have argued that the Irish migrants in British North America originated primarily from Ulster, settled overwhelmingly in rural regions where they became pioneering farmers, and arrived well before the Great Irish Famine (1845 and 1850). This widely accepted view of the Irish migrant in British North America does not, however, account for the variety of Irish experiences across the country. As a corrective, this thesis examines and compares the Pre-Famine urban Irish experiences of Halifax, Nova Scotia, Saint John, New Brunswick, and St. John's, Newfoundland between 1750 and 1850, and uses the comparative analysis method in order to highlight the variations in Irish experiences within the Atlantic Region of Canada. Through the comparative approach, this study demonstrates how the Irish experience in these three Atlantic Canadian cities was conditioned by three broad factors: the source area of Irish migration; the nature of the host communities in which they settled; and the time in which they arrived to their new host environment.

PREFACE

When I started my research for this thesis I initially began with the following research question: what was the Irish experience of Atlantic Canada? Indeed, the question was very broad, so I had elected to focus on the following sub questions that I had hoped would help me answer my central research question: what were the primary settlement patterns of Irish migrants to Atlantic Canada? What were the origins of Irish migrants? When did they arrive to their new host environments? In investigating these questions it became clear to me that, although there were similarities between the Irish in Atlantic Canada, there was no unified Irish experience. Their experiences varied between each province.

In order to highlight this variety of Irish experience, I first chose to compare the Irish in Halifax and Saint John. The Irish in both of these cities have received a fair amount of scholarly attention and historians Peter Toner and Terrence Punch had already fielded some of the questions that I had posed. By undertaking a comparison of the two cities, I sought to illuminate the variations in Irish experience in each location. Once I had finished my examination and comparison of Halifax and St. John, I was directed towards the Irish in Newfoundland, and specifically St. John's, a city that—although it had a large Irish population—had not garnered the same amount of scholarly attention as had the Irish in other cities. I, therefore, decided to include St.

John's in my thesis to provide a study that focused directly on the Irish in that city while also offering a further comparison with Halifax and Saint John.¹

Each city that I had chosen for my thesis had a large number of Irish migrants, but this was not an attempt to suggest that the Irish were primarily an urban people or that they had not settled outside these Atlantic Canadian cities. Indeed, there were many Irish migrants who settled in the rural regions of Atlantic Canada, and there are a number of secondary sources available that confirm their presence and adaptation to rural life.² But I selected the urban experience, and these three cities in particular, because the large number and high visibility of the Irish in these communalities' did not conform to the widely accepted view that the Irish in British North America were a predominantly rural people - an argument put forward by many influential Canadian historians of the Irish Diaspora. In the pages that follow, the reader will find a comparative study of the Irish experiences of Halifax, Saint John, and St. John's Newfoundland between 1750 and 1850. Halifax and Saint John are the first two communities that are compared, followed by a case study of the Irish in St. John's, and then a conclusion that contrasts all three cities. In addition, while the thesis does engage with primary documents, particularly in the St. John's chapter, it focuses more

¹ Notably absent from this thesis is an examination the Irish experience of Prince Edward Island. I had excluded P.E.I. because there are not enough secondary resources focusing on the Irish that I could have used to sufficiently compare the Irish experience of the island with the other three provinces. This is not to state, however, that studies of the Irish experience in P.E.I. do not exist. For the most comprehensive examination of the Irish in P.E.I., the reader should consult: Brendan O'Grady, *Islanders and Exiles: The Irish Settlers of Prince Edward Island* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004).

² For more information of the Irish in rural Atlantic Canada, see: Ibid., William A. Spray, "The Irish in Miramichi," in *New Ireland Remembered: Historical Essays on the Irish in New Brunswick* ed. Peter M. Toner (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1988), 55-62; John Mannion, *Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada: A Study of Cultural Transfer and Adaptation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); Stephen J. Hornsby, *An Historical Geography of Cape Breton Island in the Nineteenth Century* (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1988); Willeen Keough, *The Slender Thread: Irish Women on the Southern Avalon, 1750-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); A.A. MacKenzie, *The Irish in Cape Breton* (Wreck Cove: Breton Books, 1999); Scott W. See, "Mickey's and Demons vs. Bigots and Boobies : The Woodstock Riot of 1847," *Acadiensis* Vol. XXI No. 1 (1991): 110-31.

on secondary resources, and is essentially an investigation into the historiography of the Irish Diaspora in British North America.

Doyle Lahey, June 17, 2010
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Introduction

One of the most important and enduring debates about the Irish Diaspora in the English speaking world, particularly in North America, is over where the Irish had the greatest impact: the urban or rural setting. The debate began around the early 1980s, but the proposition that the Irish were primarily urban dwellers began with the publication of Oscar Handlin's *Boston's Immigrants: A Study in Acculturation* in 1941. Although Handlin's book does not focus directly on the Irish, or provide any insight or comparison to other Irish experiences in America, it was still a powerful piece of work at the time of its publication. According to J.J. Lee, it was "probably the single most influential study of the Irish experience in nineteenth century America."³ In his book, Handlin focused primarily on the Irish who left Ireland during the Famine period between 1845 and 1851, and he depicted Irish immigrants in Boston as unskilled Roman Catholic paupers who were economically disadvantaged urban dwellers.⁴

Handlin's study of the Irish in Boston influenced succeeding generations of Irish American historians, whose work focused almost exclusively on the urban Irish American experience. In 1963, William V. Shannon argued in *The American Irish* that the Irish experience in America was founded on a paradox: "The Irish were a rural

³ J.J. Lee, "Changing Contours of the Historiography of Irish America," *Canadian Issues* (2005): 35. For more information on the historiography of the Irish in America, see: Kevin Kenny, "Twenty Years of Irish-American Historiography," *Journal of American Ethnic History* Vol. 28, No. 4 (2009): 67-75.

⁴ As calculated by Handlin, "Irish transient paupers outnumbered the sum of all others, of whatever status or nationality." Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants: A Study in Acculturation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), 118.

people in Ireland and became a city people in the United States.”⁵ Shannon’s rationale for why these rural Irish peasants became city folk in the United States was twofold: they had no money to move inland, and they had practiced a different form of agriculture that existed in America: “farming on the frontier was radically different from tilling the small plots of intensively cultivated ground in the old country.”⁶ Moreover, Shannon argued that the memory of the Famine scarred most Irish immigrants from ever undertaking agriculture in the United States.

In 1976, Lawrence J. McCaffrey, scholar of the Irish Diaspora, in *The Irish Diaspora in America*, also asked why Irish immigrants chose to settle in cities when they themselves were raised in a rural environment. McCaffrey concurred with Shannon’s view that most Irish immigrants did not have enough money to pay for a voyage west into the American frontier when they arrived upon the docks of a city like New York or Boston. Yet McCaffrey also highlighted their lack of skill, which he deemed to be “far more important than a shortage of funds in determining the Irish-Americans’ decision to become city dwellers.” McCaffrey added that Irish peasants “were among the most inefficient farmers in Europe and were not equipped for life in rural America.”⁷ If lack of skill and money were not enough, McCaffrey also argued that the Irish were not psychologically prepared for life in rural America and described them as a people who “were community-minded, gregarious by nature, fond of visiting and talking. In Ireland small farms were so close together that they really

⁵ William V. Shannon, *The American Irish* (New York: MacMillan, 1963), 27.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Diaspora in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 63.

constituted peasant villages.”⁸ Hence, the Irish chose densely settled urban America over dispersed and sparsely settled rural America.

Kerby Miller’s *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* published in 1985 is a *tour de force* that became the standard text for students and scholars of the Irish Diaspora. Historian of the Irish in the United States, Kevin Kenny, declared that Miller’s book was “probably the most influential work on Irish American history ever written.”⁹ Indeed, to date no other book has rivaled its scope or in-depth research that draws on a wide array of secondary resources and over five thousand letters from Irish emigrants. The most intriguing aspect of Miller’s *Emigrants and Exiles* is his reasoning for why Irish Catholic immigrants continued to regard their emigration to North America, especially to the United States, as exile and not as a voluntary movement to improve their livelihood. Miller argued that even though all immigrants to the United States experienced isolation, the Irish exile motif was different because it “sprang from sources more profound than the poverty and prejudice encountered abroad....the concept itself reflected not the concrete realities of most emigrant’s experiences, but a distinctive Irish Catholic worldview rooted deeply in Irish history and culture.”¹⁰ For Miller, the Irish Catholic worldview originated in pre-Conquest Gaelic Ireland, which was rooted in “[s]ubsequent historical circumstances of rebellion and defeat, despoliation and impoverishment, [that] served to ratify and magnify aspects of prequest Irish culture which made

⁸ Ibid., 65.

⁹ Kevin Kenny, “Twenty Years of Irish-American Historiography,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* Vol. 28, No. 4 (2009): 67.

¹⁰ Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 7.

the exile motif seem more poignant and appropriate.”¹¹ It was this Irish Catholic worldview that prevented Irish Catholic immigrants from making a successful transition from Ireland to the United States because their cultural inheritance (characterized by communalism, dependence, and fatalism) did not prepare them for the capitalistic society based on materialistic achievement. This was particularly true for the Famine Irish, who overwhelmingly made the decision to stay in the cities in which they arrived rather than pushing west to rural America.

The characterization of Irish Catholics as an urban centred ethnic group, more likely to become unskilled labourers than farmers, also persisted in the Canadian historical literature on the Irish experience in British North America. H. Clare Pentland’s *Labour and Capital in Canada 1650-1860* published in 1960, separated Irish Catholic immigrants from Irish Protestants (whom he designates as Ulstermen) in order to highlight the differences between the two groups and the reasons for their distinctive settlement patterns. For Pentland, the Ulstermen, specifically those of Scottish-Presbyterian descent, were intelligent, industrious, and ambitious individuals, who increasingly chose British North America over the United States especially after 1815 because of cheaper passage rates and an abundance of land available for cultivation in Upper Canada. Initially, Ulster immigrants served as labourers in British North America, but ultimately pushed into the rural sector where they became pioneering farmers. Pentland characterized the Ulster immigrant as an individual that “was...determined as any to establish himself as an independent farmer or artisan. He

¹¹ Ibid., 7-8.

worked to accumulate funds for this purpose and passed rather quickly out of the status of labourer. When the Ulsterman acquired a farm, as most did, he progressed well.”¹²

Pentland’s portrayal of Irish Catholic immigrants was in marked contrast. Whereas Ulstermen and women were hard working and determined people exposed to the industrial city of Belfast, Irish Catholics were a primitive people who were raised in a socially and politically deprived environment, which according to Pentland, “prevented their developing industrial skill of discipline and robbed them of morale and enterprise.”¹³ They had no ambition or skill, and once they arrived in British North America, Irish Catholic immigrants were forced to settle in urban squalor. Pentland stated that they “took all the heavy rough work at whatever wages they could get. They crowded into bad districts, provided a disproportionate share of those requiring public relief, and forced the beginnings of sanitary legislation upon the municipalities in which they lived. They were intemperate and found no objection to public exhibition of the fact. They disputed readily, and resorted to violence easily.”¹⁴ Pentland’s treatment of Irish Catholic immigrants is crude, but reflects the depiction of Irish Catholic immigrants by American scholars, as deprived, socially inept, individuals who (because of their unique psyche, lack of sufficient agricultural knowledge and money) were more inclined to settle in an urban setting.

¹² H.C. Pentland, *Labour and Capital in Canada 1650-1860*, ed. P. Phillips (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1960), 101.

¹³ Ibid., 96.

¹⁴ Ibid., 105. Pentland does not designate which Canadian cities he is addressing in this statement.

Kenneth Duncan's influential 1965 article on Famine Irish migration to Canada West did not treat Irish Catholic immigrants as superficially as Pentland, but his explanation for their choice of urban over rural settlement undoubtedly mimics both Pentland and American scholars of the Irish Diaspora. For example, Duncan argued that the form of agriculture that was practiced in Ireland was of little or no use in British North America: "The Irish peasant tilled his tiny plot with a spade, fertilized it with lime, and planted his seed potatoes by hand, practicing a kind of garden culture requiring almost none of the skills that would have made him a useful farm labourer in Canada."¹⁵ Furthermore, few farmers in British North America would hire Famine Irish immigrants because they were concerned that they might infect his or her family with disease. For Duncan, this prejudice coupled with the lack of knowledge of Canadian farming techniques lead Irish Catholics to shun rural life and huddle in cities where they became a distinctive urban-Irish proletariat.

Donald Harmen Akenson, a polemical Canadian scholar of the Irish Diaspora and author of several influential articles and books on Irish history,¹⁶ vehemently rejected and attacked this image of the Irish in North America, beginning with his important article, "Ontario: Whatever Happened to the Irish?" In this article, Akenson used a detailed analysis of nineteenth century Canadian census data to argue that Irish

¹⁵ Kenneth Duncan, "Irish Famine Immigration and the Social Structure of Canada West," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, II (1965): 25.

¹⁶ Donald H. Akenson, "Ontario: Whatever Happened to the Irish?" in *Canadian Papers in Rural History* ed. Donald Harmen Akenson (Gananoque: Langdale Press, 1982), 204-256; *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984); "Data: What is Known about the Irish in North America," in *The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada* ed. Robert O'Driscoll and Lorna Reynolds, Vol. I (Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada, 1988), 15-25; "The Historiography of the Irish in the United States," in *The Irish in the New Communities* ed. Patrick O'Sullivan (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), 99-127; "An Agnostic View of the Historiography of the Irish-Americans," *Labour/Le Travail* No. 14 (1984), 123-159. *Being Had: Historians, Evidence, and the Irish in North America* (Port Credit: P.D. Meany, 1985).

Catholic and Protestant immigrants in Canada overwhelmingly settled in rural rather than urban areas, and that cultural inheritance did not encumber Irish Catholics from making a successful transition from Ireland to North America. Instead, Akenson suggested that it was the conditions that existed in North America that had the greatest impact on Irish immigrants, with regard to their adjustment and adaptation.¹⁷ Akenson further developed his hypothesis with his first major publication on the Irish in British North America, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History* (1984). In this study, Akenson set out to provide concrete examples of how conditions in Ontario, or, more specifically, Leeds and Lansdowne townships, shaped Irish emigrant's transition to the New World. He pointed out that the Anglican Church of Ontario had strong ties with the Church of Ireland that facilitated an easier adjustment for Irish Protestants to the two Ontario townships. Furthermore, both Leeds and Lansdowne provided an economic environment that was amenable to Irish immigrants of both churches. In fact, some Irish Catholic landowners accumulated more wealth than Irish Protestants. In addition, the educational system in Ontario was similar to the system that existed in Ireland. All of which, Akenson believed, facilitated a relatively smooth transition for the majority of Irish immigrants—both Catholics and Protestant—to Ontario.¹⁸

Akenson examined the implications of his findings for the historiography of the Irish in North America in *Being Had: Historians, Evidence, and the Irish in North America* (1985). A work that provided an exhaustive critique of Irish migration

¹⁷ Donald H. Akenson, "Ontario: Whatever Happened to the Irish?" in *Canadian Papers in Rural History* ed. Donald Harman Akenson (Gananoque: Langdale Press, 1982), 204-256. The reader should also consult: A. Gordon Darroch and Michael D. Ornstein, "Ethnicity and Occupational Structure in Canada in 1871: the Vertical Mosaic in Historical Perspective," *Canadian Historical Review* Vol. LXI No. 3 (1980): 305-33.

¹⁸ David A. Wilson provided an excellent critique of Akenson's *The Irish in Ontario* in: David A. Wilson, "The Irish in North America: New Perspectives," *Acadiensis* Vol. XVIII No. 1 (1988): 203-206.

studies in North America, *Being Had* exposed the many failures of scholars of the Irish Diaspora, such as their lack of substantive evidence to support their claims, their tendency to offer vast generalizations, and what he saw as their lack of critical insight. Akenson stated that “historians who have dealt with the Irish in North America have been lax in their standards of evidence and have framed their basic story of the Irish in the United States and in central Canada on a remarkable paucity of solid evidence and upon a gross misreading of what evidence they actually have found.”¹⁹ Additionally, he argued that scholars of the Irish Diaspora in America offered an inaccurate depiction of the Irish experience in that country, and the assumption that the Irish in America were predominately Roman Catholics who had overwhelmingly settled in the urban cities along the North Atlantic coast in the years following the Famine was incorrect. Akenson substantiated his claim with his findings on the Irish in Ontario along with his own research on American census data. He emphasized that the American census data does not provide the ethnicity or religious orientation of any immigrant that entered America, so it would be impossible to claim that Irish Catholics settled as a majority in any particular setting. Additionally, the fact that the Irish in British North America were capable of becoming successful rural farmers dispelled the argument that Irish Catholics were city dwellers who were incapable of adapting to the type of agriculture practiced in America, since the Irish who immigrated to the United States were not very different from those who chose to settle in British North America.

¹⁹ Donald Harmen Akenson, *Being Had: Historians, Evidence, and the Irish in North America* (Port Credit: P.D. Meany, 1985), 189.

In order to improve their scholarly work on the Irish experience, Akenson recommended that American historians shift their focus from the period between 1845 and 1914 and examine, instead, the period between 1815, when the Napoleonic Wars ended and mass Irish migration began to 1880, when the Irish in the United States were well established. Furthermore, Akenson argued that there should be more attention paid to Irish Protestant immigrants and their position within the Irish immigrant experience of America in order to reflect the broader pattern of Irish experience.

It would be a difficult task to assess the impact of Akenson's work on the historiography of the Irish in North America, especially since most of the work done on the Irish in the United States since the publication of *Being Had* continue to concentrate Irish Catholic immigrants in urban settings.²⁰ There is no doubt, however, that Akenson's assertions about the Irish in Ontario and North America have changed the field of ethnic and immigration studies in Canada, particularly with regard to the Irish. Historians and other scholars alike now pay close attention to the rural Irish experience in several different geographic locations throughout Canada, and are quick to stress that the Irish experience in Canada was different from that of the United States.

²⁰ A comprehensive bibliography of all the works published after *Being Had* would require an entire text. Here are a few selected examples that detail the urban Irish experience in the United States: Michael A. Gordon, *The Orange Riots, Irish Political Violence in New York City, 1870-1871* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Thomas O'Connor, *The Boston Irish: A Political History* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995); *The New York Irish* ed. Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996); Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish* (New York: Longman, 2000); Linda Dowling Almedia, *Irish Immigrants in New York City, 1945-1995* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Timothy J. Meagher, *Inventing Irish America: Generation, Class, and Ethnic Identity in a New England City, 1880-1928* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001); Mary C. Kelly, *The Shamrock and the Lily: The New York Irish and the Creation of a Transatlantic Identity, 1845-1921* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

Only a few years after Akenson published his ground breaking work on the Irish in North America, Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth produced the first academic study of Irish emigration to Canada, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links, & Letters* (1990). In the opening paragraphs of their introduction, Smyth and Houston argued that the primary period of Irish immigration to Canada was in the nineteenth century, and of these Irish immigrants, “[f]ewer than half of them were Catholic, and the majority were Protestant: for both groups rural life was the norm.”²¹ They also stated that the Irish experience in Canada “is not the sort of story that fits the widely held stereotype of the Irish emigrant as a victim, uprooted by the Great Famine and immobilized in urban ghettos. Nor does it fit the earlier and alternate, frontier-America stereotype of Scots-Irish Presbyterian pioneers.”²² Indeed, it is evident throughout the opening comments of Houston and Smyth’s book that Akenson’s arguments about the Irish in North America had influenced their understanding of the Irish experience in Canada.

Another important study that was influenced by Akenson’s views on the Irish in Canada was Bruce Elliott’s 1988 study *Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach*. Elliot’s approach to the study of Irish migration and settlement patterns in Canada deviated from Akenson’s focus on aggregate census data regarding religion and ethnicity. In order to discover the geographical and social origins of immigrants, along with the nature, direction, and volume of their subsequent migration, Elliot argued that scholars of the Irish Diaspora needed to examine each immigrant

²¹ Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links, & Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 4.

²² *Ibid.*, 4-5.

individually and not treat them as a homogenous group, and that “only through this type of study...can [we] begin to answer certain important questions about the nature of immigration and settlement and about the economic and societal consequences on both sides of the Atlantic of the massive nineteenth-century displacement of Irish population.”²³ Elliot’s *Irish Migrants in the Canadas* traced the movement of 775 Irish Protestants from Northern Tipperary (his specific study area measures a total distance of thirty by forty miles) to rural Ontario between the period of 1818 and 1855. In his examination of these 775 Irish Protestants, Elliott discovered that their migration to Canada was “a classic example of chain migration based upon kinship,”²⁴ and that the majority of them remained in rural settlements, even though there was significant pull to live in an urban setting. Thus, Elliot’s work, although employing a different methodology, reinforced Akenson’s arguments.

As a consequence of the research of Akenson, Houston and Smyth and Elliot, it has become clear that the Irish experience in Canada was markedly different from the United States, and that a greater number of Irish migrants who left Ireland for British North America chose to settle in rural areas. Indeed, Canadian historians continue to encourage scholars to undertake studies of the Irish in rural Canada, over examinations of the Irish who settled in the urban areas. Recently, Mark McGowan, historian of the Irish in Toronto, stated that there were numerous studies that had focused on the Irish in the British North American urban centres of St. John’s, Halifax, Saint John, Quebec, Montreal, Kingston, Ottawa, Toronto, and Hamilton, but

²³ Bruce S. Elliott, *Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988), 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 114.

echoing Akenson, he argued that most Canadians tend to forget that a significant percentage of the Irish who arrived to Canada in the nineteenth century became rural dwellers, not urban residents. Therefore, according to McGowan, our attention should shift to those areas.²⁵

Nevertheless, despite McGowan's assertions, there are very few studies that examine the urban Irish experience of British North American cities, and although a significant portion of Irish immigrants did settle in rural areas, there was also a noteworthy number of Irish who chose urban communities, particularly those who arrived during the Famine years. Using his own findings on the Irish in Quebec, along with the work on the Irish in New Brunswick by Peter Toner and Michael Katz on Hamilton, Robert J. Grace argued that unlike the rest of Canada (which he argues is a term used loosely by scholars, and which almost always refers to Ontario), the Irish who arrived to the province of Quebec during the period of Famine Irish migration overwhelmingly chose to settle in Montreal and Quebec City.²⁶ Grace pointed out that

²⁵ Mark McGowan, "Charting the Future of Irish Studies," <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/033001/f2/033001-1402.9-e.pdf>. McGowan does not provide a list or bibliography that details the works that he addressed in his statement. It should be noted that there are very few studies that examine the urban Irish experience of St. John's, Montreal and Kingston. Here is a list of known works that focus exclusively on the Irish in each city: Carolyn Lambert, "Far From the Homes of Their Fathers: Irish Catholics in St. John's, Newfoundland 1840-86" (PhD diss., Memorial University, 2010); "Tho' changed be your climate, unchanged be your hearts: Support for Irish Causes in St. John's, Newfoundland, 1840-86," *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* Vol. 34, No. 2, (2008): 47-55; Patricia A. Thornton and Sherry Olson, "The Tidal Wave of Irish Immigration to Montreal and Its Demographic Consequences," *Shared Spaces/Partage de l'espace*, 13 (November 1993): 1-30; "The Challenge of the Irish Catholic Community of Nineteenth Century Montreal," *Social History/Histoire Sociale* Vol. 35 No. 70 (2002): 332-362; D.S. Cross, "The Irish in Montreal 1867-1896," (M.A. Thesis: McGill University, 1969); James Jackson, "The Radicalization of the Montreal Irish: The Role of the Vindicator," *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1, Irish-Canadian Connections / Les liens irlandais-canadiens (Spring, 2005), pp. 90-97; Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

²⁶ Robert J. Grace, "From Ireland to Canada: An Historiographical Overview of the Major Issues," *The Immigration and Ethnic History Newsletter* Vol. 34, No. 2 (2004): 8. Grace further developed his views on the historiography of the Irish in Canada in: "A Demographic and Social Profile of Quebec City's Irish Populations, 1842-1861," *Journal of American Ethnic History* Vol. 23, Issue 1, (2003): 55-84. The reader should also consult: Robert J. Grace, *The Irish in Quebec: An Introduction to the Historiography* (Québec : Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1993).

in 1871, in Quebec, “nearly half of the Irish immigrants lived in the two cities of Quebec and Montreal, and the Irish-born in Canada’s Catholic province display an urban residency rate nearly three times that of the general population.”²⁷ Furthermore, unlike Akenson, Grace contends that the majority of Irish immigrants in Canada were Protestant by pointing out that immigration agents never recorded the religion of Irish immigrants, and that only origin of birth is provided in the census records of 1842, 1852 and 1861.²⁸ Overall, Grace believes that Canadian scholars have not provided an accurate portrayal of the Irish experience in Canada because their work does not take in account how Irish experiences varied between each region of British North America and that in some of those regions, particularly Quebec, Irish migrants did choose urban over rural settlement.

The scholarly work published on the Irish in Atlantic Canada in the pre-Famine period supports Grace’s argument that Canadian Irish settlement patterns varied according to region. These scholars have provided evidence that suggests that most Irish settlers significantly preferred Atlantic Canada’s port cities and were predominately adherents to Roman Catholicism. In addition, this research demonstrates that most left from ports in the south and south east of Ireland.

Genealogist and scholar of the Irish in Nova Scotia, Terrence Punch, has produced a number of articles that examine the Irish experience of Halifax and the peculiar nature of Irish migration to that city.²⁹ He found that unlike other countries

²⁷ Robert J. Grace, “From Ireland to Canada: An Historiographical Overview of the Major Issues,” *The Immigration and Ethnic History Newsletter* Vol. 34, No. 2 (2004): 8

²⁸ Ibid., 1.

²⁹ Terrence M. Punch, “The Irish Catholic, Halifax’s First Minority Group,” *The Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly* X, 1 (1980): 23-39; *Irish Halifax: The Immigrant Generation, 1815-1859* (Halifax: International Education Centre, Saint

that received a large number of Irish migrants directly from Ireland, Halifax never witnessed a significant influx of Irish immigrants who intentionally left Ireland to settle in the region. During the mid to late eighteenth century, most Irish who settled in Nova Scotia were indentured servants from Newfoundland who left the island to escape the harsh working conditions of the summer fishery. Other Irish that arrived to Halifax were either soldiers in the British army that were stationed at the Halifax Citadel or servants who traveled with their English masters to their new dwellings.³⁰ It was not until the Napoleonic Wars ended in 1815 that a significant number of Irish arrived to Nova Scotia directly from Irish ports.³¹ Through an examination of church records, census data, newspaper articles, and printed primary resources, Punch has argued that of all the Irish who arrived to Nova Scotia between the mid eighteenth and nineteenth century, a strong majority of them were Roman Catholics from the southern counties of Ireland, including Wexford, Waterford, Cork, and Tipperary. Furthermore, their preferred area of settlement was the port city of Halifax, where there was an abundance of work available for new arrivals. According to Punch, some of the labour-intensive jobs to which the Irish in Halifax gravitated to were the “extensive construction of wharves, warehouses and related buildings; the construction, from 1826 into the 1830s of the Shubenacadie Canal...work on a new fortification on Citadel Hill...The quarrying, conveying and placing of stone, the

Mary's University, 1981); “Gentle as the Snow on a Rooftop: The Irish in Nova Scotia to 1830,” in *The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada* ed. Robert O’Driscoll and Lorna Reynolds (Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada, 1988), 215-229; “Larry Doyle and Nova Scotia,” in *Talamh An Eisc: Canadian and Irish Essays* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1986), 166-179.

³⁰ Terrence Punch, “Gentle as the Snow on a Rooftop: The Irish in Nova Scotia to 1830,” in *The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada* ed. Robert O’Driscoll and Lorna Reynolds (Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada, 1988), 218.

³¹ Punch calculated that around 6,657 Irish people arrived to the ports of Nova Scotia directly from Ireland after 1815. See: *Ibid.*, 224.

leveling and haulage, the erection of structures.”³² These economic opportunities may have made Nova Scotian rural life less appealing in addition to the rocky nature and expensive price of available land, which may explain the high percentage of Irish migrants settling in Halifax.

Providing a different perspective on the Irish experience in Canada was one of Peter Toner’s central tasks in his work on the Irish in New Brunswick. In two of his studies of the 1851 New Brunswick census, one related to occupation and ethnicity³³ and the other the origins of the Irish in New Brunswick,³⁴ Toner revealed how the Irish experience in his native province not only differed from Ontario, but also from Nova Scotia. In the first half of the nineteenth century a considerable number of Irish immigrants arrived to New Brunswick aboard timber ships that sailed from several different ports throughout Ulster directly to Saint John. Of these Irish immigrants, almost an equal number of them were Protestant and Catholic, which, Toner argues, “suggests a more important Ulster component of New Brunswick immigration than reported by...Punch”³⁵ and a much different ratio of Protestants vs. Catholics reported in Ontario by Akenson.³⁶ The Ulster immigrants to New Brunswick originated from counties Donegal, Derry and Tyrone, and were mixed together with a high proportion of Irish migrants from the southern county of Cork (taken together, these counties

³² Ibid., 217.

³³ Peter M. Toner, “Occupation and Ethnicity: The Irish in New Brunswick,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Etudes Ethniques au Canada* Vol. 20 No. 3 (1988):155-165.

³⁴ Peter M. Toner, “The Origins of the New Brunswick Irish, 1851,” *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d’etudes Canadiennes* Vol. 23, No. 1&2 (1988): 104-119.

³⁵ Ibid., 107.

³⁶ Ibid., 108

comprised fifty percent of Irish migrant origins in New Brunswick).³⁷ These Irish immigrants overwhelmingly settled in the urban port of Saint John, which is where the timber trade ships docked once they arrived from Ulster.³⁸

In addition to highlighting the difference of country origins between the Irish in Canada and New Brunswick, Toner also attacked the notion that there was little difference between the occupational structure of Irish Catholics and Protestants, as argued by Akenson in *The Irish in Ontario*. After a close examination of the 1851 New Brunswick census, Toner revealed that Irish Protestants were more likely to be farmers than Catholics and a greater number of Irish Catholics were employed as semiskilled and unskilled workers. The percentage of Protestants who participated in farming compared to Catholics was 74.5 to 59.6 respectively, while the percentage of Catholics who worked as semiskilled and unskilled labourers compared to Protestants was 25.0 to 12.9.³⁹ Thus, a disparity existed between Irish settlers based on their religion in New Brunswick (unlike Ontario), and Irish Catholic settlers were less likely to engage in farming.

In his examinations of Irish settlement in Newfoundland, geographer John Mannion has noted some small scale farming households across the island, but pointed out that the rocky terrain did not permit the growth of a society based on

³⁷ Ibid., 108-109.

³⁸ Toner asserted "that Saint John is the home of the largest Irish community in the province", and that many Irish immigrants stayed in the town once they arrived there. See: Peter Toner, "The Irish of New Brunswick at Mid Century: The 1851 Census," in *New Ireland Remembered: Historical Essays on the Irish in New Brunswick* ed. Peter M. Toner (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1988), 122-123. For more information on the Irish experience in Saint John's, see: T.W. Acheson, "The Irish Community in Saint John, 1815-1850," in *New Ireland Remembered: Historical Essays on the Irish in New Brunswick* ed. Peter M. Toner (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1988), 7-45; *Saint John: The Making of a Colonial Urban Community* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 92-114.

³⁹ Peter M. Toner, "Occupation and Ethnicity: The Irish in New Brunswick," *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Etudes Ethniques au Canada* Vol. 20 No. 3 (1988): 157.

agriculture, and that most Irish migrants turned to fishing rather than farming. Mannion also provided evidence to county origins and settlement patterns of Irish settlers on the island.⁴⁰ Based on primary resources such as shipping documents (from both Newfoundland and Ireland) and the colonial office records of Newfoundland, Mannion discovered that after their arrival to Newfoundland, some Irish migrants chose to reside in the smaller fishing villages scattered throughout the south and south western portion of the Avalon Peninsula. Nevertheless, the central port of disembarkation for Irish migrants to Newfoundland was St. John's, and although some Irish migrants left the budding fishing town when they arrived, Mannion pointed out "[s]ome 60% of those [Irish] recorded by place of origin lived there."⁴¹ A good number of Irish migrants who arrived to St. John's traveled aboard provision ships that sailed from the southeastern ports of Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny, and Cork, and arrived to St. John's with salted provisions (such as beef and pork) in order to compensate for the colony's lack of agriculture. The provisions trade linked Newfoundland with the ports southeastern ports of Ireland, which would continue to

⁴⁰ John Mannion, "Irish Migration and Settlement in Newfoundland: The Formative Phase, 1697-1732," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* Vol. 17 No. 2 (2001): 257-293; "...Notoriously disaffected to the Government...: British allegations of Irish disloyalty in eighteenth-century Newfoundland," *Newfoundland Studies* Vol. 16 No. 1 (2000): 1-29; "Victualling a Fishery: Newfoundland Diet and the Origins of the Irish Provisions Trade, 1675-1700," *International Journal of Maritime History* Vol. XII No. 2 (2000): 1-60; "Irish Merchants Abroad: The Newfoundland Experience, 1750-1850," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* Vol. 2, No. 2 (1986): 127-90; "The Maritime Trade of Waterford in the Eighteenth Century," in *Common Ground: Essays on the Historical Geography of Ireland* ed. William J. Smyth and Kevin Whelan (Cork: Cork University Press, 1988):208-233; "Patrick Morris and Newfoundland Irish Immigration," in *Talamh an Eisc: Canadian and Irish Essays*, ed. by Cyril J. Byrne and Margaret Harry (Halifax: Nimbus, 1986): 180-202.

⁴¹ John Mannion, "Old World Antecedents, New World Adaptations: Inistioge (Co. Kilkenny) Immigrants in Newfoundland," in *The Irish in Atlantic Canada 1780-1900* ed. Thomas P. Power (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1991), 33. See also: "Population and Property, St. John's, 1795," In *Historical Atlas of Canada* Vol. I, ed. R. Cole Harris (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987): Plate 27.

act as the major source area of Irish immigrant origins in St. John's, and the rest of Newfoundland.

Taken together, the scholarly work produced by historians, geographers, and genealogists on the Irish in the Atlantic region of Canada demonstrates that while variations existed in each province, often a reflection of the immigrants' county origins, occupation, and religious affiliation, the collective experience differed markedly from that experienced in Ontario and had more in common with the experience in Quebec. Overall, Irish migrants who came to Atlantic Canada were more likely to be Catholic rather than Protestant, employed as labourers or fishermen rather than farmers, and found in urban rather than rural environments.⁴² While this general regional pattern justifies renewed attention to the Irish urban experience in Atlantic Canada, the scholarship also highlights the need to be attentive to the variety of migrant experience within regions and that this is revealed effectively with comparative study.

Some scholars of the Irish Diaspora have been careful not to undertake comparisons of Irish communities because they believe that it will either exacerbate differences instead of accentuating similarities, or ignore distinction while promoting

⁴² This is not to suggest, however, that there were no Irish migrants who settled in several different rural areas throughout Atlantic Canada. For more information of the Irish in rural Atlantic Canada, see: William A. Spray, "The Irish in Miramichi," in *New Ireland Remembered: Historical Essays on the Irish in New Brunswick* ed. Peter M. Toner (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1988), 55-62; John Mannion, *Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada: A Study of Cultural Transfer and Adaptation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); Stephen J. Hornsby, *An Historical Geography of Cape Breton Island in the Nineteenth Century* (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1988); Brendan O'Grady, *Exiles and Islanders: The Irish Settlers of Prince Edward Island* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004); Willeen Keough, *The Slender Thread: Irish Women on the Southern Avalon, 1750-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); A.A. MacKenzie, *The Irish in Cape Breton* (Wreck Cove: Breton Books, 1999); Scott W. See, "Mickey's and Demons vs. Bigots and Boobies : The Woodstock Riot of 1847," *Acadiensis* Vol. XXI No. 1 (1991): 110-31.

likeness.⁴³ For example, retorting against Akenson's arguments about the similarities shared by the Irish Diaspora throughout the English-speaking world, Lawrence McCaffrey argued that the Irish experience in the United States was distinctive due to several different features that existed only in America. He stated that the Irish experience in America was unique because Irish Catholics there had to deal with a much more established Protestant church and persistent nativism, and there was a higher concentration of different ethnic groups in America which the Irish had to contend with, unlike other countries such as Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, whose populations were relatively homogenous.⁴⁴

While McCaffrey argued for difference for the Irish experience in the United States in comparison with other Irish communities abroad, David N. Doyle expressed similarity between the Irish experience in the United States and Australia. Although Doyle acknowledged that Irish Australians did not understand the Irish American experience well enough to compare them, he argued that a closer examination of different factors revealed the similarity of experience from the Irish in each country. For example, Doyle argued that Australia and the continental United States were similar in size and that the majority of inhabitants in both countries were of British

⁴³ There are several books and articles available which compare Irish migrant experiences: Donald Harmen Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (Toronto: P.D. Meany, 1993); Malcolm Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds: Immigrants, Politics, and Society in the United States and Australia, 1815-1922* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007); "The Other Immigrants: Comparing the Irish in Australia and the United States," *Journal of American Ethnic History* Vol. 14, No. 3 (1995): 3-22; Kevin Kenny, "Diaspora and Comparison: The Global Irish as a Case Study," *The Journal of American History* Vol. 90, No. 1 (2003): 134-162; Donald M. MacRaild, "Crossing Migrant Frontiers: Comparative Reflections on Irish Migrants in Britain and the United States during the Nineteenth Century," in *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* ed. Donald M. MacRaild (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000): 40-70.

⁴⁴ Lawrence J. McCaffrey, "Diaspora Comparisons and Irish-American Uniqueness," in *New Perspectives on the Irish Diaspora* ed. Charles Fanning (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 19-21.

origin. Furthermore, both countries were far removed from Great Britain, their primary trading partner and colonizer.⁴⁵

Doyle and McCarthy's diverging views on the utility of a comparative approach for understanding the Irish in America was, however, predicated on a discussion of communities separated by vast geographical distances. By comparing Irish migrant experiences within the more compact Atlantic region, this thesis will demonstrate the utility of the comparative approach for understanding the complexity of Irish migrant experience.

This thesis examines and compares the pre-Famine urban Irish experience of St. John's, Newfoundland with Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Saint John, New Brunswick in order to emphasize how Irish experiences varied, even within the small geographical region of Atlantic Canada. In using the comparative approach, this thesis demonstrates that the Irish experience in these three Atlantic Canadian cities was conditioned by three factors: the source area of Irish migration, such as home counties and provinces; the host towns where the Irish settled and the different social characteristics that existed in each town; and the time in which they arrived to their new host environment.

The first chapter of the thesis examines the Irish experiences of Halifax and Saint John between 1750 and 1850. It provides evidence of how the source areas of Irish migrants to each town differed from each other. For example, the majority of Irish migrants to Halifax throughout the period were from the south east of Ireland, in

⁴⁵ David N. Doyle, "The Irish in Australia and the United States: Some Comparisons, 1800-1939," *Irish Economic and Social History* 16 (1989): 73-74.

the counties of Waterford, Wexford, and Tipperary, and arrived to the port city from vessels that sailed directly from Ireland. There was also a substantial influx of Irish from Newfoundland, who came to Halifax to escape the arduous labour conditions of the Newfoundland fishery. In Saint John, however, Irish migrants arrived from both southern Ireland (most notably Cork) and Ulster, most significantly from counties Donegal, Derry, and Tyrone. They arrived in timber ships that had carried them east to Saint John. When the ships unloaded their passengers, they were filled with timber for the return journey to Ireland. The domination of the Saint John timber trade by Ulster ensured that the city's initial Irish population was overwhelmingly Protestant. It was not until 1846 and 1847, with the arrival of thousands of Irish Famine migrants to Saint John, that the number of Irish Catholics matched the number of Irish Protestants.

This chapter also examines how the host environment in each Atlantic Canadian city differed, and how this affected the reception of Irish migrants. At the time of their arrival, Halifax's high demand for labour, provided opportunities for Irish migrants since they could apply for jobs that ranged from wharf to harbour constructions. Additionally, the Irish arrived in Halifax from Newfoundland were skilled fishers who were able to contribute to the fishing economy of Halifax. In Saint John, early Irish migrants from Ulster arrived to a town which was originally founded by Protestant Loyalist settlers who welcomed the new arrivals because of their shared religion and support of the British Crown.

Finally, the first chapter of the thesis analyses how the timing of the Irish arrivals to Halifax and Saint John influenced their reception. The Irish who arrived to

Halifax in the early to mid eighteenth century were well received by the local inhabitants because their numbers were small, and as previously noted, they filled a local demand for labour. After the 1840s, however, nativism emerged across the city, as individuals of English and Scottish descent began to think of themselves as Nova Scotians, instead of individuals from their country of origin. It was argued by these individuals that the Irish in Halifax could not be considered to be bona fide Nova Scotians because they were Roman Catholic “papists”. Furthermore, prominent Nova Scotians, such as Joseph Howe, attacked Irish Catholics in the local newspapers because of their presumed inability to support the British Empire.

The Irish who arrived in Saint John (as well as the Irish in Halifax) were well received by the Loyalist population because of their perceived shared qualities, Protestantism and loyalty to the British Crown. They also contributed to the economy of Saint John by engaging in the timber trade with Ulster. Nevertheless, the massive influx of Irish Catholics fleeing the Famine between 1846 and 1847 overwhelmed the established Protestant Irish population, who were not prepared for their arrival. In response, many Saint John residents joined the Orange Lodge whose membership grew dramatically. The Orange Order in Saint John argued that the Irish Famine was a papal ploy to eradicate Protestantism off the face of the earth and this rhetoric helped to provide a rise of nativism in the city.

The second chapter of the thesis examines the Irish experience of St. John's, Newfoundland, from 1700 to 1850. It begins in 1700 since Irish migrants had arrived to the town almost five decades before they had settled in either Nova Scotia or New

Brunswick. The chapter explores the origins of Irish migrants to St. John's, most of whom came from the south east of Ireland, particularly Waterford, as a consequence of the provisions trade conducted between the two areas. Waterford, and other counties such as Wexford and Tipperary, were the main centres of the industry in Ireland, and focused on the production of salted provisions. West Country Merchants of England, who controlled the provisions trade, began calling into these Irish ports to collect salted provisions en route to Newfoundland. As years passed, and the number of West Country men available to serve in the summer fishery dwindled and the merchants began to recruit young Irish servants in order to compensate for the drop in labour. A greater number of Irishmen, and eventually women, from the south east of Ireland began to arrive along the southern and eastern portion of the Avalon Peninsula, particularly St. John's, where they formed a small but expanding portion of the population.

Additionally, the second chapter of the thesis examines how colonial policies in St. John's affected the reception of Irish migrants to the town. In the eyes of the British, Newfoundland was a land that was not suitable for permanent settlement or colonial adventure. Unlike the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia or Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland's soil was too rocky, and lacked the agricultural ingredients needed to sustain a thriving colonial community. The British were, however, interested in the Grand Bank Fisheries, had gained control over most of the island from the French after the Treaty of Utrecht was signed in 1713. By this time, a small permanent population, located along the eastern and southern portions of the Avalon

Peninsula, was established on the island and consisted of English Protestants from the West Country of England. Official colonial rule forbade permanent settlement in Newfoundland, but these settlements were ignored. The British knew that in order to preserve fishing stations over the winter a year round population was needed. Nevertheless, once the Irish began to arrive in Newfoundland, and in the port town of St. John's, colonial officials established policies designed to ensure that their numbers were never greater than the English Protestant population. It is also clear that these officials viewed the Irish as "papists," who religious and cultural background was different from the established population.

Finally, the second chapter of the thesis examines how the time of arrival contributed to the range of Irish experiences in St. John's. Early Irish migrants (during the period between the early to mid eighteenth century) were accused of disloyalty and collusion with the French at a time of intense conflict between the two nations. Colonial officials and magistrates argued that if the French attacked the harbour the Irish would disband their masters and join the French forces. Indeed, there are a few examples of Irish soldiers stationed in the garrison of St. John's fleeing to the French side and attacking the British. Conversely, the Irish in St. John's in the early nineteenth century were accused of having United Irishmen sympathies because a significant number of Irishmen and women in the town were from Wexford, which was the epicenter of the United Irish rebellion of 1798. And the United Irish mutiny of 1800—which took place in St. John's—was suspected to have been influenced by the events that took place in Ireland only two years before. These actions placed the Irish

community of St. John's in a difficult situation, as they were now viewed as individuals that were fighting against the British Crown, instead of supporting it. Roman Catholic Bishop James Louis O'Donel denounced the mutineers and argued to colonial officials that their actions did not represent the mentalities of all Irish men and women in St. John's. O'Donel's words assuaged the colonial officials concern about the Irish and their loyalty to the British Crown.

It was not until the 1830s that another episode of discontent ensued in St. John's, but rather than an isolated event related to Irish politics in Ireland, it was over political supremacy of St. John's. Once Newfoundland achieved representative government in 1832, two parties with two different political agendas emerged and campaigned against each other in order to secure votes. The Liberal party was composed mostly of Irish Roman Catholics who promoted farming as an alternative to fishing and represented the working class of St. John's, and the Conservative party represented the powerful fishing merchants and the parties political leaders were mostly English Protestants. Initially, each party did not use the ethnic or religious card to promote their interests; they were primarily concerned over the governance of Newfoundland. It was not until Roman Catholic Bishop Michael Anthony Fleming, a staunch Irish Catholic republican, began to meddle in politics that each party became divided along ethnic and religious lines. Fleming argued that the Conservative party was not concerned with issues that related to the working classes of St. John's and attempted to convince the majority of Irish men and women in the city to back the Liberal party whose political leaders happened to be Irish Catholics. Henry Winton,

former editor of the Conservative newspaper *The Public Ledger*, pointed this fact out and argued that Fleming was a demagogue who tried to gain support from the Irish Catholic community of St. John's so that his favourite party would win seats in the Assembly. Debates between each party along ethnic and religious lines continued throughout the 1840s and 1850s, and it was not until Bishop Fleming was replaced and Phillip Francis Little became the first premier of Newfoundland in 1852 that pronounced ethnic and religious divisions in the political arena of St. John's faded out.

The thesis concludes with the third chapter which investigates the merit and potential use of comparative history. To date, there are no studies that compare Irish communities in Canada. Some scholars have contested against the argument that all Irish experiences throughout Canada were similar to Ontario with their own research, such as Peter Toner and Robert J. Grace, but they do not use the comparative method to explain how and why variations existed. Historian of the Irish in Australia, Malcolm Campbell, proved through his own work on comparative history that comparisons between Irish communities demonstrate what factors contributed to variations in each community and he argued that the comparative method can be used as a tool to test historical controversies. For example, Campbell contested against the historical controversy that the Irish experience in Australia was similar to the United States by employing the comparative method, which in the end revealed how the Irish experience in each nation was different. Indeed, the comparative method demonstrates

how Irish experiences differ and can be used as a tool by Canadian historians to highlight how Irish experiences varied.

Chapter 2

Part I: Early Irish Migration and Settlement in Halifax and Saint John 1750-1815.

Irish migration to the Atlantic Provinces began in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century with the arrival of thousands of Irish indentured servants to Newfoundland from the southeast region of Ireland, predominately Waterford and Wexford counties.⁴⁶ Agriculturalist and travel writer, Arthur Young, was amazed during his tour of Ireland in the late eighteenth century at the “number of people who go [as] passengers in the Newfoundland ships...from sixty to eighty ships, and from three thousand to five thousand annually.”⁴⁷ Taking part in the Grand Bank fisheries located just off the southern tip of the Avalon Peninsula, these Irish indentured servants settled and became permanent residents of Newfoundland, which they termed in their native Irish tongue as “Talamh An Eisc.”⁴⁸ The Irish did not begin to penetrate farther south to Nova Scotia until the middle of the eighteenth century, when Irish migrants from Ulster, Ireland’s most northern province, migrated across the Atlantic Ocean.

⁴⁶ John J. Mannion, *The Peopling of Newfoundland: Essays in Historical Geography* ed. John Mannion (St. John’s: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1978), 6-8; C.W. Doody, “The Irish in Newfoundland,” in *The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada*, ed. Robert O’Driscoll & Lorna Reynolds (Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada, 1988), 195-196; Frederick R. Rowe, *A History of Newfoundland and Labrador* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1980), 211-220.

⁴⁷ Arthur Young, *Arthur Young’s Tour in Ireland (1776-1779)* ed. Arthur Wollaston Hutton, (London: George Bell & Sons, 1892), 406; Neal Garnham, “Arthur Young,” in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* ed. S.J. Connolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 602.

⁴⁸ The Irish term for Newfoundland, Talamh An Eisc, is commonly translated into English as “the land of the fish.” However, to a native speaker of Irish, the phrase is understood to mean “the fishing ground.” George Casey, “Irish Culture in Newfoundland,” in *Talamh An Eisc: Canadian and Irish Essays*, ed. Cyril J. Byrne and Margaret Harry (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Ltd., 1986), 203.

Ulster immigration to Nova Scotia was prompted by the rising price of rent in Ulster and the lure of colonizers' deeds to land on the peninsula.⁴⁹ Between 1690 and 1715, over 50,000 Scottish Presbyterians fled the lowlands of Scotland to Ulster in order to escape poor harvests, rising rents, and religious strife in their native country.⁵⁰ Once they arrived in Ulster they purchased cheap vacated land and practiced open-field farming whereby individual families farmed large tracts of unfenced fields. Kerby Miller noted that this form of farming did not persist in Ulster and "when old leases [were] terminated, many proprietors consolidated farms into individual holdings and often doubled, sometimes tripled, rent levels."⁵¹ Many Ulster Presbyterians could not afford the higher rent prices, which in turn encouraged many of them to search for land outside of Ulster.⁵²

After the Acadian Expulsion was over, a considerable amount of land in Nova Scotia was left uninhabited. In an attempt to repopulate the land with Protestant settlers, Governor Charles Lawrence sent his agents to New England to advertise the newly vacant lands. Colonizer and land agent Alexander McNutt came into contact with Lawrence's Boston agent, Thomas Handcock, and secured a written promise with the deed to seven townships under the condition that he send Protestant settlers to

⁴⁹ Standard works on Ulster immigration to North America include: R.J. Dickson, *Ulster Emigration to Colonial America, 1718-1775* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966); James G. Leyburn, *The Scots-Irish: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962); Maldwyn A. Jones, "The Scotch-Irish in British America," in *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* ed. Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 284-313; and Patrick Griffin, *The People with No Name: Ireland's Ulster Scots, America's Scots Irish, and the Creation of a British Atlantic World, 1689-1764* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁵⁰ Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 152.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Other reasons for Ulster emigration to North America included bad weather, crop failures, livestock disease, high food prices, and smallpox epidemics. See: Ibid.

Nova Scotia.⁵³ McNutt stayed true to his agreement, and in October 1761, after he posted advertisements for land in local pubs and taverns throughout most of Ulster, three hundred Irish Protestants from Ulster landed in Nova Scotia, and another one hundred and seventy families arrived the following year.⁵⁴

These Ulster immigrants arrived in Halifax around the mid-eighteenth century with their families intact, and with enough savings to push beyond the port city toward the farmlands purchased by McNutt in the rural townships of Onslow and Truro, where they became pioneer colonial farmers of rich agricultural soil. John Robinson and Thomas Rispin remarked on their tour of rural mainland Nova Scotia in 1774 that the rural townships were “chiefly inhabited by Irish...[who] were the best farmers [they had] seen in this country.”⁵⁵ In 1761, three hundred more Ulster immigrants arrived in Halifax and extended Ulster settlement patterns in rural Nova Scotia beyond Onslow and Truro, upcountry to Londonderry, Windsor, and Horton.⁵⁶ As a result of their settlement patterns in rural townships, the Ulster immigrants became firmly rooted in the rural settlements of eighteenth century Nova Scotia.

While Ulster Protestant immigrants were settling in rural Nova Scotia in the mid eighteenth century, Irish Catholic immigrants began to trickle into the port cities

⁵³ Phyllis R. Blakeley, “Alexander McNutt,” in *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, 15 vols, ed. Frances G. Halpenny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), vol. V, 553-557.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ John Robinson and Thomas Rispin, *A Journey Through Nova Scotia* (York: Printed for the authors by C. Etherington, 1774), 17.

⁵⁶ Terrence M. Punch, “Gentle As the Snow On A Rooftop: The Irish in Nova Scotia to 1830,” in *The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada*, ed. Robert O’Driscoll and Lorna Reynolds (Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada: 1988), 220.

of Halifax and Sydney around the same time.⁵⁷ These Irish Catholic immigrants arrived not from Ireland, but were Irish indentured servants who began leaving Newfoundland in the mid eighteenth century to escape the arduous working conditions of the summer fishery.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the Newfoundland economy could not support the continuous influx of Irish immigrants to the island, and, as a result, many Irish from Newfoundland, who had first sailed across the Atlantic from the southeastern region of Ireland, arrived in Sydney and Halifax, where they became firmly established within the local population, finding employment as fisherman, labourers or sellers or importers of liquor.⁵⁹

An additional number of Irish Catholic immigrants arrived in Halifax during the mid to late eighteenth century with English emigrants, many of whom who arrived in the town with Irish servants. Irish soldiers also served in the British Army stationed at Citadel Hill—which protected the strategic British naval port—while Irish sailors served on Royal Naval vessels. Additionally, a few Irish migrants landed in Halifax with the intention of continuing on to more southern American colonies, but lacking the required funds they settled in Halifax.⁶⁰

These Irish Catholic migrants in the late eighteenth century easily adapted to their new host environment as a consequence of their relatively small numbers, which

⁵⁷ Early Irish Catholic settlement in Nova Scotia did not focus exclusively on these urban centres. Small Irish Catholic enclave communities were also established around Halifax, such as Ketch Harbour, Herring Cove, and Prospect. Edna Press argued that these communities, at the time of their settlement, were “almost one hundred per cent Catholic and of Irish extraction.” Edna Press, “The Irish: The Urban Settlers”, in *Banked Fires: The Ethnics of Nova Scotia*, ed. Douglas F. Campbell (Ontario: Scribblers Press, 1978), 98. For information on Irish migration and settlement to Cape Breton, see: A.A. MacKenzie, *The Irish in Cape Breton* (Wreck Cove: Breton Books, 1999).

⁵⁸ W.S. McNutt, *The Atlantic Provinces: The Emergence of Colonial Society 1712-1857* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1965), 54.

⁵⁹ Virginia Clark, *Settlers of Nova Scotia* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1971), 95.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 97-99.

at no point threatened to overwhelm the existing population of Halifax. The success of Irish Catholic settlers in late eighteenth century Halifax can be seen in their ability to change established Nova Scotian law in order to achieve equal status in their new homeland. In 1781, an influential group of thirteen Irishmen not only managed to have the Penal Laws that discriminated against any Roman Catholic from holding property abolished, but they also erected the first Roman Catholic Church in Halifax for all practicing Catholics to attend in 1784.⁶¹ In addition, the Irish of Halifax established their own society to assist Irish migrants arriving in the port city. The Charitable Irish Society, formed in 1786, held dinners and marked St. Patrick's Day with celebrations open to the community of Halifax.⁶²

Irish Catholics, including a steady stream of Irish indentured servants leaving from Newfoundland, continued to migrate and settle in Halifax well into the early nineteenth century. Their arrival began to attract official colonial response that was not always positive. Colonial Administrator and Royal Governor of Nova Scotia, Sir John Wentworth, in a clearly biased account Irish migration to Nova Scotia, noted how a "more numerous emigration of useless Irishmen pass annually from Newfoundland through this province."⁶³ While an anonymous Halifax resident noted in 1813 that "[t]he Irish usually come to this Province from their own country, by way of Newfoundland.... They are principally settled in and near Halifax, where they form

⁶¹ Terrence Murphy, "Priests, People and Polity: Trusteeship in the First Catholic Congregation at Halifax, 1785-1801," in *Religion and Identity: The Experience of Irish and Scottish Catholics in Atlantic Canada*, ed. Terrence Murphy and Cyril J. Byrne (St. John's: Jespersen Press, 1987), 68-69. Murphy lists the names of the thirteen Irishmen on the corresponding page.

⁶² Herbert Leslie Stewart, *The Irish in Nova Scotia: Annals of the Charitable Irish Society of Halifax 1786-1836* (Kentville: Kentville Publishing Co., 1949), 11-31.

⁶³ Wentworth to Castlereagh, Halifax, February 3, 1806; C.O. 217, Volume 80, No. 146, p. 135.

¼ of the Inhabitants, and are, in general, Catholics.”⁶⁴ Indeed, by 1815 the majority of Irish who settled in Halifax were Catholic, while their Ulster compatriots were spread throughout the townships of rural Nova Scotia.

Irish migrants to Saint John, New Brunswick, during the mid to late eighteenth century were not as numerous as Irish migrants to Halifax, and the Irish who did settle in Saint John rapidly assimilated among the Loyalist population. The city of Saint John, incorporated in 1785, was founded and settled almost exclusively by British Loyalists, and during the mid to late eighteenth century it developed into New Brunswick’s primary port for the export of timber and the importation of manufactured products and foodstuffs.⁶⁵ There was a small number of Irish Catholics among the Loyalist settlers, and, as T.W. Acheson noted, “Irishmen had always been a part of Saint John life. Irishmen, Irish American Loyalists, and Irish soldiers from the British garrison of the city ensured their presence from the mid-eighteenth century.”⁶⁶ As Leo Hynes noted, on the 15th of May, 1783, five fleets carrying American Loyalists to Halifax that anchored in Saint John harbour had and a “number of the passengers” who “were of Irish origin—Anglo-Irish, Scottish-Irish, and Celtic.”⁶⁷ All the same, most of these early Irish Catholic settlers of Saint John were without the services of a priest, and as a consequence, most assimilated into the local Anglican

⁶⁴ Anonymous to N. Atcheson, Esq., Halifax, August 20, 1813; C.O. 217, Volume 97, p. 79.

⁶⁵ Scott See, “The Orange Order and Social Violence in Mid-Nineteenth Century Saint John,” *Acadiensis* Vol. XIII, No. I (1983): 69.

⁶⁶ T.W. Acheson, “The Irish Community in Saint John 1815-1850,” in *New Ireland Remembered: Historical Essays on the Irish in New Brunswick*, ed. Peter M. Toner (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1988), 28.

⁶⁷ Leo J. Hynes, *The Catholic Irish in New Brunswick 1783-1900* (Moncton: Leo J. Hynes, 1992), 15.

community.⁶⁸ Consequently, early Irish settlers in Saint John, as with the rest of New Brunswick, did not amount to a sizeable community, and as Peter Toner has pointed out, “[b]efore 1800, the Irish presence was scarcely noticed by the bulk of the population, and it would be difficult to argue that there was any Irish ‘community.’”⁶⁹ Unlike Halifax, it was not until after 1815 the Irish in Saint John began to attract attention when greater numbers of Irish migrants began to arrive and settle in the port city.

⁶⁸ Peter Murphy, “Poor ‘Ignorant Children’: ‘A Great Resource,’ The Saint John Emigrant Orphan Asylum Admittance Ledger in Context”, (Halifax: Unpublished MA Thesis, 1997), p.10.

⁶⁹ Peter Toner, “Another ‘New Ireland’ Lost: The Irish of New Brunswick”, in *The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada*, ed. Robert O’Driscoll and Lorna Reynolds (Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada, 1988), p. 231. Leo J Hynes illustrates the relative lack of Irish settlers in Saint Johns pre-1800, stating “In 1783, the Loyalists poured into the Saint John area and among them was the first small contingent of Irish Catholics. Others would eventually trickle in from Newfoundland and elsewhere but a half century would pass before the slowly emerging province would experience, from 1815 onward, an infusion of Celtic Irish that stimulated a transforming growth.” Leo J. Hynes, *The Catholic Irish in New Brunswick 1783-1900* (Moncton: Leo J. Hynes, 1992), 14.

Part II: An Increased Influx: Irish Migration between 1815-1845.

An economic crisis struck Ireland after the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. During the mid to late eighteenth century, Ireland had enjoyed relative economic stability due to a rise in exports brought about by increased agricultural trade with England, its primary trading partner. The increase trade had, in turn, raised the rent of most farmlands. Ireland's farmers achieved prosperity from high grain and cattle prices and industrial activity and expansion resulted from a growing staple linen industry.⁷⁰ The population also grew significantly during this period, from two and a half million in 1767 to five million in 1801.⁷¹ However, once the Napoleonic Wars ended, so too did Ireland's economic prosperity. England's demand for agricultural products dropped, causing a decrease in prices of Irish products such as wheat.⁷² Tenant farmers were incapable of paying the high rents, and landlords evicted their tenants *en masse* facilitated by new Parliamentary legislation that eased the process. These evictions, in turn, provided a powerful incentive to leave Ireland and search for better economic conditions elsewhere.⁷³ In addition, agrarian violence erupted throughout Ireland as a result of the mass evictions, and groups such as the Ribbonmen, composed largely of Roman Catholics, were formed to combat landlords. Agrarian crime, however, cut across or ignored religious affiliations as Catholic peasants attacked Catholic farmers, and Presbyterian peasants attacked Presbyterians

⁷⁰ Gearoid O'Tuathaigh, *Ireland Before the Famine, 1798-1848* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1972), 2-5, L.M. Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland Since 1660* (London: Billing & Sons Ltd., 1987), 100-101.

⁷¹ Gearoid O'Tuathaigh, *Ireland Before the Famine 1798-1848* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1972), 5.

⁷² R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London: Allen Lane, 1988), 320.

⁷³ William Forbes Adams, *Ireland and Irish Emigration to the New World from 1815 to the Famine* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), 26.

landowners.⁷⁴ Many Irish chose to emigrate in order to avoid the violence while others left in order to avoid prosecution for their participation in the attacks.

A modification of British legislation after the Napoleonic Wars ended resulted in a change of direction for Irish migrants from the United States to British North America. Throughout the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, Irish emigrants preferred to settle in the United States. The Irish in both the North and South of Ireland had family connections in the United States, who in turn could pay for their passage across the Atlantic Ocean. However, in 1816, new British Passenger Acts imposed carriage restrictions on American bound vessels that made average fares to the United States more than double the cost of passages to British North America.⁷⁵ Irish migrants took full advantage of the cheaper passages, but upon arrival in British North America, they would often continue their journey and move south to the United States. Nevertheless, an increased volume of Irish migrants began arriving through the port of Halifax and, more significantly, through Saint John, New Brunswick.

Increased Irish migration to Saint John began in the early stages of the nineteenth century after the Napoleonic Wars ended, dramatically increasing the number of Irish settlers in the port city. In 1818, an estimated 3,123 Irish immigrants sailing from Belfast and Londonderry arrived in Saint John, and in the following year another 2,644 Irish migrants arrived from Belfast. Between 1820 and 1822 over

⁷⁴ Ibid., 30.

⁷⁵ Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 194.

10,000 Irish migrants arrived at Saint John, which would continue to be the main port of entry for Irish immigrants for the succeeding decades.⁷⁶

The ports of Belfast and Londonderry dominated Irish immigration to Saint John in the early nineteenth century as a result of the established timber trade routes between Ulster and Saint John. Timber was one of the great staple products of New Brunswick and was exported east to Derry, in the north west of Ireland. In the early eighteenth century Derry's trade was conducted with colonial America and the port of Derry was the primary port where tens of thousands of Irish emigrants headed to America aboard ships that brought American flax seed to Ulster farmers.⁷⁷ However, the trans-Atlantic route changed in the nineteenth century and timber ships heading for Saint John and Quebec surpassed the flax cargo ships bound for America. The shipping of timber to Ireland "required a large tonnage in ships easily convertible into passenger vessels, and the timber ships, for which there were almost no westbound cargoes, became the greatest single medium of transportation."⁷⁸ Timber ship migration was primarily controlled in large measure by Ulster companies in concert with Greenock and other nearby Scottish ports,⁷⁹ and as a result Irish migrants landing in Saint John had set sail from Ulster ports such as Belfast and Londonderry.

Irish migrants arriving in New Brunswick during the early nineteenth century shared similar traits and qualities as the original Loyalist settlers of Saint John. They

⁷⁶ W.A. Spray, "Reception of the Irish in New Brunswick," in *New Ireland Remembered: Historical Essays on the Irish in New Brunswick*, ed. Peter M. Toner (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1988), 10.

⁷⁷ Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, "New Brunswick Shipbuilding and Irish Shipping: The Commissioning of the Londonderry, 1838," *Acadiensis* Vol. XVI, No. 2 (1987): 96.

⁷⁸ William Forbes Adams, *Ireland and Irish Emigration to the New World from 1815 to the Famine* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), 72.

⁷⁹ T.W. Acheson, *Saint John: The Making of a Colonial Urban Community*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 93

were predominately small farmers, tradesmen, and artisans, all of whom came from Ulster and were of Protestant background. Like the original Loyalist settlers of Saint John, most Ulster immigrants were Protestant and loyal to the British Crown, which helped them make a relatively smooth transition to their new host environment.⁸⁰

Additionally, the similar sympathies shared between Irish Protestants and Loyalist settlers in Saint John created an environment where the fraternal organization known as the Orange Order could be founded. First established in Ulster in 1795, the Orange Order was a fraternal organization whose purpose was to halt Roman Catholic influence from encroaching on Protestant interests or territory.⁸¹ The Order paid homage to the British Crown and Protestantism, making the organization's transition from Ireland to British North America relatively seamless. Early on Orange Lodges began to appear in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, as well as Upper and Lower Canada, but none were established in New Brunswick until 1800 and these were not officially recognized by the head Grand Lodges in Ireland until 1831. The Orange Order played an important role in the reception of Irish migrants in the 1840s, but during the 1820s the Order was not yet a recognizable institution amongst the Saint John populace.⁸²

New Irish societies were founded in Saint John during the period of increased Irish migration to the city, and the religious composition of these societies was a mix

⁸⁰ Scott W. See, "The Orange Order and Social Violence in Mid-Nineteenth Century Saint John", *Acadiensis* Vol. XIII, No. 1, (1983), 71.

⁸¹ R.B. McDowell, "The Protestant Nation 1775-1800" in *The Course of Irish History*, ed. T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (Cork: Mercier Press, 2001), 198-99.

⁸² For more information on the Orange Order in Canada, see: David A. Wilson, ed., *The Orange Order in Canada*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007); Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore: A Historical Geography of the Orange Order in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

of Protestant and Roman Catholic. In 1819 a small group of professional Irishmen (doctors, priests, and small businessmen) formed the St. Patrick's Society in Saint John and members of the group were mostly Protestants, although the Society also included a few Irish Catholics as members. T.W. Acheson argued that the Society's responsibilities included "the definition and care of the Irish community in the city, the maintenance of Irish rights, and the interpretation of the Irish cause to the larger community."⁸³ The Friendly Sons of Erin Society, formed later in the 1830s, was composed of second generation Irishmen (the St. Patrick's Society composition was largely Irish migrants who were born in Ireland) whose interests were in Irish affairs in Ireland. The Society would meet regularly to discuss Ireland, Irish politics, and Irish grievances.⁸⁴ The Friendly Sons group also included both Protestants and Catholics, a mark of the relatively homogenous Irish community that existed in Saint John before the 1840s.

A higher concentration of Irish migrants also landed in Halifax after the Napoleonic Wars ended, but they were of different origin than the Irish migrants who landed in Saint John. The end of the Napoleonic Wars reduced the need for large standing armies and, as a consequence, between 600 to 700 disbanded soldiers settled in Nova Scotia. Many of these soldiers were Irish Catholics who came from the southern provinces of Ireland, predominately Munster and Leinster.⁸⁵ And although

⁸³ T.W. Acheson, *Saint John: The Making of a Colonial Urban Community*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 98.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁸⁵ Edna Press, "The Irish: The Urban Settlers", in *Banked Fires: The Ethnics of Nova Scotia*, ed. Douglas F. Campbell (Ontario: Scribblers Press, 1978), 102.

Ulster migrants who traveled on the timber ships did indeed land in Halifax, the numbers staying in Halifax were not as great as the numbers in Saint John.

It has been estimated that between 1815 and 1838 a total of about 37,000 immigrants from the British Isles arrived in Nova Scotia, 13,000 of whom were Irish. Between 1815-1826, 4,199 Irish landed in Halifax, with an additional 1,617 arriving in 1827.⁸⁶ Nearly all of the Irish migrants who landed in Halifax were from Munster and Leinster, and their arrival resulted in an increased number of Irish Catholics residing in the port city. Terrence Punch discovered that “as many as 80% of all Irish Catholics in Nova Scotia lived in the town and county of Halifax in 1827.”⁸⁷ The Irish were already having an impact on the character of Halifax as witnessed by solidier and author Captain Moorsom, who traveled to Halifax in 1820, and noted how the “general tone of intercourse is somewhat analogous to that we met with in Ireland.”⁸⁸ The post-war Catholic migrants found employment as labourers and fishermen, prompting the first Bishop of Nova Scotia (and Irish born) Charles Inglis to state that, “ninety-nine out of one hundred of the Roman Catholics at Halifax are Irish fishermen.”⁸⁹

A factor that contributed to the increasing presence of Irish Catholic migrants in Halifax was the price of land in the rural townships. Prior to the 1830s, land was freely granted to newly arrived immigrants who settled in Nova Scotia, but the policy changed in that year and only military pensioners continued to be offered free land.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 103.

⁸⁷ Terrence M. Punch, “The Irish in Halifax: 1815-1867: A Study in Ethnic Assimilation,” (M.A. Thesis, Dalhousie University, 1976), 74.

⁸⁸ William Scarth Moorsom, *Letters from Nova Scotia*, ed. by Marjory Whitelaw (Canada: Oberon Press, 1986), 38.

⁸⁹ Bishop Inglis to Archbishop of Canterbury, Clermont, March 30, 1802, in P.A.C., Inglis Papers, C.6, Vol. 3, p. 62.

Although the price of land may have been low, many Irish migrants arriving in Halifax did not have enough capital to purchase land. Furthermore, a significant number of Irish settlers in Halifax were fishermen from counties Wexford and Waterford and they settled in Halifax or Sydney, where their skills and knowledge of fishing could be best applied.

Irish Catholic settlers in Halifax in the nineteenth century, like their predecessors, were capable of defending their rights and shaping the legal status of Irish Catholics in Nova Scotia. In the early nineteenth century, the laws of the British Empire applied to Halifax because at this time Halifax was still a part of the British Empire. As a result, Roman Catholics were not permitted to sit in the Legislative Assembly, because the law (separate from the Penal laws which restricted Catholics from obtaining land, as mentioned on page four) that originated in the British Parliament restricted any Catholic (including Irish, Scottish and Acadians) from sitting in the Legislative Assembly. These laws barred Roman Catholics from holding office because the state oath contained clauses unacceptable to them.⁹⁰ In 1823, however, Irish Catholic Lawrence Kavanagh, with the support of a few Protestants, was allowed to take a seat in the Assembly by a special exercise of the prerogative.⁹¹ Lawrence Kavanagh became the first Irish Catholic to sit in a Legislative council six

⁹⁰ Terrence M. Punch, "Larry Doyle and Nova Scotia," in *Talamh An Eisc: Canadian and Irish Essays*, ed. Cyril J. Byrne and Margaret Harry (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1986), 170

⁹¹ Terrence M. Punch, "The Irish in Halifax: 1815-1867: A Study in Ethnic Assimilation," (M.A. Thesis, Dalhousie University, 1976), 94.

years before Daniel O'Connell took his seat in Westminster and achieved Catholic Emancipation in Britain.⁹²

In the early nineteenth century, Irish migrants to both Halifax and Saint John were well received upon arrival in the port cities during the early stages of settlement. In Halifax, Irish Catholics continued to form the basis of the Irish population but their numbers still did not overwhelm the local population and the fact that many of the Irish who settled in Halifax were fishermen meant that they were able to expand that aspect of the city's growing economy. Irish migrants to Saint John continued to arrive from Ulster as a result of the timber trade and, as W.A. Spray has argued, their arrival "came at a good time for New Brunswick," since "[t]here had been a shortage of labour during the war in places like Saint John because of improved economic conditions."⁹³ Furthermore, the majority of Irish settlers in Saint John were Protestants from Ulster whose outlook was similar to the original Loyalist settlers of New Brunswick. Nevertheless, the harmony between the Irish and the established population ended in both Halifax and Saint John when economic and attitude towards Irish migrants altered.

Several contributing factors account for a change in attitude among the population of Saint John toward Irish migrants landing on their shores. First, the number of Irish arriving in Saint John after the 1820s increased significantly

⁹² Born in Co. Kerry, Daniel O'Connell became one of the most important political figures in Ireland after he and his supporters achieved Catholic Emancipation, which permitted Roman Catholics the right to hold senior government offices, to sit in parliament, and to become members of the privy council. He was known primarily for his oratorical and organizational skills and mastery of political theatre. For more information on O'Connell, see: Oliver MacDonagh, *O'Connell: The Life of Daniel O'Connell 1775-1847* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1991).

⁹³ W.A. Spray, "Reception of the Irish in New Brunswick," in *New Ireland Remembered: Historical Essays on the Irish in New Brunswick*, ed. Peter M. Toner (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1989), 14.

compared to previous years. The Passenger Act of 1823 had made passage to North America more difficult and more expensive. As a result, the Irish arrived in much larger numbers to the English ports of Manchester and Liverpool because the cost of passage across the Irish Sea was inexpensive compared to a journey to North America.⁹⁴ In 1827, however, the Passenger Act was repealed and the rates dropped from [\$]2 and [\$]3 for voyages to New Brunswick as compared to [\$]5 for American destinations.⁹⁵ As a consequence, the lowered cost of trans-Atlantic passage to New Brunswick, less affluent Irish peasants, who previously could not afford passage to North America, migrated in large numbers. Politician and office holder, John McGregor, declared in the 1830s that once “the restrictions in this act were afterwards removed, no language can describe the consequent *disease, misery, and squalid wretchedness* imported, principally from Ireland, into the colonies.”⁹⁶ Indeed, Irish migrants arriving in Saint John were no longer Ulster Protestant farmers or tradesmen, but poorer Irish Catholics from the southern regions of Ireland. As Scott See has observed, “The more skilled, financially-solvent Protestant Irishmen from northern counties began to be replaced by more destitute Catholics from Ireland’s poorer

⁹⁴ For information on the Irish experience in Britain, see: John Archer Jackson, *The Irish in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1963); Lynn Hollen Less, *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979); Graham Davis, *The Irish in Britain, 1815-1914* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1991); Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley, eds., *The Irish in Britain, 1815-1939* (London: Printer, 1989); Alan O’Day, ed., *A Survey of the Irish in England, 1872* (London: Hambledon Press, 1990); Frank Neal, *Sectarian Violence: The Liverpool Experience, 1819-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); M.A. Busted and R.I. Hodgson, “Irish Migrant Responses to Urban Life in Early Nineteenth-Century Manchester,” *The Geographical Journal* Vol. 162, No. 2 (1996): 139-153. For a historiographical survey of the Irish in Britain see: Roger Swift, “The historiography of the Irish in nineteenth-century Britain,” in *The Irish in the New Communities*, Vol. II, ed. Patrick O’Sullivan (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), 52-81.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 17.

⁹⁶ John McGregor, *British America*, Vol. I., (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1832), 458. Emphasis added by author.

southern and western regions,”⁹⁷ particularly once the migration of Famine Irish began in the mid-nineteenth century.

⁹⁷ Scott W. See, “The Orange Order and Social Violence in Mid-Nineteenth Century Saint John,” *Acadiensis* Vol. XIII, No. I (1983), 71.

Part III: Famine Irish in Halifax and Saint John 1845-1850.

In the beginning of the summer in 1845, a potato blight spread across most of Ireland causing a mass failure of the country's most important vegetable crop. The severity and scale of the potato famine was unlike anything witnessed in Europe, and had a drastic affect on the growing population of Ireland, whose diet depended on the small vegetable for survival. According to Kerby Miller, "every harvest of potatoes—practically the only food for most of the island's inhabitants—failed totally or partially," leading to approximately a million deaths.⁹⁸ Travelers who ventured to Ireland during the famine years provide a glimpse of the conditions of Irish folk during the famine years.

John East, a clergyman from England, traveled to the southwest of Ireland in 1847, when the Potato Famine was at its height. Before departing from the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry, East wrote that he

was marked by two or three circumstances painfully indicative of the existing state of things. Our road lay through the two, and my car-driver stopped in the middle of it, leaving me to be quickly besieged by a force of clamorous applicants for relief...Of the miserable crowd around my car...one individual was so preeminent in wretchedness, that it appears to me, that her form can never fade from my remembrance.⁹⁹

Further north, in County Mayo, James Hack Tuke was traveling through the town of Belmullet in 1847. A Quaker philanthropist, Tuke remarked that in the town there was

⁹⁸ Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 280.

⁹⁹ John East, *Glimpses of Ireland in 1847*, in *The Tourists Gaze: Travelers to Ireland 1800-2000*, ed. Glenn Hooper (Cork: Cork University Press, 2001), 83.

“a crowd of almost naked perishing creatures congregating in the streets, in a state of ‘perfect destitution’.” Tuke asked the landlord of the inn where he was residing about the starving people, and the landlord assured him that “they had no homes, no shelter, no land, no food; they slept at night in the streets and begged for support during the day.”¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the state of many Irish during the years of the potato famine was dire.

Crop failures occurred before the Great Famine in Ireland and well into the mid eighteenth century, but the scale of the Irish Famine was greater than any other previous famine.¹⁰¹ The Irish who were most effected were Roman Catholics from the counties in the southern region of Ireland, which resulted in an increased number of Irish Catholics migrating across the Atlantic Ocean to escape the wretched conditions. Saint John received a significant number of these famine Irish migrants, greater than any other city or rural township in the entire Atlantic region.

Although Irish Catholic migration to Saint John began before the potato famine, the numbers were small in comparison to the numbers of Irish Protestants migrating and settling in the Loyalist city well into the late 1830s. However, Irish migration of both Protestants and Catholics drastically declined in 1843 after Lieutenant Governor Sir William Colebrooke successfully petitioned the Home Office

¹⁰⁰ James Hack Tuke, *A Visit to Connaught in the Autumn of 1847*, in *The Tourists Gaze: Travellers to Ireland 1800-2000*, ed. Glenn Hooper (Cork: Cork University Press, 2001), 89.

¹⁰¹ A.T.Q. Stewart, a prominent loyalist historian who has authored several works on Irish History, refutes the significance and academic “popularity” of the Great Famine. Referring to the lesser-known famine of the mid-eighteenth century, Stewart stated “[t]he Famine of 1741 was the worst in Irish History. It has been estimated that almost a third of the entire population perished, so that proportionately it was worse than the famine of 1845-7. Yet it is barely mentioned in history books, and has no place at all in popular imagination. How are we to explain this?” A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Shape of Irish History* (Montreal: McGill Queen’s University Press, 2001), 106. Such claims are countered in Cormac O’Grada’s *Black ’47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy, and Memory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) where he argues that such “revisionism” has obscured the significance of the Irish Famine with the rest of Europe. For an insightful critique of the historical literature on the Irish Famine, see: Cormac O’Grada, “Marking Irish Famine History in 1995,” *History Workshop Journal* 42 (1996): 87-104.

in England to reduce the number of Irish migrants arriving to New Brunswick ports.¹⁰² Saint John, St. Andrews and Miramichi could no longer support their arrival as a result of a faltering economy, which was characterized by high unemployment rates, rising commodity prices, commercial bankruptcies and legislative indebtedness.¹⁰³ Only 987 immigrants arrived in New Brunswick in 1843, however, the political efforts to curtail Irish immigration did not endure, and three years later in 1846, 9,765 Irish migrants arrived, and the following year in 1847, 15,279 Irish migrants landed in New Brunswick ports.¹⁰⁴

The influx of famine Irish migrants to New Brunswick, Saint John in particular, changed the character of Irish immigrants in the region.¹⁰⁵ Irish migrants that arrived in Saint John no longer included affluent Irish Protestants from Ulster or other Protestant immigrants from England or Scotland, but poorer Roman Catholic farmers and labourers from the Irish provinces of Munster and Connaught in the southern and western regions of the country. A local newspaper in Saint John provided a description of the arrival of famine Irish migrants from the ships *Aeolus*:

Several hundred emigrants were landed from the *Aeolus*, many of women were placed on drays on landing, and we have rarely, if ever, witnessed a more sickening and heart rending spectacle....Some of them were almost denuded of clothing, and they appeared from their extreme prostration to be in the last stage

¹⁰² Scott W. See, *Riots in New Brunswick: Orange Nativism and Social Violence in the 1840s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 48.

¹⁰³ Scott W. See, "The Orange Order and Social Violence in Mid-Nineteenth Century Saint John," *Acadiensis* Vol. XIII, No. I, (1983): 70. W.S. MacNutt, *New Brunswick, a History, 1784-1867* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1984), 283-4.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. The year of 1847 is reputed to have been the worst year for crop failures during the Famine years, hence the proper title "Black '47." See: Cormac O'Grada, *Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy, and memory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

¹⁰⁵ According to Scott See, 87 per cent of all famine Irish immigrants who came to New Brunswick landed at Saint John. Scott W. See, *Riots in New Brunswick: Orange Nativism and Social Violence in the 1840s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 49.

of disease. Two or three were evidently so weak and enfeebled, that they were entirely unable to maintain a sitting posture, and they laid at full length on the drays.¹⁰⁶

Many famine Irish migrants used Saint John as a convenient stepping-stone before they moved south to the United States, which was still the preferred destination for most Irish migrants. But regardless of where they preferred to settle, many famine Irish did not have enough funds to move beyond the port where they landed.

Approximately half of all famine Irish who arrived in New Brunswick settled and remained there.

Saint John residents expressed their concern created by the influx of famine Irish by expanding the membership of the Orange Order. Previously, in the early nineteenth century, there was a small number of Orange Lodges located in Saint John and it was not until 1831 that an officially recognized lodge was created. However, the large number of famine Irish victims arriving in Saint John brought concerned Protestants to seek for help from the Orange Order for a viable solution to the Irish Catholic problem. Residents of the port city were terrified that the thousands of newly arrived famine Irish would steal jobs in an economy that was struggling to support the established residents of Saint John. The Orange Order welcomed the growing attention and cemented itself as a vanguard for nativist interests.

While thousands of famine Irish migrants were pouring into the port city of Saint John and having an impact on the social character of that city, only a small

¹⁰⁶ Originally quoted in: W.A. Spray, "The Difficulties Came Upon Us Like a Thunderbolt: Immigrants and Fever in New Brunswick in 1847," in *The Irish in Atlantic Canada 1780-1900*, ed. Thomas P. Power (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1991), 118.

number of Irish famine migrants were landing in Halifax, which was bypassed by the famine ships. The port of Halifax received only 1,220 Irish famine migrants in the middle of May and June in 1847, a relatively small number when compared to the number of Irish famine migrants arriving in Saint John.¹⁰⁷ The city of Saint John and Quebec were the only two geographic locations where victims of the Irish famine landed in British North America and the Atlantic colonies of Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island were largely bypassed.¹⁰⁸

Although the number of famine Irish arriving in Halifax was small and had little impact on the character of the Irish community, the situation of Irish Catholics in Halifax nevertheless changed as the tide of nativism amongst the established population of Halifax rose to levels never previously witnessed. A.J.B. Johnston asserted that nativism evolved in Halifax as a result of changing identities among the established population in Halifax in the mid-nineteenth century. The permanent settlers of Halifax, who had lived in the city for several generations, stopped thinking of themselves as being either Scottish, English, or other descent,¹⁰⁹ and started to see themselves as bona fide Nova Scotians. In the eyes of the dominant community of Protestant colonists living in the garrison city, Irish Catholics did not fit the criteria to be accepted as Nova Scotians due to their allegiance to the Catholic Pope. Scottish

¹⁰⁷ Susan Morse, "Immigration to Nova Scotia 1839-1851," (M.A. Thesis: Dalhousie University, 1946), 86.

¹⁰⁸ Donald MacKay stated, "Emigration to Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island had decline by the 1830's but these were the years that the Irish strengthened their positions in New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario." See: Donald MacKay, *Flight From Famine: The Coming of the Irish to Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1992), 13. Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth argue MacKay's assertion further to specifically Irish Catholic migration: "Earlier Irish Catholic communities in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, and the Miramichi area of New Brunswick were largely avoided in the Famine emigration." See: Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links & Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 73.

¹⁰⁹ A.J.B. Johnston, "Nativism in Nova Scotia: Anti-Irish Ideology in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century British Colony" in *The Irish in Atlantic Canada*, ed. Thomas P. Power (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1991), 24.

and Acadian Catholics would have faced the same discrimination, but for many of the colonists living in Halifax the Irish were particularly frowned upon.¹¹⁰

The form of nativism that existed in Halifax in the mid nineteenth century was purely rhetorical and violent conflict between Irish Catholics and the established population of Halifax was relatively rare. This may be attributed to the fact that despite widespread anti-Catholicism, the number of Irish Protestants in Halifax was relatively small when compared to Saint John. Irish Protestants were largely found in the rural townships that were settled in the early to mid eighteenth century. As a consequence, organizations such as the Orange Order had not flourished in Halifax as they had in Saint John. A lodge did exist in Halifax in 1800, but most lodges and their processions were scattered about throughout Nova Scotia in areas such as central Cumberland, Cobequid Bay, and Pictou.¹¹¹ These were areas where most of the original Irish Protestant settlers lived and would established lodges, away from the city centre of Halifax.

While lacking formal sectarianism, anti-Catholicism and anti-Irish prejudice was shaped by the printed word in Halifax. Articles, pamphlets, and speeches by prominent residents of Halifax who were of Protestant and British descent all condemned Irish Catholics, who they believed were not only strangers in their city, but also as Roman Catholics were interfering with progress, a popular nineteenth century idea that expressed a faith in advancement only conceivable in the mind set of a nineteenth-century Protestant. The Nova Scotian politician and inventor Abraham

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 25.

¹¹¹ Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore: A Historical Geography of the Orange Order in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 72.

Gesner expressed his opinion regarding Irish Catholics in Halifax as if the entire community shared his sentiments. According to Gesner, there was a “decided spirit of opposition...of the native born inhabitants to the further introduction of the poor and labouring classes of Irish into the country,” but that the immigration of “English, lowland Scotch, or German emigrants, would be cheered by the inhabitants of Nova Scotia.”¹¹²

Gesner was not the only influential Halagonian perpetuating a negative image of Irish Catholics during the mid nineteenth century; even prominent men like Joseph Howe entered the rhetorical battle against the Irish. Howe was annoyed by the apparent lack of support for the British monarchy among Irish Catholics and their supposed inability to raise their occupational status. Terrence Punch has argued that Howe supposed the Irish “in terms that mocked their occupational status” and that Howe himself stated the Irish in Halifax amounted to “the grand army of Guagers, Haberdashers, Grocers, Attornies.”¹¹³ Both Howe’s and Gesner’s comments are examples of the anti-Irish rhetoric that flourished in the mid nineteenth century British colony of Halifax. Their sly remarks about the religion and occupational background of Irish Catholics were designed to demonstrate that these immigrants could not be considered true Nova Scotians.

Anti-Irish sentiment and nativism in mid nineteenth century Saint John was fundamentally unlike Halifax’s anti-Irish rhetorical battle due in part to the changing Irish community of Saint John, and also the presence of the Orange Order. Irish

¹¹² Abraham Gesner, *The Industrial Resources of Nova Scotia* (Halifax: A. and W. MacKinlay, 1849), 332-4.

¹¹³ Terrence Punch, “Anti-Irish Prejudice in Nineteenth-Century Nova Scotia: The Literary and Statistical Evidence” in *The Irish in Atlantic Canada 1780-1800* ed. Thomas P. Power (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1991), 15.

Catholics continued to settle in Saint John during the mid nineteenth century, which pressured the established population of Saint John to turn to the Orange Order to confront the increasing Irish Catholic community, and attempt to curb Irish Catholics from settling in the Loyalist stronghold. Saint John residents were not only worried that recent Irish Catholic immigrants would decrease the availability of cheap labour, but they were also persuaded by the Orange Order to believe that the Irish famine was a papal ploy to rub out the Protestant influence in the colony. As Scott See has put it, many Orangemen claimed “the famine immigration was but a skirmish in a global battle, masterminded in the Vatican, to expunge Protestantism from the earth.”¹¹⁴ Irish Catholics in Saint John did, however, face the same form of printed discrimination that existed in Halifax. In both communities this was characterized by the stereotype of the Irish Catholic as an unruly and violent individual. The Saint John newspapers were full of stories that highlighted the violent tactics employed by many Irish Catholics in Ireland against the government. Orangemen of Saint John tarred all Irish Catholics, particularly famine Irish, with the same brush of violence and unlawfulness, which convinced Saint John residents that their city was being overrun with hooligans who had little control over drink or violence.¹¹⁵

The Orange Order became the institution of choice for nativist interest in mid nineteenth century Saint John, leading to an increase in the numbers of lodges in the city. Members of the Orange Lodges were not specifically Irish Protestants. In fact,

¹¹⁴ Scott W. See, “The Orange Order and Social Violence in Mid-Nineteenth Century Saint John,” *Acadiensis* Vol. XIII, No. 1 (1983): 79

¹¹⁵ Scott See, *Riots in New Brunswick: Orange Nativism and Social Violence in the 1840s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 62-66.

the majority of members were drawn from Saint John families of various origins who had lived in the city for generations, including eighteenth century British Loyalists and New England descendants. This made the situation in Saint John very different from that in Ireland, as it was not a battle between Irish Catholics and Protestants, but between Irish Catholics and the established population of Saint John.¹¹⁶

Physical violence between members of the Orange Lodge and the famine Irish in Saint John erupted in 1847. Every year on July Twelfth, members of Orange Lodge across the world celebrate the defeat of King James (a Roman Catholic) at the hands of King William of Orange (a Protestant) at the Battle of the Boyne. On July Twelfth, 1847, when Irish famine migration was at its peak, the Orangemen of Saint John invited neighbouring Orangemen and staged the largest procession since the organization was founded in New Brunswick.¹¹⁷ Orangemen began parading around streets of Saint John, celebrating the Battle of the Boyne and playing tunes that were offensive to Irish Catholics. As the Orangemen continued their celebrations throughout the city, a growing number of Irish Catholics followed the group and became infuriated by their procession. The two groups collided and the Irish Catholics attacked the Orangemen with sticks and bricks, and smashed several of the band's instruments.¹¹⁸ Forced to retreat, the Orangemen fled to their lodges, collecting firearms and any other objects that could be used as a weapon. Irish Catholics also retreated to their strongholds, where weapons such as firearms were gathered in order

¹¹⁶ T.W. Acheson, "The Irish Community in Saint John 1815-1850," in *New Ireland Remembered: Historical Essays on the Irish in New Brunswick*, ed. Peter M. Toner (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1988), 43.

¹¹⁷ Scott W. See, "The Orange Order and Social Violence in Mid-Nineteenth Century Saint John," *Acadiensis* Vol. XIII, No. 1 (1983): 84.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

to prepare for another confrontation. The Orangemen and Irish Catholics met each other at York Point and a battle ensued. According to Scott See, “[v]olleys of shots from both parties shattered the summer air, leaving scores of wounded lying in the streets along the procession route.”¹¹⁹ At the major’s request, a detachment of soldiers were sent and the heated battle was stopped. No one would claim victory at York Point in 1847, and more physical battles between each group would continue until the end of the 1850s.¹²⁰

The physical violence endured by Irish Catholics in Saint John during the mid nineteenth century tapered off as the 1850s dawned. The New Brunswick economy improved and job scarcity was no longer an issue as it had been in the 1840s. Irish Catholic migration to Saint John drastically declined after 1849, and there were no more “coffin ships” from Ireland arriving in the Saint John ports due to improved economic conditions in Ireland. Furthermore, the Orangemen of Saint John stopped celebrating the “glorious twelfth”, which had sparked the violent clashes between the Orangemen and Irish Catholics. All of these factors contributed to the decline in violence and nativism among Irish Catholics and the established population in Saint John.

The situation for Irish Catholics in Halifax also changed as the 1840s drew to a close, but not for the better. Certainly, the rhetorical battle that had raged between prominent Halifax residents and Irish Catholic immigrants in the mid nineteenth century had passed, but in the 1850s, tensions between Irish Catholics and the

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 85.

¹²⁰ See Ibid., 86-89.

established population of Halifax began to simmer once again for a number of different reasons. First, the outbreak of the Crimean War (1854-1856) that pitted the British, along with the French and Ottoman Empire, against the Russians, had elicited a different response from Irish Catholics than among the majority of Nova Scotians. The latter were pro-war and supported the British in their campaign against the Russians, while the former were, according to Terrence Punch, indifferent; there were many Irish who had even condemned the war.¹²¹ Loyal Nova Scotians who supported the British would have viewed Irish Catholic opinion of the Crimean war as unpatriotic. Second, Liberal politician, Joseph Howe, who acted as the Chairman of the Railway Commission on the Executive Council, traveled to Boston and New York to recruit young men to work on a railway line that was under construction in Halifax.¹²² Political enemies of Howe argued that the real purpose of his trip was to illegally draft Irish Catholics to Halifax to serve in the British Army and fight in the Crimean War. The president of the Charitable Irish society, William Condon, telegraphed this information to an Irish newspaper in New York, which exposed Howe and his activities.¹²³ Howe quickly returned to Halifax infuriated by the meddling of Condon and the Irish Catholics in the city who supported him.

Hostility between Irish Catholics and the established population of Halifax came to a head when news of a violent riot on a railway line reached the city in 1856.

¹²¹ Terrence M. Punch, *Irish Halifax: The Immigrant Generation, 1815-1859* (Halifax: International Education Centre, Saint Mary's University, 1981), 54.

¹²² Scott W. See, "Variations on a Borderlands Theme: Nativism and Collective Violence in Northeastern North America in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," in *New England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons* ed. Stephen J. Hornsby and John G. Reid (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 137.

¹²³ Ibid.

The exact details of the riot are unknown, but according to Scott W. See, on the religious holiday known as Corpus Christi Day, “Protestant railway workers mocked Catholics beliefs in a testy confrontation....[And] [i]mmediately afterward...about a hundred Irish Catholics attacked a shanty belonging to the Protestant Gourlay family, which was located north of Enfield on the county border between Halifax and Hants.”¹²⁴ Although the Gourlay Shanty Riot took place well outside the metropolis of Halifax, its affect on the residents who lived in the city (once news of the riot reached Halifax) was profound. A hundred militiamen from Halifax were sent out to Enfield to restore order amongst the railway workers and Joseph Howe left the city to lead an investigation into the riot. When he returned to Halifax Howe unleashed an outburst against the Irish Catholics for their disloyalty that he linked to the riots.¹²⁵ An anti-Catholic campaign that was fueled by the Gourlay Shanty Riot, accusations Irish Catholic disloyalty, and Howe’s attacks on the Irish spread throughout Halifax. There was even a Protestant Alliance formed to attempt to keep Catholics out of the government.¹²⁶ Such efforts to halt Roman Catholic’s from entering public office were not successful and once the Crimean War ended such anti-Catholic agitation subsided.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 138.

¹²⁶ Terrence M. Punch, *Irish Halifax: The Immigrant Generation, 1815-1859* (Halifax: International Education Centre, Saint Mary’s University, 1981), 66.

Part IV: Conclusion:

Irish experiences in the urban port cities of Halifax and Saint John between 1750 and 1850 shared similar characteristics and also distinct differences. The origins of Irish migrants to Saint John (and indeed the rest of New Brunswick) were mostly from the northern province of Ulster, predominately counties Derry, Donegal, and Tyrone, although a notable number of Irish migrants also arrived from the southern county of Cork.¹²⁷ The specific county origins of Irish migrants to Saint John was a result of the timber trade conducted between Ulster and Saint John, which in turn facilitated an increased influx of Irish Protestant settlers to New Brunswick as the amount of trade conducted between the two areas elevated during the early nineteenth century. Conversely, Irish migrants to Halifax were concentrated south of Ulster, in the provinces of Leinster and Munster from the southeast counties of Waterford, Wexford and Tipperary.¹²⁸ Irish migrants to Halifax were much more cosmopolitan than Saint John because migration to Nova Scotia was not controlled by trade of an economic staple such as timber or fish. Instead, Irish migration to Halifax was composed of Irish migrants from Newfoundland in search of better economic

¹²⁷ For a detailed examination of Irish Immigration to New Brunswick see: Peter M. Toner, "The Origins of the New Brunswick Irish, 1851," *Journal of Canadian Studies/ Revue d'Etudes Canadiennes* 23 (1988-89): 104-119. As tabulated by Toner, between 1780 and 1845, the percentage of Irish migrants from Ireland were mostly from Ulster and settled either in Saint John city or around the Saint John Valley. See also, William A. Spray, "Reception of the Irish in New Brunswick," in *New Ireland Remembered: Historical Essays on the Irish in New Brunswick*, ed. Peter M. Toner (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1988), 9-26.

¹²⁸ Terrence Punch meticulously examined Irish migration and settlement to Halifax throughout his various works. See, Terrence Punch, "The Irish in Halifax, 1836-1871: A Study in Ethnic Assimilation," (M.A. Thesis, Dalhousie University, 1976).

conditions, Irish soldiers in the British army who arrived in the port town, and British immigrants who brought along their Irish servants upon arrival in Halifax.¹²⁹

Nevertheless, similar experiences of Irish migrants in Halifax and Saint John were evidenced during the period between 1815 and 1830, when Irish migrants were well received in both urban port cities. Halifax received a small number of Irish migrants that turn did not overwhelm the permanent residents of Halifax who, in turn, welcomed the newly arrived immigrants. Saint John witnessed a rise in the availability of labour as a result of improved economic conditions after the Napoleonic Wars ended, which demanded a readily available work force. As a consequence Irish migrants arriving in Saint John during this period were well received because they could fill in this gap and increase the prosperity of the port town's economy.¹³⁰

Irish migrants who arrived to Saint John in the 1840s, however, were not welcomed by the established population because of their poor health conditions and large numbers. Between 1846 and 1847, 25,000 famine Irish arrived to the city, many of which had contracted deadly ship fever or typhus while on the vessels that carried them across the Atlantic Ocean.¹³¹ Irish migrants that caught these diseases were quarantined at the hospital on Partridge Island by order of New Brunswick officials who were concerned over the possibility that some of the contagious illnesses might

¹²⁹ See: Edna Press, "The Irish: The Urban Settlers," in *Banked Fires: The Ethnics of Nova Scotia*, ed. Douglas F. Campbell (Port Credit: Scribblers' Press, 1978), 93-112.

¹³⁰ W.A. Spray, "Reception of the Irish in New Brunswick," in *New Ireland Remembered: Historical Essays on the Irish in New Brunswick*, ed. Peter M. Toner (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1988), 14, Terrence Punch, *Irish Halifax: The Immigrant Generation, 1815-1859* (Halifax: International Education Centre, Saint Mary's University, 1981), 1.

¹³¹ Spray, "Reception," 22.

infect the city's population. Saint Johners, on the other hand, were more troubled by the prospect that these new migrants might apply for work if they decide to stay in the city, thereby limiting the number of jobs available for themselves.¹³² They expressed their fears to members of the Orange Order who, in turn, argued that the sudden influx of famine migrants—many of whom were Roman Catholic—was a papal ploy to expunge the influence of Protestantism from the city. Several Saint John Protestants were convinced by these arguments and joined the ranks of the Orange Order, which became Saint John's vanguard of nativist interests. Violent physical clashes occurred between Irish Catholics and members of the Orange Order throughout the 1840s, but eventually came to an end by the 1850s once Irish migration declined and nativism faded.

Irish Catholics in Halifax also experienced nativism in the 1840s and 1850s, except unlike Saint John, very few physical altercations took place and prominent residents in the city expressed their animosity against Irish Catholics through the written word. For example, in his book that examined the industrial resources of Nova Scotia, inventor Abraham Gesner pointed out that most residents in the province were opposed to the arrival of more labouring classes of Irish men and women and that they preferred immigrants from England, Germany, and the lowlands of Scotland.¹³³ Politician and influential journalist Joseph Howe expressed his attitude towards Irish Catholics in the local Halifax newspaper the *Nova Scotian*, which was the medium

¹³² At the time of famine Irish migration, the economy of Saint John struggled with high unemployment rates, rising commodity prices, commercial bankruptcies, and legislative debt.

¹³³ Abraham Gesner, *The Industrial Resources of Nova Scotia* (Halifax: A. and W. MacKinlay, 1849), 332-4.

that he used to mock their occupational status and inability to be pro-British.¹³⁴ Irish Catholics would have to tolerate the negative comments made against them by these prominent individuals until the 1850s, but they did not have to confront the form of nativism contrived by the Orange Order in Saint John since most Irish Protestants settled in more rural areas rather than urban Halifax.

While the Irish experience in Saint John and Halifax were similar they were not identical. Three factors account for the variations; the source areas of Irish migrants; the host communities where they settled, and the time in which they migrated. These three factors are crucial to understand when examining not only Irish experiences in Saint John and Halifax, but also other towns or cities where the Irish were less well received. The Irish experience in St. John's, Newfoundland, which has hitherto received little scholarly attention, also highlights how Irish circumstances varied throughout Atlantic Canada.¹³⁵ This is the subject of the following chapter.

¹³⁴ Punch, "Anti-Irish," 15.

¹³⁵ It is difficult to discern why the Irish experience in St. John's has never received a sufficient amount of scholarly attention, considering that the Irish were one of the most important ethno-religious groups of that city. Recently, however, Carolyn Lambert has published an article that examines the support of various Irish causes in the city of St. John's. See: Carolyn Lambert, "Tho' changed be your climate, unchanged be your hearts: Support for Irish Causes in St. John's, Newfoundland, 1840-86," *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* Vol. 34, No. 2, (2008): 47-55.

Chapter 3

Part I: Introduction to the Irish in St. John's, Newfoundland.

During the early period of the island's history, Newfoundland was classed by England as a fishery and not recognized as an official colony. The various countries that ventured to Newfoundland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries never intended to establish permanent settlements, and were only using the island's oceanic resources for the economic benefit of their own country.¹³⁶ Even after the English gained possession of Newfoundland's eastern shore when the Treaty of Utrecht was signed in 1713, their motive was to acquire a naval foothold in the North Atlantic rim to contest French possession of the island, and they did not encourage colonization of the island as they had in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick.

However, a small permanent population emerged on the island between the early seventeenth mid eighteenth centuries, particularly on the Avalon Peninsula and in St. John's, where the Irish comprised a small but expanding portion of this populace. The English Government monitored the Irish in St. John's and specifically targeted them against allegations of disaffection and disloyalty. And, unlike the Irish who settled in Halifax and Saint John, the Irish in St. John's were not viewed through the eyes of the colonial administrators as welcomed settlers and reports against their

¹³⁶ See: Sean Cadigan, *Newfoundland & Labrador: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009) 26-71.

arrival consistently appear throughout the annals of the colonial officials records, which are characterized by concerns over potential allegiance to the French.

Initial Irish migration to St. John's was seasonal in nature and most Irish arrivals to the town in the late seventeenth century were young Irish servants who returned to Ireland after the fishery months ended. These young Irishmen did not intend to settle permanently on the island and only ventured to Newfoundland to earn some capital, which would benefit their family back in Ireland. It was not until the arrival of several Irish women to Newfoundland that permanent Irish settlement occurred.¹³⁷ However, unlike the Irish in Halifax and Saint John, the Irish migrants to St. John's were exclusively drawn from counties Wexford and Waterford, particularly within a forty-mile radius of the latter county. This highly concentrated source area of Irish migrants to St. John's occurred as a result of the provisions trade conducted between the south east of Ireland, the West Country of England, and Newfoundland.

In addition, Irish migrants arriving in St. John's did not have similar political sympathies. Irish residents of St. John's were perennially accused of disloyalty to the British Crown, and they were closely monitored with the French during periods of conflict. Indeed, there are a handful of instances of Irishmen in St. John's deserting to the French side. In the later periods of Irish migration (particularly in the early nineteenth century), Irishmen arriving in St. John's were accused of having republican sympathies. The centre stage of the United Irishmen rebellion was in Wexford, a major source area of Irish migrants to St. John's. And the United Irish "mutiny" in

¹³⁷ Willeen Keough, "The Riddle of Peggy Mountain: Regulation of Irish Women's Sexuality on the Southern Avalon, 1750-1860," *Acadiensis* Vol. XXXI No. 2 (2002), 41-44.

1800 did not curb the apprehensions of the colonial officials stationed in the city concerning the political leanings of Irish residents.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the Irish experience of St. John's, Newfoundland by focusing on the three factors that shaped the town's unique experience as they had shaped those of Halifax and Saint John. These three factors include the source area of Irish migration, the host community of settlement, and the time in of arrival in St. John's.

The first section of this chapter details the advent of the Irish provisions trade and how Ireland became connected with St. John's, specifically the counties located in the south east of Ireland and the West Country of England. The section also examines the seasonal nature of Irish migration to the town and the dominating presence of English settlers. The second section examines the beginning stages of the Irish community in St. John's, allegations of French collusion and Irish disloyalty to the British Crown, and how the social characteristics of the town and colonial policy of Newfoundland affected the Irish experience. The third section details the equalization of the number of Irish to English residents in St. John's, the restrictions placed upon Irish Catholics in St. John's, and the arrival of North America's first Roman Catholic bishop, James Louis O'Donel. The fourth and final section examines the Irish community in St. John's until the mid-nineteenth century, and the divide among English Protestants and Irish Catholics, which ensued after Newfoundland achieved representative government in 1832 and lasted until the 1850s and beyond.

Part II: The Advent of the Irish Provisions Trade and Early Irish Migration to Newfoundland.

Ireland first became meaningfully connected with Newfoundland in the late seventeenth century through the advent of the provisions trade, where amenities such as salted beef and clothing were provided to the migratory fishermen residing on the island in the summer months.¹³⁸ Writing in 1681, Captain James Story commented that Irish trade to Newfoundland contained “all sorts of frises, linen cloath, candles, cloath Hatts, shoooes, stockens, beefe, porke, bread, butter, chesse & all sorts of small merchndise.”¹³⁹ Irish ports involved in the Newfoundland provisions trade were located in the south east of Ireland, in counties Dublin, Waterford, and Cork, the central areas of industry in Ireland that were based on the importation of raw materials (See Map I).¹⁴⁰ Before they became involved with Newfoundland, these ports forged trading links with several other North American colonies, most prominently the West Indies.¹⁴¹ Provisions, textiles, and Irish servants were traded to the West Indies in exchange for sugar and Chesapeake tobacco.

Irish ports located in the south east were well versed in the nature of transatlantic trade, but the inclusion of Newfoundland into the Irish provisions trade route was a consequence of three specific developments: the implementation of the

¹³⁸ John Mannion noted that “[t]here is no clear evidence of any year-round or permanent Irish population” in Newfoundland between the early to mid seventeenth century. John Mannion, “Irish Migrants to Newfoundland” (public lecture delivered to the Newfoundland Historical Society, St. John’s, Newfoundland, October 23, 1973), 1-2.

¹³⁹ Captain James Story, “Answers to Enquiries,” 1 September 1681, CO 1/47, 115.

¹⁴⁰ L.M. Cullen, *Anglo-Irish Trade 1660-1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968), 5-6.

¹⁴¹ Other North American colonies that were involved in trade with Irish ports—consequently attracting Irish migrants to settle in these areas—included Virginia, Maryland, and the Amazon. See: L.M. Cullen, “The Irish Diaspora of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries” in *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500-1800* ed. Nicholas Canny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 126; Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 139.

Irish Cattle Acts; a greater demand for salted provisions across the Atlantic; and West Country ships calling into Irish ports en route to Newfoundland. Instituted by the English government in 1663 and again in 1671, the Irish cattle acts imposed a duty on the importation of live Irish cattle or sheep to England in order to protect English agriculture from cheap Irish competition.¹⁴² The effect of the Acts was not drastic. Irish exporters of cattle simply transferred from live cattle to barrels of salted beef, or salted provisions. Subsequently, demand for these provisions across the Atlantic Ocean increased, particularly in Newfoundland where the landscape was unsuitable for subsistence farming. It was not Irish ships, however, delivering salted provisions to Newfoundland. Instead, ships from the West Country of England that had previously sailed directly to Newfoundland began calling into Irish ports along the south east to collect salted provisions *en route* to Newfoundland.

Irish involvement in the provisions trade was strictly limited to the loading of provision barrels onto English ships, and, as a consequence, very few Irishmen arrived and settled in Newfoundland in the late seventeenth century. The number of English settlers on the island was far larger than any other group of Europeans, and it would be impossible to assert that any significant number of Irish resided on the island, and not nearly enough to be designated as a community.¹⁴³ English settlement in Newfoundland began in earnest in the last decades of the seventeenth century and the opening decades of the eighteenth century, when a small resident population of

¹⁴² The first act imposed a duty on the importation of cattle or sheep to England during the main fattening season, and the second act implemented a complete ban on Irish exports of beef, pork and bacon. "Irish Cattle Acts," in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, ed. S.J. Connolly (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 83.

¹⁴³ John Mannion, "Irish Migrants to Newfoundland" (public lecture delivered to the Newfoundland Historical Society, St. John's, Newfoundland, October 23, 1973), 1-2.

English emerged on the Avalon Peninsula to support the Grand Bank fishery. Official residency in Newfoundland was limited to the catching and curing of cod in the summer months, but the English accepted the fact that year round settlement was needed in order to protect their interests on the Avalon Peninsula from rival Europeans.¹⁴⁴

English settlements were scattered throughout the Avalon, but mostly concentrated along the eastern portion of the peninsula. Settlements such as Ferryland, Tors Cove, Bay Bulls, and further up north in Carbonear, had around two to five English families living in each community between 1675 and 1677. The area that had the largest concentration of English settlers on the Avalon was St. John's, with a population of over fifteen families and around twenty-seven households.¹⁴⁵ St. John's was one of the most important ports in Newfoundland due to its central location on the Avalon. Positioned on the eastern side of the peninsula in the south east of Newfoundland, the wide mouth that opened the harbour of St. John's to the Atlantic Ocean had attracted several European fishermen throughout the sixteenth century. These fishermen used the harbour to anchor their vessels before embarking back to either the Grand Banks to fish or to return home. England was the first country to claim ownership of the harbour, when in 1583 Elizabethan explorer Sir Humphrey Gilbert landed and proclaimed the harbour to be possession of the British Crown.¹⁴⁶

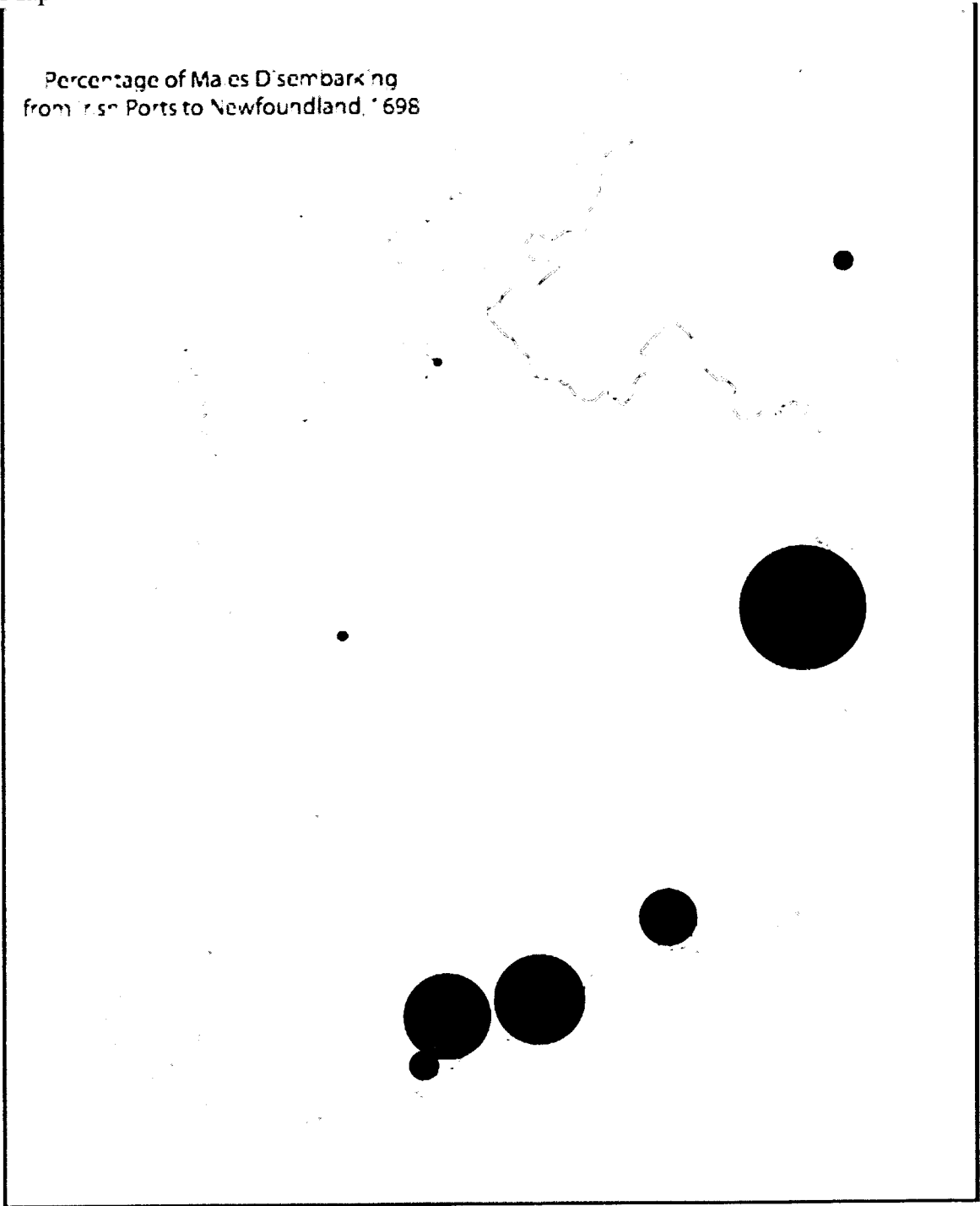
¹⁴⁴ Sean Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 45.

¹⁴⁵ W. Gordon Handcock, *Soe longe as there comes noe women: Origins of English Settlement in Newfoundland* (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1989), 41; John Mannion, "Virtualling a Fishery: Newfoundland Diet and the Origins of the Irish Provisions Trade, 1675-1700" *International Journal of Maritime History* Vol. XII, No. I (2000): 5.

¹⁴⁶ Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador*, 39.

Map I.¹⁴⁷

Percentage of Males Disembarking
from Irish Ports to Newfoundland, 1698



¹⁴⁷ Source: John Mannion, "Irish Migration and Settlement in Newfoundland: The Formative Phase, 1697-1732," *Newfoundland Studies* Vol. 17, No. 2 (2001): 266. The author would like to thank Don Bonner of Saint Mary's Geography Department for helping devise the various maps used in this paper.

And although Gilbert's rather informal declaration of St. John's as an English settlement attracted retaliation from the French, St. John's was certainly an English town.

In the late seventeenth century, West Country merchants began recruiting young Irish males to work as servants in Newfoundland during the summer months. Previously, the only servants who worked in the fishery were from the West Country of England. However, a greater demand for labour and a shortage of help at home forced English merchants to publish advertisements in Irish newspapers in order to attract young males to work in the fishery, or they would recruit young Irishmen in pubs and local taverns in Ireland. Merchants recruited Irish servants from towns in the southern ports of Ireland, which included Cork, Youghal, and Waterford.¹⁴⁸

Young Irish servants who ventured to Newfoundland to work in the fishery were much more cosmopolitan in their background than commonly assumed, and they do not fit within the typical depiction of a poor Irish migrant. As John Mannion has argued, "[s]ome of the Irish were the surplus sons of small but comfortable farmers unwilling to subdivide land; others worked plots too small to be economically viable under the changing market conditions; others were fishermen-farmers, farm labourers or cottiers; and still others were engaged in a wide variety of crafts in the towns and countryside of the southeast."¹⁴⁹ While the Irish who arrived to Newfoundland throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were individuals who had been

¹⁴⁸ Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador*, 57.

¹⁴⁹ John Mannion, ed., *The Peopling of Newfoundland: Essays in Historical Geography* (St. John's: Memorial University Institute of Social and Economic Research, 2003), 10.

involved in various pursuits beyond farming, they were drawn from one specific region. Not surprisingly, West Country merchants tended to hire Irish males from the counties in the south east of Ireland where they had procured their provisions.¹⁵⁰

Although portions of Ireland had become highly Anglicized since the seventeenth century, Irish migrants from the south east of Ireland were mostly Irish speaking Roman Catholics.¹⁵¹ These two markers of identity, both cultural and religious, set Irishmen and women apart from the West Country merchants—who were English speaking Protestants—but this did not appear to have hindered English merchant's decision to recruit Irish servants.

Additionally, the young Irish servants who initially arrived in Newfoundland did not reside on the island for more than two to three summers and did not have any intention of staying for several reasons. First, since Irish migration to Newfoundland in the late seventeenth century was largely seasonal in nature, very few Irish settled permanently on the island.¹⁵² Their intention was to work in the fishery, secure their wages, and sail back home before the winter months. Second, the scant number of Irish women migrating to Newfoundland discouraged many Irish men from settling on the island, and the formation of year-round communities was less likely without the arrival of Irish women.¹⁵³ Finally, there were no Roman Catholic priests in

¹⁵⁰ Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 140.

¹⁵¹ Robert McCrum, William Cran, and Robert MacNeil, *The Story of English* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), 170.

¹⁵² John Mannion, "Irish Migrants to Newfoundland" (public lecture delivered to the Newfoundland Historical Society, St. John's, Newfoundland, October 23, 1973), 1-2.

¹⁵³ Willeen Keough, *The Slender Thread: Irish Women on the Southern Avalon, 1750-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 57-70).

Newfoundland, and the lack of religious services may have deterred some Irish Catholics from permanently settling.

Although it is difficult to tabulate how many Irish came to Newfoundland through the provisions trade in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, no area of Newfoundland had a significant number of permanent Irish settlers.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the links forged between the south east of Ireland, the West Country of England, and Newfoundland through the advent of the Irish provisions trade and the recruitment of young Irish servants to work in the fishery established a connection that would later facilitate the arrival of many more Irish men and women. Furthermore, the town of St. John's, although an English establishment, would also witness an increasing number of Irish residents due to its central location on the Avalon.

¹⁵⁴ Calculating the number of Irish servants arriving in Newfoundland during the mid to late seventeenth century is difficult considering the relative lack of sources indicating the actual number of Irish on English ships sailing to Newfoundland. Mannion noted that Irish servants dominated during the late seventeenth century, but their names were rarely recorded, and surnames do not provide an accurate indication of origin of birth considering the high amount of Irish descendents living in England who may have had Irish surnames. See: John Mannion, "Irish Migration and Settlement in Newfoundland: The Formative Phase, 1697-1732," *Newfoundland Studies* Vol. 17 No. 2 (2001): 261.

Part III: The Early Period of the Irish in St. John's, Newfoundland (1700-1750).

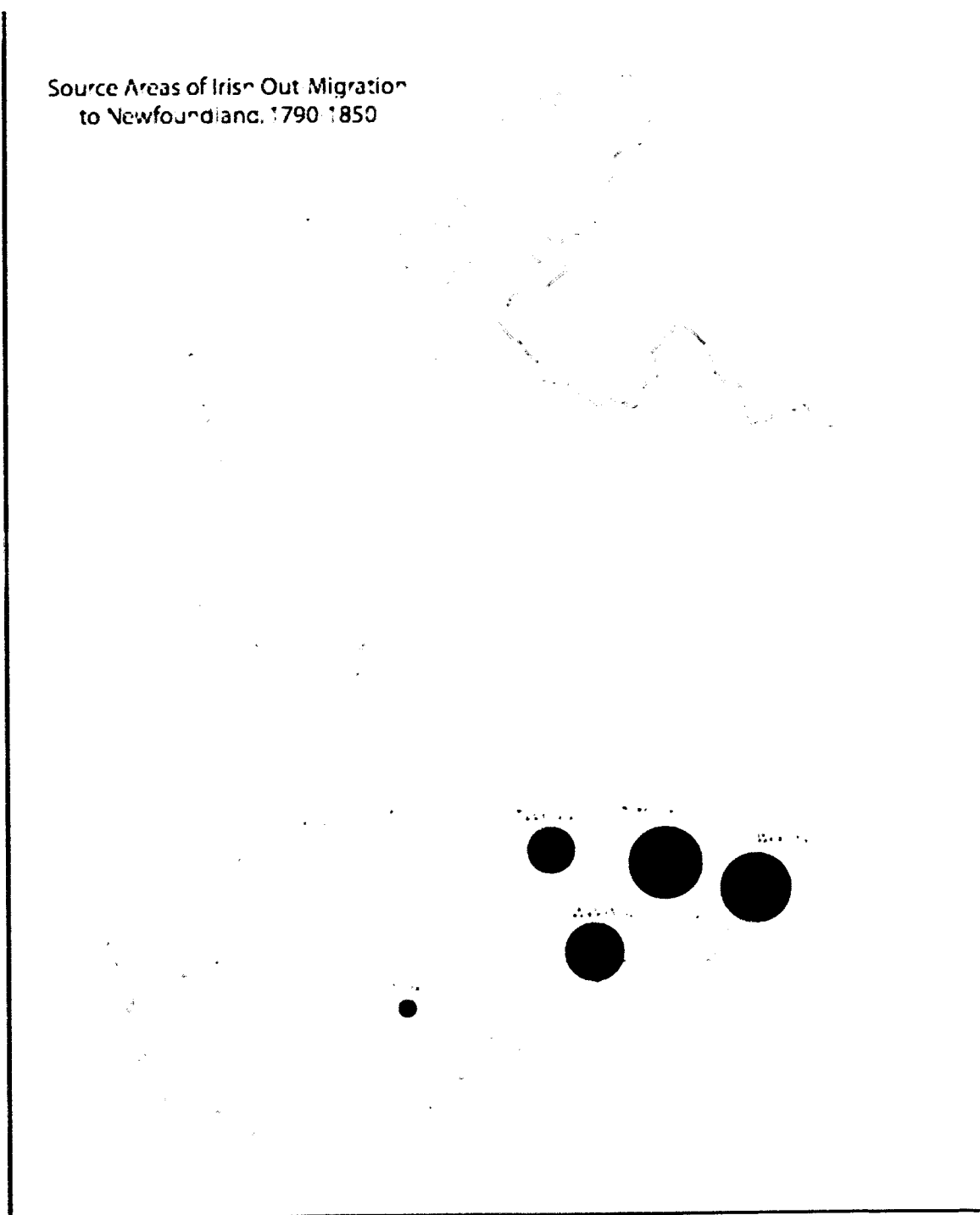
The connections forged between the south east of Ireland and eastern Avalon Peninsula through the provisions trade in the late seventeenth century inextricably linked Ireland and Newfoundland together. Irish immigrants set out annually in English ships to take part in the fishery, and returned back to Ireland with their wages in tow once the fishery months ended. Those who stayed behind on the island in the winter months were mostly Englishmen, who reconstructed fishing stations in order to prepare for the upcoming summer fishery. However, with the advent of the eighteenth century, a small number of Irish began to settle on the island permanently, especially along the southern and eastern portion of the Avalon in areas such as Placentia, Trepassy, Ferryland, Bay Bulls, and St. John's. The Irish who arrived and settled in St. John's in the early eighteenth century were closely monitored by British colonial officials who questioned their loyalty and feared an alliance with the French, who consistently attacked the British garrison throughout the eighteenth century with the aim of gaining possession of the important harbour. The Irish were also viewed as being prone to criminality and were frequently accused of robberies, drunkenness, and felonies. Indeed, the Irish were specifically targeted by the colonial officials stationed in St. John's as unwanted settlers and despite their small numbers they figure prominently in English colonial office records.

The majority of Irish migrants and settlers to St. John's in the early eighteenth century continued to arrive from the south east of Ireland, specifically Kilkenny,

Waterford, Wexford and Tipperary (See Map II) attracted to the island by the prospect of work in the summer fishery. Young Irish servants were hired by planters in St. John's to help with the catching and curing of cod. West Country merchants, whose central aim was to procure Irish servants to work in the Newfoundland fishery, were not troubled by their recruits' language or religion. It did not matter to them that the Irish began to settle permanently on the island either since this did not affect their own activities. The same cannot be said, however, for the colonial officials stationed in St. John's, who closely monitored the growth of Irish in the town and recorded their actions.

The central concern of the colonial officials (ie. commodores and governors) in the early eighteenth century was the potential for Irish collusion with the French. The French controlled near by Louisbourg in Cape Breton, and the British administration was responsible for preventing them from attacking the important port town with its strategic position beside the grand banks. Indeed, the French attacked the Avalon settlements in 1690 and they briefly captured and occupied St. John's in 1709.

There were a few Irish soldiers stationed in the St. John's garrison after it was established in 1697, and the English believed that these Irish soldiers were disloyal spies that would fight along side the French if they invaded because of the recent

Map II.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Source: John Mannion, "The Irish Migrations to Newfoundland," Summary of a Public Lecture delivered to the Newfoundland Historical Society, October 23, 1973 (Unpublished typescript, Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Queen Elizabeth Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL), 3.

alliance between French and Irish forces opposed to the revolution of 1688.¹⁵⁶ In 1702, English authorities noted that Irish Catholics soldiers were “spyess, corrupting & debauching his Maj[esties] Servants,” and if they had the opportunity, they would “desert their Service and bring in a French power.”¹⁵⁷ In 1709, two English planters from St. John’s noted, “not less than 40 or 50 English and Irish...have declared themselves subjects to the King of France and have several times taken up arms against the English.”¹⁵⁸

Irish servants continued to be accused of collusion in St. John’s with French men present in St. John’s in the early eighteenth century. Thomas Joyce, a young Irish servant arrived in the town in 1699 to work for Francis Joyce, a planter in the town who may have been a relative. He was summoned to a hearing at Fort Williams in 1702 where he and Henry Neal testified to having a conversation in French with two Frenchmen. Neal revealed that the Frenchmen had planned to steal a shallop from Joyce’s master, and offered a free voyage to Placentia for anyone interested in deserting. Upon hearing the testimony of Joyce and Neal, the commander present at Fort Williams ordered that “if officers of the [harbour] guard came upon tippling houses where all does not appear right they can simply break up the gathering.” The

¹⁵⁶ John Mannion, “Irish Migration and Settlement in Newfoundland: The Formative Phase, 1697-1732” 17 (2001), 263. For information on the alliance between Ireland and France during the Williamite Wars, see: Éamonn Ó Ciardha, *Ireland and the Jacobite Cause, 1685-1766: A Fatal Attachment* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004).

¹⁵⁷ Keough, *The Slender Thread*, 22.

¹⁵⁸ Allen Southmayd and John Collins, “Observations,” 7 July 1709, C.O. 194/4, 399.

commander continued to state “that the same regard be had to houses where French or Irish have been or are entertained.”¹⁵⁹

While Irish servants and soldiers in St. John’s were constantly accused of disaffection by British officials stationed in the town, the number of Irish residents in St. John’s was grossly over estimated by several colonial officers, making the threat of Irish collusion appear to be of greater concern. George Clinton, commodore and governor of Newfoundland, wrote to London in 1731 that the “danger” would be, ...more explored in case of a French war, by the bringing [of] such a number of Irish-Roman Catholicicks [sic] being 300 or more every year; insomuch that three quarters of the inhabitants of the S[outh]: and west part of the island are of that sort, and who, we have very good Reason to think, will to a man join the French as they have opportunity which will so be given [to] them by the French from Cape Breton whenever a war happens.

Clinton further revealed his hostility to the Irish in the region by ending his report with the claim that, “...those People from Ireland being all Papists, brought from inland places and many from Goals, very ignorant and insolent, and naturally prejudiced against Englishmen and Protestants.”¹⁶⁰

In 1732 Edward Falkingham, Clinton’s successor as the governor of Newfoundland, undertook the first official census of St. John’s in order to determine how many Irish residents there were in comparison to English. In his census of the town, Falkingham discovered that the Irish only accounted for fifteen percent of the population, while the English still constituted the majority of the inhabitants in the

¹⁵⁹ John Mannion, “ ‘...Notoriously disaffected to the Government...’ British allegations of Irish disloyalty in eighteenth century Newfoundland,” *Newfoundland Studies* Vol. 16, No. 1 (2000): 2. Mannion does not state the name of the commander who issued the order.

¹⁶⁰ Magistrates, Letter from St. John’s, 20 August 1731, C.O. 194/9, 104.

town.¹⁶¹ Falkingham's census revealed that the number of Irish in St. John's was greatly exaggerated and that most Irish servants continued to return home once they served their term in the Newfoundland fishery.

Although the period of seasonal and temporary Irish settlement in St. John's continued well into the early to mid eighteenth century, a small but growing number of Irish migrants began to settle in the town permanently during the winter months. Reasons for staying over the winter varied, but, like their English counterparts before them, many Irish endured the harsh winter conditions in order to earn some extra pay by repairing and constructing shore installations for the next fishing season. Other Irish migrants did not have the choice of returning home. Former Commodore of Newfoundland, Lord Vere Beauclerk, writing from St. John's in 1728, observed that "Irishmen who are generally Roman Catholic and remain here, that the number is already very great and in time be of ill consequence."¹⁶² In 1738, naval governor Capt. Philip Van Brugh reported that the English residents in the town,

...most material and universal complaints are against the great numbers of Irish Roman Catholicks [sic] brought into Newfoundland, and remain [during] the winter season to the very great prejudice of his Majesty's Protestant subjects who dread the Consequence that may attend them in case of war.¹⁶³

Patrick O'Flaherty has argued that official colonial reports tended to accentuate problems and disorders and did not portray the normal routines of daily

¹⁶¹ The 1732 official census of St. John's is available in the following colonial office records: C.O. 194/9, 1732, 221-224.

¹⁶² Commodore Vere Beauclerk, Letters to the Lords of Trade, 4 October 1728, C.O. 194/8, 203.

¹⁶³ Van Brugh to Commissioners for Trade, 6 November 1738, C.O. 194/10, p. 124.

life.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, the colonial records may only provide a picture of the problems as they existed in St. John's, and were not indicative of the relationship between the English and Irish settlers elsewhere in Newfoundland. Furthermore, most of the Irish servants who stayed in the town in the winter months could not afford passage back to Ireland. So, as Sean Cadigan has argued, their actions may be better explained as a method of survival as opposed an attempt at terrorizing the inhabitants of the town.¹⁶⁵

Overall, during the first half of the eighteenth century, the Irish attracted the attention of English officials stationed in St John's well out of proportion to their actual numbers. The Irish drew this high degree of attention because of a perception of potential disloyalty and a propensity for criminality. The number of Irish migrants who settled in St. John's did not increase, however, until the middle of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century.

¹⁶⁴ Patrick O'Flaherty, *Old Newfoundland: A History to 1843* (St. John's: Long Beach Press, 1999), 67.

¹⁶⁵ Drunkenness may have also been an unconventional method to curb the brutal working conditions of the fishery. Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador*, 61.

Part IV: The Irish in St. John's from 1750 to 1805.

In the mid eighteenth century a shift occurred in the nature of Irish migration to Newfoundland. Irish men and women stopped sailing back to Ireland when the fishing months ended, and began to reside in much larger numbers in the port towns along the eastern shore of the Avalon peninsula. By the 1750s and 60s the Irish accounted for sixty percent of the population, with around 2,683 Irish scattered throughout the Avalon in areas such as Bay Bulls, Ferryland, and St. John's.¹⁶⁶ In fact, the number of Irish in St. John's was almost equal to the number of English settlers in the town.¹⁶⁷

A significant factor that contributed to the growth of permanent Irish settlement in St. John's, and indeed the rest of Newfoundland, was the increased volume of Irish female migration.¹⁶⁸ Previously, very few women migrated to Newfoundland, probably because most merchants sought out young males to work in the fishery, and not women. Before the 1750s the number of women in Newfoundland

¹⁶⁶ Figures taken from the colonial office records: C.O. 194/13, 1753, 116-123 and 1754, 152. In 1754, there were around 3,362 Irishmen and women overwintering in Newfoundland, accounting for 46% of the Avalon's winter population. John Mannion, "Tracing the Irish: A Geographical Guide," *The Newfoundland Ancestor* Vol. 9 Issue I (1993): 7.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁶⁸ Willeen Keough has thoroughly probed the topic and significance of Irish women in Newfoundland. See: Willeen Keough, *The Slender Thread: Irish Women on the Southern Avalon, 1750-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); "The 'Old Hag' Meets St. Brigid: Irish Women and the Intersection of Belief Systems on the Southern Avalon," *An Nasc* 15 (spring 2001): 12-25; "The Riddle of Peggy Mountain: The Regulation of Irish Women's Sexuality on the Southern Avalon, 1750-1860," *Acadiensis* Vol. XXXI, No. 2 (2002): 36-70. Other factors that also contributed to the greater number of permanent Irish settlement in Newfoundland were fewer prospects for work and population growth in Ireland.

accounted for roughly thirteen percent of the entire population.¹⁶⁹ By the mid eighteenth century, however, the number of Irish women in Newfoundland accounted for one third of the total female population.¹⁷⁰

Sir Hugh Palliser, the governor of Newfoundland who presided over the period of increased Irish female migration, was alarmed and concerned over their arrival because of their contribution to permanent Irish settlement. In 1764, Palliser noted how, “great numbers of poor women are frequently brought into this country, and particularly into this port by vessels arriving from Ireland.”¹⁷¹ Most of these Irish women arrived in St. John’s with very few prospects for work, and allegedly caused much disorder and many disturbances. In order to halt Irish or any other female migration to St. John’s, Palliser issued an order that forbade the arrival of all women to the town unless they had secured work:

Notice is hereby given to all masters of vessels arriving in this country that from the first day of April next no Women are to be landed without security being first given for their good behaviour and that they shall not become chargeable to the inhabitants.¹⁷²

Palliser’s orders were not strictly enforced, and Irish female migrants continued to land and settle into St. John’s.

Colonial officials continued to monitor the Irish in St. John’s, suspecting them of disloyalty and rowdy behaviour, and commented on the greater number of Irish remaining in the winter with great agitation. But the West Country merchants who

¹⁶⁹ Jerry Bannister, *The Rule of the Admirals: Law, Custom and Naval Government in Newfoundland, 1699-1832* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 201.

¹⁷⁰ John Mannion, “Tracing the Irish: A Geographical Guide,” *The Newfoundland Ancestor* Vol. 9 Issue I (1993): 8.

¹⁷¹ PANL GN 2/1/A, 1764, 232, Vol. 3.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

employed the young Irish servants argued that the number of Irish in St. John's was not greater than the number of English settlers; that the Irish who did stay were subjects of the crown; and that there were no unlawful actions committed by them. A merchant from Poole argued:

That as to the number of papists and other disaffected persons increasing in Newfoundland, your memorialists beg leave to observe that they are in general His Majesty's natural born subjects that go from Ireland; that they think their increase to be no more than in proportion to the increase of Protestants; that their behavior has given no cause to apprehend any danger to the well affected, to his Majesty's person and government residing there.¹⁷³

The merchants' petitions did not convince colonial officials, probably because the officials understood how important Irish servants were to the merchants', and that these pleas were not reflected in their own reports and observations. Indeed, colonial officials noticed a trend of robberies and felonies committed primarily by the Irish.

Governor Richard Dorrill observed the following in 1755:

Whereas a great number of Irish Roman Catholicks [sic] are Annually brought over here, a great [many] of which have but small wages...they have not where with either to pay their voyages home, or to purchase provisions for the Winter, by which means they not only become chargeable to this place but many Robberys and Fellonyes are committed by them to the great...terror of his Majesty's subjects in this Island.¹⁷⁴

Two years later, another complaint regarding the Irish in St. John's was registered, which further detailed the relationship between servants and masters:

...great numbers of Irishmen which being generally roman Catholicks [sic] they use them as they think proper, and seldom pay them any Wages, by which many of them are left in the island to the great terror...of the inhabitants, and are obliged, as it most of the poor labouring people, to engage themselves for only

¹⁷³ Originally quoted in: Cyril J. Byrne, "The Waterford Colony in Newfoundland 1700-1850" in *Waterford History & Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* ed. William Nolan and Thomas P. Power (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1992), 354.

¹⁷⁴ PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 2, 236, Proclamation, Dorrill, 22 September 1755.

their Provisions in the winter, to labour and fish, for the summer season, they supply them with quantities of rum likewise.¹⁷⁵

Individual crimes committed by the Irish, such as robberies and murders, caused fear among many English Protestant residents in St. John's, and their fears came to a head in 1754 with the murder of William Keen. A native of Boston, Keen moved to St. John's in 1704 to act as an agent for New England merchants involved in the Newfoundland fishery. He was the first Englishman to exploit the salmon fishery along the French shore, and to accumulate an extensive amount of properties in St. John's, Harbour Grace, and Greenspond. He was also the island's most prominent magistrate.¹⁷⁶ One night in 1754, a group of four Irish soldiers and two Catholics, the married couple Robert and Eleanor Power, entered Keen's house armed with muskets and bayonets to rob Keen's estate. The reason why this small band of Irish men and women wanted to rob Keen is unknown. But when he awoke during the robbery, he was attacked and killed by the alleged ringleader of the group, Edmund McGuire.¹⁷⁷

The murder of William Keen resulted in the creation of several regulations aimed against all Irish Roman Catholics in Newfoundland. In 1755, Governor Richard Dorrill outlawed the celebration of mass and the hoisting of Irish flags. The penalties for carrying out such acts included fines, arrest, and house burnings.¹⁷⁸ While the banning of mass was comparable to the restrictions anticipated by the Penal laws in Ireland itself, there was no comparable regulation of the apparently trivial acts

¹⁷⁵ Edwards to the Lords of Trade, C.O. 194/13, 1757, 220.

¹⁷⁶ Jerry Bannister, *The Rule of the Admirals: Law, Custom, and Naval Government in Newfoundland, 1699-1832* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 215-216.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 216.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 217.

of hoisting a flag, and the penalties imposed for ignoring the Newfoundland regulation went further than the anti-Catholic measures in Ireland.

The restrictions Governor Dorrill imposed upon Irish Catholics were one of the first steps toward regulating the Irish community of St. John's, but these actions were unsuccessful. In June of 1762, the French recaptured St. John's and held it until September of the same year. In that time, many Irish absconded from their masters and joined the French once they took the capital and continued to act as they had in previous years, regardless of Governor Dorrill's laws.¹⁷⁹

Griffith Williams, an army officer stationed in St. John's in the 1760s, witnessed the actions of the Irish in the town during the time of French occupation. According to Williams:

Robberies were committed almost every Day in one Place or other....So that at the Time the *French* took the Country...the Merchants and Inhabitants suffered more Cruelties from the *Irish Roman Catholics*, then they did from the declared enemy.¹⁸⁰

Once the English regained possession of St. John's, Sir Hugh Palliser, a naval officer and Dorrill's successor as governor of Newfoundland, sought to maintain peace and diminish the number of robberies committed in St. John's. Palliser believed that it was the Irish who carried out most of the robberies and felonies committed when St. John's was under French occupation, and his orders were directed strictly towards them. Upon receiving a merchants' petition in 1764, which detailed the situation of

¹⁷⁹ John Mannion, "...Notoriously disaffected to the Government..." British allegations of Irish disloyalty in eighteenth-century Newfoundland," *Newfoundland Studies* Vol. 16 No.1 (2000): 3.

¹⁸⁰ Griffith Williams, *An Account of the Island of Newfoundland, with the Nature of its Trade, and Method of Carrying on the Fishery* (London: Thomas Cole, 1765), 9-10.

Irish servants decamping after they were advanced their winter supplies, Palliser announced the following orders:

I) That no papist man or woman shall remain at any place where they did not fish or serve during the summer preceding, II) That no more then two Papist men shall dwell in one House during the Winter, except such as have Protestant Mastery, III) That no Papist shall keep a Publick [sic] house or lend liquor by Retail.¹⁸¹

The negatively charged rhetoric contained in Palliser's orders, much like Dorill's before him, suggests a strict policy against the permanent settlement of the Irish in St. John's past the summer months of the fishery. This policy sought to ensure that no more Irish would arrive in the town, and to deny the French allies in the town if they decided to attack again.

While turmoil between the Irish and English continued into the mid eighteenth century, the economy of St. John's diversified and several new buildings were erected in the town. Public houses and taverns were some of the most popular areas frequented by soldiers and fishing servants in the mid eighteenth century, who wished to fill their stomachs and satisfy their thirst. Artisans such as carpenters and barbers were also opening shops in order to fulfill the needs of the growing population in St. John's.

The Irish were overwhelmingly represented in all of these trades, while most of the English residents in the capital were planters, merchants or agents. These class divisions between the Irish and English in St. John's were a result of higher numbers of English merchants engaged in the Newfoundland fishery and subsequently

¹⁸¹ PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 3, 272-73, Order, Palliser, 31 October 1764.

controlled all of those involved in the fishery, including the fishermen. They were the individuals who ventured into Newfoundland and won control over the fishing banks off the coast of St. John's. Irish merchants were more involved in the West Indies and did not expand their interests to Newfoundland until the early eighteenth century.

Irish Catholic merchants that were involved in the Newfoundland fishery may have considered themselves to be a part of the same class as the West Country merchants (despite their differing religious affiliations), and they did not want to be associated with the lower echelons of the Irish working class. The lower classes of Irish in St. John's comprised the majority of Irish in the town, and the criminal actions of some embarrassed their middle class merchant countrymen, who were concerned that their identity as Irish might cause a backlash against themselves. In order to keep the lower classes of Irishmen in St. John's from creating a negative reputation that could be extended to all Irish in the town, Catholic merchants petitioned Roman Catholic Church in both Waterford and England to send a bishop who could help control the Irish labouring classes in St. John's.

The Catholic merchants' petition was answered with the arrival of James Louis O'Donel at St. John's on July 4th, 1784.¹⁸² O'Donel was born in Knocklofty, county Tipperary, in the south east of Ireland, and arrived in St. John's at the age of forty seven. Having previously served as a teacher in theology at Prague before returning back to Ireland in Waterford, O'Donel moved onwards to St. John's to serve as

¹⁸² Cyril J. Byrne, ed., *Gentlemen-Bishops and Faction Fighters: The Letters of Bishops O Donel, Lambert, Scallan and Other Irish Missionaries* (St. John's: Jesperson Press, 1984), 4.

Prefect Apostolic, and his background as an Irish speaker from the south east of Ireland was certainly a contributing factor that lead to his appointment.¹⁸³

O'Donel's arrival in St. John's marked a significant turning point for Roman Catholics in Newfoundland. Previously Catholics in Newfoundland were not granted religious freedom. From 1729 until the time of O'Donel's arrival, the governors of Newfoundland were instructed "to permit a liberty of conscience to all persons, except Papists, so they be contented with a quiet and peaceful enjoyment of the same, not giving offence or scandal to the government."¹⁸⁴ The "except Papists" clause restricted all Irish Roman Catholics in St. John's and Newfoundland from erecting a Catholic Church and from publically practicing their religion.

It was not until 1784, when Governor John Campbell issued a new order permitting the freedom of liberty and conscience to individuals of all faiths, that Irish Catholics were finally granted the ability to practice their religion openly. Campbell ordered:

Pursuant to the King's instructions to me, you are to allow all persons inhabiting this island to have full liberty of conscience, and the free exercise of all such modes of religious worship as are not prohibited by law, provided they be contented with a quiet and peaceable enjoyment of the same, not giving offence or scandal to Government.¹⁸⁵

The historian of religion, Hans Rollman, has argued that the decision to grant freedom of religion to Catholics in Newfoundland along with the elimination of the "except Papists" clause was a direct consequence of the new legal situation for

¹⁸³ Ibid., 4-6.

¹⁸⁴ Originally quoted in: Hans Rollman, "Religious Enfranchisement and Roman Catholics in Eighteenth-Century Newfoundland," in *Religion and Identity: The Experience of Irish and Scottish Catholics in Atlantic Canada* ed. Terrence Murphy and Cyril J. Byrne (St. John's: Jespersen Press, 1987), 36.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 34.

Catholics in England in the late eighteenth century. A series of three Relief Acts that were instituted in England between 1778 and 1829 that eventually led to Catholic emancipation, but the most important in the case of St. John's was the second Relief Act of 1778 which granted Catholics in England the right to legally inherit land, and finally freed bishops and priests from prosecution or imprisonment for practicing their religious values. At around the same time, Catholics in Newfoundland were granted freedom of liberty and the "except Papists" clause was removed from the original order given to the Governors of Newfoundland in 1729. Furthermore, with the constant threat of invasion from American and French forces, and of potential Irish collusion with the French, the removal of the "except Papists" clause in St. John's was a strategic move designed to ensure loyalty in case of an invasion.¹⁸⁶

The fact that O'Donel arrived in St. John's at the same time that Catholics were granted religious freedom did not mean that he was well received. Some West Country merchants believed that O'Donel's presence would encourage permanent settlement of Irish Catholics. In 1785, Lieutenant Governor Jillford reported to Lord Sydney that in St. John's:

...last summer an Irish Roman Catholic Priest arrived here [and] they have begun building a Chapel (with which the English merchants are much dissatisfied as they think it will turn out in the end, turn out very prejudicial) the consequence of which is, as soon as the Fishery was over away they came here in great number from the out Harbours, never thought of going home, spent the money they had got in the summer...for upon a list of them being taken it appears, there are about five Roman Catholics to one Protestant, the lower class of people being mostly Irish.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 38.

¹⁸⁷ Lt. Gov. Jillford to Lord Sydney, C.O. 194/36, 14 May, 1785, 13-16.

Furthermore, it was suggested that O'Donel was like his Irish Catholic flock in St. John's and shared loyalties to the French and not the English.¹⁸⁸ Benjamin Lester, an English merchant in St. John's, argued:

The priest can ever manage the Irish as he pleases, by this we may ultimately loose [sic] the Island—a probably thing to happen...particularly as the present priest [O'Donel] was during the last war Chaplain to a French regiment, and of course I suppose continues to receive some kind of pay from the French King.¹⁸⁹

The hostility that O'Donel faced in St. John's placed him in a position of uncertainty with regard to his willingness to reside in the town, and he also questioned his status as an individual that could be trusted to lead the Irish in St. John's.¹⁹⁰ However, when O'Donel returned to St. John's in 1797 after a visit to Ireland, his position as an authoritative figure in the administration of the Catholic Church in Newfoundland and as an individual who could be trusted by the English Protestant merchants was solidified after his denunciation of the United Irish mutiny in St. John's.

Formed in Belfast and Dublin by Wolfe Tone, Thomas Russell, and James Napper Tandy in 1791, the United Irishmen's central aims were parliamentary reform and the complete removal of English control of Irish affairs in Ireland. The group was

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 39, Raymond J. Lahey, "Catholicism and Colonial Policy in Newfoundland," 53.

¹⁸⁹ Originally quoted in: Hans Rollman, "Religious Enfranchisement and Roman Catholics in Eighteenth-Century Newfoundland," 39.

¹⁹⁰ O'Donel experienced more setbacks when permission to build a chapel in the Ferryland district was denied after a vicious battle between the local factions of Leinster and Munster provincial gangs erupted in the previous year and resulted in the conviction of 155 men, all of whom were Irishmen.¹⁹⁰ O'Donel attempted to distance himself from the riots in Ferryland, and argued that

...there have been riots there & in every quarter of the Island those 40 years past & often brought to an higher pitch than they have been this winter, for there is a deep rooted malice in the hearts of the lower class of Irishmen to each other from the great abuse & horrid mangling they have received from time to time in those Provincial quarters.

Originally quoted in: Raymond J. Lahey, "Catholicism and Colonial Policy in Newfoundland, 1779-1845," 54.

initially split between radicals and reformers, who debated over the most effective way of achieving Irish independence. Reformers believed in parliamentary actions while the radicals wanted bloodshed, and in 1798 the radicals staged a series of unsuccessful armed rebellions throughout Ireland with most of the action was centered in Wexford.¹⁹¹

Wexford was a significant source area of Irish migration to St. John's in the mid to late eighteenth century, but surprisingly the United Irish rebellion in Ireland did not reverberate in St. John's until 1800. As noted by John Mannion, all Irish passengers departing for the Newfoundland fishery in 1798 left before the rising took place, and only one fourth of all Irish passengers to Newfoundland were from Wexford. Although there were a few United Irish groups in St. John's, Placentia, and Conception Bay, the failure of the rebellion coupled with the recent low numbers of Irish migrants from the major centres of the rebellion arriving in St. John's, failed to provoke an immediate reaction in the town.¹⁹²

It was not until two years later that a suspected United Irish mutiny took place within the ranks of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment located in St. John's. On the night of April 24th, 1800, brigadier-general John Skerrett reported that a Sergeant Kelly along with twelve rank and file soldiers (who were later joined by six more rank and file from Fort Townsend) abandoned Signal Hill with twenty-three arms and ammunition. The dearth of work available during the winter months forced many Irish

¹⁹¹ R.B. McDowell, "The Protestant Nation, 1775-1800," in *The Course of Irish History* ed. T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (Cork: Mercier Press, 2001), 195-203.

¹⁹² John Mannion, "...Notoriously disaffected to the Government..." British allegations of Irish disloyalty in eighteenth-century Newfoundland," *Newfoundland Studies* Vol. 16, No. 1 (2000): 6.

to join the army in order to gain some income when the fishing season was over, and the vast majority of those who deserted were Irish Catholics who the officers suspected of being United Irishmen.¹⁹³ The deserters attempted to revolt using the United Irish war cry of “Death or Liberty,” but the revolt was halted after General Skerrett initiated the signal of desertion—halting any other United Irishmen from abandoning Signal Hill—and the surrender of one deserter who led Skerrett to the mutineers, five of whom were hanged while the rest were sent to Halifax.¹⁹⁴

Whether these Irishmen were indeed United Irishmen, or if the actual motive for the mutiny was influenced by the United Irishmen rebellion in Ireland, is not clear. It has been argued that the alleged United Irishmen were rebelling against poor treatment and harsh working conditions, or even that the men wanted to proclaim Newfoundland as a Republic.

Regardless of the motives of the deserters, Bishop O'Donel's reaction to the United Irish “mutiny” in St. John's solidified his position as an influential individual within the Irish community of St. John's and established his trustworthiness among the English Protestant settlers of the town. O'Donel denounced the United Irish men and the mutiny and stated that:

Those villains who formed a plot to take & plunder the town, were strictly bound together with the infamous link of the United Irishmen's Oath & are supposed to have been determined to...take possession of the 2 garrisons & make their escape to Boston, however being disappointed in their infernal schemes, 19 of them deserted in a body & brought their muskets &c. with

¹⁹³ Ibid., 8.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 10, Cadigan, *Newfoundland & Labrador*, 83; Cyril J. Byrne, “Ireland and Newfoundland: The United Irish Rising of 1798 and the Fecible's Mutiny in St. John's, 1799” (paper presented to the Newfoundland Historical Society, St. John's, Newfoundland, November 9, 1977), 5.

them,... [but] The people of the town are quiet & amenable to the laws of God, the land & the church.¹⁹⁵

With such statements, it was clear that O'Donel could no longer be considered an Irishman whose sympathies reflected those held by the United Irishmen in St. John's, or that he was an individual who could not be trusted due to his religious affiliation as an Irish Roman Catholic.

Raymond J. Lahey has argued that O'Donel's handling of the United Irish mutiny cemented an alliance between the Roman Catholic clergy and the government of Newfoundland that would endure well into the future.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, O'Donel's handling of the United Irish mutiny secured the position and trust of succeeding Irish Roman Catholic Bishops to St. John's, who would oversee the actions and growth of the Irish community in St. John's into the nineteenth century.

¹⁹⁵ Cyril J. Byrne, ed., *Gentlemen-Bishops and Faction Fighters: The Letters of Bishops O Donel, Lambert, Scallan and Other Irish Missionaries* (St. John's: Jespersen Press, 1984), 171-172.

¹⁹⁶ Raymond J. Lahey, "Catholicism and Colonial Policy in Newfoundland, 1799-1845," 54.

Part V: The Irish in St. John's to the Mid-Nineteenth Century.

After the 1830s the number of Irishmen and women arriving at St. John's drastically declined, and the mass migration of Irish labourers from the south east of Ireland to Newfoundland came to an end.¹⁹⁷ The Great Irish Famine of 1845 to 1850, which witnessed the departure of about one million Irish to various destinations across the world, did not affect the Irish community of St. John's. The town would not have to endure the arduous task of caring for sickly, famine-stricken individuals or the repercussions of thousands of Irish-Catholics arriving with a new sense of identity, which at times caused havoc and violent backlashes between themselves and the established population in a particular area, such as the fate of Saint John, New Brunswick.¹⁹⁸ This is not to state that the Irish community of St. John's was entirely at peace after the suspected United Irish Mutiny. Indeed, Bishop O'Donel's denunciation of the mutineers helped cement a solid relationship between the Catholic clergy and the imperial government, while simultaneously securing a new and safer position for the Irish community from accusations of disloyalty. But political sectarianism (along the lines of religion and ethnicity), particularly after Newfoundland achieved representative government in 1832, would divide the town of St. John's between two competing factions: the Liberals, who were Roman Catholic and Irish, and Conservatives, who were Protestant and of English descent.

¹⁹⁷ The apex of Irish migration to Newfoundland occurred between 1780 and 1830, with two major waves between 1811 and 1816, and again in 1825 and 1833. John Mannion, ed., *The Peopling of Newfoundland: Essays in Historical Geography* (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977), 5-7.

¹⁹⁸ T.W. Acheson, "The Irish Community in Saint John, 1815-1850," in *New Ireland Remembered: Historical Essays on the Irish in New Brunswick* ed. Peter M. Toner (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1988), 7-45; *Saint John: The Making of a Colonial Urban Community* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 92-114.

An economic crisis struck Newfoundland after the Napoleonic Wars ended in 1815. The high prices for fish, which were the result of wartime prosperity, plummeted. Areas that were most affected by postwar economic depression were the smaller out port communities scattered along the southern portion of the Avalon peninsula. Fishermen in St. John's, the majority of whom were Irish, were not as severely affected by the depression because they could vacate their fishing occupations to work as unskilled labourers in the construction of new government buildings and churches.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, even though the rocky terrain of Newfoundland would not permit the growth of subsistence farming—which discouraged many Newfoundlanders from undertaking the task of agriculture—the majority of Irish in St. John's and towns outside the city attempted some subsistence farming. Such adventures would not only provide them with an additional source of nutrition in their diets (instead of relying solely on fish), but also a chance to earn some extra cash by selling fresh produce and dairy products such as milk and cheese.²⁰⁰

One of the most ardent supporters of agriculture in St. John's was Irish merchant, Patrick Morris. He had arrived at St. John's from Waterford in 1804 to work for fellow Irish clerk Luke Maddock. After a short period of time with Maddock, Morris launched his own independent mercantile trade, and became a self-sufficient merchant. His activities as a merchant, which included the trading of supplies and provisions from Ireland to Newfoundland, facilitated the arrival of Irish

¹⁹⁹ Cadigan, *Newfound and Labrador: A History*, 103.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 104.

migrants to St. John's in the early nineteenth century, but his interests went well beyond the realm of the merchant trade. Morris was deeply concerned about the economic condition of Newfoundland after the Napoleonic Wars, especially with regard to the fishery and those who were dependent upon it for their livelihood. Morris placed the blame for St. John's economic woes squarely on the colonial government, whose actions, he argued, were controlled by the large merchant houses operated by the West Country Merchants who resisted local agricultural development in order to secure the prominence of the fishery. Morris argued that although the fishery was indeed a significant economic dependence in Newfoundland, the colony would not fully develop without a local agriculture.²⁰¹

Another prominent St. John resident who was also concerned over the state of the Newfoundland economy was Scottish physician, William Carson. He arrived at St. John's in 1808, and only two years later established a successful medical practice. Carson also encouraged the construction of a public hospital, which is where he became the principal medical attendant. During the economic depression in St. John's, Carson advocated for an extension of the British constitution in Newfoundland and the establishment of the colonial equivalent of a king, House of Lord, and House of Commons. He also supported Morris's agricultural reforms and was convinced that if Newfoundland were to survive as a colony it must develop small scale farming in order to avoid total dependence on fish. Carson met with some success. For example,

²⁰¹ John Mannion, "Patrick Morris," in *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, 15 vols, ed. Frances G. Halpenny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) vol, VII, 626-634.

in 1817 Newfoundland was granted a year-round governor, instead of a governor who only presided during the summer fishing season.²⁰²

Together, Carson and Morris became the leaders of the reform movement in St. John's, which sought to achieve an elective form of colonial government in Newfoundland in order to curb the power of the merchants and to create economic balance to the colony. Their interests were galvanized by the underdevelopment of agriculture in St. John's, which they argued was the reason for extreme poverty in the town. The most difficult task for both men was finding an event that could be used as an occasion to publicize their views and allow the reform movement to force the colonial office to implement change. Two separate events occurred that helped the Reformers gain momentum. In the surrogate courts of St. John's, David Buchan and Reverend John Leigh charged two men from Conception Bay with contempt to court. Both men were found guilty, and whipped for their punishment. Carson and Morris turned the event into a public outrage, which resulted in the colonial Supreme Court rebuking Buchan and Leigh for inflicting such harsh punishment. A petition was sent by the Reformers to the King calling for reform to the system of justice that existed in Newfoundland, but was not answered.²⁰³

The second cause that Carson and Morris used to promote the reform movement and to gain the support of the British colonial office was the problem of public relief. The bureaucrats in London were in complete control of Newfoundland's economic policy—something that Carson believed could be managed better—and

²⁰² Patrick O'Flaherty, "William Carson," in *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, 15 vols, ed. Frances Halpenny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), vol. VII, 151-156.

²⁰³ Ibid.

were responsible for doling out public relief to the inhabitants of the island. Using the lack of agriculture development in St. John's as his backdrop, Carson argued that only a government elected in the town could govern the island effectively and a colonial legislature located in Newfoundland could bear the costs of public relief. The policy appealed to the British colonial office, which at the same time also supported imperial reforms in other colonies that wished to diminish the imperial government's financial burdens.²⁰⁴

As economic conditions worsened and public sentiment for a legislature increased between 1830 and 1831 (thanks in part to the work of Carson and Morris), Newfoundland was finally granted representative government in March 1832, with the legislature located in St. John's. The new government was comprised of a Governor, an appointed Council, and an elected Assembly. Unfortunately, the euphoria of Newfoundlanders having achieved their own colonial governance by a united front would not last long. The first elections in 1832 took on a sectarian nature that would divide the relatively peaceful town of St. John's between the Irish Catholic and English Protestant residents, although the leaders of the reform movement never used their ethnic or religious affiliation as instruments of political change. Indeed, Patrick Morris, an Irish Catholic from Waterford whose countrymen and co-religionists were highly visible in St. John's, never used his ethnicity nor religion as a rallying cry. William Carson, although not an Irishman or Catholic, had a fair number of Irish Catholic supporters from the Irish community of St. John's, but, like Morris, he did

²⁰⁴ Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador*, 106-7.

not use this support to further his political agenda. The central instigator of the sectarian dimension to the reform movement in St. John's was newly appointed Roman Catholic Bishop Michael Anthony Fleming.

Born in country Tipperary, Bishop Fleming arrived in St. John's in the autumn of 1823 by an invitation by then Bishop Scallan. Fleming served as a curate for six years for Scallan, and then succeeded him as the Bishop of Newfoundland in May 1830.²⁰⁵ Scholars of Newfoundland history have noted the strong sense of Irish identity found in Fleming that was notably absent in past Irish Newfoundland bishops, and his inability to comply with the imperial government's wishes. Patrick O'Flaherty argued that "[h]e was the first Catholic bishop in Newfoundland whom the British couldn't control."²⁰⁶ Scholar Phillip McCann described Fleming as "a man of strong opinions and uncompromising character, completely convinced of the rightness of his own cause....He was an impassioned defender of the Catholic religion, a devoted follower of the Irish nationalist leader Daniel O'Connell, and a champion of the poor Irish immigrants of Newfoundland."²⁰⁷ Indeed, Fleming was a staunch defender of Catholic rights, but he was also an individual whose personal traits and melding in the election of 1832 caused sectarian divisions within the political realm of nineteenth century St. John's.

²⁰⁵ Raymond J. Lahey, "Michael Anthony Fleming," in *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, 15 vols, ed. Frances G. Halpenny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), vol. VII, 292-299.

²⁰⁶ Patrick O'Flaherty, *Old Newfoundland: A History to 1843* (St. John's: Long Beach Press, 1999), 158.

²⁰⁷ Phillip McCann, "Bishop Fleming and the Politicization of the Irish Roman Catholics in Newfoundland, 1830-1850," in *Religion and Identity: The Experience of Irish and Scottish Catholics in Atlantic Canada* ed. Terrence Murphy and Cyril J. Byrne (St. John's: Jespersen Press, 1987), 81.

Bishop Fleming supported and campaigned for three politicians who were running in the election of 1832, two of whom had strong support in the Irish community of St. John's. John Kent, an ambitious young business man born in Waterford and part of St. John's shopkeeper bourgeoisie, decided to embark upon a career in politics during the House of Assembly election by joining the reform movement.²⁰⁸ Fleming also supported the old reform movement's leader William Carson, who found the support of the bishop an invaluable asset for the election and also the fight against patronage. The final candidate whom Fleming supported was Protestant merchant William Thomas, who was sympathetic to the reform movement.

John Kent's first move in the political arena of Newfoundland gained some attention from the more conservative wing of the St. John's. In an attempt to attract voters within the lower orders of St. John's, particularly the Irish, Kent denounced the executive council's control of patronage and the oligarchical nature of the overwhelmingly Protestant legislative council.²⁰⁹ He wanted to highlight how the higher classes of English Protestant merchants controlled the government of Newfoundland in order to win votes from those who were politically excluded. Kent's attacks on the Newfoundland government caught the attention of Henry Winton, the editor of the conservative newspaper the *Public Ledger*, who saw Kent simply as a demagogue and an individual who was attempting to gain support from the Irish in order to win seats in the assembly.

²⁰⁸ P.B. Waite, "John Kent," in *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, 15 vols, ed. Marc Lu Terreur (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), vol. X, 398-400.

²⁰⁹ Patrick O'Flaherty highlighted that "The governor, attorney general, solicitor general, collector and sub-collectors of customs, colonial secretary, colonial treasurer, surveyor general, clerks and registrars in the courts, stipendiary magistrates, coroners, and sheriff were Protestant." Patrick O'Flaherty, *Old Newfoundland: A History to 1843* (St. John's: Long Beach Press, 1999), 156.

Winton also identified the Reform party as a party which represented the Catholic community of St. John's, and the leader of that community in Bishop Fleming, who Winton argued should have not been involved in politics because of his clerical status. In response to Winton's assertions, Fleming continued to make politically charged comments and argued that his promotion of Kent only highlighted his interest in an Assembly that was composed of men who would advance the interests of the poor.²¹⁰ Winton fired back at Fleming, and argued that his participation in Kent's run for election to the Assembly was an attempt "to throw the firebrand of religious discord among us."²¹¹

This heated exchange between Winton and Fleming separated the community of St. John's along denominational and ethnic lines. Most Irish Roman Catholics in St. John's sided with Kent, Fleming, and the Reformers, and condemned the acts committed by the pen of Winton in the *Public Ledger*. As Philip McCann has pointed out, Kent, in an attempt to rally the Irish community of St. John's together against the Protestant merchants, had "urged Irishmen and Catholics to stand up for their country and creed." McCann also suggested that Kent supported the Bishop and denounced Winton because Fleming was an Irish Catholic whose interests were with his people.²¹²

Nevertheless, not all Irish Catholics supported Fleming or the Reformers who used the ethnic and religious card to further their political pursuits. For instance,

²¹⁰ Phillip McCann, "Bishop Fleming and the Politicization of the Irish Roman Catholics in Newfoundland," 85.

²¹¹ *Public Ledger*, 21 September 1832. Originally quoted in *Ibid*.

²¹² *Ibid*.

Patrick Kough, a Wexford born carpenter who was supported by the small Catholic merchant class (which was ostracized by Fleming because of their social standing), stood against Fleming and defeated his candidate, William Carson. Kough, along with the Catholic merchants class, denounced Fleming and the Reformers in their attempts to gain support from the lower classes of the Irish, mainly because they wanted to maintain their ties with the merchant Protestant elite. All the same, the majority of Irishmen sided with Fleming and the Reformers.

Both of Fleming's candidates, John Kent and William Thomas, were elected into the Newfoundland Assembly in 1832, and were soon followed by William Carson, who defeated Liberal Irishmen, Timothy Hogan in a by-election in 1833.²¹³ Fleming had successfully convinced the lower classes of Irishmen in St. John's that his candidates would represent their interests in the Assembly if they were elected, by appealing to their status and religious affiliation. Furthermore, his political maneuvering polarized the community of St. John's between the working class of Irish and the Protestant merchant elite. But it would be incorrect to assert that all religious groups voted exclusively for the candidate that appealed to their religious interest or ethnic background. There was nearly an equal number of Irish Catholics and English Protestants who lived in St. John's in the mid nineteenth century, so there was no definite majority in the town. Furthermore, in the Assembly elections of 1837, there were thirteen liberal Reformers who sat in the fifteen-seated House of

²¹³ Patrick O'Flaherty, "William Carson," in *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, 15 vols, ed. Frances Halpenny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), vol. VII, 151-156.

Assembly.²¹⁴ There must have, therefore, been some support from English Protestant fishermen and merchants who agreed with the reform-liberal party's ideals.

Nevertheless, the political and religious leaders of St. John's continued to fight among each other, which furthered the divide between the Irish Catholic and English Protestants in the town. One of Fleming's central enemies, apart from Henry Winton and the British imperial government, was Henry John Boulton. A conservative and English trained barrister, Boulton was appointed as the president of the Executive Council and Chief Justice in 1833 after a failed attempt as Attorney General of Upper Canada.²¹⁵ One of the first changes Boulton initiated in Newfoundland in an attempt to renovate the Council and justice system was to change the method of impaneling juries. The new system would make it easier for lawyers to challenge and eradicate names of juries, which would also make it easier for lawyers to discriminate against Irish jurors.²¹⁶ Throughout the 1830s the issue of who sat on the jury bench was of grave concern for the Irish, because it was primarily their countrymen who were accused of committing crimes such as murder and petty theft. As Patrick O'Flaherty has noted, of the forty prisoners who were in the St. John's jail, thirteen were charged with murder, and almost all of the prisoners were Roman Catholic.²¹⁷

Boulton's actions in the courtroom came under scrutiny from Fleming and Irish Catholics in St. John's after the trial of Peter Downey and Patrick Malone. Both Downey and Malone were accused of killing a schoolmaster, along with his child and

²¹⁴ Phillip McCann, "Bishop Fleming and the Politicization of the Irish Roman Catholics in Newfoundland," 90.

²¹⁵ Patrick O'Flaherty, *Old Newfoundland: A History* (St. John's: Long Beach Press, 1999), 159; Sean Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 113.

²¹⁶ Patrick O'Flaherty, *Old Newfoundland: A History* (St. John's: Long Beach Press, 1999), 158.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 159-60.

female servant. Downey was immediately executed, but Malone was not, and the Crown lawyers suggested at the trial that he be pardoned. Previously, both men had sent a petition to the King detailing the falsehood of the charges against them, but Boulton intercepted the letter before it had a chance to reach England. Fleming, however, sent a petition to his good friend Daniel O'Connell that detailed all of the incorrect procedures followed in court that had lead to the execution of Downey. Fleming wanted all of the Newfoundland judges to be removed so that Malone could receive a fair trial but his wishes were not met.²¹⁸ As a consequence of the Downey and Malone trials, Fleming viewed Boulton as a bigot, and someone who was unsympathetic to the lower classes of the Irish community in St. John's.

Concerned over the state of Newfoundland, with particular regard to the sectarian nature of politics that had emerged in St. John's, the British Parliament appointed a select committee to review the affairs of the island in 1841. The committee confirmed that the situation in St. John's was worrisome, but the British imperial government was not prepared to resume authority over Newfoundland. Instead, as noted by Sean Cadigan, the British government "recommended that electoral influence with the colonial government be lessened by amalgamating the House of Assembly with the appointed Legislative Council."²¹⁹ In the same year that the British government instituted these changes, a new governor was appointed to replace Thomas Cochrane. Sir John Harvey took Cochrane's position and quickly demonstrated that he was capable of appeasing Fleming and the reformers. For

²¹⁸ Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador*, 114.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 116.

example, Harvey, in an attempt to attract loyalty from Carson and Morris, created a Newfoundland Agricultural Society and appointed both of them to the Executive Council. Fleming was granted public support for Roman Catholic schools by Harvey who hoped that the move would “dampen the sectarian flames that had been fanned by Irish Roman Catholic members of the St. John’s Bourgeoisie.”²²⁰ These actions did indeed help to ease tensions.

Much had changed in the political realm of St. John’s once the 1840s ended and the 1850s began. The Liberals were now under the leadership of Phillip Francis Little, a Roman Catholic from Prince Edward Island. Fleming was replaced by John Thomas Mullock, who also supported Little and the reform movement, but not to the same degree in which his predecessor did. Indeed, Mullock supported Irish Nationalism and the reform movement that was still largely composed of Roman Catholics, but he was more interested in the economic development of Newfoundland, and did not use the sectarian card to further his objectives. Together, they succeeded in the general election of 1852 when the Liberals won the majority in the House of Assembly, and Little became Newfoundland’s first premier under responsible government.

²²⁰ Ibid., 116-7.

Part VI: Conclusion

This chapter's focus on St. John's reveals how the three separate factors examined in this thesis (the migrant origins; the nature of the host community; and the time of arrival) accounts for the range of experience in that city as well as that of the Irish in Halifax and Saint John. Irish migrants to St. John's were primarily Roman Catholics from counties located in the south east of Ireland, such as Wexford, Waterford, Tipperary, and East Cork. Waterford was a major source area for Irish migration to St. John's, and indeed, the rest of Newfoundland. The south east of Ireland was also an important source of Irish migration to Halifax, and many Irish who first arrived to Newfoundland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, eventually moved south to Nova Scotia to escape the demanding working conditions of the summer fishery. As a consequence, a high percentage of Irish migrants to Halifax were Roman Catholic. The county origin and religious orientation of Irish migrants in Saint John, however, was in marked contrast to Halifax and St. John's. A notable number of Irish Protestants from Ulster arrived at the city on timber ships that were then loaded with lumber once all passengers had departed from the vessels. These immigrants would compose the majority of Irish migrants to Saint John until the 1840s, when thousands of famine Irish Catholics entered and settled in the city.

St. John's was first and foremost a fishery and not an official colony, and permanent settlement on the island was not encouraged until the eighteenth century. A small population of English Protestants from the West Country, however, began to take up residence on the island in order to preserve their fishing stations for the next

fishing season and also to protect them from possible raids by neighbouring Beothuks. West Countrymen were primarily settled along the eastern and southern portion of the Avalon Peninsula but were chiefly centered in St. John's. Their settlement on the island was not officially discouraged even though English colonial policy forbade permanent residency. Through the advent of the Irish provisions trade—which was controlled by West Country merchants—hundreds of young Irish males ventured into St. John's, many of whom were Irish speaking Roman Catholics. These Irish migrants were constantly attacked by the colonial officials stationed in St. John's who argued that the Irish were unwanted settlers because of their behavior, treatment of English settlers, and their willingness to abscond their English masters and join French forces.

Conversely, the colonial policies that shaped the Irish experiences of St. John's were not implemented in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick and Irish immigrants who arrived in those regions were generally well received by the local population because of the host communities' distinctive characteristics. For example, Loyalist settlers established the city of Saint John in the late eighteenth century after the American Revolution ended and the British lost possession of the thirteen colonies. Many of the original Loyalist colonizers who came and established Saint John were loyal to the British Crown and adherents to Protestantism. A significant number of Irish migrants who arrived in the early nineteenth century were Irish Protestants from Ulster who also paid homage to the British Crown. These two traits found amongst both groups helped early Irish migrants make a relatively smooth transition to their new host environment. Additionally, after the Napoleonic Wars ended, Saint John witnessed a

rise in the availability of labour opportunities, which in turn, provided newly arrived Irish immigrants with the ability to integrate themselves within the local economy without threatening to take the jobs of local residents. Irish migrants who arrived to Halifax in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were also well received because many of them were fishermen who left Newfoundland and settled in Halifax, where they contributed to that community's fishing industry, as well as smaller out-port fishing villages located near by. There were also a number of Irish migrants who had previously served as soldiers in the British Army that took up positions at Citadel Hill to help protect the Halifax harbour. Additionally, Irish migrants arrived at a time when there was a surplus of labour intensive jobs available, including the construction of wharves, warehouses, and the building of the Shubenacadice Canal. These factors helped Irish migrants make a successful transition into the Halifax economy and they experienced very little backlash from local residents.

An examination of the time at which the Irish arrived at their respective cities, however, demonstrates that the Irish were not always well received by the established population. In the mid nineteenth century, in Saint John and Halifax, the Irish encountered a nativist backlash from their new host cities' inhabitants. For example, in the 1840s and 1850s the majority of residents in Halifax stopped identifying themselves by their country of origin, whether England or Scotland, and began to view themselves as Nova Scotians. Supposedly, in the eyes of the dominant Protestant community that lived in the colony, the Irish could not be considered to be *bona fide* Nova Scotians because of their allegiance to the Pope. Prominent residents of Halifax

who were Protestant and of British descent, such as politician Joseph Howe and inventor Abraham Gesner, condemned the Irish because they not only believed that the Irish were strangers in the city, but they also argued that as Roman Catholics, they were interfering with the progress that the city had recently witnessed. Howe and Gesner expressed their attitudes towards the Irish in their respective books and newspaper articles, which mocked Irish migrants occupational status and inability to be pro-British. Fortunately, aggressive physical clashes between the Irish and the local population of Halifax rarely occurred and the form of nativism that emerged in the city was generally rhetorical.

Although there were instances when residents of Saint John expressed their own negative opinion of the Irish in local newspapers, the form of nativism that transpired in the mid nineteenth century was fundamentally different from Halifax as a result of two factors: the existence of the Orange Order and the arrival of thousands of famine Irish Catholics to the city. Throughout most of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century a considerable number of Irishmen and women in Saint John originated from Ulster. There was a notable number of Irish Catholics who arrived to the city from Cork during this time period as well, but they quickly moved south to the United States to join their relatives who emigrated from Ireland before them, which left the Ulster immigrants to form the majority of Irish settlers in Saint John. By the 1840s, however, thousands of famine Irish Catholics arrived and settled permanently in the city, which resulted in an equalization in the number of Irish immigrants—both Protestant and Catholic—in the region.

Concerned over the prospect that these newly arrived immigrants might compete for jobs once they took up residence in the city, the established population turned to the Orange Order in search of a solution to the recent influx of Irish Catholic immigrants. Members of the Orange Order proclaimed to the worried inhabitants that the Irish famine was ploy devised by the Pope in Rome to eradicate the influence of Protestantism and to increase the number of Catholics throughout the world. Although this was indeed an absurd assertion, the Protestant residents of Saint John were convinced by the Orange Order's contentions and many of them joined the organization, which became the vanguard for nativist interest in the city. Tensions between the two factions escalated in the mid nineteenth century and violent physical clashes ensued as Irish Catholic migrants vowed to protect their respective interests from Protestant nativists.

Although nativism did not emerge among the English Protestant classes of St. John's in the mid nineteenth century, there was undoubtedly a serious debate that emerged along ethnic and religious lines between Irish Catholics and English Protestants when Newfoundland achieved responsible government in 1832. An examination of the time at which this episode arose highlights how the Irish experience changed over time from the early years of Irish settlement to the mid nineteenth century, as it also had for the Irish experience in Saint John and Halifax. For example, throughout most of the eighteenth century Irish migrants were closely monitored by colonial officers stationed in the town. They were concerned that if the French—who occupied the fortress at Louisbourg—attacked the town, that Irish

indentured servants would desert their English masters and join the French forces. Indeed, there were several instances when the Irish joined French when they attacked St. John's at various intervals throughout the eighteenth century.

Irish migrants who arrived to St. John's in the early nineteenth century, unlike like their Irish predecessors, who were suspected of collusion with French forces, were accused of having republican sympathies, particularly with the United Irishmen who fought for the removal of English control over Irish affairs. A considerable number of Irish migrants to St. John's in the late eighteenth century arrived from the port of Wexford—the epicenter of Irish rebellion—which concerned English colonial officials stationed in the town. There was little evidence to suggest that any of these Irish men or women planned to stage an uprising or that they were supportive of the United Irish cause. Indeed, there was a “mutiny” that took place in St. John's in 1800 that was suspected to have been carried out by a few United Irishmen, but it is still not clear if the actual motive for the “mutiny” was influenced by the United Irishmen rebellion in Ireland.

In the mid nineteenth century, long after the suspected United Irish “mutiny” transpired and Irish migration to St. John's drastically declined due to the conclusion of the provisions trade, another series of events took place that pitted Irish Catholics against English Protestants after Newfoundland was granted representative government by the English colonial government in 1832. There were two political factions that competed against one another for votes in order to secure as many seats as possible in the new Newfoundland Assembly: the Liberals and the Conservatives.

The former political group, also known as the Reformers, was comprised of individuals who were Roman Catholic—many of whom were born in Ireland—and political members of the latter group were, in a majority, Protestant and of English descent. Although there was clearly a difference between both political groups with regard to their religious orientation and ethnic affiliation, neither faction used their identities as a rallying cry to gain support. It was not until Bishop Michael Anthony Fleming started to meddle with the members of the Liberal party and their campaigns that political sectarianism emerged. For example, Henry Winton, the former editor of the conservative newspaper the *Public Ledger*, argued that liberal party member and Fleming backed politician John Kent was nothing but a demagogue who attempted to gain political support from the Irish by appealing to their interests. Furthermore, Winton argued that Fleming had no right to political action because of his clerical status. Fleming disregarded Winton's statements and continued to promote his candidacy for Kent along with William Carson and William Thomas, two other Liberals. Winton, however, was persistent and retaliated against Fleming when he argued that the Bishop attempted to cause trouble by integrating religion in the political realm of St. John's. Not surprising, the Conservatives sided with Winton, and the Liberals, along with the Irish Catholics of St. John's, backed Fleming. The community was divided between English Protestants and Irish Catholics, a divide that would last until Philip Francis Little became Newfoundland's first premier in the 1850s

In conclusion, the urban Irish experiences of St. John's, Halifax, and Saint John, in the pre famine period—as briefly demonstrated above—varied between each region because of the three following factors: the source area of Irish migration, such as home counties and provinces; the host cities where the Irish arrived and settled, and the different social, political, and economical conditions that existed in each town; and the time in which they arrived to their new host environment. Although an argument could be made that several other micro factors contributed to the variations in Irish experiences in each city, the factors that were explored in this study were argued to have been fundamental macro reasons for disparities in each case study. These factors could also be used for further study into how Irish experiences varied throughout Canada, which would, in the end, expand scholarly knowledge of the Irish experience in Canada and draw attention to why Irish experiences differed throughout the country.

Epilogue: The Merit and Potential of Comparative History in Irish Migrant Studies

Using the broad categories of migrant origins, time of arrival, and host conditions, this thesis has illustrated the utility of a comparative approach to the history of urban Irish settlement in Atlantic Canada. This final chapter will further examine the potential of this approach by discussing its early advocates and application to Irish settlement elsewhere, and by suggesting how it might be further extended to the study of the Irish in Canada.

Several notable historians have promoted the comparative approach to historical inquiry and analysis throughout the twentieth century. Henri Pirenne announced his support for comparative history at the first International Historical Conference in 1923, arguing that this particular historical method would guide historians away from national distinction and prejudice.²²¹ French historian and founding member of the French scholarly journal *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, Marc Bloch, argued in his influential article on comparative history that historians should not be reluctant to use the comparative method, and that its general use was “one of the most pressing needs of present-day historical science.”²²² Lord Acton also expressed his admiration for the use comparative method in historical practice: “The process of Civilization depends on transcending Nationality. Everything is tried by more courts, before a larger audience. Comparative methods are applied. Influences which are accidental yield to those which

²²¹ Nancy L. Green, “The Comparative Method and Poststructural Structuralism: New Perspectives for Migration Studies,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* Vol. 13 No. 4 (1994): 5. For more information on comparative history, see: George M. Fredrickson, “Comparative History,” in *The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States* ed. Michael Kamen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 457-73; Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, “The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 22 No. 2 (1980): 175-197; Victoria Bonnell, “The Uses of Theory, Concepts and Comparison in Historical Sociology,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 22 No. 2 (1980): 156-73.

²²² Marc Bloch, “Toward a Comparative History of European Studies,” in *Enterprise and Secular Change: Readings in Economic History* ed. Frederic C. Lane and Jelle C. Riemersma (Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, 1953), 494.

are rational.”²²³ Yet, regardless of these and other historian’s praise,²²⁴ many scholars are still reluctant to embrace the comparative method. Raymond Grew claimed that historians do not want to compare two societies, groups, or states because it would “require an equally intimate knowledge of at least two societies, two languages, two distinct traditions of record-keeping and interpretation.”²²⁵ Malcolm Campbell pointed out that “[t]here are many reasons why comparative history has a limited appeal for historians, including the national orientation of the history profession in most universities and some historians skepticism toward the value of the genre.”²²⁶ Furthermore, there is no authoritative text in which historians can draw upon that would help them formulate their own approach to comparative history, or help them understand the exact meaning of the comparative method.

But the comparative method may be used as a tool in which to test historical controversies and a path in which to discover how certain societies, experiences, or cultural values varied (whether similar or different) throughout a particular time period in a specific geographic location. This is particularly true of the study of Irish immigration. In this field, there dominates an image (and description) of the Irish migrant in North America—but mostly in the United States—as an urban prone individual unable to adjust to life in rural America. Several historians have contested this image with their own work

²²³ Originally quoted in: Sylvia Thrupp, “Editorial,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History: An International Journal* Vol. 1 No. 1 (1958), 1.

²²⁴ For a listing of historians who promoted the use of comparative history, see: Nancy L. Green, “The Comparative Method and Poststructural Structuralism: New Perspectives for Migration Studies,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* Vol. 13 No. 4 (1994): 4-7.

²²⁵ Raymond Grew, “The Case for Comparing Histories,” *The American Historical Review* Vol. 85 No. 4 (1980), 767.

²²⁶ Malcolm Campbell, *Ireland’s New Worlds: Immigrants, Politics, and Society in the United States and Australia, 1815-1922* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), X.

on the Irish experience,²²⁷ but very few have conducted comparisons between different Irish settlements. Malcolm Campbell, historian of the Irish experience in Australia, has utilized the comparative method and highlighted how the Irish in the United States adapted to life in rural America, and how their experience was not so different from that found in the antipodes. Campbell compared the Irish experience in rural Minnesota with New South Wales between 1830 and 1890, and came to the conclusion that in both areas that the Irish took “advantage of the opportunities available in the still unrefined settings.”²²⁸ Furthermore, Irish settlers adapted to life in rural Minnesota and New South Wales because they had acquired knowledge of the land before they made the decision to settle there. Campbell indicated that “[w]hen viewed in such an international, comparative context, the example of Minnesota experience suggests that social historians should abandon stereotypical assertions about what the Irish did not or could not do on the land and emphasize a renewed examination of the specific experiences of the rural Irish in the United States.”²²⁹

Campbell further developed his method of comparative history in his study of the Irish in eastern Australia and California in the nineteenth century.²³⁰ He began his article with a clear explanation of how the historiography of Irish migration in the United States has been dominated by the Irish experience in Atlantic seaboard cities (such as New York and Boston), and how this orthodoxy has prevailed over other studies that have attempted

²²⁷ In the United States: Robert A. Burchell, “British Immigrants in Southern California, 1850-1870,” *Southern California Quarterly* Vol. 53 No. 4 (1971): 283-302; *The San Francisco Irish, 1848-1880* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979). In Canada: Donald Harmen Akenson, “Ontario: Whatever Happened to the Irish?” in *Canadian Papers in Rural History* Vol. III ed. Donald Harmen Akenson (Gananoque: Langdale Press, 1982): 204-256; *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History* (Kingston: McGill Queen’s University Press, 1984).

²²⁸ Malcolm Campbell, “Immigrants on the Land: Irish Rural Settlement in Minnesota and New South Wales, 1830-1890,” *New Hibernia Review/Iris Eireannach Nua* Vol. 2 No. 1 (1998), 44.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 61.

²³⁰ , “Ireland’s Furthest Shores: Irish Immigrant Settlement in Nineteenth-Century California and Eastern Australia,” *The Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 71, No. 1 (2002): 59-90

to offset the commonly accepted view of the Irish experience in the United States.

Campbell argued that in order to contest the accepted view, historians must look beyond the Irish experiences of their own country, and compare Irish communities in with other countries, such as Australia. As Campbell expressed, "comparison with the experiences of nineteenth-century Irish immigrants who settled in Australia promises to be much more illuminating to an understanding of the West Coast Irish than contrasts with America's eastern Irish."²³¹ Throughout his study, Campbell compared how the Irish experience in eastern Australia and California were similar: Irish migrants to both areas experienced little trouble in adapting to their new surroundings; moderate levels of prosperity were achieved; and each settlement had a large and diverse Irish population demographic. The central factors that contributed to the similar outcomes, as outlined by Campbell, were the time the Irish arrived, their preparedness for their new environment, and the openness of each society.

Campbell's comparative studies of the Irish experience in Australia with rural America have proved how effective the comparative method can be. Yet very few scholars of Irish migration have compared their research on Irish migrant experiences with other countries or other Irish settlements within their own country of interest.²³² This point is particularly true for historians of the Irish experience in Canada, who have continued to argue that the bulk of Irish migrants to that country were Irish Protestants who settled in rural areas. A few historians have contested this hypothesis. Historian of the Irish in Quebec, Robert J. Grace, argued that when the Irish experience in Canada is

²³¹ Ibid., 62.

²³² Alan O'Day, "Revising the Diaspora," in *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy* eds. D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day (London: Routledge, 1996), 196.

mentioned in the historical literature of Irish migration, it typically refers to the Irish in Upper Canada, an area of Canada where most Irish settlers were Protestant and who became rural dwellers once they pushed through the urban port cities of British North America. Grace maintained that this image does not represent the Irish experience of the entire country because in Quebec, the Irish were overwhelmingly represented in the cities of Quebec and Montreal. And although there were Irish Protestants in Quebec, Irish Catholics were the clear majority of the two migrant groups.²³³ Peter Toner concurred with Grace that the Irish experience in Ontario was “not necessarily representative of the Irish in Canada as a whole.”²³⁴ Moreover, using his findings on the Irish in New Brunswick, Toner asserted that based on religion the Irish in New Brunswick were almost evenly divided, and that although there was a meaningful number of Irish in rural New Brunswick, there was also a large proportion of Irish Catholics who settled in the urban port city of Saint John.²³⁵ Although both Toner and Grace use the Irish experiences in New Brunswick and Quebec respectively to counterbalance the image of the Irish immigrant in Canada, they do not use the comparative method to highlight exactly how Irish migrant experiences varied and what factors contributed to these variations.²³⁶

Nevertheless, the potential for further use of the comparative method—to demonstrate how and why Irish experiences in Canada varied—are vast. For example, comparisons between the Irish experience in Montreal and Toronto would display how

²³³ Robert J. Grace, “A Demographic and Social Profile of Quebec City’s Irish Populations, 1842-1861,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* Vol. 23 No. 1 (2003): 55-60.

²³⁴ Peter Toner, “Lifting the Mist: Recent Studies on the Scots and Irish,” *Acadiensis* Vol. XVIII No. 1 (1988), 219.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 221.

²³⁶ Toner does, however, compare the origins of Irish migrants in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland with New Brunswick in: Peter M. Toner, “The Origins of the New Brunswick Irish, 1851,” *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d’études canadiennes* Vol. 23, Nos. 1&2 (1988): 104-119. See also: Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, “The Irish Abroad: Better Questions through a Better Source, the Canadian Census,” *Irish Geography* Vol. 13, Issue 1 (1980): 1-19.

these two city's Irish experiences varied, and also shed light on the different urban Irish experiences of Upper and Lower Canada. The Irish migrants who settled in rural New Brunswick could be compared to the rural Irish settlers of Nova Scotia in order to determine if Irish migrants in both provinces were from the same social milieu. Comparisons between the Irish experience of certain Canadian communities and other countries Irish communities, such as the United States and Australia, would place the Irish experience of Canada within an international context. Furthermore, gender could act as an avenue in which to compare Irish female experiences. Willeen Keough has provided a number of excellent studies that detail Irish women experiences along the southern Avalon of Newfoundland.²³⁷ These sources, combined with original research on Irish women experiences in other provinces, would not only permit a comparison between Irish women in Newfoundland with other Irish women in Canada, but it may also foster a growth in studies on Irish women in Canada, a topic that has not received a sufficient amount of attention.

Indeed, there are several different comparisons that may be conducted, which would provide many diverse perspectives of Irish experiences in Canada. It is important to remember that when the Irish in Canada are examined, that they arrived to the country between the early eighteenth and mid nineteenth century and settled in various locations throughout the country. Many of the migrants were both Protestant and Catholic, and they came from different counties and provinces in Ireland. Furthermore, the host provinces in

²³⁷ Willeen Keough, *The Slender Thread: Irish Women on the Southern Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland, 1750-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); "The Riddle of Peggy Mountain: The Regulation of Irish Women's Sexuality on the Southern Avalon, 1750-1860," *Acadiensis* Vol. 31 No. 2 (2002): 36-70; "The 'Old Hag' Meets St. Brigid: Irish Women and the Intersection of Belief Systems on the Southern Avalon," *An Nasc* 15 (2001): 12-25; "Contested Terrains: Ethnic and Gendered Spaces in the Harbour Grace Affray," *The Canadian Historical Review* Vol. 90 No. 1 (2009): 29-70.

which they settled in were not the same: some provinces had a great number of employment opportunities in their respective urban centres, which attracted Irish migrants to settle there, while in some provinces rural life promised more opportunities. There is certainly no typical Irish experience that could represent the Irish migrant experience for all of Canada, and as Willeen Keough stated, we must not think in terms of the statistical average because “[it does] not reflect the actual experience of many, or even most, of the emigrants involved.”²³⁸ One of the best tools that may be used to reinforce the point that there were several different Irish migrant experiences is the comparative method.

²³⁸ Keough, *The Slender Thread*, 20.

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