A COLONIAL PRINT ASCENDANCY:
The Domestic Press, Sociability and Elite Formation
in Eighteenth-Century Halifax and Québec City

by

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In memory of my father
William “Bud” Eamon
1938-1985
Abstract

This dissertation will argue that, from the mid eighteenth-century introduction of printing presses in Halifax (1751) and Québec City (1764), printers, readers and print contributors informally coalesced around the newspapers and magazines produced in the British American capitals. This group was an eclectic mix of close friends, acquaintances and complete strangers of varied education, backgrounds and professions. Whether they realized it or not, print drew these individuals together, uniting them in their literacy and a shared belief in the power of the press to shape opinion, regulate behaviour and inspire action. The individuals who were drawn to the domestic press in the two colonial capitals can be considered as comprising a colonial print ascendancy. As we will see, some of the most active members of this print ascendancy appealed to the colonial press — and the British traditions it communicated — to create a cohesive vision of privileged, English-speaking conduct. Indeed, in both colonial capitals, those who envisaged and aspired to this elite conflated British gentility, literature and elevated sociability with civility and modernity. Print was not only used by some as a means of privileged sociability, it was also used to debate or promote the objectives of other select fora such as the theatre, coffee houses, clubs and societies. The domestic press forged social networks that lay claim to erudition and refined sociability believed requisite to colonial advancement.
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I know many men in the world who are immediately prejudic’d against a work if it appears abroad without a Preface; nor will they peruse the sheets, till they have read a pompous dedication, or a prefatory preamble twice as long as the work itself.¹

— From the Preface of George’s Coffee-House, A Satire, 1763

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Chapter 1: The Press, Sociability and a Colonial Print Ascendency

Samuel Neilson believed that the printed word was essential to British American life. For the late eighteenth-century printer of the Quebec Gazette, the press was more than a means of livelihood; it possessed an inherent power to change society. This was a conviction, he argued, that was also shared by his readers. “PRINTING…,” he observed in his Quebec Almanac for 1792, is seen as the cause of “the improvement of Reason and advancement of the Arts and Science.” As it was also generally believed that “the ARTS constitute the principal difference between barbarous and civilized nations,” Neilson concluded that “we may just count the ART OF PRINTING as the guardian angel of that difference… it is the *ars atrium conservatix.*”¹ For Neilson, print was an invaluable vehicle that could inform, educate and entertain while promoting the use of reason in public. As we shall see, those who also believed in this power of the press were not afraid to use the printed word to promote what they saw as the public interest or to facilitate their own private advancement: two objectives that were not necessarily considered mutually exclusive.

From the introduction of printing presses in Halifax and Québec City in the mid-eighteenth century, printers, readers and print contributors informally coalesced around the newspapers and magazines produced in the British American capitals. It was an eclectic group of close friends, acquaintances and complete strangers of varied education, backgrounds and professions. This group was partly comprised of individuals that have been seen as members of the traditional colonial political and religious hierarchy.² Its

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¹ The Quebec Almanac for the Year 1792, (Quebec: Samuel Neilson, 1791), 58.
² This hierarchy has been viewed as the ruling Governor and council, senior bureaucrats, church officials and past ruling officials who remained in the colonies, often to the chagrin of the newer regime. These individuals have been the focus of the core of older political histories of the period as they are the ones who
margins, however, also expanded beyond these traditional elites, encompassing merchants, clerks, tradesmen, prominent farmers and the printers who facilitated the process. Whether they realized it or not, print drew these individuals together, uniting them in their literacy and a shared belief in the power of the press to shape opinion, regulate behaviour and inspire action. These individuals who were drawn to the domestic press in the two colonial capitals can be considered as comprising a colonial print ascendency.

Newspapers and magazines in Halifax and Québec City, with their selection of news, essays and letters, quickly became a form of sociability outside of the bounds of formal state institutions, religious congregations or family life. Some of the most active members of the print ascendency used the press to fashion what they deemed a suitable colonial elite. In both colonial capitals, they initiated a dialogue that promoted certain beliefs, behaviours and forms of sociability believed essential in English-speaking


3 It should be noted that I am not arguing that the print ascendency is a transposition, or manifestation of the Anglo-Irish or Protestant Ascendancy experienced from the late seventeenth to the nineteenth century in Ireland. Both provincial elites indeed consisted of primarily Protestant, English-speaking individuals who venerated the English constitution and Scots-English intellectual and cultural traditions. Furthermore, as modern scholarship attests, the Irish Protestant Ascendancy, much like the colonial print ascendancy, was by no means homogeneous and exhibited various and conflicting internal concerns. The Anglo-Irish Ascendancy came to be, however, in an arguably different economic, political and geographic situation of Ireland and resulting in a much different legacy than what was experienced in Nova Scotia and Québec. See: S.J. Connolly, Religion, Law and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland, 1660-1760, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Jacqueline Hill, From Patriots to Unionists: Dublin Civic Politics and Irish Protestant Patriotism, 1660-1840, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Allan Blackstock, The Ascendancy Army: The Irish Yeomanry, 1796-1834, (Portland: Four Courts Press, 1998).
society. These efforts either received the approval of other readers, or were countered with cautions over the perceived excesses and immorality of certain actions. Regardless of the positions taken, all involved in the process appealed to print — and the British traditions it communicated — to create a cohesive vision of privileged, English-speaking conduct. It was a dialogue that clearly circumscribed how refined colonists should act, what they should read and how they should entertain themselves. Indeed, in both colonial capitals, those who envisaged and aspired to this elite conflated British gentility, literature and elevated sociability with civility and modernity. Print was not only used by some as a means of privileged sociability, it was also used to debate or promote the objectives of other select fora such as the theatre, coffee houses, clubs and societies. Through the domestic press social networks were forged that lay claim to erudition and genteel sociability believed requisite to colonial advancement.

The existence of this perceived power of print to influence and alter society has been argued since the invention of moveable type over five centuries ago. As print became the preferred method of communication, societies adapted to the medium and, in turn, shaped it. “After Gutenberg,” French print historian Roger Chartier writes, “all culture in western societies can be held to be a culture of the printed word.” The power of print, as Chartier observes, rests in the fact that it “penetrated the entire web of social relations, bore thoughts and brought pleasures and lodged in people’s deepest self as well as claiming its place in the public scene.”

For those that study the eighteenth century,

the printed word similarly holds a preeminent place in the interpretation of the era marked by a dramatic increase in literacy, publishing, reader contributions and self-publishing. The reach of print was simultaneously municipal, regional, national and transatlantic in nature. Librarians, conservators, sociologists and historians have all contributed to what has been seen as a “forbidding range of scholarship” including analyses of paper, print runs, costs and distribution, biographies of printers and their customers, as well as wider studies of the diffusion of print ideas upon eighteenth-century society.

Although print is vital to this study, it is not a history of the book. Neither is it a history of ideas. It is rather a cultural history of how the press was used to convey certain ideas, regulate behaviour or inspire action in eighteenth-century British Halifax and Québec City. In doing so, this study navigates some unfamiliar waters in the social history of eighteenth-century British North America. Indeed, a wealth of scholarship exists concerning the eighteenth-century book and its transatlantic trade to the thirteen colonies (and the American republic that they became). There the press has been seen as a political engine where pamphlets and newspapers offered an important means to debate

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6 Over the past three decades several monographs and collections of essays have been published that argue the parameters of this transatlantic network of print distribution and focus on the particular efforts of English, Scottish and American booksellers and publishers. These works include, William L. Joyce et al., eds. Printing & Society in Early America, (Worchester: American Antiquarian Society, 1983); Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, eds., A History of the Book in America, Volume One, The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); James Raven, London Booksellers and American Customers: Transatlantic Literary Community and the Charleston Library Society, 1748-1811, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002); Richard B. Sher, The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors and Their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, and America, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
publicly the conflicting ideologies such as those behind the American Revolution. Print, scholars of the American press argue, voiced republican and democratic ideals providing a levelling force in the new American republic. It brought knowledge to the masses and helped to release the hold of the traditional college-educated, religious elite in the new republic. Print was not only the voice of republicanism in America, but it also has been seen as a vehicle of the Enlightenment. Since historian George S. Gordon remarked that the writings from the Revolutionary War period constituted “the most magnificent irruption of the American genius into print,” the framework of the Enlightenment has been used as a means to better explain the origins and nature of that printed genius. However, these interpretations, focused on the colonies that comprised the nascent United States, offer little insight into the culture surrounding the presses in other British American regions.

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In the French-language scholarship some inroads have been made linking the francophone press and sociability of Québec with the greater eighteenth-century Age of Enlightenment. After Marcel Trudel published *L’influence de Voltaire au Canada* in 1945 scholars have argued the existence of the Enlightenment within limited pockets of literate French Canadian society. Select French Canadian lawyers, gentry and merchants, this literature observes, were directly influenced by the French intellectual tradition, notably meeting in salons and discussing the works of the philosophes. In the particular case of Montréal, the censured printer Fleury Mesplet, journalist Valentin Jautard and merchant Pierre Du Calvet have been held up as catalysts of Enlightenment thought and for inspiring circles of intellectual association. More recently historian Yvan Lamonde

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13 Mesplet learned the printing trade in London and Philadelphia and later moved to Montréal where he and Jautard published the short lived Gazette du commerce et littéraire de Montréal. The liberal tracts of Mesplet and Jautard often endorsed the principles of the American Revolution and were perceived — it has been argued — as being too republican for the colonial administration and too liberal for the French clergy of Montréal. Both men were arrested for sedition in 1779. After his imprisonment, Mesplet established La Gazette de Montréal in 1785. See: Marcel Trudel, *L’influence de Voltaire au Canada*, (Montréal : Fides, 1945), 49, 94-111; de Lagrave, *Les origines de la presse au Québec*; Claude Galarneau, « Mesplet, Fleury » Volume IV, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, www.biographi.ca, (Accessed on 1 June 2009); Denis Monière, *Ideologies in Quebec: The historical development*; trans, Richard Howard, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981); Jean-Paul de Lagrave, *L’Époque de Voltaire au Canada: Biographie politique de Fleury Mesplet, Imprimeur*, (Montréal : L’Étincelle, 1985); and more recently, Lamonde, *Histoire sociale des idées*, 28-33; Andrès et Bernier, eds. *Portrait des arts*.

14 Du Calvet was a French Huguenot who arrived in Canada after the British Conquest of Québec in 1763. A rich merchant who vocally advocated colonial reform, he was also known to have accommodated American rebels during the Revolution. His sympathies were mistrusted by Governor Haldimand who imprisoned him until 1784, after which he fled to England and sued Haldimand for his imprisonment. The issue remained unresolved as he died in a shipwreck two years later. See: Trudel, *L’influence de Voltaire au Canada*, 107-111; Pierre Tousignant and Madeleine Dionne-Tousignant Bernard, « Du Calvet, Pierre » Volume IV, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, www.biographi.ca, (Accessed on 1 June 2009); Annie Saint-Germain, « De héros révolutionnaire à héraut pamphlétaire: le cas du Pierre Du Calvet (1735-1786) », en Andrès et Bernier, eds., *Portrait des arts*, 213-226.

has underscored the importance of sociability and societies in the intellectual life of late eighteenth-century Québec. By the end of the century, he writes, the province was marked by « des groupes sociaux [qui] suscient une activité intellectuelle remarquable dont la Chambre d’assemblée, les brochures, les « gazettes » et les cafés deviennent les forums. »

It is in this environment, Lamonde concluded opinion publique was born and ideas such as religious toleration, loyalty and libertés anglaises were diffused.

On the other hand, this interpretation of a sociable Enlightenment culture of ideas transmitted through print has not gained prominence in English-language histories of British society in eighteenth-century Québec or the Maritimes. Historian J.M. Bumsted has observed that English-language scholars of British North America have been reticent to address the concept of the Enlightenment. “The question of whether there was an indigenous Enlightenment in English Canada,” Bumsted muses, “much less the question of the extent to which external Enlightenment influences touched it — has never been seriously posed, and there is no secondary literature that directly addresses these matters.”

In explaining this disparity, Bumsted’s reasoning takes a form similar to the opinions expressed by the eighteenth-century travel writer. Citing the standard prerequisites of Enlightenment seen in the American experience, Bumsted observes that “the diffusion of enlightened ideas required a society that was both urban and urbane, based on educated aristocratic or at least bourgeois classes.” He continues that the Enlightenment, “was a movement of the university, the salon, the classroom, the study, the bookshop, the scientific laboratory, and the encyclopedia. British North America had

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neither cities nor a very well educated population, and the settlers had far more important things to worry about — such as survival in a howling wilderness — than formal book-learning.” As Bumsted observes, English-language historians have believed that eighteenth-century Canada was too small or isolated for the spirit of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment to make any great inroads.19

This view of the Maritimes and Québec as being unable to support an intellectual culture, let alone a culture of Enlightenment, can be seen in studies of English-language literature and the press in the eighteenth-century colonies. Works that address colonial literacy, print consumption and authorship — with the exception of a handful of recognized loyalist poets — tend to gloss over the eighteenth century.20 In regard to the domestic press, bibliographers and historians of journalism have seen colonial governments as authoritarian and oppressive, keeping a tight reign on the content of the eighteenth-century newspapers of Nova Scotia and Québec. One example frequently offered is that of Halifax Gazette printer Anthony Henry, who was removed by the colonial secretary of Nova Scotia for publishing material contrary to the Stamp Act in 1766.21 In Québec, the arrest and imprisonment of Fleury Mesplet and Valentin Jautard

18 ibid.
in 1779 is offered as further evidence of a tendency towards censorship by British
colonial authorities.\textsuperscript{22} Such acts of suppression have led to a generally-held belief that the
press in eighteenth-century British North America was strictly under the control of
colonial officials. “Among British North American newspapers the authoritarian theory
of the press prevailed,” press historian W.H. Kesterton wrote. “In British North America,
during the second half of the eighteenth century,” he continued:

there were no doubts about the government-colony relationship, and the subservient
role of the newspapers was taken for granted… Under such stifling conditions it is
not strange that the characteristic journal of the free press was a pallid, neutral,
harmless sheet without any really vital role to play in the social and political life of
the community.\textsuperscript{23}

This view of authoritarian control over the presses of Nova Scotia and Québec, however,
tends to provide a polarized and unbalanced picture of eighteenth-century print politics.
Instead, the reception and regulation of print was more complex and nuanced than this
interpretation has traditionally acknowledged. English-speaking colonial administrators,
readers and printers alike claimed a stake in the press and at different times exhibited acts
of tolerance and moderation, advocated propriety and censorship, or defended the
importance of its liberty.

Halifax and Québec City can be considered to have been respectively born and
reborn into the mid-eighteenth century British Empire. Halifax, the younger of the two
capitals, was founded in 1749. In that year the London-based Board of Trade and
Plantations oversaw the establishment of the town and the immigration of approximately
3000 settlers, soldiers, and sailors arriving in thirteen military transports under the

\textsuperscript{22} Giles Gallichan, “Political Censorship,” in \textit{History of the Book in Canada}, Volume I, 321-323; Andrès et
\textsuperscript{23} Kesterton, \textit{A History of Journalism in Canada}, 8-9.
command of Edward Cornwallis. The town was deemed to be strategically situated at the south-eastern coastal centre of the colony, particularly in the wake of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, which saw nearby Cape Breton returned to French interests. An estimated 4400 miles from London,\textsuperscript{25} the settlement was particularly prized by eighteenth-century observers for its large natural harbour.\textsuperscript{26} This “commodious”\textsuperscript{27} space, large enough by contemporary estimation to accommodate a “thousand sail of ships,”\textsuperscript{28} remained open throughout the year and soon became a centre of lucrative maritime trade and British colonial communication networks along the eastern seaboard of North America and the West Indies.

The Board of Trade, ever mindful of the public money expended on Nova Scotia, believed that increased settlement was the requisite means to free the colony of its economic dependency.\textsuperscript{29} Halifax would soon become the gateway to successive waves of immigrants to Nova Scotia, including thousands of “Foreign Protestants” (from various Germanic regions of Europe),\textsuperscript{30} Irish, Yorkshiremen,\textsuperscript{31} urban merchants, and rural

\textsuperscript{25} The town of “Hallifax” was measured to be 4460 miles from London with a latitude of 44° 20’. See: \textit{America display’d, and the Truth Discovered: Being A Repository of American Inteligences; in Three Parts}, (T. Burroug, 1775), 2.
\textsuperscript{26} “Arrival of the Settlers at Nova Scotia,” from the \textit{Gentleman's Magazine} 19 (1749): 408; British army major Robert Rogers in his gazetteer called it, “…the finest in America, and capable of being equal to any in Europe….” See: Robert Rogers, \textit{A concise account of North America: containing a description of the several British colonies on that continent, including the islands of Newfoundland, Cape Breton, &c. ...}, (London: J. Millan, 1765), 18.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Gaine’s universal register, or, American and British kalendar, for the year 1775}, (New-York: H. Gaine, 1774), 124.
\textsuperscript{30} Over 3000 “foreign Protestants” arrived in Nova Scotia from the founding of Halifax to the end of the Revolutionary War, for more on the impact that this had on the colony see: Winthrop Pickard Bell, \textit{The
planters from New England. While the vast majority of immigrants travelled through Halifax to the more fertile interior lands, some would remain in the city. Suburbs with German, Irish, and African American settlers soon formed around the initial Halifax settlement. By the end of the eighteenth century, Halifax had grown to a population of 8,500, a relatively small but lively colonial capital and garrison town in British America.

On the other hand, the Québec City that had fallen under British control in 1759 was originally founded by the French in 1608. The capital of Canada boasted a commanding presence on and below a rock cliff overlooking the Saint Lawrence River. Québec had been the administrative centre for the French colonial administration and

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33 This phenomenon occurred throughout the eighteenth century which led to great fluctuations in the population of Halifax. It is first noticed early on by the Rev. Dr. Breynton who wrote to his superiors in England that, “the number of inhabitants in Halifax was somewhat diminished by their branching into out settlements, where the soil is better, and the situation more convenient for fishing….“ Quoted in: George W. Hill, “History of Saint Paul’s Church, Halifax, Nova Scotia,” Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society 1 (1879): 38-39.


army as well as hosting various Roman Catholic religious orders,\textsuperscript{37} tradesmen, and what has been controversially described as a \textit{gentilhomme bourgeoisie} of merchants.\textsuperscript{38} French military engineers attempted to impose symmetry and order to the growing city,\textsuperscript{39} but the pre-Cambrian ledges and outcroppings often confounded these attempts, giving the city the feeling of both a planned capital and meandering European market town (see appendix iv).\textsuperscript{40} The upper town was home to the city’s main fortifications, the Governor’s palace, military barracks and the residences, hospitals, schools and chapels of the Hospitalières de Hôtel-Dieu, Recollect, Ursuline and Jesuit communities.\textsuperscript{41} Through a gate in the southern wall, the steep Côte-de-la-Montaigne led traffic to the cramped lower town, home to the merchant quarter, the lower fortifications and the harbour (see appendix vi).\textsuperscript{42} The frenetic business of the harbour\textsuperscript{43} was abruptly curtailed each year.


\textsuperscript{39} Gaspard-Joseph Chaussegros de Léry, the King’s Engineer for New France and architect of the \textit{Citadelle} particularly devised an ambitious plan in 1752 to drastically redesign Québec with symmetrical blocks and gardens, parallel streets and grand avenues. Léry did not see his plan come to fruition, nor did he live to see the British attack on his fortifications, as he died in 1756. Voir: John Hare, Marc Lafrance et David-Thierry Ruddel, \textit{Histoire de la Ville de Québec, 1608-1871}, (Montréal : Boréal, 1987), 60-62; F.J. Thorpe, « Chaussegros de Léry, Gaspard-Joseph » Dictionnaire biographique du Canada enligné, Volume III, www.biographi.ca, (téléchargé le 19 février 2010).

\textsuperscript{40} For a detailed exploration into the challenges of the military and urban planning of the city see: André Charbonneau, Yvon Desloges, and Marc Lafrance, \textit{Québec The Fortified City: From the 17\textsuperscript{th} to the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century}, (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1982).

\textsuperscript{41} Approximately 20 of the Upper Town’s 72 hectares were owned by the Roman Catholic Church and its various religious orders, almost another 4 hectares was occupied by military and government administrators. The remaining area was comprised of roads and private residences. See: Yvon Desloges, \textit{A Tenant’s Town: Québec in the Eighteenth Century}, (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1991), 73, 77-85. For a detailed contemporary description of the features of Québec City see: Father Charlevoix, \textit{Letters to the Dutchess of Lesdiguières; Giving an Account of a Voyage to Canada, and Travels through that vast Country, and Louisana to the Gulf of Mexico Undertaken By Order of the Present King of France}, (London: R. Goadby, 1763). This version is an English language reprint published for an audience hungry for information on Britain’s newest colonial acquisition.

\textsuperscript{42} Desloges, Tenant’s Town, 89-93; Hare et al., \textit{Histoire de la Ville de Québec}, 80-83.
with the advent of winter and the freezing over of the river. After the arrival of the British, the city continued in its role as a hub of colonial trade and communications. It was a gateway to Montréal and the lucrative fur trade beyond as well as to the rich agricultural lands that functioned for generations under a feudal system of overseeing seigneurs and their farmer censitaires. After a prolonged naval bombardment of the city in 1759, a dramatic land battle was fought on the Plains of Abraham resulting in the death of both French and British military commanders and the eventual ceding of the city to the British forces. With the death of General James Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham, Britons were given both a new imperial hero and a new colonial capital confirmed by the Treaty of Paris in 1763. A British Army garrison and Royal Navy detachment was soon

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43 By 1758, 56 different ships frequented the harbour carrying over 13 000 tons of goods. In the period between 1739 and 1749, 98 ships were built at Québec. See: Hare et al., *Histoire de la Ville de Québec*, 318, 322.


45 For more on the military operations, see: Arthur Doughty, *The Siege of Quebec and the Battle of the Plains of Abraham*, (Québec: Dussault and Proulx, 1901); C.P. Stacey, *Quebec 1759: The Siege and Battle*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1959). Numerous primary accounts have been published in the subsequent years and include: An *Accurate and Authentic Journal of the Siege of Quebec*, 1759, (London: J. Robertson, 1759); Richard Gardiner, *Memories of the Siege of Quebec... from the journal of a French officer... compared with accounts transmitted home by Major General Wolfe and Admiral Saunders....*, (London: R. and J. Doddsley, 1761); Manuscript *Relating to the Early History of Canada: Journal of the Siege of Quebec, 1760 By General Jas, Murray*, (Québec: Gazette Printing Office, 1871); CIHM #22490, *Narrative of the Doings during the Siege of Quebec, and the Conquest of Canada; by a Nun of the General Hospital of Quebec, transmitted to a Religious Order of the Same Order*, In France, (Québec: c. 1855); Jean-Claude Panet, *Journal du Siège du Québec en 1759*, (Montréal : Senécal, 1866).

46 In addition to initial reports of the battle found in various contemporary newspapers and magazines including *The Annual Register, The London Magazine, or Gentleman’s Magazine*, commemoration of the exploits of Wolfe continued throughout the century and was depicted, by painters such as Edward Penny (1764), Samuel Wale (c. 1778), or Benjamin West (1771). The exploits of Wolfe were also detailed in biographies like John Pringle, *The life of General James Wolfe, the conqueror of Canada: or, the elogium of that renowned hero, Attempted according to the Rules of Eloquence*, (London: G. Kearsly, 1760); or in poetry such as Thomas Young, *A poem sacred to the memory of James Wolfe Esq; major-general and commander in chief of His Majesty's forces, destined for the reduction of Quebec. Who was slain upon the Plains of Abraham, near that capital, gloriously disputing the cause of liberty, and his country; September 13, 1759*, (New-Haven: James Parker, 1761) or as an exemplar, especially to youth, in works such as *Britannia Triumphant, or an Account of the Sea-Fights and Victories of the English Nation...,* (London: R. James, 1761), Thomas Mortimer, *The British Plutarch, containing the lives of the most eminent statesmen,*
followed by a small, but vocal group of merchants and their families from New England and Great Britain. Slowly, the French face of the city began to change. By the end of the eighteenth century, Québec City was a thriving urban community with 12 000 to 14 000 souls, one third of whom were English-speaking.

The colonial print ascendancy and its use of the domestic presses in the two capitals reflect in many ways what cultural historian Benedict Anderson has observed as the influence of print-capitalism. Print, Anderson famously writes, was foundational in the creation of national consciousness during the late eighteenth century. “First and foremost,” he argues, “they created unified fields of exchange and communications below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars… these fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally-imagined community.” Printing, Anderson continues, also provided “a new fixity to language” and privileged “languages-of-power,” thus creating a vehicle that was well-suited for communicating tradition and could eclipse past and once

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Linda Kerr details the arrival of English merchants and argues that, contrary to the prevailing belief in the historiography, these men of commerce had a difficult time in becoming established in the former French colony, see: Linda Kerr, “Quebec: The Making of an Imperial Mercantile Community, 1760-1768,” PhD Dissertation, University of Alberta, 1992. Historian Alain Parent argues that images of British soldiers and merchants juxtaposed along side the architecture and landscape of Québec City fostered the imperial imagination particularly back in Great Britain. See: Alain Parent, Entre Empire et Nation : Les Représentations de la ville de Québec et de ses environs, 1760-1833, (Québec : Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 2005).


honoured forms of expression. The print ascendancy of Halifax and Québec City exhibited many of the characteristics observed by Anderson. Its efforts advanced the English language as the preferred colonial vernacular. Print provided an informal community that exhibited a specific awareness of what it believed to be acceptable cultural norms and traditions. As Samuel Neilson observed in the pages of his almanac, the press communicated a new language of reason, imbued with the arts and sciences, and was the “ars atrium conservatix,” a means to convey and fix these communications in time and space.

While Anderson equates these developments in print with the rise of “nationalism,” in the colonial context of eighteenth-century Halifax and Québec City national identity for the print ascendancy was a broader Britishness. It is difficult to understand, however, how much the eighteenth-century inhabitants of the British Isles saw themselves as a cohesive group, let alone the degree to which colonists appealed to this Britishness in forming their own identities. “As a historical process,” historian Kathleen Wilson writes, “identity is tentative, multiple and contingent, and its modalities change over time. In the eighteenth century, the relations of individuals and collectives to each other were rendered through religion, politics, geography, sociability, politeness and ‘stage’ of civilization.” Protestantism, commerce, and the colonial experience have all been offered as factors in the creation of a British consciousness, a consciousness that scholars argue remained fluid and contradictory throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

50 ibid., 47-48.
52 Linda Colley, Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992);
It is not the objective of this study to prove that a collective British identity existed amongst all the residents of such diverse capital cities. However, those who actively engaged the English-language press — those who can be considered part of a colonial print ascendency of printers, correspondents and advertisers (such as booksellers and coffee house proprietors) — exhibited a demonstrative taste for English- or British-styled literature. In a transatlantic world that has been characterized as one of movement and interaction, appropriately British-styled information was important. Before the American Revolution, this importance of the press can be seen as a means for British Americans to reconnect with a social, cultural and intellectual life in Great Britain physically inaccessible on the colonial periphery. After the American Revolution, this reaching out to Great Britain took on a more overtly political and patriotic tone, expressing a need to show the division between British Americans and the Americans of the United States. As the writer Verax wrote to the *Nova-Scotia Magazine* in 1789, “Were I to name the most striking peculiarity of our neighbours in the United States, I would say that they are set apart from the rest of mankind by a certain littleness….“ As we shall see, being British to those in Halifax and Québec City meant being part of something larger, part of an empire and a wealth of familiar tradition. The press in the two capitals was seen not only as part of that tradition, but as a means to promote and preserve it.

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54 *Nova-Scotia Magazine* 1,3 (1789): 204.
Another characteristic of the colonial print ascendancy throughout the second half of the eighteenth century was a steadfast belief in an unchanging nature of the press. This unaltering view of the press, however, does not mean that life remained static in the colonial capitals. To the contrary, the second half of the eighteenth century was subject to tumultuous change. Within a decade of ending what was almost a half century of sporadic warfare with the French, Britain Americans had become embroiled in a vicious and divisive civil war. The treaty that would end the American Revolution would change the political map, ushering in globally what some scholars term the Second British Empire and in North America marking the beginning of what historian A.R.M. Lower observed as the continent’s “two English-speaking American experiments.”

loyalist refugees from the former British American colonies flooded to Halifax and

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Québec City, causing economic and social stresses in the two capitals.\textsuperscript{59} During this time of unrest, what was perceived as the longstanding nature of the press — an ability to communicate British liberties and freedoms — was purposely sought by members of the colonial print ascendancy who wanted to bring normalcy and stability, to reinforce British traditions, or to correct the aspects of society that were believed at risk, or had already changed. In spite of, or because of, the great demographic changes that accompanied the arrival of loyalists in both Halifax and Québec City, there was a remarkable continuity in the appeal of the press and in the perception of its invaluable role to colonial society.

Some members of the colonial print ascendancy, believing in the ability of the press both to shape opinion and to communicate culture norms, used print to promote elite British association on the colonial periphery. One cannot address issues of print and sociability today without acknowledging the German scholar Jürgen Habermas and his polarizing writings on the bourgeois public sphere.\textsuperscript{60} The applicability of Habermas’ ideas to eighteenth-century British America,\textsuperscript{61} let alone Europe,\textsuperscript{62} remains a subject of


\textsuperscript{60} Historian of ideas Harold Mah has gone as far as to say that the diffusion of Habermas is one of “the most significant historiographic developments” since its English translation in 1989. Harold Mah, “Phantasies of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians,” \textit{Journal of Modern History} 72,1 (2000): 153.

sometimes heated debate. While it is beyond the scope of this study to engage with the specific arguments surrounding his work, some of his observations are salient. In particular, his identification of newspapers, theatre, coffee houses and societies as the secular fora of association has guided this analysis. In Europe, Habermas argues, these manifestations of sociability can be considered hallmarks of the emerging public sphere, an ideally rational and egalitarian space — separate from the institutions of the Church or State — in which the eighteenth-century transition to modernity and rise of deliberative democracy can be seen.  

In Halifax and Québec City these fora also existed, but instead of being spaces of a growing egalitarianism they were spaces of privileged association whose cachet was shaped by the efforts of some members of the print ascendency in colonial elite formation.

Colonially produced print is the foundation of this study. As a primary source, colonially produced print offers a discourse separate from that found in records of government, or of the Church. It provides a voice that is more consistent than what can be found in the remaining and scattered mercantile records, private journals, or correspondence from the era. It is only through an analysis of domestic newspapers, magazines and almanacs that we can gain an appreciation of the attitudes, behaviours and actions of the colonial print ascendency. Halifax and Québec City are the basis of this

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study as they offer two prominent British American centres that fall outside of the traditional thirteen colonies. Notwithstanding geographic, linguistic, legal and ethnic differences, the towns also shared many traits that would foster the colonial print ascendancy and direct its efforts. Both capitals shared similar roles as centres of British colonial bureaucracy and administration. Both were market towns with important transatlantic links and a strong Royal Navy and British Army presence. As capitals, the towns also faced many similar challenges adjusting to new colonial policies and economic realties in an era that has been seen at the cusp of the First and Second British Empires.64 While other colonial towns in the colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick (after 1784) and Québec (Lower and Upper Canada after 1791) would have presses by the late eighteenth century, Halifax and Québec City produced the longest and most consistent print record of all these regions in the eighteenth century. Every surviving newspaper and magazine produced in Halifax and Québec City has been studied along with a cross-section of almanacs, poetry, handbills and posters, directories, dictionaries, published sermons, speeches and essays. When required, various newspapers, magazines and printed works from neighbouring towns, colonies and across the Atlantic have also been consulted (see appendix i) as well as manuscript letters, correspondence, and other archival sources to flesh out the greater influence of the print record.

64 Sir J.R. Seeley (1834-1895) is perhaps the first scholar of empire to acknowledge this split as First and Second Empires. “The great central fact in this [colonial] chapter of history,” he observed in 1884, “is that we have had at different times two such Empires. So decided is the drift of our destiny towards the occupation of the New World that after we had created one Empire and lost it, a second grew up almost in our own despite.” [J.R. Seeley, The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1884), 14.] The scholarship on this transition era between the First and Second empires is vast, encompassing perspectives originating from British, American and Canadian authors, as well as scholars from continuing or previous British dependencies. One thorough work that details the scholarship on this era, as well as major trends in other colonial, and later commonwealth, matters is Robin W. Winks, The Historiography of the British Empire-Commonwealth: Trends, Interpretations and Resources, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1966). A more recent and less historiographic work can be found in P.J. Marshall, ed., The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume II: The Eighteenth Century, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
For all of the insight that the study of colonial print offers it also has limitations and conspicuous silences. Primarily absent are the voices of the illiterate in colonial society. Print sources such as newspapers also offer little in regard to women, children, First Nations, and African American settlers. In spite of sizeable populations of German- and French-language speakers, the majority of print contributions found in the newspapers of the capitals were authored in English by those who fashioned themselves to be British, or Anglo-American men. The story newspapers provide — that of a literate British American ascendancy attempting to change itself and the greater society — is unavoidably incomplete.

This study begins by surveying the participants in a colonial ascendency of print. Chapter two explores the lives and actions of printers in Halifax and Québec City. These tradesmen were both print facilitators and participants. Printers promoted the utility of their productions in an attempt to balance public propriety and what they believed was an inherent liberty of the press. Their productions were designed to entertain and inform colonial readers and to appeal to existing tastes. The third chapter addresses the other component of the colonial print ascendency, its readers and contributors. Through the use of diaries, subscription lists, and the print record, the backgrounds and tastes of many of these individuals can be brought to the fore. Print information was viewed by those in both the upper echelons and middling ranks as important in daily life. In this environment, both renowned civic figures and forgettable minor characters forged ties around the printed word, steadfast in the belief of its power to convey knowledge and elevate lives.
Chapters four to seven address the relationship between print and four forms of elite sociability in Halifax and Québec City. In chapter four the first forum to be explored is that of the newspaper itself. Readers in Halifax and Québec City forged a special, collaborative relationship with the press. Literate colonists did not see themselves as passive consumers of print information, but rather as active print contributors and arbitrators. Print was more than a means of amusement or information and members of the colonial print ascendancy used it to influence and regulate behaviour. The fifth chapter explores the elevated sociability of the theatre. The messages communicated in popular plays reinforced British supremacy. After the establishment of presses, print extended this experience beyond the confines of the playhouse. It was in the press that members of the colonial print ascendency debated the merits of theatre, where printers, performers and patrons alike fashioned theatre as an amusing and respectable form of entertainment. The sixth chapter examines coffee houses as the physical embodiment of British tradition and gentility in the colonial capitals. As in the theatres of the two capitals, print was essential not only to the literary activities of coffee houses, but also to patrons and proprietors alike to promote what was seen as the appropriately genteel and British nature of the coffee house. The sixth and final chapter addresses the nature of societies and clubs in the two capitals and how the press was employed to fashion these colonial gatherings. Through print, members of societies could both obtain new transatlantic perspectives on association life or have their ideas on propriety and conduct reinforced. Club members along with other participants of the colonial print ascendancy then turned to the press to debate the value of proper sociability and legitimize their own elite association.
As we shall see, the domestic press was integral to the development of society in Halifax and Québec City during the second half of the eighteenth century. Not content merely to consume print information, some readers used the medium to criticize what they believed to be deviant behaviour, to suggest exemplars of proper action, or to otherwise communicate cultural values and opinion. In the hands of a colonial print ascendancy, print became a powerful form of social interaction that could bring constancy and cultural normalcy to the instabilities of colonial life.
Chapter 2: Colonial Printers as Participants in the Colonial Print Ascendancy

Printers were facilitators of the colonial print ascendancy in Halifax and Québec City. They provided a forum for literate colonists to improve their knowledge, fashion their identity, and suggest the shape that colonial society should take. Printers in the two capitals were also members of this colonial print ascendancy. In spite of personal differences, they believed in an overarching power of print to influence opinion and inspire action. Printers — employing a rhetoric utilized throughout the eighteenth-century British Atlantic — extolled the virtues of the press. For them, print was essential in the promotion of education, in the diffusion of useful knowledge, protection of British liberties, and the betterment of society. Committed to the expansion of knowledge through print, their productions appealed to those who were educated, or who aspired to the benefits that education could offer.

Printers were also well aware of the nature and tastes of the reading public they both served and created. The eighteenth-century British American newspaper was inherently political, and printers in both Great Britain and colonial America had to be mindful of the financial and legal ramifications of their productions.1 Printers in Halifax and Québec City had to walk a fine line between liberty and propriety, or risk the loss of

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patronage from an already elite base of subscribers, advertisers, and state officials. Since a significant part of colonial print readership in both capitals included the governing authorities, printers tended to stay away from inflammatory subjects, or at least to couch potentially controversial topics in a variety of non-confrontational ways. Printers, mindful both of the importance of government patronage and of the approbation of a broader readership, often used the promotion of useful knowledge and of British-American innovation as a means to avoid thornier political issues. Printers also used their newspapers as vehicles for the expression of British literary touchstones and the promotion of the English constitution and its liberties. The printers’ message of universal betterment, couched in familiar British tales and tropes, was imbibed by the larger colonial print ascendancy and later used by some of its members in the formation of a colonial elite. As we shall see, it was an elite framed by the literary messages found in print and extolling the values of charity, self betterment, and social improvement.

Printing presses did not exist in either Nova Scotia or Québec until the second half of the eighteenth century. In 1751, three years after the founding of Halifax, (see appendix ii) Bartholomew Green, Jr., arrived to set up what has been generally acknowledged as Nova Scotia’s first press. Green was the son of a famous Boston printer and his migration to Halifax illustrates the strong ties between the two regions.

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2 As with most historic “firsts” there is some debate whether Green was actually the first printer in Halifax. Both printers Otis Little and Herbert Jefferie are known to have lived in Halifax before Green, but there is no evidence of them producing any printed works. See: C. Bruce Fergusson, “Eighteenth-Century Halifax,” Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association 28.1 (1949): 36; Douglas G. Lochhead, “Herbert Jefferie — First Canadian Printer?” Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada, IV (1965): 19-20.

3 The New England/Nova Scotian connection has been argued in many places, most prominently it can be found in Bartlett Brebner, The North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, The United States and Great Britain, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945); W.S. MacNutt, The Atlantic Provinces: The Emergence of Colonial Society, 1712-1857, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965); George Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts, (Montréal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1973) and further
After Green’s sudden illness and death in 1751, fellow Bostonian and former partner John Bushell arrived in the town and started publishing the *Halifax Gazette* the following year. The successive proprietors of the *Halifax Gazette* also carried the distinction of being the official King’s Printer. The *Gazette* (see appendix iii) was the longest standing press in Nova Scotia, operating continuously (with the exception of the period between 1765 and 1769) from 1752 to the end of the eighteenth century.

The first press in the colony of Québec did not arrive until after the resolution of the Seven Years War (1756-1763) and the official establishment of British rule in the colony. In 1764, William Brown and Thomas Gilmore — two printers from Philadelphia — moved to Québec City (see appendix iv), opened up a printing office, and began printing the *Quebec Gazette*. Like the printers of the *Halifax Gazette*, Brown and Gilmore received official government patronage as the King’s Printer. Also like its Halifax namesake, the *Quebec Gazette* was published (with a few notable exceptions) continuously from its establishment until the nineteenth century. After Thomas Gilmore’s death in 1773, William Brown continued the newspaper until his own death in 1789 after which the paper was run by successive members of the Neilson family.

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6 ibid., 629.

7 ibid.
Colonial printers associated daily with other members of the print ascendancy. As historians of the book Claude Galarneau and Gilles Gallichan write, printers were highly visible in colonial society, situating their offices on busy public thoroughfares and attracting a large clientele of the literate public to their typically crowded offices.\(^8\)

Literate colonists requested the printing of tickets, handbills, poems, cards, and other documents from local printers. From invitations to parties and concerts\(^9\) to funeral letters,\(^10\) from theatrical playbills\(^11\) to handbills advertising the flight of a “Runaway Negro”\(^12\) or the arrival of the circus,\(^13\) these records bear witness to the domestic print trade and the literate circles that emanated from it. Printers, whether under the official patronage of the government or not, garnered the attention of, and interacted with, all levels of literate society.

Considering their public role in colonial life, the majority of eighteenth-century printers in Halifax and Québec City have left behind a comparatively scant archival record. Little is known of their personal lives, or the day-to-day business of the press. Aside from the records of William Brown and the Neilson Family, which chronicle the production of the *Quebec Gazette*,\(^14\) biographers have had to rely on disparate and

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\(^10\) ibid., 430, 439, 455, 477, 479, 484, 489, 495, 498, 501, 504.

\(^11\) ibid., 444, 464, 466, 473, 474, 479.

\(^12\) ibid., 432, 455, 468.

\(^13\) ibid., 507, 508.

ancillary records as well as the printers’ own productions to piece together what is known of these men. Such is the case for Québec’s Thomas Gilmore (Quebec Gazette), William Moore (Quebec Herald), and William Vondervelden (The Times),¹⁵ and for Halifax’s John Bushell (Halifax Gazette), Anthony Henry (Halifax Gazette), Robert Fletcher (Nova-Scotia Calendar),¹⁶ John Howe (Halifax Journal),¹⁷ and William Minns (Weekly Chronicle).¹⁸ From what records do exist, we can glean little vignettes of the printers’ lives that reveal quite divergent origins, training, personality, behaviour and business practices. For example, William Moore was a professional actor and toured the West Indies and colonial America before settling in Québec City in the 1780s. There is no evidence that he had apprenticed or otherwise engaged in the printing trade before his arrival in Québec City.¹⁹ On the other hand, Bartholomew Green, Jr., and John Bushell, the first printers of the Halifax Gazette in 1751, grew up with the trade in their native Boston.²⁰ Similarly, William Brown and Thomas Gilmore, the co-founders of the Quebec Gazette, were Philadelphian printers of Scottish and Irish descent respectively.²¹ Anthony Henry, who took over as the printer of the Halifax Gazette in 1761, served as a

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fifer in the British Army and is rumoured to have worked in the printing business in Europe and in New Jersey, but his actual training and education are unclear.\textsuperscript{22}

Differences in origins and experience were not the only factors that separated printers in the capitals. In an era notable for the growing support of emancipation, William Brown preferred employing Black slaves to run his press at the \textit{Quebec Gazette} over engaging apprentices, whom he found unreliable.\textsuperscript{23} Anthony Henry, on the other hand — who printed the \textit{Halifax Gazette} and its successive titles from 1761 to 1800 — employed apprentices such as his godson Anthony Henry Holland,\textsuperscript{24} early print historian Isaiah Thomas, and his own successors Messrs Gay and Merlin. There is no evidence that Henry employed slaves and is reported that he married a free Black woman as his first wife.\textsuperscript{25} Such distinctions in business practices could reflect greater differences in outlook and personality. For example, \textit{Quebec Gazette} printer William Brown raised the ire of many residents of Québec City. Local merchant Henry Juncken wrote in his diary that Brown was the “greatest Sot… in all of Canada”\textsuperscript{26} and fellow Québec City resident and printer William Moore of the \textit{Quebec Herald} publicly berated him in an obituary. Upon William Brown’s death, Moore wrote that the \textit{Gazette}’s printer had died without a

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\item \textsuperscript{23} In the Neilson Family fonds (LAC, MG24-B1) there is correspondence between Brown and Philadelphian printer William Dunlop complaining of his difficulty in finding skilled apprentices and asking Dunlop to find a slave that could be employed instead. A man named Joe was Brown and Gilmore’s most famous slave who had a reputation for escaping and getting into trouble. See: Thérèse P. LeMay, “Joe,” \textit{Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online}, Volume IV, \url{www.biographi.ca}, (Accessed 15 March 2010).
\item \textsuperscript{25} Isaiah Thomas is credited with publicizing this fact, though he is somewhat unkink to his former employer implying that Henry’s marriage with the “sable female” was orchestrated so that he could obtain her property. See: Isaiah Thomas, \textit{A History of Printing in America With a Biography of Printers}, Volume I, (Albany: Joel Munsell, 1874), 360.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Bibliothèque et Archives nationales de Québec à Québec (BANQQ), P119, P1, Copie dactylographiée du journal Henry Juncken 1788-1789, 23 March 1789, 257.
\end{itemize}
will and thus that his entire estate fell to his brother. Paralleling the situation to the death of Lord Bath, Moore concluded with Lord Chesterfield’s unfavourable comments on Bath: “...he cared for nobody; the words GIVE and BEQUEATH were too shocking for him to repeat, so he left all in one word to a brother.”

Moore’s disdain, however, appears to have been reserved for Brown and not his successor Samuel Neilson. Later in 1789, a devastating fire destroyed the offices of the *Quebec Gazette*. Neilson published a note of thanks simultaneously in the *Gazette* and in Moore’s *Quebec Herald* to those who had saved his business and equipment from the flames. “My thanks are particularly due to Mr. Moore,” Neilson observed, “not only for his zealous efforts during the fire, in common with others, but also for his liberality in freely offering me the use of his press to print the Quebec Gazette until such time as my own is put into proper order.” These rare glimpses show that printers in Halifax and Québec City were tradesmen in a sociable business marked equally by the harbouring of grudges and by working together in mutual respect. In summary, printers who lived and worked in these colonial capitals during the second half of the eighteenth century — like their counterparts in other British North American colonies — were an eclectic mix of individuals with different backgrounds, education, work ethics, and moral codes.

Such differences amongst printers, however, did not preclude shared ideologies, professional experiences, or economic circumstances. Bankruptcy and failure were indeed harsh possibilities that faced all colonial printers. Apart from the *Gazette*, which received official government patronage, three other papers were introduced in Québec City between 1764 and 1800. Of those the average lifespan was approximately two and a

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27 *Quebec Herald* 30 March 1789, 171.
28 *Quebec Herald* 28 December 1789, 45; *Quebec Gazette* 31 December 1789, 2.
half years.  Halifax saw six differently titled publications in the five decades after the printing of the first newspaper in 1752, two of which remained in business for less than three years.  By necessity, printers sometimes chastised readers publicly for not paying subscriptions. Notices attesting to the inability of the printer to continue without subscription were not empty threats, as the failure of several other publications including the *Nova-Scotia Magazine* was attributed to the lack of subscriptions. During the five-year run of the *Quebec Herald*, William Moore frequently published notices for payment, especially to those colonists who lived in the region that would become Upper Canada. “The Printer presents his respects to his subscribers above Montreal, who have not paid, nor given directions where the Printer is to call for payment,” Moore wrote in January 1791. Citing the “narrowness of his circumstances,” Moore lamented the fact that he could not provide credit to those subscribers in arrears and implored that they, as well as “Gentlemen in other parts of the country,” should “take the hint” and pay their accounts. Unfortunately for Moore, the narrowness of his circumstances led to his closing the *Quebec Herald* permanently the following year.

In spite of the economic challenges of the business, the constant badgering of subscribers, and the ever-present possibility of financial ruin, printers continued to ply their trade in the colonial capitals. While financial gain was undoubtedly a motivation,

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29 *Tremaine, A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints*, 599-650. In addition to the *Quebec Gazette*, the three other papers were the *Courier de Québec ou herault François*, published by William Moore and edited by James Tanswell. It lasted for two months. William Moore also published the *Quebec Herald* which enjoyed a longer run from 1788-1793. The third paper published was William Vondervelden’s *Times/Le cours de temps* lasting from 1794 to 1795.

30 *Tremaine, A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints*, 599-650. From the end of the American Revolution to the turn of the nineteenth century, three publications operated in Halifax: Anthony Henry’s *Nova-Scotia Gazette and the Weekly Chronicle*, John Howe’s *Halifax Journal* and William Minn’s *The Weekly Chronicle*. In 1787, Henry solicited subscribers for a German language weekly paper entitled *Die welt und die Neuschottländische correspondenz*. It is believed to have been published only from 1788-1789.

31 “To the Public,” *Nova-Scotia Magazine* 5,3 (1792).

32 *Quebec Herald* 20 January 1791, 65.
an enthusiasm for the press and a sense of duty to improve society were also exhibited that transcended monetary concerns. The subscription records of the *Quebec Gazette* show that a substantial number of newspapers were given to various readers and organisations free of charge. These “gratis” subscribers originally included the colonial secretary (as the *Gazette* was used as the official record of the government), the custom house, various post offices in the colony, and the post rider.\(^{33}\) Providing select government departments and officials with free newspapers was part of the obligation of being the King’s printer. Printers also offered free newspapers to those who assisted in the import, distribution, and production of their publications. However, printers also offered free newspapers to a large variety of other individuals where no formal obligation existed. In 1769, over 30 printers, stationers and schoolmasters from across America received free subscriptions to the *Quebec Gazette*.\(^{34}\) By 1786, this diffusion of free newspapers was truly transatlantic in nature, with copies being sent to John Anderson’s printing office in the Barbados and the Post Office in London, as well as to that city’s New York and New England coffee houses.\(^{35}\) This list was further expanded to include religious orders such as the Ursulines, Hôtel Dieu, and the Roman Catholic Seminary.\(^{36}\) While there are not corresponding records from other colonial printers, it is clear that they also participated in this exchange of free newspapers. Indeed, other printers were often cited on the “return” list in the *Gazette* records. Their only obligation for the

\(^{33}\) LAC, MG24-B1, Neilson Family Collection, Volume 46, File 3, Subscription Book, 1765-1769, Reel C-15611.

\(^{34}\) LAC, MG24-B1, Neilson Family Collection, Volume 46, File 4, Subscription Book, 1769, Reel C-15611.

\(^{35}\) LAC, MG24-B1, Neilson Family Collection, Volume 46, File 5, Subscription Book, 1784-86, Reel C-15611.

\(^{36}\) LAC, MG24-B1, Neilson Family Collection, Volume 46, File 13, Subscription Book, Gratis, 1789-92, Reel C-15611.
receipt of the *Quebec Gazette* was to return their own productions in kind.\(^{37}\) That printers such as William Moore, Anthony Henry, John Howe, and William Minns remained on the *Quebec Gazette* “gratis” list implies that they did indeed return the favour. The keeping of such “gratis” lists underscores that printers, in addition to contractual obligations, believed that they had a greater societal obligation. Sending free subscriptions to postmasters, printers and religious orders, served to diffuse the knowledge, opinion, and messages conveyed in print to even broader audiences.

Similarly, the editors of the *Nova-Scotia Magazine* and of the *Quebec Magazine* demonstrate a belief in the public importance, over the profitability, of their respective publications. In 1789, the members of the newly formed Quebec Agriculture Society asked about the motives behind the publishing of Samuel Neilson’s *Quebec Magazine*. In a written response to the Society, Neilson elucidated his altruistic goals, reassuring them that “the persons concerned in that proposed publication flatter themselves with no lucrative views for the first years and are only actuated by the desire of introducing an establishment which in other Countries has contributed greatly to dispel ignorance & to disseminate knowledge in every Branch of the Arts and Sciences whether useful or entertaining.”\(^{38}\) Likewise in Halifax, the Rev. William Cochran (the first editor of the *Nova-Scotia Magazine*) wrote in announcing his retirement that when he: “first conceived the design for promoting a periodical publication in this Province, he was more influenced by a sincere desire of being useful, than by any hope of emolument to himself… and that ingenious and public-spirited men would be induced to offer their speculations or experience or such subjects, when means should be provided of

\(^{37}\) ibid.

\(^{38}\) BANQQ, P 450, Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, 1960-01-544/5, “Copy Book of Letters Written on the business of the Quebec Branch of the Agriculture Society,” 1789-1799.
preserving their labours, and of making them generally useful to the community.”39 It is clear that Neilson and Cochran, like other eighteenth-century printers and editors, saw a value in print to improve society. Accordingly, they fashioned themselves publicly as being more interested in this value of improvement than in financial gain.

Such claims to utilize the press in social improvement took on distinctly patriotic overtones in Halifax and Québec. As we have just seen, the creation of the *Quebec Magazine*, Samuel Neilson wrote, was motivated through the use of the press for improvement in “other Countries.”40 Neilson’s purview was indeed broad, finding and republishing articles that hailed from Britain, Europe and the nascent United States of America. However, Neilson did not adopt wholesale the newest philosophies, criticisms, or observations in print. His selection was directed by a belief in the need for only information palatable to the British colonial ideal. Representative of this selection, the full title of the *Quebec Magazine*, “a useful and entertaining repository of science, morals, history, politics &c.” also clearly reassured readers that it was, “adapted for the use of British America.” The Rev. Cochran with his *Nova-Scotia Magazine* was even less subtle in his stated editorial choices. He clearly writes that the goal of the magazine was “to preserve and diffuse a taste for British literature.”41 The editorial choices of Neilson and Cochran can also be seen in the productions of other printers in Halifax and Québec City. Improvement, in the mind of the colonial printer and editor, became synonymous with the communication of British values and ideas. Printers understood British as a quantitative measurement, an adjective of place referring to literature actually

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penned in Great Britain. However, for printers in the capitals, British also took on a qualitative sense of a corpus of inherent values and beliefs that a Briton (no matter where) could read, accept, and even reproduce by means of print.

How such allusions to British literary touchstones were received and acted upon will be discussed in the following chapters. But the appeal to Britishness is a reoccurring trait of colonial print ascendancy. In Halifax and Québec City, the British discourse in the press transcended even the language of publication. From its beginnings in 1764, the Quebec Gazette was a bilingual newspaper. However, as bibliographer Marie Tremaine observed, until the 1790s its British-American printers struggled with the French translation of its content.\(^4^2\) Technically a paper of two languages the Gazette was, in fact, an English paper offering a British perspective translated into French. By the last decades of the eighteenth century, French Canadians who wanted a French-language newspaper edited by a francophone had to turn outside of the capital to Montréal and the productions of Fleury Mesplet.\(^4^3\) The failure of William Moore’s French-language version of the Quebec Herald in 1788 may indicate that the capital’s French Canadian readers had found their print voice with Mesplet or were otherwise uninterested in supporting what they believed would be another British paper translated into French.\(^4^4\)

A similar situation can be seen in regard to Halifax’s German-language weekly Die Welt und die Neuschottlaendische Correspondenz [The World and the Nova Scotia Correspondent]. In 1788, Halifax printer Anthony Henry began printing the newspaper for the large German-speaking community in the city. Henry promoted the newspaper as

\(^4^3\) For more see Introduction page six, footnote 13.
\(^4^4\) Moore writes, curiously in English, to thank all those who supported his plan for a French-language paper “there not being subscribers sufficient to pay for the paper.” *Quebec Herald* 15 December 1788, 25.
a useful and much desired publication as there was a perceived dearth of “decent
German” publications.\textsuperscript{45} This scarcity of German-language print in Halifax made it
necessary for Henry to rely solely on papers from Great Britain, observing in the
newspaper’s prospectus that the new publication would “incorporate all curious events of
the four continents which I will receive from English papers.”\textsuperscript{46} As no copies of the \textit{Die
Welt} remain, it is impossible to determine whether it was merely a translation of his
longstanding English-language \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle}. Even if that
was not the case, it is clear that Henry received his news from the same British
newspapers, regardless of the language in which published.

In any case, printers in Halifax and Québec City presented their productions as
inherently beneficial to their readers. As the article “To the Public” explained to readers
of the \textit{Halifax Gazette} in 1765, newspapers were advantageous for several reasons:

\begin{quote}

NEWSPAPERS, not only convey Instruction, Amusement, but when properly
conducted, secure us the Liberty of the Press — There is another great Advantage
which the Increase of Newspapers has procured us: Ignorance is not so prevalent;
News Papers have given People a Taste for reading; this occasions all useful
Knowledge to be cultivated and encouraged….
\end{quote}

Printers in the capitals exercised this stated freedom of the press through the diffusion of
what they presented as useful and modernizing knowledge which was mostly British.
The destruction of printer Samuel Neilson’s office by fire in 1789 gave him a renewed
zeal to conduct his press in such a beneficial manner. “This trying occasion,” he

\textsuperscript{45} See “\textit{Die Welt und die Neuschottlaendische Correspondenz},” in Tremaine, \textit{A Bibliography of Canadian
Imprints, 1751-1800}, 619. The prospectus translated from the original German reads: “I will give my best
effort to enhance our mother-language through this print shop, so that no decent German in this region as
well as in the United States will be ashamed; even though many of the youth, out of a wonderful inspiration
are disgusted at [?]. For this goal I will edit weekly, on Fridays, a German paper... and this, according to the
title, should incorporate all curious events of the four continents, which I will receive from English papers,
and particularly the most interesting things of this province.” (Translation courtesy of Professor Arne
Bialushcowksi, Trent University).

\textsuperscript{46} ibid.

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Halifax Gazette} 14 November 1765, 4.
observed, “will ever induce me to exert myself to render the Gazette of public utility, and in every respect to devote my time and attention to the service of my generous employers and of the society in general.”

According to Neilson, his exertions as printer were undertaken for the benefit both of those advertisers and subscribers whom he called his “employers” and of the greater public. Indeed, this was an ideology of societal improvement and civic betterment that he carried into the development of his Quebec Almanac where he wrote to readers in 1791, “we trust that the enlightened friends of literature will lend their influence in encouraging the productions of the Press.” The press, he concluded, using a metaphor that would resonate with the province’s inhabitants, “must ever be regarded to bear the same relation to the culture of the mind as the plow bears to that of the earth.” Some of the deepest furrows in the culture of the mind were arguably the product of the diffusion of “usefull knowledge” and the facilitators of this public conversation were printers.

The cultivation and diffusion of “usefull knowledge” became a common preoccupation in the latter half of the eighteenth century throughout the transatlantic world. Some more traditional observers saw academic study as the only means to impart knowledge and encourage true erudition. This attitude can be seen amongst the governors of King’s Academy in Windsor — the first public grammar school in Nova

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48 Quebec Herald 28 December 1789, 45.
49 Neilson was the nephew and apprentice to William Brown. After Brown’s death on 22 March 1789, he inherited the newspaper and became its sole owner. See: “Brown, William,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online.
50 The Quebec Almanack for the Year 1791, (Quebec: Samuel Neilson, 1790), 36.
Scotia — who saw the importance of the institution in its ability to communicate useful knowledge. “Science, in a new country, is like a tender plant, removed to an unfriendly soil and eliminated. Much care and attention are required, before the roots strike deep, and the plant itself can shoot out with vigour. And… this Academy is designed to diffuse principles of useful Knowledge, and is replete with many advantages to the community at large.”

However, less traditionally-minded commentators, and particularly printers, argued that useful knowledge could be gained in many places both inside and out of the classroom. An anecdote on education published in 1791 by William Moore in his *Quebec Herald* underscores this alternate view:

A GENTLEMAN who has a family has adopted a method of rendering every incident of their lives contributory to useful knowledge. No tea, sugar, coffee, butchers’ meat, &c. are permitted to be eat, unless the boys can give an account of each article, the place from which it is imported, its manufacture, uses, price, &c. &c. &c. — This he calls imbibing knowledge and digesting instruction.

Printers were vocal in arguing for the importance of the press in relating useful knowledge observed as the practical application of theory and the distillation of systems for use in common, everyday situations.

For example, the public encouragement of science and of the observation of natural phenomena can be found in the colonial press from its beginnings in both Halifax and Québec City. Scientific observations of a practical or curious nature were commonplace in newspapers of the two capitals. These included reports in the *Halifax Gazette* of smallpox in colonial centres such as Boston and Montréal, highlighting the

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52 *Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 10 February 1789, 3.
53 *Quebec Herald* 21 February 1791, 112.
importance of public inoculations, or the story excerpted in 1753 from the *Newcastle Journal* of “a Curious Case of a Gentleman who has entirely recovered his Speech by the Use of the ELECTRICAL MACHINE alone.” Later, *Halifax Gazette* printer Anthony Henry made tidal, meteorological, and astronomical observations a requisite part of not only his yearly almanac, but also of his weekly newspaper. Along with numerous references to philosophers of historical note, colonial publications also carried stories, anecdotes, and references to contemporary personages such as the American polymath Benjamin Franklin (especially at the time of his death), the Scottish physician William Cullen, Cullen’s pupil Joseph Black, natural philosopher William Smellie, the astronomer William Herschel, economic theorist Adam Smith, Royal Society

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54 For example, see: *Halifax Gazette* 23 March 1752, 2; *Halifax Gazette* 30 March 1752, 2; *Halifax Gazette* 18 April 1752, 1; *Halifax Gazette* 16 May 1752, 2; *Nova Scotia Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser* (Halifax) 16 January 1770, 21; *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 4 July 1775, 2; *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 8 August 1775, 4.

55 *Halifax Gazette* 6 January 1753, 1.

56 See the *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) starting in 1769.


59 *Quebec Herald* 15 February 1790, 99.

60 “Extracts from Smellie’s Philosophical Natural History,” *Nova Scotia Magazine* 3,6 (December 1790): 436-438.


62 *Quebec Herald* 20 July 1789, 308.
president and explorer Sir Joseph Banks,\textsuperscript{63} and French Jesuit explorer and natural philosopher Lahontan,\textsuperscript{64} as well as historians such as Abbé Raynal\textsuperscript{65} and William Robertson.\textsuperscript{66} The press could remove ideas from the purview of the academies and then easily abridge and relate them, in the vernacular, for the literate colonial public.

From the beginnings of the press in Nova Scotia and Québec into the nineteenth century, printers in the capitals advertised their role as colonial improvers, declaring their intentions for all to see in the subtitles and mastheads of their publications. As we have seen, Samuel Neilson presented his \textit{Quebec Magazine} (first published in 1792) as a “Useful and Entertaining Repository of Science, Morals, History, Politics, &c. Particularly Adapted for the Use of British America.” Likewise, the full title of Anthony Henry’s \textit{Nova-Scotia Chronicle} boasted, in 1769, “the freshest Advices, both Foreign and Domestic, with a Variety of other Matter, useful, instructive, and entertaining.”\textsuperscript{67} The first edition of William Moore’s the \textit{Quebec Herald} in 1788 began with a quotation from Horace: “\textit{Quid verum atque decens curo et rogo, et omnis in hoc sum: condo & compon}.” The phrase (also found in the masthead of William Addison’s \textit{Spectator}) translates as, “What is right and seemly is my study and pursuit, and to that I am wholly given.”\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Quebec Herald} 20 July 1789, 308.
\textsuperscript{65} “A History of Quebec from Abbé Raynal,” \textit{Quebec Herald} 24 November 1788, 1; \textit{Quebec Herald} April 1789, 202; “EXTRACTS RELATIVE TO THE HISTORY OF BRITISH AMERICA, ACCOUNT OF CANADA: Chiefly from the Abbe Raynal,” \textit{Nova-Scotia Magazine} 1,2 (1789): 81-87; \textit{Nova-Scotia Magazine} 1,3 (1789): 161-164; “Historical Account of Nova-Scotia [From Abbé Raynal],” \textit{Nova-Scotia Magazine} 2,2 (1790): 82-87; \textit{Quebec Herald} 7 January 1790, 50.
\textsuperscript{66} For examples see: \textit{Nova -Scotia Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser} (Halifax) 27 March 1770, 98; \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 10 November 1772, 3.
\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Nova-Scotia Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser} (Halifax) 3 January 1769, 7.
\textsuperscript{68} This abbreviated use of Horace’s quotation is also used in \textit{Spectator} 16, 19 March 1711. What both the publishers of the \textit{Herald} and the \textit{Spectator} edit from this quotation is the beginning phrase which reads: “\textit{Nunc itaque et verses et cetera ludicra pono}…” or “So now I lay aside my verses and all other toys….”
Moore’s original subtitle for the Quebec Herald illustrates once again the importance of social improvement to printers in the capitals as well as the belief in the value of British literary exemplars — such as those found in the pages of the Spectator — in that process of improvement.

In their publications, printers not only excerpted local and transatlantic articles on natural and moral philosophy, they encouraged colonial participation in charity, education, science, and the use of reason in public. Within a few months of its inaugural issue John Bushell, the printer of the Halifax Gazette, excerpted an article “Of Spectres and Apparitions” that detailed the imposture of several famous supernatural events in Britain. Bushell had previously ignored local gossip concerning various supernatural occurrences, refusing to give any quarter to such stories in his paper. However, after what he believed was an escalation of irrational and damaging behaviour, he felt compelled to address the issue. In a rare preface to a featured essay, Bushell wrote:

As there is considerable Talk in Town of a Ghost, Spectre, or Apparition, said to be seen by a Man on board of Schooner belonging to this Place, then on the Banks of a fishing voyage, which struck such a Panic on the whole Company belonging to her, that they left their Business before they had compleated their Cargo, to the no small Damage of the Owners; and as the more credulous Part of Mankind are too apt to receive such Notions as true, we apprehend the publishing the following Piece at this Time might not be judg’d unreasonable.…

Colonial newspapers encouraged the public to use reason in how it viewed its environment. Bushell dissuaded his readers from becoming part of the “more credulous Part of Mankind,” and his assistant Anthony Henry later continued the tradition of explaining the natural and dispelling superstition. Henry would frequently report on tides and severe weather and offer explanations for rare occurrences such as the sightings of

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In the case of William Moore’s use of the quotation in the Herald, he includes an additional two words, not found in the Spectator: “condo & compono” which roughly translate as a “cache (or home) and collection.”

69 Halifax Gazette 2 May 1752, 1.
In 1769, Henry tracked the progress of the Great Comet of that year. "The Comet observed here for several Days past, now rises about 1 o’ Clock, and may be very plainly seen after two o’ Clock in the Morning, about 15 ° S.E. of the Seven Stars." Not only did he give co-ordinates and times for readers to view the comet, but in the following months he excerpted several articles on the science behind comets including "the minutes of American Philosophical Society… for promoting Usefull Knowledge."

The importance of the diffusion of useful knowledge by printers was no less evident in Québec. Even before the publishing of the Quebec Gazette, its printers in 1763 were advocating the utility of the newspaper in the colony’s uniquely bilingual environment. William Brown and Thomas Gilmore, cognizant of the new political situation of Québec within the British Empire after 1763, argued that their newspaper, written in both French and English, would be “the most effectual Means of bringing about a thorough Knowledge of the English and French Language to those of the two Nations now happily united in one in this Part of the World, by which Means they will be enabled to converse with, and communicate their sentiments to each other as Brethren, and carry on their different Transactions in Life with ease and Satisfaction….”

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70 The periodic comet later known as Halley’s Comet appeared ten years earlier in 1759. This comet was more than likely the one discovered by French astronomer Charles Messier (1730-1817), who had also confirmed Halley’s prediction a decade earlier. Messier’s Comet, or the Great Comet of 1769, was first seen on 8 August 1769.

71 Nova Scotia Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser (Halifax) 4 September 1769, 287.


73 University of Toronto, Fisher Library, Canadian Pamphlets and Broadsides Collection, brc f 0072, “Quebeck : to the public = au public,” Broadside printed in the printing office of William Dunlap 1763.
example illustrates, printers saw useful knowledge as ever-changing and relative to the environment in which it was given.

It was an issue of grave local importance that compelled William Moore to publish a “Caution to the Public” in the Quebec Herald in 1789 concerning a perceived ignorance of the poisonous plants in city. Moore not only took the opportunity to diffuse useful knowledge to his readers, but to comment on the importance of such knowledge and value of the press in relating it. “It is the indispensable duty of every individual,” Moore wrote, “as far as his knowledge and experience may lead, to publish, for the good of society, any circumstance, which, from ignorance, inattention, or accident, may affect the life of a fellow creature…. ”

Moore noticed that children who were “entirely incapable of judging of the difference of structure in young plants” had been harvesting plants from the rock outcroppings of the city and then selling them to “such of the inhabitants as, from an idea of their antiscorbutic virtues, are induced to buy them.” Moore recommended that no one should ingest such plants since “neither the culler of the plants, nor the purchaser of the salad, is in any degree certain that there are not young sprouts of hemlock which (as the following cases sufficiently prove) are extremely poisonous mixed with the other ingredients.” Thus, Moore saw it as his civic duty as a publisher not only to alert the public to the danger that poisonous plants presented, but to highlight the importance of the press in relating such knowledge.

Printers in Halifax and Québec City in particular viewed the almanac as an essential means to diffuse useful knowledge to colonial readers. Almanacs offered a

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74 Quebec Herald 8 June 1789, 254.
75 ibid.
76 For a general overview see Anne Dondertman and Judy Donnelly, “Almanacs,” in History of the Book in Canada, Beginnings to 1840, Volume I, 271-275.
yearly calendar, listing the phases of the moon and general astrological and meteorological predictions. Because of the calendar format and the publications’ relatively small physical dimensions, almanacs often took on the secondary purpose of a diary. Almanacs offered short essays on natural philosophy, amusing anecdotes, and home remedies, as well as moral maxims and aphorisms. Other practical information such as the Civil List, lists of surgeons, justices of the peace, judges, constables, and surveyors, tables for the calculation of duties, and currency exchange were also found in almanacs. As the long title of the 1772 *Nova-Scotia Calender, Or An Almanack* revealed, the publication contained a cornucopia of practical information including: “The Eclipses of the Luminaries, Sun and Moon’s Rising and Setting, Moon’s Place, Time of High-Water; Lunations, Aspects, Spring Tides, Judgement of the Weather, Feasts and Fasts of the Church, Sittings of several Courts and Sessions in the Province of Nova-Scotia… Prognosticks, of the Weather. Infallible Signs of Rain, &c. taken by observations of the Planets… A Collection of select Aphorisms. The Art of Printing a Poem. On the liberty of the Press… & Sundry useful Receipts.”

The almanac offered a compendium of useful local information that could be appreciated by merchants, farmers, sailors, soldiers or bureaucrats alike.

Such was the popularity of almanacs that literate colonists purchased imported versions when domestically produced versions were not available. For example, advertisements for the sale of the Ames almanac (published in Boston) can be found in the *Halifax Gazette* as early as 1754. Although based on the Boston astrological calculations, his almanac could be found throughout the British American colonies,

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77 *Nova-Scotia Calendar, or an Almanack for the Year of the Christian Æra 1772…*, (Halifax: Henry and Fletcher, 1771).
78 *Halifax Gazette* 19 January 1754, 2.
including Nova Scotia. Most printers in the capitals, however, produced an almanac. The first almanac to be proposed in either Québec or Halifax was the 1766 *Almanac de cabinet* envisaged by Quebec printers William Brown and Thomas Gilmore. But it was never produced, confounded in part by the increased costs for paper in the wake of the Stamp Act. Records from the *Quebec Gazette* printing office observe that in the following year Brown and Gilmore did produce their almanac “fitted to the Latitude of Quebec,” though no copies of it have survived. In addition to their annual production in French and English, Brown and Gilmore also produced an “Indian Kalendar” written in the Montagnais language and distributed by local Roman Catholic missionaries. In Halifax, Anthony Henry started his English-language *Nova-Scotia Calendar* in 1768, later published with Robert Fletcher in the 1770s, and started printing the German language *Der Neuschottländische Calendar* in 1788. John Howe, upon setting up shop in Halifax, printed an almanac in 1780, as did William Moore in 1788 after the founding of his *Quebec Herald*. Samuel and later John Neilson, following in the tradition of William Brown, continued and expanded the *Quebec Almanac*.

Almanacs give a strong indication of a printer’s taste for science and, consequently, varied greatly in size and content. For example, the almanacs produced by Anthony Henry and Robert Fletcher in Halifax and those by William Moore and the

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79 Ames, who was also a medical practitioner and tavern keeper, started publishing his almanac at eighteen years old in 1726 in Dedham, Massachusetts. By the mid-eighteenth century, the almanac had become so popular it had been licensed to other publishers who would include particular local astronomical calculations with centrally prepared essays, poetry and observations, all under the rubric of Ames. For more on the life of Nathaniel Ames and his impact upon colonial culture see Martha J. McNamara, “Nearest a Kin to Fisher,” *Common-Place* 2 (2002) [www.common-place.org/vol-02/no-02/lessons](http://www.common-place.org/vol-02/no-02/lessons) (Accessed 6 December 2005); and William Pencak, “Nathaniel Ames, Sr. and the Political Culture of Provincial New England,” *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 22 (Summer 1994): 141-158.

80 Tremaine, *A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints*, 27.
81 ibid., 49.
82 ibid., 59.
83 ibid., 52.
84 Henry produced this almanac for at least 10 years, see ibid., 233, 471.
Neilsons in Québec were quite large, often numbering over 100 pages, and included excerpts from current literary works or discoveries in natural philosophy. On the other hand, the almanacs produced by William Brown in Québec in the 1770s and 1780s were relatively small, more concise, and did not include as many essays on science as his contemporaries. The almanacs of Henry and Fletcher, Moore, and particularly the Neilsons, not only featured excerpted items believed to be of the public interest, but also encouraged the public use of reason and a philosophical approach to daily matters.

In explaining the reasoning behind the new, expanded *Quebec Almanac* of 1792, Samuel Neilson presented, in no uncertain terms, what he believed to be the nature of the almanac and the press and their purpose in society. His observations illustrate how the almanac was believed to have expanded upon its original purpose and had become an invaluable tool of reason, embodying the spirit of Enlightenment on the colonial periphery. In the frontispiece of the almanac the first thing that greeted the reader was a detailed woodcut of three men working a printing press titled “Progress of Reason and Propagation of the Arts and Sciences / Progres de la Raison et Propagation des Arts et des Sciences.”

In case that first image was in any way unclear, Neilson’s preface endeavoured to illuminate his readers:

THE matter which should form the contents of an Almanac has constantly varied in all countries, and seems in a great measure arbitrary, however they all agree that it ought chiefly to consist in a Calendar for the measure of time, which being dependent on the motion of the heavenly bodies makes an Almanac so much of the Science of Astronomy as is necessary for the regulation of human affairs. But this like most other institutions from time to time has been thought susceptible of improvement, and that additional advantage might arise to the public by rendering its utility more extensive, which has since become the common object of both the makers and purchasers… another portion has been very fitly appropriated to objects

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85 “Frontispiece,” *The Quebec Almanack for the Year 1792*, (Quebec: Samuel Neilson, 1791).
of general Utility, such as short sketches of POLITICAL, MORAL OR
SCIENTIFICAL TRUTHS. 86

Thus, according to Neilson, the scope of the almanac had grown over the course of the
eighteenth century. What had once been a mere tool, a calendar and means of
organisation, had transformed into a indispensable tool for rational improvement,
designed to inform and enlighten the colonial reader through daily exposure to the
various branches of science.

In addition to newspaper articles and almanacs that addressed useful knowledge
and the various branches of science, a concerted and ambitious effort to educate the
public can be seen in the founding of the Nova-Scotia Magazine and Quebec Magazine
during the post-Revolutionary era. 87 The arrival of loyalists in the decade following the
American Revolution, it has been argued, introduced new social, political, and economic
pressures in Halifax and Quebec City. Thousands of immigrants passing through the
capital cities, it has been observed, led to commodity shortages, inflation, unemployment,
and in particular a lack of lucrative government patronage positions. 88 From a literary

86 “Almanac, 1791 [sic],” The Quebec Almanack for the Year 1792, (Quebec: Samuel Neilson, 1791).
87 The arrival of loyalists in the decade following the American Revolution, it has been argued, introduced new
social, political and economic pressures in Halifax and Quebec City. Thousands of immigrants passing through the
capital cities, it has been observed, led to commodity shortages, inflation, unemployment and a lack of patronage positions. From a literary perspective, however, this influx also
brought British American writers and poets and increased the numbers of the reading public.
88 See: L.F.S. Upton, The United Empire Loyalists: Men and Myths, (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing,
Review of Studies in Nationalism VI (1979): 218-32; D.G. Bell, Early Loyalist Saint John: The Origin of
New Brunswick Politics, 1783-1786, (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1983); Janice Potter-MacKinnon,
The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts, (Cambridge: Harvard
University Press, 1983); Wallace Brown and Hereward Senior, Victorious in Defeat: The Loyalists in
Canada, (Toronto: Methuen, 1984); Neil MacKinnon, This Unfriendly Soil: the Loyalist Experience in
Nova Scotia, 1783-1791, (Montréal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986); Robert M.
Calhoon, The Loyalist Perception and Other Essays, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989;
James W. St. G. Walker, The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra
Leone, 1783-1870, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Julian Gwyn, Excessive Expectations,
Diaspora and the Reconfiguration of the British Atlantic World,” in Eliga Gould and Peter S. Onuf, eds.,
perspective, however, this influx also brought British American writers and poets and increased the numbers of the reading public.\textsuperscript{89} The \textit{Quebec} and \textit{Nova-Scotia Magazines} initially capitalized upon the increase of readers in the colonies and their capitals.

Published between 1789 and 1792, the \textit{Nova-Scotia Magazine} featured over 30 articles on natural philosophy (not including various letters and public commentary on agriculture, husbandry and soil fertilization). The broad range of content spanned from locally authored articles, such as “To the Editor of the Nova-Scotia Magazine: On the Cultivation of Potatoes,”\textsuperscript{90} to reprints of circulars from American, British-American, and British agriculture societies, such as “Thoughts on Raising and Feeding Swine [Communicated to the Blockley and Merrian Agricultural Society, by Edward Heston].”\textsuperscript{91}

During the same time frame, over half a dozen articles on First Nations languages, customs, and manners, could be found along with another half dozen articles on electricity, magnetism, and chemistry, as well as twelve articles on topics concerning Natural History, fossils, animals, and botany (“the study of which,” one author opined, was the greatest “universal benefit to mankind”).\textsuperscript{92} The \textit{Quebec Magazine}, published from 1792 to 1794 and edited by a “society of gentlemen,” most notably the Rev. Alexander Spark,\textsuperscript{93} focused principally on news, politics, and history. In the magazine’s

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{93} Spark was the Presbyterian minister for Quebec City at the turn of the nineteenth century. He is noted for a concurrent passion to his ministry and to science. See: James H. Lambert, “Spark, Alexander”
\end{flushright}
two-year run, over 10 articles on navigation and meteorological observations were published, with a half dozen additional articles on medicine, four on agriculture, and another dozen on various branches of natural philosophy, including mathematics, astronomy, natural history, and electricity.

The particular devotion of the printer and editor of the *Nova-Scotia Magazine* to science writ large was apparent in both editorials and the editorial selections ranging from technical treatises to lyrical forms of expression. In each monthly issue a section was devoted to poetry, much of which was penned by local authors. It is there in May 1790, between two poems promoting the abolition of slavery, that readers were greeted with a “Hymn to Science.” “SCIENCE!,” the poem exclaimed:

Thou fair effusive ray
From the Great Source of mental Day
Free, generous, and refin’d,
Descend, with all thy treasures fraught,
Illumine each bewilder’d thought,
And bless my lab’ring mind…
O let thy powerful charm impart
The patient head, the candid heart
Devoted to thy sway;
Which no weak passions e’er mislead
Which still with dauntless steps proceed,
Where Reason points the way….

The poem, although excerpted in the *Nova-Scotia Magazine* without reference to the author, was written by Mark Akenside, a theology student at the University of Edinburgh who later became a physician. Published in 1739 in the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, it

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experienced a resurgence of popularity in the 1790s in Great Britain. The use of Akenside’s poem, which promotes the use of reason and science in everyday life, illustrates not only the printer’s devotion to the principles elucidated in the poem, but also the connections of such ideas to those held throughout the British Atlantic.

Printers, mindful of their role as public improvers, believed in the importance of keeping readers apprised of current political events. However, it was a task that engaged in carefully avoiding the sort of controversy that might offend government officials or British (under the qualitative understanding) sensibilities. By the late eighteenth century, the newspaper had become vital to feed public interest in political events. Colonial readers, like those elsewhere in the British Atlantic, expected newspapers to foster controversy and could be disappointed if political intrigue did not exist. “Your paper being professed open to all parties,” a reader of the Quebec Herald wrote in 1790, “I am surprised so few champions for political controversy have entered the lists; Junius and Lepidus after declaiming on opposite sides, and throwing some dirt at each other, abandon the field, and a general apathy seems to prevail between the contending political parties.”

To feed this appetite for politics, colonial printers dutifully published anonymous letters from foreign correspondents and excerpted parliamentary debates or reports from British and American newspapers to inform readers of various European conflicts, the American Revolution, and the French Revolution. However, in spite of a

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97 *Quebec Herald* 8 March 1790, 127.
popular expectation for politics in the press, printers in Halifax and Québec City had to weigh their political observations carefully.

A key skill for printers was to communicate the heated debates without alienating their readers, and particularly, colonial authorities. The removal of Anthony Henry as printer of the *Halifax Gazette* in 1766 for the printing of opinion contrary to the controversial Stamp Act exemplified the risks in printing overtly political sentiments.  

William Brown and Thomas Gilmore of the *Quebec Gazette*, for example, ceased operations voluntarily, publishing no issues during the Stamp Act crisis of 1765 and during the hostilities prior to the American Revolution in 1775. Interestingly, in the case of the Stamp Act, Brown and Gilmore indignantly denied rumours that they had been cowed by colonial authorities. They felt it “necessary to declare,” in the “resurrected” *Gazette*, “that…our paper has been, and ever shall be, as free from the Inspection or Restrictions of any Person whatsoever, as it is of the late Stamp.”  

Brown and Gilmore believed it important to maintain the public’s expectation of the *Gazette* as a proper British, and thus politically-minded newspaper, in the face of rumours to the contrary.

At least one printer in the capitals found an ingenious way to offer political commentary in a manner that balanced both the appetite and concerns of readers. Three years after being ousted from his position as printer for publishing seditious material, a

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99 *Quebec Gazette* 29 May 1766, 2.

100 In 1792, Samuel Neilson (successor to Brown as printer of the *Quebec Gazette*) wrote that the printers had indeed been cowed by the government in shutting down the press in 1765 and 1775. Even when printing, Neilson further observed that during the era of the American Revolution, “the Gazette kept silence on the most important facts, and was filled with misconceptions,” a fact that he argued led to a drastic decline of subscribers to the newspaper. See: Samuel Neilson, “The Quebec Gazette,” 1792; reprinted 1822. CIHM #62171.
chastened Anthony Henry returned to the newspaper business.\textsuperscript{101} Rather than comment on local politics, Henry displaced his political radicalism by praising a British radical, “that illustrious but suffering Patriot”\textsuperscript{102} John Wilkes. Wilkes, as Henry’s readers would have known, was a controversial politician and printer who had been arrested for seditious libel and removed from the House of Commons in 1763 and again in 1768.\textsuperscript{103} Copies of Wilkes’ controversial organ, the *North Briton*, were sold in Halifax and editions of his other works would also have been readily available.\textsuperscript{104} The same year that Henry returned to printing, he announced in his paper that he was publishing for purchase a version of *Britannia’s Intercession for the Deliverance of John Wilkes, Esq. from Persecution and Banishment*.\textsuperscript{105} In 1770, he reported the official pardon given to Wilkes, reprinted a series of letters of support from Tobias Smollett to Wilkes from 1765, reported the proceedings of Wilkes’ release, and even noted Wilkes’ birthday to the readers of the *Nova-Scotia Chronicle*.\textsuperscript{106} Henry’s publication of stories marking the vindication of Wilkes, probably reflected his feelings concerning his own exoneration and return to publishing. If indeed he voiced his politics solely through the selection of

\textsuperscript{101} In 1769, Henry returned to printing in Halifax, producing the *Nova-Scotia Chronicle* which was the first newspaper in either Québec or Nova Scotia that did not receive official government patronage. The following year he purchased the *Nova Scotia Gazette* from Robert Fletcher (the government-appointed printer who had replaced him in 1766) and was reinstated as King’s Printer. See: Tremaine, *A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints*, 602, 604.

\textsuperscript{102} *Nova-Scotia Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser* (Halifax) 20 March, 1770, 1.


\textsuperscript{104} For example see: *Nova Scotia Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser* (Halifax) 7 August 1770, 255.

\textsuperscript{105} *Nova-Scotia Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser* (Halifax) 13 June 1769, 191.

articles, it was a strategy that proved successful, as he continued unobstructed in the position of King’s Printer until his death in 1800.107

On the other hand, some printers in the capitals more critical of the establishment and society in the opinions expressed in their newspapers. Printers who took this tack argued that their freedom to publish and the liberties that their newspapers promoted showed that the objective of their labours was inherently beneficial and, again, properly English or British in character. This fashioning can be traced to the beginnings of the domestic press, such as the notice from the “Printers to the Publick” published in the first Quebec Gazette that observed:

AS every kind of knowledge is not only entertaining and instructive to individuals, but a benefit to the community, there is great reason to hope, that a NEWS-PAPER, properly conducted, and written with ACCURACY, FREEDOM, and IMPARTIALITY, cannot fail of meeting with universal encouragement; especially as it is allowed by all, that such a paper is at present much wanted in this colony.108

Even though the Quebec Gazette would feature both the French and English languages, the printers left no doubt that the above characteristics were inherent in the English press tradition. Reassuring readers of the nature of the newspaper, they wrote that “we shall take particular care to collect the transactions and occurrences of our mother country, and to introduce every remarkable event, uncommon debates, extraordinary performance, and interesting turn of affairs that shall be thought to merit the notice of the reader as a matter of entertainment or that can be of service to the public as inhabitants of an English colony.”109

107 Henry’s obituary read: “Last evening departed this Life, after a short illness, Mr. ANTHONY HENRY, aged 66 — Printer to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, and for 40 years the Publisher of this Gazette — He was among the earliest Settlers in this Province, and has through a long and useful Life supported a respectable and amiable Character. — He has left a disconsolate Widow and Daughter to mourn the loss of a most affectionate Husband and Father….’’ Royal Gazette (Halifax) 2 December 1800, 3.
108 Quebec Gazette 21 June 1764, 1.
109 ibid.
While all newspapers in the capitals printed articles and featured letters on the importance of the freedom of the press, the flamboyant William Moore of the *Quebec Herald* excelled at the expression of this right. Soon after publishing the first issue in 1788, he changed the more obscure Latin quotation in his masthead to the clearer English phrase: “Open to all parties, but influenced by none.”¹¹⁰ Later, in an editorial penned in 1789 he wrote: “OF all the liberties of which we boast, under a mild government, that of a free press is the most we prize, because it is the basis of all others; it is the great defender of our rights, and the support of our liberty and property. It has, therefore, been justly observed, that ‘the liberty of the press,’ on which so much depends, ‘should be touched with a trembling hand.’”¹¹¹ Charges of libel levied against Moore in 1790 by a leading colonial official led him to add the phrase “Vehicle of Freedom” to the footer of the paper.¹¹² It would be an ordeal that would continue to the test the appropriateness of this sentiment.

Moore’s libel troubles began on 23 August 1790, when he published a letter by merchants John Walter, John Jones, and George Irwin, critical of colonial Henry Caldwell, head of the militia. Even by the colourful standards of the *Herald*, few letters of equal measure had been featured previously. The letter began with twelve stanzas of Hudibraic verse and then cut to the quick with its satire: “England may boast a Newton, a Chatham, or a Marlborough, we can also in this Country bring forward to view a Caldwell, in whom the character of Philosopher, a Statesman, and more particularly that of a Warrior is combined.”¹¹³ The three authors of the letter lambasted Caldwell for his

¹¹⁰ *Quebec Herald* 15 December 1788, 1.
¹¹¹ *Quebec Herald* 23 November 1789, 4.
¹¹² *Quebec Herald* 22 November 1790, 8.
¹¹³ *Quebec Herald* 23 August 1790, 317.
arrogance and pomposity, citing in particular his excessive display in calling them to a special tribunal to explain why they had not attended the recent militia muster.

The merchants were not the only colonists aggrieved by what they thought were heavy-handed actions, as the Herald also reported that elsewhere in the province three young men had been imprisoned over their failure to attend muster.114 As it was a time of peace, the current Militia Act and Caldwell’s support for its severe punishments for non-compliance caused a great deal of public debate.115 Walter, Jones, and Irwin concluded their admonishment of Caldwell by using a familiar metaphor to describe the arrogance and pointlessness of the colonel’s actions:

And as all Characters of such striking Genius shou’d have Historiographers to record their Actions, they pledge themselves to hand down to Posterity from Time to Time, a faithful state of all his Errant Proceedings, and shou’d he, Don Quixote like, find occasion for a Squire to attend him in the future, worthy Sancho’s Good Qualities shall not be forgot.116

Cervantes’ tale of vanity and futility (translated from its original Spanish into English) is one that resonated throughout the British Atlantic.117 The authors appealed to this literary touchstone, emphasizing their erudition and appealing to that of their fellow readers. Indeed, the entire letter required a literacy of British history and its popular literary forms, a literacy that both the authors and the printer clearly believed that the readers possessed.

In response, Caldwell charged not only the authors of the letter but also the publisher of the Quebec Herald with libel. With a grand jury date set in November,
Moore wasted no time in soliciting public support for his cause, publishing several articles on what he framed as the very English or British liberty of the press. One such article was entitled “The Proper Liberty of the Press.” Originally found in the London publication *The World* and signed An Englishman, it was an appeal to a British grand jury presiding over a case of libel. Underscoring both British legal and cultural precedents, the author pleaded that the members of the grand jury stand up against what he saw as intimidation by “wealth” and agents of legislative and judicial “power.” In this and other articles published in the *Quebec Herald*, an appeal to a qualitative *Britishness* was again employed. Moore appealed directly to the reading public to take a stand on what behaviour was proper for the colony. It was a choice between what he framed in his newspaper as a deplorable parochial tyranny or a more universal and desirable British liberty.

On 10 November 1790, the Québec grand jury met and exonerated Moore and the letter’s authors. Moore, in his characteristic style, took the opportunity to rebuke Caldwell, writing, “the present Grand Jury have boldly stood up for the maxim held out in a favourite old song, that ‘Britons never shall be slaves,’ — which the prosecutor Colonel Caldwell seems to have a wish to make them, as would appear by his attack upon the Printer of a free paper.” Not satisfied with his initial reproach of Caldwell, Moore advertised in the next issue of the *Herald* that he was publishing a pamphlet that detailed the arguments he had given to the grand jury with a special appendix and “A Treatise on the Freedom of the Press.” Moore’s approach proved to be as effective as it was simple. In the first instance, he denounced Caldwell’s behaviour and character as being

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118 *Quebec Herald* 27 September 1790, 359.
119 *Quebec Herald* 15 November 1790, 412.
120 *Quebec Herald* 18 November 1790, 409.
un-British. Concurrently, he curried favour with the reading public by underscoring the public worth of his own actions, both in exposing Caldwell’s poor character and by upholding what he believed to be that most British of rights, the liberty of the press. Moore’s libel victory provides a compelling example of how a printer could use the press, and gain its public acceptance, as a vehicle for British tradition in the colonial environment.

“A Newspaper exactly resembles a stage coach — in which the Printer may be said to be the driver,” read a letter Moore featured in his Quebec Herald during the libel controversy of 1790. “The various things produced” in the newspaper, the letter continued, “may be likened to the passengers, who come from all parts of the world. Perhaps the conversation of many of these passengers may not be quite so pleasant — but without they are very riotous indeed, the poor driver does his duty honestly.” Excerpted from London’s The World newspaper, the letter clearly expressed the philosophy Moore employed in the printing of the Herald. It is a philosophy, though necessarily tempered, that we can see from the earliest days of the press in both Halifax and Québec City. For all their differences, printers in the late eighteenth-century capitals were united by their geopolitical situation on the periphery of the British Empire, by the financial trials of the printing profession, and by a shared conviction of print’s ability to engage, entertain, and inform readers. This passion can be observed from the earliest print productions and grew stronger as the population of the regions increased after the American Revolution. Like other Enlightenment-era printers in the British Atlantic, the printers of Halifax and Québec City became purveyors of information to the public and promoted themselves as colonial improvers. The need to balance propriety and liberty,

121 Quebec Herald 30 September 1790, 358.
however, was never far from the minds of these printers who fashioned their newspapers as particular vehicles of British intelligence and literature. Printers had to skilfully highlight news and information while at the same time either downplay political events and ideas, or express them in an overtly patriotic or constructive manner that framed them as inherent and beneficial British liberties and traditions. Printers directed a colourful and animated discourse that privileged reason over superstition, advocated liberty with propriety, extolled democracy under British monarchy, and encouraged social criticism without revolution. In doing so, the information that they communicated was consumed by a literate and curious community that can be seen as a colonial print ascendancy. As we shall see in the following chapters, some members of this community would utilise these messages and the print forum itself in the formation of a colonial elite on the periphery of the British Empire. It was an elite whose exclusivity was framed by the literary content and patriotic values exhibited in the press while, at the same time, an elite who understood and acted upon the messages of charity, self and societal betterment that print also conveyed.
Chapter 3: Colonial Readers and Contributors as Participants in the Colonial Print Ascendancy

Literacy, the diffusion of knowledge, and sociability were all central to Joseph Peters’ life. Peters was a veteran of the Seven Years War who settled in Halifax after the conflict and became a schoolmaster in 1773.¹ Twelve years later, he was officially appointed Post-Master General of Nova Scotia, overseeing the receipt of transatlantic mail and directing its distribution throughout the colony.² Peters liked to be informed and observe the world around him, traits that he employed both in his official position and in his private life. In his spare time, the Massachusetts-born Peters would take detailed records of the meteorological conditions at Halifax and send them to the Rev. Dr. Jeremy Belknap for the use of his Massachusetts Historical Society.³ Peters also included with his reports copies of the local newspapers for Belknap and other Society members to pursue.

On 11 February 1796, Peters wrote to Belknap and communicated his eagerness to continue writing. “I shall endeavour to continue those observations and according to your request send them quarterly,” he promised. However, the cash-strapped Peters⁴ was less than eager to keep purchasing newspapers for the Society as Halifax’s three weekly papers, “being constantly sent to my Office for Country Customers… can [be] read without injury to any person, or expense to myself.” Not to close the door on the subject

¹ Peters writes in an advertisement for his school that his decision to become a schoolmaster was prompted by the several requests he had received to teach after the death of prominent schoolmaster Daniel Shatford. In the same place he observed that his curriculum would be, “Reading and Writing English, Bookkeeping, practical Geometry, Mensuration of Superficies and Solids, Trigonometry and the Art of Navigation.” Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 29 June 1773, 3.
² For more on Peters (1729-1800) and his various careers, including Deputy Post-Master General, see: Judith Fingard, “Peters, Joseph,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online, Volume IV, www.biographi.ca, (Accessed on 7 September 2010).
³ Peters’ submissions are preserved by the Massachusetts Historical Society.
⁴ “Peters, Joseph,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online.
altogether, he quickly added, “should your Society wish to have any one or more of those papers subscribed for, and sent to you, as opportunities may offer, I shall cheerfully execute the Commission in so doing.” While unable to continue paying for three newspaper subscriptions for the Historical Society in Boston, Peters concluded that he would nonetheless be happy to purchase Belknap’s next anticipated book: “If your 2 Vol. of Biography is published, or if not as soon as it shall be, I shall be greatly Obliged by your sending me Two Copies thereof, and at the same time to name the price, which I will find means to transmit by the first safe conveyance.” Belknap was ultimately unable to fulfill Peters’ request, because he died before his second volume on the lives of famous Americans was published.

Little is known of Peters’ connection with Belknap, other than what is revealed in the few documents and letters he sent to the American scholar. It is clear, however, that Peters relished the opportunities that his position as postmaster afforded to read the various newspapers that passed through his office. His desire to purchase Belknap’s book, in spite of his limited means, underscores the importance of print to him and the valuable relationships that could be forged through its consumption. As we shall see, Peters’ actions are in line with those of others in both Halifax and Québec City who comprised a colonial print ascendancy. It was a community that used print to shape colonial society at large as well as the nature of its upper echelons in the capitals. It was a community that could believe in an equal importance of the direct measurement of the

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weather as the consultation of the social barometer that the newspaper provided. It was a community who participated in a greater transatlantic print culture and valued the ability of print to diffuse knowledge and form opinion.

In the previous chapter we saw that printers in Halifax and Québec City were both facilitators and participants in what can be seen as a colonial print ascendancy. Possessing divergent backgrounds and experience, these individuals were unified by the trials of their profession and their belief in the importance of the press to inform and improve society. While the printers’ efforts can be clearly seen, discerning who else participated in a colonial print ascendancy that coalesced around the presses is more difficult. Not every reader would have seen print in the same manner. Undoubtedly, there would have been literate people who disagreed, did not understand, or were indifferent to what was printed in the newspapers of the capital cities. The readers and contributors who formed the print ascendancy, however, were a diverse group of literate individuals as the printers themselves. As we shall see in this chapter, it was a group that comprised the traditional political and religious elite as well as a mix of literate merchants, sea captains, navy and medical officers and soldiers, civil servants, clerks, lawyers, medical practitioners, prosperous farmers, and tradesmen. Like the printers, these people shared a belief in the importance of the press to influence behaviour in society. Reading for them, however, was not a passive experience. Whether they were conscious of it or not, the press informed their thoughts and actions and, in turn, they used the press to influence the actions of others. The print ascendancy — by no means a homogenous or coherent group — can nonetheless be considered a community of

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7 A recent and detailed articulation of the connection between the scientific observation and the social obsession with the weather in the eighteenth century can be seen in: Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007).
colonial readers and print contributors sharing a belief in the inherent value of print. Some members, too, used the press in an attempt to form a more coherent and British-oriented elite in colonial society.

Eighteenth-century subscription lists are a key source in indentifying readers, many of whom belonged to the colonial print ascendency that came together around the presses of British Halifax and Québec City. These lists offer illuminating information on the identity of domestic readers, though their usefulness is tempered by their rarity and their incomplete nature. The most detailed records of this nature pertain to the operations of the *Quebec Gazette*. In 1768, four years after the establishment of the *Gazette*, it is recorded to have had almost 300 subscribers.\(^8\) For the years 1782 to 1785, the subscription rate averaged around 326\(^9\) and by the end of the century almost 520 subscribers were listed.\(^10\) The subscription books show that approximately sixty percent of the readers of the *Quebec Gazette* lived in Québec City, with the majority of the remaining forty percent of readers living in Montréal, or on the “roads to” Montréal and Halifax. Considering that, by the end of the 1790s, the population of Québec City alone was estimated between 12 000 and 14 000,\(^11\) it is clear that the subscribers to the *Gazette* were a minority in colonial society.

The names on the subscription lists show that the colonial readers, although a relatively small segment of the entire colonial population, were nonetheless a stratified and influential group. Perhaps the most eclectic community of readers could be found in

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\(^8\) Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (LAC), Neilson Family Collection, MG24-B1, Volume 46, File 3, Subscription Book, 1768-1769, Reel C-15611. In this list the names of individuals that dropped subscriptions are also indicated, hence the use of the term “had been subscribers.”

\(^9\) LAC, Neilson Family Collection, MG24-B1, Volume 46, File 5, Subscription Book, 1784-1785, Reel C-15611.

\(^10\) LAC, Neilson Family Collection, MG24-B1, Volume 46, File 12, 1795-1803, Reel C-15611.

Québec. The subscription books of the Quebec Gazette, reflecting the mid-century upheaval of imperial powers, showed a mix of old French gentry and new British arrivals. It was a spectrum of readers that included high-ranking government officials, clergy, prominent merchants and seigneurs, military officers, lesser merchants, clerks and tradesmen. A similar cross-section of subscribers supported the Quebec Magazine (1791-1794), also published by the Gazette printing office. These 324 subscribers included Prince Edward, Roman Catholic Bishop Levesque, members of the prominent Baby and De Saliberry families, Montréal merchants Cuthbert Grant and James McGill, prominent Québec City merchants, Lester, Lynd, Bell, and Macnider, British colonels Nairne,
Simcoe, and Gordon, as well as lesser merchants such as Henry Juncken and his friend and schoolmaster John Jones.

While no similar subscriptions records remain concerning the printers of Halifax, during its first year of publication, the *Nova-Scotia Magazine* (1789-1792) listed in its pages the names of its 240 subscribers. Styled as a publication “beneficial to the merchant, the farmer, the mechanic, and to every description of man,” the magazine’s list of subscribers provides a rare glimpse of the identity of the literate public. While not as eclectic a group as found in Québec City, the readers of the *Nova-Scotia Magazine* were nonetheless a diverse mix of newly arrived American loyalists as well as longstanding British, New England and German inhabitants that had been instrumental in the settlement of the town. Included were Lieutenant-Governor John Parr and his executive council, members of the Legislative Assembly, Rev. Dr. Charles Inglis, Bishop of Nova Scotia, influential medical doctors W.J. Allmon and Duncan Clark, noted merchants Alex Brymer, Charles Geddes, Benjamin Salter, the Rev. Dr. Andrew Brown, and army subaltern and diarist William Dyott. Even Joseph Peters, who as we have seen avoided subscribing to the newspapers of Halifax, is prominently listed. In addition to this colonial who’s who, the list of magazine subscribers also bore the names and would occasionally detail the professions of dozens of farmers, sailors, lesser merchants, bureaucrats, and military officers and clerks.

As illuminating as the extant subscription lists are, they offer an incomplete picture of the reading public. Domestically-produced print was also distributed and

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14 For more on the founding of Halifax and its ties particularly to the German states and New England see Introduction pages 10 and 11.
16 *Nova-Scotia Magazine* 1,1 (1789): v.
consumed outside home. Printers’ and merchants’ shops, coffee houses, and libraries also offered newspapers and other publications for reading. The Quebec Library, for example, is found on the Quebec Gazette’s list of subscribers that received newspapers “gratis.” Similarly, Québec City merchant Henry Juncken writes of going to the coffee shop to read a newspaper, having newspapers delivered by friends, or visiting the printer directly to purchase publications without subscribing. This wide distribution of print alludes to an even larger reading public in the capitals than is revealed through subscription lists.

Furthermore, subscription lists only denoted the head of household or primary subscriber and these were predominately male. With the exception of the odd widow, subscription lists omitted wives, children (both male and female) and other relatives that would have been part of a greater circle of literacy. While women are rarely listed as subscribers, it is clear that printers in Halifax and Québec City saw them as a potential audience for their productions. In 1764, the Quebec Gazette presented itself as a forum where “the youth of both sexes will be improved and persons of all ranks agreeably and usefully entertained.” Publishers of almanacs in the capitals included articles that they believed would be of specific interest to women, ranging from folk remedies to treat sick children to moral essays on topics such as gossip and tattling. In some cases, a page or

17 LAC, Neilson Family Collection, MG24-B1, Volume 46, File 12, Subscriptions Books, 1795-1803, Reel C-15611.
18 Bibliothèque et Archives nationales de Québec à Québec (BANQQ), P119-P1 Journal de Henry Juncken, typed transcription, 1788-1789, 18 November 1788, 73.
19 ibid., 23 April 1789, 296.
20 ibid., 22 December 1788, 113.
21 Quebec Gazette 21 June 1764, 1.
two would be reserved especially “For the Ladies.” Later in 1791, when William Moore, the agent of the *Nova-Scotia Magazine* in Québec, placed an advertisement in his paper for subscribers, he entreated all “Gentlemen and Ladies wishing to be furnished with that useful and elegant production” to contact him for copies, as the magazine “is universally allowed to be equal or superior to many Magazines now in circulation.”

To address male and female readers equally, printers must have considered female readers an important, lucrative and — as the length of time between these examples illustrate — longstanding part of the greater print readership.

Indeed, printers not only anticipated that women would read their newspapers and magazines, they also printed material designed specifically for them. Newspapers in the capitals advertised such women-only publications such as “The Lady’s Memorandum Book; or Daily Pocket Journal” or the “Lady’s Diary, and Pocket Almanac” exclusively for the use and approbation of the “female world” by providing “useful information” on a variety of subjects, including “several useful receipts in cookery… a Lady’s gardening calendar…,” poetry, songs and “enigmatical questions.” Colonial women also gave publications as gifts, often to other women as a means to augment their education. An example of this practice is witnessed by the annotation found on the front cover of one of the editions of the *Nova-Scotia Magazine* used in this study, which reads “The Gift of

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24 *Quebec Herald* 23 May 1791, 8.  
25 This publication, touted as being written “by a Lady,” was imported from London by Robert Fletcher. See: *Nova-Scotia Gazette* (Halifax) 8 June 1769, 4.  
26 *Quebec Herald* 12 October 1789, 404.
Katherine Gould to her affectionate Niece Catherine Johnstone." Although their names were not on any of the subscription lists, Katherine Gould and Catherine Johnstone attest to the much wider circles of reading that existed, of which little more than anecdotal evidence remains.

For all the limitations of the remaining subscription lists, they nonetheless provide an invaluable baseline to determine readers and the expanded networks of reading. What drew these readers to print in Halifax and Québec City? What were the tastes of readers or what messages were transmitted through print? Print scholar Fiona Black has argued that the newspaper advertisement can be used as a key source in tracing the Canadian-Scottish book trade in early Halifax. Expanding upon Black’s observations, the study of advertisements can be particularly useful in ascertaining the specific tastes that readers displayed (or at least what the booksellers believed those tastes to be).

As was illustrated in the previous chapter, newspaper printers in Halifax and Québec City — in an attempt to meet the tastes of their readers — drew upon a vast well of literary and cultural touchstones originating in Great Britain. The vast majority of works imported into the colonial capitals were produced by British presses, written by British authors, or otherwise reflected contemporary British tastes. For example, in 1776, books that could be purchased at Anthony Henry’s Halifax printing office included reference works, such as a two-volume set of “Johnson’s English Dictionary;” the newest

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27 Inside cover, *Nova-Scotia Magazine and Comprehensive Review of Literature, Politics, and News, being a collection of the most valuable articles which appear in the periodical publications of Great-Britain, Ireland, and America, with various pieces in verse and prose never before published*, Volume IV, (Halifax: John Howe, 1791), from the microfilm copy, Library and Archives Canada.

novels, such as a nine-volume set of Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*; classic British serials, such as *The Spectator*, and *The Rambler*; classically-inspired work, such as a collection of Alexander Pope’s writings; or the latest works of biography, such as Thomas Mortimer’s *British Plutarch*. The situation was no different in Québec City, where the printing office of the *Quebec Gazette* carried on a lively book and stationary trade, as did the office of William Moore’s *Quebec Herald*, which became a self-proclaimed hub for “NEW and OLD BOOKS. Bought, sold and exchanged.” “LADIES and Gentlemen,” commenced one of Moore’s announcements soliciting the print-buying public, “who wish for Magazines, Novels, new Plays, Poems, or Books of any particular sort from England, by the early vessels in Spring, signifying their wants at the Herald Printing-Office previous to the first Monday in January, they will be accommodated to

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29 Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 17 September 1776, 3.
30 See: “Brown/Neilson Shop Records,” in Patricia Lockhart Fleming and Sandra Alston, *Early Canadian Printing: A Supplement to Marie Tremaine’s A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints, 1751-1800,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999). Throughout the Gazette’s pages can be found advertisements for stationary and books. For a typical example see “JUST IMPORTED From LONDON, and to be Sold at the PRINTING-OFFICE behind the Cathedral Church,” *Quebec Gazette* 14 September 1775, 4. A particularly detailed order for books and stationary from Samuel Neilson, printer of the *Quebec Gazette*, to his English supplier, dated 14 February 1793, sheds light on the breadth of publications, paper, textbooks and related items that were sold through his office: “1 Ream Superfine Copy / 2 Reams 2d table do. / 10 Reams Superfine foolscap/ 4000 best quills / 4000 middling do. / 12 doz Gold leaf ½ pale 1/8 deep / 6 small pocket bibles / 6 larger do. / 12 Turlington’s balsam / 12 skins reed sheep / 4 skins red morocco/ 4 skins green do. / 4 skins blue do. 300 cut. paste boards different thickness / 1 piece black buckram for bookbinding / 6 Johnson’s Dictionary Octavo / 3 best maps of Canada if any can be found / 6 brass dividers of different sizes / Asiatic Researches Philosophical Transactions of London and Edinburgh / Esprit des Journaux from July 1792 / A Copy of new political publications with any other that [sic] new ones that may be very interesting / 3 Copies of Éwings synopsis of Mathematics / 2 Copys of Brooks Gazetteer / 3 Guthries Geographical Grammar Edinbourg Magazine / Court Calendar for 1793 / Nautical Almanac for 1793 / 1 Microscope / Ferrier on the Coutume de Paris / 1 Code Civile / The best and newest edition of the Printers Grammar / 2 Needle bars of 4 inches nine lines and 1/2 made by J. Jones Charing Cross London…..” BANQQ, P 193, Fonds Imprimerie Neilson, 1960-01-142/33, Letterbook, 1793-1798.
31 *Quebec Herald* 7 September 1789, 362. For the breath of titles that Moore sold in Quebec also see: *Quebec Herald* 24 November 1788, 8; *Quebec Herald* 15 June 1789, 259; *Quebec Herald* 28 September 1789, 389; *Quebec Herald* 3 December 1789, 13.
their satisfaction, on very moderate profit.”

Printers ensured that a variety of current and traditional British works were available to a public that eagerly awaited their arrival.

In addition to the printers’ own commercial endeavours, general merchants and booksellers also advertised the sale of print in the colonial newspapers. While this occurred in both Québec City and Halifax, booksellers’ advertisements tended to be more prevalent in the Nova Scotian capital. Merchants such as Richard Kidston, sometime-publisher Robert Fletcher, Francis Boyd, and New York bookseller James Rivington, piqued the interest of Nova Scotian readers with advertisements heralding the arrival of new and well-loved books. The booksellers, like the printers, offered a wide selection of books. In a typical instance, Rivington advertised a “curious Collection of Books, in History, Divinity, Law, Physic, Mathematics, Classics, Architecture, Navigation; a Variety of the best Novels and Books of Entertainment, with a good Assortment of Greek, Latin & English School Books, a great Choice of low prized Histories, Books of Piety, Bibles, Testaments… Maps of Nova Scotia, [and] Charts of

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32 Quebec Herald, 15 December 1788, 3.
33 Kidston was a Scottish bookseller who appears to have moved to Halifax after the American Revolution. He was a member of the North British society, a part of their special committee on charity and is on record as donating to various other charities including giving £2 for the building of a new Episcopal church in Lunenburg in 1795. See: Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management, Halifax (NSARM), MG 20, Volume 231, North British Society, Treasurer's Records, Proceedings of the North British Society and NSARM, MG 1, Volume 797 a-d (c) #1, Rev. John Seccombe Journal.
34 Robert Fletcher was a general importer that specialized in books and briefly took over the publication of the Halifax Gazette after Anthony Henry was removed for printing criticisms of the Stamp Act. His advertisements for a wide variety of books, music and publications span three decades in various Nova Scotia newspapers. See Marie Tremaine, A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints, 1751-1800, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952), 662.
36 George L. Parker writes that Rivington was Halifax’s first bookseller, being “of the well-known family of London booksellers,” later moving to New England and then to New York. See, Parker, The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 13.
Also like the printers, the booksellers highlighted works of British authors and publishers in their advertisements, often at British prices. Robert Fletcher, for example, would entice prospective buyers by selling books, “at the London Prices for Cash.”

A typical catalogue, such as he published in 1771, would be solidly British including works such as Catherine Macaulay’s *History of England*, Tobias Smollet’s *History*, Alexander Pope’s works, Milton’s and William Congreve’s works, the *Spectator*, the *Tatler*, Rev. John Spotswood’s *History of the Church and State of Scotland*, “Lock [sic] on Understanding,” “Mother Goose’s Tales,” and Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. Print sellers evidently anticipated a demand, not only for popular British publications, but also for fair British prices of such material.

Whether read in a coffee house, the work place, on the street, or by the domestic fireside, the printed word helped to minimize the perceived distance between Great Britain and the literate inhabitants of Halifax and Québec City. “By Means of the Press,” a broadside soliciting subscribers for a proposed *Gazette* in the then new British colony of Québec proclaimed in 1763:

we can sit at Home and acquaint ourselves with what is done in all the distant Parts of the World, and find what our Fathers did long ago, in the first Ages of Mankind: By this Means a Briton holds Correspondence with his Friend in America or Japan, and manages all his Business: ‘Tis this, which brings all the past Ages of Men at once upon the Stage, and makes the most distant Nations and Ages converse together, and grow into Acquaintance.

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37 *Halifax Gazette* 14 May 1761, 2.
38 *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 13 April 1771.
40 This phenomenon has been previously observed; see in particular, David Shields, “Eighteenth-Century Literary Culture,” in Amory, Hugh and David D. Hall, eds., *A History of the Book in America: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, Volume I, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 436.
41 University of Toronto, Fisher Library, Canadian Pamphlets and Broadsides Collection, “Quebeck, to the
For the literate “Britons” of Halifax and Québec City, print brought together reports of eras long past with current events, pairing what was often touted as the “freshest intelligence” from across the world with the stalwart works of past authors and popular histories. By bringing together ideas from the furthest reaches of known geography and chronology, the reader was provided with a foil to the colonial everyday and grist for thought and discussion.

The purchasing of British works from colonial booksellers was one means that members of the colonial print ascendancy in Halifax and Québec City could stay connected with the mother country. Sending print through the mail, or by packet ship, or having it delivered in person were other popular means for readers and members of the colonial print ascendancy alike to acquire, or share cherished, works while at the same time maintaining social networks. Particularly in the years following the American Revolution, friends and families divided by civil war continued relationships via the printed word. Québec City’s Thomas Aston Coffin, writing to his mother in Boston, would frequently ask for publications to be forwarded to him by mail, or, as in this instance, by travellers planning to visit: “By the return of Mr. Sheaffe, I wish you would send me a Boston Register for this year I wish much to know who are selectmen, Hog-reeves &c. — any other novel publication that you think worth reading I wish thank you for, not forgetting a catalogue &c of the College of Harvard, for I suppose they keep the anniversary as in the days of yore.” Coffin was not alone in his request; the

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43 MHS, Ms. N-1005, Thomas Aston Coffin Papers, Letter: Thomas Aston Coffin (Quebec) to Mrs. Coffin (Boston) 13 May 1788, Reel P-758.
correspondence of colonists is peppered with words of anticipation or appreciation for works sent through the mail. The loyalist Chaplain of the Garrison at Halifax, Rev. Dr. Mather Byles, Jr.,\(^{44}\) for example, frequently exchanged publications (particularly poems) and detailed his literary habits with his sisters in Boston. He also received books through the post as is also revealed in his correspondence. “I have also been much entertained,” Byles wrote his father and sisters in 1783, “by a new Production entitled the History of Connecticut,\(^{45}\) which was sent me from England, & in which I have the Honor to be mentioned with particular Respect.”\(^{46}\) Other Haligonians, such as Governor John Wentworth\(^{47}\) and the Rev. Dr. Andrew Brown, were also connected with transatlantic networks of print sharing and distribution. Like Coffin and Byles, they also enjoyed a particular connection to Boston that can be witnessed in their vibrant exchanges with the Rev. Dr. Jeremy Belknap.\(^{48}\) Before departing for New Brunswick in 1784, Halifax’s Edward Winslow begged his friend Ward Chipman to “Send me a ton of Newspapers, of

\(^{44}\) Rev. Dr. Andrew Brown (1763-1834) was in charge of the congregation of St. Mathew’s, Halifax from 1787 to 1795. He was a dynamic speaker and involved himself in both the city’s charitable and social affairs. He was also a scholar who compiled several rare documents in an attempt to write a history of Nova Scotia. Returning to Scotland, he later replaced Hugh Blair as the Chair of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres at the University of Edinburgh. See: George Shepperson, “Brown, Andrew” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Volume VI, [www.biographi.ca](http://www.biographi.ca), (Accessed on 14 March 2010).

\(^{45}\) This work may have been Samuel Peters history of Connecticut that was published in 1781. Byles, who originally lived in New London, Connecticut, is mentioned on pages 315 to 316. See: Samuel Peters, *A General History of Connecticut... Including A Description Of The Country, And Many Curious and Interesting Anecdotes... By a gentleman of the province*, (London: J. Bew, 1781).

\(^{46}\) MHS, Byles Family Papers, Letter: Mather Byles Jr. (Halifax) to Mather Byles Sr., Mary and Katherine Byles (Boston), [10 June 1783.]

\(^{47}\) The Harvard-educated Wentworth (1737-1820) was originally the Governor of New Hampshire, Surveyor of Crown Lands in Nova Scotia (as a loyalist exile), and then Lieutenant Governor of the colony. See: Judith Fingard, “Sir John Wentworth,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Volume V, [www.biographi.ca](http://www.biographi.ca), (Accessed on 14 March 2010).

pamphlets, Caricatures — anything.” Similarly, in 1787 Governor Sir John Wentworth thanked a Boston friend, “for the News papers, you have been kind[?] to send us, & amusements & Intelligence they have afforded us and our Friends…” Such disparate sources offer telling examples not only of the value of print for the continuing education and entertainment of members of the print ascendancy, but of how social relations were forged or continued around the personal distribution of the medium.

The importance of print to these members of the colonial print ascendancy is further demonstrated by the lengths they went to in moving personal libraries. “When I was first on the move to Halifax,” the Rev. Dr. Andrew Brown wrote in 1793, “Dr. Robertson, who had directed me in the choice of my little library, desired me to get a bookseller to pack it; adding I have always done so, for many valuable volumes have come to me many hundred miles, and there is nothing so necessary as to be attentive to such treasure, which they who have the taste to chuse have also the taste to value.”

William Smith, another acquaintance of the auspicious Scottish historian William Robertson, underscored the importance of moving his library in its entirety and without damage. “I must have a Study large enough for my Library; concerning which last I am

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49 LAC, MG23-D1 Ward Chipman (Senior and Junior) fonds, Reel C-1180, 1320.
52 Leslie Upton observes that: “In the preface to his History of America (London, 1777), Robertson acknowledged, ‘from William Smith, Esq., the ingenious historian of New York, I have received some useful information.’” in L.F.S. Upton, ed., The Diary and Selected Papers of Chief Justice William Smith, 1784-1793, Volume I, (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1963), 12. A letter to a Haligonian from a “Gentlemen in London” published in 1772 shows that Robertson is beginning a great history of America but, “due to the variety of occupations in which the Doctor is engaged, give reason to fear, that it will not be delivered to the world for several years to come.” The popularity of Robertson was such that, “The bookseller purchased of Dr. Robertson the Copy of his history for 600 l. And his history of Charles V. was sold for no less than 4500 l. Sterling. – a price it is then never before paid for any book in the country. The Bookseller made an immense Sum by the sale of the Books.” Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 10 November 1772, 3.
not a little anxious,” he confided to his wife Janet as they prepared to move from New York to Québec City in the wake of the American Revolution:

for unless a Chance Ship comes to us from NY, I fear the Boxes must be reduced to a more portable Size, & so covered as to turn Rain, to prevent their being ruined in the open Passage by Land & Water thro’ the Lakes. I beg this may be a prime Object of your Attention. It is possible that some British Bottom may leave your Port for this Place in the Spring. I Must have them as speedily as possible cost what they may.\(^{53}\)

The concern and effort taken over the transport of libraries also gives a clear indication of the value that was placed upon printed materials by the colonial elite in eighteenth-century Nova Scotia and Québec.

Another testament to the value of printed materials could be found in the great efforts taken to recover them when they had gone “lost.” “The person who has borrow’d the fifth Volum [sic] of the History and Proceedings of the House of Lords, from the Restoration in 1660, to the Present Time,” read an advertisement published repeatedly in the *Halifax Gazette* during 1754, “is desired to return it…as the Want of it breaks a Sett.”\(^{54}\) “Whereas Mr. Turner D.P.M. of Halifax, has lent several BOOKS, which have been forgotten to be returned” another advertisement taken out in the Nova-Scotia Gazette proclaimed in 1780, “And his name is upon the Title Page of them all: this is to desire that they be sent to Him at Halifax.”\(^{55}\) The list of over 10 borrowed books contained several French-language titles, including a copy of Rousseau’s *Lettre à D’Alembert* on Theatre.\(^{56}\) In Québec City, similar advertisements were also common,

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\(^{54}\) *Halifax Gazette*, all editions, June-July 1754.

\(^{55}\) *Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 15 February 1780, 2.

\(^{56}\) The list of missing books in their entirety equalled: “four Volumes of the Foundling Hospital, viz. Sewed in Marble. 1st, and 2d Vols. Of Lelland’s History of Ireland, 3d Vol. Dodsley’s Poems, Les Premiers 4 Toms, de La Mythologie des Anciens par L’abbe Banier, & Une Lettre de J. Jacsue [sic] Rousseau à D’Alembert on Theatre.”
such as when a reader of the *Quebec Herald* asked for the return of the “4th volume of Marmontel’s moral tales – octavo” lent in the summer to “some gentlemen or a lady of this city,”\(^{57}\) or when an advertisement was placed in the *Quebec Gazette* concerning a quintessentially Scottish tome of instruction that had gone astray: “Missing: The second part of the 15\(^{th}\) volume of the Edinburgh Encyclopædia Britannica, supposed to have been lent, or taken by mistake, from the Shop of James Ainslie, Stationer. Any person who has it will do a favour to the Proprietor by returning it to Mr. Neilson.”\(^{58}\) Printed information was indeed valued amongst the readers who can be considered part of a colonial print ascendancy. It was an important means to stay connected with others, a cherished commodity that was transported with respect and misplaced to the chagrin of its owners.

As has been demonstrated up to this point, a rough determination can be made of the types of subscribers of colonial publications, their wider circles of interaction, and the general taste for printed works. From the correspondence of some of these readers, and the print record itself, the identities of those who comprised a colonial print ascendancy emerge. Print was a valued commodity to these citizens. In addition to commercial transatlantic networks of print distribution, members of the print ascendancy forged their own wide-spread personal networks to ensure a constant flow of reading materials. For them print was a respected carrier of news and information and the messages it conveyed were deemed important in influencing their own behaviour. Those who can be considered as comprising a colonial print ascendancy also actively turned to print as a

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\(^{57}\) *Quebec Herald* 17 December 1789, 28.

\(^{58}\) *Quebec Gazette* 9 November 1797, 3.
medium of sociability and employed it to express opinion and attempt to alter behaviour of others.

Those who contributed to the newspapers of Halifax and Québec City used pseudonyms. A nom de plume was a popular literary custom used throughout the British Atlantic in the eighteenth century, so there were undoubtedly some who used assumed names to be au courante with the prevailing fashion of Peter Pindar (John Wolcot), Samuel Johnson, and others. 59 Considering that print readers in the capitals numbered in the hundreds, the use of pseudonyms also served to conceal the identities of print contributors lest their opinion offend some ears. However, the anonymous expression of opinion also created a problem for members of the colonial print ascendancy. Those who believed that print could shape behaviour — and even delineate the boundaries and character of the colonial elite — felt compelled to leave clues to their education or to provide the reading public assurances of authority in their opinion.60 These clues can be seen not only in the content of letter writers, but in the names they signed to those letters.

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Pseudonyms were expressions of a self-fashioned identity. As individual as these monikers were, their selection and use appear to have been subject to cultural norms and unwritten rules of usage. Colonial contributors tried to appear as authorities in their letters. Employing allusions from classical history, English playwrights and authors, or contemporary political commentators shaped their print identity as educated. Those who used simple pseudonyms such as *J.S.*, *Y.Z.*, or *An Old Subscriber* leave us little on which to base their identity today, as the contextual clues available to other readers at the time have all but vanished. For contributors, it was not adequate to express an opinion. It had to be an informed opinion that exhibited the greater cultural literacy that only someone of, or aspiring to, the colonial elite could possess. Colonial writers used names that described the correspondent in generic terms, appropriating popular British literary or historical characters, or otherwise styling themselves in a manner reflecting the nature of their correspondence. For example *The Private* was the name used by a writer who wrote on military affairs. *A Patron of Eloquence* and *Demosthenes* were used by authors of letters on the importance of oratory. *Will Wimble*, a character taken from Joseph Addison’s *Spectator*, *Doll Tearsheet*, from Shakespeare’s *Henry the Fourth*.

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62 *Halifax Gazette* 30 March 1752, 1.
63 *Quebec Herald* 7 January 1791, 53.
64 *Quebec Herald* 3 January 1791, 55, and *Quebec Herald* 3 January 1791, 53.
65 The character of Wimble, as depicted in the *Spectator*, was a man firmly ensconced in the gentry, an over-educated and under-employed man-of-leisure. The use of the name *Will Wimble* illustrates the difficulties encountered in understanding the mentality behind a pseudonym. Does this choice of pseudonym indicate that the author is actually mocking those who may criticize the club proposal, or is the author showing his breadth of reading by referring to an older work and self-fashioning as part of the leisured class? Perhaps the author is identifying himself with another Will Wimble altogether. Considering the venom in his criticism of the club proposal, it is more likely that he is using the name to identify himself as a member of the upper class. For Addison’s description of Wimble, see: “Will Wimble visits Sir Roger” The Spectator No. 108 reprinted in Angus Ross, ed., *Richard Steele and Joseph Addison — Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator*, (London: Penguin Books, 1988), 219-220.
66 *Nova-Scotia Gazette* (Halifax) 18 August 1768, 3.
or Junius, the famous satirical correspondent to London’s Public Advertiser, are but three examples of pseudonyms that appealed to well known works of British literature. Similarly, the use of names such as Momus, Civis, Publicola, Demothenes and Pro Bono Publico, taken from the lessons of a typical English grammar school education, all graced letters that criticized or suggested improvements to colonial society.

Pseudonyms that appealed to literary and historical references attest to the erudition both of the authors and of the intended readership.

Pseudonyms could liberate those who would not normally contribute publicly for fear of being known to others in the capitals. Such was perhaps the case of eight purported women of Québec City who, deciding that their suitors needed matrimonial encouragement, wrote to the Quebec Herald in 1790. Using carefully chosen aliases so that the men alone might know their identity, they began their letter: “To Messrs. Jack Stormwell, Bob Cramfull, Harry Teutonic, Tom Roger, George Pimple, Tammy Flockless, Tonny Fillfunds, Jack Butt, BACHELORS.” Underscoring the odd nature of the letter, the authors continued:

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67 Habermas writes that the letters of Junius “appeared from 21 November 1768 through 12 May 1772 in the Public Advertiser (in their way forerunners of the political lead article)... This series of satirical articles have been called ‘pioneers of the modern press,’ because in them the King, the ministers, top military men, and jurists were publicly accused of political machinations, and secret connections of political significance were thereby uncovered in a manner that ever since has been exemplary of a critical press.” Jürgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, trans. by Thomas Burger with the Assistance of Frederick Lawrence, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 60-61. The letters of Junius, available from colonial booksellers, also captured the attention of British North Americans and the pseudonym Junius, Junius Americanus, etc. are used in both the Halifax and Québec City prints.

68 The Greek god of mockery and censure, it was a name that was also popularly used in the London press. See: “Momus” in G.E. Marindin, A Classical Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography Mythology and Geography by Sir William Smith, D.C.L., L.L.D., (London: John Murray, 1919), 572.

69 He was the famed orator that overcame a speech impediment to become one of the most eloquent speakers of the classical world. “Demosthenes” in Marindin, A Classical Dictionary, 282-283.

70 Quebec Herald 7 January 1791, 53; Quebec Herald 3 January 1791, 53; Quebec Herald 29 December 1788, 51; Quebec Herald 22 November 1790, 4; Quebec Herald 15 March 1790, 134-135; Halifax Gazette Thursday, December 26, 1765, 4; Quebec Herald 26 November 1789, 5.
THOUGH it is a very uncommon thing for ladies to address bachelors in this public way, we can no longer remain silent, when we consider the hardships we undergo, in so long remaining in an unmarried state: we are therefore determined to communicate to you our sentiments on that head, that you as men, and that too of parts, may remedy this growing evil.71

After forwarding several reasons why the delinquent men should propose, the women signed off using the names, Deborah Wrinkle, Poll. Laughall, Nan. Squeezewell, Kitty Lukewarm, Tinny Nettletop, Polly Brickdust, Biddy Loveless, and Moll. Giggle. The monikers, undoubtedly inspired by the subjects’ individual attributes, offered their matrimonially obtuse suitors a final means to guess their identities, if they had not already figured them out.

In response, the suitors —using their attributed aliases — professed their affection to the women, but placed the blame squarely on the civil law of the colony. “If an union of love and interest, in this commercial city, was divested of those restraints,” the men observed:

which we will take the liberty to point out to you, we should deprecate the idea of celibacy, and with hearts teeming with affection and anxious desire, readily pay our devotion at the shrine of your charms.72

The romantic prose later evaporated when the letter went into a detailed explanation of how the death of a wife under civil law meant a very public accounting of affairs, “an event that may blast his credit and terminate in irretrievable ruin.”73 After exposing a few more examples of the inadequacies of the civil code in regard to marriage, the letter concluded with the practical wish that “we mingle with you in the common joy of an approaching House of Assembly, and trust that by our combined efforts the first acts of

71 Quebec Herald 22 March 1790, 142-143.
72 Quebec Herald 12 April 1790, 166.
73 ibid.
the Legislature will eradicate those diabolical customs and usages…”74 As no further correspondence is found in the pages of the Quebec Herald, it is impossible to know whether the response was deemed sufficient. Indeed, because of both the eighteenth-century penchant for pseudonyms and satire, it is impossible to tell if the whole incident was not just a thinly-veiled attempt to criticise Québec’s system of French civil law, deemed inadequate by many British inhabitants of the colony. Regardless, it was a message that would have been understood, if it was not entirely penned, by members of the merchant community. These men had traditionally railed against the provisions of French law and in this case it was clear that its “diabolical customs” were impeding both their professional and personal lives. On the other hand, if the women actually did exist and this was truly the response of their suitors, it provided an excuse to other readers for their apparent failure to marry.75

Even if an author was styled to be someone else, the guise had to be plausible, or else the printer and other readers would be quick to criticise or reject the letter. William Moore, like other colonial printers, paid keen attention to letters that were submitted for publication. However, unlike his colonial peers, he published not only letters, but also the reasons why he rejected them. Both content and the authors’ self-styled credentials were fair game for Moore’s barbs. In rejecting a letter purportedly from one Jerry Sneak, in 1788, Moore explained that the writer had failed on both accounts. “JERRY SNEAK”s

74 ibid.
Complaint is not of consequence for the Herald and rather to [sic] daring for a ‘paltry, puddling, prying, Pin-maker.’”

Letters that did make it through the editorial process then became exposed to the scrutiny of readers, which could be equally harsh. Such was the curious case of the letter written by Civis Canadiensis (Canadian Citizen) to the Quebec Gazette in 1765. Allegedly a French Canadian (as attested by his chosen pseudonym and his claim to be a “new Subject of Great-Britain”) the author strangely wrote in English to the bilingual newspaper that would publish letters in French. “Your Gazettes for some Time past,” he observed, playing up his ignorance as a new subject of “English Liberty”:

have been fill’d with bitter Complaints, made by several of your Nation, fearing Attacks may be made on their Liberties… I see nothing in your Papers but Alarms about English Liberties… Hearing all those Complaints of Individuals, I say unto myself probably it may be a Violation of English Liberty to require that we should support the Army, that we should be taxed, that our Trade should be confined, or that Printers should be discommoded; all those Arguments are but meer Surmises, as I have no precise Idea of those Liberties.

In conclusion, Civis Canadiensis cited a story of a canadien he had known who had cruelly lampooned friends and then in his defence said, “that such Things were allowed in England, that there the King is some Times lampooned.” This occurrence, he wrote, further bewildered him and he asked for someone to explain the nature of English liberty to alleviate this cultural confusion.

A response did indeed follow in the Quebec Gazette which questioned the authenticity of Civis Canadiensis and the veracity of his stories. The response, penned under the name Civis Bonus Usque ad Mortem (A Good Citizen Until Death), found the

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76 Quebec Herald 15 December 1788, 31.
77 Quebec Gazette 3 October 1765, 3.
78 ibid.
79 ibid.
story of the rude canadien and the defence of his behaviour that “it is done in England” difficult to believe: “… if such a Man did exist he would be unworthy of civil society.”

Still less credible to Civis Bonus Usque ad Mortem was the idea that any reader of the Gazette would have such poor understanding of English liberties. Suspecting that the whole incident might be just a satirical ploy, Civis Bonus Usque ad Mortem decided to indulge the letter writer, but not without first communicating his suspicions: “As this Civis Canadiensis seems desirous of knowing what those English Liberties are, which we are to enjoy under the present Government, and of which he pretends Ignorance… I shall venture to assure him.”

For Civis Bonus Usque ad Mortem, the idea that a canadien would be reading and contributing a letter to the Quebec Gazette (in English) was not surprising. What was difficult to accept, thus putting the letter under suspicion, was the premise that a Civis Canadiensis would have been so ignorant of British ways.

This incident reveals many things about mid-eighteenth-century assumptions of readership and the approaches taken by correspondents in Québec City. Perhaps most striking is the confidence exhibited by the writer Civis Bonus Usque ad Mortem in the understanding that French Canadian readers of the Gazette would have of British traditions. Based on what Civis Bonus Usque ad Mortem knew of the French Canadians who would read the Quebec Gazette, the letter just could not ring true. On the other hand, if Civis Canadensis was earnest in his inquiries, the incident demonstrates that, within the first year of printing, literate French Canadians had recognised the newspaper as an important forum for the debate. If the letter was indeed bogus, a veiled criticism on the state of British liberties in Québec, it nonetheless demonstrates how members of the

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80 Quebec Gazette 17 October 1765, 4.
81 ibid.
print ascendancy embraced the press and even attempted to engage in more complex and satirical forms in an attempt to redirect or shape elite society. Thus, the choice of pseudonym and choice of topic were almost always interwoven, offering revealing clues to a letter writer’s identity and authority or suggesting reasons for readers to distrust or be cautious of what they reading.

From what we have seen, a public of sophisticated readers and contributors formed around the print of Halifax and Québec City in the second half of the eighteenth century. Those literate colonists who believed in the value of print to educate and direct behaviour constituted a colonial print ascendancy. Some members of this community used the press to shape a colonial elite defined both by the lessons that print diffused and their own perceptions of proper British tradition. Others, like Joseph Peters, could either forge elite social relationships around print or at least be apprised of the actions of the upper echelons of colonial society to which they aspired. Indeed, being a part of colonial print ascendancy afforded the opportunity to connect in unprecedented ways with other literate colonists.

Like postmaster Joseph Peters, the Rev. Dr. Andrew Brown was also a correspondent of Boston’s Jeremy Belknap. Brown was a prominent member of Halifax society in the late 1780s. As the popular pastor of Halifax’s Presbyterian congregation, he would later return to Scotland to become the last chair of Rhetoric and Belle Lettres at the University of Edinburgh. A voracious reader, he particularly enjoyed newspapers

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82 Brown (1763-1834) was in charge of the congregation of St. Mathew’s, Halifax from 1787 to 1795. He was a dynamic speaker and involved himself in both the city’s charitable and social affairs. He was also a scholar who compiled several rare documents in an attempt to write a history of Nova Scotia. Returning to Scotland, he later replaced Hugh Blair as the Chair of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres at the University of Edinburgh. The Rev. Dr. Mather Byles Jr. tells of the spell that Brown had on the community: “...Understand then that Mr. Weeks [the Anglican minister] preaches at the Church in Halifax to bare Walls; Mr. Brown to a crowded congregation at the Meeting-House, being a handsome young man & of
and magazines which took precedence over other productions. “The spring ships, bringing with them a great variety of new publications,” he wrote to Belknap in 1793, “interrupted for a season the course of my reading.” As much as he looked forward to this, Brown also lamented that the volume of print material was overwhelming and “requires great application to overtake and to finish it….“ He was also a contributor to domestically produced print through his published observations and sermons. Although he may have also assumed a pseudonym and contributed anonymously, he did not need to. He was literally and figuratively ordained to shape colonial society.

To be sure, the acquaintance exhibited between Brown and Belknap was not equal to that between Peters and the Boston academic. Both Belknap and Brown had a deep interest in chronicling colonial history and within a few years considered himself a “faithful friend” of the American minister. As ministers, both Belknap and Brown belonged to the upper echelon of colonial society. Indeed, Brown was an acquaintance of the most influential members of Halifax society including Governor John Wentworth and Chief Justice Samson Blowers, who originally introduced him to Belknap. Brown was an official Contributing Member of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and his correspondence with Belknap was preserved and later printed by the Society. On the other hand, it is not known how Peters came in contact with Belknap, nor is there any

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84 After some acquaintance with Belknap, “yours most faithfully” or your “faithful friend” was Brown’s standard farewell.
85 Belknap Papers, Volume I, 521.
record of his being made officially a member of the Society.\textsuperscript{86} Peters’ correspondence was preserved by the Society, but unlike Brown’s letters, it was catalogued without his name as merely “Meteorological Observations.”

Regardless of the level of friendship amongst Peters, Brown, and Belknap, the fact that they all could correspond is noteworthy. In this era, men of varied educations and career trajectories could find common ground through a shared belief in the value of knowledge and through the printed word. Sociability, once the domain of strictly physical interaction and oral exchange, became dependent on print as a means to advise readers of the newest fashions and forms of interaction. Those who could read were privy to a direct conduit of ideas, opinion, traditions and norms. The print ascendancy was comprised of such prominent residents as colonial administrators, clergy, principal landowners and seigneurs as well as military and naval officers, medical practitioners, transient gentlemen and their families. It also included many merchants, ships’ captains, shopkeepers and traders, ordinary soldiers, and farmers. Print allowed a Governor and a literate tradesman the opportunity to be apprised of the events surrounding the French Revolution, or to form an opinion on the alleged barbarism of the Turks. As shall be explored in the next chapter, the newspaper forum was unlike any other type form of sociability and exchange experienced in Halifax or Québec City. Members of the print ascendancy took advantage of the unprecedented power of print to express their opinions both openly and anonymously in the capitals. While some members of the colonial print ascendancy were committed to the printers’ ideals of the diffusion of knowledge to a broad reading public, others increasingly used the press as a means to manipulate and

\textsuperscript{86} Index to the First Twenty Volumes of the Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1791-1883, (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1888). I would like to thank library assistant Katie Leach of the Massachusetts Historical Society for providing me with this information.
fashion an elite in both Halifax and Québec City. It would be an elite possessing many similarities, including a shared value for the literary references, fashionable behaviour and the British cultural norms that print communicated.
Chapter 4: The Case of Newspapers

The introduction of presses in Halifax and Québec City led to the creation of a colonial print ascendency. Members in this group of eclectic backgrounds were unified by their literacy and a shared belief in the value of print and its potential to advance their social, intellectual and economic interests. Participants in this informal collective also turned to print for advice to shape their behaviour and believed it to have a capacity to influence the actions of others. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, members of this print ascendency relished the press and maintained transatlantic networks around print distribution. In the two capitals, a preference was exhibited for imported works from Great Britain, a taste that savvy colonial printers appealed to in their own domestic publications. Some members of the print ascendency, under carefully chosen pseudonyms, forged an active relationship with the press. Through letters to the newspaper, they expressed their opinions and hoped to change the opinions of others. In so doing, they criticized or attempted to redirect behaviour within perceived British norms or traditions. The nature of this relationship with the newspaper will be further explored in this chapter and additional light will be shed on the ideals, actions and ambitions of this colonial print ascendency during the second half of the eighteenth century.

“PERHAPS there are those who may smile at the idea of the dignity of a Newspaper,” a correspondent using the pseudonym of Censor wrote to the Quebec Herald in 1790, “I cannot help, however, thinking that they who… exert all their powers for public entertainment, with DELICACY, fidelity, and judgement, deserve a considerable degree of respect.” Under “proper regulations,” the correspondent
continued, newspapers were “highly useful as well as amusing,” not only in the medium’s ability to chronicle events, but more importantly in providing readers of “thinking and enlightened minds” a “chain of causes and effects” in which events could be properly judged in context. Using a Shakespearean metaphor to gain the favour of William Moore, the Herald’s thespian printer, Censor argued that newspapers “ought to show ‘virtue her own image, vice her own feature:’ And not only to show them, but also bestow the reward of praise, and the punishment of just satire and indignation.”

Newspapers possessed a great power, he argued, in the “directing of public taste, and re-echoing the public opinion.” Concluding in almost blasphemous terms, Censor observed that print was a more powerful incentive or more effective deterrent in behaviour than “the united force of all moral (or I had almost said religious) considerations.”

A well-regulated newspaper was indeed an important social forum in both Québec City and Halifax. Censor likened the newspaper to the stage, since both forms could provide a mirror for society to view itself. It could direct public taste, reflect public opinion, and be a powerful moral incentive or deterrent in the shaping of behaviour. This chapter, the first of four case studies, will further explore the way in which the print ascendancy in the second half of the eighteenth century used newspapers as a form of interaction and a means to shape colonial society. Newspapers in both Halifax and Québec City were a new and dynamic venue of sociability that was embraced and nurtured by the colonial print ascendancy. Through the vehicle of the press, those who

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1 The paraphrase comes from Hamlet Act 3, Scene 2, Lines 15-24 where Hamlet is talking to a company of players: “Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance that you o’erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as ‘twere, the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.” (Emphasis added).

2 Quebec Herald 18 October 1790, 382.
formed the colonial print ascendancy engaged in this “directing of public taste,” a process that, in the words of one of the ascendancy’s own, held a moral suasion almost equaling that of religion. Print was used as means to regulate, direct or otherwise improve literate society. From the publishing of legal proclamations to the voicing of readers’ opinions, the boundaries of elite colonial society were established and maintained. Readers, following the example set by printers, used newspapers as a means to fashion the ideal colonial subject. As print was used by the colonial print ascendancy to bring order to the greater colonial society, its members also expected the print medium to be well-regulated. They publicly called upon printers for propriety in their productions and printers dutifully fostered the debate in their newspapers. Those who contributed to print also exhibited an awareness of these rules and endeavoured also to meet the expectations of fellow contributors and print readers. Thus, the newspaper became a powerful tool for the expression and formation of elite norms and behaviour based on ideals such as useful knowledge, civic improvement, and propriety in what was believed to be the prevailing British manner.

The power of print to inform and engage readers was recognised early by colonial authorities, who were some of the first and most visible patrons of the news presses in Halifax and Québec City. The *Halifax Gazette* and *Quebec Gazette* were the official record for legislative proceedings and their respective publishers were awarded the contract of King’s Printer. In this role, printers would publish public ordinances and

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3 The role of King’s Printer stayed, predominately, with the printers of these two newspapers until the beginning of the nineteenth century. In most instances, the mantle would change only upon the death of the printer, a notable exception in Nova Scotia was that of Anthony Henry who was temporarily removed from the position by colonial authorities in 1766 after a series of articles critical of the Stamp Act appeared in the *Halifax Gazette*. In Québec, the exception can be seen in the decade of the 1790s when a succession of printers became the King’s Printer after the young John Neilson took over the *Quebec Gazette*. The King’s Printers in Halifax between 1752 and 1801 were: John Bushell, Anthony Henry, Robert Fletcher,
proclamations in the newspaper\textsuperscript{4} and in broadsides for distribution.\textsuperscript{5} The duties of the King’s Printer also included the production of the numerous forms, licenses, and other print documents required to facilitate the daily operations of the colonial bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{6} From 1758 in Nova Scotia, and from 1791 in Québec, notices of elections for the assembly, of proposed legislation and of passed acts were also published in the colonial newspapers.\textsuperscript{7}

An example that illustrates the importance of the press to colonial officials can be seen in print’s rapid adoption as the only means of informing the public of government

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\textsuperscript{4} Some examples showing the variety of proclamations found include: Proclamation (Governor Francis Legge) against illegal land occupation and tree cutting, \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 22 February 1774, 3; Proclamation (Governor Francis Legge) for the proper observance of the Lord’s Day, \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 11 October 1774, Supplement, 2; Proclamation (Governor Francis Legge) “For a General Thanksgiving,” \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 11 October 1774, 3; Proclamation (Governor Francis Legge) of investigation to reports of improper accounting in Nova Scotia, \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 10 January 1775, 3; Proclamation (Governor Francis Legge) identifying Nova Scotia as an Asylum for loyalists, \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 24 October 1775, 3; Proclamation (Governor James Murray) on the publishing of ordinances, \textit{Quebec Gazette} 4 October 1764, 2; Proclamation (Governor Guy Carleton) on the selling of spirituous liquors, \textit{Quebec Gazette} 30 November 1775, 3; Proclamation (George III) “For suppressing rebellion and sedition,” \textit{Quebec Gazette} 8 August 1776, 1; Proclamation (Governor Dorchester): Encouraging the Import of Grains, \textit{Quebec Herald} 8 June 1789, 255.

\textsuperscript{5} In a review of the records from the printing office of the \textit{Quebec Gazette}, Patricia Fleming observes that between 1764 and 1800 approximately 3,100 imprints were produced. Of that only 11 per cent or ninety handbills and proclamations have been found. In regard to Nova Scotia, she writes, “Only some three dozen public notices from eighteenth-century Nova Scotia are known, including fourteen proclamations from the very first decade of Halifax printing, when a quick succession of governors attempted to regulate public conduct… the record is even thinner for early printing offices in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island….,” See: Patricia Lockhart Fleming, “Public Print,” \textit{History of the Book in Canada}, Volume I, 217.

\textsuperscript{6} ibid., 310-313, 315.

\textsuperscript{7} For examples of published election results see: \textit{Nova-Scotia Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser} (Halifax) 8 to 15 May 1770, 167; \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 16 August 1774, 3; \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 6 September 1774, 3; \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 25 May 1779, 3. For a selection of various published acts (from Westminster, in legislature, and in council) see Militia Act, \textit{Halifax Gazette} 5 January 1754, 1; Various acts “passed by the assembly,” \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 4 May 1773, 1; Act prohibiting unlicensed taverns, \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 31 January 1775, 3; Poor Relief Act, \textit{Quebec Herald} 20 April 1789, 197; “More Effectually to Prevent the Desertion of Seamen from the Merchants Service,” \textit{Quebec Herald} 3 May 1790, 189; “For the Better Preservation and Due Distribution of the Ancient French Records,” \textit{Quebec Herald} 3 May 1790, 189; “To Amend An Act or Ordinance for preventing accidents by fire passed in the seventeenth year of his Majesty's reign,” \textit{Quebec Herald} 17 May 1790, 205.
policy and proclamations. In British Québec City, while under martial law from 1759 to 1763, the publicising of government ordinances involved their public reading in the town square where theoretically all, regardless of their literacy, would be able to hear and understand the content of the proclamation. After the establishment of the *Quebec Gazette* in 1764, an ordinance was passed that added the newspaper to the list of traditional modes of publishing proclamations. In explaining this addition, Governor James Murray noted that “publishing in the *Quebec Gazette* has been found the most convenient and expeditious Method of conveying knowledge to the Publick, [for] all such Matters and Things [that] have been, or may be thought proper to communicate to them.”

This practice of publicizing government directives through both the spoken word and print lasted until 1777 when Governor Sir Guy Carlton declared that the printing of any ordinance in the *Quebec Gazette*, “shall be deemed a sufficient publication thereof.”

Thus, in the span of just over a decade, the official definition of “publication” changed from primarily an oral act to a printed one. Print, at least for government authorities in Québec, was becoming the ascendant and official means of communication in the colony.

In addition to state-sponsored messages and proclamations, the press also increasingly exhibited the productions of individual colonists intended to inform the public of issues, to change behaviour, or otherwise to regulate society. These efforts took several forms, ranging from specific censures and public apologies to general, philosophical musings on proper public behaviour or social interaction. The use of print specifically to censure wives who had left their spouses provides a clear illustration of the

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8 “An ORDINANCE, declaring what shall be deemed a due Publication of the Ordinances of the Province of Quebec,” 4 George III, 3 October 1764.
9 “An ORDINANCE Declaring what shall be deemed a due publication of the ordinances of the province,” 7 George III, c. 4, 4 March 1777.
regulating power of print. Under British common law, husbands were required to declare publicly the unlawful departure of a wife in order to be absolved of any subsequent debts that the eloped spouse might incur. Such announcements were relatively frequent in the newspapers of Nova Scotia and not unknown in Québec, even though the province was subject to the provisions of French civil law. A typical advertisement named the wife, furnished a list of grievances, and concluded with a plea not to make any financial dealings with the estranged woman. “WHEREAS HANNAH the Wife of me the Subscriber,” one such advertisement from Charles Wright read:

> hath for a long Time been very remise [sic] in her Duty towards myself and Children, by keeping bad Company, living in idleness and such like vicious Acts and Practices, as tend wholly to subvert all kind of Family Order and Government, and hath at last unjustly made away by pledging and selling, with a great part of my Household Furniture… hath eloped from my Bed and Board. This is therefore to give Notice to all and all manner of Persons, that they do not trust or give any Credit to the said HANNAH, on my Account… And I do give this further Notice to all good People with whom my said Wife may have pledged or bargained with for any of my said Household Furniture that if they will return the same to me in the like Condition as it was taken away, I will repay the Money…

George Greaves placed a similar announcement after he found out that his wife who had left him seven years earlier, “and in a scandalous Manner co-habitated with Strangers” had recently returned to Halifax. By placing such announcements, allegedly wronged husbands publicly absolved themselves from financial responsibility for their wives and publicly chastised them for breaking the marital contract. The press thus provided a

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10 Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 12 September 1775, 3.
11 Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 7 November 1775, 3.
12 Under English common law and the doctrine of coverture women could only enter into financial agreements in the name of their husbands. This practice of publishing the names and stories of wives who had abandoned their husbands was also commonplace in eighteenth-century Britain. See: Joanne Bailey, Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-1800, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 12-14.
means to solicit public support for what they believed were their wives’ violations of acceptable behaviour.13

Gossip, or town talk, was a hallmark of everyday life in colonial Halifax and Québec City. “It is extremely hard, gentlemen” an author under the pseudonym S.B. wrote to the Quebec Herald, “that in this small town, there should be persons who busy themselves in spreading evil reports of others, in my opinion a mark should be set upon them, that the world may at least know their enemy.”14 In 1773, a writer to the Nova-Scotia Gazette, noticing the prevalence of gossip in Halifax, asked the printer to re-publish an article penned by the English writer John Dryden that he had read in the Spectator. In prefacing the excerpt, the author took aim at those whom he believed to be the worse culprits of the offence:

PERUSING the other day the Spectator, I met with a Letter relative to CALUMNY and REPROACH so well adapted to the times and so very applicable to some in this little part of the Globe… as there are some of that younger part of them I fear (that they) spend too much time in places of diversion and amusement and fling away so much of their precious time (who know an hour once past can never be recalled,) in repeating what he may term the common chit chat of the place, and will turn a deaf ear to reason who tells them the injury they are doing some innocent person, and a character once lost is hardly ever to be regained ….15

The observations of an author, under the name A.V., reveal much about the growing division in opinion concerning the nature of refined sociability and entertainments that were increasingly seen as self-indulgent or offering meaningless diversion. It is clear that A.V. believed himself as being of a traditional and more superior upbringing. He reads

13 Other examples of such advertisements include: Mary Goget the wife of Pastry Chef Frederick Goget, Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 14 September 1779, 3; Marie MacKan, wife of David Mackan, Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 23 May 1780, 3; Margaret Martin the wife of Isaac Martin, Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 11 July 1780, 3; Sarah Ballintine wife of James Ballintine, Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 5 September 1780, 3; Susannah Jones wife of Owen Jones, Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 22 May 1787, 3.
14 Quebec Herald 1 April 1790, 151.
15 Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 2 March 1773, 3.
and, as he observed, is then worldly in “this little part of the Globe.” Print, and particularly that produced in Britain (such as the *Spectator*), informed his behaviour, not “common chit chat” which he argued defies reason and can only injure the innocent.

Indeed, print was often employed to regain the character believed to have been lost by gossip and town talk. In 1765, John Tong agreed to have a dictated apology published in the *Halifax Gazette* for rumours he had spread about two local merchants:

> Whereas I John Tong, have inconsiderately, and falsely reported and swore many things to the disadvantage of Messrs John Mergerum and William Howard South, Gentlemen, both of Halifax, who are willing to forgive me on this public recantation. Therefore I do hereby declare any charge reflecting upon both, or either of the said Gentlemen, to be entirely false and without foundation and I do sincerely ask their Pardons.16

As Tong was illiterate, he was unable to read his own apology. Nonetheless, in the minds of those whom he had slandered, the only effective means to extinguish his rumour and gossip was through the printed word that was believed to be longer lasting, more authoritative, and more rational than oral discourse.

When the perpetrator of a rumour could not be found, or could not effectively be dealt with in private, the newspaper was once again used as a means to publicly acknowledge rumour and communicate displeasure. In one instance, an anecdote submitted to Anthony Henry’s *Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* related the plight of an anonymous gentleman rumoured to have abused his servants and hid a not-too-veiled message to local gossips. “There is a Gentleman living in a Town in this Province, who hears the character, as Town-talk would have it,” it was reported in 1773, “of starving his Servants, his Prentices, and such young gentlemen as are put to board with him, &c. &c. &c…. ” It is clear that the author of the anecdote found that the

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16 *Halifax Gazette*, 17 October 1765, 2.
rumours were without basis and dispelled them summarily, observing “the sagacity of this Mr. Town-talk, is, that, the said Servants, Prentices and other things, there starving for want of Victuals, do grow tall and stout; very fast, have rosy Cheeks to countenance their deplorable tale, and are in much better health than when they came into the Gentleman’s house.” In a final parting shot the anecdote concluded that, in actual fact, “the said Gentleman and his Yard Dog, are the only two thin and lean creatures in the family. So good-bye to you Mr. Town-talk.”¹⁷ Such unattributed anecdotes are intentionally oblique, commenting on what would have been a well known situation and, thus, not requiring further explanation. Furthermore, this type of commentary stemmed primarily from the printer and, in this case, illustrates Anthony Henry’s frustration with unfounded gossip and his use of print to right any damage that the spoken word had created.

Printers were not the only ones to use the press to right what was seen as injustice created through gossip. Matthias King, in a less subtle approach than a printer’s anecdote, dispelled rumours of his allegedly inappropriate behaviour with two local women. “WHEREAS certain scandalous and malicious Reports have circulated tending to defame the characters of Miss P**** and Miss M**** of this Place, and said to have originated with me,” King observed in an advertisement he placed in the *Nova-Scotia Gazette* in 1774:

> This is to Certify the Public that I have already satisfied the Friends of these Ladies, that I never did directly or indirectly say or cause to be said any thing to the prejudice of the Persons above meant, and do further accuse the Author or Authors of the above Report to be guilty of a most infamous and scandalous Falsehood.¹⁸

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Newspapers were thus used as a rational and tangible means to deal with what might have been seen as the irrational, mercurial and potentially financially devastating sting of gossip and rumour. Through print, those who had been the victim of spoken accusations could both answer their detractors and attempt to influence the opinion of the reading public.

In a similar vein, members of the colonial print ascendancy appealed to local newspapers to show their discontent with society or alter societal behaviour. The press was seen in many quarters not only as a basic British right but as an important tool to remind subjects of their other rights and responsibilities — many of which, as one commentator to the *Quebec Herald* observed, exceeded the print medium. “Sir, however zealous you may be, however, well protected you may have been, in the liberty of your free press,” the correspondent *A Court Cringer* wrote in 1791: “I would have you to know, that the liberty of the subject, far, very far transcends that of the press.” The actions of those who had stood up against the provisions of the Militia Act, inspired this author’s letter. Their failure to muster and their outspoken behaviour led to their arrest, prompting *A Court Cringer* to observe: “the person who stands out in the defence of his own and the public rights, is one of the most darling sons of the English constitution, and ought to be fostered and supported by every well-wisher of British rights, a true independent spirit will always spurn at every attack on their hereditary rights….”

*A Court Cringer*, it should be underscored, was not an opponent of the press, but saw it as an ancillary liberty in which other British liberties could be communicated and preserved.

This belief that the press could be used both to promote British liberties and correct colonial deviations from the British norms was witnessed in both capitals.

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19 *Quebec Herald* 10 January 1791, 61.
Almost twenty-five years earlier in Halifax, a letter authored by Libertas to the printer of the *Halifax Gazette* observed: “It is the duty of every individual, of what class or denomination soever, to conduct himself on every occasion, wherein either public or private communities are concerned, so as to make himself a useful member of society; to consider the good of the whole rather than a Part; and to prefer the public good before any private interest….“20 Indeed, this sentiment expressing the importance of the public good over individual interest is found throughout the late-eighteenth-century prints in Halifax and Québec City.21 Similar strains can also be seen in the remonstrance that we witnessed earlier penned by *Civis Bonus Usque ad Mortem* against *Civis Canadiensis* over the nature of British liberty. “Every new and old Subject knows what he owes to himself, to His Sovereign, to His Representatives and to civil Society,” the correspondent reminded readers of the *Quebec Gazette* in 1765:

Our Duty to ourselves, is, to do nothing against Honor and Honesty, not to trouble that blessed Harmony which ought to subsist in civil Societies, to have a great deal of Circumspection and Reserve, and to do by others as we would be done by… we owe a great deal of Deference to Civil Society, the Members of which ought to live among themselves in Union and Peace, without any Altercations, to support and help one another mutually for the general Good, not to injure one another, and exactly to observe the Laws established by the Government under which we live.22

Appealing to concepts such as the nature of “civil society” and a Briton’s “duty,” exhibited in newspapers elsewhere in the British Atlantic, members of the colonial print ascendancy argued what they believed the ideal blue print for colonial society, a plan that

20 *Halifax Gazette* 28 November 1765, 1.
21 For examples see: “PHILO-AMERICAE to PHILO-BRITANIAE…,” *Nova Scotia Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser* (Halifax) 3 January 1769, 4; “A Card of Compassion… from a well-wisher to the Peace of Society and the Good of the Public,” *Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 30 May 1775, 3; “Ode for the New-Year,” *Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 26 December 1780, 3; “On the Liberty of the Subjects,” *Quebec Herald* 9 February 1789, 107; “We are happy to recount the unanimity and regularity which prevails in this City for the public good…,” *Quebec Herald* 12 April 1790, 165; “Address from the Chairman of the Agriculture Society,” *Quebec Herald* 19 April 1790, 176; *Quebec Herald* 23 December 1790, 37.
22 *Quebec Gazette* 17 October 1765, 4.
underscored the importance of civic duty and acts of public good undertaken in an appropriately British fashion.

It was in the spirit of improvement that contributors from the colonial print ascendancy moved from the diffusion of socio-political advice to the diffusion of useful knowledge through the medium of the press. As one correspondent to the *Quebec Herald* attested in 1790, the provision of useful knowledge, especially by furnishing examples or questions to the public, was a challenge that colonists were only too eager to meet: “In a Society of civilized people,” this correspondent using the pseudonym *A Friend*, observed:

> every good citizen is anxious of informing himself of any useful subject, of which he is unacquainted; or of informing others in proportion to the knowledge himself possesses, and in such manner as will best answer such laudable intent, by respectfully submitting to the society of which he is a member the Subject, or *Query* on which he wishes to be informed: — or by carefully avoiding ostentation and calumny in answering any one. It is in consequence of such harmony and mutual efforts only that each member participates of the good qualities of all the rest and that societies advance to the knowledge and adoption of what is proper, and reject what is improper.…

Print was seen not only as a way to regulate society, but also for society to judge for themselves proper behaviour. For members of the print ascendancy, such as *A Friend*, useful knowledge was paramount to the formation of a civilized people and good citizens.

As we have already seen in the analysis of printers as part of the colonial print ascendancy, useful knowledge had many branches and was actively encouraged. Readers, following the encouragement of printers, asked for the republishing of interesting and colonially-applicable articles that they had read elsewhere. By doing so, these readers demonstrated an awareness of a larger print culture and the value of the application of this print information to colonial situations. It is perhaps not surprising that such articles included a description of the nature of and treatment for hydrophobia.

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23 *Quebec Herald* 5 April 1790, 158.
(rabies),\textsuperscript{24} various methods of resuscitating drowned bodies,\textsuperscript{25} or tips on the latest and most profitable agricultural practices.\textsuperscript{26} Not only did readers use the newspapers, and later magazines, to ask that articles replete with useful knowledge be reprinted, they used the print medium to pose questions concerning science, history and particularly mathematics that encouraged fellow readers to respond.\textsuperscript{27} In justifying his submission of a mathematical problem to the \textit{Quebec Gazette} in 1788, the correspondent \textit{A Citizen} observed that: “The following question (in Vulgar Arithmetic) is offered to the Youth of Quebec, as a stimulus to their further study of that noble science of numbers, on which, so many branches of usefull and necessary Knowledge depend: And (perhaps) maybe not be unworthy the investigation of their Teachers….”\textsuperscript{28} As both the correspondents \textit{A Friend} and \textit{A Citizen} highlight, the public communication and discussion of useful knowledge was perceived by some in the colonial print ascendancy as the duty of all subjects in the capitals. Useful knowledge, it was believed, could be beneficial in the improvement of the individual and the general betterment of society and, for some, crucial in their attempts at elite formation in the capitals.

The knowledge of agricultural science, in particular, became an preoccupation amongst some readers in both Halifax and Québec City. Indeed, agricultural

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 25 April 1786, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 17 August 1773, 4; \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 28 March 1780, 1; “Description of a Machine for restoring Respiration to Persons Drowned, or Otherwise Suffocated [Invented by M. Roland, Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University of Paris],” \textit{Nova-Scotia Magazine} 3,3 (1790).
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Quebec Herald} 18 January 1790, 69; \textit{Quebec Herald} 18 March 1790, 135; \textit{Quebec Herald} 5 August 1790, 294; \textit{Nova-Scotia Magazine} 5,2 (1792): 90-92.
\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Quebec Gazette} 10 January 1788, 3.
improvement was a civic-minded pursuit that that enjoyed a wide popularity throughout
the late eighteenth-century British Atlantic. Henry Home, Lord Kames — a central
thinker and benefactor of the Scottish Enlightenment — remarked to the president of the
Royal Society in *The Gentleman Farmer being an attempt to improve Agriculture, by
subjecting it to the Test of Rational Principles* that, “agriculture justly claims to be the
chief of arts: it enjoys beside the signal pre-eminence, of combining deep philosophy
with useful practice. The members of your Society, cannot employ their talents more
profitably for their country, or more honourably for themselves, than in improving and
promoting an art, to which Britain is fundamentally indebted for the figure it makes all
the world over.”

The physician William Cullen became one of Scotland’s premier
researchers, lecturing and publishing in the field of agricultural science. Cullen believed
that his research not only improved society as a whole, but of course had very practical
applications in the development of medicines, or “Pharmaceutical Chemistry.”

Improvements to agriculture were viewed as an appropriately modern, scientific and
British means to shape colonial society.

In Quebec the seriousness of the undertaking of an agriculture society was
underscored by the involvement of Dr. John Mervin Nooth, the Edinburgh-trained
physician and member of London’s Royal Society, as the de facto scientist for the

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30 ibid., 152.

Society. Nooth, who had been elected a member of the Agriculture Society’s directors, summarized academic papers elsewhere for the information of the Governor and the Society\textsuperscript{32} and was regularly called upon to examine various seeds in order to assess their worthiness or to “pronounce whether they are still in a state of vegetation….”\textsuperscript{33} Nooth, who had published several scientific papers in England,\textsuperscript{34} was a contemporary of some of the greatest scientific minds of the eighteenth century, witnessed by his candidacy into the Royal Society that was supported by both Benjamin Franklin and the renowned Scottish physician William Hunter.\textsuperscript{35} When in London, Nooth participated regularly in the Royal Society meetings, even bringing fellow colonist and future Chief Justice of Québec William Smith as a guest on occasion.\textsuperscript{36} Nooth’s association with the Agriculture Society undoubtedly enhanced its credibility as a modern scientific organization.

Agriculture, one correspondent to the \textit{Quebec Herald} observed, “that most natural, the most useful, and among the most honourable…employments… is now thought a subject not unworthy the attention of Philosophers, — In Britain the genuine spirit of experimental agriculture begins to diffuse itself with a zeal and rapidity that promises soon to establish this science on the most solid foundations….”\textsuperscript{37} Similarly, a letter in the \textit{Nova-Scotia Magazine} penned by \textit{Columella} in 1790 argued: “sentiments of

\textsuperscript{32} BANQQ, P 450, Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, 1960-01-544/5, Minutes of Agricultural Society of Quebec, 1789-1792, 28 July 1789.
\textsuperscript{33} BANQQ, P 450, Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, 1960-01-544/5, Minutes of Agricultural Society of Quebec, 1789-1792, 21 December 1789.
\textsuperscript{34} His most notably paper being: John Mervin Nooth, “The Description of an Apparatus for Impregnating Water with Fixed Air; and of the Manner of Conducting That Process,” \textit{Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society} (1775).
\textsuperscript{35} The Royal Society, London, GB 117, Certificates of Election and Candidature, Nooth, John Mervin, EC/1773/34.
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Quebec Herald} 5 August 1790, 294.
the importance of agriculture, are confirmed by the judgment and practice of the wisest nations.” *Columella*, who was (or fashioned himself as) a farmer, offers yet another example of the social extent of the colonial print ascendancy seen in chapter two. “I am one of the few farmers,” he wrote, “who have joined theory and reading, to the practical part of this useful art.” Exhibiting his knowledge as a learned and well read farmer, *Columella* further argued that agricultural science was a hallmark of every great ancient empire concluding with that of the Britain. “In Great-Britain, the most unwearied exertions have been made, for a century to promote this useful art,” he observed, concluding that, “the result is such as might be naturally expected — the farmer is amply repaid for his labour; the nation is abundantly supplied with provision, which give a spring to commerce and manufactures; and great quantities of provisions, of every kind, are annually exported.”\(^38\) Whether *Columella* was truthful in his assertion of being a farmer is less important than the idea that he was trying to convey. For him, a farmer should be learned and attuned to print knowledge on agricultural improvements. In particular, as both *Columella* and the author of the letter to the *Quebec Herald* illustrate, this type of improvement was beneficial to society at large and inherently British, two prime reasons that it should be promoted in the colonies.

Although the term Enlightenment would not be used to describe the movement in the English language until decades later,\(^39\) by the end of the eighteenth century members of the colonial print ascendancy also appealed to the new “spirit” that had emerged in the transatlantic press in their efforts to form a British colonial elite. A letter to the editor of

\(^{38}\) “To the Secretary of the Society for promoting Agriculture in Nova-Scotia…,” *Nova-Scotia Magazine* 2.4 (1790): 243-244.

the *Nova-Scotia Magazine*, prefacing a submission of letters between William Penn and John Tillotson, requested, in 1790 that “as the spirit which at present prevails so universally in Europe, is establishing that Right of Mankind, Toleration in Religion, you will oblige some of your subscribers by inserting the following letters in your Magazine — They shew that even at the time when the majority were against it, there were some of the greatest men who dared to be its advocates.”\(^{40}\) Similar sentiments could also be found in Québec. In 1794, the Rev. Alexander Spark, Presbyterian minister and editor of the *Quebec Magazine*,\(^ {41}\) remarked that the public’s interest in the new monthly publication could be seen by the high number of subscribers. He also believed that his magazine was well suited for the age. “Upon the whole,” he observed, “we think that few periods of History have ever appeared more favourable or inviting to an undertaking of this kind than the present time — more fertile in subjects fit for the animadversion of the Statesman or Philosopher — or more productive of incidents worthy of being recorded. By the Spirit of Enquiry (which in no age was ever more awake) new discoveries in History and antiquities, and improvements in Philosophy, are expected almost every day.\(^ {42}\) This spirit, transmitted through print, was intended for members of the colonial print ascendancy. It was provided to shape or confirm readers’ opinions with the proper views on civic formation, the value of reason and tolerance, the importance of self and societal improvement, sociability, and charity. Writing to the *Quebec Herald* in

\(^{40}\) *Nova-Scotia Magazine* 3,5 (1790): 343-344.


\(^{42}\) *The Quebec Magazine* 1,1 (1792): i.
1790, *A Friend* observed the importance of this global spirit of improvement and how exactly the medium of the press could be employed to effect change. “In a Society of civilized people,” the correspondent observed, “every good citizen is anxious of informing himself of any useful subject, of which he is unacquainted; or of informing others in proportion to the knowledge himself possesses….” Submitting questions to the newspaper for the response of other readers, *A Friend* argued, was a particularly good means to effect change. However, no matter the method employed, the print medium was key. The missive concluded that, “it is in consequence of such harmony and mutual efforts only that each member participates of the good qualities of all the rest and that societies advance to the knowledge and adoption of what is proper, and reject what is improper.”

This new “spirit,” while also demonstrated in France and the German states, was framed in the newspapers of the capitals as being inherently British. Indeed, progress, civic good, moderation, tolerance in the predominately English-language discourse were all perceived as British characteristics. Many colonists, disregarding any nationalistic overtones, undoubtedly supported these ideals for their own merit. However, in the press of Halifax and Québec City this spirit was a British one, a spirit of improvement and inquiry with which readers could personally engage through the vehicle of print.

Print proved a powerful medium to inform colonists of the importance of sociability and perhaps compel them to engage in sociable activities. In 1768, Halifax bookseller and printer Robert Fletcher published an anonymous letter in his *Nova-Scotia Gazette* extolling the social and intellectual benefits of possessing good manners.

“Among the numerous advantages which knowledge has over Ignorance, and Refinement

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43 *A Friend*, *Quebec Herald* 5 April 1790, 158.
over Barbarity,” the Gazette’s readers were told, “the Rules of Politeness and Good Manners are justly considered as the greatest and commendable.” Good manners were essential generally, the letter continued, but of particular importance in the expression of ideas. “There is a grace, a beauty, and elegance,” the author went on, “in every generous action, which however difficultly expressed, is easily understood; however, variously displayed, is at the bottom still the same… Conversation is on all sides acknowledged the peculiar happiness of man, and is exceeding desirable or the immediate pleasure it conveys, and the strong cement with which it consolidates a mutual intercourse….”

The anonymous author (and the printer) believed that a proper comportment was required in society. It was a sociability of manners and good behaviour to which readers aspiring to the elite should adhere.

Twenty-five years later, readers of the Quebec Magazine were also treated to an article lauding the virtues of polite behaviour and sociability. “Sociableness is always better than unsociableness…,” the anonymous author argued. “To be sociable,” the excerpted essay continued, “implies the communicating of our thoughts, our sentiments, our feelings, and views to each other, to compare them together, to barter them, for others and to rectify and enable them by those of other men.”

The Quebec Magazine’s editor looked to predominately British works to find like sentiments to fill the pages of his monthly publication. In this case, the excerpt came from the Moral and Philosophical Estimates of the State and Faculties of Man, a popular and exhaustive four volume

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44 Nova-Scotia Gazette (Halifax) 28 July 1768, 4.
45 Quebec Magazine 3 (1793): 352-353.
46 Excerpted mid-chapter from “Estimate XXIII: The Value of Social Life,” in Anon., Moral and Philosophical Estimates of the State and Faculties of Man; and of the Nature and Sources of Human Happiness. A Series of Didactic Lectures, Volume III, (London: B. White and Son, 1789), 71-88. This work was later attributed to either Georg Joachim Zollikofer or William Tooke.
treatise from Britain described by the literary critic and early feminist Mary
Wollstonecraft⁴⁷ as having, “a manly plainness running through the style of the original,
which must excite respect….”⁴⁸ Printers and readers alike employed print to inform other
readers of the types of moral sentiments and social norms to which they should adhere.

Members of the colonial print ascendency used newspapers to announce
upcoming sociable events deemed suitable for the interests and tastes of others who
comprised print ascendency. From charitable amateur theatrical performances to coffee
house happenings, print was seen as a medium that would address directly the literate
colonial elite who believed in the importance of proper, genteel sociability. It was
through newspapers that colonists could be kept apprised of dance assemblies, or
unforeseen changes to the regular schedule of events. From the first year of its
publication, the Quebec Gazette would dutifully announce the arrival of the next public
ball (bal public)⁴⁹ and later in the century the perennially popular Quebec Assembly
(Assemblé de Québec). Print also informed colonists of the yearly general meetings
where managers would be elected from the body of subscribers for the next season.⁵⁰
The same situation could be found in Halifax amongst the city’s various newspapers.⁵¹
Similarly, larger colonial gatherings such as the agriculture, fire, and benevolent societies

⁴⁷ Wollstonecraft’s seminal work, A Vindication of the Rights of Women, would later appear in the Quebec
Magazine in an abridged version that had been translated into French. See: « Abrège de la defense des
droits des femmes, par MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT » Quebec Magazine 4 (1794): 83-85.
⁴⁸ Review of “Moral and Philosophical Estimates of the State of Man,” Analytical Review 7 (1790): 290,
cited in Jane Hodson, Language and Revolution in Burke, Wollstonecraft, Paine, and Godwin,
⁴⁹ “A Public Ball,” Quebec Gazette 27 December 1764, 3.
⁵⁰ For example, see: “Quebec Assembly,” Quebec Gazette 1 December 1791, 5.
⁵¹ For examples see: Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 1 June 1779, 3; Nova-Scotia
Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 11 January 1780, 3; Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle
(Halifax) 1 April 1788, 3; Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 6 January 1789, 3; Royal
Gazette (Halifax) 13 October 1795 3; Royal Gazette (Halifax) 22 December 1795, 3.
or the Quebec Library would have the times of meetings and notices of important elections, important proceedings, and decisions published in the press.\textsuperscript{52}

Often public sociable events were undertaken in the name of charity, an aspect that was prominently highlighted in newspapers. Charitable events frequently focussed upon those in misfortune from the unforeseen consequences of colonial life such as drowning, fire, or sickness. One such event was advertised in the \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} to take place on 3 November 1779 for “the Widow and the Family of the unfortunate Henry Baldwin, Master of the Hope schooner who was lately cast away.” Charitable events offered a way for those who considered themselves a part of, or were aspiring to, the colonial elite a public means to demonstrate their benevolence and refinement. In this case, the organisers of the charitable event solicited those members of the print ascendancy who saw themselves as part of the colonial elite and also advertised entertainments that would appeal to those perceived to have elevated tastes. In addition to performances of the \textit{Mirror of Nature} and the popular British theatrical touchstone \textit{The Lecture on Heads}, the evening also hosted a session on a “Method of teaching young Children to read and write both in Prose and Verse.” In addition to providing exemplars of entertainments enjoyed across the Atlantic, the event offered a venue (albeit promoted as a method for teaching children) for the adults in attendance to become more culturally literate and to better appreciate the works of such quintessentially British authors as “Shakespear, Pope and Addison.”\textsuperscript{53}

Print was also employed to reassure readers that certain types of colonial sociability were appropriately civil in the British tradition. Civil society, as we have seen

\textsuperscript{52} For more see Chapter 6, The Case of Clubs and Societies.
\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 2 November 1779, 3.
one writer to the *Quebec Gazette* argue, was marked by the ability for colonists to live in “Union and Peace, without any Altercations, to support and help one another mutually for the general good;” in short, to live in “beautiful Harmony.” Sociability, when conducted properly, it was believed, also reinforced these ideals, especially when conducted in larger public manifestations. Coffee houses in Halifax and Québec were promoted as centres of “genteel” entertainment. Theatrical performances staged, “in aid of Billiards, Dancing, Cards, & Song, / To shorten, Winter Evenings, cold and long…” were described in the public prints as being conducted with “propriety” for “respectable” audiences. Public dances were lauded for their “decorum,” “polite Harmony,” and “agreeable entertainment.” The printer of the *Quebec Gazette*, commenting on the anniversary meeting of the Select Society in Montréal — a gathering of the “principal Gentlemen of the Military, Town and Environs” — elucidated in no uncertain terms the value of this form of sociability over other forms of association. “The whole was conducted with Elegance, Decorum and Propriety,” it observed, “and reflects Honor on a set of Gentlemen who dar’d thus publickly resist the present rapid Torrent of Gaming, and devote a Portion of their Leisure to so rational and useful an Amusement.”

Such observations not only reassured the public of the propriety of larger gatherings, but

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54 *Quebec Gazette* 17 October 1765, 4.
55 *Nova-Scotia Chronicle* (Halifax) 24 October 1769, 343. Also see Chapter 6, The Case of Clubs and Societies.
56 Prologue to “Acadius, or Love in a Calm,” *Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 8 February 1774, 3.
59 *Quebec Herald* 29 December 1788, 54.
60 *Quebec Herald* 12 January 1789, 71.
61 *Quebec Herald* 26 October 1789, 421.
62 *Quebec Gazette* 20 April 1775, 3.
also instilled the importance of well regulated sociability as an integral part of civil society and proper behaviour.

Using the press, some members of the colonial print ascendency would occasionally rebuke other members who were perceived as being excessive or reckless in their sociability. In so doing, they drew cultural battle lines regarding the proper behaviour and comportment of the colonial elite. Printers, for example, would occasionally publish collections of maxims designed to shape sociable behaviour. Such was the case of the “Thoughts on Several Subjects” published by Anthony Henry in 1774 that encouraged readers to apply reason in the correction of behaviour, observing that, “it is easy to keep from gaming, drunkenness, or any other fashionable vice. You have only to lay down a firm resolution, and fix in your mind a steady aversion against them. When your humour is known, no-body will trouble you.” In addition to the publishing of such moral maxims by printers, individual readers also contributed their opinion on such matters. Sometimes these contributions took the form of a subtle criticism couched in verse, as was the case of the anonymous card that appeared in the *Nova-Scotia Gazette* in 1773, addressed to “the POLITE CIRCLE in HALIFAX.” “FORBEAR my friends divisions to foment,” the short poem began:

> Be yours the joys of Peace, and Sweet content.  
> Should any one prefer the noise of these,  
> Let such confine it, to domestic life:  
> Be great at home, and tyrannize at will,  
> Whilst we enjoy the dance, and play Quadrille.  
> I wish the Man that would these hopes prevent  
> May see his error, and in time repent:  
> Then mix again, among the social few  
> That always have true happiness in view.”

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63 “Thoughts on Several Subjects,” *Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 1 February 1774, 4.
64 *Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 6 April 1773, 4.
Other contributions were more direct, such as the poem that appeared the following month in the *Nova-Scotia Gazette*. Entitled “An Address to the Generation of Wine-Bibbers” and penned under the pseudonym *Temperatus*, again attacked a certain element of Halifax society “who’s Reason’s laws transgress” through an excess of drink. Fearing that his intended audience may not fully appreciate his message, *Temperatus* concluded with the rousing: “Awake! Awake to virtue then / And shew yourselves not BEASTS, — but MEN.”\(^{65}\) It should be underscored that these rebukes were not directed to the alcoholism of the illiterate tavern patron, but rather from one literate member of the print ascendancy to another.

Such was also the case of the correspondent *Censor* who wrote to the *Quebec Herald* in 1790 that the overindulgence and lassitude exhibited by certain individuals could be potentially devastating to the entire colony. “As a citizen and friend to the inhabitants of this town,” he wrote: “I cannot help making a few remarks concerning the luxury, and dissipation, which reigns throughout among all classes and degrees of the people, but more particularly among the bon-ton, and those who are more immediately connected with the government.” While he believed that many inhabitants of Québec City engaged in questionable forms of sociability, *Censor* highlighted the activities of the bureaucrats and government officers who possessed “a very mistaken idea that the pleasures and enjoyments of society are only to be found in large companies, where everyone vies with the other who shall exceed in the grandeur of the feast, and the brilliancy of their dress.” Attesting to both his education and his authority on such

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matters, *Censor* then compared the situation in Québec City to that of ancient Rome and Greece. “It is an unfortunate circumstance that such a taste should prevail in an infant colony like this,” he opined, as “it has been the ruin of great empires, and if not speedily checked will have as bad an effect in this province. The Greeks and Romans formerly masters of the world, enervated by luxury were overcome and conquered by a less effeminate people, innured to toil and labour.” Censor did not elaborate further on whom he felt were the comparable “effeminate,” labouring people that threatened society in Québec City. Perhaps, he referred to the *canadiens* who outnumbered the British in the province and were perceived by some as peasant-like, hard working, and uneducated. On the other hand, perhaps he referred to the newly arrived American loyalists who were perceived as ambitious, hardworking and desirous of the limited patronage positions that existed in government. Regardless of the nature of the perceived threat, Censor’s use of the press to warn those who enjoyed a privileged life to neither be overindulgent, nor lazy is noteworthy.

Who was *Censor*? Was he one of the government class that he criticized? Was he part of this undefined group marked by “toil and labour” that threatened those who considered themselves of the colonial elite? This type of criticism found in newspapers further illustrates the diversity of the colonial print ascendancy and the dynamism that existed in their discourse. Print permitted a much greater public to witness and comment upon the activities of others. Protected under pseudonyms, colleagues or social equals could criticise their peers in the press. Likewise, the older generation of literate colonists could criticise the behaviour of the newer generation. In other cases, the press afforded

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66 *Censor*, *Quebec Herald* 8 March 1790, 126.
some members of the colonial print ascendancy a means to both be apprised of and comment upon the actions of others outside of their direct professional or social experience.

As members of the colonial print ascendancy perceived a tangible power of the press to influence opinion and behaviour, they also believed it necessary to safeguard the integrity and regulation of this influential medium. Printers were expected to conduct their productions and contributors were equally expected to follow the rules of polite society in the expression of fair and thoughtful opinion. In Halifax and Québec City, these rules of print politesse applied can be traced back to the earliest days of the press in Québec City and Halifax. “A well regulated Printing Office,” the prospectus for the Quebec Gazette read in 1764, “has always been considered a publick benefit,” and “No Place of Note in the English dominions” has suffered from its presence. Part of the inherent “Englishness” or “Britishness” of the press was a belief that perceived British norms of utility and propriety were properly exercised. “SIR, I SAW your Gazette of Monday last with great Satisfaction,” the correspondent Y.Z. wrote to the printer of the nascent Halifax Gazette in 1752, “not only as it was the first that ever was publish’d in this Province, but as I think the Letter very good, and the News Paragraphs judiciously chosen.” However, Y.Z. wrote not only to congratulate the printer, but to remind him of his obligations to the public:

As I am a Lover of Liberty, I hope that the Press will always maintain it; but as I would not have that same Liberty degenerate into Licentiousness, nor that which is introduced for the Good of the Province be made an instrument to raise useless Broils and Disputes… I think every Thing that tends to promote Virtue and

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67 University of Toronto, Fisher Library, Canadian Pamphlets and Broadsides Collection, brc f 0072, “Quebeck : to the public = au public,” Broadside printed in the printing office of William Dunlap 1763.
Industry, ought to be encouraged, as well as Papers that treat of Humour and Wit, as long as they keep within the Bounds of Decency and Morality.  

John Bushell, printer of the *Halifax Gazette*, not only published *Y.Z.*’s letter, but also wrote of his support for his principles, letting it stand as the *de facto* editorial policy for the paper: “We are highly oblige’d to our Correspondent for the foregoing Cautions and Advice; and as they entirely agree with our Sentiments and settled Purposes, hope they will be taken proper Notice of, not only by us, but also such as incline to correspond with us for the future.”

Propriety and liberty were thus enshrined early on as guiding principles of the colonial press and were maintained by successive printers in both Halifax and Québec City. “BURNT be the piece, forget the author’s name,” a poem excerpted in the *Halifax Gazette* in 1765 suggested, “that dares to hurt a good man’s honest fame / Alarms the virtuous breast with causeless fear, / ‘Or draws from innocence a single tear….” Anthony Henry was polite, yet firm, in his rejection of material for his *Nova-Scotia Gazette*. “The PRINTER would be glad to oblige his Correspondent who signs himself Q___ F___s by publishing his DREAM, but the Narrative is too long, uninteresting and extremely incorrect.” In another case he observed: “As the piece signed Wm. Lovegrove contains reflections on respectable Characters, the Printer cannot be justified in inserting it. — The Press is free for all decent Publications.”

Almost thirty years later, William Moore — the thespian-turned-publisher — also underscored the importance of propriety observing in an editorial that, “he will endeavour

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68 *Halifax Gazette* 30 March 1752, 1.
69 ibid.
70 *Halifax Gazette* 26 December 1765, 4.
to render his paper a source of perpetual information, instruction, and entertainment, uncontaminated with scandal, undebased by ribbaldry, and free from virulence.” 73

Indeed, he exhibited an atypical flamboyance in printing rejections to submissions to his Quebec Herald. In his weekly “To Correspondents” column, he would update readers upon the status of their contributions, submitting the worst to the “ordeal of the stove” to see if such pieces could be spared being “committed to the flames.” 74 Among the judgements doled out by Moore he deemed the author Careless, “not worth our care, nor do we think the public would care what becomes of him.” 75 Another submission entitled “Advice to Married Ladies” was found not only to be inappropriate for the public, but also unoriginal, prompting the printer to write that it, “favours too much of smut, we imagine the copier, took it from the Rambler’s Magazine. — Our sincere wish is not to offend the eye or ear of modesty.” 76 On one particularly bad week, Moore offered three stinging admonishments in a row for “HISING HOT, [whom] we think luke warm, TO SHOOT AT FOLLY, [who] seems to have blunt arrows and a weak bow, [and to] THE FLIGHT, [who] seems to soar beyond the bounds of reason.” 77 Although tongue-in-cheek in its delivery, Moore’s editorial policy showed a sophisticated understanding of his readers and their expectations of the type of content the press should convey.

Printers argued that part of that “well regulated” tradition of printing in the “English dominions” was to ensure that a balance was maintained. As we saw in the first chapter, printers in Halifax and Québec City were vocal in their declarations of impartiality. Other members of the colonial print ascendancy held the printers to their

73 Quebec Herald 23 November 1789, 4.
74 Quebec Herald 12 January 1789, 71.
75 Quebec Herald 15 June 1789, 266.
76 Quebec Herald 22 March 1790, 144.
77 Quebec Herald 9 March 1789, 145.
word and would react if the printer was seen as providing biased, or unbalanced intelligence. In 1775, a letter penned under the name of Castigator Falsi clearly elucidated the normally tacit relationship between the press and the colonial reader in Halifax. Upset with what he saw as biased reports on the proceedings of the Grand Continental Congress in Philadelphia, he reminded the printer of the Nova-Scotia Gazette that “BETWEEN you, as publisher of a News-paper, on the one part, and your readers on the other, there exists a virtual contract.” As part of this unwritten, yet mutually understood contract, the newspaper as “the tool of no party” had to remain unbiased and truthful. In Britain, the author continued, “you would be humbly called the servant of the public, in free America you may be stiled its trustee of intelligence. In this character, you are bound, to procure every possible information, to insert whatever comes to your hand, true, or probable, for, or against, any party, but to exclude, whatever bears ex facie the stamp of falsehood.”

Indeed, the press was taken very seriously in the two capitals as a means to diffuse knowledge useful in informing and directing the reading public and, as such, it had to live up to the highest standards of that discerning public. As an article “To the Public” in the Halifax Gazette observed in 1765, newspapers were initially simple publications intended merely to amuse; however, “the People are since grown more curious and more capable of judging….” William Moore would frequently acknowledge in the Quebec Herald what he believed his responsibilities were as printer. In an account of the opening of a new theatre in Québec in 1789, for example, he took great pains to describe the occurrences because, “should the Printer omit observation, his

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79 Halifax Gazette 14 November 1765, 4.
Subscribers might accuse him of breach of promise, ‘to observe public transactions.’

Moore’s fears of public admonishment were not unfounded, as Halifax printer Anthony Henry had discovered in 1780. “I must confess that I was much aggravated by the great Neglect you have shewn for some weeks past, to give any Account of the following very interesting Events, which have been publicly known in this Town — And which I think must have come to your knowledge…,” wrote a correspondent under the name A FRIEND to Loyalty and Truth. The author then offered Henry a copy of an article from his own collection of London newspapers for publication that detailed the French navy engaging British forces in the West Indies. Although the author’s comments sounded very much like a reproach, he claimed to: “avoid reproaching you at this Time for not collecting these matters, expecting you will behave with more Assiduity and Faithfullness in future…”

Readers in Halifax and Quebec City not only possessed a nuanced understanding of the press, they also voiced this understanding in print. The writings of A Commis, a frequent correspondent to the Quebec Herald, particularly illustrate this advanced comprehension of the way the press was believed to foster debate and public opinion. In March of 1790, A Commis found himself at the centre of a debate over a letter he had written supporting the development of colonial factories in the vein of the existing

80 Quebec Herald 9 February 1789, 111. Another example of Moore’s commitment to public expectations can be seen in a special supplement he printed concerning intelligence surrounding the French Revolution. He prefaced the supplement by writing: “As the Printer thinks himself pledged to the public to furnish the latest intelligence that can be acquired, he likewise thinks it is duty to thank his friends for their aid in furnishing materials to gratify the public at large with the present important state of France…. Postscript to the Quebec Herald 28 September 1789, 391-392.
82 ibid.
83 On 25 January 1790, A Commis suggested in the Quebec Herald several measures to eliminate debt by asking the city’s merchants to stop advancing credit in certain cases. This appears to be the first letter under this particular pseudonym. On 18 March, A Commis wrote again, lamenting how many bachelors there were in the city and the challenges that they faced in finding a wife.
Forges de Saint-Maurice. “The only Manufactory of consequence,” he observed, “is that of stoves, bar iron, &c. near Three-Rivers, and which the present proprietors…deserve the greatest encouragement, as an example to others who may wish to commence Manufactories …which must prove a great benefit to the Province….“84 A Commis’s plea for colonial industrialisation, however, did not resonate with all readers. Some felt compelled to respond critically by emphasizing the perceived benefits of the existing mercantilist system with Britain and its proposed expansion to the factories of the United States of America.85 Others questioned A Commis’ ability as a mere clerk to comment on such issues and further ridiculed him as a bachelor with as poor a prospect of becoming a merchant as finding a wife.86 A Commis did not answer the insults of his detractors in his response. Instead he outlined his philosophy on the nature of public opinion and attacked what he believed was the irrational style of his critics. “When a person ventures to advance an opinion publicly, on any political question,” he calmly wrote: “I look upon him as under the obligation of supporting it, by sound reasoning and applicable remarks…and of refuting…the arguments of all…against him; especially if his opinion be founded on mature deliberation, and a conviction that he is in the right.” Confident in his own abilities, however, A Commis reserved the greatest respect for readers and “the criticism of the public, who have an undoubted right to judge and determine the fate of every production of this kind….“87 Tellingly, what was more worrisome than any particular insult was the idea that his writing, and the formative processes behind it, would not withstand public scrutiny.

84 Quebec Herald 25 March 1790, 141.
85 See letters by Mercator and Scriba, Quebec Herald 1 April 1790, 150-151.
86 ibid., 29 March 1790, 149-150 and 12 April 1790, 167.
87 ibid., 19 April 1790, 174-175.
The newspaper was a versatile and valued medium of communication in the British Atlantic during the second half of the eighteenth century. After its mid-century introduction in Halifax and Québec City, it quickly became an important herald of news, method of social regulation and forum of elite sociability. Printers, readers, and contributors forming a colonial print ascendancy in the two capitals exhibited a sophisticated understanding of the newspaper and its importance in the expression of opinion. For the members of this informal community the boundaries between the realms of the print imagination and the physical world were blurred. That is to say, that print information and opinion was perceived to inform, or even change, the everyday lives of readers. Print was used to convey official edits, dispel rumour, and advise the public of perceived wrongdoing and excesses. Members in the colonial print ascendancy turned particularly to newspapers to communicate traditional British norms or the latest fashions including such concepts — characteristic of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment-era — as useful knowledge, tolerance, and the use of reason in public.

Because of this belief in the power of print, readers would equally attempt to regulate or direct the tenor of the print word itself. Printers and correspondents alike, in presenting opinion for publication, drew upon a well of literary tropes and traditions deemed suitable for consumption in a British colony. In doing so, they used newspapers to shape the bounds of colonial society and the nature of their place in that society. As we have seen, some members of the colonial print ascendancy specifically turned to the newspaper as a method to advance their goals of elite formation in Halifax and Québec City. In the following chapters, we shall explore this conscious employment of print to promote and gain a wider public acceptance for more elite forms of sociability such as
the theatre, coffee houses, clubs and subscription societies. This exploration will reveal further tensions and divisions amongst the colonial print ascendancy. These anxieties, as we shall see, only served to strengthen the collective and un faltering support for the press as a vehicle to engage the mind and even change the shape of colonial society.
Chapter 5: The Case of Theatre

Theatre was a welcome diversion for William Smith, the former Chief Justice of New York. As often as twice a week, he would take in a play in London’s famed theatre district.¹ Plays offered respite from the daily and often frustrating routine of inquiring over loyalist compensation, attending government functions and awaiting a rumoured new position as Chief Justice of Québec. On 1 April 1784, Smith visited London’s Drury Lane playhouse for the first time. This particular evening he was suitably impressed with both the production of Douglas and of the theatre: “It is not so large as Covent Garden but every way else the superior Play House: better scenery, better actors.” His highest praise, however, was reserved for a woman he referred to as the “imitable” Mrs. Siddons.² By the mid-1780s, the talented Sarah Siddons had obtained a near-cult-like status, beguiling London society, including Smith. Siddon’s performance in Jane Shore, it was widely reported, once forced “two ladies among the spectators fall into hysteries, and one of them had to be carried out, laughing convulsively.”³ Smith would return to Drury Lane often to see several other plays — including Jane Shore on two further occasions — and, regardless of the quality of the other performers, would never fail to

¹ In his diaries, Smith mentions attending the theatre no less than 20 times in his two years residence in London. He states a preference for the Covent Garden theatre in general and is quite critical of the Drury Lane theatre. Nonetheless, it is Drury Lane that he frequents most often having a particularly fondness for the “imitable” Mrs. Siddons. See: L.F.S. Upton, ed., The Diary and Selected Papers of Chief Justice William Smith, 1784-1793, Volume I, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1963), 25, 27, 30, 42, 54, 82-83, 154, 158, 170-171, 202, 205, 207, 211, 212, 221, 225, 287 and L.F.S. Upton, ed., The Diary and Selected Papers of Chief Justice William Smith, 1784-1793, Volume II, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1965), 31, 51,58, 78, 90, 126.
² “Mrs. Siddons is imitable… In grief she excels all Description, and frequently stole a tear from me unawares.” Upton, ed., The Diary and Selected Papers of Chief Justice William Smith, Volume I, 42.
write about Siddons with the highest regard. For him, theatre was more than a mere amusement. Writing to his wife still living in New York City, Smith observed that plays furnished “subjects for Conversation, and to be wholly ignorant of them, is to be a Miser, or ill bred.” Smith even took his son, also living in London, to the theatre in the belief that it would give him valuable lessons in elocution and oratory. When Smith received the long-awaited appointment as the Chief Justice of Québec in 1787, he moved to a colonial society that was also captivated by the sociability, spectacle and even utility of theatre. Although far from London, residents of Québec City not only attended theatrical performances, but read and debated the value of theatre in print.

In the previous chapter we saw that a colonial print ascendancy perceived newspapers as an important form of colonial sociability and a means to shape colonial society. Theatre in British Halifax and Québec City during the late eighteenth century can be seen in similar terms. Plays gave voice to the pride, fears, humour and tears of the audience. The productions expressed new trends, reinforced old clichés and criticised society, all couched in familiar and widely-held cultural references. Although drama can be seen as a spoken form of interaction in Halifax and Québec City, its primary audience

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4 On Monday, 25 October 1784, Smith remarks: “I heard Mrs. Siddons in Jane Shore last Saturday at Drury Lane. She is inimitable in her Pronunciation & Action. I saw her from the 2nd Seat in the Pitt from the Orchestra under the best Advantages. She has a good Face & tolerable Figure.” He again saw “Mrs. Siddons in Jane Shore” on 8 February 1786. He also watched her perform in the Grecian Daughter twice, noting after the first performance: “The Character of Euphrasia is amiable & the wonderful Talents of Mrs. Siddons has elevated it so much that I never so much admired her as in this Play which acts better than it reads by the Address of its Apparatus to the Eye. It is not possible to have an Idea of this Woman’s Abilities. She feels & exhibits beyond the Conception of the Writer certainly beyond his Power of expressing by mere Language to any Mind but her’s. She has the Advantage of Audiences who shew every mark of Approbation to her Pride. Applause checked by the Cry of Silence that not a word may be lost.” See: Upton, ed., *The Diary and Selected Papers* ..., Volume I, 154; Upton, ed., *The Diary and Selected Papers of Chief Justice William Smith, 1784-1793*, Volume II, 51; and Upton, ed., *The Diary and Selected Papers* ..., Volume I, 207.


and critics were members of the colonial print ascendancy. For them the debate over the
virtue and vices of theatre, or the expression of the messages plays conveyed, could not
be kept to the confines of polite oral conversation. Furthermore, members of the colonial
print ascendancy in the two capitals used print to diffuse beyond the theatre walls
messages expressed in plays and prologues. These messages uniformly rang with
dramatic passion and patriotism, extolling the civilizing benefits of British governance,
literature and science. The colonial print ascendancy, not afraid of voicing divergent
opinions, were nonetheless unified in their use of the press to shape the place for theatre
in a British colony.

Print is central to the study of theatre during the second half of the eighteenth
century in Halifax and Québec City. Not only does it record the opinions of the print
ascendancy, it is one of the only remaining primary sources that accurately detail the
types, frequency and attendance of theatrical productions. From advertisements and
reports found in the press (starting in the 1760s and continuing to the end of the century)
it is clear that professional theatre and amateur productions were popular in the colonial
capitals (see appendix v). In both capitals, these advertisements followed a similar
format. The public would often be told of the staging of two works with various skits,
songs, and dramatic interludes. The advertisements would also list the names of the
players, the time of the performance, its cost, and any specific seating instructions.
Similar to the print culture and, as we will later see, club customs of Halifax and Québec
City, the roots of an eighteenth-century theatre scene can be seen as being laid before the
American Revolution, and later flourishing with the arrival of loyalist playwrights, poets,
and audiences.
Colonial theatre offered a welcome entertainment and a forum for public interaction throughout the year and particularly in the winter season. A prologue recited in a Halifax theatre in 1773 and then printed in the newspaper lamented: “The summer’s suns, no more our spirits cheer, / And dreary winter desolates the year.” Underscoring the gravity of the situation, the narrator continued that “inclement skies prevent sports by day, / And tedious nights are spent in cards and tea.” Yet, as the prologue concluded, it was quite clear that the cure for this dreary situation could be found in the theatre: “since such the case, with ardour we engage / To furnish entertainment from the Stage. / Our slipper’d heroes we once more enrol, / To combat all the passions fowl….”

Through much of this period, theatre took place in the few public spaces that existed in both Halifax and Québec City. Plays were staged in back rooms or upper storeys of taverns and coffee houses until the construction of dedicated theatre buildings. In Halifax, for example, a public house known as the Pontac was used as the primary theatre space until the building of the Grand Theatre by the British garrison in 1789. A similar situation existed in Québec City until the 1780s and 1790s when several purpose-built performance spaces opened including the Thespian Theatre, the Patagonian Theatre, and the converted former coffee house of Thomas Ferguson. As the

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7 The length of the theatre season varied depending on the colony. In late-1780 Nova Scotia, the season followed a similar Fall-Winter pattern as was experienced in London. [See Reginald W. Jeffery, ed., Dyott’s Diary, 1781-1845: A Selection from the Journal of William Dyott, Sometime General in the British Army and Aide-de-Camp to His Majesty King George III, Volume I, (London: Archibald, Constable and Company Ltd., 1907), 62]. From an analysis of playbills, in Quebec, it appears that the season spanned throughout the year. [See “#499. Quebec Theatre [Play Bills], 1786” and “#540. Quebec Theatre [Play Bill], 1787,” in Marie Tremaine, A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints, 1751-1800, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952), 231, 251.]

8 Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 21 December 1773, 3.


11 Quebec Herald 2 February 1789, 103.
eighteenth century unfolded, theatrical performances, performers and performance spaces increased in Halifax and Québec City.

Print, instrumental in expanding the purview of theatre, also chronicled the fundamental details and growth of the art form. Advertisements found in the newspapers of the two capitals reveal what plays were performed, where they took place, and the costs that patrons incurred for such entertainments. For example, when the American Company of Comedians first performed in Halifax in 1768, five shillings were charged for box seating, three shillings for the pit and one shilling six pence for general admission in the gallery. By the 1780s, the price of admission in Halifax had dropped slightly, averaging around a dollar, or three shillings per seat. In 1789, the newly constructed theatres in both Halifax and Québec City that had both main floors and galleries saw the introduction of a graduated admission scheme in Québec City and a reintroduction of one in Halifax. In Halifax, the “first pit” seats cost three shillings, while the “second pit” seats were a slightly more reasonable two shillings. Québec City theatres advertised “Front Seats half a dollar, gallery a quarter of a dollar.”

Admission fees often equalled the daily pay of the average colonial labourer. However, the relatively high prices did not necessarily dissuade prospective theatre patrons some of whom were quick to take advantage of any means that would reduce the admission cost. One particular scheme employed by less scrupulous theatre goers involved making a habit of paying for cheaper tickets and then advancing to the more

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12 *Nova-Scotia Gazette* (Halifax) 25 August 1768, 3.
15 These prices were listed for the 9 April 1790 for the benefit performance of the comedy *The Hypocrite* and the farce the *Rival Candidates*, see: *Quebec Herald* 29 March 1790, 146.
premium seating. This practice led to public reproaches in the press. “It having been reported to the Manager’s that many persons who only purchase tickets for the Back Seats, have made practice of going into the front, and likewise behaving in an unbecoming manner,” an advertisement for the April 9th performance of the comedy The Hypocrite warned:

proper persons will be stationed in different parts of the house, to prevent any thing of the kind in future: — and notwithstanding the variety of performances, no time will be delayed between each, in order that the whole may be finished at an early hour.16

Such behaviour was also not unknown in Halifax, as a print remonstrance with theatregoers in the Weekly Chronicle attests in 1795:

The MANAGERS of the THEATRE having been informed that several patrons have been let into the Pitts by paying money at the doors, contrary to their positive orders, which they issued to prevent the Pits being overcrowded, will be much obliged to any one who has gained admission by that method to prevent such irregularities in future.17

The overcrowding by dishonest ticket holders recorded in newspapers offers another example of the popularity of the theatre in Halifax and Québec City. It also further demonstrates the use of print to regulate and control the literate and sometimes unruly patrons and divisions within the print ascendancy.

For the money spent on admission, it appears that patrons were treated to relatively lavish productions of well-known British plays. During the 1780s in Québec City over £69 was spent by local players on newspaper advertisements for productions and the printing of playbills to the Quebec Gazette printing office.18 In 1796, one Halifax

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16 Quebec Herald 29 March 1790, 146.
17 Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 17 January 1795, 3
18 This number is calculated using the “Brown/Neilson Shop Records” compiled from several disparate sources by Fleming and Alston for the years 1780-1788. £69 is a conservative estimate for the decade as thespian William Moore started his Quebec Herald print shop in 1788 and would have undertaken several
production spent over £60 on costumes and sets. A few years earlier, diarist William Dyott and treasurer of the new Grand Theatre in Halifax, reported earnings of £400 in the first year which was almost entirely “expended on the house.” Four hundred pounds was no small sum in Dyott’s era, being four times the annual salary of the Speaker of the House, or of the Solicitor General. The amount also represented the entire yearly operating budget of the newly opened Academy in nearby Windsor, Nova Scotia. Such sums spent on theatrical productions illuminate the great importance that the theatre held to patrons, including members of the colonial print ascendancy, as a form of acceptable sociability in the capitals.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, theatre became an increasingly prominent topic in the newspapers of Halifax and Québec City. Domestically-produced print advertised the arrival of new shows and reviews of past productions. Local booksellers, for example, advertised plays for sale with their lists of new publications and sometimes took out separate advertisements for particularly popular theatrical works.

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19 Bains, “Painted Scenery and Decorations in Canadian Theatres,” 111.

20 Jeffery, ed., Dyott’s Diary, 62.

21 The Minutes of the Windsor Academy Board of Governors (later King’s College University) show: “1787 22d: Novr…Resolved, that a Sum not exceeding £400 be granted for the Purpose of hiring a proper House in the Neighbourhood of Windsor, for an Academy, and also for paying the Salary of the President and Professor for one Year.” University of King’s College Archives, 1987-12, Board of Governors, “No. 1 Bd. of Governors 1787-1814, 5. The only civil servants paid more than the Solicitor General and the Speaker of the House was the treasurer, the supreme court justices and the Lieutenant-Governor. The salaries are related in: “An Act for applying certain Monies therein mentioned for the Services of the Year One thousand Seven hundred Eighty-nine, and for appropriating the Supplies Granted in this Session of General Assembly, and for funding the Debt of the Province,” 26 George III. c. 5, The temporary acts of the general assemblies of His Majesty's province of Nova Scotia, 1789, 315.

22 For examples see: “Plays and Farces,” in an advertisement by Robert Fletcher, bookseller, Nova-Scotia Gazette (Halifax) 20 October 1768, 4; “To-morrow Morning will be publish’d / and SOLD, / By Robert Fletcher, / On the PARADE. / The JEALOUS WIFE. / A Comedy of Five Acts. / Written by GEORGE COLMAN, Esq. / Esteemed one of the best Comedies / In the English Language” Nova Scotia Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser (Halifax) 3 April 1770, 111.
Even before the first known theatrical performances in Halifax in 1768, the local newspapers would publish soliloquies and prologues from popular London productions, or update readers with the latest stories from the world of drama through columns entitled “Theatrical Intelligence.” Members in the colonial print ascendancy not only purchased theatrical works or read about it in the newspaper, they also turned to the press to debate its merits as a form of elite sociability and its moral influence on colonial society.

Theatre in British Nova Scotia and Québec was never officially sanctioned by the colonial authorities — unlike in England where it was subject to licensing or in New England and Pennsylvania were it was temporarily criminalized. Nonetheless, it still had its critics, who turned to the press to express their dissenting views. “AMONG the world’s vanities, I should have numbered the Play-House entertainments…,” a letter found in the Nova-Scotia Gazette authored under the pseudonym Jenks observed in 1774. Launching into a tirade against the entire theatre industry, the author continued that:

“Their makers, their actors and promoters: which (after all the late expence of sweat and struggle to defend them) are generally such wretched instructors of the age; as to teach and credit nothing more than its profaneness and debauchery....” Indeed, one common thread found in letters critical of plays argued that the danger of the art form was how it made vice look virtuous. In plays, one submission from an anonymous reader observed:


24 The Licensing Act of 1737 limited theatre to a select number of theatres in London and banned it from the rest of England. Early performers had to strike specific deals with town in order to provide entertainment. An official petition to parliament had to be made to acquire an official theatre license in towns outside of the capital. See: Cecil Price, Theatre in the Age of Garrick, (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1973), 175-195.


26 Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 8 February 1774, 4.
“lewdness is spoken, not in double entendres, but in plain English… Virtue appears in sackcloth, and vice in embroidery, rakes go of with success and sober men with disappointment….”

“ENTER not therefore into the Play-House,” read another extract submitted by a “constant reader” using the pseudonym M.F.: 

It’s the Palace of Asmodens the Seat of Lewdness, the Nursery of Debauchery, it’s with us as Fornices were at Rome… for my Part I am of Opinion that a Christian cannot with a safer Conscience enter into the Play-House than into a Brothel… Temptation is stronger on the Stage, and more inviting, the Blackness of The Vice is under a Disguise; it blanch’d over with all the Art of Wit and Gawdry so that nothing appears but the Charming Part, which fascinates the Eyes, captivates the Ears, doges the Intellect, and fires the Passions….

Theatre, for these readers, came into direct conflict with Christian values and was an abhorrent revival of pagan Rome. It was believed that the power of the live performance could overwhelm the senses, making vice attractive and awakening the aspects of human nature that needed to be kept in constant control. These letters once again illustrate the use of the press by certain members of the print ascendancy to direct the behaviour of other members, an attempt that — as we shall discover later — proved ultimately unsuccessful.

Other readers, taking a tact characteristically of the Enlightenment-era, argued that viewing theatre resulted in an undesirable loss of reason and control. Such arguments often employed references to the era of Rome that had eschewed plays and asked the public to employ classical wisdom to ameliorate present society. “Please to publish these few Quotations, and will oblige several of your Readers. The Sense of virtuous Ancients, both Heathens, and Christians, about Plays and Play-Houses…,” read a letter published in 1770 in the Nova-Scotia Gazette by an anonymous group in

opposition to the theatre there. The authors first cited an account from a history of St. Augustine which observed an address to the Roman Senate that likewise argued the dangers of establishing a theatre. Theatre, the oratory opined, would “bring in foreign vice; and the Debaucheries of Greece among them. The old Roman virtue would be lost, and the Spirits of the People emasculated.” Arguing that theatre was an inherently flawed and corrupt art form, the authors then cited St. Augustine’s own view which criticised dramatic productions as, “the Blemishes of human Nature, the Plague of Reason, and the Ruin of Virtue…. 30” Thus, tracing a line from Roman antiquity to St. Augustine and concluding with themselves, the anonymous contributors attempted to demonstrate the longstanding immorality and irrational nature of theatre.

While some correspondents were blunt in their criticisms, others fashioned their displeasure in more ironic, or satirical ways which in themselves demonstrate a nuanced awareness of the content and popularity of theatre. In 1768, when the rumour was confirmed that the American Company of Comedians was to perform in Halifax, a flurry of letters was sent from concerned colonists to the *Nova-Scotia Gazette*. One author using the pseudonym *S.W.* purported to be a farmer who — after the haying season — hoped to attend one of the performances. In the letter, *S.W.* cannot contain his excitement for the plays and writes with anticipation, “I hope that the *Provoked Wife* is among the Number [of performances]: Sir John Brute is an amiable Character. Many of us will be with you when our Harvest is ended.” The farmer laments, however, that due to the lack of currency in the province he would have to pay in grass, and solicited “any Person who wants Grain or Hay, I will supply him at his own Price provided he will now

29 *Nova-Scotia Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser* (Halifax) 13 February 1770, 56.
30 *Nova-Scotia Gazette* (Halifax) 18 August 1768, 3.
advance me three or four pounds for this Purpose.\textsuperscript{31} While earnest in tone, several inconsistencies make one wonder if the letter is instead a satire criticising those people (such as farmers) who would find plays entertaining.

One inconsistency that puts the veracity of the letter in question can be seen in the farmer’s request for money to pay for tickets. At a price of just over one shilling per general admission ticket, the farmer’s request for three to four pounds to cover admission costs would have been seen as excessive by contemporary readers, perhaps belying an unhealthy appetite for plays and their immoral situations.\textsuperscript{32} However, the greatest clue to the true intentions of the author is his reference to the tragedy the \textit{Provoked Wife} and approbation of the antagonist Sir John Brute. Brute, well known for his unimaginable cruelty, was a character that only a philistine would find “amiable.” S.W.’s letter provides a further illustration of the complexity behind the contributions to colonial newspapers. In his criticism of theatre, S.W. also demonstrates how well versed he actually was in the art form or at least the production of the \textit{Provoked Wife}. His letter shows that participants in the colonial print ascendancy not only employed the press, but could amuse themselves in their productions, creating personas and offering opinion that could be outlandish as well as earnest. Further underscoring the complexity of the newspaper discourse in the capitals, is the fact that such satire was not always appreciated or understood by other members of the colonial print ascendancy. Indeed, the idea planted by S.W. that a farmer would need ready cash to purchase tickets was plausible

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{ibid.}

\textsuperscript{32} The prices for the eight scheduled performances of the American Company of Comedians were officially published on 25 August 1768 being five shillings for boxes, three shillings for Pitt seating and one shilling nine pence for general admission in the gallery. This publishing of prices occurred a week after S.W.’s letter. Nonetheless in order for this bit of satire to have an impact on the reader, the author must have assumed that the public would be familiar with either the rumoured prices of tickets, or with the actual price of theatre tickets elsewhere.
enough that an offer of assistance appeared in next edition of the *Nova-Scotia Gazette* from an unsuspecting correspondent.  

In a similar tone, another satirical letter (found in the same edition of the *Gazette* as S.W.’s letter) tells of a “poor Girl” who is excited at the arrival of the plays and, in particular, any potentially unmarried players. In this case, the woman who can not afford tickets writes of her intention to sell her clothing to buy tickets, including “a brand new Hat and Cloak given to me by a worthy married Gentleman [and] several Shifts and under Petticoats, little the worst for wear.” The “woman” then signs the letter *Doll Tearsheet*, a name shared with Falstaff’s prostitute lover in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV*. Both letters use the trope of selling belongings or wares to acquire tickets, both satirise the lower classes (farmers and prostitutes) that are purportedly susceptible to the immoral charms of the play. Both letters also ironically require knowledge of popular theatre to fully understand the criticisms that are being levied. In a final paradoxical twist — whether or not the authors were aware of it at the time — in crafting their satires they were playing a part for an audience, in this case other members of the colonial print ascendancy. Such ironies were, however, not lost on all of their contemporaries. One theatre advocate writing to the *Nova-Scotia Gazette* remarked: “*All the World’s a Stage, / And all the Men and Women merely Players. / This sensible Reflection of old Shakespear’s, seems as left as a lasting Characteristic of all Ages; a general Satyr on Mankind, and a tacit Compliment to the Theatre. Every Man has some particular Character to support… Yet there are some Dispositions who never appear but in their

33 *Nova-Scotia Gazette* (Halifax) 25 August 1768, 2.  
34 *Nova-Scotia Gazette* (Halifax) 18 August 1768, 3.
natural Characters…. "35 Clearly, newspapers were an effective tool both for those critical and those in favour of the theatre.

While we have seen opponents of theatre turning to the press to voice their concerns, the printed word was also used by its advocates to display displeasure at particular performances that were deemed less than acceptable. Colonial audiences, like their transatlantic counterparts, enjoyed the occasional tragedy and were upset when the performance failed to meet their standards. “WHEN the Theatrical Campaign commenced,” the correspondent Observator wrote to the Halifax Journal in 1796:

I hoped, as did many more of the respectable inhabitants of this town, that we should obtain a little rational amusement for our money; especially when we were told of the Auxiliaries from Quebec, and the sister of the immortal Siddons. I have constantly attended the Theatre with some part of my Family ever since it opened, and invariably have seen more to be disgusted with, than pleased at; for, instead of **sterling Sense**, we receive **Grimace** and **wretched Buffoonry**.36

In a final blow, making reference to the cost of colonial theatre and his awareness of the situation elsewhere in the Atlantic World, Observator concluded: “Good Gentlemen reflect, we pay as high a price for our entertainments as they do in York or Philadelphia…. do not palm **flat insipid Perry** upon us, when you **can and may afford** to treat us with **enlivening Champaigne**."37 As we saw earlier, relatively large amounts were expended on theatrical productions in Halifax and Québec City and tickets to such productions were relatively dear. With the elevated costs of theatre, expectations were also high. These expectations — as Observator’s letter underscores — were not always met.

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35 Nova-Scotia Gazette (Halifax) 11 August 1768, 3.
36 Halifax Journal 3 March 1796, 3.
37 ibid.
Most reviews of new theatrical work were nonetheless favourable, observing that performances brought together amusement, rational behaviour and respectable audiences in a manner reminiscent of that experienced in Great Britain. “Last Friday evening the WEST-INDIAN, a Comedy,” the printer of the *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* wrote in March of 1787:

> was presented, for the second time, to a crowded and respectable audience; and received the tribute of applause due to the abilities of the performers. — The avidity with which the tickets for this play have been purchased up, marks the high sense the public entertain of its merit, and proves the choice of the gentlemen under whose care the entertainment is conducted, to be perfectly judicious. — And this Evening, the WEST-INDIAN, a Comedy, will be performed a Third Time.\(^{38}\)

Likewise, after the “Gentlemen of the Navy, Army & town”\(^ {39}\) had put on a performance of the *Merchant of Venice*\(^ {40}\) and the comedy *The Citizen* in Halifax’s new Grand Theatre on 26 March 1789\(^ {41}\) an equally favourable review of the performance could be found in the Halifax press:

> On Thursday Evening last the New Theatre, in Argyle-Street was opened… The characters of the Comedy [The Merchant of Venice] were, in general, supported with much propriety, and met the approbation of a numerous and respectable audience. The Farce [the Citizen] is replete with humour… [and drew bursts of applause from the audience almost every scene.\(^ {42}\)

In Québec City, the thespian-turned-publisher William Moore often included reviews of recent performances in his *Quebec Herald*, more often complimenting than criticising recently staged productions. In November 1789, after the staging of the comedy the *Recruiting Officer* and the farce the *Connaught Wife*, Moore remarked that “both pieces

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\(^{38}\) *Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 20 March 1787, 3.  
\(^{39}\) *Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 24 February 1789, 3.  
\(^{40}\) This production was also one of the last plays staged in the old Theatre Pontac on 13 January 1789. It boasted the same amateur actors and was for “Public Charity.” *Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 6 January 1789, 3.  
\(^{41}\) The exuberant diarist, and treasurer for the theatre, Lieutenant William Dyott wrote of the performance: “It was as complete a thing for the size as I ever saw.” Jeffery, ed., *Dyott’s Diary*, Volume 1, 61.  
\(^{42}\) *Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 3 March 1789, 3.
would not have disgraced a regular theatre”\textsuperscript{43} and later in the year observed that the staging of \textit{The Wonder} and \textit{The Spirit of Contradiction} “generally received highly merited applause.”\textsuperscript{44} Colonial prints also tell of plays being warmly received by “crowded and respectable” or “numerous and respectable” audiences, with the performances receiving “great” or “universal” applause.\textsuperscript{45} As these examples illustrate, those critical of theatre were not the only members of the colonial print ascendancy to turn to the press to voice their opinion. In both capitals, theatre was also promoted — particularly by printers — as a well-crafted artistic performance, enjoyed by the most respectable members of society in a fashion reminiscent of that of the theatres of Great Britain.

The enthusiasm that printers particularly exhibited in promoting theatre could be seen as rooted in personal bias or economic self interest. William Moore’s embrace of colonial theatre, for example, can be attributed to his experiences as an actor throughout the British Atlantic. Furthermore, both professional companies and amateur theatre companies that staged productions in the two capitals — as the records of William Brown’s \textit{Quebec Gazette} attest — proved lucrative for printers who produced the requisite tickets, playbills, posters and newspaper advertisements for the shows.\textsuperscript{46} Yet, as we have seen, newspaper printers were also ardent supporters of free expression and the advancement of the literary awareness of colonial society. Thus, their efforts in

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Quebec Herald} 16 November 1789, 445.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Quebec Herald} 17 December 1789, 29.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 20 March 1787, 3; \textit{Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle} (Halifax) 3 March 1789, 3; \textit{Quebec Herald} 17 December 1789, 29; \textit{Quebec Herald} 28 January 1790, 73; \textit{Quebec Herald} 7 March 1791, 124.
\textsuperscript{46} For example see, Fleming and Alston, \textit{Early Canadian Printing}, 464-465.
fashioning theatre as socially acceptable can be considered a fortuitous confluence of self interest, personal profit, and the public good.

In spite of dissenting views amongst members of the colonial print ascendancy, theatre would eventually become an acceptable part of elite sociability in both late-eighteenth-century Québec City and Halifax. Perhaps most tellingly, neither the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia, nor the Executive Council of Québec took steps to ban productions as had been the case in several neighbouring American colonies. The acceptance of theatre was due, in no small part, to the way the print ascendancy in the capitals fashioned theatre as an acceptable, respectable and even benevolent pursuit. Professional theatre in the eighteenth century, however, was not normally billed as a munificent pursuit. Quite practically, it was a means for actors to make a livelihood, and as such, performances were normally touted as being for the benefit of the members of the theatre company. Such was the case when William Moore (later printer of the *Quebec Herald*) was acting with the American Company in Jamaica. The 22 December 1781 performance of *Belle’s Stratagem*, for example, was staged “for the benefit of Mr. Moore.”47 Similarly, the American Company or other professional players who visited Halifax and Québec City followed this model of payment.

While professional acting troops continued to visit Halifax and Québec City, by the last decades of the eighteenth century theatrical performances became increasingly amateur in nature and the money raised went increasingly to charity. During this era there were few ways to raise funds for charitable purposes outside of the established churches. Although lotteries and special subscriptions were a popular means for the government to raise funds, they were rarely employed for charity predicated on

47 *Supplement to the Royal Gazette* (Kingston, Jamaica) 22 December 1781, 301.
unexpected hardship. Instead, plays — with the stated official approbation of the
governor or lieutenant governor — became the means to bridge this charitable gap in late
eighteenth-century Halifax and Québec City.

Such amateur performances involved officers from the Army and Naval
establishments, prominent merchants and occasionally students who performed well-
known comedies and farces accompanied by songs, humorous lectures, or verse, dance,
pantomime and other artistic performances. One of the first such events in Halifax was
staged on 20 April 1773. It was advertised that, on that evening, The Suspicious Husband
and The Citizen were to be performed “for the Benefit of the Poor, or the Town,” at the
Pontac for 2 shillings 6 pence admission.48 After the event, Anthony Henry reported that
the event had been a success: “On Friday last was perform’d by the Gentlemen of the
Army and Navy, a Play for the benefit of the Poor, at which was a considerable
Collection, which is to be distributed to the indigent Families, and other old and poor
people by the Minister and Church-wardens of this Place.”49 In this manner, theatre was
made publicly palatable and could even be considered unofficially institutionalized
through the use of prominent citizens and military officers as players.

Over a decade later, the use of theatre for charity had become commonplace in
both Halifax and Québec City. “We have the Pleasure of Informing our Readers,” one
such notice in the Nova-Scotia Gazette read, “that on Account of the Severity of the
Winter, a Number of Officers of the Army, intend performing a Play for the Benefit of
poor confined Debtors, and other public Charities.”50 The following theatre season
another group of amateur actors made it very clear in the printed advertisement that: “It is

49 Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 27 April 1773, 3.
50 Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 20 February 1787, 3.
the Intention of the Performers, after defraying the necessary Expenses of the Theatre, &c. to appropriate the Remainder to charitable Purposes.”51

In Québec City a similar situation can be observed. William Moore, upon the opening of the new theatre in 1789, could not speak highly enough of the motives of the performers and the performance:

What makes it of more consequence is, the male characters are supported by young gentlemen in the garrison, who are inspired to it through motives of CHARITY. Such a laudable undertaking shews the goodness of their hearts, and it is expected there will be a splendid and crowded audience, we can therefore with propriety and justice say with Collin M’Leod. ‘A’hae ne’ cauld hearts that occupy cauld climates.’52

In reporting the performance the following week Moore again highlighted the importance of instructing the public on the charitable efforts of the players: “CHARITY being the sole motive for the exertions of the Gentlemen, who pay their addresses to the enchanting Thalia; we shall while we omit the errors, recommend true deserts.”53 Not one to merely report on theatre and its virtues, the next year Moore staged a performance of his popular Lecture on Heads solely for “the benefit of the SUFFERERS by the LATE FIRE” that had devastated Québec’s lower town on Christmas Day.54 Theatre thus became an important means for members of the print ascendancy to entertain themselves and shape and promote the public good. While professional companies continued to visit the capitals, increasingly the theatre performances promoted in the newspapers were the work of amateurs (many of whom can be considered also as participants in the colonial print ascendancy).

51 Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 30 December 1788, 3.
52 Quebec Herald 2 February 1789, 103.
53 Quebec Herald 9 February 1789, 111.
54 Quebec Herald 22 February 1790, 105.
Theatre’s popularity was also in no small part rooted in its ability to reinforce elite identity by reconnecting colonists with established or shared beliefs. Postcolonial studies of British theatre have brought to light how the concept of empire and the “other” was dealt with in Georgian drama.\(^{55}\) As Kathleen Wilson writes “theatre did much to familiarize audiences with emergent typologies of gender, race, class, and nation, socializing British people into recognizing difference, especially the historical difference and distinctiveness of the English nation. Once reaching the diversity of colonial littorals, theatre became a distinctive ‘rite of Britishness.’”\(^{56}\) A review of the types of English-language productions advertised in the press of Halifax and Québec City reveals that colonists liked both traditional plays and what they believed to be the current tastes of the London theatres. Advertisements for new plays in the colonial press often touted their popularity in London such as the announcement in the *Quebec Herald* that read “THEATRE. On FRIDAY Evening the 26\(^{th}\) instant will be presented a New Comedy, (never performed here) in universal estimation in England called the Disbanded Officer or the Baroness of Bruchsal….”\(^{57}\) Indeed, from newspaper reports over a twenty-five year period starting in 1768, over 29 different plays were known to have been performed in Halifax and 76 different plays in Québec City. The vast majority of these performances were British comedies, farces, and musicals with the plays of the mid-eighteenth-century London actor David Garrick being the most popular. While colonial tastes preferred comedic fare, the staging of more emotive works was not unknown. One


\(^{57}\) *Quebec Herald* 22 February 1790, 105.
of William Smith’s favourite plays whilst he was in London was the tragedy *Jane Shore*\(^{58}\) which was performed in Québec City the same year\(^{59}\) and again at Mr. Menut’s Theatre in Québec City in 1789.\(^{60}\) In publicising the Québec staging of *I’ll Tell You What*, that same year William Moore wrote that the play “is the production of Mrs. Inchbald; whose abilities in Dramatic composition, requires no comment: it had a great run at the Hay-Market, and afterwards, (with permission) at Covent Garden; and in the Dramatic phrase is a living Piece, which its frequent representation fully confirms.”\(^{61}\) Colonial tastes were not unlike those of London; they favoured Shakespeare, modern comedies and tragedies.\(^{62}\)

Not only did audiences in Halifax and Québec City attend plays that were popular in Britain, a similar corpus of works was staged between the two capitals and often repeated over several seasons. In some cases, a particular play would be performed in one city within weeks of it being staged in the other. For example, Richard Cumberland’s comedy the *West-Indian* was produced no less than three times over three years in both Halifax and Québec City,\(^{63}\) resonating especially with Halifax audiences (for whom one production was staged successively three weeks in a row).\(^{64}\) Later in

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58 Smith attended the production which featured his favourite actress, Mrs. Siddons, at least twice.
59 300 play bills at a cost of 15 shillings were ordered for this production on 14 September 1786. Fleming and Alston, *Early Canadian Printing*, 473.
60 *Quebec Herald* 30 November 1789, 11. Smith would have been in the city at the time, but it is unknown if he attended the Canadian version of the play.
61 *Quebec Herald* 16 March 1789, 153.
62 Cecil Price writes that the London theatre was quite conservative with a third of all plays at Drury Lane being written by Shakespeare. The other two thirds were a mix of comedies and drama; some were new, but the majority were repeat productions dating back to the turn of the eighteenth century. See: Price, *Theatre in the Age of Garrick*, 196-197.
63 *The West-Indian* was performed with the farce *The Divorce* on 21 February 1789 and patrons were informed that, “after defraying the necessary expenses, the surplus will be given to the poor.” *Quebec Herald* 16 February 1789, 113.
64 “Last Friday evening, the WEST-INDIAN, a Comedy, was presented, for the second time, to a crowded and respectable audience; and received the tribute of applause due to the abilities of the performers. — The avidity with which the tickets for this play have been purchased up, marks the high sense the public
March 1789, the Halifax audience of the Grand Theatre were treated to a joint production of *The Beaux Stratagem* and *The Citizen*. The subsequent month in Québec, that city’s theatre mounted a separate production of the same two plays. It is perhaps no coincidence that plays like these — with merchant or colonial characters in provincial settings — were received so well by audiences in Halifax and Québec. For example, George Farquhar’s *The Beaux Stratagem* tells the story of two ne’er-do-wells, Archer and Aimwell, who travel to provincial towns in England to take advantage of young heiresses. On the other hand, (though again playing upon the device of a character being out of his element), Cumberland’s *The West-Indian* recounts the story of a young colonial libertine who charms London with his non-courtesan ways. In Arthur Murphy’s *The Citizen*, the character of penny-pinching Old Philpot and his mercantile mantras such as “trade must be minded — A penny sav’d, is a penny got — ” (not that dissimilar from those penned by that prominent eighteenth-century American Benjamin Franklin) would have also undoubtedly rung true to many in Halifax and Québec City.

English-language audiences in both capitals demonstrated a taste for British theatre that included not only the standards of Georgian theatre but also its most current tragedies, farces and satirical productions.
One of the most popular satires to play in both Halifax and Québec City was George Alexander Stevens’ *Lecture on Heads*, noted for being one of the longest running shows in eighteenth-century London.⁷⁰ A “lecture on heads” was a commonly-used phrase to describe an oration on various topics, or headings. Stevens’ particular lecture addressed several topics such as “Astronomy,” “Poetry,” and “Architecture” and over 3 dozen typical characters in society such as “The Lawyer,” “The Quaker,” the “Old Bachelor,” and the “New Married Lady,” all of which he brutally satirised for their speech, habits and disposition. In a twist of comic *double entendre*, Stevens performed this lecture upon heads using actual miniature heads that could be perched on his arm and that were carved and costumed to accentuate a respective character’s features. Part of the lasting appeal of Stevens’ *Lecture on Heads* rested in the fact that the “heads” could be refined or substituted as popular taste changed. Stevens’ popularity can also be attributed to his witty turns of phrase and insightful social commentary, prompting one of his contemporaries to note that he “made folly hide her head in the highest places, and vice tremble in the bosoms of the great.”⁷¹ This combination of satire, theatre and comedy proved to be an incontrovertible sensation in Britain and was likewise enjoyed across the Atlantic. In 1785, William Moore — who would later go on to publish the *Quebec

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⁷⁰ By 1766, over 200 successive performances of Stevens’ lecture had occurred in London with six editions of the pirated text published. According to a posthumous publication of the lecture’s text, after its run in London, Stevens toured “almost every principal in England and Ireland” before returning to the London stage with a revised version that was “almost a new performance.” See: *A Lecture on Heads; Which has been exhibited upwards of Two Hundred successive Nights, to crowded Audiences, and met with the most universal Applause*, (London: J. Pridden, 1766); *A Lecture on Heads; written by George Alexander Stevens, with additions by Mr. Pilon, As Delivered by Mr. Charles Lee Lewes, at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden, and in Various Parts of the Kingdom. To Which is Added an Essay on Satire*, (London: G. Kearsley, 1785), iii-iv.

⁷¹ *A Lecture on Heads; written by George Alexander Stevens, with additions by Mr. Pilon*, 2.
— performed an adapted version\textsuperscript{72} of the “Lecture on Heads” in Halifax to a delighted audience employing the “Proper Scenery and Apparatus.”\textsuperscript{73} Upon settling in Québec City, he performed the play on several occasions, having such a sway on the local population that letters to his Quebec Herald frequently requested repeat performances, or would excerpt passages from the play for comedic effect or to display their wit.\textsuperscript{74} The appeal of the Lecture on Heads, particularly with audiences in Québec City, can also be seen in repeated allusions to it in correspondence to local newspapers. Theatre, and particularly satirical plays, offered colonists a forum in which the shortcomings of contemporary individuals and society at large could be explored.

Requisite to most productions was also a prologue which set the tone for the evening’s performance. In English-language productions in both Halifax and Québec City, these prologues ranged from the light-hearted to the overly melodramatic, attempting to emulate contemporary poetic styles to varying degrees of success. Prologues almost unanimously argued the connection between colonial society and the culture and commerce of Britain. Composed and delivered by well-known local


\textsuperscript{73} Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 31 May 1785.

\textsuperscript{74} For example, on 7 March 1791 a writer under the name “A Citizen” submitted a parody of the “Lecture on Heads” as a response to a previously published article the author prefaced his lecture in the style of Stevens writing: “Mr. Moore, I FOUND the inclosed LECTURE on HEADS last evening in St. Peter’s Street, near the Coffee-House. your inserting it in your excellent and entertaining Miscellany will stimulate me to be on the look for more of the Lectures…” Quebec Herald 7 March 1791, 124. Other examples include: “Bullum vs. Boatum” Quebec Herald 3 December 1789, 14.
individuals, prologues illustrate, in the most direct sense, how this “rite of Britishness” played out to colonial audiences. It was a rite that also involved the newspapers of Halifax and Québec City that diffused the patriotic messages beyond the walls of the theatre to colonial readers and members of the print ascendancy.

English-language prologues commonly portrayed British North America as being a savage wilderness that had been refined by British civilisation, literature and, of course, drama. As the prologue to the 1774 comedy *Acadius, or Love in a Calm* observed:

> In less than half, MAN’S, Post Deluv’an AGE;  
> In this SEPTENTRION Clime, there was no STAGE…  
> The MUSES, then, knew not, these frozen Climes;  
> So sent no Cargo here, of Prose or Rhymes.  
> But ARTS and TRADE, at length being wafted o'er,  
> From BRITISH ISLES to this ACAD’AN Shore;  
> DISCIPLES, then, of the PARNASS’AN TRAIN;  
> Adventur’d, over, the ATLANTIC Main....

In a similarly dramatic and patriotic fashion, prologues, such as one given at a performance in Québec City in 1793, cited intellectual legacies such as reason, justice, liberty and the importance of public good as Britain’s greatest gift to her colonies:

> Oh! may Britannia’s Genius watchful spread  
> The Shield of Wisdom o'er each patriot head;  
> With generous ardor give her sons to feel  
> Alone the interest of the Public Weal…  
> Shall British bliss, and honors be consign’d,  
> Her sons where’er by Fame or Commerce led  
> Shall the sound maxims of her Police spread…  
> May Reason strengthen the firm hand of Law…  
> Till the adorning World shall own the Plan  
> That as it proceeds best proves the Rights of Man.

75 An excellent compilation of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theatre prologues is provided as electronic resource by the University of New Brunswick library and the prologues listed here are taken from that website. The list was originally compiled by Patrick B. O’Neill, Ph.D., Speech and Drama Department, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia and later converted to an electronic Web format. See: “Prologues and Epilogues as Performed on Canadian Stages in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” [http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/Theatre/Texts/bin/get_prologues.cgi](http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/Theatre/Texts/bin/get_prologues.cgi) (Accessed on 25 March 2006). The prologue cited here was published in the *Nova Scotia Gazette and the Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 8 February 1774, 4.
Nor is this prelude foreign to our cause,
‘Tis mild spirit of British Laws;
That gives us, midst the storms that rage around,
Safely to meet on Pleasures flow’ry ground...

Melodramatic and derivative, prologues nonetheless shed a valuable light on the print ascendancy and the efforts of some participants to form a colonial elite in Halifax and Québec City. While a play could delight, embarrass or incur the wrath of the audience, a prologue was designed to be an agreeable piece. It was the role of the prologue, and its performer, to set the tone for the evening and generally delight the audience. Prologues tapped into a vein of sentiment that underscored their connection to the tastes and tradition of Britain, in spite of the very real colonial realities that they faced. These tastes included a spirit of societal improvement through the promotion of reason and the public good. The subsequent publishing of prologues both served to validate the theatre experience as well as propagate the patriotic messages that they conveyed. Prologues extolled a British victory over the colonial environment. Their verses distilled a common belief that likened the colonies to a *tabula rasa*, ready to receive the stamp of empire and to be improved through British genius of which the culture of theatre and print played a integral role.

The interest exhibited of British theatre in Halifax and Québec City does not appear to have been shared for domestically-written plays. This can be particularly seen in the years before the American Revolution and the arrival of the loyalists. Apart from prologues and epilogues, few other locally written dramatic works are known and several explanations could be offered for this situation. Possibly, the small population of particularly pre-Revolutionary Halifax and Québec City meant that there were

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proportionally fewer playwrights than could be found in other colonial American towns. Perhaps, as well, the taste for European, and particularly British productions, was such that any locally-written productions seemed lacklustre in comparison. A third possible reason may be that local plays had the potential to insult the sensibilities of both actors and the audience alike, people who all hailed from the same elite group of literate merchants, soldiers and bureaucrats.

One of the only known full-length domestic productions from this time period is *Acadius, or Love in a Calm* staged in 1774. No script is known to exist and it is only from newspaper reports that we have any record of the play that satirized life in Nova Scotia with a cast of characters offering a host of local archetypes. For example, one of the main characters is Frankport, a local merchant and the eponymous Acadius is a subaltern with the garrison. Frankport has a “negro servant” named Fortune and the servant’s wife is Phebe. One of the love interests is a local girl named Jenny Chowder and the play also has comedic duos such as the two visiting Londoners, Guttle and Guzzle and Frankport’s two creditors, Scentwell and Saveall. Though intending the play to be light-hearted entertainment, its anonymous author nonetheless published a lengthy disclaimer before its production, distancing the characters from actual Haligonians. “THE AUTHOR thinks proper to assure the Public;” a statement in the *Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* read, “that the FABLE of it is, an entire Fiction; and tho’ some part of the PLACE of Action may on a general Construction, rather be fixed in this Province, than any other part of the Continent of America, yet it cannot be absolutely so. — The MORAL has a strict Moral tendency. The EPISODES and INCIDENTS (he presumes) are probable, natural and diverting. — And the CHARACTERS, he insists, are too outré to be personal
on any Persons here or elsewhere, within the circle of the Author’s acquaintance.” It is impossible to know how the play was received but it appears not to have gone over well. Unlike British plays — the staging of which is mentioned repeatedly in newspapers — there is no further mention in the Halifax papers of Acadius or any indication that it was performed again. Considering that the Halifax press was normally favourable in their review of plays, the satirical messages found in Acadius were perhaps considered a bit too close. Local theatre patrons, though all too ready to laugh at the foibles of archetypical British characters, were perhaps unwilling to find the joke in their own.

To this point, there has been an emphasis on English-language theatre in Halifax and Québec City. This preoccupation reflects the fact that, in the newspapers of both capitals, theatre was predominately advertised or commented upon in English. From the newspaper record, there is no evidence of a French-language theatre scene in mid-eighteenth century Halifax (which is not surprising considering the few people of French origin that lived in the region). On the other hand, in Québec City a longstanding tradition of French-language theatre existed dating before the British regime and the introduction of the press. Throughout the seventeenth century theatre had been popular in Québec, but a 1694 controversy over the staging of Molière’s irreverent Tartuffe ended with Bishop Saint-Vallier shutting down the production and casting a pall over the staging of plays for another six decades. This censure, tantamount to a ban on theatrical productions, ensured that the colony would witness only a few theatrical works during this time. After the British conquest of Québec, French-language theatre re-emerged

77 Nova Scotia Gazette and the Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 1 February 1774, 3.
78 Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly, English-Canadian Theatre, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), 3. Leonard Doucette believes that not all theatre in the colony was banned after Bishop Saint-Vallier’s mandement prohibiting the public performance of plays by colonists and Jesuits. Though
alongside the new taste for British productions. In October 1765, for example, the *Quebec Gazette* announced a « spectacle nouvel et divertissement public » that began with a one act comedy entitled *Les Fêtes Villageoises* and continued with several smaller skits and musical numbers. The works of Molière reappeared in the capital and the seminaries in particular became centres, albeit temporarily, of French language theatre. Although no professional French-language troupes performed between 1764 and 1805 in Québec City, several groups of amateur players staged French-language plays. These included the officers of the garrison, students at French-language colleges (until 1780) and the amateur troop *les Jeunes Messieurs canadiens* formed in 1791. However, throughout this period the Roman Catholic Church continued to oppose theatre for its ability to communicate seemingly immoral behaviour and ideas. Grumblings amongst seminary leaders led to a ban of theatre in these institutions of higher learning in 1780, less than twenty years after the establishment of British administration and the lifting of the initial restrictions that the Roman Catholic Church had imposed on theatrical productions. By the 1790s, Roman Catholic displeasure with theatre troupes in Montréal had spread to the capital.

While the occurrence of French-language theatre is not frequently observed in the papers of *Quebec City*, it was not altogether ignored, particularly when it could advance evidence is scarce, he believes that the Ursuline nuns were allowed to privately conduct their *pastorales* and concerts. A blind eye was also turned to garrison theatre on the fringes of the Québec. Leonard Doucette, *Theatre in French Canada: Laying the Foundations, 1606-1867*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 33-37.


80 *Quebec Gazette* 24 October 1765, 3.

81 Much more is known of theatre in late eighteenth-century Montréal than in Québec City. Nonetheless, a review of the nature of French language theatre in the capital, including the types of plays performed and the return to seminary productions can be seen in: Doucette, *Theatre in French Canada*, 37-48.

82 Lemire, *La vie littéraire au Québec*, 193.

83 ibid., 182-184, 186, 188.

84 ibid., 183.
the objectives of elite formation held by some members of the colonial print ascendancy. Such is the case when members of the colonial print ascendancy turned to the newspapers, in both languages, to show their displeasure with what they saw as Roman Catholic tradition encroaching on the liberating and modernizing aspects of British rule. Evidence of this can be seen in this translated version of a letter published in January 1791 in the *Quebec Gazette* that questions the growing strictures of the Church:

> No one has ever imagined that there would be objections against the decent, honest entertainment that a few young Canadian Gentlemen of this town have undertaken to offer the public by performing a few plays… An attempt is being made to persuade people that theatre is dangerous for the young folk who attend it, which seems hardly likely. On the contrary, even the briefest reflection should convince us that actors and spectators as well could in fact be using the time they now devote to these performances, in much less commendable amusements that would be a good deal more prejudicial to morality, to their own best interests and their health, as well as to the edification of their neighbours.\(^85\)

As in the debates over theatre that had occurred in Halifax twenty years earlier, the author questioned assertions that theatre was immoral, seeing it as beneficial to both self and society. However, in a departure from those earlier debates, the author used the opportunity to tacitly question the authority of the Roman Catholic Church in British Québec.

Writing in English, William Moore had no qualms about publicly admonishing Roman Catholic interference. “ON Wednesday Evening,” he wrote in his *Quebec Herald*, “the Comedies which have been performed in french by some young gentlemen for the amusement of their friend [sic] during this winter, closed with a humourous comedy called the Spanish Barber, and attended by His Hon. LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR, and a numerous and respectable audience, without the interdiction of the

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\(^85\) *Quebec Gazette* 20 January 1791, 2. Translated by L.E. Doucette and cited in Doucette, *Theatre in French Canada*, 68-69.
Thus, in no uncertain terms, Moore used the opportunity of the performance to argue its legitimacy and progressive nature (as demonstrated through the attendance of the British Lieutenant Governor and other worthy citizens) and to denounce what he saw as the retrograde actions of the Roman Catholic Church. In late eighteenth-century Québec City — where a longstanding and contested tradition of French language theatre existed — newspapers were employed in many ways by the colonial print ascendancy to promote British values. While particularly British-styled theatre was popular, the basic right to perform plays — regardless of the language — was also deemed important. The overtly patriotic messages that could be found in English-language plays and prologues were secondary to a perceived British liberality demonstrated in the staging of theatrical performances.

In the theatres of Halifax and Québec City, patrons could connect directly to the popular entertainment of Britain in a visceral and communal way. Theatre was perceived by many as an elite form of sociability and such perceptions were upheld in the capitals by certain members of the colonial print ascendancy. Outside of the performances, theatre acted as lightening rod for the public debate over civic virtue. The colonial print ascendancy debated the merits of plays in print as well as used the press to fashion theatre as an amusing and respectable form of entertainment. The messages communicated in theatrical performances and then diffused through the press reinforced Great Britain’s political, intellectual and cultural supremacy in the two capitals. Through the particular form of the prologue, performed on the stage and then echoed in the press, residents of Halifax and Québec City were told that plays, and Britishness they communicated, were an essential civilizing force in America. Initially divided over the virtues of theatre,

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86 Quebec Herald 7 March 1791, 124.
members of the print ascendancy in Halifax and Québec City would eventually come to embrace it. As the majority of performances received the approval of colonial officials, featured prominent gentlemen and military officers and funded colonial charities, theatre was seen not only as entertainment, but also as an instructive, civilising and beneficial force in the British manner. In the next chapter, the nature of the coffee house — a popular venue for colonial plays — will be explored. Like the theatre, coffee houses were a forum of elite sociability for members of the colonial print ascendancy. Print was essential in the functioning and promotion of the establishments that, like theatre, were perceived as centres of refined, British tradition on the colonial periphery.
Chapter 6: The Case of Coffee Houses and Coffee Rooms

As a purveyor of sundries, the peripatetic Johann Heinrich (Henry) Juncken would busily crisscross the narrow streets of late eighteenth-century Québec City.¹ Juncken spent much of his time at auctions in the Lower Town purchasing everyday items that he could sell to his various customers.² Coffee houses figured prominently in Juncken’s life. He would furnish provisions to the establishments and frequent them to meet with friends, or discuss business. Such was the case on the morning of Friday, 5 December 1788, when he met a group of other merchants and shared a glass of gin “in the London Custom” at Merchant’s Coffee House which included treating the proprietor to a complimentary glass, a tradition that he found “very odd.”³ After dinner, Henry Juncken would sometimes join his friends and business associates for conversation, games and beverages again at Merchant’s, staying from six to eight or even ten o’clock, depending on the weather.⁴ It was also at Merchant’s Coffee House that Juncken — with newspaper printer William Moore, schoolmaster and merchant John Jones, and a small

group of merchants and tradesmen — first conceived, drew up the articles of incorporation, and then regularly met as the Québec Benevolent Society. The society would be one of the colony’s first charitable societies and Juncken was unanimously elected its first president.\(^5\)

Coffee houses were an important forum of sociability in eighteenth-century British Halifax and Québec City. Like newspapers and the theatre, coffee houses were used as elite spaces of sociability for colonial administrators, military officers, senior merchants, printers and aspiring men of commerce such as Henry Juncken. Many coffee house proprietors and patrons can be considered part of the colonial print ascendancy. Print was both vital to the activities that took place within such establishments and to the promotion, advertising and reporting of coffee house conduct. Members of the print ascendancy also used the press to fashion the coffee house as a form of sociability that stood apart from that of the average public house. In newspaper advertisements, articles and letters, coffee houses were patterned as centres of colonial commerce. Coffee houses in the two capitals were fora for the diffusion and discussion of ideas, focal points of refined entertainment, and exemplars of genteel and familiar British tradition on the British American periphery.

In eighteenth-century Halifax and Québec City, several different types of public houses existed, the most controversial of which provided alcohol to the lower classes of colonial society. Long before the temperance movements of Victorian Canada,\(^6\) late

\(^5\) BANQQ, P119, P1 Journal de Henry Juncken, typed transcription, 25 April 1789, 299. Juncken, though instrumental in the planning and operation of the Quebec Benevolent Society, did not attend its first meeting and was elected president in absentia. The formation and meetings of the friendly society are also chronicled publicly in Moore’s Quebec Herald.

\(^6\) By the mid nineteenth-century, historians observe, public houses were seen almost universally as dens of inequity and working class culture and became one of the targets of the temperance movements. See: Peter DeLottinville, “Joe Beef of Montreal: Working-class Culture and the Tavern, 1869-1889,” Labour/Le
eighteenth-century writers are known to have lamented the unfavourable aspects of alehouses and taverns, decrying the deleterious effects of alcohol. As early as 1760, Alexander Grant writing to the Reverend Styles of Boston observed of Halifax, with its 3,000 inhabitants, that “we have upwards of one hundred licensed houses and perhaps as many more that retail spirituous liquors without license; so the business of one half the town is to sell rum and the other half is to drink it.” In Québec, the situation was not perceived as being much better. A correspondent to the Quebec Gazette in 1765 felt compelled to write a complaint “against both the Nations that compose this Province” concerning ill-behaviour from people whose actions should reflect what he saw as “two of the most polished Nations of Europe.” While emphasising the importance of social gatherings, the writer lamented the deleterious effects of alcohol leading men to engage in acts, “which are not allowable when sober, [such that] Men do not hesitate, especially at certain Taverns, to create a needless Expense to themselves, by breaking and destroying furniture often valuable; and what is extraordinary, this is done thro’ Gaiety… Pray Gentlemen there is not Wit where Reason is wanting…..” In both eighteenth-century Québec and Nova Scotia, the abuse of alcohol was perceived as a blight upon society, a malady fostered in the various licensed and unlicensed public houses and eventually leading to irrational behaviour, violence and debauchery.

In addition to alehouses and taverns of perceived ill-repute, there were also establishments considered more upscale, including those commonly referred to as

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8 Quebec Gazette 18 April 1765, 1.

9 Ibid.
“taverns,” “houses of entertainment,” or “coffee houses.” However, reconstructing the daily activities of coffee house patrons or finding evidence of the establishments’ influence upon the daily life of Halifax or Québec City presents a challenging task. Archival sources that address coffee house life in the colonial capitals are rare and the few extant documents fail to give much detail about the nature of the establishments or their clientele. For example, in Québec under the Ancien Regime there is little indication in legal records — other than proprietors occasionally described as “cafetier” — that a particular public house would also vend coffee. Nonetheless, Québec City court records witness the existence of several establishments that served coffee dating to at least 1675. One particularly colourful proprietor, Pierre Hévé (Evê), noted as a cafetier, buvetier and cabaretier, appears in court records no less than two dozen times in the first decades of the eighteenth century. While these establishments served coffee, it is doubtful that they bore much more resemblance to the coffee houses that would emerge under British governance.

The origins of the earliest coffee houses in Halifax are similarly clouded. The first licenses for public houses were issued just days after the first transports of settlers

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10 In addition to licenses, court records also detail those involved in the provision of beverages and lodgings. For example, on 26 August 1675 caberetier Charles Marquis and his wife Marguerite Cousin were fined for attacking shoemaker Adrien Michelon. (See: BANQQ, fonds Nouvelle-France. Conseil Souverain, TP1,S28,P1168, f. 243-243v., microfilm M9/1.) Not only did coffee house proprietors incur criminal charges, so too, of course, did coffee house patrons, as was the case of one Catignon (Gatignon dit Duchesne) who had court proceedings started against him on 9 October 1679 for swearing and uttering blasphemy in the coffee house of Pierre Nolan. See: BANQQ, fonds Nouvelle-France, Cour de la Prevoté de Québec, TL1,S11,SS1,D11,P14, f. 9v-10, microfilm M48/3. 11 He is also listed in court records as being a « navigateur » later in his life. (See: BANQQ, fonds Nouvelle-France. Conseil Soverain and fonds Nouvelle-France. Cour de la Prevoté de Québec). Perhaps reflecting the popularity of Hévé’s coffee house, on 9 October 1730 he was fined fourteen livres for opening his establishment on holidays and Sundays at the same time as divine service and was temporarily forbidden to « tenir café ni cabaret. » BANQQ, fonds Nouvelle-France, Intendant, E1,S1,P2236, f. 15-15v, microfilm M5/5.
arrived in the new colony during the summer of 1749.\textsuperscript{12} There is little evidence, however, of the services these public houses offered. Indeed, various reports cite 1751 as the year the first coffee house opened, though little is known about that establishment or its services.\textsuperscript{13} For certain colonists, coffee houses were undoubtedly an essential part of the daily routine; however, it was a routine that was deemed not to require elaboration. Considering this, eighteenth-century print — and in particular the domestic press — offers an invaluable means to flesh out the manuscript sources concerning the coffee house. In particular, the newspapers of Halifax and Québec City provide a more complete picture of the establishments, of their role in colonial society, and of how print was employed to fashion the coffee house as an elite form of sociability.

Some of the silences in the historical record concerning early coffee houses in Halifax and Québec City can be attributed to the fact that such establishments were not subject to any special licensing. Coffee houses show up in the legal record only when they — as any other colonial public house — were licensed to sell liquor or offer gaming tables. Alcohol consumption, in fact, appears to have been a common aspect of coffee house life. As we have seen, Henry Juncken’s journal tells of the drinking of gin in Merchant’s Coffee House in Québec City. While in Halifax between 1787 and 1792, the military diarist William Dyott tells of his frequenting several of the town’s coffee houses. In 1792, describing one particularly indulgent March 17\textsuperscript{th}, Dyott writes: “We kept the day


\textsuperscript{13} For example, it is known that Captain William Piggot received license for his Halifax coffee house in 1751. This, however, was granted not for the sale of coffee, but for the operation of a billiard table. See: Thomas Beamish Akins, “History of Halifax City,” Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, Volume VIII, (Halifax: Morning Herald Printing and Publishing Company, 1895), 30; George Mullane, “Old Inns and Coffee Houses of Halifax,” Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society XXII (1933): 1; George T. Bates, Annotated and Illustrated Map, “Old Halifax 1749-1830,” c. 1950, private collection of Michael Eamon with thanks to Ken Hiltz of Halifax for finding this document and for granting access to other productions of the late George Bates.
in honour of St. Patrick by dining together at the coffee-house, and a pretty scene of drunkenness it was.”14 In both Halifax and Québec City, coffee houses hosted special dinners to mark national saints’ days, ritual freemasons’ festivals,15 and exclusive colonial societies such as the Veterans of 1775-76.16 However, unlike the case of alehouses, newspaper reports frequently offered warm accounts of such gatherings. These reports told of the “respectable” and “orderly” nature of the occasion, and at the same time recounted numerous toasts and alcohol consumption that lasted long into the evening. From these print observations, it is clear that coffee houses were known to vend alcohol and to host events with lively alcohol-fuelled revelry. Yet, in spite of this and the other similarities between this establishment and other colonial public houses, the coffee house appears to have had a distinct identity. It is an identity that, in no small way, was influenced by the printed word.

Print was important both to the activities of the coffee house and the establishment’s promotion throughout the British Atlantic.17 In England, print was used

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15 Merchant’s Coffee House enjoyed a broad spectrum of patronage, including hosting Saint Andrew’s Day celebrations (see: Quebec Herald 8 December 1788).
16 Quebec Herald 5 January 1789, 7; Quebec Herald 27 December 1790, 1.
17 The British coffee house has been subject to a staggering amount of scholarship. Early works on the role of the coffee house in the intellectual and social life of Great Britain include: John Timbs, Clubs and Club Life in London. With Anecdotes of its Famous Coffee-Houses, Hostelries, and Taverns, from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1872), 300; Robert J. Allen, The Clubs of Augustan London, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933; reprint, Hamdon: Archon books, 1967), 33-34; Lewis A. Coser, Men of Ideas: A Sociologist’s View, (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 19-25. Aytoun Ellis, can be considered an early advocate of the leveling nature of the coffee house, a social nexus where all ranks of could meet, debate current events and become educated, see: The Penny Universities: A History of the Coffee Houses, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1956). Jürgen Habermas would later use the well-known social phenomenon of the coffee house as a key aspect in the study of the public sphere and the creation of a politically-aware and vocal bourgeoisie, see: The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, trans. by Thomas Burger with the Assistance of Frederick Lawrence, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991). Later, historians of the Enlightenment such as Roy Porter would see the coffee house as an “oasis of modernity,” where this diverse public could learn values such as tolerance, moderation and respect. See in particular, Roy Porter,
to shape the public perception of the early coffee house. From their introduction in the mid-seventeenth century, coffee houses quickly became a popular fixture of English, and later British, life capturing both the imagination and the ire of contemporary writers. Within three decades of the emergence of the first coffee houses in England, advocates were already singing the praises in print of these new social institutions, lauding them as a mark of an unprecedented age of commerce, productivity and intellectualism. Coffee, in particular, was believed to stimulate the senses and conversation, promoting what was perceived by many as a more-refined style of sociability than had been previously known.

Accounts dating back to the late seventeenth century paint a polarised picture of the establishment, both capturing the imagination and raising the ire of the public. Inside the establishments, it was observed that a diverse group of patrons discussed business, read the “freshest” newspapers, overheard the latest gossip, or voiced their opinions on current events. Early interpretations concerning a universal nature of the coffee house to promote equality, education and particularly a Habermasian public sphere have recently been questioned. Some of this counterpoint can be seen in writings such as: Steve Pincus, “‘Coffee Politicians Does Create’: Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture,” *Journal of Modern History* 67 (December 1995): 833-834; Eric Laurier and Chris Philo, “‘A Parcel of Muddling Muckworms’: Revisiting Habermas and the English Coffee-houses,” *Social and Cultural Geography* 8,2 (2007): 275; Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 1-2; Brian Cowan, “Publicity and Privacy in the History of the British Coffeehouse,” *History Compass* 5/4 (2007): 1180-1213. The coffee house of British America has not received as much attention. Some have perceived it as clearly an elite space of sociability, for example see: Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 160-162. Others, however, have seen the establishments as more complex, serving the elite and the growing middling classes, being bastions of republican and whig ideas, or generally being at the cross roads of modernity and early modern culture. See for example: David W. Conroy, *In Public Houses: Drink and the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995) and David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 55-98.

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18 Most accounts argue that the coffee houses first emerged in England in the mid-1750s. While the search for “firsts” is often a counter-historical process, Oxford’s longstanding claim of having the first English coffee house prevails in many quarters, as seen in this late-eighteenth-century account: “In the year 1650, we learn... Jacob a Jew opened a coffee-house at the Angel in the parish of S. Peter in the East, Oxon, and there it was by some, who delighted in noveltie, drank.” See: “Account of the First Introduction of COFFEE into Britain” *Scots Magazine* (May 1785): 247. Recently, Markman Ellis questions Oxford’s generally accepted claim, instead arguing that Pasqua Rosse’s London coffee house was actually the first. See: Markman Ellis, *The Coffee House: A Cultural History*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), 29-30.
events. Coffee houses were praised in some corners as places where “all ranks” could assemble and partake in conversations as stimulating as the eponymous beverage that was served. On the other hand, critics argued that the “levelling” aspects of the establishment allowed “rooks,” “mountebanks” and other pretenders to take on airs beyond their station, and in their discussions dupe the unaware with their pretences.

Throughout the eighteenth century, British satirists would continue to poke fun at coffee houses and the various “characters” that were perceived to frequent them, further revealing the tensions between what was seen as the emerging coffee house class and traditional polite society. These characters included self-important businessmen busily darting from coffee house to coffee house while achieving little, vociferous debaters possessing strong political opinions with no actual experience in politics, or common labourers and tradesmen who took on airs beyond their true education and station in life.

By the eighteenth century, print accounts portrayed the coffee house as a central

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19 Anonymous, Coffee-Houses Vindicated in Answer to the Late Published Character of a Coffee-House Asserting from Reason, Experience and Good Authours, the Excellent Use, and Physical Vertues of that Liquor With the Grand Conveniency of such civil places of Resort and Ingenious Conversation, (London: F. Lock and F. Clarke, 1673), 5.


21 “There is no more whimsical creature under the sun (a woman excepted) than a coffee-house frequenter….” one such satirical account observed, “no sooner does one of these would-be-thought men of importance enter the coffee-room, then he flies to the bar, throws his calico carcase half over it, runs his head full-drive into the barkeeper’s face, like an old Roman battering Ram against the walls of a city; -- ‘Pray, Madame, has Captain Blunderbuss been to enquire for me’? – Being answered in the negative, he turns short upon his heel, triops to the other end of the room … to kill the tedious moments… a newspaper is ordered to be brought upon the tapis, which he carelessly runs through like a cat on a harpsichord…..” See: “Character of a Coffee-House Lounger,” Weekly Miscellany; or, Instructive Entertainer 5:108 (October 1775): 110-111.

22 One particularly cutting poem observed: “Prate not, my friend, of unknown things, / Say, why are ministers and kings / And courts the object of they spleen? / Who never yet a court hast seen, / Nor ever wilt, I’ll answer for’t, / But Russel or Saint Martin’s-court.” “To a Coffee-house Politician.” Sentimental Magazine (October 1776): 447.

23 Richard Steele, under the guise of Isaac Bickerstaff, wrote that the intended purpose of The Tatler was to
social institution, a cultural touchstone that acted both as a catalyst for intercourse and was itself a lightning rod of debate.

Colonists in both Halifax and Québec City — many of whom had been patrons of Britain’s coffee houses — were also aware of the characteristics and literary impressions of the institution. Newspapers in the capitals made a regular habit of keeping their readers informed of any speeches, altercations or other events that had taken place in coffee houses. Some of these articles painted the British coffee house in an unfavourable light. Coffee houses were not unknown to harbour unsavoury characters, or offer a place where a fraud could be perpetrated, or to witness the occasional fit of politically-inspired violence. Colonial readers were also exposed to articles that framed the coffee house in a more positive and progressive fashion, particularly in regard to the establishment’s role in British commerce and communications. From newspaper reports, colonial readers were informed that coffee houses were frequented by noted British politicians and savants, were brokerages of financial transactions and were the establishment of choice for doctors, lawyers, merchants and the emerging government bureaucracy.

deal with this very problem throughout society, “to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity and affection…” The coffee house remained a perceived hub of superficiality well into the mid-eighteenth century. As Tobias Smollett’s character Mathew Bramble observed: “Every clerk, apprentice, and even waiter of tavern or coffeehouse maintains a gelding by himself, or in partnership, and assume the air and apparel of a petit maitre — The gayest places of public entertainment are filled with fashionable figures; which, upon inquiry, will be found to be journeymen, tailors, servingmen, and abigails, disguised like their betters. In short, there is no distinction or subordination left…” Tobias Smollett, The Expedition of Humphry Clinker, 1771, reprinted; (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961), 100.

24 For some examples see: Halifax Gazette 20 July 1754, 2; Supplement to the Halifax Gazette 14 May 1761; Nova-Scotia Chronicle (Halifax) 20 February 1770, 59; Nova-Scotia Chronicle (Halifax) 3 April 1770, 109; Nova-Scotia Chronicle (Halifax) 29 May 1770, 173; Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 11 January 1774, 4; Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 3 May 1774, 3; Quebec Herald 9 March 1789, 146; Quebec Herald 16 March 1789, 149; Quebec Herald 9 November 1789, 435; Quebec Herald 24 December 1789, 37.
Loved or loathed, the coffee house was nonetheless seen as an essential part of daily life, not to be missed even in the direst circumstances. In the article “A New Etiquette for Mourners,” excerpted in William Moore’s *Quebec Herald* in 1789, it was observed under the heading “A Husband Losing His Wife” that a man, “must weep or seem to weep at the funeral — Should not appear at the coffee-room the first week — should vent a proper sigh whenever and wherever good wives or matrimony are mentioned.”\(^\text{25}\) The kernel of truth at the centre of this “advice,” as in all good satire, was the prevailing perception that the coffee house was an essential part of daily life and that, in some circles, even the death of a spouse should not delay one’s attendance unnecessarily. It is arguably a perception known by colonists; Moore, ever mindful of his readers’ tastes, would not have excerpted such a piece if he believed that they would not understand the joke.

London coffee house proprietors — assuming a pre-existing knowledge and familiarity with their establishments — used colonial newspapers to appeal directly to a perceived colonial clientele. In 1754, Edward Clarke, the proprietor of the New-England Coffee-House in London, announced in the nascent *Halifax Gazette* that he had just opened an expanded establishment called the “New-York, New-England, Rhode Island and Nova Scotia Coffee-House” in London’s Royal Exchange district.\(^\text{26}\) Thomas Lever, the new proprietor of the “New-York, New-England, Nova Scotia, Quebec, &c. &c. Coffee-House” in 1761 took out an advertisement in the *Halifax Gazette* to state that his establishment was still open, but had moved to another location, “till the Party Walls of the House are rebuilt.” As Edward Clark had done before him, Lever invited colonial

\(^{25}\) *Quebec Herald* 16 February 1789, 6.  
\(^{26}\) *Halifax Gazette* 22 June 1754, 2.
men of business to frequent his establishment, boasting “the freshest American, Foreign and Liverpool News Papers.”27 London coffee house proprietors not only went to the time and expense to advertise in colonial newspapers, they also used inclusive names for their establishments — all in an apparent attempt to promote a more familiar environment for prospective patrons. That London proprietors made these efforts at all attests to the fact that colonists were not only seen as valuable clientele, but also as well-travelled and familiar with the importance of the eighteenth-century coffee house as a forum for business, entertainment, print and oral information.

Print not only informed colonists of the culture of coffee houses and its activities, it was also requisite in the functioning of the establishment. Historian Richard Brown has argued that in the thirteen colonies the coffee house was a hub of public information expressed in newspapers and conversations and the source of information and intrigue for private correspondence.28 Similarly, from the coffee houses of Halifax and Québec City news could be sent or received, connecting patrons with greater transatlantic networks of information and opinion. For example, sea captains would leave bags out for the parcels and would, in turn, deliver mail directly to the coffee house. Henry Juncken, hoping to send a letter to London, writes: “went to Furgusons [Merchant’s Coffee House] to see which of the Captns had a Bag there to receive Letters for London. The Manuelle Capt. Edwards had one there and he is to sail toDay....”29 On another occasion, Juncken writes that mail had arrived for him: “Thomas Furguson [sic] of the Coffee House told me in the Market, there was a Letter for me at his house, I went home with him had the letter, and

27 Halifax Gazette 14 May 1761, 2.
29 BANQQ, P119, P1 Journal de Henry Juncken, typed transcription, 5 November 1788, 51.
Reflecting the coffee house’s role as a central distribution point for mail, if the particular address of an individual was unknown, it would not be uncommon to have the package sent automatically to the local coffee house in the hope that it would eventually find the intended recipient.

The same currents of communication that brought letters and oral reports into the coffee house also carried newspapers, magazines and other print items. In the early years of the nineteenth century at the Exchange Coffee House in Saint John, New Brunswick patrons were offered “Lloyds list, a London Paper Publish’d three times a Week, a New York and Boston daily paper and a Halifax and St. John weekly paper, [and] to provide Fuwell and Candle Light for the same and a Blank Book for the Insertion of News and pen, ink and paper….” Readers of newspapers in Halifax and Québec City were informed that coffee houses throughout the northern British Atlantic contained prints with the “freshest” news and while no lists of print materials for the coffee houses in Halifax and Québec City are known to exist the establishments would likely have offered a similarly wide selection of items to read. James Rivington — sometime bookseller in Halifax and rumoured double-agent in the American Revolution — understanding the connection between social interaction and print, established a successful printing

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30 BANQQ, P119, P1 Journal de Henry Juncken, typed transcription, 3 December 1788, 91.
31 This was the case when Ward Chipman Sr. sent Samuel Jones a letter via a New York coffee house. “Dear Sir, It was with great Pleasure I received yours of the 8th March. I found it at the Coffee-House — how long it had been there I cannot tell; for I have neither seen nor heard of Mr. Sebor who I suppose brought it. When you write again please to direct to the care of Andrew van Fogel Merchant in New York.” Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (LAC), MG23-D1 Ward Chipman (Senior and Junior) fonds, Samuel Jones to Ward Chipman, New York, 1 July 1784, Reel C-1179.
33 Halifax Gazette 14 May 1761, 2.
business, a newspaper, and a coffee house in New York. It is, then, perhaps no coincidence that Henry Juncken tells of newspaper publisher William Moore’s frequent patronage of Merchant’s Coffee House in Québec City. At Merchant’s, Moore could talk with captains from the packet ships, pick up newspapers and receive other intelligence for his *Quebec Herald*. In this sense, the coffee house had the potential to take on the dual role of being the terminus for transatlantic print and the source for colonial publications.

Through the print medium, we can also observe that colonial coffee houses were perceived as places for the distribution of print in such various formats as correspondence, handbills, pamphlets and essays. In 1754, an article republished in the *Halifax Gazette* was prefaced by the fact that “the following Pieces have been handed about at some of the Coffee-Houses” in London. Merchant’s Coffee House, in Québec City boasted a dedicated “Board of Intelligence” where information of public interest could be posted, and later published — as William Moore did in May 1790 — reporting delays in the mail service due to a problem with the packet ships. Later, a writer under the name *A Citizen*, in prefacing a series of satirical verses submitted to the *Quebec Herald*, claimed that: “I FOUND the inclosed LECTURE on HEADS last evening in St. Peter’s Street, near the Coffee-House. The original Manuscript, from lying in the snow being a little effaced, curiosity prompted me to dry it, and make a fair copy…” It is clear from the tone of the verses — based upon *Herald* publisher William Moore’s own comical interpretation of the “Lecture on Heads” — that the preface is a ruse, perhaps to distance or absolve the anonymous contributor from scrutiny of the satirical piece that he

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36 *Halifax Gazette* 13 December 1754, 3-4.
37 *Quebec Herald* 6 May 1790, 189.
38 *Quebec Herald* 7 March 1791, 124.
found, but did not write. Regardless of the intentions of the writer, he nonetheless believed that the public would accept the idea that such a piece could have been delivered, and subsequently discarded, near the coffee house.

Coffee houses in Halifax and Québec City also offered a space for people to congregate and engage in what were seen as refined, or elite entertainments. Advertisements in colonial newspapers told of the instruction of dance and languages at coffee houses as well as the hosting of balls, dancing assemblies, theatrical events and concert performances. Such events, much like newspapers and other print material, were provided by coffee house proprietors to offer catalysts for conversation, opinion, and the general entertainment of patrons. In Britain, some establishments advertised cabinets of curiosities and other entertainments that would have been unconventional in the original seventeenth-century businesses. Don Saltero’s coffee house, in particular, became a popular destination. In 1775, loyalist diarist Samuel Curren could not resist the allure of Saltero’s and, after visiting the nearby New England Coffee House, paid a visit “where we drank Tea and were entertained with a sight of the curiosities there, consisting of many kinds both of Nature and art, remarkable antique dresses, exotic plants, minerals, fish, reptiles, insects, &c. &c.…” The breadth of the collections held at Saltero’s can be seen in the over four dozen editions of the artefact catalogue that were published as a souvenir or in efforts to attract further visitors to the Chelsea establishment.

40 The English Short Titles Index lists 13 different versions of the catalogue that is believed to have been published yearly between 1731 and at least 1795. In 1731, the coffee house boasted a collection of 271 items ranging from a “Model of our Blessed Saviour’s Sepulchre at Jerusalem” to a “Skeleton of a Child.” By the last known catalogue in 1795, it appears that the number had grown to 711 items in 17 display cases and mounted on the walls of the coffee house. The range of items included religious relics, animal specimens, human and other remains, clothing, weapons, coins and the like. See: Catalogue of the Rarities To Be Seen at Don Saltero’s Coffee House in Chelsea To which is added, a Complete List of Donors 164
While neither Halifax, nor Québec City could boast an establishment as famous as Will’s coffee house in London — or offer cabinets of curiosities like those found at Don Saltero’s — local coffee house proprietors nonetheless advertised what they believed to be credible colonial equivalents. In addition to dances, concerts and theatre performances, coffee house proprietors advertised scientific, or pseudo-scientific, displays, ventriloquism⁴¹ and the mounting of historical and popular personages in wax.⁴² In September 1769, the proprietor of Québec City’s British Coffee House, advertised a series of lectures on pneumatics advertised in September 1769, “containing a variety of the principal and most important Experiments on the Air-Pump and Condensing-Engine, those curious machines by which the several wonderful Properties and Effects of the Air, or Atmosphere, are demonstrated, and in a very entertaining Manner made sensible to us.” Pneumatics, the advertisement argued, was one of the most important new sciences of the era, as “there is scarce any Subject in Natural Philosophy that has given Rise to a greater Variety of Experiments, or that affords a more satisfactory Entertainment.” The lectures were aimed at an educated though non-specialist audience and potential patrons were reassured that:

as it is presumed that many who attend these Lectures, may perhaps not have made Philosophy a previous Study, Care has been taken in compiling them, to make every Experiment as plain and explicit as the Nature of the Subject will admit of; and to render them in every Respect a polite and rational Amusement to those who are happy enough to have any Taste for Knowledge.⁴³

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⁴¹ Royal Gazette (Halifax) 15 November 1808, 3; Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 23 December 1808, 3.
⁴² For examples see: Royal Gazette (Halifax) 6 January 1795, 3; Royal Gazette (Halifax) 11 July 1809, 3.
⁴³ Quebec Gazette 14 September 1769, 3.

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In crafting the advertisement, the proprietor of the British Coffee House utilised several key terms and concepts that would have resonated amongst members of the colonial print ascendancy. The sociability that the British Coffee House offered was not intended for everyone. It specifically targeted the literate members of colonial society that valued a “polite” and “rational Amusement,” those particular individuals that possessed a “Taste for Knowledge.” Members of the colonial print ascendancy who had used the newspapers of the capitals as a vehicle of polite debate, rational expression, and the diffusion of useful knowledge, were the primary audience for these advertisements that played to their sensibilities of proper behaviour, refined entertainment, and elite association.

This idea of the coffee house as an elite space runs against the widely-held interpretation of the diverse, levelling and “community centre” nature of public houses in early-nineteenth century Canada. Nonetheless, the coffee house of eighteenth-century Halifax and Québec City stood apart from these later incarnations. Indeed, part of this process of fashioning coffee houses in the two capitals as elite spaces was to frame the establishments in what was perceived as an appropriately English or British style. Print, crucial to fostering the cultural imagination surrounding the coffee house, was complemented by tangible actions on the part of coffee house proprietors. At the most superficial level, coffee house proprietors in the capitals tended to name their establishments after famous London coffee houses, playing both upon public perceptions

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formed through first-hand experience and the numerous print accounts of coffee house life in Great Britain. Some names, such as the British Coffee House — used in both Halifax and Québec City — were explicit in portraying to patrons the nature of the establishment. Others served as more subtle transatlantic namesakes, such as Halifax’s Pontac, Mermaid, Exchange and Jerusalem coffee houses, or Québec City’s Union, London and Merchant’s coffee houses. Names such as the Exchange or Merchant’s clearly indicated the purported focus on business, while titles such as the Pontac or Mermaid connoted spaces of refined sociability and merriment. In Québec City, the use of familiar British-inspired names was not as prevalent as it was in Halifax. Instead, the name of their proprietor was favoured, such as Franks’ Tavern and Coffee House, or Alex Cairn’s Quebec Coffee House in Québec City. Despite these exceptions, it is clear that a concerted effort was made by several proprietors to emulate names (such as the British Coffee House or General Wolfe’s) that carried with them an air of

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45 Timbs writes that the British Coffee-House was in Cockspur-street and famous for its Scottish patronage and agreeable landladies, one of which (a Mrs. Anderson) is described as “a woman of uncommon talents, and the most agreeable conversation.” Timbs, Clubs and Club Life in London, 315.
46 The Pontac, also known as the Great Pontac, or Old Pontac, was built in Halifax in 1754. Named after a similar establishment in London, it soon became one of city’s principal hotel-taverns. In December 1758, the lease on the property, including all furniture, was advertised to have expired. Any interested parties were advised to contact the landlord George Suckling. Willis took over the establishment in 1769. See: George Mullane, “Old Inns and Coffee Houses of Halifax,” 2.
47 Several Mermaid Taverns existed in London, the most famous hosted the Mermaid Club, and boasted such patrons as Walter Raleigh, William Shakespeare and John Donne. Timbs, Clubs and Club Life in London, 7-9.
48 The Exchange was a common name for coffee houses throughout the Atlantic. In addition to the Exchange Coffee House situated in London, there was also Exchange Coffee Houses in Boston, Massachusetts and Saint John, New Brunswick.
49 The Jerusalem Coffee House was situated in Cornhill, near the Royal Exchange and was still active during the time of Timbs. Timbs, Clubs and Club Life in London, 293-294.
50 Aytoun Ellis writes that the Union and New Union Coffee Houses were found in Cornhill, near the Royal Exchange in London. Ellis, The Penny Universities, 126.
51 The London Coffee House opened around 1731 and was situated by St. Martin’s Church, near Ludgate, London. Timbs, Clubs and Club Life in London, 345-347.
52 Merchant’s was a commonly-used coffee house name. There was one in Shelburne, Nova Scotia during the 1780s, another in Philadelphia and one in New York from 1737 to 1804. See: Port Roseway Gazeteer and Shelburne Advertiser (Shelburne) 19 May 1785, 3; “Tablet for Famous Old Coffee House,” New York Times 24 May 1914, 14.
familiarity, connotations of sociability and commerce and reflected the nationality of their preferred clientele in a divided town.

Proprietors of such unmistakably British-sounding establishments went to great lengths to publicize in print equally grand, refined and transatlantic inspired services to colonial readers. An advertisement in the nascent *Halifax Gazette* in 1752 proclaimed the opening of a new coffee house in the town, “with the Approbation of His Excellency the Governor,” where patrons could drink refreshments or be taught dancing, or French. In 1768, Halifax’s William Fury boasted “a Commodious Coffee-Room” in which “he will always take particular Care to be furnished with every Thing of the best in its Kind.” Adjacent to the coffee house, Fury also advertised, “a neat Garden to walk in, stock’d with a Variety of the best English fruit Trees and now in bearing.” Halifax’s “Great” Pontac, best known under the ownership of John Willis, epitomized what could be considered the typical full-service coffee house and tavern of the period. Willis advertised that the *raison d’être* of his establishment was to “improve in Public Entertainment” by providing a space where “Gentlemen, of every Profession, both of Town and Country, may rely on Being genteely entertained at the most reasonable Rates.” In these spaces, men could conduct business, refresh themselves after their work, read, or discuss the latest news.

Indeed, the promotion of coffee houses as being a place of “genteel entertainment” was a hallmark of many advertisements placed in local newspapers by the

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53 *Halifax Gazette* 25 April 1752, 2.
54 *Nova-Scotia Gazette* (Halifax) 5 May 1768, 3.
55 ibid.
56 *Nova-Scotia Chronicle* (Halifax) 24 October 1769, 343.
establishments’ proprietors. Coffee house proprietors such as Elizabeth Brehm, Mrs. Sutherland — whose establishment was a favourite with the North British and Irish Societies — and Elizabeth Taylor also promoted the respectability of their establishments in the press. In particular, Taylor advertised that her Bristol, or British Coffee House offered “genteel Entertainment… for accommodating Gentlemen and Ladies either in travelling or refreshing on Recreation.” In Québec City, coffee house proprietors promoted their establishments in a similar fashion. During the late 1760s, the British Coffee House was known to host lectures in natural philosophy. Thomas Ferguson, owner of Merchant’s Coffee House, advertised the best “provisions, liquors and attendants, the country can produce,” adding that “dinners, suppers, &c. &c.,” could be provided at the “shortest notice,” and travellers could be provided with “good lodgings.” Likewise, John Frank’s Tavern and Coffee-House at the Free-Masons-Hall in Québec City also boasted a variety of services, “where Ladies and Gentlemen can be accommodated with Board, convenient Lodgings, Breakfasts, Dinners, &c. Coffee or Tea provided at short notice… with the best viands and liquors that can be procured.” The promotion of the coffee house as genteel enough for ladies as well as gentlemen illustrates how this type of establishment was purposely fashioned in the press as a forum for proper interaction, a sociability that was markedly different than that found in the typical colonial alehouses.

57 Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 16 May 1780, 3.
59 Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 14 September 1779, 3.
60 Quebec Gazette 14 September 1769, 3.
61 Quebec Herald 24 November 1788, 1.
62 Quebec Herald 22 June 1789, 267.
Perhaps it was the colonial belief that coffee houses were a more exclusive and elevated place of sociability that prompted colonial coffee house proprietors to charge—at least initially—a subscription fee for the use of the coffee room. In the London coffee houses, it was common to pay an initial charge, such as a penny upon entering the coffee house (that was used to defray the cost of lighting and newspapers) and then two-pence for a cup of tea or coffee.\textsuperscript{63} Traditionally, scholars of the coffee house have viewed this fee as having a permissive, rather than restrictive function. As coffee house historian Aytoun Ellis famously wrote, “one penny was all that was needed by any man, rich or poor, to gain entry.”\textsuperscript{64} It was only later as fees increased, Ellis continued, that the coffee house transformed into the more exclusive club where the charge was seen as a deterrent. In America, however, literary historian David Shields argues that a subscription fee was used to cover necessary expenses and as a deterrent, as it paid “for candles and the many newspapers dispersed through the room, [and] it served in effect to keep the indigent out-of-doors.”\textsuperscript{65} It appears that in Halifax and Québec City subscription fees were employed initially by coffee house proprietors to add an additional cachet of respectability and indeed exclusivity to their establishments.

In Halifax, an advertisement under the heading “Subscription Coffee-Room” praised the opening of the coffee room at the Prince Edward Hotel in 1795. Observing the popularity of the newly opened establishment, the advertisement proclaimed that: “The Subscription is already signed by a great Number of the principal Merchants and Inhabitants. — Such Gentlemen as choose to join in so laudable an Undertaking, can be informed of the Rules and Terms of the Subscription by applying to Mr. Wm. Williams,

\textsuperscript{63} Timbs, \textit{Clubs and Club Life in London}, 300.
\textsuperscript{64} Ellis, \textit{Penny Universities}, 45.
\textsuperscript{65} Shields, \textit{Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America}, 59.
who is appointed Treasurer to the Subscribers.” From the language used, it is clear that the proprietor was trying to convey the unique and elevated nature of his coffee room. The advertisement fashioned it as an orderly and “laudable” space with set rules of conduct, designed for “Gentlemen” and already receiving the patronage of Halifax’s “principal Merchants and Inhabitants.” There is no evidence of how much the subscription fee was; however, at the Exchange Coffee House in neighbouring Saint John, New Brunswick, an annual levy of twenty shillings was not unheard of and ensured patrons access to the coffee house as well as six different newspapers, candles and writing paper. The early nineteenth-century travel writer John Lambert, in recounting the history of Québec City’s Union Coffee House, observed that its proprietor once charged an annual subscription fee of two guineas. This fee was eventually dropped, which in Lambert’s estimation was a poor decision, since the room then became, “open to all without distinction.”

By drawing together disparate manuscript and print accounts, we can see that members of the colonial print ascendancy gravitated to the coffee houses promoted as elite, refined and British in late-eighteenth century Halifax and Québec City. During his 1786 stay in the city, Joseph Hadfield made a point to observe the people that he encountered during one of his frequent visits to an unnamed coffee house. “In the evening we went to the Coffee House which is very much frequented. Mr. L[ymburner] took this opportunity of introducing me to the first characters of the place, among which

66 Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 7 March 1795, 3.
67 NBM, Oversize Collections, OS F4, 1, Saint John Exchange Coffee House, subscription list, 1803-1804.
were Captain Grant, who married the Baroness de Longueil, Mr. Fraser, Mr. Lees, Mr. Lester, Mr. Blackwood, Mr. Freeman, Mr. Young, Mr. Cameron, Dr. Fisher, Mr. Harrison and Mr. B. Frazier. We remained here till super time, and then returned home."

Hadfield’s list observing merchants, physicians, militia officers and bureaucrats offers a veritable cross-section of Québec’s literate, English-speaking society. Henry Juncken who visited Merchant’s Coffee House — also in the Lower Town — almost daily tells of his association with a slightly less auspicious, though aspiring group of merchants and tradesmen, including “[William] George the Brewer,” “Furgusson the tailor,” auctioneer and schoolmaster John Jones and Quebec Herald printer William Moore. In a telling use of the press, coffee house proprietor Thomas Fergusson related his thanks after moving to larger premises in 1791, to “the Merchants, his friends and the public in general, to the commanders of vessels and transient gentlemen. &c. for their past favours” and requested their continued patronage for the newly reopened Merchant’s Coffee House.

In Halifax, a similar group of merchants, ships’ captains, travellers, and civil and military officers could be found in the city’s coffee houses. Such was the case in August 1764 when Halifax merchant Henry Meriton asked his creditors to meet him at 5 o’clock one afternoon at the Pontac. A similar notice in the Halifax Gazette appealed to “Gentlemen in Trade” requesting them to meet at the British Coffee House on 26

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70 Entry 31st July 1785, in Douglas S. Robertson, ed., An Englishman in America 1785 Being the Diary of Joseph Hadfield, (Toronto: Hunter-Rose Co. Ltd., 1933), 125-126. Biographies of all in attendance with the exception of Constant Freeman can be found in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography. All were merchants, with the exception of Garrison Surgeon Fisher, and most were members of the colonial militia. Archival documents from the Massachusetts Historical Society shed light on the mercantile life of Freeman. See: Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston (MHS), Minot Family Papers.
71 BANQ, P119,P1 Journal de Henry Juncken, typed transcription, 1788-1789, 16 December 1789, 149.
72 Quebec Herald 2 May 1791, 1.
73 Halifax Gazette 10 August 1754, 2.
December 1765, “as Matters of importance would be set before them.” Likewise, the merchant and diarist Simeon Perkins, member of the Nova Scotia legislature for Queen’s, occasionally writes of boarding at Sutherland’s Coffee House when in Halifax on business or to attend the assembly. In the late 1770s, while in Halifax, Perkins, the governor, speaker and members of assembly had formal dinners at various coffee houses in town, including the Pontac, and later the Wentworth Hotel.

Colonists in mercantile and civic professions were not the only patrons who found the coffee house a familiar and attractive space for business, relaxation and discussion. As with the merchants of the colony, the officers of the British Army and Royal Navy also embraced the coffee houses of Québec City and Halifax. It is perhaps unsurprising that the garrison — a physical extension of Empire, not unlike that of the coffee house — gained comfort from the coffee rooms stocked with British newspapers, with menus of traditional dishes and familiar beverages. Such was the importance of the coffee house to the entertainment of the military officers that they would even set up the establishments, when none existed, to ease the rigors of frontier life. British army lieutenant Thomas Anburey wrote of his captivity during the American Revolution: “It being the universal opinion throughout the army, that we shall remain prisoners the remainder of the war, the British officers contributed to render their situation as comfortable as the nature of the

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74 *Halifax Gazette* 26 December 1765, 4.
77 In 1776, Anburey left England for Canada as an ensign in the British army and subsequently served during the Revolutionary War. Many of his anecdotes and observations were later found to be plagiarised, or embellished from a variety of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century authors on America. See: Whitfield J. Bell, Jr, “Thomas Anburey’s ‘Travels Through America’: A Note on Eighteenth-century Plagiarism,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 37 (1943): 23-36.
country will possibly allow, and to promote association, they have erected a coffee-
house, a theatre, and a cold bath, to tense up the relaxed state of the body, the intense heat
of the climate occasions.”

The soldiers and officers who resided in, or visited, Halifax and Québec City did not have to set up temporary coffee houses; instead they had the choice of several existing establishments.

Coffee houses provided hospitable quarters for travelling officers, an informal space where officers could be entertained and refreshed, discuss current events, or recall past campaigns. In Halifax, the surgeon Julius Friedrich Wasmus wrote in 1781 that a British military party consisting of “Capt. Tonge, his 2 lieuts., the doctor and I moved into the big coffeehouse, called ‘The Golden Ball,’ by Mr. O’Brien.” There the party stayed until a ship could be found to continue Wasmus’ journey to Québec. Coffee house proprietors, seeing military officers as respectable and valuable customers, publicly encouraged their custom. In July 1789, Thomas Ferguson, the proprietor of Merchant’s Coffee House, took out an advertisement in the Quebec Herald on the occasion of the departure of the 53rd Regiment to thank the officers of the regiment for their patronage and to wish them a “pleasant and speedy passage to their desired port.”

Military officers, in particular, provided a direct, physical link to the opinions and customs of Great Britain, as well as offering a global perspective on any discussions of colonial affairs. As in the case of colonial theatre, members of the British Army and Royal Navy felt comfortable in the convivial and familiar space of British custom that undoubtedly eased the rigors of garrison duty half-a-world from home.

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78 Thomas Anburey, Travels through the interior parts of America. In a series of letters. By an officer. ... (London, 1789), 442-443.
80 Quebec Herald 3 August 1789, 319.
On the other hand, Black and First Nations inhabitants — mentioned later as tavern patrons and proprietors in the colonial interior\textsuperscript{81} — are virtually ignored in both the manuscript and print accounts of the coffee houses of eighteenth-century Halifax and Québec City. In Québec City, this may be partly attributable to the fact that the local Algonquin peoples had avoided integration with the French settlement and this separation continued after the installation of the British colonial administration.\textsuperscript{82} The Mi’kmaq residing near Halifax had endured years of strenuous and hostile relations with the settlers\textsuperscript{83} and contemporary reports observe that they frequently conducted business on their own terms or on their own territory, avoiding Halifax and its Anglo-centric coffee houses.\textsuperscript{84}

In regard to the colonial Black community, relatively few Blacks (and even fewer free Blacks) lived in Québec and Nova Scotia before the American Revolution.\textsuperscript{85} Even after the Revolutionary War influx, Black settlements such as Birch Town (near Shelburne) and Preston (near Halifax) were physically and culturally separated from

\textsuperscript{81} For example, Captain Thomas, “an Indian of considerable consequence” from the Montréal era, when in Kingston, stayed and conducted business at the coffee house during the 1790s. See: H.H. Langton, ed., Patrick Campbell, \textit{Travels in the interior inhabited parts of North America in the years 1791 and 1792}, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1937), 138. Further into the interior, it was also not uncommon to find First Nations people not only conducting business in public houses, but also being the proprietors. See: Langton, ed., Patrick Campbell, \textit{Travels in the interior}, 184, 216; Charles M. Johnson, ed., “A Six Nations Council at Fort George, October 8, 1803,” in \textit{The Valley of the Six Nations: A Collection of Documents on the Indian Lands of the Grand River}, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1964), 105.


\textsuperscript{84} See for example: NSARM, MG 1, Volume 797 a-d (c)#1, Rev. John Seccombe Journal.

\textsuperscript{85} Numbers of the pre-Revolutionary War Black community, as with much demographic information from the era, is incomplete. For Québec in particular see: Marcel Trudel, \textit{L'esclavage au Canada Français}, (Québec : Presses de l’Université Laval, 1960); Marcel Trudel, \textit{Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires}, (Montréal : Éditions Hurtubise HMH, 1990).
white society. This social separation, let alone the costs involved in frequenting coffee houses, may have made the establishments an unappealing place for Blacks to congregate. Furthermore, coffee houses were also well-known places of auction, including slave auctions in some American colonies, which may have given the institution an added stigma for Black colonists.

One did not have to be of Black, First Nations or lower class origin to feel alienated from the British-fashioned sociability of coffee houses. In Maurice Lemire’s comprehensive study of the literary culture of eighteenth-century Québec, he and his team of historians identify several agents and fora of the colony’s intellectual culture, in particular highlighting the importance of societies (les pratiques associatives), theatre, print and publishing. Québec’s coffee houses are not to be found in this otherwise exhaustive analysis. More recently, historian Yves Lamonde argues that Québec enjoyed a rich intellectual culture marked by « des groupes sociaux [qui] suscident une activité intellectuelle remarquable dont la Chambre d’assemblée, les brochures, les « gazettes » et les cafés deviennent les forums. » Yet, his mentioning of the cafés of Québec is a nominal acknowledgement, focusing instead on the other fora that exhibited what he calls the traces of « opinion publique naissante. »

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86 James Walker writes: “Yet, because they were kept separate these institutions did not lead blacks into white society. Rather, they encouraged the development of a parallel society: black, Christian and to some extent educated, different from their white neighbours but different too from the slave culture they had left behind.” James W. St. G. Walker, The Black Loyalists: the Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone 1783-1870, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 85.


90 ibid.
Did French Canadians in Québec City, then, avoid the coffee houses that were purposely fashioned in a model of British gentility? The scarcity of primary documents concerning coffee house life makes it difficult to draw any concrete conclusions. As historian David-Thierry Ruddel has observed, the English-speaking merchants of Québec enjoyed a “slightly higher status” and it appears that the coffee house appealed to that perceived elevation. Nonetheless, if French Canadians wanted to interact with English-speaking colonists in the coffee house, then they would undoubtedly attend. Indeed, reports such as those found in the Quebec Gazette during 1792 observed that the Constitutional Club (formed to debate the impact of the Constitutional Act) boasted a mixed anglophone and francophone membership and met at Frank’s Coffee House and Tavern. The two requisite elements of the British-styled coffee house was entertainment (print or otherwise) and discussion, two elements that appear to have been conducted in the English language. Even French Canadians with the necessary language skills may have preferred to discuss ideas in a more private setting, such as the salon, where participants could freely express their thoughts in their native tongue in a manner characteristic of the intellectual custom of France.

In the late eighteenth century, coffee houses in Halifax and Québec City were exclusive spaces of entertainment and exchange. During the day, colonial coffee houses accommodated merchants, military officers, and other citizens who engaged in business

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91 Ruddel, Québec City, 61.
92 The club, by its own admission, was founded to promote an understanding of the British Constitution, the Québec Act, and the Constitutional Act, as well as to promote agriculture and commerce for the good of the colony. See: John Hare, Aux Origines du Parlementarisme Québécois, 1791-1793, (Sillery: Les Éditions de Septentrion, 1993), 38-43, 45.
or simply desired a respite between engagements. In the evenings, coffee house proprietors tried to lure back the same clientele by promoting entertainments so suitably genteel that they could be enjoyed by “gentlemen” and “ladies” alike. Print proved to be integral to both the operation and the perception of coffee houses in the colonial capitals. Fashioned on a British model of sociability, coffee rooms and coffee houses became natural hubs of English-language communication, much like that experienced in the newspapers and theatre of Halifax and Québec City.

Coffee houses can also be considered central to the process of elite formation in the two capitals. As a space of refined sociability, members of the print ascendency turned to the coffee house, as a suitable place to host the exclusive clubs and subscription societies in British Halifax and Québec City. This included, for example, the Halifax physicians John Halliburton and Duncan Clark who would join lieutenant-governor Sir John Wentworth, along with several prominent merchants — and on occasion Prince Edward — at the Pontac coffee house where they formed a weekly literary coterie. In the next chapter we will further explore the associative actions of Halliburton and Clark and other members of the colonial print ascendency. There it will be argued that societies — like the theatre and coffee houses — can be seen as another example of a point where print, identity, ideas of elite sociability and behaviour merged on the colonial periphery.

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Chapter 7: The Case of Clubs and Societies

On 2 November 1786, the membership of North British Society unanimously elected Dr. John Halliburton as president.¹ For his first executive act, Halliburton nominated Thomas Robertson and Dr. Duncan Clark as “assistant Presidents,” a motion that also received the universal approval of the membership.² This day marked for Halliburton and Clark, in particular, the pinnacle of their meteoric rise in the organisation chartered to assist and advance the welfare of Scots in Halifax. Both men, who had only joined the society six and two years earlier respectively,³ were well-liked and sociable. Both were Scots, had studied in Edinburgh and served with the Royal Navy as physicians. Reflecting upon this period, one historian of the North British Society observed that Halliburton was one of the “most popular” presidents the Society ever had.⁴ Clark was no less popular, being elected president two subsequent times.⁵ Association life was important for both of these Haligonians, witnessed in their participation in the North British Society and in their efforts as longstanding freemasons to establish a lodge for members of the Royal Navy.⁶ Clark would later serve in several administrative roles in freemasonry, becoming in 1800 the Grand Master of Nova Scotia.⁷ Both Halliburton and Clark, also known for their informal literary coterie at the coffee house, believed not

² ibid.
³ NSARM, MG 20, Volume 230, North British Society, Treasurer’s Records, Articles of the North British Society, 1768 [ -1786].
⁵ ibid., 45.
⁶ NSARM, MG 20, Volume 2003, Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, #4, Royal Navy Lodge No. 18, 1787-1804.
only in the importance of club sociability, but in the value of print to inform society discussions.

This chapter explores the relationship between the domestic press and the formation, promotion and functioning of various societies and clubs in Halifax and Québec City. From the newspapers of the capitals we can see that a vibrant society and club life existed. Initially founded to look after the interests of the members, several colonial societies and clubs became more concerned with the greater public good as the eighteenth century drew to a close. Print not only chronicled this change in club life; it was employed to effect this change. Through the printed word, concerns over the importance of club life in personal and civic formation were debated. The printed word informed societies and clubs, giving members a transatlantic perspective on current events as well as providing knowledge of the best and worst practices exhibited elsewhere. Print also informed the reading public — including club members — of the results of the activities of societies, including charitable events, taking place in the community. While functional literacy was not a prerequisite for colonial societies, a greater cultural literacy — as exhibited by those who aspired to be a part of the colonial elite — became increasingly important to club life. Colonial societies, as theatre and coffee houses, used the newspaper as a tool of elite formation. Members of the colonial print ascendancy took part in societies and print was increasingly used to inform, or seek the approval of, club activities with other members of that print ascendancy.

Colonial societies, and in particular voluntary societies, have been considered integral to the social fabric of Victorian Canada. However, studies of their influence on

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eighteenth-century British North America have been more piecemeal in nature. The French-language literature dealing with eighteenth-century clubs in Québec is quite rich and particularly details the literary nature that many societies exhibited and the role that they played in the cultural life of the colony. On the other hand, the writings on Halifax’s societies and sociability tend to overshadow any literary preoccupations, focusing instead on the practical aspects of freemasonry or voluntary organizations in providing charity to its members. The lack of an overarching approach to the study of eighteenth-century societies has perhaps given the impression that associations were sporadic and of little consequence in eighteenth-century Nova Scotia and Québec.

Drawing upon this secondary literature, historian Peter Clark downplays the importance of sociability and association in eighteenth-century British North America. Clark writes that, “associations made slow progress” in Québec and Nova Scotia. “Halifax, the capital of Nova Scotia,” he continues, “had several masonic lodges and a Scottish society by the 1760s…The French defeat at Quebec was celebrated by the

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formation of a military masonic lodge, though subsequent attempts to establish a philosophical society failed; only in the last years of the century do an agricultural society and one or two other bodies surface.”¹¹ Small in population and perceived as isolated on the colonial periphery, both Nova Scotia and Québec were slow to embrace the importance of associations evident elsewhere in the British Atlantic, Clark argues compellingly.

This interpretation, however, does not reflect the overwhelming evidence to the contrary that can found in the manuscript and print record. Dances, concerts, theatre, coffee house gatherings, clubs, salons and society meetings were all popular pastimes in eighteenth-century Halifax and Québec City. Primary accounts reveal that the relative isolation in the capitals did not inhibit sociability, but instead spurred it on, particularly during the harsh winter season. One Haligonian writing to loyalist Ward Chipman at the beginning of 1784 observed: “Our Winter hitherto has been Moderate…. The Governor is a hearty Old Soldier [who] loves Sociability… There is a good number of agreeable Ladies Young & Married, for their amusement There is an Assembly Every Fortnight very well regulated….¹² A few years later, Lieutenant William Dyott would write in his diary noting that the winter, “… was very gay at Halifax — plays, balls, and assemblies; not near so much whist as usual, but an abundance of good eating and

¹³ Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (LAC), MG23-D1 Ward Chipman (Senior and Junior) fonds, George Townsend to Ward Chipman, 12 January 1784, 1207-1208, Reel C-1180.
drinking.” Similarly, Isaac Weld who travelled through Upper and Lower Canada in the 1790s remarked that “the society in Quebec is agreeable, and very extensive for a place of the size, owing to its being the capital of the lower province, and there the residence of the governor, different civil officers, principal lawyers, &c. &c. The large garrison constantly kept in makes the place appear very gay and lively.” Thomas Aston Coffin, a senior bureaucrat and aide to Governor Dorchester, would frequently reassure his mother in Boston about the joie de vivre experienced in Québec society, even during the isolation of winter: “Tho’ surrounded with Ice & Snow,” he wrote in December of 1790, “we enjoy health & are at least as social as in any other quarter of the Globe — our amusements of concerts, assemblies, &c. are commencing — friendly meetings are also very frequent.” In spite of the distance of Halifax and Québec City from the major centres of Britain and America, the inhabitants of the capitals were no less interested in gathering and being sociable.

Indeed, as general sociability was popular, so too were formal clubs and societies. Residents of both Halifax and Québec City maintained connections from a distance with various British- and American-based societies. As we saw in chapter two, the Rev. Dr. Andrew Brown was a Contributing Member of the Rev. Dr. Jeremy Belknap’s

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15 Isaac Weld, Travels Through the States of North America and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada during the Years 1795, 1796 and 1797, (London: John Stockdale, 1799), 200-201.
16 Coffin tells his mother that his official title is “Commissary and Controller of Public Accounts to the Forces in North America.” In the 1790 Quebec City Directory, Coffin is listed as “Controller of Accounts and Assistant Secretary to Lord Dorchester.” See: Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston (MHS), Ms. N-1005, Thomas Aston Coffin papers, letter, Thomas Aston Coffin (Québec) to Mrs. Coffin (Boston), 12 April 1787, P-758, Reel 2; Hugh Mackay, ed., The Directory for the city and Suburbs of Quebec, (Quebec: William Moore, 1790); Also, see: Marcel Caya, “Coffin, Thomas Aston,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online, Volume V, www.biographi.ca (Accessed on 13 July 2009).
17 MHS, Ms. N-1005, Thomas Aston Coffin papers, Letter: Thomas Aston Coffin (Québec) to Mrs. Coffin (Boston) 9 December 1790, P-758, Reel 2.
Massachusetts Historical Society. In the late eighteenth century, Québec Chief Justice Peter Livius and physician John Mevin Nooth maintained their membership and connections to the Royal Society of London. At the same time, other colonists such as Thomas Davies (Commander of the Artillery at Québec) and Dr. George Longmore gave papers, or offered ethnological samples to the Society.

In addition to participating at a distance in transatlantic societies, the inhabitants of Halifax and Québec City also formed their own local clubs. Small private gatherings in the form of salons, card clubs, and teas figured prominently, as is attested in correspondence from the era. Thomas Aston Coffin, for example, writes how he dined on a weekly basis in the 1790s with a small cadre of soldiers and civil servants at the house of Adam Mabane, where literary, scientific and political issues were discussed with the Scottish physician and former Québec Chief Justice. The journals of James Thompson, Sr., Overseer of Works at Québec, detail how — apart from his regular duties maintaining the city’s fortifications and public buildings — he in 1788 had seventeen card tables especially crafted for Lady Dorchester to entertain ladies in her parlor. Thompson’s journals also describe in great detail his Order of the Gateau, a private gathering replete with fabricated rituals and rules of conduct that he hosted for a select group of his friends. The merchant Henry Juncken writes of frequent gatherings over whist, backgammon and flute playing with fellow Germans and other friends in Québec.

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18 The Royal Society, London, GB 117, Certificates of Election and Candidature, Livius, Peter, EC/1773/10; Nooth, John Mervin, EC/1773/34.
20 MHS, Ms. N-1005, Thomas Aston Coffin papers, Letter: Thomas Aston Coffin (Quebec) to Mrs. Coffin (Boston), 5 January 1792, P-758, Reel 2.
21 Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales de Québec à Québec (BANQQ), P 450, Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, 1960-01-544/1, Journal, James Thompson Sr., 1787-88.
In Halifax, during the 1770s and early 1780s the loyalist Rev. Dr. Mather Byles, Jr. kept a “grand Parlor” finished with a “magnificent carpet” where he held salons, or entertained his “refugee friends.” The diary of twenty-year-old Mary Robie tells of her fondness for the dancing assembly and her frequent gatherings with others over tea. Indeed, one hallmark of letter writing from the period is the place given to the description of social activities and the resulting gossip.

In addition to the countless smaller and informal gatherings, there were also larger, organized societies framed by formal constitutions and requiring subscription fees. For example, during the last second half of the eighteenth century, Haligonians could participate in at least 9 different clubs and 15 separate freemason lodges. In Québec City, citizens had the choice of no less than 11 clubs and at least 16 freemason lodges (see appendix viii). Some of these colonially-based organisations were branches of greater transatlantic organisations, such as the Loyal Friendly Society of the Blue and Orange for members of the 30th Regiment of Foot or perhaps most famously, freemasonry. Other societies were specific to the nature or vicissitudes of colonial life. Both Halifax and

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23 BANQ, P119,P1 Journal de Henry Juncken, typed transcription, 1788-1789, 12 September 1788, 12, 7 November 1788, 56; 24 December 1788, 114; 1 January 1789, 124; 9 January 1789, 136; 13 January 1789, 143; 25 February 1789, 231; 2 May 1789, 308.
24 MHS, Byles Family Papers, letter Rev. Dr. Mather Byles Jr. (Halifax) to Rev. Dr. Mather Byles Sr. (Boston), 20 February 1784.?
25 MHS, Ms. N-804, Mary Sewell Robie Diary, 1783.
26 Typical of like military clubs, the Blue and Orange set up branches wherever the regiment was stationed in the British Empire. See: William MacArthur, “The Loyal and Friendly Society of Blue and Orange,” Notes and Queries s11-IV (1911): 170. Dyott was invested into the Society before he departed to North America and recalls the Halifax investiture of Prince William Henry in his diaries. See: Dyott’s Diary, 23, 41.
27 The transatlantic reach of Freemasonry has been perhaps best explored by Jessica Harland-Jacobs who writes that it: “was one institution that contributed to the development of these intracultural connections in the British Empire. By creating a global network that had both practical functions and ideological dimensions, Freemasonry played a critical role in building, consolidating, and perpetuating the empire.” See: Jessica Harland-Jacobs, “‘Hands Across the Sea’: The Masonic Network, British Imperialism, and the North Atlantic World,” Geographical Review 89,2 (1999): 239; also see: Jessica Harland-Jacobs, Builders of Empire: Freemasonry and British Imperialism, 1717-1927, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).
Québec City can be considered home to a variety of debating societies, benevolent, or friendly societies, agriculture societies, fire societies, veterans’ clubs, as well as private business clubs.

These colonial associations are notable for their organisational complexity, detailed written constitutions and the emphasis placed on the importance of propriety, order and democracy in their proceedings. Indeed, the first decision made by the North British Society in 1768 — that is after electing its moderator, stewards and monthly meeting time — was to procure a box (for dues and fines) and a mallet (for the moderator).28 The constitution of the North British Society made it clear that the conduct of members would be exemplary, or else there would be strict punishments. To “Blaspheme The Name of Almighty GOD by cursing, or Swearing,” for example, incurred a 6 pence fine, an amount that was raised to one shilling for every subsequent offence. Other 6 pence fines included not paying attention to the moderator, or leaving a meeting without the permission of the moderator. A dearer penalty of one shilling above the monthly dues was exacted for anyone missing three consecutive meetings without excuse. However, the largest fine — that of 2 shillings and 6 pence — was saved for those who missed the funerals of fellow members. Penalties other than those identified in the articles of the constitution were possible, but could only be enacted after being put to a vote of the membership.29 Similarly, in 1789 the initial constitution of the Quebec Benevolent Society also made provisions to ensure the regular attendance and the

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29 NSARM, MG 20, Volume 230, North British Society, Treasurer’s Records, Articles of the North British Society, 1768.
appropriate behaviour of members. “THAT upon the misbehaviour of any member,” the seventeenth article of the Society constitution warned:

Or members on a meeting night, by challenging to fight, or game, by offering wagers, party disputes, obscene discourse, oaths or drunkenness, for every such offence, shall be fined 1s. and not being silent when three times demanded by the President, or presiding officer, he or they so misbehaving shall forfeit 2s. & 6ds. each, and upon any further misbehaviour the same evening, the said member or members shall quit the room at the request of the President, or presiding officer, or foreit the sum of 10s.  

Benevolent societies, like other colonial organizations, valued free association, but regulation was nonetheless required to ensure that members would behave with decorum and propriety.

Perhaps the clearest example of this mix of sociability, regulation and propriety can be seen in the conduct of freemasons in the two colonial capitals. During the second half of the eighteenth century, freemasonry was the most prolific form of club sociability fuelled largely by the men of the colonial garrisons and navies of Halifax and Québec City. Freemasonry, the Rev. Brother Joshua Weeks preached in 1785, “reduces all men to a pleasing and rational equality. Beyond any institution of human origin it inculcates industry in acquiring, temperance in using, and charity in distributing the good things in life.” Indeed, men from a large cross-section of society in Halifax and Québec City associated under the mantle of colonial freemasonry. For example, every governor, or lieutenant governor of Nova Scotia during the second half of the eighteenth century was a freemason and were often called upon to be the Provincial Grand Master. Officers with

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30 Rules and Regulations of the Quebec Benevolent Society, 15. CIHM #55328.
31 Joshua Wingate Weeks, Sermon Presented at St. Paul’s Church in Halifax, On Friday, June 24th 1785, Being the Festival of St. John, Before the Grand Lodge and the Other Lodges of the Ancient and Honorable Society of Free and Accepted Masons, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, (John Howe: Halifax, 1785), 16.
32 See: Charges and Regulations of the Ancient and Honourable Society of Free and Accepted Masons Extracted from Ahiman Rezon &c., Together with A concise Account of the Rise and Progress of Free Masonry in Nova-Scotia, from the first Settlement to this Time..., (Halifax: John Howe, 1786).
both the garrison and the navy were members, as were prominent merchants, physicians and gentlemen.\footnote{For Québec City, see: The Library and Museum of Freemasonry (LMF), London, Merchants’ Lodge, No.151 [erased], Quebec, GBR 1991 AR/467, 1765 – 1789, “A List of Members of Merchants Lodge, No. 1 held at Free Masons Hall in the City of Quebec, Quebec 9 November 1789.” For Halifax see the various regimental lodge records held in the NSARM.} Through freemasonry, members of what can be considered the colonial print ascendency could freely associate with other literate colonists as well as those with varying degrees of literacy such as the shoemakers, cabinetmakers, tradesmen, butchers, bakers, sail-makers, mariners, tailors, tavern-keepers and gardeners that are listed on the Masonic rolls.\footnote{LMF, St Patrick’s Lodge, No. 153 [erased], Quebec, GBR 1991 AR/520, 1777 – 1789, “A List of the members of the St. Patricks Lodg, No. 3 Quebec held at the Cork Arms. 20th October 1789;” St. Andrew’s Lodge, No. 152 [erased], Quebec, GBR 1991 AR/476, 1760 – 1789, “List of the Members of St. Andrew’s Lodge No. 2 Quebec acting under a Warrant of Constitution dated at Quebec 20th October A.L. 5760 grant by the Honrble and Right Worshipful Colonel Simon Fraser then Provincial Grand Master of Masons in Canada… Quebec 25th October 1789.”} Although divided amongst different lodges, this cross-section of males in the capitals believed themselves united as demonstrated in their gathering for the celebration of their “rational equality” upon the death of a member or at a Masonic festival.

Freemasonry above all offered a convivial means for members to interact, recall past events, or discuss current issues affecting the community. “I don’t indeed know a more sociale pleasing & rational Way of spending an Evening with Company,” loyalist Dr. Peter Middleton the Provincial Grand Master of New York wrote in 1766, “than when the Rules of a Lodge are properly framely & religiously adhered to. It is usual here when Business is over for a Warden to ask Leave of the Master for the Members to hold free conversation. This is seldom denied; And then the brethren engage in chat at Liberty, till the Master’s mallet brings them again into Order.” Endavouring to create a balance amongst liberty, equality, rationality and order was indeed one of the principle

characteristics of eighteenth-century masonry. Lodge records from Halifax show that a great deal of attention was paid to the discipline of members who displayed “un-masonical behavior,” which generally included drunkenness, swearing, and the refusal to pay membership dues. One typical edict issued in 1787 to punish members’ behaviour read:

James Clark, late a Member in the Lodge No. 3 in the 57th Regiment, is finally excluded for Drunkeness, Non Attendance and other UnMasonical behaviour — And Wm. Kennedy of the same Lodge, is Suspended, for 6 Months from the 1st November last.

John Livingston late a Member of Lodge No. 52 in 37th Regt. is finally excluded, for NonAttendance and other Irregular and Un Masonical behaviour.\textsuperscript{36}

In most cases, such decisions were used as a warning and did not necessarily mean the permanent expulsion of a member. Even James Clark, who appeared to be a repeat offender, was returned to the brotherhood a few years after his expulsion.\textsuperscript{37} Like many other eighteenth-century organizations, freemasonry was preoccupied with the importance of balancing liberty and order. The fraternity allowed its members some latitude for free discussion, but also ensured that they maintained a high standard of conduct.

Print was an important vehicle that informed members of the colonial print ascendancy of club practices and values exhibited elsewhere. Newspapers would occasionally publish various rules advising readers about the best means to converse and

\textsuperscript{36} NSARM, MG 20, Volume 2006, Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, #6, Sion Lodge No. 3 (Halifax), 57th Regiment of Foot, 1786-1791.

\textsuperscript{37} As reads the text of the minutes concerning his readmission: “I am directed to Inform you, that James Clark formerly a member of / Sion Lodge but since Excluded for unmasonical Behaviour; has Petitioned to be readmitted as a member of / Sion Lodge No. 3 / The Lodge has on account of his good Behaviour for this Long time past, come to a Resolve to Admit him, providing it merits with the approbation of the Grand Lodge....” NSARM, MG 20, Volume 2006, Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, #6, Sion Lodge No. 3 (Halifax), 57th Regiment of Foot, 1786-1791.
otherwise interact within groups.\textsuperscript{38} Newspaper readers were also presented with a variety of club proceedings and news from Great Britain. Some of these proceedings were of direct commercial interest such as the Committee of Merchants Trading to North America that met at Tom’s Coffee House in London and was reported in the \textit{Halifax Journal}.\textsuperscript{39} Others stories of club life had more political interests in mind, such as reporting on British gatherings in opposition to the proposed Sedition Acts in 1796,\textsuperscript{40} or the reporting in Québec newspapers of British constitutional clubs in the years leading up to that colony’s constitutional change.\textsuperscript{41} Still other reports told of the pomp of Freemason activities,\textsuperscript{42} or of notable club happenings across the Atlantic.

Such was the case in 1789, when the \textit{Quebec Herald} printer William Moore noted the establishment of a new club in England by the province’s occasional resident William Henry, the Prince of Wales. Under the headline the “Je ne sais quoi” Moore observed that:

\begin{quote}
His Royal Highness the PRINCE of WALES has established a Club at the STAR and Garter under the above title.
As harmony, wit, humour, and conviviality so alternately prevail, how could a name less comprehensive than the present be allotted to it.
Under such a patron as it boasts, it must undoubtedly take the lead of all other societies.
Captain Warner, so well known for his harmonic voice, and elegant composition, has composed some delightful glees adapted to the club, which do the honour to his taste and judgement.\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{38} “Short Rules for CONVERSATION,” \textit{Halifax Gazette}, 21 November 1765, 1; “Thoughts on Various Subjects,” \textit{Halifax Gazette}, 21 November 1765, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{39} \textit{Halifax Journal} 11 February 1796, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{40} \textit{Halifax Journal} 3 March 1796, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{41} For example see, “Constitutional Club [of London],” \textit{Quebec Herald} 16 March 1789, 152; “Revolution Club, Edinburgh,” \textit{Quebec Herald} 24 February 1791, 105-106.
\item \textsuperscript{42} \textit{Halifax Gazette} 2 March 1754, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{43} \textit{Quebec Herald} 3 August 1789, 321.
\end{itemize}
This particular account is interesting for several reasons. Its inclusion in the newspaper provides evidence of the notoriety of the Prince who perhaps reciprocated his affection for the colony by bestowing his London club with an enigmatic French title. Furthermore, the article more clearly demonstrates a perceived interest in club life, at home and abroad, including a colonial familiarity with the Star and Garter, a popular and sociable London tavern. Finally, the article sheds light on the popular philosophy in the late eighteenth century — shared colonially and abroad — that club life was believed to necessarily feature “harmony, wit, humour, and conviviality” as well as an inherent eclecticism of activity and perspectives. Indeed, a British review of the Je ne scai quoi Club — published six years later — mirrors and expands upon the sentiments found in Quebec Herald. In the review, the Je Ne Scai Quoi Club was seen to possess the same “grace and dignity” that Prince William Henry exhibited and was particularly lauded for its core tenets, rooted in freemasonry. “Friendship, love, nobility of soul, universal benevolence, and all the sublime and ruling attributes of masonic science,” the author of the review wrote, “diffuse their most sacred influence.” Although separated from England by the Atlantic Ocean, colonists in both Halifax and Québec City were nonetheless fascinated by many of the same aspects of contemporary club life.

Print not only described club life elsewhere, it was also employed by a variety of colonial organisations to communicate with members, or promote their objectives to other members of the colonial print ascendancy. Colonial debating societies, for example, were one type of club with directors who were most eager to use the press. From the mid-eighteenth century, clubs formed for the express purpose of debating grew

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44 “The Je Ne Scai Quoi Club,” The Sporting Magazine, or Monthly Calendar of the Transactions of the Turf, the Chace and Every Other Diversion Interesting to the Man of Pleasure, Enterprize & Spirit 6 (1795): 83-84.
in popularity throughout America and Europe.\textsuperscript{45} The Select Society of Edinburgh, boasting the membership of Adam Smith, David Hume, Henry Home, historian William Robertson and physician William Cullen, became one of Britain’s most notable examples.\textsuperscript{46} In British America, secular oratory and debate also became a growing obsession. Historians such as Richard Brown, Sandra Gustafson and Christopher Grasso have all observed that during the period of the American Revolution oratory became less elitist and more radical, engaging a popular audience in an unprecedented manner.\textsuperscript{47} This transatlantic obsession with oratory was also present in Halifax and Québec City. However, unlike the situation argued to have existed in the thirteen colonies, public debate experienced a similar popular appeal without necessarily being inherently republican in nature.

Debating societies existed in both Halifax and Québec City, but those in Québec were especially embraced by the press. As early as 1774, a group calling themselves the Select Society (perhaps inspired by its auspicious Scottish namesake) had been established in the Montréal area for the discussion of literary topics. Three years later in Québec City the Minerva Free Debating Society comprised of English-speaking residents from that city was formed. William Brown, the printer of the \textit{Quebec Gazette}, wrote in describing the proceedings of the Minerva: “Few Men are Orators, ‘tis certain; however every Man who has common Sense and the Power of Speech can easily express his Ideas

in a Manner, tho’ not elegant, yet perfectly intelligible.”

The Minerva Society offers an example of the intersection of print and sociability, as Brown would use his press to publish both the resolutions and results of the debates. Considering that the Minerva Society functioned during the height of the American Revolution, it is perhaps unsurprising that the topics stayed away from genuinely contentious political issues, focusing instead on moral dilemmas such as if “a reformed Rake Makes the best Husband,” or whether “Duelling be of Advantage or Disadvantage to Society,” or if the “Laughing Philosopher” is wiser than the “Weeping Philosopher.” Nonetheless, these gatherings were designed as a means to practise rhetoric and inform the public of current issues in the fashion popular throughout the British Atlantic.

In terms of the sheer number of participants, the most popular debating society in Québec City was the Constitution Club. Formed in December 1791 to celebrate the Constitutional Act, the initial meeting and dinner attracted 165 participants. Over the following months a constitution and rules of procedure were established and the gathering was transformed into a debating club designed to promote, “free and reciprocal communication of sentiments, to acquire and diffuse a knowledge of the Constitution of Great Britain, and of this Colony.” Additional members were free to join as long as

48 *Quebec Gazette* 23 January 1777, 3.
49 The Select Society and Minerva are described in Rajotte « Les pratiques associatives... » 550-553.
50 Quebec Gazette 23 January 1777, 3. The reformed rake was deemed as the best husband, see: *Quebec Gazette* 30 January 1777, 4.
51 *Quebec Gazette* 30 January 1777, 4. The result was that duelling was deemed disadvantageous, see: *Quebec Gazette* 6 February 1777, 4.
52 *Quebec Gazette* 6 February 1777, 4. The result was that neither was deemed wiser, see: *Quebec Gazette* 13 February 1777, 4.
53 For more on the political importance of the Constitution Club, see: John Hare, *Aux Origines du Parlementarisme Québécois, 1791-1793*, (Sillery : Les Éditions de Septentrion, 1993), 38-43, 45.
54 See: “The New Constitution was celebrated by 165 Citizens in Quebec, (City;) at Frank’s, at one table, December 26, 1791,” in “ Provincial Chronology &c. Since the Conquest,” *Moore’s Pocket Almanack, Calculated For the Year of our Lord MDCCXCII...*, (Quebec: Herald Printing Office, 1791), 1.
55 *Quebec Gazette* 26 January 1792, 2.
they signed their names in agreement to the rules of the club. More than a mere political debating society, the club’s constitution interestingly also included a mandate to encourage the diffusion of “a spirit of Commercial and Agricultural industry,” and to oppose a “tendency to retard, or prevent the spreading of knowledge and industry” perceived to be present in Québec society.56 Like the Minerva Society, the proceedings and topics debated by the Constitution Club were assiduously followed in the pages of the colonial press.

Debating societies and oratory were seen as powerful tools in colonial society. “A man cannot distinguish himself without” oratory, a correspondent under the name A British Commis wrote to the Quebec Herald in 1791, “in parliament, in the pulpit, or at the bar; and even in common conversation, he who has acquired an easy, and habitual eloquence and speaks with propriety and accuracy, will have a great advantage over those who speak inelegantly and incorrectly.”57 Although debating societies were some of the most short-lived associations in the capitals, their existence proves that the obsession for oratory and debate was not confined to Britain or the American colonies to the south. Furthermore, the press was seen by members of debating societies (that were also part of the colonial print ascendancy of Québec City) as key to keeping members and curious readers alike apprised of their activities.

Clubs such as fire societies and agriculture societies also embraced the print medium to inform colonial readers of their efforts in the service of the public. These groups openly sought to protect or improve colonial society and boasted a broad-based membership that was only limited by a colonist’s ability to pay the subscription fee.

56 ibid.
57 Quebec Herald 20 January 1791, 71 (Originally found in Chesterfield’s Letters 1 November 1739).
From this membership base, a president and board of directors were elected annually and entrusted with the best interests of the society as a whole. Such associations functioned under formal constitutions, ratified by the membership, that dictated the frequency and order of meetings, the purview of the society and the admission or removal of members or elected trustees. As societies deemed in the public interest, they would publish meeting times in the newspapers, along with minutes and their financial accounts for scrutiny, not only by the membership, but all literate colonists.

Fire societies were the earliest examples of this type of organisation. Fire was a particular concern in colonial towns, where tightly packed homes of wooden construction dominated. In Halifax, the Union Fire Society was founded in January 1754 and operated throughout century. Québec City had two fire societies, one formed in 1765 and another, under the name of the Amicable Society, in existence from the 1770s. In addition to extinguishing fires, fire societies ensured the safe removal of people and property from burning buildings and were involved in the programs designed to prevent conflagrations. From the body of fire society subscribers a special committee would be formed who had the task of removing property and were instructed with special watch words and answers employed to distinguish committee members from thieves. In their efforts to prevent fire, Québec’s Amicable Society — that met quarterly at Simpson’s

58 5 UNION FIRE-CLUB Halifax. Rules and Orders to be observed by the Members of the Union Fire-Club, First Instituted at Halifax on the 14th Day of January, 1754, and thence continued to the 14th day of January 1759... (Halifax: Halifax Gazette Printing Office[?], 1759).
59 Quebec Herald 5 April 1790, 157.
60 The watchwords themselves can be seen as a further example of the extent of the process of elite formation in the colonies. While there is no known record of watchwords in Québec City, they were more than likely similar to the ones used in Montréal that uniformly described colonial or British officials and royalty. Some examples of watchwords and answers used by the Montreal Fire Club in the 1780s include: “Monday 8th Jany; 1787... Watchword Quebec Answer: Carleton,” “Monday 7 Jan. 1788... Watchword Dorchester Answer: Montreal,” and “5 January 1789... Watchword -- William Henry Answer – Chatham,” see McGill Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University, Montréal, MS 437, CH133.53, Montreal Fire Club, Minute Book, 1786-1814, 2921-2922.
Coffee House in the Lower Town — used the *Quebec Gazette* to publish substantial rewards for the conviction of arsonists.\(^{61}\) By the late 1780s, it appears that Québec’s two fire societies had merged and boasted a combined membership of 275 individuals and groups.\(^{62}\)

Not only did fire societies provide an important service, they were a mark of civic pride and were touted as such in the colonial press. Through the newspapers of both Halifax and Québec City, readers were shown that the directors and central committee of the fire society were comprised by some of the cities’ most notable inhabitants.\(^{63}\) Also related in colonial print was the fact that fire engines were prominently housed, along with water reservoirs and routine drills, on government or military property.\(^{64}\) A further mark of their importance was the money spent by the fire societies in the execution of their duties. In Québec City, where the accounts of the fire society were publicly printed, almost £150 was spent in a period of 10 months during 1789.\(^{65}\) Costs included 20 pounds and 5 shillings for the repair of fire engines, hoses and buckets, 17 pounds 10 shillings and 7 pence to hire additional labour to extinguish fires and 7 pounds 8 shillings and 11½ pence for the purchase of 52 “hats, label’d in the front F.S.” for the men that operated the fire engines.\(^{66}\) The soldiers of the garrison, although paid by the state, were also

\(^{61}\) Such as when it offered a $100 reward after a spate of fires in 1771. *Quebec Gazette* 13 June 1771, 3.

\(^{62}\) *Quebec Herald* 4 February 1790, 84.


\(^{64}\) See “Fire Society,” *Moore’s Pocket Almanack Calculated for the Year of our Lord, MDCCXCI†…*, (Quebec : Herald Printing Office, 1791), 24-25; and *Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 2 June 1789, 3.

\(^{65}\) *Quebec Herald* 21 January 1790, 69.

\(^{66}\) ibid.
recognized for their efforts; £7 10 shillings was expended for three hogshead of porter “given to the troops assisting at the late fire in Mountain Street.”\textsuperscript{67} Not an obvious venue for the discussion of moral philosophy, fire societies were nonetheless the practical embodiment of emerging eighteenth-century ideas of public welfare and social responsibility communicated in the presses of Halifax and Québec City. Such associations provided an opportunity in which the private citizens, public officials and civil servants — many of whom can be considered members of the colonial print ascendancy — could work together for the public good. Print informed readers of the general importance of civic responsibility and thus was also employed to express the specific public benefit of fire societies, detail the actions of its members, or chronicle their efforts in fire prevention or the persecution of arsonists who posed a very real threat to the fabric of colonial society.

Agriculture societies, formed under a mandate to improve colonial farming and husbandry, utilised the medium of the press even more vigorously than fire societies. In 1789, agriculture societies were founded in both Québec City and Halifax, under the patronage of the government and colonial governors. Financial subventions or donations of seed and implements were given to bolster membership fees which funded programmes to encourage new agricultural practices, or to publish findings from other Agriculture societies. These state-sponsored organizations can be considered the first public scientific societies in British North America, encouraging better agricultural practices and attempting to foster a public interest in agricultural science.

In addition to the purchase of seed and the funding of agricultural experiments, agriculture societies also published the latest agricultural findings. In the first year of the

\textsuperscript{67} ibid.
Quebec Agriculture Society alone, William Moore is listed as receiving over £6 for printing costs. The next year, printer Samuel Neilson notes being paid over £3 for printing 150 circulars on proper agricultural practices to be distributed by the rural curates and for 400 blank letters to be used by the Directors of the Society. Printers like Neilson also donated free printing to the Society, citing the importance of the cause to the development of the colony. Printers of both magazines and newspapers in the years surrounding the formation of agriculture societies in Halifax and Quebec also made special efforts to prominently feature essays and letters on agricultural science.

In both Nova Scotia and Quebec the establishment of agriculture society became a touchstone of excitement and public admiration that was also expressed through the print medium. Printers annually published the names of the organizations’ executives (comprised primarily by members of the colonial executive councils) as well as a list of the names of subscribing members that read as a who’s who of both the capitals and the surrounding rural counties. Printers also lauded the efforts of the Governors and senior colonial officials that founded and administered the organizations. For example, Quebec Herald printer William Moore wrote in 1789 that: “Too much praise cannot be given to His Excellency the Governor, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, and the other Gentlemen forward in establishing an Agricultural Society in the Province, as the

70 BANQQ, P 450, Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, 1960-01-544/5, Minutes of Agricultural Society of Quebec, 1789-1792, “Special meeting of the Directors,” 18th June 1791.
71 For various example see: Quebec Agriculture Society: Quebec Herald 27 April 1789, 206-207; Quebec Agriculture Society (Montreal Branch) Quebec Herald 23 November 1789, 5; Nova Scotia Agriculture Society: Nova-Scotia Magazine 2,4 (1790): 241-248, Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 2 May 1795, 3; New Brunswick Agriculture Society: Quebec Herald 16 September 1790, 340-341; District of Nassau Agriculture Society: Quebec Gazette 12 April 1792, 3.
advantages that will occur from it to the community at large, must be sufficiently evident to the discerning, and reflects the highest honour on the projectors and promoters.”

Another correspondent to the Herald under the moniker A Subscriber to the Agriculture Society enthusiastically observed that Lord Dorchester, the province’s governor and patron of the newly instituted society, “may with truth be stiled the father of this country.”

A similar fervour could be seen in Nova Scotia, not only for Lieutenant Governor Parr, the Halifax society’s patron, but for the scientific spirit the organisation embodied, marked by reason, experience and the dissemination of useful knowledge. “Knowledge will be diffused, and the Public will derive Benefit from the Experience of Individuals,” an article in the Nova-Scotia Gazette observed in relating the founding of the Nova Scotia Agriculture Society:

It frequently happens that Useful Discoveries and Improvements in Agriculture are lost to Mankind for want of Communication — they die with those who made them. This Society will preserve all Discoveries and Improvements of this Kind that are communicated to them; and make them extensively beneficial by conveying them to others. THERE is no Art more useful or necessary than Agriculture….

Colonial agriculture societies not only promoted the improvement of society through the diffusion of scientific knowledge, they also provided a further point of shared interest to bring together Nova Scotia and Québec after the American Revolution. Through the particular efforts of printers in the capitals, the colonial leaders were presented as public-minded and progressive, embodying the best traits of British character for emulation amongst others in the colonial print ascendancy.

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72 Quebec Herald 9 March 1789, 145.
73 Quebec Herald 13 April 1789, 187.
74 Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 3 November 1789, 3.
Locally-produced print was also used to debate the greater advantages of sociability and the importance of local club life. On 13 December 1790, a seemingly modest proposal was published in the *Quebec Herald*. The author — who signed the letter *A Commis* — did not write upon religion, or revolution. He did not suggest any great social or political change. What he did seek was nonetheless unprecedented in the pages of the *Herald*: public approval of an oratory club to be established solely for the young clerks of Québec City. “As we have reason to expect next spring, a great change in Administration, and that we will at last be blessed or cursed, as it may be, with the long-looked for House of Assembly,” the author posited, “I think it would be of great service to myself, and some other Commis, were we to have a weekly Club open to all our acquaintances, where to discuss public questions and so train ourselves up, that at a future day, we may be able to appear in that House, with honour to ourselves, and credit to our constituents.” Over the course of the next five months, ten additional letters would follow, engaging the readers of the *Quebec Herald* in a public debate over how public debate should be.

Further illustrating the convergence of print, opinion and action that occurred in British Halifax and Québec City in the late eighteenth century, the value of association and oratory became a focal point of discussion in the pages of the *Quebec Herald*. Most correspondents to the paper supported the idea of an oratory club for clerks, though one notable detractor questioned whether the value of association would be lost on the young participants. The author, writing under the name of *Will Wimble*, wondered if such an

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75 *Quebec Herald* 13 December 1790, 29.
activity would only end in “riot and debauchery.” Will Wimble wrote, “you should set apart that evening, and as many more in the week as you could spare from your other occupations, to the serious reading of useful books; which, in my humble opinion, would be much more edifying than any arguments produced by young men all equally ignorant.” In spite of Will Wimble’s unoptimistic stance, the majority of correspondents nonetheless saw the proposed clerks’ association as an integral part of the character formation of youth and of polite, British-styled society in the colony.

The concerns of Will Wimble, though unpopular, were not unfounded, as many societies held no pretences of being more than a forum to gather, reminisce and indulge in refreshments. Even formal societies that were formed with charitable intentions had specific limits, as exhibited in their constitutions, to whom that benevolence could be extended. As the founding articles of the North British Society read in 1768:

Whereas Sickness and Death is the Common lot of all Mankind, in Order Therefore, to Assist each other as much as in us lays, we the Subscribers, do bind our selves into a Society under the name of the North Briton Society or Scots Club for the Benefit of our selves, and Assistance of Each other, who may be Afflicted by Sickness or any other Casualty or Misfortune in Body….

Societies, and particularly friendly societies such as the North British Society, were formed for the express purpose of assisting their members and family in the face of adversity.

During the last two decades of the century, however, the scope of benevolent associations expanded from being member-focused to encompassing the well-being of

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77 Quebec Herald 20 December 1790, 37.
78 ibid.
79 NSARM, MG 20, Volume 230, North British Society, Treasurer’s Records, Articles of the North British Society, 1768.
the whole community. Societies not only fulfilled their traditional functions, but through print promoted their wider interests to the membership and the greater colonial print ascendancy. The published mandate of Halifax’s Charitable Irish Society when formed in 1786 was to “promote and encourage friendship and good will amongst men….”

The Marine Society of Halifax was originally founded by mariners to “collect observations for the improvement of Navigation, and to raise a fund for the assistance of each other,” changed its mandate in the late eighteenth century to become of more service to the greater public. Inspired by the actions of the Royal Humane Society of London, who in its eighteen years had seen the resuscitation of over 1500 drowned persons, the Society changed its constitution and name to become the Marine Humane Society of Halifax, an organization “heartily disposed to enter on the divine work of saving life.”

As the examples of the Charitable Irish Society and Marine Humane Society illustrate, in the last decades of the eighteenth century the wider, public promotion of association interests was perceived as important. Print was particularly employed as a means to diffuse the word and seek public approval of these changes.

The Quebec Benevolent Society, with printer William Moore as a member of its directors, actively employed the press to communicate its activities to the public. Established in 1789, it was unlike the friendly societies of Halifax that were formed along ethnic lines of its members (such as the North British, German and Irish Societies). The Quebec Benevolent Society was open to all regardless of religion or background as long

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81 Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 3 January 1795, 1.
82 ibid.
as they were deemed of “perfect health” and good “character and morals.” Its founding members were indeed a variety of people of German, Scots, Irish, Welsh, English and American backgrounds. Its members — comprised of merchants, a schoolmaster, a coffee house proprietor and several former members of the British Army — can be considered to also be participants in the colonial print ascendancy. Indeed, the members were required to be literate as their printed constitution dictated that all were required to purchase a copy of the “rules and regulations” of the society and follow the newspaper for announcements on society meetings. The Quebec Benevolent Society provides just one example of how print became not only common place, but essential in even the non-print activities of the colonial print ascendancy.

Part and parcel of this growing belief in the importance of a greater public good was a growing use of the press to inform the public of club activities. The press acted as a means for club members to both advertise and legitimise club activities held in private or semi-public spaces. To this end, even some of the most elite and exclusive colonial groups felt compelled to emerge from their self-imposed veils of secrecy to engage in the occasional, well-publicised act of benevolence. Printers, simultaneously, would use the example of certain associations to encourage similar acts in other community gatherings. Of course, not every society or club in Halifax and Nova Scotia published proceedings or pertinent information in the press like the debating, fire, agricultural and select benevolent societies. Countless private clubs, for example, used the press in a reduced

83 Rules and Regulations of the Quebec Benevolent Society, Established the First Wednesday in May MDCCCLXXXIX. Held in the Merchant’s Coffee House, 1789, 8. CIHM #55328.
84 The founding members were: Henry Juncken (President), Jonathan Eckart (Vice-President), Godfrey King (Treasurer), John Jones (Secretary), William Moore (Steward), John Rees, A. Ferguson, John Fraser, James Hanna, John Saul, George Pashley, John Chillas, Daniel Fraser, William Grant, John Urquhart, Josias Wurteler, Thomas Fergusson, John Ayton, John Rhynart, Anthony Vamelson, William Laing, and John Robertson. See: ibid., 21-22.
85 ibid., 20.
fashion, if at all, primarily to notify members of upcoming meetings. Yet as the century unfolded, even some of the colonies’ most secretive organizations took on a more public persona facilitated by the print medium.

Somewhat paradoxically for a society that prided itself on its secrets, the freemasons of Halifax and Québec City were a very public fixture of colonial society and the colonial press. In both capitals, lodge secretaries would use the press to announce upcoming banquets and meetings. Masonic manuals, such as the one published by Halifax’s John Howe in 1786, that detailed the history, rules of conduct and the importance of secrecy, were published and distributed widely.\(^{86}\) Newspaper readers would submit Masonic songs, aphorisms and poetry for publication for the entertainment and interest of brothers and those outside of the craft. Such pieces generally told of the convivial nature of freemasonry, while also underscoring the brotherhood’s devotion to God, charity and the public good. As the chorus to a Masonic song published in the *Nova Scotia Gazette* observed in 1773, “Let the day be ever prais’d / When the ROYAL CRAFT was rais’d / Let the social virtues shine / Doing good is sure divine.”\(^{87}\) Similarly, a Masonic aphorism published over a decade later in the *Quebec Herald* read: “Though we are all free and on the level, yet it is our duty always to keep within compass, and to conduct ourselves according to the square and plumb.”\(^{88}\) The print diffusion of Masonic events, rules, poetry and verse offered the brethren, and public alike, information on certain aspects of the inner workings of the secretive society. Through the vehicle of the

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\(^{86}\) *Charges and Regulations of the ... Society of Free ... Masons, extracted from Ahiman Rezon...* (Halifax: John Howe, 1786). One of the only remaining copies of this work is found in the British Library attesting to the wide diffusion of the work.

\(^{87}\) *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax) 22 June 1773, 4.

\(^{88}\) “Masonic Aphorisms from An Introduction to Free Masonry, by Mr. Meeson M.M,” *Quebec Herald* 29 December 1788, 54.
press, freemasonry was portrayed as an orderly, rational, charitable and civic-minded organization, to the pride of members and reassurance of the general public.

Reports of Masonic festivals — held both locally and abroad — were inserted by printers for the interest of the reading public. For example, on the front page of the *Halifax Gazette* on 2 March 1754 the parade and rituals surrounding the laying of the foundation stone for the new Exchange in Edinburgh was observed and coverage of the event continued on the front page of the next week’s paper. For freemasons, there was no larger public activity than the celebration of the festivals for the Saint John the Evangelist and Saint John the Baptist. In Québec City, these were two events that that freemason and printer William Moore made sure did not escape the attention of the reading public. “Saturday being St. John’s day,” William Moore reported in the *Quebec Herald* in December 1788:

> at Mr. Dailey’s Tavern; — and the Ancient York Lodge at Merchant’s Coffee- the same celebrated by the different Lodges in this City, at the following places; viz. the Merchant’s Lodge No. 1, and St. Andrew’s Lodge at Mr. Mackay’s tavern; — St. Patrick’s Lodge House; the Ancient York Lodge of the 53rd Regiment at Mr. Batty’s. We are happy to add the conviviality and propriety which should ever distinguish that Ancient and honourable Society, was manifested in an eminent degree by each Lodge respectively.  

Likewise, the following June, Moore observed:

> Wednesday morning… being St. John’s day, a plentiful and elegant dinner was provided, at Brother Frank’s, which was attended by a numerous and respectable body of the Brethren; who spent the afternoon with that harmony and decorum which should ever be the inseparable characteristic of Free Masonry: Masonic toasts and sentiments with the honours of Masonry, joined by some well sung Masonic and other pleasing songs, added greatly to the hilarity and good humour which manifested itself on this festive occasion.  

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89 *Halifax Gazette* 2 March 1754, 1 and 9 March 1754, 1.
90 *Quebec Herald* 29 December 1788, 54.
91 *Quebec Herald* 29 June 1789, 281.
Such observations were published as they were believed by printers to be of interest to the members of the colonial print ascendency who were also freemasons. The glowing reports of Masonic activity were written as well for the benefit of those who were not in attendance, were curious, or were even fearful of what activities continued after parading in public. In particular, language that highlighted the “good humour,” “harmony,” and “decorum” of the occasion was undoubtedly employed to assuage any such fears and tout the refined merits of Masonic sociability.

Colonial freemasonry was also publicly praised — in the form of published sermons — for its equality as well as its compassionate and charitable nature. In 1780, the Grand Lodge of Québec had the Rev. Brother George Henry’s Saint John’s day sermon published for the benefit of the brethren and the public. In the sermon, the Rev. Henry expounded on the important tenets of freemasonry, underscoring charity and brotherly love. “The wise and sovereign Providence of God has so ordered, that there is a Diversity in the States of Men,” Henry observed: “Some are indigent, others in a capacity of relieving; the rich and the poor meet together… Reason and a compassionate Heart will readily suggest to a Man, how he ought to shew his Charity; that it is by feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, visiting the sick and the Prisoner, and taking in the Stranger.”92 In such a manner, the Rev. Henry reminded all those present that, in addition to the bonds of brotherhood within the association, members were to also remember their duty to all mankind.

92 Rev. George Henry, Brotherly Love Explained and Recommended, in a Sermon Preached Before the Ancient and Honourable Society of Free and Accepted Masons at Quebec, On Monday the 27th of December, 1779, Published at the Request of the Society, (Quebec: William Brown, 1780), 9-10. CIHM #55146.
Similarly, the Rev. Brother Joshua Wingate Weeks observed in Halifax in 1785 that “benevolence doth not restrain its enlivening influences to one sect or religion, to one nation or climate.” Instead, he told his congregation of fellow masons:

It reaches, like the power of attraction, to the smallest and to the largest bodies in the universe, uniting men of all degrees and of all nations in the bonds of friendship. The language of Charity is universal; all the brotherhood know and understand it: For they are masters of a secret language, by which they can make themselves known to each other at a distance, and can converse together without the use of speech.93

Such language, reflecting the importance of universal charity, equality and public good, was undoubtedly appealing to freemasons. However, as both Henry’s and Weeks’ missives were also published and made available to the public, the message also could inform and reassure the greater community of the nature and laudable objectives of freemasonry.

Freemasons in both Halifax and Québec appeared to indeed practise what they preached. On the special occasions such as the Feast of Saint John, lodges would undertake large public charity events, events that did not fail to escape the notice of local printers. William Moore, printer of the Quebec Herald and freemason,94 was particularly astute at recording and praising acts of Masonic charity. “The fraternity of Free-Masons,” he wrote in one such instance:

considering the distressed situation of the poor, in the present scarcity of flour, have generously ordered four hundred and fifty loaves to be baked by Mr. Saul, and delivered to the poor, on St. John's day, (Wednesday next) between the hours of seven and nine in the morning — Such whose distresses required it, on producing a

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During the years that the *Quebec Herald* was published, Moore ensured that the charitable acts of freemasonry did not go unnoticed. Moore can perhaps be seen as one of freemasonry’s greatest boosters throughout North America and the Caribbean. While living as an actor in Kingston, Jamaica in 1781, he would preform his “Masonic Oration” which was described in the local press as a piece in which “the Lessons of that Order are poetically pictured, and add a Lustre to MASONRY. With an address to the Ladies, with a just Reason given why they are not admitted.” The next year, Moore had a pamphlet entitled *The Elements of Freemasonry Delineated* published by Kingston’s *Royal Gazette* press. In May of 1785, while visiting Shelburne, Nova Scotia, Moore’s show was billed slightly differently as an “EULOGIUM on FREE MASONRY. In which Mr. Moore will discover to the Ladies the SECRETS of that ART” and for a June 1785 performance in Halifax the public were simply told that he was to perform a “Eulogy for Freemasonry in the Character of a Master Mason.” In December of 1785, in Albany, New York, the actor was known as “Brother Moore” in the billing for his performance. After leaving the theatre and setting up a press in Québec City in 1788, Moore used his press to diffuse his sentiments on the importance of what he believed freemasonry’s core charitable tenets.

Another example of a private association whose public beneficence was touted in the press is that of Québec City’s Barons’ Society. Established in 1761, the Barons met...
during the months between the last ship’s departure in the fall and the first arrival of the spring. Fashioned in the manner of its London namesake, it was indeed an exclusive gathering open to select merchants and gentlemen who had lived in Québec for several years.¹⁰¹ Much of what we know comes from John Lambert, the curmudgeonly critic of life in early nineteenth-century Québec, who writes that the club consisted of “twenty-one members, who are chiefly the principal merchants in the colony, and are styled barons.”¹⁰² While he questioned the pretences of the membership, he was clearly impressed with the manner of sociability that they provided. Attending the grand investiture of seven new “knights” to the society, Lambert writes how the event, that cost over 250 guineas to stage, saw “upwards of 200 of the principal people in the country,” and was conducted with a “regularity and decorum that would have done credit to any similar entertainment in London.”¹⁰³ The late nineteenth-century antiquarian James McPherson LeMoine, however, painted a more unflattering picture of the Society and its indulgent nature, suggesting that it was marginal, rather than elite in composition and describing the group as “a sort of Pitt Club, — all Tories to the backbone. It was a very select affair — and of no duration.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Moore’s Pocket Almanack… MDCCXCII, 25.
¹⁰³ ibid., 306.
Earlier reports from the eighteenth century offer an equally mixed impression of the Society. The *Quebec Herald* printed that a woman was heard saying that the “Barons were a parcel of *cochons,*”105 yet Moore in his *Pocket Almanack* lists the Barons as one of the city’s principle clubs, on par with the Fire and Agriculture societies,106 and fondly observes that their annual ball attracted, “upwards of 200 of the most respectable members of this small society.”107 Whether respectable or piggish, the directors of the Barons Society nonetheless understood the importance of public acts of generosity, advancing both the public good and their public standing. The Barons used the colonial press to advertise such acts, often centred on patriotic occasions such the celebration of the King’s Birthday, or the recovery of George III from one of his bouts of madness. “THAT the wretched may in a small degree, participate in that pleasure which we feel from the happy information just received of the King's recovery,” a report from a Barons’ Society meeting observed in 1789, “it was proposed that an Ox and *one hundred loaves of bread* be purchased at the Expense of the Club, and distributed among the Poor of the City.” Likewise, it was announced that, on the day of the 52nd birthday of the King, “708 pounds of beef and 600 loaves of bread were distributed by Messrs. Webb and Robertson to one hundred poor families. The donors were the gentlemen of the Baron's Society.”108

The amount of positive publicity that Québec City publisher William Moore gave to the Barons’ Society makes one think that Moore was not only a freemason, but also a Baron! It is doubtful that Moore, the thespian-turned-printer, was well-heeled enough to be a part of this wealthy group of merchants, officers and senior colonial officials.

105 *Quebec Herald* 18 May 1789, 233.
106 *Moore’s Pocket Almanack…* MDCCXCII, 25.
107 *Quebec Herald* 24 January 1791, 76.
108 *Quebec Herald* 8 June 1789, 255.
However, what is clear is that Moore — who was also a founding member of the Quebec Benevolent Society — was an ardent supporter of sociability and particularly club life in the advancement of the public good in the vein of freemasonry. On one particularly eventful week in Québec City, Moore observed in his *Herald* that:

> On Wednesday Evening, a numerous meeting of the Benevolent Society took place in consequence of an advertisement for a choice of officers when those who served last year were entreated to continue their former exertions for promoting and furthering the society, who freely accepted the charge of the same.  
> On Thursday Morning the truly laudable Society for the encouragement of Agriculture met to choose Directors for the next twelve months when the gentlemen who directed the last year, were unanimously chosen for the ensuing, and kindly undertook the task, for its future prosperity.  
> Too much praise cannot be given to the officers and committee of the fire society for their intense application to the completion of their truly salubrious designs….  

Moore argued that these activities were not random and indeed reveal, “the unanimity and regularity which prevails in this City for the public good.” For Moore, there was no greater achievement for a colonial association than to improve the public welfare. Additionally, he believed it his duty as a printer to make known the activities of such groups to inform, reassure and inspire other members of the colonial print ascendancy.

The late eighteenth century saw a proliferation of clubs and societies throughout the British Atlantic. Sociability and, in particular the act of gathering in organised clubs, was also important to many of the inhabitants of Halifax and Québec City. Like the theatre, coffee house and the newspaper itself, societies provided a venue of sociability outside of the purview of family or religious obligation where members of the colonial print ascendancy could gather in the two capitals. Literacy, though not essential to the physical act of assembly, became increasingly essential if one wanted to stay informed of association activities both at home and abroad. Through print, members of these

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109 *Quebec Herald* 12 April 1790, 165.
organizations — many of whom were also participants in the colonial print ascendancy — could obtain new transatlantic perspectives on association life, or have underlying norms of associative propriety and conduct reinforced. Associations that, by their nature, represented smaller communities of interest within the capital, were also viewed by some as elite gatherings for the enjoyment of elite society. Newspapers in the two capitals were particularly employed — as in the case of theatres and coffee houses — to legitimize the elite interaction that most clubs and organized societies were perceived to offer. In the particular case of clubs and societies in Halifax and Québec City, this legitimization was achieved by favourable accounts emanating from members of the print ascendancy that demonstrated propriety behind closed doors and a greater, charitable public concern toward colonial society at large.
Conclusion — The Press of Halifax and Québec City: A Vehicle for the Colonial Print Ascendancy and Their Vision of the Late Eighteenth-Century Capitals

The presses of late eighteenth-century Halifax and Québec City acted as a catalyst for the development of a new and dynamic community in Nova Scotia and Québec. Printers, readers and contributors in both capitals coalesced around the printed word and formed what can be seen as a colonial print ascendancy. These individuals used print as a bulwark against an unfamiliar climate, unstable economic conditions and myriad other challenges on the Atlantic periphery of the British Empire. The colonial print ascendancy of select colonial officials, military and naval officers, merchants, businessmen, members of the clergy, leading farmers, clerks and craftsmen, turned to the press for reassurance and for direction on how to prosper. They also used print as a means to define and communicate what they believed were essential British values that, in their view, transcended place. An essay entitled a “View of Great-Britain, Its Liberties and Privileges” published in the Nova-Scotia Magazine in 1790 illustrates this understanding. The author, who claimed to be a Prussian officer living in Great Britain, was glowing in his observations of the British Isles, its laws and its literature. “The English have adopted in their literature,” he observed a sense of:

…liberty, or rather this propriety of thinking and of acting; and it is this that we are indebted for so many bold systems, so many spirited and useful truths, with which their philosophers and mathematicians have enriched human nature. From thence also proceed that daring flight of genius, and those new paths which their historians and poets have opened and which they have, as it were, enlarged the world of ideas.¹

As we have seen, the arguments of this Prussian soldier — carefully selected by the editor of the Nova-Scotia Magazine — did not fall upon deaf ears. The colonial print

¹Nova-Scotia Magazine 2,3 (1790): 175-176.
ascendancy believed in an innate power of British literature and domestic productions written in conformity with what they believed to be British tradition — to inculcate the reader with desirable beliefs, methodologies, traditions, norms and manners deemed essential to both colonial life and participation in a broader British world.

In both capitals, members of this colonial print ascendancy also believed that the domestic press had an inherent power to preserve and diffuse ideas, a power with the potential to inspire the imagination and initiate action in every day life. In 1789, printer William Moore published in his *Quebec Herald* the poem “On a printing-office” that underscored what he perceived to be as the greater relationship between print and daily life:

> The world’s a printing-house; our words, our thoughts,  
> Our deeds are characters of different sizes:  
> Each soul is a compos’tor, of whose faults  
> The Levites are correctors; Heav’n revises:  
> Death is the common press; from whence being driv’n,  
> We’re gather’d, sheet by sheet, and bound for Heav’n.²

In Moore’s view, the production of print shared such an intimate bond with daily life that the one could be given as a metaphor for the other. Interestingly, in citing this poem, Moore gave no indication of its author,³ nor did he have to. To be a member of the colonial print ascendancy in late eighteenth-century Halifax and Québec City implied that one already had a background in the myriad tropes and clichés of British literary culture. To be a member of the colonial print ascendancy meant that one also believed in the value of the press to improve both self and society at large.

² *Quebec Herald* 18 March 1790, 136.
³ The verse is an epitaph originally published in the *Divine Fancies* (1687) by the English writer Frances Quarles. It can be found excerpted in various newspapers and magazines throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, often unattributed but was sometimes erroneously attributed to Benjamin Franklin. See: William Bates, “Franklin’s Epitaph,” *Notes and Queries* 9, 230 (May 1872): 419-421.
While the opinions and actions of this colonial print ascendancy can be clearly witnessed in the newspapers and magazines of the two capitals, this community did not exist in a formal sense. Participants never specifically identified themselves or the phenomenon around the press as a print ascendancy. Furthermore, there were no formal rules or tangible contract that held the members of the community together. In spite of this, they were nonetheless conscious of a larger print community whom they sometimes addressed as their fellow “readers” or the “public.” They believed they were a part of a kind of “virtual contract,” an unwritten understanding of conduct and expectations. Like the revered English constitution, the domestic press functioned partially on precedent, with its contributors citing past examples of discourse in the attempt to shape the form of present or future discourse. It was also subject to new, user-defined rules and expectations that were again elucidated and debated within its pages. One point that all could agree upon was the general importance of print in this process to inform, educate, improve or otherwise shape society.

Although the press was lauded by some members of the colonial print ascendancy for its ability to diffuse knowledge and expand reader participation, it could also be used to consolidate power or aspire to it. Those members of the print ascendancy in the two capitals that used the press in this manner tried to delineate the nature of the colonial elite or attempted to close the gap which they perceived to exist between them and their ideal station in society. The print ascendancy, and the particular efforts of some of its participants at the formation of a colonial elite, functioned best when the populations of the capitals were relatively small, the margins of the literate community circumscribed and the hope of either shaping a colonial elite or aspiring to it seemed plausible.
Newspapers and magazines communicated messages to and from members of the colonial print ascendency and, in so doing, galvanized this form of print sociability. Members of the colonial print ascendency not only shaped the discourse in domestically-produced print, they also appealed to the same newspapers and magazines to shape the everyday, extra-print attitudes and behaviours of readers. In particular, those members of the print ascendency that engaged in the formation of a colonial elite turned to the press to promote privileged forms of sociability, such as the theatre, coffee house, clubs and societies. These efforts were countered by other members who used the press to caution against the perceived excesses and immorality of such elite association. In the case of theatre, print was used to convey the patriotic messages of plays and to seek the approval of a potentially divided community of readers. Popular prologues repeated in newspapers extolled the modernizing virtues of British genius upon the new world. Both patrons and opponents of the theatre turned to the newspapers to voice their contradictory opinions and in so doing revealed much about their opinion of the shape that the ideal colonial society should take. Paradoxically, theatre — by most accounts elitist, expensive and exclusionary entertainment — was, in both Halifax and Québec City, made more palatable and acceptable through print by being presented as a form of generous and enriching sociability of universal benefit.

Similarly, print was used to advertise and promote other forms of elite sociability. Coffee houses, a well-known staple of the British Atlantic, were also common in Halifax and Québec City. Coffee houses in the two capitals were shaped, with the assistance of the press, as the very image of the English establishments, though with a fundamental difference. In England, many considered that coffee houses were an experiment in
leveling, providing an urban space of association much different than that enjoyed by those in the court. Yet in Halifax and Québec City, coffee houses were promoted as spaces of elite, British association. Often sporting recognizably British names and offering appropriately genteel services, coffee houses were promoted in the press as an elite space patronized by members of the colonial print ascendency.

The importance of print to fashion socially acceptable means of elite sociability — as demonstrated in the examples of theatre and coffee houses — can also be seen in the formation and conduct of societies and clubs in the colonial capitals. In the later half of the eighteenth century, Halifax and Québec City enjoyed a vibrant association life. Clubs and societies were important to members for many reasons, including relaxation, self-improvement and the forging of new commercial and social contacts. Participants in the colonial print ascendency used the domestic press to facilitate their sociability, to provide grist for club discussions and debate, or to communicate at a distance among other association members that were also part of the print ascendency. Print was also employed to gain the approval of the larger colonial print ascendency in regard to a particular association’s motives and behaviour. While readers were not unanimous in their support of every form of sociability, print offered a forum for the debate about the virtues of the associative life. It was a debate that, as in many aspects of colonial life, drew from the well of published British practice and tradition for cues on the proper means to proceed.

The existence of a colonial print ascendency offers a new perspective on the cultural identity and cohesiveness of English-speaking inhabitants in what has been
traditionally seen as stratified and divided colonial societies. Indeed, a “Canadian Mosaic” of different peoples with diverging cultural and political beliefs existed in the late eighteenth century. The English-language press in the capitals, however, offered a vehicle for those who can be considered the colonial print ascendancy to bring sense and cultural unity into this fractured environment. In particular, this perspective provides an important counter balance to the cultural history of late eighteenth-century Québec that has argued the salience of a small, though dynamic group of French Canadian intellectuals who forged an elite cadre around sociability and the French-language press of late eighteenth-century Montréal. The existence of an English-language colonial print ascendancy does not diminish the cultural importance of the press and sociability to this cadre of French Canadian intellectuals, but rather shows that a similar process was happening at the same time around the English press. Instead of having an ancillary or oppressive role in colonial society, the press of the two capitals was a vehicle for the print ascendancy to forge a shared British identity, to outline appropriate behaviour and otherwise set the boundaries of colonial society.

This dynamic function that the domestic print played in the two capitals can be traced to the very inception of the presses. The American Revolution and the subsequent arrival of the loyalists — often seen by scholars as a watershed in the political and cultural history of British North America — did not appreciably change the underlying principles that members of the colonial print ascendancy had attributed to the press. The

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4 Such classic, and still referred to, works can be seen cited in the Introduction, footnote 2.

Loyalists may have possessed a passion for British literature, believed in the utility of print knowledge, and advocated both the liberty and propriety of the press, but such ideas already existed in Halifax or Québec City by the time of their arrival. Indeed, the loyalist diaspora led to an increased number of print subscribers and augmented participation in the newspapers and magazines of the two capitals. The fundamental beliefs in the importance of the liberty and propriety of the press, the power of the press to influence behaviour and the utility of the British messages that it conveyed can be seen from the beginning of the press era in the two capitals.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the situation that fostered the print ascendancy had already begun to change. Other towns such as Saint John and Montréal had eclipsed the capitals of Halifax and Québec City in population, economic growth and cultural activities. The presses of the capitals would continue and grow, but instead of being a primary and privileged voice, the newspapers of Halifax and Québec City increasingly became part of a chorus of colonial opinion. The study of the early press and the colonial print ascendancy of printers, readers and contributors nonetheless offers an important perspective on the role of print in the formative years of these two British colonial capitals. Although the press may have functioned differently than what has been argued in the later period, it was nonetheless of great importance to its

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greater Atlantic networks of commerce and commodities, and intellectual and cultural exchange. This study was also born out of a desire to avoid the teleological pitfalls found in many studies of colonial America, particularly the widely accepted interpretation of the nature and role of the eighteenth-century press. The history of the press in British America has been dominated by an interest in the role of print in the development and diffusion of republican ideology and the dismantling of traditional elite structures. This study purposefully delved into a British America that could potentially be different in nature than what was experienced in Massachusetts Bay, Pennsylvania or New York.

By answering certain questions concerning the uses of the colonial press in Halifax and Québec City, this dissertation opens the door to further research and study of the nature of the English-language press, readers, sociability and identity in the eighteenth-century British Atlantic Empire. In the face of greater transatlantic connections — and the choices that such networks presented — members of the colonial print ascendancy in late eighteenth-century Halifax and Québec City nonetheless gravitated towards a decidedly British manner in which to fashion their reading habits and their lives. Yet, how unique was this experience? One means to expand the scope of this study is to include the other contemporary presses of Québec, the Maritimes and Newfoundland. Did a colonial print ascendancy develop around the presses in these colonies and, if so, did it exhibit the same tastes and characteristics as those of Halifax and Québec City? A comparative analysis of the printers, readers and contributors in other colonial towns would undoubtedly offer further insight into the value of British knowledge and cultural norms as communicated through the press during the tumultuous late eighteenth century. In the particular case of Québec, the respective styles of the
English-language and French-language discourse could be analyzed further. Were the print messages that francophones received, although in French and couched in metaphors familiar to that audience, really any different from what was being communicated in the English-language press? Did such cultural cues bring together or push apart French readers from their English counterparts? Further comparative work, again appealing to the transatlantic paradigm, must necessarily incorporate the print culture of the British West Indies, where domestically-produced print had existed thirty years before the establishment of the *Halifax Gazette*. This perspective would be invaluable in understanding if a colonial print ascendancy similar to that of Halifax and Québec City developed elsewhere. Was the press employed to form a colonial elite in these other regions? What messages were selected by printers and commented upon by readers? In what ways did the press in regions based upon slave labour differ from that of the northern British colonies, where slavery was present but not essential to the colonial economy? The study of the interconnection of print, sociability and action in late eighteenth-century Halifax and Québec City paves the way for a larger reinterpretation of a potentially diverse British American experience outside of the nascent American republic.

From the crowded wharves of Halifax to the busy Lower Town of Québec City where a multilingual mingling of shouts, orders, gossip and opinion could be heard, the influence of the “paper empire” of the eighteenth-century English Atlantic was also

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9 The *Weekly Jamaican Courant* was published as early as 1722, the *Barbadoes Gazette* was established in the 1730s and over a dozen other papers were established throughout the West Indies between 1740 and 1790. Though incomplete, Isaiah Thomas’s classic work offers a good overview of the West Indian press by a contemporary of many of the eighteenth-century printers. See: Isaiah Thomas, *A History of Printing in America With A Biography of Printers*, Volume II, (Albany: Joel Munsell, 1874), 185-194.

10 As Ian K. Steele observes, “Ultimately the English Atlantic was a literate empire, a paper empire. Laws and instructions to governors, sea captains, agents, and attorneys, as well as letters and newspaper or even
present. Predicated on reams of hand-written letters and dispatches, it also combined imported and domestically-produced print. In this environment, a functional literacy soon proved inadequate for social and economic advancement. Instead, a new literacy of print emerged that transcended the ability to sign a document, or read selected passages from a bible.\textsuperscript{11} It was a literacy of cultural touchstones, literature, history, natural philosophy, political writing and social graces. It was a literacy shared by those in the colonies with the time to read, the predisposition to ponder and the inclination to write. It was a literacy possessed by a colonial print ascendency who employed print to set the boundaries of their society — to observe, criticize, or otherwise regulate the behaviour of its readers. In this milieu, the press afforded them a means to be privy to a greater discourse and the ability to either reject or aspire to the vision of society it presented. It was a discourse not only of popular trends and suitable politics, but also of science and literature. Simultaneously sophisticated, amusing, insightful and ridiculous, the content of the colonial press was crafted and used by members of this print ascendency to bring order to their environment, promote their interests, and fashion their success. Indeed, the society of the colonial print ascendency of Halifax and Québec City was like the printing house of the well-known poem; those who aspired to be part of it hoped to leave a lasting impression.

\textsuperscript{11}The determination of literacy in eighteenth-century Britain and America is a painstaking task based on the analysis of past legal records, contracts, licenses and marriage certificates looking for evidence of signatures. As historian Lawrence Stone has observed, this autographic approach is not perfect; however, it is “for periods before the nineteenth century are indeed all we know or are ever likely to know.” Lawrence Stone, “Literacy and Education in England 1640-1900,” \textit{Past and Present} 42 (1969): 98.
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**Appendix i: Eighteenth-Century Printers, Newspapers, Almanacs and Magazines of Halifax and Québec City**

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<td>William Vondenvelden</td>
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<td><em>The Quebec Magazine</em>, 1792-1794.</td>
<td>Alexander Spark, Samuel &amp; John Neilson</td>
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Appendix ii. The New Settlement of Halifax, c. 1750

A Plan of Halifax, Plate in Gentleman's Magazine 20 (1750)
Appendix iii: Masthead of the Halifax Gazette, 1752-1765

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Appendix iv: Plan of Québec City, c. 1764

“A Plan of Quebec...,” 1759
By E. Oakley & sold by J. Rocque, Library and Archives Canada, NMC-133349.
Appendix v: A Selection of Plays Performed At Halifax and Québec City, 1768-1791

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Author</th>
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<td>The Suspicious Husband</td>
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<td>Bon Ton, or High Life Above</td>
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<td>James Johnstone</td>
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<td>William O’Brien</td>
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<td>Duke’s Theatre, London 1682</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1791</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* a London revival of this play, revised by John Phillip Kemble, opened at Drury Lane in 1795.

Total plays: 89
52 = satire/comedy/farce; 13 = drama/tragedy/history; 21 = unknown

Resources Used:


English Drama. An Online Chadwyck-Healey/Pro-Quest Database.

Quebec Herald; Printer’s Records for the Quebec Gazette; Halifax Gazette; Nova-Scotia Gazette; Nova-Scotia Chronicle
Appendix vi: Québec City, Lower Town, c. 1777

“Lower Town, Quebec,” 1777

By James Hunter, Library and Archives Canada, Acc. No. 1989-246-4, C-001506, Watercolour and pen and ink over pencil.
Appendix vii: A Select List of Public Houses Identified as “Coffee Houses,” Services Provided, Activities Undertaken, & Known Patrons in Halifax and Québec City 1764-1800

**Quebec City**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establishment</th>
<th>Known Owner/Years</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Known Activities</th>
<th>Known Patrons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Coffee-House</td>
<td>1766 Mr. Simpson 1769</td>
<td>Lower Town</td>
<td>Refreshments Auctions Lectures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun Tavern (not identified as coffee house)</td>
<td>1765</td>
<td></td>
<td>Refreshments Saint Patrick’s Day Dinner:</td>
<td>Gentlemen; Merchants;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miles Prentice’s Coffee-House</td>
<td>Miles Prentice 1780</td>
<td></td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td>Military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant’s Coffee House</td>
<td>Thomas Ferguson pre-1788-</td>
<td>Pre-1788: Lower Town</td>
<td>Refreshments (coffee, tea, chocolate, liquor) Meals Lodgings Auctions Dances Mail for Packets Concerts Theatre</td>
<td>“Merchants,” “Ladies;” “Gentlemen;” “public in general;” “commanders of vessels;” “transient gentlemen;” Quebec Benevolent Society; Loyal Veterans of 1775-76; Officers of the 53rd Regiment; “Gentlemen of the Marine Department;” “most respectable citizens to the number of about 50…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nov. 1788: Lower Town</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“house formerly Mr. McPherson’s Hotel” May 1790: “House formerly occupied by Mr. Baten as a Coffee House, No. 30, St. Peter Street”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franks Tavern and Coffee House</td>
<td>John Franks 1789-?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Refreshments Meals Lodgings Dances</td>
<td>Ladies; Gentlemen; Merchants; Military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec Coffee House</td>
<td>Charles Daly 1789 Alex Cairns 1789-?</td>
<td>Lower Town “opposite the church”</td>
<td>Refreshments Lodgings</td>
<td>Gentlemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Baten’s Coffee House (possibly Sun Tavern, Wolfe Tavern, or British Coffee House)</td>
<td>Mr. Baten 1790</td>
<td>No. 30, St. Peter Street</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Halifax

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establishment</th>
<th>Known Owner/Years</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Known Activities</th>
<th>Known Patrons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Piggott’s Coffee-House</td>
<td>William Piggott 1751</td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td>Gentlemen; Ladies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee House “with the</td>
<td>L.D. 1752? “Dancing</td>
<td>“two doors from the North Gate”</td>
<td>Refreshments (tea, coffee, chocolate)</td>
<td>Merchants; Governor and Lady Wentworth; North British Society; Charitable Irish Society;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval of his Excellency the</td>
<td>and French taught as before”</td>
<td>Dance lessons French lesson</td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor” (possibly Pontacs)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Coffee-House</td>
<td>Phillip Marchington 1780</td>
<td>1780: Upper Water Street</td>
<td>Meals Concerts</td>
<td>Gentlemen; Ladies; Military; Masons; Members of the Legislature; North British Society;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1780</td>
<td>Wyndham Madden 1805</td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown Coffee House</td>
<td>William Fury 1768-?</td>
<td>“North–End;” “on the beach leading to His Majesty’s Dockyard”</td>
<td>Refreshments Employment Recruiting</td>
<td>Gentlemen; Ladies; Merchants; Military; Masons; Members of the Legislature; North British Society;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Pontac</td>
<td>Decarteret? (see</td>
<td>corner of Duke and Water streets, “near the North Gate”</td>
<td>Refreshments Meals Auctions Theatre Dances Lodging</td>
<td>Gentlemen; Ladies; Merchants; Military; Masons; Members of the Legislature; North British Society;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raddall); George</td>
<td></td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suckling ? Edward</td>
<td></td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Best? 1754-1758;</td>
<td></td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Willis 1769-1784</td>
<td>corner of Duke and Water streets, “near the North Gate”</td>
<td>Refreshments Meals Auctions Theatre Dances Lodging</td>
<td>Gentlemen; Ladies; Merchants; Military; Masons; Members of the Legislature; North British Society;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter Lennon 1784-</td>
<td></td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol Coffee House</td>
<td>Elizabeth Taylor 1779</td>
<td>“Road to old Blockhouse from Halifax”</td>
<td>Refreshments “genteel Entertainment”</td>
<td>Gentlemen; Ladies; Merchants; Military; Masons; Members of the Legislature; North British Society;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Brehm’s Coffee House</td>
<td>Elizabeth Brehm 1780</td>
<td>“Brehm’s Farm”</td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td>Gentlemen; Ladies; Merchants; Military; Masons; Members of the Legislature; North British Society;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Ball</td>
<td>Edward Phelon 1780</td>
<td>Hollis and Sackville streets</td>
<td>Refreshments Meals Lodging</td>
<td>Masons; Military; Charitable Irish Society;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallagher’s Coffee House</td>
<td>Andrew Gallagher 1791?-1798?</td>
<td>Upper Water Street</td>
<td>Refreshments Meals Lodging</td>
<td>Charitable Irish Society; North British Society; Masons;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(British Tavern)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutherland’s Coffee House</td>
<td>William Sutherland, later Mrs. Sutherland 1779-1791</td>
<td>Bedford Row</td>
<td>Refreshments Meals Lodging</td>
<td>Lt. Gov. Parr; Prince William Henry; North British Society; Masons;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wentworth Coffee House</td>
<td>1797-1801</td>
<td>Refreshments Meals Lodging</td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td>Members of the Legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment</td>
<td>Known Owner/Years</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Known Activities</td>
<td>Known Patrons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange Coffee House</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refreshments Meals</td>
<td>Merchants; North British Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem Coffee House</td>
<td>Wyndham Madden</td>
<td>1789: Ordnance Yard, opposite Collin’s Wharf</td>
<td>Destroyed by fire 1837.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources Used:** *Halifax Gazette, Nova-Scotia Gazette, Nova-Scotia Chronicle, Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (1752-1800), *Quebec Gazette* (1764-1800), *Quebec Herald* (1788-1791)

Bibliothèque et Archives de Québec à Québec: Henry Juncken Diaries, James Thompson Diaries, Quebec Agriculture Society Papers, Various Masonic Papers.


Massachusetts Historical Society: Byles Family Papers, Belcher-Jennison-Weiss Papers.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Known Dates</th>
<th>Type of Club</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Old” Union Fire Club</td>
<td>14 January 1754</td>
<td>Fire Society</td>
<td>Mixed Subscribers</td>
<td>5 UNION FIRE-CLUB Halifax. Rules and Orders to be observed by the Members... First Instituted at Halifax on the 14th Day of January, 1754, and thence continued to the 14th day of January 1759... (Halifax: John Bushell, 1759); Nova-Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle 8 March 1774, 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Friendly Society</td>
<td>1765</td>
<td>Benevolent or Friendly Society</td>
<td>Mixed; met at house of “Mr. John Simpson, Halifax”</td>
<td>Halifax Gazette, 24 October 1765, 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North British Society, or “Scots Club”</td>
<td>1768</td>
<td>Benevolent or Friendly Society</td>
<td>Scots Community</td>
<td>MG 20, Volume 230, North British Society, Treasurer's Records, Articles of the North British Society, 1768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whist Club</td>
<td>1783?</td>
<td>Informal Private</td>
<td>Edward Winslow “Townsend, Brentley &amp; Coffin”</td>
<td>MG23-D1 Ward Chipman (Senior and Junior) fonds, Reel C-1180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday’s Club</td>
<td>1783?</td>
<td>Informal Private</td>
<td>Edward Winslow “Townsend, Brentley &amp; Coffin”</td>
<td>MG23-D1 Ward Chipman (Senior and Junior) fonds, Reel C-1180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charitable Irish Society</td>
<td>1786-</td>
<td>Benevolent or Friendly Society</td>
<td>Irish Community</td>
<td>MG 100, Volume 158, #5, Halifax: Societies: Charitable Irish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Society</td>
<td>1786</td>
<td>Benevolent or Friendly Society</td>
<td>Sailors, Mariners and Merchants; “formed by about twenty Masters of Vessels... joined by two or three merchants....”</td>
<td>Dr. Brown’s Sermon on the Dangers and Duties of the Seafaring Life, 1793; Weekly Chronicle (Halifax) 3 January 1795, 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal and Friendly Society of the Blue and Orange</td>
<td>1787</td>
<td>Formal Private Society</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Dyott’s Diary, Volume 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture Society of Nova Scotia</td>
<td>1789</td>
<td>Public Improvement Society</td>
<td>Mixed Subscribers</td>
<td>Various newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward’s Literary Coterie</td>
<td>1790s</td>
<td>Formal Private Society</td>
<td>HRH Edward, Drs. Clark &amp; Halliburton, Geddes Brothers</td>
<td>Proceedings of the North British Society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Halifax Freemasons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Known Dates</th>
<th>Type of Club</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Select References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, No. 1</td>
<td>Grand Lodge Warrant: 2 June 1784</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Mixed; met at Golden Ball</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint John’s Lodge, (No. 1) No. 2; also known as No. 211 and “No.1 Ancient York Masons”</td>
<td>Warrant: 13 June 1780 1780-1837</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Mixed; met at Golden Ball</td>
<td>MG 20, Volume 2003, Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, #5, St. John’s Lodge No. 2 (Halifax), 1780-1837; Robertson, History of Freemasonry, 155.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodge No. 134, 54th (West Norfolk) Regiment of Foot</td>
<td>1782-1784</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>MG 20, Volume 2007, Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, #11, Lodge No. 134, 54th (West Norfolk) Regiment of Foot (Halifax), 1782-1784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virgin Lodge No. 3, or Artillery Lodge, No. 2</td>
<td>1782-</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>MG 20, Volume 2007, Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, #2, Virgin Lodge No. 3, or Artillery Lodge, No. 2, (Halifax), 1782-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 3 Thistle Lodge, 82nd Regiment</td>
<td>1783</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>MG 20, Volume 2006, Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, #3, Thistle Lodge, 82nd Regiment (Halifax), 1783-1784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Lodge No. 1</td>
<td>1784-1834</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>MG 20, Volume 2006, Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, #7, Union Lodge No. 1 (Halifax), 1784-1834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodge No. 169, 17th Regiment of Foot</td>
<td>1784</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>MG 20, Volume 2007, Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, #7, Lodge No. 169, 17th Regiment of Foot (Halifax), 1784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodge No. 63, 20th Regiment of Foot,</td>
<td>1784</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>MG 20, Volume 2007, Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, #8, Lodge No. 63, 20th Regiment of Foot (Halifax), 1784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodge No. 52, 37th Regiment of Foot</td>
<td>1784-1789</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Military; Dyott</td>
<td>MG 20, Volume 2007, Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, #10, Lodge No. 52, 37th Regiment of Foot (Halifax), 1784-1789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Known Dates</td>
<td>Type of Club</td>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Select References</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sion Lodge No. 3, 57th Regiment of Foot</td>
<td>1786-1791</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>MG 20, Volume 2006, Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, #6, Sion Lodge No. 3 (Halifax), 57th Regiment of Foot, 1786-1791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Navy Lodge, No. 18</td>
<td>1787-1804</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Royal Navy</td>
<td>MG 20, Volume 2003, Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, #4, Royal Navy Lodge No. 18, 1787-1804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodge No. 293, 16th (Buckinghamshire) Regiment of Foot</td>
<td>1791-1792</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>MG 20, Volume 2007, Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, #6, Lodge No. 293, 16th (Buckinghamshire) Regiment of Foot (Halifax), 1791-1792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodge No. 538/580, 66th (Berkshire) Regiment of Foot</td>
<td>1799</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>MG 20, Volume 2007, Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, #12, Lodge No. 538/580, 66th (Berkshire) Regiment of Foot (Halifax), 1799</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Québec City 1760-1800**

**Societies (Not Including Freemasons)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Known Dates</th>
<th>Type of Club</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Select References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barons Club</td>
<td>Winter 1761</td>
<td>Formal Private Society</td>
<td>Merchants (including John Melvin, John Lees and John Painter)</td>
<td><strong>Quebec Herald</strong> 18 May 1789, 233; <em>Quebec Herald</em> 20 January 1791, 71; <em>Quebec Herald</em> 24 January 1791, 76; Moore’s Pocket Almanack… 1792, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amicable Society / Société favorable</td>
<td>1770</td>
<td>Fire Society</td>
<td>Mixed; A. Martin (1770); Robert Woolsey (1771), secretary</td>
<td><em>Quebec Gazette</em> 15 November 1770, 3; <em>Quebec Gazette</em> 16 May 1771, 3; <em>Quebec Gazette</em> 13 August 1772, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Known Dates</td>
<td>Type of Club</td>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Select References</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minerva Free Debating Society</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>Debating Society</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Quebec Gazette 23 January 1777, 3; Quebec Gazette 30 January 1777, 4; Quebec Gazette 6 February 1777, 4; Quebec Gazette 13 February 1777, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec Library</td>
<td>1778</td>
<td>Public Library</td>
<td>Mixed Public Subscribers</td>
<td>Various newspaper; library catalogues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchants’ Club</td>
<td>1789</td>
<td>Formal Private Society</td>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>Quebec Herald 11 to 18 May 1789, 233.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture Society of Quebec</td>
<td>1789</td>
<td>Public Improvement Society</td>
<td>Mixed Public Subscribers</td>
<td>Quebec Gazette; Quebec Herald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec Benevolent Society</td>
<td>1789</td>
<td>Benevolent or Friendly Society</td>
<td>Mixed Public Subscribers</td>
<td>Quebec Gazette; Quebec Herald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pye Club</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>Formal Private Society</td>
<td></td>
<td>Quebec Herald 25 March 1790, 141.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans of 1775-76</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>Formal Private Society</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Quebec Herald 29 April 1790, 181. etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec Clerk Club (Proposed)</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>Debating Society</td>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>Quebec Herald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitutional Club</td>
<td>26 December 1791</td>
<td>Debating Society</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Quebec Gazette</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Québec City Freemasons**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Known Dates</th>
<th>Type of Club</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Select References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Grand Lodge</td>
<td>[1780]</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Mixed; “meets the 1st Monday in March, June, September and December, at the house of Brother Bacon”</td>
<td>Almanach de Québec 1780, 60.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewart’s or “Select” Lodge</td>
<td>1759-1768</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Graham, Outlines of the History of Free-masonry, 38, 41.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Andrew’s Lodge No. 2 (78th Highlanders)</td>
<td>1760-1789 Warrant: 20 October 1760 Registered in England: 1762</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Mixed; predominately Scots “[meets the 2d Thursday” (Almanach de Québec 1780, 60.)</td>
<td>The Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London, England, St. Andrew’s Lodge, No. 152 [erased], Quebec GBR 1991 AR/476,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Known Dates</td>
<td>Type of Club</td>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Select References</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodge No. 5, <em>HMS Canceaux</em></td>
<td>1768-?</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Navy (one of only three naval lodges warranted) 1760 – 1789; Graham, <em>Outlines of the History of Free-masonry</em>, 38, 42-56.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anbak Zum Temple Lodge, No. 12</td>
<td>1780</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Mixed; “1st &amp; 3d Saturdays in every month” <em>Almanach de Québec</em> 1780, 60.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King’s Lodge, No.8, 8th Regiment of Foot</td>
<td>1780</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Military   <em>Almanach de Québec</em> 1780, 60.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. George’s Lodge, No. 108, 31st Regiment</td>
<td>1780</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Military   <em>Almanach de Québec</em> 1780, 60.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodge No. 195, 8th Regiment of Foot</td>
<td>1780</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Military   <em>Almanach de Québec</em> 1780, 60.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodge, No. 236, 53rd Regiment of Foot</td>
<td>1780</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Military   <em>Almanach de Québec</em> 1780, 60.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anhalt-Zerbst Regiment (German), No. 516</td>
<td>1787</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Military   Graham, <em>Outlines of the History of Freemasonry</em>, 40.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint John’s Lodge, No. 3 (Antient)</td>
<td>1788</td>
<td>Freemasonry</td>
<td>Mixed      Osborne, <em>A Concise History of Freemasonry in Canada</em>, 82.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: In 1751, a division in the English Grand Lodge of freemasonry occurred effectively creating two grand lodges, neither of which would acknowledge the members of the other. The secessionist grand lodge believing to be better adherents of traditional masonry called themselves “antients,” and the initial grand lodge was referred to pejoratively as the “moderns.” All lodges in Québec City were “moderns” unless otherwise stated.