

# HALIFAX AT THE TIME OF CONFEDERATION<sup>1</sup>

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IN 1867 an even better view of Halifax could be obtained from Citadel Hill than to-day because the spreading trees that now obstruct the view, though immensely improving the appearance of the city, had not been planted. At that date Halifax was clustered on the eastern slope of the Citadel and along the waterfront from South Street to North Street. Looking southward toward McNab's Island and the mouth of the harbor, one could see the squat wooden buildings of Artillery Park, St. Mary's Cathedral, and St. Matthew's Church. The section south of Morris Street was known as Smith's fields, where a few houses were being built on such streets as Inglis, Kent, Tobin and Victoria Road. Beyond the broad expanse of Miller's Field lay Point Pleasant and Tower Woods, owned by the military and dominated by Fort Ogilvie, Fort Cambridge, and the Prince of Wales' Tower, now the Martello Tower.

Stretching westward, the Common was simply an open space, fairly level, part of it having been graded for horse races and military reviews, although some swamp and rocks remained. The trees along its borders, which now add so much to its beauty, had not been planted. An open drain ran across it from what is now the corner of Cunard and Robie Streets, thence to Griffin's Pond, a large square pond that was later transformed into the present charming circular one in the Public Gardens, and then down South Park Street and through Smith's fields to Freshwater or the Kissing Bridge. The Common as it exists at present is little more than the North Common of 1867. Much of the South Common then remained empty from South Park Street to Robie Street, and South Street to Sackville Street, although encroachments had begun in the lots leased to the Horticultural Society, the Convent of the Sacred Heart, and to the City and Provincial Hospital, the

1. This article is based on the following books, manuscripts, maps and newspapers in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. *Business Directory of City of Halifax* for 1858-9, Halifax, Richard P. Nugent 1858; *Census of Canada 1870-71*; *Census of Nova Scotia* taken March 30, 1861, Halifax, N. S. Printed by E. M. McDonald 1862; *Halifax Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, Constitution and By-Laws 1867*, Halifax, Macnab and Shaefer, 1867; *Hutchinson's Nova Scotia Directory, 1866-67*; *Harry Piers' Evolution of the Halifax Fortress*; *John Quinpool's First Things in Acadia, 1936*, First Things Publishers Limited, Halifax, N. S.; *History of the Halifax Street Railway* by Stanley Borden (unpublished MSS. of N. S. Historical Society); *Plan of the City of Halifax* on A. F. Church's *Topographical Map of Halifax County, 1864*; *City Atlas of Halifax, N. S.*, by H. W. Hopkins, Civil Engineer, 1878; and a careful analysis of the *Acadian Recorder, British Colonist, Morning Chronicle, and Novascotian*.

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forerunner of the Hospital district of to-day. In 1818 part of the Common known as Spring Gardens had been laid out in lots in leases of 999 years. By the 1830's some citizens were already regretting this prodigality because the Common was too small for the number of animals grazing there, and householders were being restricted as to the number of cows, oxen and sheep they might keep on it.

Strenuous efforts had been made in 1867 to raise funds for a School for the Blind. William Murdoch had left a bequest of £5,000 towards an Asylum for the Blind in Halifax, provided that an equal sum be raised within five years. The suggestion that this institution be given a site on the South Common aroused such opposition that a Society was formed for the preservation of the Common. The practice of raiding the Common every time a new building was required for public or benevolent purposes was decried in the press. "The people of the South-end are without a place to which they can resort for public recreation of any kind, without trudging away to the North Common", and they had collected funds to lay out and decorate their part of the Common. The Society finally withdrew its opposition as the only way to enable the School to benefit by Mr. Murdoch's legacy.

West of the Common were farms and woodland, leafy trees and cottages, with some large estates owned by city merchants and professional men whose residences overlooked the North West Arm—Pinehill, Gorsebrook where the Hon. Enos Collins lived, Belmont, Oaklands the summer home of William Cunard, Rosebank, Bloomingdale, the residence of A. G. Jones—while Miss Isabella Cogswell lived at Jubilee, and Hon. Dr. Tupper at Armdale. Although Robie Street had been planned as the "great main artery of Halifax" from the Penitentiary at the North West Arm north to Bedford Basin, it had not even been laid out except along the Common, where it was barely passable for carriages. North of the Common there were only a few scattered houses among the fields, and Agricola Street had not been opened. The section north of Jacob Street was still called "Dutch Town," and west of Gottingen Street was "New Town," the residential area centering about Gottingen and Brunswick Streets. The latter street ran only from Buckingham Street to North Street. Not until 1872 was Barrack Street, from Buckingham to Sackville Streets, renamed Brunswick Street, and an attempt made to extend it south through Imperial property to Spring Garden Road.

A few houses of the poorer class were stretched along Campbell Road between the Dockyard and Richmond, where a settlement had grown about the railway terminus after the beginning of work on the Nova Scotia Railway. Richmond, where the machine shops employed one hundred and fifty men, was considered a separate village, as it was four miles from the business district. Pigs, goats, cows and poultry roamed at will through its streets in spite of repeated petitions from the residents for the City Council to establish a Pound. This nuisance had prevailed since 1860, while the "district has been rapidly growing in houses, population and nuisance." With the opening of the line from Halifax to Pictou in May 1867, and the expectation that the rapid completion of the Inter-colonial would cause goods from the interior to pour into Halifax, the structures at Richmond were thought to be absolutely inadequate. The *Acadian Recorder* complained that "the depot-building is not fit for a cow stable, or a wood-shed; there are no freight sheds or stores, worthy of the names, and there is no place where suitable edifices of the kind can be erected."

Everywhere steeples proclaimed that Halifax was rapidly attaining the status of a "city of churches" with its twenty-five places of worship. In 1867 two churches were dedicated and opened for worship—St. John's Presbyterian in Brunswick Street on July 7th, and St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church at the north end of Gottingen Street on November 3rd, and the North Baptist Church purchased a site for a new church on Gottingen Street. This "handsome edifice" later became the Community Theatre.

The eminent danger of conflict with the United States during the Civil War between the North and South and during the Fenian raids of 1866 made the defences of Halifax extremely important. Haligonians remembered the Trent affair in the winter of 1862, when General Hastings Doyle had rushed 13,000 British soldiers by boat, train and sleigh to Canada. They were fond of recalling that Fort George, or the "Citadel", had been named in honor of George III by the Duke of Kent, the father of their Queen, when he was commander at Halifax, and they regarded it as the crowning jewel in the defences and were proud of the enormous bastion commanding the blue waters of the finest harbor in North America. Few realized that improvements in ordnance had made Fort George obsolete almost as soon as it had been completed in 1861 at a cost of £233,882 or that it was being superseded by forts nearer the

harbor. Thousands of pounds were being expended on the reconstruction and enlargement of the fortifications and on the Glacis and the Pavilion Barracks, both of which were begun in 1867. In May of that year the military authorities commenced a Station Hospital for sick soldiers on Gottingen Street in the Garrison Field to replace the old General Hospital on the Citadel Glacis, formerly the town house of the Duke of Kent, which had been destroyed by fire on November 10 1866. Residents of Brunswick Street presented a petition against the erection of the Hospital because it would depreciate the value of property and because it would not be healthy to have it near the thickly settled parts of the city. Pleas to the Imperial government to have it placed on the South Common were unavailing. This substantial brick and mastic structure, now known as the Cogswell Street Hospital, was completed in 1869 by John Brookfield for £31,972.

In 1867 there were 2,400 British troops stationed in Nova Scotia, chiefly at Halifax, consisting of detachments of the Artillery and the Engineers and two Regiments, the 4th and 47th Foot. One regiment occupied Wellington Barracks and the other the Citadel. On the first of May they exchanged quarters, marching along Gottingen Street with bands playing and colors flying, and when they met, the junior corps opened out to allow the senior to pass through its ranks. On one occasion there was such hostility between the regiments that the commanding officers feared a riot. Discretion proving the better part of valor, they marched by different routes.

These forces of the Army and those of the Navy, for Halifax was the Naval base of the Atlantic squadron from May to October, required large quantities of supplies, as well as brightening the streets with their scarlet and blue uniforms. This meant money for the merchants of the city and the farmers of the province. Although many rejoiced that Halifax was a Garrison Town and a Naval Station, the editor of the *Acadian Recorder* was not one of them. He admitted that "That urbanity of manner, a regard for the polished conventionalities of society" which was a marked characteristic of Haligonians was due to the influence exercised by "contact with the most highly cultivated classes of the mother country which military and naval services threw amongst them." However, he insisted that the large blocks of Imperial property in the centre of the city were injurious to commerce and

that the commercial community, as a whole, were led into the habits of almost pitiable dependence. There were army and navy contracts to be looked for; there were fortifications to be constructed and a naval yard to be kept in operation; there was soldiers' and sailors' pay to be spent, and, in war time, numerous special hauls to be made; and to these sources alone did anybody look for business. Such a procedure as striking out in a self-reliant and enterprising way into any independent business for which the country had many inducements, scarcely seems to have been thought of.

Vessels crowded the spacious harbor till it appeared like a forest of masts. The ladies of Halifax eagerly awaited the arrival of the spring and fall ships from England bearing the latest fashions, bonnets, and dress materials. At a time when the railway ran only to Windsor and Pictou the wharves were piled high with sugar, molasses, rum and fruit from the West Indies; clothing, carpets, crockeryware, tea and coffee from England; flour from the United States; fish, lumber, coal and vegetables from Prince Edward Island, the north shore of New Brunswick, and the outports of the province. The shipping trade continued "brisk notwithstanding the stagnation of trade," for in five days one ship, one steamer, six brigs, two brigs, one bark, and seventy-eight schooners laden with produce arrived at Halifax, the steamer *Carlotta* bringing 1,600 barrels of flour and other freight from Portland.

Halifax had many flourishing local industries, such as bakeries, boot and shoe and broom factories, iron foundries, and factories for carriages and furniture. In addition there were many firms of commission merchants; the wholesale and retail grocery, drug, and dry goods establishments serving the Maritimes; ship chandlers; and those connected with the West India trade.

The Maritime Provinces experienced a slight depression in 1867. People blamed the lack of business upon Confederation instead of on the loss of the American market since the abrogation of the Reciprocity Treaty and the end of the Civil War, because of the universal desire of mankind to attribute depressions to political rather than economic causes. In mid-summer a larger number of mechanics and other industrious hardworking men were out of work than for many years. The *Acadian Recorder* explained that the unemployment was caused by the introduction of large quantities of goods from abroad, which were naturally bought instead of home production on account of their cheapness, and that the country was unable

to bear the effects of a glut of foreign manufactured goods, such as boots, shoes and clothing.

The profits of the importing trade were already diminishing at a time when city taxes were steadily increasing for the extension of the Water Works in the north end and the building of the Poor Asylum. Until 1865 Halifax had been the importing centre from which Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, New Brunswick and the Bermudas drew large amounts of supplies. Now the merchants in most of the small towns throughout the Maritimes were importing directly from Europe, the States and the West Indies and Ontario, confining the transactions of the mercantile houses of Halifax to the city. At the end of December, 1867, the Cunard steamers discontinued calling at Halifax because of the lack of freight. This withdrawal was deeply regretted by the inhabitants because Cunard's wharf and the bustle and excitement of the arrival of the mail steamers had become an institution. The proprietors of the Inman Line, which was now to carry mails and passengers to England, entertained a large party on board the *City of Antwerp* on 31 December, when the guests, including Mayor Stephen Tobin and Hon. Joseph Howe, were regaled with toasts and speeches. The Agents, Messrs. J. & R. B. Seeton, extended their wharf thirty feet into the harbor and erected freight sheds and workshops.

The fall fishery had been a failure, especially in Halifax County. At Prospect and in the villages around St. Margaret's Bay the people were confronted with the spectre of starvation during the winter of 1867-68. This destitution was reflected in a further decline of business in Halifax, and in the steady emigration of young men to the United States. The citizens of Ottawa raised funds for the relief of the "Distressed Fishermen" by concerts and solicitations, while in Halifax committees in each ward collected subscriptions to add to the proceeds of a literary and musical concert. The Rev. John Ambrose of St. Margaret's Bay advertised in the newspapers for work for his parishioners, and asked the merchants of Halifax to buy nets made by hand from the fishermen instead of those manufactured by machine. Just before Christmas fourteen girls from St. Margaret's were driven from their homes by hunger to look for work in Halifax. The newspapers wasted no sympathy on their plight, for the *Acadian Recorder* merely commented that "parties in need of domestic servants will now have no difficulty in supplying themselves."

To help the churches alleviate poverty the Halifax Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor was revived on 27 December, 1866, "to search out hidden destitution." Citizens in those days did not limit their attempts to relieve poverty to contributions of money to charitable organizations. Prominent men acted as voluntary visitors for the Association and soon discovered that "hard times" were prevalent in the winter of 1867. Bread was selling at a famine price, having advanced in April to ten cents a loaf. In its first year the Society aided nearly six hundred families with fuel and provisions, while the St. Vincent de Paul Society carried on a similar work of mercy among the Roman Catholic poor of the city.

Transportation still depended on horse power or shank's mare. Wagons and "trucks" could be seen jolting along over the cobble stones of Water Street, carrying freight to and from the wharves. All who could owned one or two horses and a carriage of some description, such as a pony phaeton, Victoria, landau, brougham or dog cart. Thus the houses in the south end were built with commodious stables in the rear. The size of the city was sharply limited because a man refused to live far from "down town" when he had to walk to work. Only the wealthier classes could afford a coachman and had the good fortune to live in the suburbs.

Large crowds assembled along Hollis Street on 11 June, 1866, for the inauguration of street cars in Halifax with William D. O'Brien's Halifax City Railroad from Richmond Station in the north to Montgomery's Iron Works at Freshwater in the south. They watched eagerly as the sound of music approached, two platform cars with the band of the 4th Regiment leading the procession, then five elegant passenger cars filled with Lieutenant-Governor Sir Fenwick Williams of Kars and his suite, General Doyle, Dr. Charles Tupper, Judge Jackson, the American consul, and the dignitaries of the city, army navy and legislature. Mr. O'Brien welcomed his guests to a sumptuous luncheon of wines and delicacies at the Richmond Depot, which had been gaily decorated with evergreens and flags. The horse cars ran every fifteen minutes from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., and in 1867 there was a half hour service to the corner of Spring Garden Road and Robie Street. Tickets were sold in packets of twenty for a dollar, single fares being seven cents for adults and three cents for children.

There was a very marked hostility towards the Horse Railway. In many places, especially along Spring Garden

Road, the rails were several inches above the surface of the street. This caused considerable discomfort to those who had to ride over it, and occasionally the wheels of the vehicle were broken. After every snow storm Mr. O'Brien tried to clear the tracks with a plow. This caused furious protests because bare streets prevented the wealthier citizens from riding in a barouche or sleigh, or poorer ones from driving a cab or truck sled. The truckmen were particularly bitter because they could not haul freight over bare streets, and the snow thrown on the side by the plow made it very difficult to deliver coal or other goods to the doors of the shops. On one occasion the truckmen assembled after dinner at the Grand Parade and proceeded to Water Street, where they spent the afternoon amusing the street loafers by throwing snow back into the tracks to stop the horse cars. The *Acadian Recorder* praised the utility of the street cars and declared that they had "added immensely to the appearance of the city, giving it an air of progress."

We who live in an era of airplane and automobile accidents need not think that there were no accidents in the horse and buggy age. Runaways were frequent. Miss Antoinette Nordbeck, daughter of Peter Nordbeck the silversmith, suffered one such mishap as she was driving down Sackville Street in her carriage:

The horse took fright, and started down the street at a fearful pace. Turning the corner into Water Street, the animal took a course near the lower sidewalk, and the waggon striking the curbstone as he came round, the violence of the shock threw Miss Norbeck completely through the large window in the store of Messrs. Noble, and the coachman was left on the sidewalk. Neither were injured anything to speak of, although the escape from serious results was something almost miraculous. At the time of the accident Miss Norbeck had a large bundle of bank notes in her hand. When she recovered herself the notes were missing, but were subsequently discovered some distance inside the shop, where they had been thrown in by the force of the collision.

As they do to-day Haligonians urged strangers to visit their public buildings—the Government House; the Province House, "one of the handsomest edifices in British North America"; Admiralty House; St. Paul's Church, the oldest Protestant Church in Canada; the Garrison Chapel, where the church parade of the Imperial troops in their scarlet uniforms



was a famous tourist attraction; the new Court House, a large imposing freestone building on Spring Garden Road. Dalhousie College, "a dingy, unsightly edifice" constructed of freestone, occupied the north extremity of the Grand Parade, where the City Hall stands to-day. In it were the Post Office and the museum of the Halifax Mechanics' Institute. The City Hall, Court House and Police Station were then in an old building at the foot of George Street, at the corner of Upper Water Street, now a parking lot. The City Council and the citizens often talked of "erecting a new City Hall suitable to the wants and commensurate with the pretensions and aspirations of this Province." This building was urgently needed, for the *Acadian Recorder* reported that at one of its meetings the City Council "found itself under the necessity of either adjourning, or sitting in solemn conclave with umbrellas over their heads, owing to the pour of rain from the ceiling." St. Mary's Cathedral was still unfinished, the work on the facade and spire not beginning till the spring of 1869. St. Matthew's Church, rebuilt after its destruction by fire on New Year's Day in 1857, was situated on Pleasant Street where it stands to-day. Its former site at the corner of Prince and Hollis Street, where the Eastern Trust Company building is to-day, was occupied by the six-storey, freestone, dry goods establishment of Doull and Miller. The Halifax Hotel on Hollis Street, used in the 1850's as the Officers' Quarters after the burning of the North Barracks, was now one of the best hotels in the Dominion. In its large dining hall the Nova Scotian delegates had entertained the members of the Charlottetown Conference and had listened to the eloquence of D'Arcy McGee.

Handsome stone and brick buildings were being erected in the business district, although many wooden structures remained on Granville, Prince, George, Duke, and Barrington Streets. The Bank of Nova Scotia on Hollis Street was built in 1856-57 of freestone for six thousand pounds, and the Union Bank in 1863 for ten thousand pounds. Hare's Building and two blocks on Hollis Street and Bedford Row had been burnt on 12 January, 1861, a night of such intense cold that the pumps had frozen and the firemen had had frequent recourse to whiskey for warmth. In 1863 the Nova Scotian Government had purchased the site and signed a contract for a splendid building to accommodate the Post Office, Customs House and Railway Department. This new Provincial Building, now known as the old Post Office, was still under construction in 1867.

A new Poor Asylum was begun in 1867 by Henry Peters on the South Common near the City Hospital, on the site of the present Poor House, and completed at a cost of \$112,346.00, two-thirds being borne by the Province and one-third by the City. David Sterling, the architect, had planned a brick and stone structure in the form of a Latin cross, having its four wings radiating from a central building, five stories high. As it would accommodate twelve hundred persons it was decided to build only the central building and the south and west wings, to care for six hundred. The poor remained until December, 1869, in the old, crowded, unventilated Workhouse, or Bridewell, in Spring Gardens, the original wing of which had been built in 1758, and which was situated across what is now the western end of Doyle Street. On 6 April, 1870, J. D. Nash sold for \$20,000 the old Poor House and grounds on the northern side of Spring Garden Road between Queen Street and what is now Hastings Street, named after General Sir Hastings Doyle Lieutenant Governor from 1867 to 1873. The Poor House Cemetery became Grafton Park.

Although the main streets were macadamized and in the business section the sidewalks were of brick or slate instead of earth and ashes mixed, on most streets the citizens suffered from mud and pot holes full of water in spring, and from dust in summer. One citizen was so annoyed at being choked by clouds of dust one April that he declared that "a watering-cart will be round by the first of August, if nothing unforeseen occurs."

Nearly everyone agreed that improvements were never made until the flimsy wooden buildings had been swept away in some conflagration like the Granville Street fire of 1859. The fire fighting equipment was primitive according to our standards, although Halifax did possess two steam fire engines. A fire was the personal concern of every able-bodied man, including the soldiers and sailors, for there was no paid fire department. Whenever a fire was discovered, word was carried to the nearest engine house, the man in charge rang the bell, and the volunteer fire forces organized as the Union Fire Protection Company and the Volunteer Engine Company, rushed to the engine house to pull the hand pumps to the scene of the alarm. There were two notable fires in 1867. The first occurred on 15 April, when the brick steam bakery and grist mill of Moir & Company, "the most extensive of its kind in the Lower Provinces," suffered the destruction of its two upper storeys

and considerable damage to the large stock of flour and grain. On the morning after Christmas a fire roared unchecked before a high wind among the tenements on Barrack Street, causing the death of three people and destroying four houses while little children stood shivering in the snowbanks on the glacis of the Citadel.

The popularity of gardening must have added considerably to the beauty of the city. Flower gardens were part of almost every household. This hobby had led to the establishment of several nurseries, the largest being those of Herbert Harris near the Dockyard, and Thomas Leahy near the North Common, both of whom imported extensively from Europe and the States. In spring and summer the grounds of the fine residences along Brunswick and Gottingen Streets and in the south end were bright with carefully cultivated flowers. Judge Bliss, James Forman, later notorious for embezzling the funds of the Bank of Nova Scotia, Martin P. Black, and William Cunard, son of the founder of the Cunard Steamship line, were renowned for the splendor of their gardens. Passers-by on Brunswick Street in winter delighted to pause to admire the rare varieties in the conservatories of W. B. Hamilton and Sandford Fleming, who was later to give his property at the Dingle to the people of Halifax for a park. Often they lingered before Mr. Hamilton's windows to feast their eyes on the hundreds of pink and white blooms of his zonal geraniums.

Inhabitants of Halifax who were seeking escape from the crowded and overheated streets on a hot still summer day could easily walk to one of the rural retreats like the Grove at Richmond, or Robie's fields. The green fields where their fathers had played were rapidly disappearing before grand and imposing mansions. Those who were anxious for Halifax to retain its aspect as part of the countryside suggested that in new developments, such as Smith's Fields or Willowpark, the houses be set back six or eight feet from the street, making generations yet unborn grateful for these streets lined with flower plots and ornamental shade trees.

The City Gardens, now that part of the Public Gardens fronting Sackville Street, were being reclaimed from the wilderness and attracted many visitors to see the seals and rare geese in Griffin's Pond. The Horticultural Society's Gardens, situated in the half of the Public Gardens fronting Spring Garden Road, were a source of pride to all. After paying five cents for admission:

one can sit beneath the shade of some arbor or overhanging branches, and watch the gambols of the pretty children who frequent the gardens with their nurses. The spacious croquet-grounds, as smooth as a parlor floor, and carpeted with beautiful green, are generally occupied by young ladies with their male friends, most frequently of the military persuasion; and it is not in the least tedious to spend an hour or so in watching the manoeuvring which forms part of the game. In an adjoining enclosure are erected targets for the Archery Club, also composed of young ladies; and often the bows and arrows are brought into requisition on fine afternoons. There are the extensive hot houses to look through, and the Skating Rink to inspect, and the fountain to admire, and the pond, with the tiny house standing at the edge of a small island in its centre, the water leaving its sills . . .

It was pleasant to spend a somnolent Sunday afternoon at the grounds of Andrew Downs at Dutch Village, viewing the rare birds and the animals in his zoological garden. Here the Caledonia Club held their annual gathering on 5 September 1867, and other groups often travelled by steamer from the harbor to the head of the North West Arm. At Downs' Gardens the Club amused themselves with Scottish games, such as putting the heavy stone, throwing the light hammer, and with the Highland fling and sword dances.

Thomas Leahy's Thornfield Nursery, near the North Common, was a popular resort in the summer of 1867. There he had a fine collection of animals and birds—a wild bush hog from Trinidad, an ant eater from Cienfuegos, a tame seal playing under the fountain in the garden, monkeys, macaws, a tame beaver, and a pair of red deer that had been broken to harness in New Brunswick. A season ticket cost one dollar, and a single admission twelve and a half cents or an English sixpence. In July crowds thronged to Thornfield to watch Alfred Elson perform his endurance feat of walking 1000 miles in 1000 hours! Those who beheld this spectacle purchased a gold medal, made of Nova Scotian gold by Julius Cornelius, which was presented in a simple ceremony when Miss Leahy pinned it on Elson's breast.

At the time of Confederation much of the entertainment in Halifax consisted of small gatherings among families and friends. Religion, or at least, the social life of the Church, seemed to occupy a far more important place than in the twentieth century, with its bazaars, soirees, picnics, and strawberry festivals. Church services were crowded, for most families attended church twice on the Sabbath. During the week of

prayer "several places of worship have been so well attended, on many occasions large numbers being unable to gain admission These meetings have been largely attended by the young men."

But the presence of officers of the army and navy, men with money and leisure, contributed much to the gayeties of Halifax. One of the chief joys in winter was sleigh driving, many of the officers owning splendid horses and sleighs. It was a delight to both eye and ear to witness the weekly club drives inaugurated by General Sir Hastings Doyle, when a number of ladies and gentlemen assembled at the Grand Parade and, with sleigh bells ringing and horses prancing, passed through the principal streets, and proceeded "up the road." Then there were the big sleigh drives of the Fire Engine Company to Bedford for dinner, Casey's "six greys" leading the cavalcade, the return into the city often being "accompanied by a very pretty display of fireworks set off from different sleighs". There was more leisure during weekdays, for the Scottish Volunteer Rifles "numbering twenty sleighs, comprising four-in-hands, tandems, unicorns, &c" mustered on the Grand Parade at eleven o'clock and after a short delay started off through the main streets for Fitzmaurice's, well protected from the cold by bearskins and buffalo robes, fur coats and caps and gloves. Over one hundred sat down at the table to do ample justice to the good food with appetites sharpened by the drive to Bedford, and the "usual toasts followed the Dinner".

Although coasting on the streets was forbidden the police force was too small to curtail the boys' enjoyment of this sport. Accidents occasionally happened, as when a boy on a sled passed under the feet of a horse on Cunard Street and startled it so that it rushed downhill to the wharf and broke a load of window frames.

Skating was a favourite pastime with young and old, rich and poor. Besides Chocolate Lake, the Dartmouth Lakes, the Arm, and Bedford Basin there were many ponds near the city, most of which have vanished—Steele's and the Quarry Ponds at Point Pleasant, the Egg Pond on the Common, two at Fort Needham and on the Rockhead property, and Stanford's Ponds near James Stanford's Tannery, and Bone Mill at Three Mile House, now Fairview. Prisoners were sent from Rockhead to clear snow from Griffin's Pond, where it was the ambition of every boy to strap on the skates of some girl and take her for a spin in the moonlight. The Skating Rink in the Horticultural Gardens, the first covered ice rink in Canada, had been

opened on 3 January, 1863, by the Earl of Mulgrave, when a fancy skating exhibition was given. Ladies and gentlemen who purchased a season's ticket could skate skillfully and gracefully to music on its glassy surface, but the public generally was barred. One summer when its tents had been delayed a circus performed in the rink. In the Christmas holidays in 1867 there was skating on the Grand Parade when hundreds of youngsters "made a Skating Pond of the Parade, the surface of which was like a sheet of glass". This same ice storm made the walking very dangerous, as most householders had neglected to put ashes on their sidewalks.

During the winter Haligonians had a wide choice of indoor amusements: concerts; banquets of the volunteer companies; lectures on Prince Charlie and the Rebellion of 1745 by Duncan Campbell, and on "Irish Wit and Irish Eloquence" by Dr. McGregor of St. Francis Xavier; a Grand Parlor Entertainment with farces, music and the song of McBeth at the Temperance Hall; and the meetings of the different societies, such as St. George's, Charitable Irish, North British, Y.M.C.A., and Temperance Divisions.

In January they could attend the Exhibition, in the Legislative Council Chamber, of articles collected in the Province to be shown at the Paris Exhibition. Hundreds filed slowly through the rooms to view the portraits by Chase and Chambers, oil paintings by Forshaw Day, the cabinet work of Messrs. McEwan, fancy work, tools, mineral products, Andrew Downs' collection of birds, and a miniature railway locomotive constructed of five thousand pieces by J. D. Ells, while the Band of the Union Protection Company played popular airs. Not all who came to the Province House merely admired, for Mrs. Bourdillault, the manufacturer and owner of the furs exhibited, announced that the "person who took the Mink Fur Cap from the Fur Stand in the Exhibition Room would oblige Mrs. Bourdillault by returning the same". A Dog and Poultry Show, the "first Exhibition of the kind ever held in the Province", opened at the Market House on 21 October, 1867, and gave great satisfaction to the hundreds who thronged to see it.

In summer Haligonians sought their pleasures in the open air for who can appreciate better the sunshine and salt laden air after the long, cold spring? Cricket was always popular, as there were many enthusiasts among the military to play on the excellent crease on the Common, and in May, 1867, a new Club, the Phoenix, was organized among the civilian

gentlemen. The chief attraction was the harbor where the masculine population indulged in swimming. The calm salt water that almost surrounds the peninsula of Halifax encouraged a great love of sailing, all the boating and yachting taking place on the harbor and Bedford Basin. Nearly every family owned a row boat, which was kept moored at the inner end of the docks along the waterfront. During the evenings most of the populace were afloat on the harbor, the majority in the vicinity of the warships, where they lingered listening to the band of the flagship or the sea songs of the sailors till the firing of the 9.30 gun from the Citadel. A favourite recreation was a basket picnic to the many beautiful coves that lined the shore of the harbor and the Basin, or to McNab's Island for lobsters, or an excursion to the Rifle Range at Bedford. Young men proved their skill in informal rowing contests for bets of ten or twenty dollars a side. George Brown, the fisherman from Herring Cove who became the champion oarsman of America, won the annual scull race of 1 August, becoming Champion of Halifax Harbor for the fourth year. Yacht races and regattas were sponsored by the Royal Halifax Yacht Club, which had been sponsoring such functions since the summer of 1837. The climax of the season was the match for the Prince of Wales' Challenge Cup, which was presented by the Patron of the Club, later King Edward VII, and which was won by Eben Mosely in the *Whisper*. The new Club House overlooking the harbor at Richmond was built during the summer of 1867.

The Theatre, both professional and amateur, was an important source of entertainment. "Michael Earl and the Maniac Lover" was a favourite with amateurs, for it was performed by the Dramatic Club of the Halifax Volunteer Artillery and by the amateurs of H. M. S. *Sphynx*, who gave a benefit for the widowed mother of a seaman who had died of yellow fever.

Most of the professional theatrical companies came from the States to visit Halifax during the summer and acted in the Temperance Hall or the Theatre Royal. The Temperance Hall, between Starr Street and Poplar Grove, designed and built in the Grecian style by Henry G. Hill for the Halifax Temperance Hall Company, was too small for the best plays. Opened on 10 January, 1850, with an address to the Sons of Temperance by John S. Thompson, father of Sir John Thompson, the first Nova Scotian to be premier of Canada, it was destroyed by fire on the night of 15 March, 1899. The audience at Temperance Hall was delighted on 15 August, 1867, with the singing

of the "Little Folks", Commodore Foote, Miss Eliza Netelle, and Colonel Small, "the three smallest beings in existence". Watty Wallack, the great monologist who had made a very successful tour of the West Indies, fascinated the spectators at the Temperance Hall with 150 changes of costume and 40 songs and dances, "now appearing as a ballet-girl fully equipped, and then in a twinkling dressed as a fop of the first water."

The Theatre Royal, Spring Gardens, was on Queen Street opposite the former First Baptist Church. In the 1850's, as Sothern's Lyceum, it had been the scene of the triumphs of E. A. Sothern, later famous as Lord Dundreary. In 1858 it had been described as "a gem in its way, built entirely of wood, but very nicely ornamented both inside and out . . . and although at some distance from the chief part of the City is rendered quite a place of resort", but by 1868 it was delapidated and shabby, with old, dirty, worn-out scenery. W. Fiske, the popular comedian, arrived on board the *Alhambra* with a large and talented company from Boston to play at the Theatre Royal. Halifax theatre-goers must have been very familiar with Shakespeare, particularly "Othello" and "McBeth". Other favourites performed by Fiske's Company were "Black Eyed Susan", "The Bonnie Fish Wife" and "Ten Nights in a Bar Room", a moral play dear to the hearts of temperance advocates. Fiske spared neither trouble nor expense to have each piece "exceedingly cleverly performed", and he was rewarded each night by "a large and most fashionable audience".

Holidays were celebrated with enthusiasm. Christmas was enjoyed quietly at home, but New Year's Day was observed in good old style with ladies "at home", a levee at the Government House, a round of visits, and sleighing and skating. The Queen's Birthday on 24 May was duly honored by firing one salute from the Citadel and another by the Halifax Volunteer Artillery on the Common.

Natal Day was always a time of festivity and a civic holiday for all. "The day when Britons came over" to Halifax did not mean merely a cessation from work, as it has often been in recent years, but a day with a full programme arranged by the City Council and citizens. To make certain that no one missed a minute of the speeches, races, band concerts excursions or the military review, the Volunteer Artillery and their band marched to the Grand Parade at six o'clock in the morning of 21 June and fired a "jubilee" of one hundred



guns. Having aroused the sleeping citizens, the Company dispersed to partake of breakfast at the Halifax Hotel, while the bells of the city, including the new fire alarm "gave forth a joyous peal which certainly sounded sweet on the morning air." Small boys were already celebrating the Anniversary with fireworks, reminding the police that these delights were forbidden by breaking a window with a rocket. At nine o'clock the youngsters connected with the various Bands of Hope assembled at Temperance Hall and, led by the Band of the Union Protection Company, they paraded with colors and mottoes flying, through the down town streets to the Government House and back to the Hall for songs and speeches before an audience of admiring parents. Meanwhile other Halifaxians were watching a review of the Volunteers on the Common and remained to hear the band of the 47th "discourse sweet music", or else sauntered along to watch the cricket match between the Thistle Club and the Royal Artillery or down to the Harbor to search for a vantage point on some building to cheer the opening races of the Yacht Club.

In the afternoon over a thousand people who wanted to inspect an iron-clad accepted the Admiral's invitation to visit the flagship *Royal Alfred*. Those who had not struggled with the mob to get on board the densely packed steamer *Neptune* for the excursion to Downs' Gardens may have travelled by Horse Car to the Concert in the Horticultural Gardens in the evening. The lovers who had come to the Gardens to wander hand in hand along the shadowy paths undoubtedly enjoyed themselves, but those who had come for the music were sadly disappointed, as the band was very poor. The highlight of Natal Day was the excursion to Downs', when over five hundred dollars worth of tickets were sold for the trip by ferry from the harbor to the head of the Arm. Families wandered through the crowded gardens to see the birds and animals, stopping to greet friends and acquaintances or to watch a fight, and all enjoyed themselves eating, drinking and walking round. Others used the opportunity to go to the theatre. The largest "house within the memory of the oldest theatre goer" crammed into the Theatre Royal and returned homeward, chatting happily about the three popular plays they had seen.

In marked contrast to the observance of Natal Day, when all businesses were closed and the newspapers suspended publication, was the first Dominion Day. The majority of Nova Scotians did not want union with Canada and resented the fact

that the Legislature had agreed to Confederation without consulting the people at the polls. Three-fourths of the 28,000 people living in Halifax had been born in Nova Scotia, and this would partly explain their strong attachment for the sea-girt province of their birth and the lack of patriotic feeling for the new Dominion. Although 1 July had been proclaimed a provincial holiday nearly one-half of the stores "were doing business: showing unmistakably that it required something more than a proclamation to compel men to rejoice . . . over the destruction of the liberties of their country." Both the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Acadian Recorder* appeared as obituary editions with broad black lines between the columns mourning the death of Nova Scotia. Arrangements had been made for special church services at 7 a.m., an oration on the Parade by the Rev. Dr. Richey and a "Procession of the Trades and other Societies and Citizens", and a grand military display on the Common in the morning. The afternoon and evening were to be employed by sports on the Common and rowing and sailing matches on the Harbor and a torchlight procession and fire works. The *Morning Chronicle* gave this ironical description of the procession:

The procession, which we may safely call the principal feature of the day's rejoicing, was a good one, that is about six hundred people, including a large number of boys and girls, took part in it, and flags were borne, and bands played, and hats of decided rustiness were waved in the air . . . About six hundred people—as many as have occasionally attended a decent funeral in the city—were all that could be scraped up to join in this great display.

The *Acadian Recorder* added that Moir & Company contributed a

"bread waggon" gorgeously decorated with spruce etc. Mr. Scrivens' ditto, from which biscuit was occasionally thrown out to the crowd; the Virginia Tobacco Factory a team, whence issue stray cigars and lumps of tobacco. Symonds' Iron Foundry, the Nova Scotia Iron Works, Starr's Nail Factory, had each cars in the procession. The Stonecutter's and Carpenter's Societies were represented by a few members from each craft.

I do not want to emphasize the antipathy towards Confederation because until such antagonisms are forgotten it will be difficult for Canadians from all sections of the Dominion to feel that they are the citizens of a united nation owing a common allegiance to it.

Halifax in 1867 had many resemblances to the Halifax of the present in its entertainments, sports, public buildings, hospitality, sensitivity to criticism, and dissatisfaction with many public services, although life was far more leisurely than now. Founded as an Atlantic base for British seapower, it remained a naval station and, as always, it flourished in war-time only to decline in peace. At the time of Confederation the inhabitants of Halifax had faith in the future greatness of their city. It was the fourth city in the Dominion, and the centre of the importing trade for the Maritimes and Newfoundland. Looking at its magnificent harbor, its wharves crowded with shipping, few dared to believe that the golden age of wood, wind and sail was drawing to a close. For Halifax had prospered in the era of sailing ships, when to live by the sea was to live on the highway of the world. Although some gloomy forebodings had arisen because of the loss of American markets and the opposition to the union of British North America, the people of Halifax were looking forward to the day when the Intercolonial Railway would be completed and Halifax would become its terminus and a manufacturing centre, and the wealth of the interior of the new Dominion of Canada would pour into the city to be transported to the rest of the world.