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Newfoundlanders in the “Boston States”: A Study in Early Twentieth-Century Community and Counterpoint

W.G. REEVES

IN THE DECADES PRIOR TO World War I, thousands of Newfoundlanders emigrated to the United States. While many went as sojourners in order to maintain their way of life at home, large numbers opted to settle in America, particularly in New England. This out-migration has always loomed large in the Newfoundland consciousness, a natural occurrence given the attachment to place so characteristic of a traditional society. Only in recent years, however, have scholars studied the expatriation experience. Gradually, its contours and some of its details are becoming evident.¹ As part of the infilling process, this paper profiles the Newfoundlanders who settled “permanently” in the “Boston States” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.² It argues that the Newfoundlanders in New England, especially in Boston, constituted a distinctive community, one remarkable for its ability to maintain home ties while adjusting to a new life.

The major destination for Newfoundlanders emigrating to New England was Massachusetts. Table 1 indicates the total number of Newfoundlanders, male and female, in that state at each census in the period 1885-1915:

TABLE 1
Newfoundlanders in Massachusetts, 1885-1915

Year	Male	Female	Total
1885	1,173	1,678	2,851
1895	3,959	3,632	7,591
1905	4,645	5,938	10,583
1915	5,682	7,587	13,269

Source: This Table is compiled from the following: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Decennial Census*, 1885, Vol. I, Part 1 569; Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Census*, 1895, Vol. II, 692-9; Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Census*, 1905, Vol. I, 474; and Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Decennial Census*, 1915 472.

The relative balance between the sexes up to 1905 and the subsequent imbalance towards females suggests the permanent character of the migration. Equally significant was the age spread of the immigrants. Though the 1895 census, the most detailed enumeration, indicated a definite bias in favor of those twenty to twenty-nine years old, it counted large numbers in other age-groups, including 735 children fourteen years old and younger.³ Such evidence of a substantial family presence underscores further the long-term intentions of the Newfoundland immigrants.

The Newfoundlanders' pattern of settlement in Massachusetts also reflected specific intentions. Table 2 indicates the fifteen cities containing over 100 former colonists in one or more census years in this period:

TABLE 2
Massachusetts Cities With Over 100 Newfoundlanders,
1885-1915

Cities	1885	1895	1905	1915
Blackstone	—	265	107	67
Boston	1,567	3,136	4,326	4,876
Brockton	26	105	148	164
Cambridge	159	677	1,195	1,299
Chelsea	77	357	933	896
Everett	2	92	215	483
Gloucester	314	755	574	418
Lynn	43	317	506	747
Malden	20	82	128	203
Maynard	8	74	185	175
Medford	6	16	29	192
Newton	39	69	190	144
Revere	—	43	51	124
Somerville	66	354	325	795
Saugus	1	6	16	110

Source: This Table is compiled from Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Decennial Census*, 1885, Vol. I, Part I 490-563; Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Census*, 1895, Vol II, 594-691; Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Census*, 1905, Vol. I, 7-445; and Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Decennial Census*, 1915 318.

The 1885 data documented the initial movement towards Boston and the fishing port of Gloucester. Once the immigration assumed larger proportions after 1885, Newfoundlanders settled in significant numbers in other cities. The great majority, however, continued to choose Boston and its circle of satellite cities as their destination (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Massachusetts Cities with over 100 Newfoundlanders, 1885-1915

In metropolitan Boston, the Newfoundlanders dispersed widely. The 1905 census provided a ward-by-ward breakdown of the city's population, but its statistics on place of origin incorporated the native-born children of immigrant fathers.⁴ Though this inclusion of a portion of the second generation enlarged the Newfoundland community from 4,326 to 6,776, its impact on the residential pattern which emerged was probably limited. That pattern showed a pronounced bias towards settlement in particular districts of the city. In crowded Central Boston, the starting point for most poor immigrants, 1,183 Newfoundlanders resided. Of these, slightly more than one-half, or 601, were concentrated in Ward 7, the downtown and wholesale district (Fig. 2).⁵ The great majority of Newfoundlanders, 4,604, lived in a ring of wards — Wards 1-5 and 13-19 — immediately surrounding the city core. The greatest concentrations occurred in the two East Boston wards — Wards 1 and 2 — where 701 and 1,193 lived. The next largest cluster were in the South Boston wards — Wards 13, 14, and 15; these contained 1,385. Another 989 were distributed throughout adjacent wards in the ring area and farther out in the metropolitan region. This pattern of dispersal with its bias towards the inner suburbs suggested an immigrant colony faring relatively well.

A definite correlation existed between residential distribution and occupation, a primary indicator of well-being. Social worker Albert J. Kennedy labelled the inner-suburban ring area, together with nearby Cambridge, as the "zone of emergence," residence in which represented a significant step up the occupational and social ladder for newcomers.⁶ In an era when eight out of ten immigrants were manual workers, the zone contained almost as many skilled workers and clerks as those semiskilled and unskilled.⁷ Reflecting an upper working-class and lower middle-class character, the zone's housing was "distinctly more habitable" than that found in the city center. Among its residents, next to second- and third-generation Irish, "Provincials" from Canada and Newfoundland were prominent.⁸ Equipped with superior occupational skills, many of these provincials were able to "skip a grade" and bypass the poorer downtown districts to settle directly in the zone.

The Newfoundlanders among the provincials often found openings in occupations central to Boston's economic life. While the "Hub" contained a significant manufacturing component, its identity stemmed more from its role as a commercial center, one where banks, insurance companies and mercantile houses predominated.⁹ A considerable portion of its industry remained craft-based, and such trades as shoemaking and coopering were still in evidence. Like their Maritimer counterparts, Newfoundlanders found their way into these trades. In terms of occupational ranking, however, the Newfoundland immigrant experience was somewhat different. Historian Alan Brookes indicates that the Maritimers found a comfortable niche in the high-

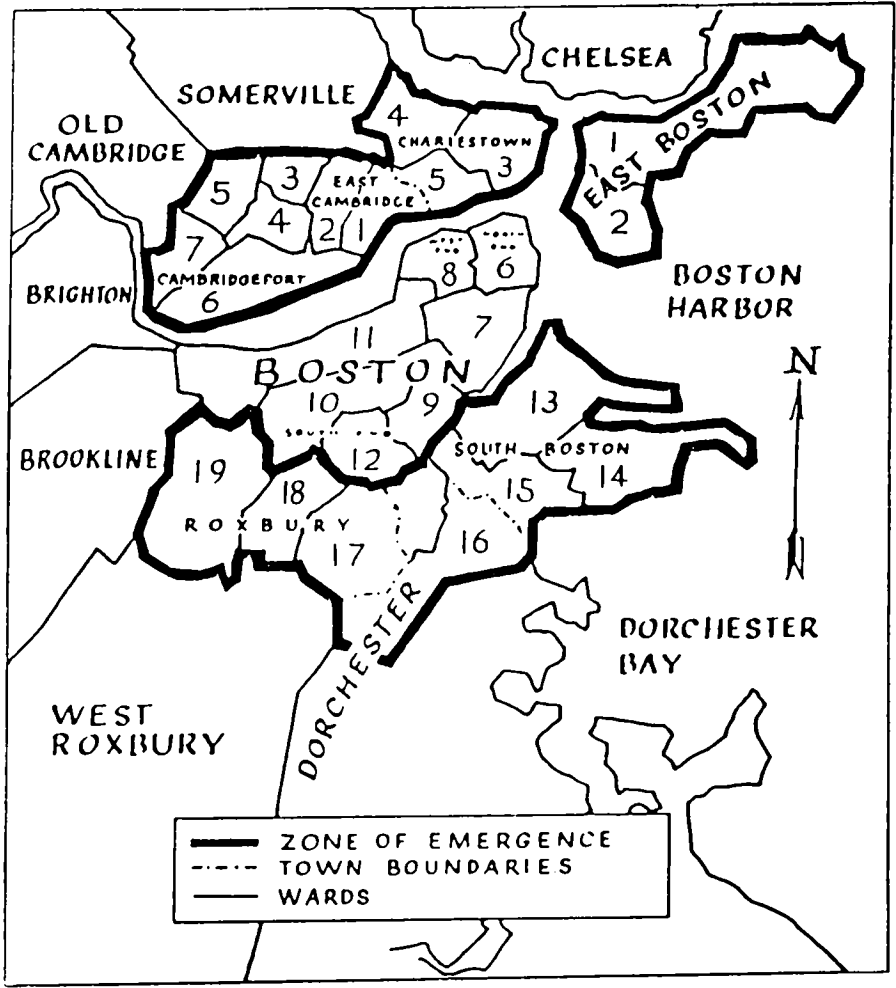


Figure 2. Central Boston and Zone of Emergence Wards (Source: Robert A. Woods and Albert J. Kennedy, *The Zone of Emergence: Observations of the Lower Middle and Upper Working Class Communities of Boston, 1905-1914*, Abridged and Edited with a Preface by Sam Bass Warner, Jr. (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1962), 30.

blue/low-white collar range.¹⁰ Impressionistic and statistical data suggest that while Newfoundlanders were well represented in occupations in which Maritimers were strong, their occupational ranking stood somewhat lower, though not as low as the bottom groups in Massachusetts society.

The Newfoundlanders, for instance, ranked above another yardstick group, the Irish, who remained the poorest. Constituting two-thirds of the ordinary unskilled or semiskilled labor, the Irish of Boston were distinguished

for "their inability to find jobs that offered security, prestige, and financial rewards."¹¹ Also, as a further counterpoint, the occupational experience of Newfoundlanders in Boston and elsewhere in Massachusetts contrasted sharply with the colonial work profile. In 1901 nearly 70% of Newfoundland's labor force worked in the fisheries, agriculture, lumbering and mining, occupations overwhelmingly semiskilled in nature; only 5% were classified as mechanics and 1% as factory workers.¹² Those Newfoundlanders working in Massachusetts displayed much more balance in their occupational skills.

Only one Massachusetts census, that in 1905, related occupation to place of origin. As in the data on population distribution in Boston, statistics for the latter included a part of the second generation. The aggregate numbers for the expanded Newfoundland community included 7,182 males and 8,130 females for a grand total of 15,312, nearly 50% higher than the total of 10,583 Newfoundland-born in the state.¹³ As such, these statistics provide a less-than-precise profile, one likely weighted toward the more highly skilled end of the occupational ladder.¹⁴ Yet despite this bias, the data give an approximate idea of where the Newfoundlanders ranked.

The Massachusetts census listed occupational statistics under broad categories based on the nature of work performed: more specifically, "Agricultural Pursuits," "Professional Services," "Trade and Transportation," "Manufacturing and Mechanical Pursuits," "Apprentices," and "Not Gainful." In order to profile ranking, this study categorized the statistics according to a system devised by United States Census statistician Alba M. Edwards and employed in most mobility studies.¹⁵ Table 3 indicates the rankings in both Boston and the state at large:

TABLE 3

Occupational Categories of Gainfully Employed Newfoundlanders in Boston and Massachusetts, 1905^a

<i>Category^b</i>	<i>Boston</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Mass.</i>	<i>%</i>
White Collar	556	20.6	1,051	16
Blue-Collar Skilled	613	22.7	1,534	23.4
Semiskilled and Service Workers ^c	1,092	40.5	2,981	45.5
Unskilled Laborers and Menial Service Workers	368	13.7	704	10.7
Others	47	1.7	232	3.5
Apprentices	18	.7	53	.8
Totals	2,694	100.0	6,555	99.9

^aThe source for the statistics contained in this Table is Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Census, 1905*, Vol. II, 12-123. The census also contained a "Not Gainful" category — 3,542 for Boston and 8,575 for the state. In the state data, the two largest subcategories were "housewives" at 2,936 and "scholars and students (aggregate)" at 2,949.

^bThe first four categories in this Table are based on a system identified with former United States Census statistician Alba M. Edwards and employed in most mobility studies. See Thernstrom, 289-302. Where there is no Edwards subcategory equivalent to that in the Massachusetts census and terminology differs — as in "merchants and dealers" — the occupation is placed in the appropriate category as indicated by meaning.

^cThe statistics for Boston in this category are biased upward. Several groups were included *in toto* even though more detailed state statistics suggest the probable presence of a number of foremen and other subcategories who might be placed more appropriately in either the Skilled or White-collar categories. Some of these groups also contained laborers who might be placed with the Unskilled. In both instances, the numbers would be relatively small. The groups involved were the following: steam railway employees, street railway employees, boot and shoe makers and repairers, firemen and engineers (not locomotive), and iron and steel workers.

The relative closeness of the Boston numbers for white-collar and skilled workers on the one hand and semiskilled and unskilled on the other indicates that Newfoundlanders in the Hub's "Zone of Emergence" — the majority of those in the city — shared in its lower middle-class and upper working-class character. The large percentage of semiskilled and unskilled, however, suggests that the Newfoundlanders tended downward in the zone's occupational mix and were less well represented in the outer suburbs.¹⁶ Furthermore, a drop-off in the level of skills statewide, though slight, reinforced the downward skew for the Newfoundland community as a whole.

The state data for white-collar occupations attested to the lower middle-class character of this element of the Newfoundland community. The principal occupations in descending order for Newfoundlanders were as follows: salesmen and saleswomen; clerks and copyists; messenger, errand or office boys; merchants and dealers; bookkeepers and accountants; and nurses and midwives.¹⁷ In all these, except for the messenger group, the Newfoundlanders trailed proportionately their Nova Scotian counterparts.¹⁸ They also lagged well behind in high white-collar occupations, coming out ahead in only one, the clergy, and then slightly. Throughout, the Newfoundland community's representation in white-collar callings showed a more pronounced clustering toward the lower end of the category.

Whatever the reason — probably some combination of lower entry-level skills and a later arrival for the larger influx — a greater proportion of Newfoundlanders than Nova Scotians toiled in blue-collar occupations. In turn, within that sector, Newfoundlanders were less well represented proportionately in the skilled trades. Several occupations led the way in attracting them: carpenters and joiners; dress-makers; machinists; painters, glaziers and varnishers; printers, lithographers and pressmen; and tailors and tailoresses. In the first two, Newfoundlanders lagged well behind Nova

Scotians; in the middle two, they fared much better, and the numbers, though lower, were much closer; only in the final two did they lead, and then slightly. The overall impact was to enhance the downward skew in the community's profile. Despite that, however, the percentage of expatriates in the skilled category compared quite favorably with its equivalent in the colonial homeland.

Only in the semiskilled and unskilled categories did the Newfoundlanders approach proportionately a balance with the Nova Scotians and even surpass them. The principal semiskilled occupations which attracted former colonists were as follows: servants and waiters (aggregate); fishermen and oystermen; boot and shoe makers and repairers; rubber factory operatives; draymen, hackmen and teamsters; and woollen mill operatives. The Newfoundlanders led the Nova Scotians in three: fishermen and oystermen, rubber factory operatives, and woollen mill operatives. They trailed in the remaining three. Farther down the occupational ladder, the unskilled category contained proportionately a larger contingent of Newfoundlanders. In the overwhelmingly dominant occupation in this category, laborers (domestic and personal service), they were way ahead. Apparently, as a group, Newfoundlanders, though spread across the occupational spectrum, performed more strenuous, less skilled work than did their Nova Scotian counterparts.¹⁹

Such work was identified with Newfoundlanders living in specific areas; Cambridgeport, East Cambridge, East Boston, and Gloucester were prime examples. Albert Kennedy, for instance, observed that the majority of Newfoundlanders in Cambridgeport did "hard coarse labor, mostly in the East Cambridge industries, though a few engage in the rough work of the port."²⁰ One contributor to the perception that Newfoundlanders typically did heavy work was the presence of hundreds of semiskilled and unskilled "birds of passage" from Newfoundland; whether employed in the Gloucester fisheries or in maritime-related occupations around the East Boston wharves, those sojourning colonists added a distinctive element. Yet this dimension of the Newfoundland immigrant experience should not distort the character of the "permanent" community. Most notably, of the 4,445 Newfoundland males gainfully employed in Massachusetts, the proportion in the various laboring occupations remained small, approximately 13%. Even taking into account the second-generation factor, this percentage underscores the argument that the Newfoundland community's occupational profile, though standing lower than the overlapping Nova Scotian one, still reflected considerable balance.

The Newfoundlanders' comparatively high educational and skill levels were a key ingredient in their adjustment and eventual assimilation. In a society whose emergent ethos stressed career opportunities and progress, one's occupation entailed an often unconscious social integration. Yet the impact

of occupational success stopped well short of all-embracing. Housewives, for instance, could only participate vicariously. For many of them — and many of the employed too — adjustment to a new life required something else. In a society still in many ways a “collection of nationality groups,” Newfoundlanders turned to one another for mutual support, often self-consciously enhancing their separate identity.²¹ The distinctive Newfoundland subculture which emerged, however, never developed a siege mentality or completely closed in upon itself. Facilitated by commonalities of language, religion, and many other cultural norms, a constant process of erosion and breakdown occurred. Given a transcendent Americanism, the immigrants’ ties with home gradually weakened. During the transition, meanwhile, they adeptly balanced old and new loyalties.

The persistence of old loyalties appeared in the reluctance of Newfoundland immigrants to become American citizens. Occasionally, the colonial press referred to visiting expatriates who had made the change; for instance, in reference to Lance Cove-born William Head, the St. John’s *Daily News* observed: “William is quite a naturalized Yankee and speaks in glorious terms of the country and its people.”²² In terms of actual numbers, however, Head’s experience was not typical. Data from the 1915 Massachusetts census indicated that of 5,235 Newfoundland-born males aged twenty-one years and over in the state, 2,412 were naturalized and 2,749 were aliens.²³ Of the 2,749 aliens, 2,101 had six or more years in the United States, a long enough time to have put down roots. Evidently, membership in the British Empire exerted a strong residual pull on many Newfoundlanders. Also, proximity to place of origin probably kept alive hopes for an eventual return. Their “instinct for the homeland,” so much a part of traditional society, diminished slowly.

The same instinct likely meant that Newfoundlanders in Boston shared in the preference for rental accommodation shown by Maritimers.²⁴ This particularly applied to immigrants in the city core, but in diminishing strength to those who moved farther out in the suburbs. In a few specific references the colonial press indicated that Newfoundlanders owned “freehold property” in Boston, perhaps suggesting that the practice was not widespread.²⁵ A number of those who accumulated such property undoubtedly abandoned the idea of returning home some day. By committing themselves to property maintenance, they gave up the independence, or the perception of it, cherished in a traditional society; instead, they threw in their lot with the American mainstream, accepting the prevailing ethos of achievable material success and continuing progress. Many others, possibly the majority, retained the hope of returning home, thus forestalling a complete commitment to American society.

Whatever their intentions — they must remain unknown — large numbers of Newfoundlanders settled permanently in Massachusetts. They

did so, moreover, with minimal upset. One indicator that the Newfoundland community managed to control any dislocations lay in the low rate of participation by its members in criminal activity. Of 7,591 Newfoundlanders in Massachusetts in 1895, only twelve fell into the "convict" category.²⁶ Newfoundland newspaperman W.S. Dooley, who lived for a period in Massachusetts, commented:

Our countrymen in Boston are esteemed for their law-abiding qualities by their American neighbors. It is seldom indeed that the name of a Newfoundlander appears in the public court news of that city. They adapt themselves easily to their new surroundings and make splendid citizens of the Great Republic.²⁷

Many of the control mechanisms, subtle and otherwise, which characterized colonial society remained intact in America, nurtured by the smallness of the expatriate community and the favorable conditions it enjoyed in the host society. In turn, these mechanisms, often unconsciously, promoted integration in an orderly way.

Prominent in the Newfoundlanders' cultural baggage was an emphasis on family. Once the migrants arrived in America, the family network afforded the most elemental form of mutual support; through its practices, it helped keep alive ties to the old home, while easing adjustment to the new. In both its immediate and extended forms, it offered accommodations to members during work searches and often boarded them after work was obtained. For example, Carbonear-born Reuben Rowe's younger sister came to live with him in Chelsea and to work in a boot and shoe factory.²⁸ In Boston, domestic Annie Mullins boarded with two aunts when not employed out, and in Gloucester, fisherman James Power stayed with distant relatives in the restaurant business, the Gleeson family.²⁹ In a myriad of ways, from help in job procurement to material support, the family constituted the center of the Newfoundland immigrant experience.

To some extent, particularly in the first generation, intermarriage further strengthened the larger Newfoundland "family." While a systematic study of this phenomenon lies beyond the scope of the present paper, qualitative evidence suggests that the attractions of similar national, religious, and cultural backgrounds proved compelling for Newfoundlanders in America. Indeed, many of the marriages publicized back in the colony involved people from the same communities and often entailed a celebration of home connections.³⁰ Yet Newfoundlanders were by no means exclusive in their choice of partners, for the press of the day recorded numerous instances of marriages to people of various nationalities, including native Americans. In Gloucester, for example, Newfoundlanders marrying outside their own community most commonly chose as partners those of Canadian and Scandinavian background, less so those of Portuguese extraction.³¹ The under-publicized counterpart of the Newfoundland marriages, these mixed unions signalled a steady cultural amalgamation.

The “surrogate family” represented by the boarding house, and to a lesser extent the lodging house, also played a vital role in the contradictory processes of cultural differentiation and integration. In this period, up to an estimated 20% of American households took in boarders to help pay expenses.³² Apparently, Newfoundlanders were no exception to this pattern. Indeed, according to the 1905 census, fifty-three of them, mostly women, operated lodging or boarding houses. These dwelling places encouraged the creation of small communities of Newfoundlanders and, as in real families, fulfilled such useful functions as the circulation of job information and the maintenance of a familiar social environment. On occasion, keepers even provided material support. After William Head left his position as cook aboard a Newfoundland vessel docked in Gloucester, he found a Boston boarding-house mistress, “a good-hearted lady,” who carried him for a while.³³ Another Boston keeper, a Mrs. Jordan from Heart’s Content, illustrated a different role: after the great 1908 Chelsea fire, she coordinated a minor relief effort, collecting \$90 to aid the Newfoundland victims.³⁴ In special circumstances — as in everyday life — the surrogate-family environment contributed to a preservation of immigrant identities.

For some immigrants, boarding-house life became virtually permanent. Master mariner William Cluett, a Belleoram native noted for his home connections, still categorized himself as a boarder after twenty years in Gloucester.³⁵ Yet many Newfoundlanders in that city lived in boarding houses, such as the one at 11 Locust Street, with people of other national backgrounds. Similarly, lodgers in Boston likely shared in the “loosening of ethnic boundaries” which occurred in the Hub’s lodging houses in the period 1860-1900.³⁶ While exposure to people of different cultures enhanced in the short term the national self-definition of Newfoundlanders, it eventually helped break down parochial viewpoints and facilitated assimilation.

Next to family, and in large part indistinguishable from it, religion played a key role in the lives of Newfoundland immigrants. In a few instances, Protestants could attend church services held by clergy with Newfoundland backgrounds. At different times in Massachusetts, the Woods brothers from St. John’s ministered to Methodist congregations in East Pepperrell, Malden, Woburn, and Ipswich; another Newfoundlander, A.C. Skinner, served at one of the largest Methodist churches in Springfield.³⁷ Membership in organizations with religious overtones, notably the Orange Order, also provided some Newfoundlanders with a badge of identification which enabled them to make connections in their new society.³⁸ Indeed, the considerable sensitivity about religious affiliation still evident in America, and particularly in Boston, must have led many Newfoundlanders to think that in this respect at least their new environment differed little from their old.

Catholics too could look to familiar clergy and church-related cultural practices. In Boston there were clergy who had been born in Newfoundland

or had experience in the colony.³⁹ Most Newfoundlanders of Irish ancestry likely found a comfortable ambience when they attended such churches as St. Anne's in Gloucester or the Church of the Sacred Heart in Jamaica Plain. Like Annie Mullins, who watched scenes of Ireland shown at a Cambridge church, many Newfoundlanders found a place in the larger Irish Catholic culture so distinctive to the Ireland-Newfoundland-Boston trinity.⁴⁰ Some also developed specific links to maintain their Newfoundland heritage; one such link involved the formation of the Avalon Society in Boston to help support Mount Cashel, a working boys' home in St. John's.⁴¹ Like their Protestant countrymen, however, Catholics lacked sufficient numbers to have their own parishes. By necessity, their religious affiliations brought them into contact with larger groups in American society, thus forwarding the assimilative process.

Similar intergroup interactions characterized residential patterns. For the most part, there were too few Newfoundland immigrants to develop much in the way of distinctive neighborhoods. Some might congregate in particular areas such as the boarding-house district around Gloucester's Water Street. Yet the presence of immigrants of other nationalities made it impossible for them to call this area their own; many of them, for example, found accommodations on Perkins Street where they intermingled with Irish and Portuguese residents.⁴² To a degree, the Newfoundlanders' experience in this old fishing port suggested a limited ethnic clustering shaped to some extent by occupational considerations.

At the core of the Newfoundland community in nearby Boston, a more complex picture emerged. Many of the Hub's Newfoundlanders went into predominantly Irish wards. In the four wards with over 60% Irish population, there was a total of 1,064 Newfoundlanders.⁴³ Others, however, spread into more ethnically mixed districts. The two largest concentrations occurred in East Boston's Wards 1 and 2, with relatively low percentages of Irish population at 26% and 35%. Ward 1 contained a large contingent of Nova Scotians, while in Ward 2 Russian Jews were prominent. Also, nearly 200 Newfoundlanders lived in the North End, where Italians comprised 65% of the population. Their relatively dispersed distribution, combined with limited numbers, meant that Newfoundlanders escaped identification with any one large area.

Though scattered, the Newfoundland immigrants in New England maintained numerous connections to home. Some of them were fairly minor, including everything from Newfoundland-oriented Hallowe'en parties to home-directed relief projects.⁴⁴ In Boston itself, Newfoundlanders congregated at such favorite spots as Crosby's restaurant on Station Street to renew old acquaintances.⁴⁵ They even shopped at stores which carried Newfoundland goods, particularly foodstuffs. The East Boston firm of S.B.

Yerxa, for example, made Newfoundland items a specialty. Its advertising informed Newfoundlanders:

You can get the choicest No. 1 Newfoundland shore codfish; also Harvey's No. 1 Hard Bread, Butter Bread and Excursion Bread (wholesale and retail) at S.B. Yerxa's big grocery, Central Square, East Boston (agent for New England); we also have the corned beef and salt pork, same as used in Newfoundland. These goods on sale at Yerxa's branch, 200 Washington St., Brighton.⁴⁶

Yerxa's operated throughout the early 1900s and was not averse to hiring Newfoundland help.⁴⁷ Its "fish n' brewis" connection symbolized the tenacity of Newfoundland traditions, even in the heart of one of America's great metropolitan centers.

Shopping for familiar foods gave the Newfoundland immigrant an opportunity to encounter fellow expatriates. Other occasions, such as receptions for visitors from home, permitted more deliberate meetings. For instance, in 1899 the Newfoundland community in the Hub provided a warm welcome to a group of colonists, the "Boston Excursionists," who availed of the new trans-island railway to make the trip.⁴⁸ More frequently, individual visitors created interest. For example, politician Edward Morris actively maintained his ties with the Newfoundland community.⁴⁹ When such visitors as Wilfred Grenfell and Newfoundland railway publicist C.M. Beane delivered formal lectures, these too attracted Newfoundlanders.⁵⁰ Obviously, many of them kept well informed about events at home.

At other times, the visits of Newfoundland vessels sparked considerable interest. When an old coastal boat, the S.S. *Grand Lake*, made a special trip to Boston in 1899, "thousands" of Newfoundlanders flocked to Lewin's Wharf to see the storied vessel and to meet old friends.⁵¹ Often Newfoundland immigrants were anxious to obtain news. In the absence of visitors, those in Boston might take to city libraries to check back issues of colonial papers, preferring to spend a night reading "instead of going to a minstrel show."⁵² In late 1902 a group in Boston tried to launch a Newfoundland periodical, the *Islander*; apparently, it soon fizzled, and nothing substantial of this sort appeared until the 1920s.⁵³

The Newfoundlanders, however, enjoyed much more success with another common institutional expression of immigrant identity, namely their clubs and associations. These voluntary organizations, especially the ones mutual-benefit in character, represented a modern response to the anxieties of starting a new life. At the same time, they permitted the immigrant a social equality and status reminiscent of the rough egalitarianism experienced at home. Overall, the Newfoundland institutions compiled much better records than their Nova Scotian counterparts, some of them maintaining cohesion for many decades.

The earliest club, the Boston Terra Novian Association (BTNA) formed in 1865 and chartered in 1876, operated years before the large influx of

Newfoundlanders in the late 1880s and 1890s.⁵⁴ From the latter decade onward, other clubs appeared, most notably the Newfoundlanders' Mutual Benefit Association (NMBA), organized in 1891 and incorporated in 1892.⁵⁵ In addition to these two benefit associations, there were clubs which proved less enduring. The most prominent, the Cabot Club, was formed around 1899 and enjoyed tremendous success in the early 1900s.⁵⁶ Others such as the Avalon Society, the United Sons of Terra Nova, the St. Aloysius Club and the Cabot Association of Chelsea played smaller and more specialized roles.⁵⁷ All these organizations, especially the mutual-benefit ones, were vital to the Newfoundland identity abroad.

The benefit associations in Boston had a twofold purpose. First, they provided minimal support levels in an age when no social safety net existed. In 1908, for instance, the NMBA paid out a total of \$1,100 in sickness and death benefits to members and their families.⁵⁸ The second purpose, common to all the organizations, entailed the provision of an amenable social environment. Apparently, one organization, the Cabot Club, initiated by Pouch Cove native Abraham Moulton, saw its role as primarily social. Another, the Avalon Society, was more specialized in its support for Mount Cashel. In every organization, though, the social function ultimately exerted the greatest impact.

While total numbers remain unknown, some information on club membership in the Boston area is available. At their peaks the NMBA and the BTNA counted 800 and 700 members.⁵⁹ Like most British-American friendly societies, the major Newfoundland organizations were exclusively male, the BTNA extending to include the American-born sons of Newfoundlanders.⁶⁰ Despite an inevitable overlapping of memberships, these organizations still involved a respectable proportion of the expatriate community. Adding to the numbers, a Ladies Auxiliary of the NMBA began early in the twentieth century; it counted around 100 members.⁶¹ Outside their own circle, however, the various organizations touched many nonmember expatriates, both directly and indirectly, as relatives and friends attended or shared vicariously in their numerous and well-publicized activities.

The NMBA and BTNA, in particular, extended their range by professing a nondenominational and nonpartisan character. In an attempt to forestall the bitter internecine strife so much a part of colonial history, the constitution of the NMBA, for example, expressly forbade discussions of a religious or political nature.⁶² Though their executive and committee membership lists indicated a great preponderance of Irish Catholic names, the two mutual benefit organizations avoided complete denominational alignment. At one time or another, for instance, Protestant Abraham Moulton participated in the affairs of both. Moulton was one of the two most prominent leaders of the Newfoundland community; the other was Catholic John P. McCormack. The two played key roles in the socially oriented Cabot Club, the membership

of which reflected a denominational mix as well as considerable geographical diversity in terms of their Newfoundland origins.⁶³ Of the seventeen members on the club's 1904 excursion committee, seven were born in St. John's, one in Ireland, and the remaining nine in various Avalon Peninsula communities, including three each in the Heart's Content and Harbour Grace-Carboney areas.⁶⁴ Again, a common Newfoundland identity appears to have overridden potentially troublesome differences.

The Newfoundland organizations enhanced community cohesion through a wide range of social functions. Whether extending resolutions to a murder victim's family or greeting new arrivals off the boat, they provided a key link to the home country.⁶⁵ A more publicized function involved the extension of hospitality to visiting Newfoundlanders. For instance, when the "Boston Excursionists" of 1899 arrived in the Hub, one of the Newfoundland organizations arranged balls, parties, and riverboat trips.⁶⁶ Prominent Newfoundland visitors received extra attention. In 1901 the Cabot Club tendered a banquet for Edward Morris. A recipient of the club's hospitality again in 1904 and 1905, Morris maintained a particularly warm relationship with the expatriates.

The Cabot Club also arranged lectures by Morris and other, less well-known people. Yearly from 1902 and 1904 it sponsored an illustrated talk by one of its own members, artist J.J. McAuliffe. At the 1903 event, McAuliffe's use of stereopticon views of Newfoundland reportedly drew 500 expatriates and drove many old-timers "wild with delight."⁶⁷ Somewhat later, in 1908, the NMBA coordinated with the Reid Newfoundland Company to have railway publicist C.M. Beane put on a lecture. The Association expressed its interest in disabusing Americans, particularly the American-born children of Newfoundland parents, of the perception gained from American geography texts that Newfoundland was a "barren island" off North America.⁶⁸ Obviously, association members took their task of promoting things Newfoundland very seriously.

Of all the functions undertaken by the clubs, the most vibrant involved the familiar entertainments they put on for both their own members and the larger Newfoundland community. For instance, at the NMBA's June, 1899, meeting attended by 175 members, "comic songs, recitations, clog and step dancing, speeches, etc., were indulged in."⁶⁹ June also meant that attention turned to less exclusive outdoor events, especially the annual picnics of the two benefit associations. In 1901, for example, the NMBA held its ninth annual picnic and the BTNA its thirty-first.⁷⁰ Both occurred at Waushakim Lake in South Framingham. At the first event, an estimated 2,000 members and friends showed up, many coming by special train from Boston. The picnic sites featured various sports contests as well as dancing for the young people. The major focus was on a schedule of boat races reminiscent of events back home. Crews from the different Boston districts competed, but the real rivalry

occurred between those representing the two associations. The numbers involved and the atmosphere at these picnics helped keep alive for decades the Newfoundland identity.

That identity was enhanced further by major winter events, especially the annual balls sponsored by the different clubs. Like the picnics, these were long-standing events for the two benefit associations. The other, more recently organized clubs such as the Cabot Club and the Avalon Society also held their own functions. In 1901, for instance, the NMBA drew an estimated 2,000 people to Boston's Oddfellows' Hall, including Newfoundlanders from such outlying centers as Lynn, Salem, Fall River, and Gloucester.⁷¹ Usually, the organizing committees invited special guests — local politicians, transportation company representatives, and the officers of Maritimer and fellow Newfoundland associations. Two prominent guests at balls during the early 1900s were Boston mayor John F. Fitzgerald and ex-State Senator William Taylor, managing editor of the *Boston Post* and a member of a Newfoundland family himself.⁷² Often the events evoked such expressions of nostalgia as the decoration of ballrooms with Newfoundland emblems and the start of proceedings with the "Flag of Newfoundland" song. No doubt the detailed coverage of these functions in both the Boston and colonial press ensured the maintenance of a vibrant connection between new and old homes.

The most publicized example of that connection at work came in the form of excursions to Newfoundland by expatriates. In coordination with the Reid Newfoundland Company, the Cabot Club took the lead in organizing such events. The success of a small excursion in 1900 involving some seventy or eighty people convinced club president Abraham Moulton that a larger undertaking on the American Old Home Week model would work.⁷³ After an extensive publicity campaign, hundreds visited the colony in the summer of 1904, making the event a success.⁷⁴ Efforts to repeat it four years later, however, ran afoul of the 1907-08 economic downturn in the United States, and the numbers involved were much smaller.⁷⁵ Still, the group visitations of this decade signified the vitality of home ties.

All these various activities contributed to the development of a Newfoundland community, one whose institutional expressions had a long and vibrant history. In contrast to the experience of Maritimers in America, the group identity of Newfoundlanders to some extent overrode the cultural differences apparent at home.⁷⁶ Most notably, the attachment to Newfoundland on the part of expatriates of Irish ancestry indicated a separate reference point apart from the larger Irish-American community. As many of these former colonists possessed considerable education and experience in politics and labor — a testimony to the founding role of Irish immigration in Newfoundland society — they were quite conscious of status. One commentator, the Rev. Michael James Ryan, who spent fourteen years in

America in this period, perceived a difference between the Irish who came to Newfoundland and those who went to the United States. He wrote:

The Irish who have gone to the United States of America, are, as every one knows, of a much inferior character to those who have come to Newfoundland and Canada, and many of them, when taken out of the Irish Catholic environment and thrown into different circumstances, have done little credit either to the Irish name or to the Catholic religion.⁷⁷

Evidently, the unique textures of Newfoundland life provided immigrants of Irish extraction, as well as those of other backgrounds, with a strong sense of self which helped ease the anxieties of adjustment to life in a new land.

Yet the emphasis on home ties should not be overplayed. Even the outpourings of nostalgia were plugged, subtly and otherwise, into an American context. When the Newfoundlanders in Boston invited Mayor Fitzgerald or Alderman James Curley to their balls, they forged links to the host society.⁷⁸ And the balls themselves took place in such buildings as the Paul Revere Hall or Paine Memorial Hall; often, as in the Oddfellows' Hall, portraits of American heroes were prominent.⁷⁹ Also, the Newfoundlanders frequently held their functions on American holidays: balls on Lincoln's birthday and picnics on Bunker Hill day.⁸⁰ At an Avalon Society affair to celebrate Washington's birthday, the intermingling of American flags and the Newfoundland colors of pink, white, and green illustrated the dual loyalties at work.⁸¹ Boston may have been the American city most resembling an English town, but its ultra-American character remained beyond question. Newfoundlanders living there could hardly escape its many influences.

Unhindered by any serious language difficulty, the Newfoundland immigrants found it relatively easy to participate in American affairs. Many used the skills developed as leaders in the Newfoundland organizations to enhance their positions in American society. Available biographical information on the Cabot Club's 1904 excursion committee suggests the upward mobility of that select group. On the committee were six veteran craftsmen, including two blacksmiths in supervisory posts, three small businessmen, five employed in the business world, and one each in the artist, city government, and painter categories. Several came from a background in the Newfoundland inshore fishery. In the more open America — minus such vestiges of an artificial social order as cap doffing — many immigrants adopted or reinforced middle-class values of education, frugality, hard work, and property accumulation. Acceptance of an American ethos which stressed ambition and material progress meant the gradual divestiture of the more static outlook so common to a traditional society. Even as many Newfoundland immigrants assiduously maintained home connections, they were sinking roots in their new culture.

These roots took many forms. Socially, Newfoundlanders joined clubs and associations unrelated to their homeland. Abraham Moulton, for instance, was a vice-president of the Boston Drygoods Clerks' Benefit Association. Other members of the Cabot Club executive participated in organizations which reflected their membership in larger, overlapping communities. Dennis Walsh was a member of the Catholic Order of Foresters, while Henry Rendell belonged to the Order of the Sons of St. George.⁸² Generally, membership in the Newfoundland community presented no real barrier to outside activities, and the colonial press carried many items about expatriate involvement in a range of fraternal and recreational organizations. The resultant overlap in allegiances undoubtedly eased the adjustment process.

Participation in organized labor also figured in that process. Some immigrants combined membership in trade unions with that in the Newfoundland organizations; for example, Timothy St. John, an *NMBA* vice-president in 1901, was active in the Boston Car Inspectors' Union.⁸³ Such involvements even enhanced the participant's status in the old country, thus providing further career reinforcement in the new. In 1901, for instance, Nicholas Hallegan, identified as President of the Boston branch of the Iron Moulders' Association of North America, visited St. John's and was feted by local brethren.⁸⁴ Similarly, labor-conscious Newfoundlanders knew about the activities of Harbour Grace-born John F. Kennedy, a Boston business agent of the Tin Sheet, Iron and Cornice Workers, who sat as the Central Labour Union representative on the Finance Commission constituted by the State in 1907 to investigate Boston's city government. In fact, Kennedy became Mayor Fitzgerald's ally on the commission.⁸⁵ Successful careers of this sort attested to the participants' integration into American society.

Political involvement also signified a degree of Americanization. Limited evidence suggests that Newfoundland immigrants allied with the Democratic and Republican parties in rough concert with fellow Irish and English immigrants.⁸⁶ The trailblazer in Massachusetts politics was William Taylor Sr., who became first president of the *NMBA* and a state senator to boot.⁸⁷ Taylor's attainment of relatively high office, however, appears to have been an exception. Most politically involved Newfoundland immigrants in this period ran for aldermanic or municipal councillor positions, and their accomplishments were uneven at best. In Cambridge, for example, Newfoundlanders achieved some success. There, John P. McCormack, "the grand old man" of the Newfoundland community, played a prominent role in the Democratic organization.⁸⁸ In contrast, a number of attempts by Newfoundlanders in Chelsea to win office proved futile: none was elected until the 1920s.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, these tentative forays into local politics suggested that assimilation was well underway and essentially irreversible.

Though assimilation occurred, the Newfoundland community exhibited a remarkable persistence. Its distinctive attitudes and practices ensured it an enduring visibility among the national segments making up New England's social fabric. At the same time, its occupational achievements set it in contrast to Newfoundland society. Even its relative solidarity established a counterpoint, one not lost on people back home. In promoting an umbrella athletic association for all Newfoundlanders, regardless of extraction, St. John's resident George Ayre observed: "This will, with the exception of the Newfoundland Club at Boston, be the only club of Newfoundlanders in existence. In Newfoundland we have British, Scotch and Irish clubs, but no Newfoundland clubs."⁹⁰ As a model for intra-community harmony, however flawed, the Newfoundlanders in the "Boston States" added a welcome dimension to colonial history.

Notes

¹See Chafe; Crawley; Thornton. This paper was presented to the Canadian Historical Association in June, 1989. The author is indebted to Robert Babcock of the University of Maine, Peter Neary of the University of Western Ontario, and Patrick O'Flaherty and Robert Hong of Memorial University for their help in the preparation of this paper.

²The use of the term "permanently" is meant to suggest a crude differentiation from "birds of passage," those who sojourned yearly or for longer periods in America. For a treatment of the "birds of passage," see Reeves.

³Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Census*, 1895, Vol II 700-07.

⁴Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Census*, 1905, Vol. I xcii.

⁵The population data for the various wards are taken from Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Census*, 1905, Vol I xcii. Ward descriptions are taken from Woods and Kennedy 30, 35, 39-40.

⁶Woods and Kennedy 30, 34-5.

⁷Thernstrom 34. Also, Woods and Kennedy 35.

⁸Woods and Kennedy 34, 36.

⁹For a description of the various areas of Boston where industry was situated, see Brookes, "The Exodus" 175.

¹⁰For the Maritimers' involvement in various occupations, see Brookes, "Out-Migration" 47-8.

¹¹Thernstrom 132.

¹²Alexander 68.

¹³Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Census*, 1905, Vol. I xc, 474.

¹⁴Thernstrom argues (124-5) that in general Boston's second-generation immigrants were "somewhat more favorably placed" than the first generation.

¹⁵Thernstrom 289.

¹⁶Social worker Albert Kennedy argued that Newfoundlanders, as the least industrially skilled of "Canadian" immigrants, were found less often in the suburbs. See Brookes, "The Provincials" 94.

¹⁷The data on white-collar occupations are drawn from Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Census*, 1905, Vol. II 12-123. Though "merchants and dealers" spanned both high and low white-collar occupations, impressionistic evidence suggests that the great majority of Newfoundlanders in this subcategory were petty proprietors.

¹⁸The grand total of the Nova Scotian community stood at 98,695, a little over six times larger than that of the Newfoundlanders. A crude 6:1 ratio thus serves as a convenient yardstick. See Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Census*, 1905, Vol. II 9.

¹⁹The data on various occupations in this and the preceding paragraph are drawn from Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Census*, 1905, Vol. II 12-123.

²⁰Woods and Kennedy 73.

²¹The term "collection of nationality groups" is R.H. Wiebe's (32).

²²*Daily News* (St. John's, Newfoundland) (DN), August 7, 1903.

²³Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Decennial Census* 318. Another 74 were categorized as "under guardianship and of unknown political conditions."

²⁴Brookes, "The Exodus" 204.

²⁵See for example, DN November 28, 1902; *Evening Herald* (St. John's, Newfoundland) (EH), October 25, 1902; and *Evening Telegram* (St. John's, Newfoundland) (ET), July 20, 1904.

²⁶Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Census*, 1895, Vol. III 433.

²⁷*Western Star* (Bay of Islands, Newfoundland) (ws), December 16, 1908.

²⁸EH July 20, 1905.

²⁹For reference to Mullins, see *Evening Chronicle* (St. John's, Newfoundland) (EC), April 2, 1908; to Power, see EC June 8, 1908.

³⁰For an example, see DN September 29, 1903.

³¹This observation is based on a perusal of the 1900 United States Census for Gloucester.

³²Brookes, "The Exodus" 207.

³³DN August 7, 1903.

³⁴EC June 13, 1908.

³⁵Indicated in the 1900 United States Census for Gloucester.

³⁶Peel 828.

³⁷For the Woods brothers, see DN August 11, 1899, and ET April 6, 1894; August 8, 1904; and July 23, 1906. For Skinner, see DN September 20, 1900, and EH May 29, 1899.

³⁸For one Newfoundlander's experience of this sort, see Burse 51.

³⁹For references, see DN October 16, 1901, and January 14, 1904.

⁴⁰For reference to Mullins, see EC March 30, 1908.

⁴¹ET January 18, 1905.

⁴²Indicated in the 1900 United States Census for Gloucester.

⁴³Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Census*, 1905, Vol. I xcii.

⁴⁴ET November 14, 1904. Also EH January 11, 1894.

⁴⁵ws October 9, 1900.

⁴⁶DN June 16, 1902.

⁴⁷*Newfoundland Quarterly* (NQ) 4, 1 (1904): 12.

⁴⁸DN May 7, 1900.

⁴⁹DN April 19, 1901; *Boston Post* extract of April 16, 1901 in EH April 25, 1901; also *Boston Herald* extract of January 3, 1904, in EH January 12, 1904.

⁵⁰For reference to Grenfell, see extract from *Comm[er]cial Journal[?]* in EH May 3, 1901; to Beane, see EC April 3, 1908.

⁵¹DN February 10, 1899.

⁵²DN December 12, 1900.

⁵³EH November 10, 1902.

⁵⁴*Newfoundland Weekly* (Boston, Massachusetts) (nw), September 13, 1924, and April 10, 1926.

⁵⁵NW September 5, 1925.

⁵⁶ET May 28, 1904.

⁵⁷For the Avalon Society, see ET January 18, 1905; for the United Sons of Terra Nova, see ET September 23, 1904 — the only reference to this group found by the writer; for the St.

Aloysius Club, see ws January 27, 1908 — also the only reference; for the Cabot Club of Chelsea, see DN May 27, 1908.

⁵⁸EC January 19, 1909.

⁵⁹NW April 11, 1925.

⁶⁰NW September 5, 1925.

⁶¹EH November 14, 1906.

⁶²NW September 5, 1925.

⁶³For Moulton, see EH June 28, 1900. For McCormack, nw February 28, 1925, and April 10, 1926.

⁶⁴See NQ 4, 2 (1904): 11-12.

⁶⁵For a reference to resolutions, see EC April 23, 1908; to greeting new arrivals, EH August 5, 1899.

⁶⁶DN August 18, 1899.

⁶⁷EH April 8, 1903. See also EH March 29, 1902, and NQ 4, 2 (1904): 1.

⁶⁸DN March 19, 1908; EC March 21 and May 18, 1908.

⁶⁹EH June 21, 1899.

⁷⁰Extracts from *Boston Globe*, June 18 and August 8, 1901, in DN June 26, 1901, and EH August 17, 1901, respectively.

⁷¹EH February 21, 1901.

⁷²For references to Fitzgerald, see *Boston Post* extract in EH March 7, 1906, and February 12, 1907. For reference to Taylor, see letter from N.J.H. in ws February 24, 1909.

⁷³Extract from unidentified Boston paper (likely the *Globe*) in ET May 28, 1904. Also DN July 5, August 3, 11, 1900.

⁷⁴ET August 2, 1904.

⁷⁵DN April 23, 1908. Also EC July 29, 1908.

⁷⁶For the Maritimers' experience, see Brookes, "Out-Migration" 49.

⁷⁷NQ 21, 2 (1921): 2. For a sketch of Ryan's career, see Hibbs 253.

⁷⁸For reference to Curley, see letter from N.J.H. in ws February 24, 1909.

⁷⁹See for examples EH February 21, 1901, and March 21, 1905; also ET January 20, 1905.

⁸⁰See for examples EC January 12, 1909, and EH June 28, 1900, and April 18, 1901.

⁸¹ws March 10, 1909.

⁸²NQ 4, 2 (1904): 4, 11-12.

⁸³DN June 26, 1901.

⁸⁴EH August 8, 19, 1901.

⁸⁵DN September 28, 1907, and ws February 10, 1909. Also, see Goodwin 135, 156-7.

⁸⁶Berthoff 196. A perusal of Hibbs, which includes entries for prominent expatriates, indicates such an alignment.

⁸⁷EH January 11, 1894. Also NW September 26, December 26, 1925.

⁸⁸For references, see EH March 28, 1900, and Hibbs 64. For examples other than McCormack, see EH July 10, 1899, and September 18, 1906.

⁸⁹NW December 13, 1924.

⁹⁰Letter, Geo. B. Ayre to ET June 18, 1904.

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