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“Photos of the school group of this place and others”:  
An Itinerant Photographer Pictures Rural Education in Nova Scotia, c.1912

Sara Spike

A Thesis

in

The Department

of History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts (History) at  
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## Abstract

“Photos of the school group of this place and others”:  
An Itinerant Photographer Pictures Rural Education in Nova Scotia, c.1912

Sara Spike

In June 1912, itinerant photographer Frank Adams travelled northeast through central Nova Scotia, making class portraits at the small rural schools along his way. The resulting photographs and other like them are at the centre of this thesis. School photographs have been the subject of only passing critical interest to historians, yet they are eagerly collected by local historical societies who use them as key tools in their efforts to imagine the pasts of their communities. This avid collection underscores the fact that these seemingly innocuous artifacts speak volumes about community identities.

Despite the wide circulation of his photographs, Adams himself has been almost entirely forgotten. The reciprocal relationships that he had with the communities he visited have not been archived along with the images he made. This thesis begins by piecing together some of the fragmentary traces that Adams left behind on his travels through the province. It then positions his school photography in the particular environment of rural Nova Scotia in 1912. In the context of widespread education reform in the period, this thesis argues that Adams’s unique class pictures were at odds with the standardized vision of education that was being imposed on rural communities by government and reform agendas. Adams’s particular talents and representational choices, along with his position as an itinerant photographer, working outside the bureaucracy of the school system, made him uniquely suited to create images with local significance.

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## Introduction

In June 1912, itinerant photographer Frank Adams travelled northeast through central Nova Scotia, eventually heading to the coast along the province's Eastern Shore. Whether he had ever made this particular trip before, or if he ever made it again, is unclear. What is clear is that for the children along his route, in small rural schools at Middle Stewiacke, Otter Brook, Dean, Crossroads, Newton Mills, Upper Stewiacke, Spry Bay (figs. 2-8), and probably more, one of their sunny June days was briefly interrupted by a friendly visitor. As the school year came to a close, it was time for class pictures in this part of rural Nova Scotia. The resulting photographs and others like them are at the centre of this thesis.

They are school photographs made at a time before conventions for such images had been standardized. A selection is reproduced as figures 2 through 18. The groups depicted are tidy and organized yet relatively relaxed in comparison to the strict orderliness of the more formal school portraits that would appear in later years. They show groups of children of various ages and sizes, most of them in the unique local backdrops of their schoolyards or nearby scenery. The children's teachers are with them, usually to one side, though sometimes difficult to discern due to their youth. The children and teacher in Otter Brook (fig. 3) pose on and around a log on a stony patch of ground in front of a backdrop of stately spruce trees. In Crossroads (fig. 5), a cordwood fence separates the group from an elaborate background of leafy foliage and skinny pine trees. In East Noel (fig. 9), the children and teacher stand in thick grass alongside a verdant orchard. Each school is situated in its own particular spot in the province and Adams uses these backdrops to emphasize this, highlighting the unique features of each community.

In many photographs, one or more children near the middle of the picture hold slates on which the name of the school and the date of the photograph have been written. This internal documentation, and his use of personalized picture frames bearing his company name, are the only reasons that we are able to re-imagine Adams's trip that June, or to catch a glimpse of the breadth of his travels in the province. Adams's photographs are now found in a number of community-based historical society collections throughout north-central Nova Scotia and just a small fraction of the whole is reproduced in this thesis. Collections of this kind are often overlooked by academic researchers, but they are unique and complex repositories of the past of rural communities and can provide historical perspectives unavailable elsewhere. But despite the wide circulation of his photographs, and their fortunate collection by these historical societies, Adams himself has been almost entirely forgotten. The reciprocal relationship that he had with the communities he visited has not been archived along with the images he made. The ephemeral nature of his life has been replicated in his archival legacy.

Broadly speaking, this thesis considers the relationship between Frank Adams, his photographs, and the rural communities he visited. Adams traveled around the province during the first two decades of the century, often by bicycle but other times with a darkroom and mobile studio in two specially outfitted horse-drawn wagons. He provided his services to a range of clients, including various kinds of portrait making and landscape views. However, one of his primary occupations was as a school photographer and it is his school photographs that have been the most extensively collected and identified. While many are simply average photographs of schoolchildren, his best photographs are beautifully lit and meticulously arranged, often in unconventional ways

that reveal at least some knowledge of style and technique. But what is particularly interesting about Adams's photographs for the purposes of this thesis is their very ordinariness, their seamless entry into the lives of his rural customers that parallels his own seamless movement in and out of their communities. These small details were fundamental to the fabric of everyday life in the early twentieth century, just as they are today. Studying Adams is not simply intended to be a biographical recovery project. Rather Adams and his photographs provide a novel perspective from which to consider the culture of the world in which he lived by foregrounding some of the more ephemeral, but nonetheless important, details of rural life at that time. Starting with the life and work of an itinerant photographer and his photographs of schoolchildren, this thesis broadens to examine the more general culture of schooling and school reform in rural communities in early twentieth-century Nova Scotia.

Following this extended introduction, which situates the study in time and place and introduces the rural communities that formed the backdrops of Adams's photographs, this thesis moves to a biographical sketch of Frank Adams. This sketch is a critical attempt to piece together the largely anonymous practice of this itinerant photographer from the fragments and traces that he left behind, including his photographs. As part of this, the chapter explores the aesthetics of Adams's photographs and it asserts the particular relevance of his identity as a commercial photographer who made pictures for sale to the rural people he photographed, as opposed to a range of other kinds of photographic practices.

The thesis then moves to its central chapter, which focuses in on the school photographs themselves. It concentrates on just one aspect of rural life in 1912 and

considers the potential role played therein by Adams and his school portraits. In the context of widespread education reform in the period, this chapter argues that Adams's unique class pictures were at odds with the standardized vision of education that was being imposed on rural communities by government and reform agendas. This chapter provides a discussion of school photographs more generally, rural reform movements active at the time, and the conflict of representation in which Adams's school photographs participated in opposition to official ways of imaging rural schools in Nova Scotia in 1912.

Each of these two chapters draws on a range of primary sources specific to their particular subject matter, but two kinds of sources are used throughout the thesis. The first is Frank Adams's photographs themselves. More than twenty-five years ago, Abigail Solomon-Godeau wrote that when studying photographs "it is properly the work of historians and critics to attempt to excavate . . . coded and buried meanings, to bring to light . . . rhetorical and formal strategies that determined the work's production, meaning, reception, and use."<sup>1</sup> This statement could easily be read as a description of historical source work in general, and it is from this perspective—that visual sources are simply another kind of historical source, distinct from but no more or less problematic than others—that this thesis approaches Adams's photographs.

Roland Barthes famously observed that "a photograph is always invisible." Typically when we look at a photograph "it is not it that we see," but rather the subject depicted on it.<sup>2</sup> We do not see the technological, social, and cultural processes that

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<sup>1</sup> Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 182.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 6.

converged to produce this particular image-object. This is certainly how old school photographs are used today: they are valued as portraits of ancestors and as documentation of past practices. But by considering the context of their production and original use, we are able to make these photographs visible and can begin to recognize them as complex sites through which meaning was, and continues to be, created and negotiated, rather than simply as quaint pictures of children. The images then become transparent and readable illustrations, not simply of people who lived long ago, but of some of the cultural forces that were at work in the everyday lives of those people.

Pierre Bourdieu has written that “adequately understanding a photograph . . . means not only recovering the meanings which it *proclaims*, that is, to a certain extent, the explicit intentions of the photographer; it also means deciphering the surplus of meaning which it *betrays* by being a part of the symbolism of an age, a class or an artistic group.”<sup>3</sup> Following the cultural history model of photography scholars such as Alan Trachtenberg and Jennifer Green-Lewis, this study attempts to decipher some of the meanings betrayed by Frank Adams’s photographs. It does so by considering both the making of photographs and engagement with photographs as cultural practices with “significance in social as much as aesthetic terms,” and prioritizing the “larger workings of culture” that surrounded their production and use.<sup>4</sup> In a much-quoted passage, Trachtenberg asserts that “the history [that photographs] show is inseparable from the history they enact: a history of photographers employing their medium to make sense of

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<sup>3</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 6-7. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>4</sup> Jennifer Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 19 and passim; Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images As History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1989).

their society.”<sup>5</sup> Whether or not we consider Adams’s photographs to be “successful” or aesthetically pleasing images, the very fact of their existence means that they have a story to tell that makes them appropriate subjects for historical consideration. It is the story of the social and cultural forces that made these photographs look the way they do and that made taking photographs of school children and teachers in rural Nova Scotia a reasonable occupation for Frank Adams in the first years of the twentieth century. It is also important to note that these photographs are material artifacts that circulated as objects in the world that this thesis seeks to describe. Their status at that time as commodities and objects of desire is central to any understanding of their meaning. This attention to the idiosyncrasies and the social and cultural embeddedness of school photographs from rural Nova Scotia in 1912 responds in part to Geoffrey’s Batchen’s call for an attention to “vernacular photographies” and to the “ordinary photographs” that in fact have made up the bulk of the medium over the past seventeen decades.<sup>6</sup>

The second type of source that is used throughout this thesis is the rural “community notes” columns published in the Truro *Daily News*. Like many newspapers with a large rural readership, the *Daily News* published columns by informal correspondents who described the activities of their rural communities in sporadic, gossipy dispatches, including whatever bits of news from the past few weeks that happened to come to mind. It is clear that the editors understood these columns to be an important part of the daily paper, imploring their readership: “Don’t hold back those local items. If you know some interesting item or have some communication of concern to the

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<sup>5</sup> Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, xvi.

<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey Batchen, “Vernacular Photographies,” *History of Photography* 24, no. 3 (2000): 262-271.

public get it into the printer's hands at the earliest moment."<sup>7</sup> Each day's paper included notes from several communities; some locales appeared quite often while others appeared only once or twice a year. The geographical range represented by the notes is surprisingly wide, including Colchester county, of which Truro was the capital, but extending into adjacent Cumberland and Hants counties and taking in the far-flung parts of Halifax and Guysborough counties, through the interior of the province and along the Eastern Shore. Indeed, to a remarkable degree, the community notes cover the very same territory that Frank Adams covered. This was not the only newspaper available in these parts. Several Halifax dailies, as well as the weekly *Presbyterian Witness* were commonly subscribed to as well, but the regular flow of rural content provided by the community notes columns in the Truro *Daily News* makes it a particularly interesting source for exploring the daily lives of rural Nova Scotians in this part of the province.

The notes, written typically in the form of a list, always included the comings and goings of visitors in the homes of the community, including friends and relatives visiting overnight. Weddings, births, deaths, illnesses, house parties and more public community social events, such as community concerts, pie socials, lodge activities, picnics, and sleigh rides all made the news, as did bits of community business such as the arrival in August of the schoolteacher for the year, or the renewal of the mail delivery contract. These goings-on were presented on a backdrop of weather-related pontificating and seasonally-specific descriptions of rural labour activities. But among and between these details were scattered less common bits of news. Travelling entertainments "passed through," sales agents and peddlers "were around," itinerant ministers, doctors, and dentists made their regular visits, and peripatetic characters of all kinds, including, of

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<sup>7</sup> Truro *Daily News*, June 21, 1912, 5.

course, photographers, made fleeting appearances before moving along down the road. These sporadic, fragmentary and incomplete notes provide an interesting counterpart to the fragmentary and incomplete utterances of Adams's photographs, further highlighting the methodological similarities between various kinds of historical source work.

While photographs from the turn of the century until the First World War and from a wide range of communities are discussed in this thesis, Adams's trip in June 1912, described in the opening passage of this introduction, provides the central focus in order to ground the study in a particular moment in time and place. Frank Adams was neither the first, nor the last, photographer to work in rural Nova Scotia. The argument here is not that this was a particularly remarkable moment, but rather that studying the moments in between is just as important. The choice of 1912 was originally a fairly arbitrary one, based entirely on the discovery of the photographs, but it has turned out to be a remarkably useful organizing tool that has allowed a clear delineation of a particular moment in the history of rural Nova Scotia. Focusing on 1912 neatly occludes a discussion of the upheavals of the First World War and the changing historical context of that time. It also predates the 1913 Agricultural Instruction Act, which would alter, to some extent, the tenor of the discussion about rural education reform described in chapter two.

From a regional perspective, the 1910s in the Maritimes have been characterized as the last decade of true optimism regarding the region's place in the industrializing and modernizing nation (and world) before various industries, and the economy more generally, began to be dismantled in the 1920s. Historian Ian McKay has written that

“The 1910s were the region’s last years of abundant hope.”<sup>8</sup> Related to this, 1912 also predates the period described by McKay in *The Quest of the Folk*, his monograph on antimodernism in Nova Scotia, which is perhaps the most widely known scholarly historical study of the province and one that has coloured subsequent historical interpretations of it. McKay argues that beginning in the late 1920s an idea of Nova Scotia as a simple, pristine place untouched by the anxieties of the modern world gained currency. The cultural history and traditions of Nova Scotia were rewritten by government tourism promoters and local cultural producers with a clear tendency toward antimodernism and the romanticization of a mythical past personified by simple rural “Folk.” Such an emphasis erased attention to the urban, industrial, capitalist society that was the pride of the province until the second decade of the century. In its place, the lowly fishing village was exalted as the site of the true spirit of Nova Scotia, and fisherfolk became the standard bearers for Nova Scotian identity. In the process, “the pre-modern ‘Otherness’ of Nova Scotia was ‘naturalized’ (that is, made to appear an obvious and commonsense interpretation)” for visitors and residents alike.<sup>9</sup> The ways that rural people themselves experienced this discursive shift are not well understood; McKay is clear that his study “is about the ways in which urban cultural producers, pursuing their own interests and expressing their own view of things, constructed the Folk of the countryside as the romantic antithesis to everything they disliked about modern urban and industrial life.”<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, studies of cultural production, such as photography, in Nova Scotia in the period that McKay covers are compelled to attend to the

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<sup>8</sup> Ian McKay, “The 1910s: The Stillborn Triumph of Progressive Reform,” in *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, ed. D. A. Muise and Ernest R. Forbes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 229.

<sup>9</sup> Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 31.

<sup>10</sup> McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, 4.

characterizations that he describes. While the allegedly simple, rustic character of rural Nova Scotia had already long been the subject of commodification and tourist attention by the 1910s,<sup>11</sup> McKay describes a period in which the complexities of rural life were significantly erased from public view, though not, certainly, from the actual experience of rural living.

Adams's photographs depict the thoroughly modern activity of going to school through the thoroughly modern medium of photography. While his aesthetic sensibility could in some cases be interpreted as having been informed by a romanticization of rural life, this was not the only, nor the most widespread, way of understanding or depicting rural people in 1912. The particular cultural context that McKay describes was not the backdrop for Adams's work. Indeed, central to McKay's argument is that the emergence of prevalent antimodernism in the 1920s was at odds with the ways that the province had been characterized leading up to that time. As mentioned above, the 1910s was a decade in which the busy, progressive character of Maritimes society was the main message being sent out of the region, although the depopulation of rural communities—in part a symptom of the celebrated industrial development—was already a major concern.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See Colin Howell, "The 1900s: Industry, Urbanization, and Reform," in *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, ed. D. A. Muise and Ernest R. Forbes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 178-179; Monica MacDonald, "Railway Tourism in the 'Land of Evangeline,' 1882-1946," *Acadiensis* 35, no. 1 (2005): 158-180; James H. Morrison, "American Tourism in Nova Scotia, 1871-1940," *Nova Scotia Historical Review* 2, no. 2 (1982): 40-51. For a discussion of how photography was implicated in this, see Graeme Wynn, "'Images of the Acadian Valley': The Photographs of Amos Lawson Hardy," *Acadiensis* 15, no. 1 (1985): 59-83.

<sup>12</sup> The topic of migration from Nova Scotia, and from the Maritime provinces more generally, has a significant historiography. Publications in the 1970s and 1980s attempted to come to terms with the demographic and economic implications of the movement, while later work has offered a social history approach. See, for example, Alan Brookes, "Out-Migration from the Maritime Provinces, 1860-1900: Some Preliminary Considerations," *Acadiensis* 5, no. 2 (1976): 26-45; Alan Brookes, "The Golden Age and the Exodus: The Case of Canning, Kings County," *Acadiensis* 11, no. 1 (1981): 57-82; Patricia Thornton, "The Problem of Out-Migration from Atlantic Canada, 1871-1921: A New Look," *Acadiensis* 15, no. 1 (1985): 3-34; Betsy Beattie, "'Going Up to Lynn': Single, Maritime-Born Women in Lynn, Massachusetts, 1879-1930," *Acadiensis* 22, no. 1 (1992): 65-86; Betsy Beattie, *Obligation and Opportunity: Single, Maritime*

At the local level, the Musquodoboit Railway from Dartmouth to Upper Musquodoboit, built between 1912 and 1916, had significant implications.<sup>13</sup> The eventually completed railway would dramatically alter the accessibility of many rural communities to urban and other markets and “liven up the country a bit,” as one observer had hoped early on.<sup>14</sup> It would also change the personal mobility of rural people in and near the places that the railway serviced. In 1912, the beginning of its construction, following decades of stalled attempts, also led to renewed lobbying efforts on behalf of an extension of the line through the Stewiacke Valley—along the route taken by Adams that June. The line would never be built, but the arguments forwarded on behalf of the project contribute to our understanding of the way that some people in those communities understood their lives and home places at that moment.

When the Truro *Daily News* ran an item supporting a Stewiacke Valley line in May 1912, it highlighted the issue of rural depopulation, pointing to the wasted potential of both the agricultural land and its “progressive citizens,” in terms that support McKay’s characterization of the decade: “This valley for 25 miles is among the finest of the agricultural lands of Nova Scotia, and its people have been our most intelligent and progressive citizens. Yet in spite of this the Valley has greatly decreased in population and in general agricultural productions. . . . These magnificent country districts have been gradually drained of their young men and women because on account of their isolation, they have been unable to keep up with the modern tendency to increased industrial

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*Women in Boston, 1870-1930* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000); Gary Burrill, *Away: Maritimers in Massachusetts, Ontario and Alberta: an Oral History of Leaving Home* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> On the history of the Musquodoboit Railway see David E. Stephens, *Iron Roads: Railways of Nova Scotia* (Windsor, NS: Lancelot Press, 1972), 61-64.

<sup>14</sup> See Truro *Daily News*, community notes for Cooks Brook, March 6, 1912, 3.

activity. . . . [New railway lines] will be the salvation of many of our best country districts.”<sup>15</sup> The author acknowledges that industrialization is the cause of rural depopulation, but rather than fighting against it, wants to bring it to the countryside, where progressive farmers were eagerly waiting to be linked to modern markets.

But others who lived there did not see the need for “salvation” so clearly and were more than happy to leave the technologies of the “modern” world outside the Valley for the time being. A poem entitled “The Village of Upper Stewiacke” appeared in the *Truro Daily News* two months before the piece about the railway:

You may talk of New York, with its riches,  
The “Old World” with its rare ancient sights;  
Palestine with its items of interest—  
Boston town with its bright ’lectric lights,

But what shall you say of our Valley  
Where fortune and riches are not,  
But where Nature has carefully picked out  
For us, a most beautiful spot?

I am proud to be one of its children;  
I am proud to be of it a share;  
I’m content to abide in such beauty,  
So simple, and yet “Ohso [f]air.”

I’m not saying I never shall leave,  
And seek my fortune fr[o]m home;—  
But I’m sure I shall never forget it—  
No matter how far I may roam.

It’s not perhaps a place to get riches  
But I think this, without a drawback  
That the happiest place on the face of earth  
Is the village of Upper Stewiacke.<sup>16</sup>

The poem’s author was responding to precisely the same social context as the advocates of the railway, but from a perspective that did not foresee or encourage a

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<sup>15</sup> *Truro Daily News*, May 14, 1912, 1.

<sup>16</sup> W.F.B., “The Village of Upper Stewiacke,” *Truro Daily News*, March 7, 1912, 7.

widespread remaking of the Valley. For example, where the railway boosters saw the region being “drained,” the poet seemed to be more calmly referring to the rhythms of migration that had characterized rural Nova Scotia for generations, even suggesting that he or she might also have to leave for a time, and that it was perfectly normal to do so.<sup>17</sup> The poet was not blind to the difficulties facing rural communities, repeatedly referring to the limited financial fortunes to be had at home. This thread of realism woven through the otherwise naive pastoral moves this poem away from simple romanticizing and makes it a nuanced counterpoint to the more baldly articulated economic and commercial interests of the railway boosters. A comparison of these two expressions of community spirit suggests a tension in the way that the identity, and the future, of the Valley were being framed in 1912. This tension reappears in the dialogue surrounding rural education reform described in chapter two.

Along the Eastern Shore, the other area of the province represented by Adams’s trip that June, there was no realistic talk of a railway link or the changes that might come with it.<sup>18</sup> The region remained quite isolated, though not untouched by industry. For instance, traditional fishing was complemented by lobster- and clam-packing factories, lumber mills shipped their products to foreign markets, and the discovery of gold in some areas meant a brief boom period in the five or six years bracketing the turn of the century. While this led to a great deal of optimism for the future of the region, the precariousness of such resource-based industry meant that it would not last. The peak of prosperity and population for many communities along the Eastern Shore was just after the turn of the century, and by the time of Frank Adams’s visit in 1912 the area was already feeling the

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<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Beattie, *Obligation and Opportunity*.

<sup>18</sup> See Stephens, *Iron Roads*, 61-64.

pangs of a major recession—though the extent to which this financial hardship would be permanent was not yet known.<sup>19</sup>

All of these small, rural communities, whether inland or on the coast, were organized along similar lines, which, in 1912, is to say that they were only very loosely organized with limited formal political cohesion. Some slightly larger communities had central villages, but most were simply large (or small) geographical areas with relatively arbitrary and often informal boundaries, along whose poorly maintained roads were scattered homes, farmlands, woodlands, businesses and public buildings. The blurring of community boundaries in rural Nova Scotia remains a reality today, and it provides a challenge to the historian of rural places. For example, in a local history of Upper Stewiacke, the author notes that “It is hard to define the boundaries of Upper Stewiacke as the history of our locality is so closely woven with that of Middle Stewiacke and Springside, Meadowvale and South Branch, Pembroke and Burnside, Newton Mills and Eastville.” Similarly, a local history of one part of the Eastern Shore intertwines a cluster of communities whose fortunes were intimately bound together, rather than trying to divide them from each other.<sup>20</sup> All this said, the early twentieth century was also a period, quite distinct from today, when small communities were far more likely to have their own general store, post office, and school, often a church, and perhaps a community hall of some kind.

The majority of families in the communities along Adams’s route professed Presbyterianism, which was “the largest and most influential Maritime Protestant

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<sup>19</sup> Philip L. Hartling, *Where Broad Atlantic Surges Roll: A History of Beaver Harbour, Port Dufferin, Quoddy, Harrigan Cove, Moose Head, Moser-River, Necum Teuch and Ecum Secum* (Antigonish, NS: Formac, 1979), 102-103.

<sup>20</sup> I. E. Deyarmond, *Rambling Winds* (Upper Stewiacke, NS: I.E. Deyarmond, 1975), 27; Hartling, *Where Broad Atlantic Surges Roll*.

denomination” at the time, though a significant minority of Anglicans appear in Spry Bay, consistent with other parts of the Eastern Shore.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, many people were affiliated with fraternal organizations such as the Masons, the Foresters, and the Sons of Temperance, and community halls were often built under these auspices. By all accounts, a spirit of ecumenicalism, rather than an emphasis on religious and political divisions, seems to have been the guiding principle of community socializing. This inclusivity, however, does not mean that larger systems of residential segregation were not apparent throughout the province, with Acadian, African Nova Scotian, and First Nations communities largely set apart from the majority white, English-speaking population of rural Nova Scotia. In 1912, many of the communities represented in Adams’s photographs, including all of the communities in the seven photographs from his trip in June, were significantly homogeneous in terms of their ethnic and linguistic composition, with the majority of the families having been living in their place of residence for at least a couple of generations. While claims of homogeneity are always deceptive and neglect the true diversity of experiences in any community, it is nevertheless worth making the distinction here between the largely settled, multi-generational communities of rural Nova Scotia and the highly charged processes of resettlement underway in western Canada at the same time.<sup>22</sup>

Official community boundaries were drawn by central governments for the purposes of census taking, tax collecting, and school administration, but these lines were constantly subject to change and did not always reflect the ways that local people

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<sup>21</sup> Charles H. H. Scobie and George A. Rawlyk, introduction to *The Contribution of Presbyterianism to the Maritime Provinces of Canada*, ed. Charles H. H. Scobie and George A. Rawlyk (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), xiii; Hartling, *Where Broad Atlantic Surges Roll*, 40-42.

<sup>22</sup> See also Hal S. Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind: Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century New England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

experienced the geography of their lives.<sup>23</sup> Political representation in the county was at the district level, rather than at the level of individual communities, meaning that local community leadership was diffuse and informal. Individuals of social standing, such as ministers or doctors, had peripatetic practices, visiting only on occasion over the course of the year. An exception to this informality was the election of school trustees. In 1912 there were 1797 autonomous school sections in Nova Scotia.<sup>24</sup> With the exception of urban areas, each school section was responsible for a single school, including the hiring and paying of teachers, the maintenance of the school building, and the levying of fees for these services from the rate-payers in the community. A provincial education bureaucracy licensed teachers, issued a standardized curriculum, and employed county school inspectors who were authorized to chastise delinquent school sections, but the school sections were nevertheless significantly independent, partly because the inspectors generally appeared only once through the school year. The significance of the school as a formalized local institution in communities where such institutions were rare makes Frank Adams's photographs especially notable. This subject will be explored in chapter two.

Another aspect of rural Nova Scotian communities related to the flexibility of their boundaries, and central to the arguments forwarded in this thesis, is the important tendency for mobility in the early twentieth century, with rural communities part of extensive networks of exchange rather than isolated or insular sites. In Nova Scotia as

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<sup>23</sup> The informal ways that rural community geographies are navigated have been described in, for example, Robert Mellin, *Tilting: House Launching, Slide Hauling, Potato Trenching, and Other Tales from a Newfoundland Fishing Village* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2003); Gerald L. Pocius, *A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

<sup>24</sup> Nova Scotia, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of Nova Scotia for the Year Ended 31st July, 1912* (Halifax, NS: King's Printer, 1913), 3.

elsewhere, such mobility has often been linked to occupational plurality. This was a regular strategy for rural men, and to a lesser extent, women, into the middle of the twentieth century in Nova Scotia, and one that persists today. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, planting and harvesting on a small family farm was complemented on a seasonal basis with either subsistence or waged work in various industries including logging and lumbering, milling, fishing, shipping, and ship building, among others. Other individuals without subsistence farms of their own worked entirely on this seasonal cycle of jobs, hiring themselves out for weeks or months at a time wherever labourers were required, alternating between forest, field, and ocean. Historians have described how, beginning in the mid nineteenth century, Maritimers added part-time industrial work to this pattern, taking up temporary shifts at steel plants, coal mines, or fish processing plants, for example.<sup>25</sup> Larry McCann notes that while the region was witnessing changes in labour related to industrialization, “continuity prevailed in the form of the long-practiced behaviour of selectively exploiting the offerings of multiple work opportunities during a seasonal round of traditional activities.”<sup>26</sup> McCann writes that from the early nineteenth century on, such pluralism was condemned by social commentators as counterproductive to the aims of progressive development in the region, particularly detracting from specialization in agriculture. Nevertheless, despite this criticism, the

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<sup>25</sup> See Larry McCann, “‘Living a double life’: Town and Country in the Industrialization of the Maritimes,” in *Geographical Perspectives on the Maritime Provinces*, ed. E. E. Douglas Day (Halifax, NS: Saint Mary’s University, 1988), 93-113; Daniel Samson, “Dependency and Rural Industry: Inverness, Nova Scotia, 1899-1910,” in *Contested Countryside: Rural Workers and Modern Society in Atlantic Canada, 1800-1950*, ed. Daniel Samson (Fredericton, NB: Gorsebrook Research Institute for Atlantic Canada Studies and Acadiensis Press, 1994), 105-149. Rural women were also drawn to the new industrial occupations, particularly in textiles mills and clothing and shoe factories. See D.A. Muise, “The Industrial Context of Inequality: Female Participation in Nova Scotia’s Paid Labour Force, 1871-1921,” *Acadiensis* 20, no. 2 (1991): 3-31.

<sup>26</sup> McCann, “Living a double life,” 94. McCann provides a thorough overview of the various kinds of work combinations that appeared in the period.

practice continued as an “instinctive . . . cultural trait, passed from one generation to another as a tradition of necessity.”<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere McCann further emphasizes that for many individuals and families, occupational pluralism was a deliberate, long-term choice in response to the idiosyncrasies of the local economy, rather than a strategy employed only out of desperation. He notes that it was often “deliberately chosen either to exploit the environmental possibilities of staple production (e.g., subsistence farming, summer fishing, winter lumbering), or to cope with the shortcomings of industrial capitalism (e.g., market fluctuations, seasonal layoffs, unstable incomes).”<sup>28</sup>

In north-central Nova Scotia in and around 1912, rural correspondents to the *Truro Daily News* painted a clear picture of a highly mobile mass labour force, constantly on the move, even if their columns only scratched the surface of the kinds of occupations to be had in the province. Beginning with the snows of winter, “the boys” would take off for the logging camps found throughout the interior of the province where many would stay until the spring thaw allowed them to drive the logs down to the mills; around this time the maple sugar started to run and lobstering needed workers to prepare gear and then to go fishing; while the lobster season was quite short, lumbering went on through the entire spring, overlapping with planting season, the start of the more general fishing season, and the busiest shipping months; haying took up much of the early summer, and while farmers tended hopefully to their growing vegetable crops, berry picking and game hunting were interspersed; in the fall came the harvest of vegetables and, in the Annapolis Valley, fruit, especially apples, the slaughter of livestock, and the threshing

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<sup>27</sup> McCann, “Living a double life,” 98.

<sup>28</sup> Larry McCann, “Seasons of Labor: Family, Work, and Land in a Nineteenth-Century Nova Scotia Shipbuilding Community,” *History of the Family* 4, no. 4 (1999): 487.

and milling of grains before the snow began the cycle anew.<sup>29</sup> The tone of the correspondents suggests that it was simply a given that groups of men would time and again leave jobs and take up new ones, making off for various parts of the province at certain times of the year. For example, the *Daily News* correspondent for Beaver Harbour in March 1908 wrote “Most of our young men are home this winter, as there has not been enough snow for work in the lumber woods, but most of them will soon leave for different places for Spring work.”<sup>30</sup> Even when the poor weather threatened their winter work, the young men of Beaver Harbour knew that at least spring, and change, was just around the corner. While the industries themselves might have been precarious, the seasonal pattern of movement was assured.

As indicated by the Beaver Harbour correspondent, occupational plurality did not only mean changing jobs, it meant physically moving about, often over relatively long distances. Interestingly, the kinds of yearly work combinations that Nova Scotians took on were not only those available in their local area. Labourers for particular jobs were drawn from the immediate surrounding area, and a farmer might have an adjacent woodlot that he logged in the winter months, but yearly movement from deep in the woods, to one or another coast, to the various agricultural regions of the province was typical, particularly among those living in marginal areas such as the Eastern Shore, where Beaver Harbour is located. From nearby communities in 1912, “young people” from Liscombe Mills went “North to work in the lobster factory” in May, while in August, “boys” from Port Dufferin travelled all the way to the Annapolis Valley to pack

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<sup>29</sup> *Truro Daily News*, community notes columns, 1905-1913.

<sup>30</sup> *Truro Daily News*, community notes for Beaver Harbour, March 10, 1908, 6.

apples.<sup>31</sup> There were also short-term infrastructure jobs, such as the construction, from 1912 to 1916, of the Musquodoboit Railway, which brought men from all over the province into the villages along its route where they were housed and fed by the locals and took part in community events.<sup>32</sup>

McCann and Samson have each described a type of hinterland relationship, with central towns, urban places, or rural work sites (eg. shipbuilding operations, mines) drawing on rural labour from their surrounding areas.<sup>33</sup> What is not so clearly described by these authors, but which is borne out by the rural community notes in the *Truro Daily News*, is the wider extra-regional migratory patterns that took individual men from one end of the province to another, circulating for periods of time between rural communities, pursuing the fluctuating seasonal work provided by each particular region. Highlighting this aspect of their mobility emphasizes the interconnectedness of rural places across the province and deemphasizes, to some extent, regional and community boundaries. It is in this context of regular and easy mobility and elastic communities that Frank Adams and other itinerants like him made their way around the province. This mobility forms the backdrop for the discussion of itinerants in chapter one. Further, the seasonal rhythms

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<sup>31</sup> *Truro Daily News*, community notes for Liscombe Mills, May 2, 1912, 2; Port Dufferin, August 28, 1912, 3.

<sup>32</sup> At the end of May 1912, farmers around Meagher's Grant were planting extra potatoes to feed the railway workers. In June the workers attended a pie social in the community that raised funds for the Baptist church. *Truro Daily News*, community notes for Meagher's Grant, May 31, 1912, 3; June 13, 1912, 8. This was not the furthest that seasonal rural labour travelled away from Nova Scotia before returning home. For example, various historians have described the recruitment of temporary, seasonal Maritime labour for the western "harvest excursions" through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See W.J.C. Cherwinski, "The Incredible Harvest Excursion of 1908," *Labour/Le travail* 5 (Spring 1980): 57-79; A. A. MacKenzie, "Cape Breton and the Western Harvest Excursions, 1890-1928," in *Cape Breton at 200: Historical Essays in Honour of the Island's Bicentennial, 1785-1985*, ed. Kenneth Joseph Donovan (Sydney, NS: University of Cape Breton Press, 1985), 71-83; John Herd Thompson, "Bringing in the Sheaves: The Harvest Excursionists, 1890-1929," *Canadian Historical Review* 59, no. 4 (1978): 467-489.

<sup>33</sup> McCann, "Seasons of Labor"; Samson, "Dependency and Rural Industry."

and movements highlighted here are central to the opposition of rural communities to the proposed reforms of education in the early twentieth century, the topic of chapter two.

In the history of photography, 1912 was a relatively unexceptional year; photography had long been firmly entrenched in the culture of North America and Europe, including in rural areas. As Mary Warner Marien explains, “there was no particular moment in the vast expansion and societal absorption of photography to mark the point at which it permanently altered the experience of modern life.” But even by 1880, “photography had been quietly absorbed into the texture of everyday life.”<sup>34</sup> Technological advances were making it easier for people to pursue photography as a hobby and to make casual snapshot pictures for their own personal use. George Eastman’s simple-to-use Kodak cameras, the first in 1888 and then the widely popular Brownie in 1900, and, even more significantly, his widespread distribution of no-fuss roll film, which was to be mailed off for developing, made photography a widely accessible activity that required no particular skill or talent. Peter Robinson and Lily Koltun note that in Canada, the years leading up to the turn of the century saw “an explosion of amateur photographic activity” and “by 1901 the variety of hand cameras available was truly vast.”<sup>35</sup>

This widespread emergence of amateur snapshot photography decreased the number of professional photographers working, but they did not disappear altogether.

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<sup>34</sup> Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006), 165.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Robertson, “The New Amateur, 1885-1900,” in *Private Realms of Light: Amateur Photography in Canada, 1839-1940*, ed. Lily Koltun (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1984), 16; Lily Koltun, “Art Ascendant, 1900-1914,” in *Private Realms of Light: Amateur Photography in Canada, 1839-1940*, ed. Lily Koltun (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1984), 50.

Evidence from the collections of community historical societies suggests that rural Nova Scotian families had been eager and sophisticated consumers of portrait photography over several decades. This tintype photograph (fig. 19) of Belle Waddell, Minnie Johnson and her big brother Blair, made in Crossroads in the late 1870s makes it clear that Adams was certainly not the first itinerant to pass through the area. The clumsy sheet hung up as a backdrop and rough wooden floor boards are evidence of a makeshift studio, though the sitters (or perhaps more likely their mothers) seem to have taken the occasion quite seriously, showing off their Sunday clothes. But the people of the Stewiacke Valley also participated in more formal photographic culture, visiting photo studios in Truro or other urban centers and making use of the formal conventions that had been established in such settings to position themselves as fashionable, modern citizens. This photograph of siblings Alice and Wilbert Creelman of Upper Stewiacke was made at the C.W. Kelly studio in Truro, probably in the early 1890s (fig. 20). As Alan Thomas has noted, “a great deal of social make-believe inhabited the world of [Victorian] portrait photography and was deliberately fostered by commercial photographers.”<sup>36</sup> People of modest social standing in particular embraced the carefully enforced conventions of respectable appearances in portraiture, positioning themselves amongst appropriate studio props and backdrops and assuming suitably mannered poses and gestures before the camera, “an elaborate set of signs that symbolically evoke the bourgeois cultural ideal.”<sup>37</sup> In this photograph, as in many others of the period, the make-believe goes one fashionable step

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<sup>36</sup> Alan Thomas, *Time in a Frame: Photography and the Nineteenth Century Mind* (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 78.

<sup>37</sup> Suren Lalvani, *Photography, Vision, and the Production of Modern Bodies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 52. See also work by John Tagg who adds an emphasis on the portrait as a luxury commodity, the simple ownership of which conferred status on the sitter. John Tagg, “A Democracy of the Image: Photographic Portraiture and Commodity Production,” in *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 34-59.

further, placing the pair in a snowy outdoor scene, complete with furs, stylish coats, and a dusting of salt on Wilbert's shoulders for good measure. A light spray of paint on the negative before printing created the snowstorm. Studio tricks of this kind were regularly employed by the country's most prestigious portrait photographers, including William Notman in Montreal and James Topley in Ottawa.<sup>38</sup> While this technique had already been around for some time when this photograph was made, partaking in such artifice was nevertheless still meant to be a sign of erudition and modern sophistication, adding nuance to impressions of rural people as unrefined and uncultured.

In 1912, the circulation of commercial photographs was also steadily increasing, including in rural areas. The use of photographs in newspapers varied widely. While the necessary half-tone technology had existed since the 1880s, many newspapers adopted it very slowly, sometimes for financial reasons, but often just out of a loyalty to text and tradition. While some newspapers made a point of being highly illustrated, overall photographs still remained relatively rare in newspapers and were largely limited to stock photographs, mostly portraits (the *Truro Daily News* carried only a few small head shots here and there). Mail-order catalogues, such as the ubiquitous Eaton's catalogue, also continued to use pictorial illustrations rather than photographs in 1912. But there were a number of other ways that photographs circulated. Stereographs had already been very popular through the late nineteenth century and brought views of the entire world into the homes of those with suitable means. Every fashionable parlour, and those that aspired to it, included a stereoscope and collection of stereographs in 1912. Picture books were also very popular, particularly commemorative books for events of note. In the summer of

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<sup>38</sup> Joan Schwartz includes a discussion of snowy studio portraits by Notman and Topley, including such a photograph of Lady Dufferin, wife of the Governor General, in Joan M. Schwartz, "Photographic Reflections: Nature, Landscape, and Environment," *Environmental History* 12, no. 4 (2007): 966-993.

1912, just three months after the disaster, at least one itinerant peddler was “very successful” in the rural communities along Nova Scotia’s Eastern Shore with sales of a book about the Titanic, almost certainly illustrated.<sup>39</sup> A range of illustrated magazines, increasingly featuring photographs, also made their way to rural homes by mail, to be shared among family and friends.

But probably the most common way that photographs were circulated in rural communities in 1912 was on postcards. Photographic postcards were produced by the millions each year after they were made legal to send by mail in Canada in 1903. The first two decades of the twentieth century are known as the “Golden Age” of the postcard and scholars and collectors agree that a “craze” swept North America and Europe at that time, peaking in the years just before the First World War. In addition to the illustrated books mentioned above, postcard albums became popular as collecting and trading cards developed into a fashionable hobby for those with leisure time and a small amount of money to spare. Beyond correspondence between friends and family members, international postcard clubs facilitated a wide circulation of cards from around the world. In 1913 over sixty million postcards were mailed in Canada alone.<sup>40</sup> In a population of less than eight million people this was an activity of some significance—and it does not take into account the many millions of postcards that were purchased for their images and never mailed.

Frank Adams, like every other commercial photographer working at the time, almost certainly made postcards among the other photographic formats he produced.

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<sup>39</sup> *Truro Daily News*, community notes for West Liscombe, July 8, 1912, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Statistics were kept by Canada Post. They are quoted here from Allan Anderson and Betty Tomlinson, *Greetings from Canada: An Album of Unique Canadian Postcards from the Edwardian Era, 1900-1916* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1978), xiii.

Beginning around 1903 Eastman Kodak and other companies produced photographic paper pre-printed with postcard backing allowing even serious amateurs to print their photographs in postcard form, while others could mail or drop their film off for developing by professionals.<sup>41</sup> Collectors now call these “real photo” postcards. This was a boon to small-time photographers, who began supplementing their income with view cards, as well as postcards of local events, and, notably here, portraits. Photographers with both formal, settled studios (fig. 21) and itinerant practices (fig. 22), and those without professional ambitions at all (fig. 23), produced millions of portrait postcards in the first decades of the century, many of them mailed to friends and family, many others kept as personal souvenirs.<sup>42</sup> (None of these three postcards were mailed.) A photocopy of a postcard in the collection of the Colchester Historical Society Archives suggests that Frank Adams did make such portraits. The photograph shows a young man in his army uniform and this card was actually mailed. The message begins, “Dear Auntie—I had Mr. Adams snap me the other night and I thought I would send you one.”<sup>43</sup>

In contrast to the formality and sense of occasion seen in the older portraits above, in 1912, having an informal portrait taken was an extremely popular, relatively accessible, and fun thing to do. The anonymous sitters here wear their regular street clothes and pose in uncomplicated positions, displaying a new level of comfort with the camera. The community notes in the *Truro Daily News* for Barrasois, Colchester County, on January 19, 1910, announced that “Adams, the photographer, has returned to town,

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<sup>41</sup> An advertisement in 1912 for Redden Studios in Truro offered “Your Photo on Postcards” and it is likely that G.O. Fulton, Ltd., also in Truro, which regularly advertised its photography-related services in the *Daily News*, printed postcards as well. *Truro Daily News*, February 16, 1912, 5.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Bogdan and Todd Weseloh, *Real Photo Postcard Guide: The People's Photography* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006).

<sup>43</sup> Colchester Historical Society Archives, Clippings files: Business: Photographers.

and many are having their picture taken.”<sup>44</sup> The informality of this statement speaks volumes about the familiar yet novel status of photography in rural life at the time. It was a commodity, like so many others, that was embraced by people throughout the province, and itinerant photographers were able to make a modest living by enabling and taking advantage of this desire in rural communities.

This is the context in which Frank Adams was working in 1912. He, like other commercial photographers at the time, was caught between a huge demand for photography and the emergence of technological innovations that allowed increasing numbers of people to take their own pictures. Staking out territories of relevance in this environment was crucial. Postcards were one innovation that commercial photographers embraced. Landscape and town views, more formal portraits, house photographs, and, of course, school pictures, were among the many other genres that they attempted.

This thesis is not an artistic hagiography of Frank Adams. It cannot claim that his was a singular aesthetic vision. In part this is because too many of his photographs remain anonymous and are thus difficult to separate from those of the other anonymous photographers collected in community archives. It will, however, be argued in the biographical sketch that follows that his best photographs did have a distinctive aesthetic and charm, something that makes them pop out from their place among the hundreds of other anonymous photographs that are their ostensible equivalents. In conversation with Nan Harvey, chief archivist of the Colchester Historical Society Archives, we discussed the danger in the temptation to assign every nicely composed anonymous photograph from a particular time and place to Adams’s legacy. Nevertheless, with this danger in

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<sup>44</sup> *Truro Daily News*, community notes for Barrasois, January 19, 1910, 8.

mind, she has made some assertions of Adams's authorship among the photographs in her collection.<sup>45</sup> Likewise, a small number of the photographs discussed in this thesis remain officially anonymous (though who the "official" might be who would or could pronounce on this point, I do not know). Their style and form suggest important similarities to Adams's work, but these images have not been definitively identified as his. In fact, there is a moderately good chance that they were made by his brother. To an important extent, however, their authorship is irrelevant. While Adams is the focus of this thesis, and certain claims are made about the discursive work done by his particular vision of rural schools, the uniqueness of his vision is not central to that argument. Indeed, in many ways it would be even more revealing to discover that Adams was only one of a range of photographers working in the province in the same period who shared a regionally specific set of formal conventions for school portraits at a time when conventions for the genre were still largely undefined. Adams was not the only school photographer in the province, nor the only itinerant photographer, but he serves as an example of each, representative or not we can only speculate, but nevertheless an interesting case study.

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<sup>45</sup> Nan Harvey, interview by the author, August 5, 2008.

## Chapter 1— Frank Adams: A Biographical Sketch of an Itinerant Photographer

And now the 'Travelling Artist' has arrived on wheels, and all will have a picture taken.  
—Community notes of Five Islands, *Truro Daily News*, August 8, 1912.

The photographs reproduced as figures 24 and 25 are part of a very small amount of documentation of the practice of an itinerant photographer in central Nova Scotia in the early twentieth century. The prints are approximately the same size, but the summer photograph is mounted on a large black picture matte while the winter photograph is more fragile, unmounted and on rather flimsy photo paper. Neither is accompanied by any written text.

The photographs each show the same two wagons, one with a tented roof, which contained a photo studio, the other a rudimentary living space. In the summer scene the wagons are parked in a sunny, fenced field with wheels and bracing poles beneath them and little staircases folded out to allow entry. Through the open door of the studio wagon we catch a glimpse of some photographs mounted on the wall, while the window of the living quarters is spruced up with tidy curtains. Posed in front of the wagons and looking directly at the camera are, at left, the photographer Frank Adams, at right, his wife Emily, with a bicycle, just behind their daughter Nellie, and two unidentified men. A second bicycle rests at the side of one of the wagons. From Nellie's apparent age, and the apple blossoms visible at the back of the scene, we can speculate that this photograph was made in the spring of 1905.

The winter scene is somewhat more closed and inscrutable. Here the wagons have been fitted with skis and are harnessed to teams of horses on a narrow road or perhaps a

railway line through a wooded area. The curtains have been drawn. Three people are visible in the image. A shadowed figure holds the reins of the studio wagon at the rear, while two men (perhaps the two from the summer scene?) attend to the lead wagon. One stands in the doorway holding the reins, though he has only recently taken up this position, his feet and legs still covered in snow. A second man stands ankle-deep in the snow, looking directly at the camera, as do the other two. There is nothing here to indicate the date of the photograph. In common with the summer scene, there is also little that denotes the location where this photograph was made. The tall evergreens, spruce and fir typical of the woodlands of Nova Scotia, place these photographs somewhere in northeastern North America but pinpointing their locations is virtually impossible without further outside knowledge.

In each case these are posed photographs, staged in unidentifiable, largely natural scenery, meant to show off the wagons and some of the people connected with them, rather than candid pictures of the wagons in use by patrons, or in discernible locations in the province. The viewer must extrapolate from these images to ponder what other uses of the wagons might have looked like. But in spite of this—or because of it—they are an evocative starting point from which to consider a tradition that has gone largely undocumented in more conventional ways.

Despite the wide circulation of his photographs and their collection by community historical societies, photographer Frank Adams's name typically has not been archived along with his work. He has been rendered anonymous by his ephemeral relationship with the communities he visited. In light of this anonymity, this chapter provides something of a synthesis of the traces Adams left behind, including his photographs and

the references to him that appeared in the community notes of the *Truro Daily News*. Its purpose is two-fold. The first part of the chapter provides a broad outline of Frank Adams's life and work. Aside from his biography, it also takes a close look at his school photographs, and asserts the specific relevance of his status as a commercial photographer with a well-developed and particular aesthetic. In addition to Adams's professionally made photographs, this section is supplemented by a personal family photo album and a group of loose prints currently in the possession of the Sherman Hines Museum of Photography in Liverpool, Nova Scotia. Hines was a friend of Adams's daughter Nellie, who remained involved in the art world throughout her life, teaching at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design for some time. Nellie Adams did not marry or have children, so Hines has become the owner of some of her father's possessions, and, as he has noted, much else has been scattered to the winds. In addition to the photographs, Hines also has Adams's posing chair and a Graphlex camera that Adams used in a later period of his work. But unfortunately Hines's knowledge of Frank Adams's life and work is currently limited to the few anecdotes that were told to him by Nellie Adams.

Following this, the remainder of the chapter is an attempt to situate Frank Adams and other itinerants as part of the ensemble cast of rural life in early twentieth-century Nova Scotia. In the absence of more concrete documentation of Adams's photographic practice, or that of another itinerant photographer in Nova Scotia, this section analyzes their appearances in the *Truro Daily News*, drawing on the secondary literature about itinerants elsewhere to flesh out the picture. While the significantly mobile nature of rural life in Nova Scotia described in the introduction has been addressed in historical

scholarship, this more ephemeral layer of movement has gone without much commentary. Superimposed on a constantly shifting backdrop of population was a series of itinerant professionals whose own perambulations through the province were rendered somewhat unremarkable in the context of an already mobile population and fluid community boundaries. While this type of lifestyle was not very widespread, it was not anomalous. Itinerants were an integral and often colourful part of the social and cultural landscape of early twentieth-century Canada, including Nova Scotia.

The photographer who lived and worked as Frank Adams in Nova Scotia was born Francis Taylor Stubbs in Walsall, Staffordshire, England, around 1861. The circumstances surrounding his later name change are unknown and curious, as described below. He was the son of an Anglican vicar, Joseph Stubbs and his wife Ellen. Shortly after his birth, the family moved south to Chard, Somersetshire, and finally to nearby Wells, where his father was posted to minister at St. Thomas Anglican church. Wells was at that time, and remains, a small cathedral town in the midst of a relatively rural countryside. Here young Francis, his three sisters, and two brothers appear to have lived in relative leisure. The vicarage was staffed by three servants as well as a tutor.<sup>1</sup> A photograph held by Hines shows the vicarage as a handsome, if plain, three-storey stone building adjacent to the church, with a cow pasture across the road and agricultural fields behind it. Two further photographs (one is reproduced as figure 26) allegedly show the interior of the drawing room, wallpapered and boldly carpeted with a banana leaf pattern and a leopard skin rug. The room is empty of people but filled with their evocative belongings including a range of prints and photographs framed on the walls and tables.

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<sup>1</sup> 1881 Census for England, Somersetshire, St Cuthbert Out, Wells, page 27, St Thomas Vicarage.

Sewing implements, including a velvet pin cushion and bobbins of thread sit on a small table with a vase of flowers at the centre of the room, while the results of someone's industry are visible on the table's embroidered covering and several embroidered antimacassars resting on the backs of chairs. The fireplace mantle and other surfaces are lined with vases and ornaments and three large mirrors brighten the room. There is a piano, but it is small and plain, and the chandelier that hangs down in the middle of the room is eye-catching but not particularly showy. Some of the furniture is worn. It is a room that speaks of comfortable affluence, but not ostentation, befitting a minister and his family.

In 1881, at age nineteen, Frank was still, along with his siblings, a student, living at home with his parents.<sup>2</sup> The kinds of financial and social stresses that affected those at work in the troubled textile mill towns around him, and that led so many British citizens to leave their homes for new lives in Canada around this time, do not appear, as might have been expected, to have been the reasons for Adams's own emigration. Indeed, his reasons are entirely unknown. He may have simply been looking to spread his wings. Ten years later he was still living at home in Wells, but was listed in the census that year as a self-employed merchant, a relatively vague designation that could refer to any number of petty occupations.<sup>3</sup> Around 1897, at age thirty-five, he and one of his younger brothers, Oswald, made the Atlantic crossing, settling in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. It seems certain that both were familiar with photography before their emigration, though whether or not they had previously pursued it professionally is unknown. (Oswald was listed in the 1891 census as the organist of his father's church). The Dartmouth city directory for 1898-

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<sup>2</sup> 1881 Census for England, Somersetshire, St Cuthbert Out, Wells, page 27, St Thomas Vicarage.

<sup>3</sup> 1891 Census for England, Somersetshire, St Cuthbert In, Wells, page 25, household 167.

1899 shows them already in business under the name Adams Bros, with a shop at 201 Portland Street, near downtown Dartmouth. The two brothers are listed as Frank Adams and Oswald B. Adams, both photographers.<sup>4</sup> That they were able to open a business so quickly suggests that they came to Canada with funds already in hand, though the location of the shop implies relatively modest beginnings. Just away from the main business streets of downtown Dartmouth, the shop had previously been occupied by a father and son who specialized in second-hand furniture and junk dealing, suggesting that it was not an overly prestigious location.<sup>5</sup> However, it is also possible that this address was only a printing studio, without a storefront. Given what we know of their mobility, it is possible that the brothers never set up a public shop at all.

These modest beginnings might also be viewed as a false start. This is the only reference to the name Adams Bros that has been found, nor does the name appear as the signature stamp on any photographs that have been uncovered. The reasons behind their name change are obscured further as it becomes apparent that the two brothers did not necessarily agree on this direction. Curiously, the following year the city directory shows the Portland Street shop under the name O.B. Stubbs, and it is this moniker—O. Bertram-Stubbs, Dartmouth, NS (fig. 27)—under which the business would proceed for at least the next several years.<sup>6</sup> But while it might seem that the brothers simply had a falling out and decided to go their separate ways, the two of them, now known in official documentation as Oswald Bertram Stubbs and Frank Adams, actually continued to live and work together for some time. Why the business ultimately took a version of the name

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<sup>4</sup> *McAlpine's Halifax Directory for 1898-99* (Halifax, NS: McAlpine Publishing, 1898), 707.

<sup>5</sup> *McAlpine's Halifax Directory for 1896-97*, 638; 1891 Census of Canada, Nova Scotia, Halifax City, District 33, Ward 5a, household 16.

<sup>6</sup> *McAlpine's Halifax Directory for 1899-1900*, 742.

Stubbs (but not exactly Stubbs), and without the familial “Bros,” why the younger Oswald is the person after whom it was named, and, perhaps most curiously of all, why Francis Stubbs chose to become and remain Frank Adams while his brother kept his original name, are all unknown. A further detail alludes to an uneven dynamic between the two brothers: despite the business being named for Oswald, he appears to have been frequently absent from Nova Scotia and it is likely that Adams was in fact the company’s main working photographer.<sup>7</sup> By the end of the new century’s first decade, Oswald Stubbs had returned to England for good. It is around this time that “Frank Adams, Photographic Artist,” begins to emerge independently in the photographic record.

In the context of this thesis, what is particularly interesting about Adams’s eponymous business venture, following the departure of his brother, is that the signature stamp he applied to his picture frames did not indicate a particular location or address (fig. 28). As photo collectors and archivists have noted, such ambiguity was the intentional mark of an itinerant photographer. It would be inaccurate to imply that Adams only began his travels after his brother’s departure. There is little doubt that the two were travelling in their early years in Nova Scotia. The existence of the elaborate mobile photo studio described at the opening of this chapter seems to point to such activity, and images such as this one, of a school group in Carrolls Corner (fig. 10) made around 1902 and featuring the OBS stamp, indicate that at least one of these photographers was travelling to access the province’s rural markets. The key difference is in the ways that the two iterations of the business identified themselves, as articulated by their signature stamps.

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<sup>7</sup> Oswald Stubbs was married in Wells in 1898 but widowed in 1899. More tragically, in the interim his wife gave birth to a baby boy. At the time of the 1901 census, the boy was living with Rev. Stubbs and his family at the vicarage in Wells. Presumably the care of his son was the reason for Oswald Stubb’s eventual departure from Canada. Passenger lists for ships travelling between England and Halifax, NS, show that Oswald made a number of trips in the ten years of his residence in Canada.

While the Stubbs enterprise may have been an itinerant one, the owner(s) sought at least the appearance of solidity by adding the city of Dartmouth to their stamp, denying to some extent the precarious reality of their situation and positioning themselves in line with more established professional studio photographers. When Adams started anew he chose, for whatever reason, to embrace and emphasize his professional identity as a transient craftsman (or perhaps a transient businessperson) and he proudly identified with the title of “the Travelling Artist” bestowed on him by friends in the village of Five Islands.<sup>8</sup> There is a real sense that an itinerant practice was his active choice, sought out and welcomed, rather than a matter of circumstance. It seems that overall, the kind of informality associated with itinerancy appealed to Frank Adams. Even later in his life, when he and his family had settled in Halifax and he was engaged as a busy school photographer in the city, he did not maintain a formal, public studio space, suggesting a kind of extemporized character to his professional practice that corresponds with the itinerancy of his earlier years. For reasons that are unclear, he also chose not to join the Maritime Professional Photographers Association when it was organized in the 1930s, though he was quite qualified to do so.<sup>9</sup>

While his brother travelled back and forth between England and Canada, Frank Adams began to put down roots in his adopted home. His new name was not only a professional alias. When he was married to Emily Payne on New Year’s day 1902 Adams was the name she took, and it was the name given to their only child, Nellie, born the following year. There may have been an interesting story to be told about the courtship of

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<sup>8</sup> *Truro Daily News*, community notes for Five Islands, August 8, 1912, 7.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the list of working photographers published in the newsletter of the Maritime Professional Photographers Association in 1939. Frank Adams was on the list, but it was indicated that he, among others, was not a member of the MPPA. “A Maritime Photographic Directory,” *Highlights of the East*, January 1939, 1-3. Courtesy of Peggy Wright.

the forty-year-old Frank and the seventeen-year-old Emily, but what is not in doubt is that their relationship was a strong and long-lasting one; they were married for more than fifty-five years.<sup>10</sup> And if it might seem that such a May-December romance, along with a name change, were acts of mid-life rebellion, or meant to distance Adams from his family, Reverend Stubbs's travel from England to act as a witness at his son's wedding seems to dispel this notion, along with the impression that the pairing might have been a particular scandal.<sup>11</sup>

A variety of evidence suggests that by the end of the first decade of the century the Adams family made their home in one or more of the villages of northern Colchester county for some period of time. While some itinerant photographers were entirely nomadic, most others had a home that they returned to between periods of travel. The Adams family spent long periods of time on the road together but they were not truly nomadic. When the 1911 census was taken, the Adams family was in Tatamagouche, along the province's North Shore.<sup>12</sup> But as the enumeration was done in June, it is possible that they were just passing through the village at the time, perhaps on their way for Adams to take school photographs in the area. It was not uncommon for travelling salesmen and other itinerants to be enumerated in whatever location they were found on census day. Other evidence suggests that the family had ties to Five Islands, on the Fundy shore. For example, Emily Adams (standing, fourth from left) appears in a photograph

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<sup>10</sup> See the wedding anniversary announcement and photograph published in the *Halifax Mail-Star* in 1957. The notice mistakenly reports that the couple were married in 1900. *Halifax Mail-Star*, December 31, 1957, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Nova Scotia marriage registration, 1902, book 1820, page 1, number 2.

<sup>12</sup> 1911 Census of Canada, Nova Scotia, Colchester, district 18, Tatamagouche East poll district, page 7, lines 13-15.

from 1912, taken by her husband, among the women of the Ladies Aid Society of the Presbyterian Church at Five Islands (fig. 29).<sup>13</sup>

His residence in a small, rural community adds nuance to our understanding of Adams's relationship to the other rural communities he photographed. While he was not from there, he nevertheless had a sympathetic connection to rural places and rural people that informed his work. This distinguished him from the many photographers whose interests in rural areas tended toward views and landscapes, rather than to the people who lived in them. It also distinguished him from a range of social documentary photographers working at the same time. Two such examples in Nova Scotia are the American Edith S. Watson, who travelled the province (as well as Newfoundland and throughout Canada) "photographing rural people, often women, usually at work,"<sup>14</sup> and Frederick William Wallace, a Montreal journalist and author of *Wooden Ships and Iron Men*, who made several trips on Digby fishing schooners photographing the men at work there between 1911 and 1916. The intention in comparing Watson and Wallace to Adams is not to disparage their important photographic achievements. One form of photography does not negate the value of another, but each is best considered on its own terms and so it is important to distinguish between the practice of social documentary photographers who sought to photograph a "way of life," and Adams's work as an itinerant commercial photographer who was making portraits for sale to the people he photographed.<sup>15</sup> It has

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<sup>13</sup> Nan Harvey, head archivist of the Colchester Historical Society Archives concurs that it is her impression that Adams lived for a time in the area of Five Islands. Nan Harvey, interview by the author, August 5, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Francis Rooney, "Edith S. Watson: Photographing Women in Rural Canada," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 11 (1995): 185.

<sup>15</sup> Ann Hawthorne sets up a similar comparison between the itinerant photographer in her study and the social documentary photographers who worked in the Appalachians in the same period. Ann Hawthorne, ed., *The Picture Man*, photographs by Paul Buchanan (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), xiv-xv.

been persuasively argued that both Watson and Wallace had a great deal of respect and admiration for their subjects; however, the audience—and the market—for their images was nevertheless elsewhere. Watson’s photographs of rural people appeared in travel books, newspapers, and magazines across North America, including *National Geographic*. Wallace’s photographs were rarely published, but were used as inspiration for his creative writing and journalism.<sup>16</sup> Adams’s particular commercial practice meant that he was embedded in reciprocal relationships—financial and social—with the communities he visited that denote more than just passing through. Unlike the stereotypical itinerant photographer, particularly from earlier times, who travelled through an area never to be seen again, Adams made yearly travels through the province, returning to the same communities time and again, photographing the same children as they aged. In this way, Adams was part of the constant cyclical, seasonally-based movement of labour, resources, and capital around the province. The role of the social documentary photographers in the economies of rural Nova Scotia was negligible.

This economic consideration has significance beyond the issue of their relative contributions to the circulation of commodity culture in rural communities. It also influenced the production and meaning of their photographs. In her study of an itinerant photographer in Corpus Christi, Texas, in 1934, Sybil Miller draws a comparison to the work of the famous Farm Security Administration photographers. She notes that “what distinguishes work done by an accomplished commercial photographer from that of a photographer like Walker Evans or Berenice Abbott is not so much the quality of individual images. It is the underlying conception behind each image and its place in the

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<sup>16</sup> Francis Rooney, *Working Light: The Wandering Life of Photographer Edith S. Watson* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1996); M. Brook Taylor, *A Camera on the Banks: Frederick William Wallace and the Fishermen of Nova Scotia* (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions, 2006).

photographer's entire body of work. To put it another way, the difference is in the photographer's intention, which in turn influences how the pictures look and what they mean."<sup>17</sup> Evans and Abbott, like Watson and Wallace, did not have to sell their pictures back to the people they photographed, and thus had no compulsion to produce images with which their subjects could identify, or that they might like to buy. (This is not to say that they never made such photographs). Commercial photographers, on the other hand, were at least partly motivated by the potential for sales. For example, Miller describes the commercial photographer's trick of trying to get as many people as possible into a photograph in order to maximize the revenue from each exposure.<sup>18</sup> Such compositional considerations did not influence social documentary photographers.

Itinerant commercial photographers such as Adams had to make a living selling photographs back to their subjects and were thus beholden to the specific interests of others. In his well-known reflections on the work of photographer Leslie Shedden of Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, Allan Sekula emphasizes the centrality of this aspect of a commercial photographer's practice. He notes that "Like all commercial photographers, [Shedden's] work involved a negotiation between his own craft and the demands and expectations of his clients." Sekula reminds the viewer not to lose "sight of the social institutions—corporation, school, family—that are speaking by means of the commercial photographer's craft."<sup>19</sup> While these considerations impose a range of limitations on the photographer, in chapter two it is argued that it was this joint authorship, so to speak, that

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<sup>17</sup> Sybil Miller, *Itinerant Photographer: Corpus Christi, 1934* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 42.

<sup>18</sup> Miller, *Itinerant Photographer*, 42.

<sup>19</sup> Allan Sekula, "Photography Between Labour and Capital," in *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures, 1948-1968: A Selection from the Negative Archives of Shedden Studio, Glace Bay, Cape Breton*, ed. B. H. D. Buchloh and Robert Wilkie (Halifax, NS: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and the University College of Cape Breton Press, 1983), 200.

allowed Adams to meaningfully represent the communities whose schoolchildren he photographed, in opposition to official education imagery produced by outside reformers and bureaucrats.

Sekula argues that the conditions of commercial photography militate against independent authorship but that this does not devalue the work. He writes: "One can still respect the craft work of the photographer, the skill inherent in work within a set of formal conventions and economic constraints, while refusing to indulge in romantic hyperbole" about the autonomous authorship of the photographs and an amnesia regarding their context of production.<sup>20</sup> However, this should not be construed to mean that commercial photographers have never had aesthetic or indeed artistic aspirations. One flaw in Miller's book is her adamant refusal to concede the possibility that the anonymous Corpus Christi photographer, about whom she knows nothing, might, just maybe, have thought of his work as artful, or to acknowledge that there is a large middle ground between an "art photographer" and a dispassionate picture making salesman. The commercial context of production militates against the kind of artistic authorship that Sekula describes, but it does not rob the photographer of all emotions, and all independent aesthetic sensibility.

Many studies of itinerant photographers are simply biographical accounts of, for example, itinerant frontier photographers, or nineteenth-century practitioners presented as historical curiosities.<sup>21</sup> In cases where studies go further, itinerant photographers have

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<sup>20</sup> Sekula, "Photography Between Labour and Capital," 200.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, John S. Gray, "Itinerant Frontier Photographers, and Images Lost, Strayed or Stolen," *Montana* 28, no. 2 (1978): 2-15; John Gruber, "Mystery Photo Cars," *Railroad History*, Spring 2001, 110-113; Leonard Norrie et al., eds., *Who Wouldn't Have a Photograph: Isaac Horning and the Pioneer Photographers of Norfolk County* (Simcoe, ON: Norfolk Historical Society, 1976); Cynthia Elyce Rubin, "Image and Memory: Photographers Mathias O. Bue and Walter T. Oxley," *Minnesota History* 59, no. 3

generally been described alternately as unsophisticated folk artists unaware of their own latent talents, or, as Miller suggests, businessmen motivated only by commercial interests and without any aesthetic aspirations.<sup>22</sup> The result is a wide gulf between approaches that over-romanticize and patronize itinerants, and those that strip all their individuality away. But in each case the reader/viewer is nevertheless encouraged to be charmed by the accidental beauty of the photographs when viewed in retrospect. While this study of Adams does fall into the trap of being charmed in retrospect, it makes no claims that this was an accident on the part of the photographer. Frank Adams clearly had an aesthetic agenda even if he was not always successful in pulling it off. There is evidence to suggest that Adams understood himself explicitly as a photographic artist who was also a commercial photographer. This is not necessarily the case for all itinerants and it should not be interpreted as a generalization; however, the exception of Adams—if he is an exception—forces a reconsideration of the extreme assertions made about other itinerants that suggest that they had no artistic aspirations at all.

In any event, a close, formal consideration of any photographer's work is an appropriate strategy for a study that seeks to uncover the social practices and cultural contexts of which the images are part. Frank Adams's photographs are often beautifully lit and meticulously arranged in interesting ways that reveal at least some knowledge of style and technique. Concurring with my own sense of the distinctiveness of Adams's

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(2004): 110-119; Jay Ruby, "Photographic View Companies: The Camera Leaves the Studio," *Pennsylvania Heritage* 10, no. 4 (1984): 26-31.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Kim Frontz, "'Showed Proofs and Took Orders': The Images of 1890s Traveling Photographer Charles R. Allen," *Journal of Arizona History* 44, no. 2 (2003): 147-170; W. Hartley, *Otto Ping: Photographer of Brown County, Indiana, 1900-1940* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1994); Hawthorne, *The Picture Man*; Miller, *Itinerant Photographer*; Geraldine Tidd Scott, *Isaac Simpson's World: The Collected Works of an Itinerant Photographer* (Falmouth, ME: Kennebec River Press, 1990); Michael V. R. Thomason, "Two Alabama Photographers Who Recorded History: Erik Overbey and Draffus Hightower," *Alabama Review* (July 2002): 163-180.

images, Nan Harvey, head archivist of the Colchester Historical Society Archives, noted that among the hundreds of historical photographs she has looked at, particularly while working on a major photo exhibit for the museum, Adams's photographs stand out clearly, whether or not his name is attached. "When his photographs came up, you could tell that they were his because he positioned the subjects in a certain way. And even school photographs, he took such care in how he had them all placed; you could tell that they were his. . . . It's fantastic . . . he was just great at placing them just so."<sup>23</sup> Adams's photographs pop out at the viewer, particularly when viewed among the hundreds of other photographs in an archival collection.

Along with the distinctive arrangement of bodies, his best images present dynamic, layered, environments for portraits that could otherwise have been very stale and staid—and that often were, both in the hands of other photographers and in Adams's own less aesthetically successful images. Adams's groupings often eschew rigidity and straight lines in favour of pleasing dissymmetry or arrangements that draw the eye around the image in elliptical or disorderly paths. Complementing the people in his pictures, Adams makes the scenery before which they are placed an integral part of the image, rather than simply an insignificant backdrop. One of the best examples of an elaborate local backdrop in a photograph assumed to have been made by Adams shows the children and teachers of Head Harbour school positioned in the foreground of a scene that looks out over the harbour and beyond to a strip of trees, farmland and the horizon (fig. 11). While the majority of the group in is the bottom half of the frame, the two small clusters of children that extend up into the top half of the image are arranged carefully to frame either side of the fishing shed in the harbour, emphasizing the unique built landscape of

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<sup>23</sup> Harvey, interview by the author.

their community and thus identifying them with the life of a harbourside village.<sup>24</sup> In a more subtle example, rather than a wide vista, Adams simply uses the local flora to create a unique setting that mimics the effect of an elaborate studio backdrop. In *Crossroads* (fig. 5), a cordwood fence separates the children from a background of leafy foliage and skinny pine trees, but the blurred effect, likely caused by the photographer's chosen focal range and the wind, produces the same type of indistinct combination of light, shade, and texture common to studio backdrops, providing a visually dynamic frame around the children and their teacher.

In many cases, the subjects are better described as having been inserted *into* the scene, rather than being positioned in front of it. In the photograph at *Spry Bay* (fig. 8), there is almost no real backdrop to speak of; the sky is completely bleached out in the black and white photograph. Rather, Adams situated himself at a low angle, emphasizing an elaborate foreground out of which the group emerges, along with little fir trees and ferns, from the spaces between the rocks. A similar effect is produced in the photograph of *Noel Shore* (fig. 12). Here, again, the sky forms a white strip, filling the top third of the image, while the focus is pushed explicitly to the leafy foreground by the lines of a fence close behind the group, and another in the distance.

An earlier photograph, assumed to have been made by Adams, of the school children at *Oyster Pond* (fig. 13) takes this effect of being within the scene even further. Here the children are elaborately arrayed on the rocks across the road from their school at low tide. The apparently haphazard arrangement of bodies in fact imitates the haphazard

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<sup>24</sup> The range of possible interpretations such a seaside scene might produce, depending on the perspective of the viewer, has been discussed by Ian McKay in the prologue to his study of anti-modernism in Nova Scotia. Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), xi-xvii.

configuration of the exposed rocks and fills the huge middle ground of the photograph in such a way that the image more fully resembles a scenic landscape picture than a portrait. Even the background itself, which fills nearly half of the frame, passes through many layers before finally opening up into the bright white sky. But while the children of Oyster Pond, and arguably those in Spry Bay and Noel Shore, have been positioned as part of the scenery of their community—an arrangement that might imply a rather patronizing gaze on the part of the photographer, on the one hand—their individual identities were also carefully attended to. Indeed, exceptional care has been taken to ensure that every little face is perfectly visible to the camera and the viewer. (Just imagine how long it must have taken to arrange this!) Beyond this, the range of poses, including sitting, reclining, and standing, some children grouped with their friends, touching each other casually, contributes to a sense of the individuality of each child that is often absent in school photographs that depict straight rows of children all sitting or standing in exactly the same position. A more directed analysis of the significance of Adams's use of backdrops as markers of unique local identities will be taken up in chapter two.

While his primary occupation, or at least the one that has been the most well documented, was as a school photographer, Frank Adams also provided his considerable talents to a range of other clients. He produced other types of group and single portraits including weddings and family groups. He made landscapes and view photographs. On one occasion he accompanied a sight-seeing group to the Bayne & Soley barytes mine near Five Islands and photographed their trip.<sup>25</sup> Like most other commercial

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<sup>25</sup> Colchester Historical Society, *Historic Colchester: Towns & Countryside* (Halifax, NS: Nimbus, 2000), 28.

photographers, Adams was available for a range of photographic opportunities, but the full extent of his practice remains unknown due to the geographic distribution of his work and the anonymity of many of his photographs.

One puzzle piece that sheds some light on Adams's professional work is a personal family photograph album. It covers approximately a five year period beginning in 1903 with the birth of Adams's daughter Nellie, who is the album's main subject. The particular Edwardian family narrative embedded in this album is worthy of a study in its own right, though it is outside the specific scope of this thesis.<sup>26</sup> For the present purposes, however, an understanding of Adams's professional photographic practice is complemented by access to some of his personal family photographs. As Hines remarked, "If you are going to do something with Adams, you have to at least leaf through his album."<sup>27</sup> In regards to his professional work, the album provides at least two kinds of insight. First, from the perspective of simple historical evidence, these photographs indicate that Adams did work within a studio setting. All of Adams's photographs that have been positively identified apart from this album were made outdoors; however, this album is filled with studio portraits. Nellie seems to have played both muse and guinea pig; she is seen in a variety of studio arrangements and poses, both alone and with others, often acting out a scene (figs. 30, 31). These photographs show at least three moveable backdrops—a typically indistinct leafy garden backdrop, a more elaborate seaside scene,

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<sup>26</sup> The discursive space of the photograph album has been the subject of significant scholarship. See, for example, Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Marianne Hirsch, ed., *The Familial Gaze* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College, 1999); Martha Langford, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); Barbara Levine and Stephanie Snyder, eds., *Snapshot Chronicles: Inventing the American Photo Album* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006); Jo Spence and Patricia Holland, eds., *Family Snaps: The Meaning of Domestic Photography* (London: Virago, 1991).

<sup>27</sup> Sherman Hines, interview by the author, August 7, 2008.

and a plain pale sheet—along with carpeting, curtains, studio props, costumes, and furniture such as posing chairs, tables, potted plants, and a wooden fence. Surely these items were not only for private use, though it is likely that some of the more elaborate and intimate stagings were not replicated with strangers. The close cropping of these photographs makes it difficult to know the size of the studio in which they were made (was it inside the mobile studio or a larger room?) or if there was a formal studio at all. Hines believes that Adams did have a full studio somewhere, but he has been unable to discover its location. It is also just as likely that the props, carpets, and backdrops were moved around from place to place, set up both indoors and out, as was the practice of itinerant photographers everywhere. If this was the case, the sense of stability suggested by the uniformity and repetition of visual cues throughout this album might be nothing more than a veneer that obscures the true animation (or instability) of this family through their early years.

The second, and perhaps more important, kind of insight provided by the family photo album relates to Adams's artistic vision and photographic aesthetic. His professional images, as described above, are often carefully composed and arranged, and demonstrate a commitment to a particular, informed, creative vision. However, they were also made within the relative confines of each specific job and so did not allow total freedom of expression. Some of the photographs in this personal album go further to hint at the creativity and curiosity of the photographer and his openness to experimenting with ideas, genres, and techniques—even if the experiments were not always completely successful. For example, a photograph captioned “Puss N Boots” (fig. 32) in the album shows Nellie in a cat costume, including a furry hat with ears, furry leg coverings, tail

and mittens, along with a light cardigan sweater and a dark dress tucked into her leggings, and, of course, someone's large boots. She stands, leaning slightly forward, holding out her paws and showing off her curled tail. The photograph is cropped into a fashionable oval shape, as are many of the others in the album. In an attempt to make Nellie look more like a furry cat, someone (likely Adams?) drew on the photographic negative before it was printed, colouring in all the furry parts of her costume along with the bare skin of her face. A little cat's mouth and whiskers were drawn over her own mouth. The result is a patchy white mess. Nevertheless, it suggests that Adams took a playful interest in experimenting with his chosen medium. Photography was more than just a serious profession for him. In another more subtle example, raindrops have been drawn onto the negative of a photograph of Nellie and two other small girls huddled together under an umbrella. Whether this use of trick photographs remained private, or whether Adams applied techniques such as this in his professional work is unknown. Either way, his interest in and openness to experimentation surely contributed to the production of all his photographs.

A small subset of ten photographs in the album stand out from the rest (see, for example, figures 33 and 34). Unlike the others, which were made in a studio setting, these photographs were taken outdoors and are not closely cropped, thus providing more fruitful comparison to Adams's professional school photographs. They also depict groups of children, making the comparison even clearer. While it is no surprise that Adams trained his camera on his daughter, children more generally were of particular interest to him as subjects. Sherman Hines was told stories by Nellie about the picnics and parties

that Adams would hold for local children on his own birthday.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps some of these photographs show early examples of those occasions. Peggy Wright, who was photographed by Adams as a schoolchild in Halifax in the 1920s and 1930s, recalls that he was very friendly with his young subjects. When asked her impression of Adams she immediately replied “That he liked children.” She explained: “The day Frank Adams would come to our school was very special. At recess and before classes began he would sit on the steps (he only came on fine days in the early fall) and tell us stories and jokes; his supply seemed endless. When he came to class either to leave the sample picture with the teacher or to collect or distribute the orders, he always asked teacher’s permission to tell a story which was always granted.”<sup>29</sup>

Unlike Adams’s school photographs, here both the children and the photographer are at play. Seven of the photographs show groups of children, mainly girls, in various summer seashore locations. Another three photographs show the same children in a meadow. It is in the seashore photographs, more than anywhere else, that Adams demonstrates his own interpretation of the photographic trends of the day. Specifically, he appears to have been experimenting with a reserved form of Pictorialism, which was “the most significant movement in Canadian photography after 1900.”<sup>30</sup> Pictorialism dominated the world of art photography in the years following the turn of the century and also pervaded the realm of serious amateur photographers who were interested in producing expressive, evocative images. Lilly Koltun summarizes that “Pictorialism sought to emulate traditional art media by using broad compositional design, suppression

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<sup>28</sup> Sherman Hines, interview by the author, July 21, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Peggy Wright, interview by the author, August 10, 2008; Peggy Wright, e-mail to the author, July 15, 2008.

<sup>30</sup> Lilly Koltun, “Art Ascendant, 1900-1914,” in *Private Realms of Light: Amateur Photography in Canada, 1839-1940*, ed. Lilly Koltun (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1984), 33.

of detail, atmospheric effect, selective high-lighting, and diffused or 'soft' focus to create photographs that could be judged as works of art."<sup>31</sup> Manipulations in the printing process were common, but more important was ordinary, often anonymous, subject matter.

The most successful of the images from this subset of the album is reproduced as figure 33. It shows eight young girls of various ages standing in ankle-deep water, or on small rocks, along a sandy shore at low tide. Seven of the girls wear light-coloured dresses that appear white in the photograph; the eighth, who is the only one seated, wears a darker shade. The girls are dispersed unevenly across the image. The older girls are clustered together at the left of the frame, looking off beyond the edge of the photograph at something that has caught their attention. The smaller girls play at assorted games; one has a little wagon, another a pail, two others are building a little statue of rocks in the shallow water. No one is looking at the camera. Like the best of his school photographs, Adams has created a layered scene, framing the foreground in the bottom half of the image with the extended point of rock that runs behind the girls across the middle of the frame. In this case, the framing device also breaks the pale sky from the equally pale water. The gauzy effect of the soft light and tones of pale grey in the sky and water is augmented by the blurred reflections at the girls' feet, creating a beautiful, airy photograph.

Frank Adams was perhaps not a master photographer, but he was a good one. His apparent interest in and knowledge of the conventions of art photography underscores the purposefulness of the construction of each of his images, whether they were for his own use or professionally made for others. While it has been argued that other itinerant

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<sup>31</sup> Koltun, "Art Ascendant, 1900-1914," 33.

photographers may have been accidentally lucky in the evocative composition of their photographs, Adams appears to have been in full control of his craft. The intentionality of his composition becomes increasingly relevant and compelling when his photographs are viewed in opposition to a range of other images of rural schools, as they will be in chapter two.

By the early twentieth century the equipment required by a commercial photographer had become relatively manageable. A range of high quality handheld cameras had replaced the need for elaborate tripods and large hooded boxes—though professionals continued to use slightly more sophisticated apparatuses than the average snaphooter.<sup>32</sup> Sherman Hines has a glass plate negative of one of the photographs from Nellie Adams's photo album, indicating that Adams at least sometimes used a dry plate process into the end of the first decade of the century, but he most likely used a roll film or sheet film camera more generally. This would have made it much easier for him to get around. It is unclear just how often Adams actually used his mobile studio as a way to travel about the province. By all accounts the roads in rural areas were in terrible conditions and so it is no surprise that the main source of transportation for his photography trips seems to have been his bicycle.<sup>33</sup> It is likely Adams's bicycle that appears in the middle of the school photograph of Masstown (fig. 16), and it occasionally appears in other photographs as well.

Adams was joined on the roads of early twentieth-century rural Nova Scotia by a host of other itinerants, with whom he shared many characteristics. Historian David Mayall distinguishes between those who travelled to obtain employment or to sell their

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<sup>32</sup> Koltun, "Art Ascendant, 1900-1914," 50.

<sup>33</sup> Hines, interview by the author, August 7, 2008.

labour and those whose occupation itself necessitated an itinerant lifestyle to some extent such as showmen and peddlers. Of this group he notes that these “travellers were self-employed and independent, following a wide variety of itinerant callings and trades, whose earning power was based largely on their own efforts and wits.”<sup>34</sup> Whether or not itinerant photographers had aspirations of artfulness, they were peddlers; their as-yet-unmade photographs were the equivalent of patent medicines, hair brushes, magazine subscriptions, or anything else that might be sold. Additionally, photographers typically also offered a catalogue of views and other images for sale at the same time that they offered on-the-spot portraits. Like all peddlers, they had to sell themselves along with their wares.<sup>35</sup> Historians of itinerant photographers have emphasized the centrality of salesmanship to any successful photography business, as did Paul Holt, author of *Fifty Dollars A Week with Car and Camera*, who opened his guidebook with several chapters of specific selling techniques before proceeding to the how-to of photography itself.<sup>36</sup>

A considerable, if not particularly diversified, literature on various itinerant occupations exists in the United States, Britain, and elsewhere, but the Canadian contribution has been much less significant. Interestingly, one of the first major international literary successes for a Canadian writer was the stories of Sam Slick, a Yankee clockmaker and peddler who travelled around Nova Scotia on his old horse. Written by Thomas Chandler Haliburton, a judge in Windsor, Nova Scotia, these stories were first published in the *Novascotian* newspaper and then collected as a best-selling

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<sup>34</sup> David Mayall, *Gypsy-Travellers in Nineteenth-Century Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 14.

<sup>35</sup> Timothy B. Spears, “‘All Things to All Men’: The Commercial Traveler and the Rise of Modern Salesmanship,” *American Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (1993): 524-557

<sup>36</sup> Paul Glenn Holt and H. Rossiter Snyder, *Fifty Dollars a Week with Car and Camera* (Guilford, CT: R. Snyder, 1931). See for example Frontz, “Showed Proofs and Took Orders”; Miller, *Itinerant Photographer*; Ruby, “Photographic View Companies.”

book in 1836, with two further volumes appearing in 1838 and 1840. Sam Slick's occupation and mobility ideally positioned him to observe and pronounce upon "human natur" in the series of satirical sketches and morality tales about colonial life, while they simultaneously marked him as a comic figure.<sup>37</sup>

Scholarship on travelling salesmen and peddlers—the prototypical itinerants—has paid attention to these kinds of representations and to the evolving idea of the peddler in the popular imagination, even when the overall emphasis has been on their place in the history of business and marketing. For example, Timothy Spears's monograph about the travelling salesman in American history examines the place of the commercial traveler in the history of American business, but also carefully considers his place in the American imagination more generally, looking at representations in literature and popular culture such as the character of Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, and the myriad visual representations in the booming print culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>38</sup> Such representations continued the work of much older depictions that preceded and accompanied peddlers on their travels in Europe. Laurence Fontaine argues that from at least the seventeenth century until the end of the nineteenth century, the peddler was characterized throughout Europe, including England, as a trickster, an unsavoury and dishonest person, "a disturbing figure who was on the fringes of society and someone to be guarded against."<sup>39</sup> She notes, however, that at the end of the nineteenth century, when peddling was believed to be dying out, the representation of the

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<sup>37</sup> Thomas Chandler Haliburton, *The Clockmaker; Or, The Sayings and Doings of Samuel Slick of Slickville* (Halifax, NS: Joseph Howe, 1836); Thomas Chandler Haliburton, *The Clockmaker: Series One, Two and Three*, ed. George L. Parker (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1995).

<sup>38</sup> Timothy B. Spears, *100 Years on the Road: The Traveling Salesman in American Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

<sup>39</sup> Laurence Fontaine, *History of Pedlars in Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 1.

peddler, particularly in literature, “underwent a radical transformation.” In Britain, for example, the peddler “ceased to play his traditionally ambiguous and disturbing role and became instead a national hero, embodying the morality of the conservative countryside as opposed to the corruption of the city.”<sup>40</sup>

Various historians have described how salesmen themselves, too, both individually and collectively, were making efforts to change their image at this time. Seeking to overcome years of disdain, old fashioned peddlers or “drummers” were reinvented as “commercial travellers” and associated themselves with “modern” sales techniques and large, reputable corporations.<sup>41</sup> But while this meant a persistence of the tradition of life on the road, this shift to a standardized commercial culture was also, on the one hand, the root of the nostalgia that Fontaine describes, and on the other, the source of further disdain for the remaining independent travelers who now came to be seen as something of an anachronism.

Itinerant photographers faced similar hurdles in terms of the reputation that preceded them, and their status as photographers added additional complications. In her study of the Corpus Christi itinerant, Miller discusses the nineteenth-century mistrust of itinerant photographers, based partly on an incomplete understanding of the mechanics of photography, that carried forward to the twentieth century even as photography itself became more clearly understood. Miller suggests that the new pushy sales techniques of

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<sup>40</sup> Fontaine, *History of Pedlars in Europe*, 3-4; see also 164-66 on the tension between these two representations.

<sup>41</sup> See Walter A. Friedman, *Birth of a Salesman: The Transformation of Selling in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Spears, *100 Years on the Road*; Susan Strasser, “‘The Smile that Pays’: The Culture of Traveling Salesmen, 1880-1920,” in *The Mythmaking Frame of Mind: Social Imagination and American Culture*, ed. James Burkhart Gilbert (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1993), 155-178.

twentieth century salesmen, also adopted by itinerant photographers, were partly to blame for the renewed aversion to itinerants generally on the part of their public.<sup>42</sup>

As Spears points out, popular culture was loath to let go of the long-held image of the eccentric peddler. Newspapers were quick to pick up on stories that reinforced the image of itinerants as disreputable, exotic strangers. In May 1912, the *Daily News* carried a story from Coburg, Ontario about the arrest of Dr. Douglas, a “strange character” and “alleged swindler of good rural dwellers in divers’ parts” of Ontario who was arraigned on a number of counts including applying a mustard plaster of questionable merit to a woman’s back for a cost of sixty dollars. Closer to home, the *Daily News* reported that “a woman has been ‘doing’ the Stellarton merchants with an advertizing [sic] scheme. She started with a booklet, got many paid ads at \$3.00 each and the third day the ‘lady’ and her booklet scheme disappeared from that town.” The item concluded with a warning: “Give her a wide berth, if she ‘bobs up’ in our midst.” A year later, and with significant racial overtones, the paper reported on “a band of Mexican gypsies” who arrived in town by train. They were described briefly as an “undesirable lot”; one woman allegedly stole money from a local merchant, returning it upon arrest. As the group boarded a train for Sydney, Cape Breton, the *Daily News* sent out another word of warning: “It will be well for all towns to be on their guard when this tribe arrives within their gates.”<sup>43</sup>

These warnings were intensified by the more general protectionist attitudes of many towns, which sought to diminish the economic position of outside sales agents in favour of local business. When the *Daily News* ran a piece called “How to Kill Your Town,” on its front page, the first item on the list was “Buy from peddlars [sic] as much

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<sup>42</sup> Miller, *Itinerant Photographer*, 7-11.

<sup>43</sup> *Truro Daily News*, May 17, 1912, 7; March 6, 1912, 7; June 4, 1913, 5.

and as often as possible.” In towns of any size, supporting itinerants unmistakably meant not supporting local merchants.<sup>44</sup> But beyond this, it meant supporting someone who had not contributed to the town’s tax base. The *Daily News* carried the following item on May 6, 1908:

The two travelling photographers who have been doing business in Truro for a few days, were not arrested, so Chief Gass informs us. He told them they must take out a license and they went to the town office and cheerfully paid the fees and got their licenses. This is a good healthy by-law, that all non-residents, who attempt the manufacture and sale of any product in our town—should pay a license for the privilege of doing so. We residents pay taxes; let the outsiders pay license.<sup>45</sup>

A first question that comes to mind here is whether this news item might refer to Frank Adams and his brother Oswald Stubbs, something we cannot know. But beyond that it speaks to the status of all itinerants in early twentieth-century towns and urban areas as perpetual outsiders, an unknown quantity in the communities they visited, their movements restricted by obstacles such as license fees and prejudicial attitudes. Historical impressions of a life of freedom and autonomy must be balanced with an attention to these less pleasant details. Their mobility was not absolute.

Though the number of itinerant photographers diminished, this exclusionary pattern increased through the following decades. In 1912, itinerant photographers actually moved around the province with relative freedom, a feature of the comparative informality of the photographic industry at the time. Peddlers’ licenses, like the one pressed on the two photographers above, were an annoyance but were not prohibitive. Beginning in the 1920s, however, many commercial photographers began to organize themselves into business associations to provide a public voice for their collective

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<sup>44</sup> *Truro Daily News*, April 27, 1912, 1.

<sup>45</sup> *Truro Daily News*, May 6, 1908, 5.

concerns. One such concern was the movement of itinerants through their communities.<sup>46</sup> As Peggy Wright, later president of the Maritime Professional Photographers Association, explains, “The activity and competition from these itinerant photographers sparked the forming of The Maritime Professional Photographers Association in 1933 . . . The object of MPPA was to get legislation passed to require these persons to get licenses before they operated in any town.”<sup>47</sup> In 1937, Nova Scotia passed the Transient Photographers Act, which required all non-resident photographers or their sales agents to purchase a two hundred dollar a year license. Prince Edward Island in 1935, and New Brunswick in 1936, each amended their legislation relating to peddlers to include itinerant photographers with similarly steep license fees. Since the provincial legislation only covered non-residents of the province, individual municipalities were encouraged to implement local legislation in their own by-laws. For example, the town of Bridgewater on the South Shore passed a by-law restricting non-resident photographers in 1935, charging a license fee of fifty dollars for a year and a penalty of up to thirty days in jail.<sup>48</sup> How thoroughly these laws were enforced is not known, but Peggy Wright is aware of one arrest in Summerside, PEI, where “some young man spent a night in jail as a result.” The newsletter of the MPPA reported an arrest in December 1939 near Kingston, Nova Scotia, in the Annapolis Valley. Joseph Ray of Port Hope, Ontario, was picked up by the

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<sup>46</sup> Miller describes this development in the United States at the time. Miller, *Itinerant Photographer*, 48-51

<sup>47</sup> Peggy Wright, e-mail to the author, July 15, 2008.

<sup>48</sup> Nova Scotia, “Transient Photographers Act,” in *Statutes of Nova Scotia 1937*, chapter 9 (Halifax, NS: Commissioner of Public Works and Mines, King’s Printer, 1937); Prince Edward Island, “An Act to Amend an Act to Prevent Peddlers Travelling and Selling Within This Island Without License,” in *The Acts of the General Assembly of Prince Edward Island 1935*, chapter 11 (Charlottetown, PE: J.R. Burnett, 1935); New Brunswick, “An Act Respecting Licensing of Transient Salesmen, Photographers and Others,” in *Acts of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick 1936*, chapter 49 (Fredericton, NB: George M. Byron, King’s Printer, 1935); Bridgewater, “Photographers,” in *By-Laws and Ordinances of the Town of Bridgewater Nova Scotia 1935*, chapter 13 (Bridgewater, NS: n.p., 1935).

RCMP and fined fifty dollars and costs.<sup>49</sup> The emergence of such overt hostility towards itinerants, not to mention the radically altered social context of the decade, dramatically changed the landscape of the lives and work of itinerant photographers.

Returning to 1912, at the same time that towns such as Truro were taking protectionist measures against itinerants, the same itinerants were warmly welcomed in rural communities across the province where their presence had a very different meaning. As John Benson has argued about Canada, restrictions on their mobility did not signal the disappearance of peddlers altogether. Indeed, their relevance continued well into the twentieth century in both urban and rural places.<sup>50</sup> In rural Nova Scotia, a range of sales agents made a variety of consumer goods accessible to rural people who were eager and sophisticated customers.<sup>51</sup> In contrast to the negative news items carried in the general sections of the *Daily News*, the comments about sales agents and other itinerants that appear in the rural community notes suggest a friendly rapport and welcome dealings.

A wide range of products and peddlers made the rounds in rural Nova Scotia in and around 1912. The *Daily News* includes references to seasonal, farmer-friendly visitors such as H. Glawson, who brought seed potatoes and oats to Murphy's Cove in the late winter, and fertilizer dealer Hugh Fowler, who "was around" Economy in the fall.<sup>52</sup> But many others brought products that were somewhat less essential, many of which

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<sup>49</sup> Wright, e-mail to the author, July 15, 2008; "Thru' The Key-Hole," *Highlights of the East*, January 1939, 5. Courtesy of Peggy Wright.

<sup>50</sup> John Benson, "Hawking and Peddling in Canada, 1867-1914," *Histoire sociale/ Social History* 18, no. 35 (1985): 75-83.

<sup>51</sup> Lu Ann Jones has suggested that this general attitude towards itinerants might be tempered by an attention to gender and race in certain cases. She notes that in the American New South, women and African-American men who did not have free access to commercial culture were more likely to welcome peddlers than white men, who saw them as a threat to their control over the circulation of commodities in their homes. Lu Ann Jones, "Gender, Race, and Itinerant Commerce in the Rural New South," *Journal of Southern History* 66, no. 2 (2000): 297-320.

<sup>52</sup> *Truro Daily News*, community notes for Murphy's Cove, February 12, 1912, 2; *Economy*, October 2, 1912, 1.

related to photography. Woodlow Moore travelled about “taking orders for picture frames” and Manley Langille “was very successful” selling postcards for W.A. Brown. Dannie Cameron was mentioned in the introduction of this thesis selling books about the Titanic, but he sold a range of items. Two months earlier he was in Liscombe Mills selling Scotia liniment.<sup>53</sup>

Photographs also appeared as a form of itinerant, rural entertainment: projected lantern slides were a popular addition to lectures and concerts even while moving pictures were beginning to appear in some rural places. In her study of travelling film projectionists in the northeast United States, Kathryn Fuller notes that rural communities had their own “entertainment traditions” with busy social calendars and nearly continuous activity.<sup>54</sup> An important portion of that activity came from outside, in the form of travelling shows and performers. While larger itinerant acts, such as circuses and professional theatre troupes stopped at large and small towns, rural communities welcomed smaller entertainers to their halls, schoolhouses, and churches. For example, the Taylor Concert Company annually travelled rural Nova Scotia in the summers raising money for the blind and appeared occasionally in the notes of small communities where they “gave excellent entertainment” to a “packed house” in the local Temperance hall or another public building. In addition to music, their show included lantern slide exhibitions.<sup>55</sup> Lantern slides were also used in the lectures given by the Reverend Edwin

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<sup>53</sup> See *Truro Daily News*, community notes for Spencer’s Island, February 3, 1910, 3; Liscombe Mills, May 2, 1912, 2; West Liscombe, July 8, 1912, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Kathryn Helgesen Fuller, “The Cook and Harris High Class Moving Picture Company: Itinerant Exhibitors and the Small-Town Movie Audience, 1900-1910,” *New York History* 75, no. 1 (1994): 9.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, *Truro Daily News*, community notes for North River, June 10, 1911, 6; Spencer’s Island, July 6, 1912, 3; Port Dufferin, August 28, 1912, 3; Musquodoboit Harbour, September 11, 1912, 7.

Smith when he delighted rural communities in Colchester county in the winter of 1910, speaking on the subject of his travels across Canada.<sup>56</sup>

Evidence of film projectionists travelling in rural Nova Scotia at this time was not readily apparent from the Truro *Daily News*, but it seems likely that there were some. Historians have described the activity of film projectionists in the United States and Canada in the first decade of the twentieth century. In his history of Canadian cinema, Peter Morris has suggested that travelling “showmen ensured that no one was denied access to the new wonder . . . Not even the pioneer settlements of the north were ignored.”<sup>57</sup> This literature often describes the busy world of the itinerant showman in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but the central conflict, which leads to the inevitable denouement of the story, is the gradual (sometimes rapid) changes to rural communities that see transient entertainments replaced by more permanent “opera” houses and theatres. Additionally, the rise of the automobile and eventually improved roads made it easier for many rural people to travel to “town” to catch a show, reducing the demand for travelling operations. While it is true that there was a reduction in the number of these travelling showmen and other itinerants, the tradition persisted well into the twentieth century, particularly in areas that remained essentially rural. Pierre Véronneau found that film projectionists continued to flourish in rural Quebec into the inter-war period at least. Evidence suggests that this was true in Nova Scotia as well.

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<sup>56</sup> See Truro *Daily News*, community notes throughout February 1910.

<sup>57</sup> Peter Morris, *Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema, 1895-1939* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), 17. See also Fuller, “Cook and Harris High Class”; Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992); Charles Musser, *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880-1920* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); Pierre Véronneau, “The Creation of a Film Culture by Travelling Exhibitors in Rural Québec Prior to World War II,” *Film History* 6, no. 2 (1994): 250-261; Gregory A. Waller, “Robert Southard and the History of Traveling Film Exhibition,” *Film Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2003): 2-14.

Blake Mitchell, who grew up in Oyster Pond in that period recalls watching *The Man from Glengarry* among other films when projectionists set up in the community hall, noting that they continued this practice at least into the 1950s.<sup>58</sup>

As we saw in the introduction with the makeshift studios set up for postcard portrait making, the arrival of an itinerant photographer could also be a form of entertainment. According to the few notes that appear about him in the *Daily News*, Frank Adams's own appearances in rural communities were welcomed or at least observed with interest (when they were observed at all). The epigraph of this chapter, "And now the 'Travelling Artist' has arrived on wheels, and all will have a picture taken," has the same pleasant, familiar tone as the note from Barrasois in January of 1910, "Adams, the photographer, has returned to town, and many are having their picture taken."<sup>59</sup> As suggested above, Adams was no stranger to many of the rural places he visited and even in communities where he was unknown, he inserted himself into their cultural lives at the same time that he was an outsider in many other ways, leaving traces of himself that have remained intact for a hundred years. This casual movement in and around rural communities mirrors the more general movement and blurring of community boundaries that characterized rural areas more generally. Itinerants could be simultaneously strangers from away and important figures in the cultural and social lives of rural communities. Frank Adams's sporadic appearances in the villages of his rural customers were occasions of note, but his occupation as an itinerant cultural tradesperson was fairly unexceptional and part of a persistent tradition that extended well into the twentieth century in rural Canada, including Nova Scotia.

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<sup>58</sup> Véronneau, "Creation of a Film Culture"; Blake Mitchell, interview by the author, July 10, 2006.

<sup>59</sup> Truro *Daily News*, community notes for Five Islands, August 8, 1912, 7; Barrasois, January 19, 1910, 8.

## Chapter 2— School Photographs and Rural Resistance to Education Reform, c.1912

Mr. Adams, Photographer passed through here taking photos of the school group of this place and others.

—Community notes of Mattatall Lake, Truro *Daily News*, June 12, 1913.

This chapter looks at one place where the relationship between Frank Adams and the communities he visited is tangible, namely the formal class portraits he made at rural schools across central Nova Scotia. It concentrates on just one aspect of rural life in early twentieth-century Nova Scotia and considers the potential role played therein by Adams and his photographs. In the context of a widespread movement for rural education reform in the period, this chapter speculates about the potential of Adams's school photographs to contribute to the efforts of rural communities to resist the imposition of standardized reforms. It looks at aspects of education reform wherein the local character of rural communities was censured in favour of standardization and uniformity, and considers the discrepancies between the visual representations deployed on either side of this clash. Adding to scholarship that asserts the importance of the often overlooked local context in the control of rural education,<sup>1</sup> this chapter asks what new information about local schooling may be revealed through a study of early school photographs. At a time when control of education was contested terrain, the conflicting local and state agendas may be read as playing out through the practice of making photographs of schools and

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Douglas A. Lawr and R. D. Gidney, "Who Ran the Schools? Local Influence on Education Policy in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," *Ontario History* 72, no. 3 (1980): 131-143; J. I. Little, "School Reform and Community Control in the 1840s: A Case Study from the Eastern Townships," *Historical Studies in Education* 9, no. 2 (1997): 153-164; Roderick MacLeod and Mary Anne Poutanen, *A Meeting of the People: School Boards and Protestant Communities in Quebec, 1801-1998* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004); Mary Anne Poutanen, "'Unless she gives better satisfaction': Teachers, Protestant Education, and Community in Rural Quebec, Lochaber and Gore District, 1863-1945," *Historical Studies in Education* 15, no. 2 (2003): 237-272.

schoolchildren. Frank Adams's photographs articulate an alternative range of meanings assigned to and produced by rural community schools that are at odds with those produced by official documents at the time.

Fundamental to this possibility was Adams's status as an independent, itinerant photographer who worked outside of the educational bureaucracy. There is no evidence to suggest that rural school administrators at any level in early twentieth-century Nova Scotia were in any way involved in Adams's visits to their schools or in the decision to have school photographs made at all.<sup>2</sup> It seems that this was a deal brokered individually between the photographer and each local teacher. Likely the photographs were taken purely on speculation, in the hope that some might be sold. Despite the apparent uncertainty of the proposition, Adams, like other photographers across North America, was willing to take his chances that someone would be interested in buying the photographs. However, given his dependence on their purchasing power, Adams would have been eager to create images that would be embraced by the parents of each community. Allan Sekula's work, discussed in chapter one, is relevant here. Sekula reminds the viewer to attend to the negotiation between a commercial photographer's craft "and the demands and expectations of his clients" and not to lose "sight of the social institutions—corporation, school, family—that are speaking by means of the commercial photographer's craft."<sup>3</sup> John E. Carter's study of "town photographers" in small

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<sup>2</sup> There are no references to school photographs or photographers in the annual reports of the Superintendent of Education, 1900-1913, the *Nova Scotia Journal of Education*, 1900-1913, nor in the selection of local trustees minutes books that were read, covering years from the 1880s to the 1920s. Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management, Department of Education fonds, RG 14, vols. 74, 111, 115, 119, 127, 174.

<sup>3</sup> Allan Sekula, "Photography Between Labour and Capital," in *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures, 1948-1968: A Selection from the Negative Archives of Shedden Studio, Glace Bay, Cape Breton*, ed. B. H. D. Buchloh and Robert Wilkie (Halifax, NS: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and the University College of Cape Breton Press, 1983), 200.

American mid-west towns and villages at the turn of the century seems to add “town” to Sekula’s list of social institutions. Carter has argued that because most “town photographs” in the period “were made by professional photographers for sale to community members, we may be safe in assuming that they represented more than simply the whimsical choice of the picture taker. Thus they may be considered a collective expression. . . . a community activity, highly ritualized and purposeful. . . . Town photographs emerge as a market-driven, collective expression of community identity . . . and speak to collective values and sensibilities.”<sup>4</sup>

This chapter begins with a similar proposal about Frank Adams and his school photographs of rural Nova Scotia. School photographs have been the subject of only passing critical interest to historians, yet they are eagerly collected by local historical societies who use them as key tools in their efforts to imagine the pasts of their communities. This avid collection underscores the fact that these seemingly innocuous artifacts in fact speak volumes about community identities. For rural communities in particular, school photographs from the early twentieth century are sometimes the only pictorial representation from that time of a visually identifiable “community” of people larger than family groups, making momentarily visible the social networks and processes that brought people together. Thus, for rural areas, these images are as much articulations of community as the postcards of small town Main streets that proliferated in the same era. Because Adams worked outside of the official bureaucracy of the school system and made his photographs explicitly for sale to members of the local community, his photographs imag(in)e school children in a way that may have fit more closely with the community’s image of itself. By juxtaposing Adams’s photographs with official

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<sup>4</sup> John E. Carter, “Photography and the Rural Town,” *Journal of the West* 36, no. 4 (1997): 21, 27.

education imagery from the same period, a kind of counter-narrative of rural education becomes visible. Within a few decades, school portrait photography would be enfolded into the official imagery produced by the educational bureaucracy and such alternative meanings would disappear. But in the early years of school photography, when independent itinerant photographers pinned their financial hopes on producing images that would be attractive and saleable to community members, much variety was possible.

Posed photographs of school children are quite possibly the most commonly made photographs in the world; every year millions of students sit for their portraits. The formalization of the individual school portrait in North America dates to the 1950s with the organization of school photography as an industry, but the practice of making photographs of school children dates back much farther. As long as there have been photographs, students have been among their subjects, but the specific practice of yearly class portraits has a shorter history, beginning sometime in the late nineteenth century with group school photographs made by independent, itinerant photographers. This practice was taken up unevenly throughout North America, but by the 1880s readily identifiable school portraits, showing children and their teachers grouped together with no one else present, were being made at even tiny one-room schools in rural Nova Scotia. Evidence suggests that the practice had reached similarly rural locations in Ontario at least half a decade earlier.<sup>5</sup> That these photographs were made is evidence that by this time their logic as commodities had become widely accepted (or at least acceptable) and that photographers were able to count on at least some number of sales from this work.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, the school photograph collection at the Goulbourn Historical Society Archives in Goulbourn, Ontario, outside of Ottawa, includes some photographs from the 1870s.

Related to this, the practice of school photography also signals the emergence of the idea of “school” as a formal community occasion to be commemorated, a development, according to Pierre Bourdieu, that is particularly revealing of a community’s shared cultural values. Writing about rural communities in France in the first half of the twentieth century, Bourdieu notes that only certain occasions are regularly photographed, and these only within certain conventions. For example, “photographs of major ceremonies [such as weddings] are possible because . . . they capture behaviour that is socially approved and socially regulated, that is, behaviour that has already been solemnized.”<sup>6</sup> The increased attention to documenting elementary schooling mirrors the increased formalization of education and its growing legitimacy in rural communities in the late nineteenth century.

This early history of school portrait photography has yet to be written. As Noah Rosenblatt-Farrell has noted, these early years are “a period for which the production of a history has been quite difficult due to decentralization of records” and because it was the work of independent photographers rather than devoted school portrait studios. He writes that prior to 1951, the period before his own study of the founding of the Professional School Photographers Association in the United States, “school photography studios and individual photographers . . . operated without formal organization . . . [The] limited availability of records prior to that time has made evidence-based histories almost impossible to produce.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (1965; Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 6, 23-24. See also Pierre Bourdieu and Marie-Claire Bourdieu, “The Peasant and Photography” (1965), trans. Loic Wacquant and Richard Nice, *Ethnography* 5, no. 4 (2004): 601-616.

<sup>7</sup> Noah Rosenblatt-Farrell, “Corporate Strategies and Student Bodies: The Emergence of School Portraiture as Genre in 20th Century Photography” (PhD diss, Duke University, 2002), 145-146, 161.

While it is true that a history of early school photography could neither take the tidy form of Rosenblatt-Farrell's organizational history of the Professional School Photographers Association, nor easily be disentangled from the histories of itinerant photographers and portraiture more generally, Rosenblatt-Farrell nevertheless overstates the hopelessness of studying the genre in its early years. As mentioned above, by the late nineteenth century, group school photographs were common at even rural schools, if not yet a guaranteed yearly occurrence. By 1912, the year that Frank Adams produced the photographs in this study, the event would have been second nature to the students photographed, though it still occurred in a rather informal way, without institutional support. This growth matches the more general entrenchment of photography in everyday life at that time, as well as the efforts of trade photographers to stake out territories of relevance in the face of widespread amateur snapshot photography following the marketing of Kodak's affordable Brownie camera.

In assessing the status of the practice, however, it is also perhaps worth considering the lack of references to school photographs or photographers in textual source materials relating to education in Nova Scotia in the period 1900-1913.<sup>8</sup> If it were not for the enduring photographs themselves filling the image collections of every community archive in Nova Scotia, one would be tempted to believe that class pictures were not being made at all. But of course they were. Whether this silence indicates that school photographs had already so thoroughly entered the realm of common sense that they no longer required commentary, or, more likely, that they were still largely outside the purview of official interest, is a question that cannot be definitively answered.

Nevertheless, we know that there *were* school photographers traveling the roads of rural

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<sup>8</sup> See footnote 2.

Nova Scotia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because their remaining photographs document their practice. Additionally, the rural correspondents to *Truro Daily News*, in their irregular way, occasionally found Adams's visits to their schools worth mentioning, such as in the epigraph of this chapter.<sup>9</sup>

Related to its uncertain and largely undocumented status, one of the difficulties of writing a single comprehensive history of school photography is that in their early history the *meaning* of school photographs was inchoate or at the very least emerging rather than decided as their form and practice was slowly becoming formalized. Rosenblatt-Farrell limits his study to the contemporary single-student portrait, and the emergence of professional standards in the industry in the mid twentieth century because, as he puts it, the older school photographs "functioned differently" than contemporary ones due to their lack of uniformity and standardization.<sup>10</sup> His study of the contemporary form of school photographs addresses their semiotic function as portraits that simultaneously individualize students by their use of decontextualized backgrounds, while linking them to every other student, and to American culture at large, through identical poses and photographic formats that have come to create a "collective visual unconscious" that students and parents may access in order to predict what their portraits will look like even before they are seen.<sup>11</sup> From a research perspective, Rosenblatt-Farrell had access to foundational documents that clearly articulate the intentions of the photographers and the educational institutions that they served. These types of unified and unifying statements, either visual or written, do not exist for the early years of school photography which, as

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, *Truro Daily News*, community notes for Upper Stewiacke, June 19, 1912, 2; Mattatall Lake, June 12, 1913, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Rosenblatt-Farrell, "Corporate Strategies and Student Bodies," 162.

<sup>11</sup> Rosenblatt-Farrell, "Corporate Strategies and Student Bodies," 150.

previously noted, were defined by fragmentation and local character, much like the school system itself. But while Rosenblatt-Farrell found the lack of standardization in early school photographs problematic for the writing of an authoritative history of the genre, the material covered in this chapter suggests that their diversity does not simply set the older images at odds with contemporary school portraits but is, in fact, their central characteristic and one that may be mined for meanings as rich as those produced through the uniformity of later photographs.

Aside from Rosenblatt-Farrell's study, school photographs have received very little scholarly attention. Many histories of education include school portraits among their illustrations (many others do not) but none of them address the practice of school photography as a central, nearly universal, moment in the social life of schoolchildren and teachers. A very limited literature about school photography has been produced in the past decade or so by a small number of scholars working in the history of education. Much of this material came together for special journal issues or conferences from which it was subsequently gathered in published collections.<sup>12</sup> The majority of this literature addresses "images of education" in broad terms including the use of visual materials in classrooms as well as photographs of students and teachers engaged in all sorts of activities. The formal school portrait is only one of these and is only occasionally singled out for special attention. This is a result of the larger research questions that have been guiding this sub-field, which typically centre on what photography can teach us about the

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Catherine Burke, ed., *History of Education*, Special Issue: The Body of the Child in the History of Education, 36, no. 2 (2007); Marc Depaepe and Bregt Henkens, eds., *Paedagogica Historica*, Special Issue: The Challenge of the Visual in the History of Education, 36, no. 2 (2000); Ian Grosvenor and Martin Lawn, eds., *History of Education*, Special Issue: Ways of Seeing in Education and Schooling, 30, no. 2 (2001); Ian Grosvenor, Martin Lawn, and Kate Rousmaniere, eds., *Silences & Images: The Social History of the Classroom* (New York: P. Lang, 1999); Eric Margolis, ed., *Visual Studies*, Special Issue: The Visible Curriculum, 22, no. 1-2 (2007); Ulrike Mietzner, Kevin Myers, and Nick Peim, eds., *Visual History: Images Of Education* (Oxford: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005).

social and cultural histories of the classroom and how it might enable new understandings of schools and schoolchildren. In the majority of publications, the emphasis has been on questions of method and how to use visual sources as evidence in the history of education, rather than writing histories *about* photographs or photography.<sup>13</sup>

There are two main scholarly articles that deal significantly with formal school portraits, though neither of them addresses the emergence or early history of the practice. Nevertheless, they both approach school photographs as “social constructions,” thereby historicizing and denaturalizing them to some extent.<sup>14</sup> Eric Margolis discusses the many school photographs found in various online picture databases in the United States. His interest is in ways that school photographs make visible the “hidden curriculum” of education. From the work of sociologists of education, the hidden curriculum includes forms of socialization and acculturation that take place in schools, but which are not part of the formal teaching curriculum. As examples, Margolis notes gender role socialization, racial and class segregation, and the enforcement of behavioral norms, as well as the reproduction of “ideological belief systems, for example, patriotism, certain forms of representative democracy, market capitalism, and patriarchal, heterosexual family structures.”<sup>15</sup> His analysis reveals such socialization at work, both at the level of individual images and in the aggregate, looking at thousands of images in digital collections. He writes that “from a critical perspective, class pictures can be viewed as an

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<sup>13</sup> Many authors claim to be writing histories, but offer up a significant amount of space to these questions of method and evidence, producing relatively little historical analysis.

<sup>14</sup> The quotation is from Eric Margolis, “Class Pictures: Representations of race, gender and ability in a century of school photography,” *Visual Studies* 14, no. 1 (1999): 12. The second article, to be discussed below, is Catherine Burke and Helena Ribeiro de Castro, “The School Photograph: Portraiture and the Art of Assembling the Body of the Schoolchild,” *History of Education* 36, no. 2 (2007): 213-226. A third article is often referred to as being “about” school photographs, but it is really an essay about using visual sources as indexical historical evidence that uses school photos as its examples. See Kate Rousmaniere, “Questioning the Visual in the History of Education,” *History of Education* 30, no. 2 (2001): 109-116.

<sup>15</sup> Margolis, “Class Pictures,” 10-11.

historical record of certain elements of the hidden curriculum. The photographs show children's and teacher's bodies with certain race, gender, age, and ability characteristics, spatially arranged in an environmental setting. We may infer that class photographs were not randomly produced but were carefully fashioned using socially agreed upon conventions of representation. While photographs cannot directly represent social relationships which are invisible, they are frequently composed to symbolize social relations including: assimilation, order, discipline, purity, equality, patriotism, community pride and stability."<sup>16</sup>

School photographs are not candid pictures. This attention to the ways that they are composed and what systems of meaning may be at play in their production is crucial to understanding their relevance, both at the time of their creation and as historical documents. Such embedded agendas are not neutral as photographs are routinely used to forward ideological positions. In the context of school photos, this is perhaps nowhere more obvious than in the case of public relations photographs of children at native boarding schools, a topic that has been discussed by a number of scholars, including Margolis.<sup>17</sup> But even when the hidden curriculum is not quite so visible, it is nonetheless important to interrogate all photographs with these ideological projects in mind. Such agendas need not be insidious (or be made to seem insidious) in order to be worthy of

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<sup>16</sup> Margolis, "Class Pictures," 10.

<sup>17</sup> See Lonna M. Malmshemer, "Imitation White Man: Images of Transformation at the Carlisle Indian School," *Studies in Visual Communication* 11 (1985): 54-75; Eric Margolis, "Looking at Discipline, Looking at Labor: Photographic Representations of Indian Boarding Schools," *Visual Studies* 19, no. 1 (2004): 72-96; Eric Margolis and Jeremy Rowe, "Images of Assimilation: Photographs of Indian Schools in Arizona," *History of Education* 33, no. 2 (2004): 199-230. In the Canadian context, see Gerald McMaster, "Colonial Alchemy: Reading the Boarding School Experience," in *Partial Recall: Photographs of Native North Americans*, ed. Lucy R. Lippard (New York: New Press, 1992), 76-87. The assertion extends to the well-known public relations photographs of the Hampton Institute, an African American college in Virginia, taken in 1899 by Frances Benjamin Johnston. See Sarah Bassnett, "From Public Relations to Art: Exhibiting Frances Benjamin Johnston's Hampton Institute Photographs," *History of Photography* 32, no. 2 (2008): 152-168; Jeannene M. Przyblyski, "American Visions at the Paris Exposition, 1900: Another Look at Frances Benjamin Johnston's Hampton Photographs," *Art Journal* 57, no. 3 (1998): 60-68.

historical analysis. As described above, contextualized readings of these images may reveal aspects of the priorities and predilections of the communities to which these children belonged. They may also tell us something of the photographer. School photographs are not innocuous, neutral artefacts of the past. They created and reinforced particular ideas and knowledge about children and schooling, an actively political gesture.

Margolis takes school photographs seriously. Using an American example, he notes that “while these are photographs of real schools, they also helped constitute a pervasive, nearly mythological, image of American public schools. The common school, with its modest architecture, ungraded classrooms, local control, strong community support, and curriculum limited to primary instruction, is often credited with being the backbone of America.”<sup>18</sup> These are the types of narratives that historical photographs are regularly used to construct and validate today, but Margolis’s point also begins to get at something of the meanings and “agendas” of early school photographs at the turn of the century. Like Rosenblatt-Farrell, Catherine Burke and Helena de Castro, who have looked at official school portraiture in mid-twentieth century Portugal, have argued that the central meaning embedded in school photographs is that of belonging to a tradition. They write that “a single school photograph makes little sense and appears to demand that it be connected to past and future semblances of itself.”<sup>19</sup> But this was hardly the case in 1912 when Frank Adams was making the photographs in this study. Nearly everyone today has sat for a school photograph. This personal experience makes it difficult to look at historical images without thinking of their future iterations, without

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<sup>18</sup> Margolis, “Class Pictures,” 12.

<sup>19</sup> Burke and de Castro, “The School Photograph,” 214.

placing them in the lineage that would subsequently be produced. But in order to properly understand these early images we must denaturalize them and return them to a time when such assumptions did not exist. While a school photograph was clearly recognizable as such by 1912, this logic of ritual and seriality was only perhaps emerging when Frank Adams was making his photos. What Margolis just begins to touch on, and what Carter's study of town photographs, mentioned above, expresses more directly, is that these images spoke to their viewers (and purchasers) about their communities in a way that was pleasing and affirming to them, without any emotional recourse to a school-photograph tradition. Burke and de Castro, whose own study of school photographs focuses on the "interface between school and community," articulate this point more directly, writing that "the school photograph and in particular the embodiment of school in the annual portrait that finds its place in the home is neither public nor private but straddles the two domains acting as a border crosser encouraging emotional investment in the notion of school."<sup>20</sup>

But what is important for the purposes of this study is that the "notion of school" in the first decades of the twentieth century was a contested one. This was a period of widespread education reform throughout North America, and nowhere more so than in the context of rural elementary schooling. At a time when so many voices sought to sway public opinion about what rural education was and should be, every representation of a rural school, whether visual or rhetorical, was inherently politicized and carried the weight of one or another narrative. As we will see, while many people declaimed and documented prescriptions for rural education in the period, the ways that those

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<sup>20</sup> Burke and de Castro, "The School Photograph," 214, 216. In fact, Burke and de Castro continue to prioritize tradition throughout their article. But by omitting the emphasis on tradition, this statement elegantly describes historical photos as well, highlighting a continuity that is not at first apparent.

recommendations were played out in the lives of students and teachers varied dramatically across regions, provinces, and even among neighbouring communities depending on a range of factors. Scholars have shown that from the development of compulsory free schooling in the nineteenth century onward, the general logic and structure of mass education have been very similar throughout the industrialized world.<sup>21</sup> However, education in Nova Scotia in the early twentieth century, as was generally the case throughout Canada, was defined by its system of local control and thus local character which mediated to various extents the imposition of standardization from outside.

On this point, this chapter draws on the work of Michael Corbett, who investigates the place of formal education in rural Canadian communities (especially in coastal Nova Scotia) in both the past and the present.<sup>22</sup> Corbett's analyses of rural education prioritize the forces at work at the local level that have interceded against the adoption of urban educational norms over the past century, with particular emphasis on the persistence of these forces into the late twentieth century. Corbett describes these forces as forms of rural "resistance" to standardized education, noting that for many people, particularly young men, the vaguely defined benefits of formal education did not and do not outweigh the very real possibilities for adult incomes, privileges, and responsibilities afforded through working-class occupations readily available in, and

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<sup>21</sup> Francisco O. Ramirez and John Boli, "The Political Construction of Mass Schooling: European Origins and Worldwide Institutionalization," *Sociology of Education* 60, no. 1 (1987): 2-17; Kay Whitehead and Judith Peppard, "Transnational Innovations, Local Conditions, and Disruptive Teachers and Students in Interwar Education," *Paedagogica Historica* 42, no. 1 (2006): 177-189. See also Kathryn M. Anderson-Levitt, "The Schoolyard Gate: Schooling and Childhood in Global Perspective," *Journal of Social History* 38, no. 4 (2005): 987-1006.

<sup>22</sup> See especially Michael Corbett, *Learning to Leave: The Irony of Schooling in a Coastal Community* (Halifax, NS: Fernwood, 2007); Michael Corbett, "A Protracted Struggle: Rural Resistance and Normalization in Canadian Educational History," *Historical Studies in Education* 13, no. 1 (2001): 19-48.

affirmed by, their own communities.<sup>23</sup> In Corbett's formulation, "resistance takes two main forms: 1) the rural subject stands in opposition to schooling on the grounds that it is/was often an irrelevant urban/outside imposition (rurality in resistance); and, 2) structural resistance, that is, rural regions and their typical economic activities are at odds with the structure of schooling (rurality as resistance)." He summarizes that "rural people resisted the long arm of the state, reaching into the public and private spaces of their lives. But it is the structure of work and life in rural communities that grounded this resistance in a reasonable lived alternative."<sup>24</sup>

Corbett's work focuses on the resistance of individuals to regular, long-term school attendance and how these students were and are embedded in communities that supported and enabled this behaviour. Moving away from this emphasis, but maintaining the framework of resistance, this chapter instead considers the more general response of rural communities as a whole to the imposition of particular education reforms in the early twentieth century. What is particularly instructive about Corbett's work is that it provides a model of analysis for understanding rural communities wherein opposition to outside forces is interpreted as an act of productive resistance,<sup>25</sup> rather than simply as backwardness or ambivalence, as it might be understood from the dominant, typically urban, perspective. For example, in his study of school reform in early twentieth-century Iowa, David Reynolds has noted that "in most instances, elites did not recognize rural

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<sup>23</sup> The restrictively gendered organization of many rural occupations such as fishing and forestry meant that young women were/are more likely to stay in school longer, and also more likely to eventually leave their communities. On such gendered patterns, see especially Michael Corbett, "All kinds of potential: Women and Out-Migration in an Atlantic Canadian Coastal Community," *Journal of Rural Studies* 23, no. 4 (2007): 430-442.

<sup>24</sup> Corbett, "A Protracted Struggle," 24, 26.

<sup>25</sup> "Productive" here is meant in the sense of "useful," but also in the Foucauldian sense that power, and the resistance that is intrinsic to it, "produces" particular discourses and subject positions specific to, and thus specifically relevant to, the local rural communities in question.

resistance to school reform as deriving from farm people's concerns that [it] would undermine the existing social relations, and [viability of their communities]. Instead, rural resistance was perceived to be based on irremediable ignorance or reactionary perniciousness to be ignored, if possible, and marginalized, if not."<sup>26</sup> This attitude and pattern is clearly evident in the documents created by education authorities in Nova Scotia as well.

Reynolds adds that much early scholarship on the subject replicated this attitude because it was based on uncritical readings of the documentary sources created by reformers. Furthermore, he notes that a general absence of articulate documents created by the resisters themselves makes it difficult to know "why resistance occurred where it did or why it took the particular forms it did."<sup>27</sup> Again, this is equally true of Nova Scotia. With this in mind it becomes increasingly compelling to attend to those expressions about rural education that *are* available for study. While it is possible to brush these photographs off as *just class pictures* it is more interesting to accept them as potentially revealing sources about the dynamics at play in this situation.

Rural Canada was the subject of much debate and consternation in the first decades of the twentieth century. The "rural problem" of depopulation, specifically of young people "leaving the farm" for work and life in urban areas due to social stagnation and economic change had become a major point of public concern by the end of the nineteenth century, intensifying through the first decades of the twentieth. While the majority of reformers focused their attention "on the receiving end of the rural-to-urban

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<sup>26</sup> David Reynolds, *There Goes the Neighborhood: Rural School Consolidation at the Grass Roots in Early Twentieth-Century Iowa* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), xi.

<sup>27</sup> Reynolds, *There Goes the Neighborhood*, 6.

population shift”<sup>28</sup> a significant amount of attention was also paid to the effects of this shift on rural communities. Indeed, the strength of the nation as a whole was seen by many to be dependent on a healthy and productive rural foundation. In his intellectual history of Canadian imperialism, historian Carl Berger argues that “Few developments [in the period] generated more apprehension than the relative decline in the rural population, few themes were as dominant as the vague feeling that Canadian development was unbalanced and unhealthy. The preference for agriculture and the expectation that it would continue to be a dominant factor in Canada, was reinforced and strengthened at the very time when agriculture was rapidly losing its primacy.”<sup>29</sup>

Underlying more pragmatic concerns about food supply and national security was a strain of agrarian idealism that appeared in a variety of reform movements in the era, including prohibition, public health and social work campaigns, the Social Gospel, and the founding of farmers’ cooperatives and the rural Women’s Institutes. Many Canadians feared the loss of a mythologized rural society that was perceived to be the symbolic soul of a soulless industrializing nation. Rural Canada was interpreted as a virtuous bastion of purity and clean air in relation to the literal and metaphorical grime of city life. But rural communities were also posited as the authentic sites of desirable national values such as industriousness, integrity and honesty. The dismantling of rural life thus symbolized an attack on Canadian identity and values.

This idealization of the countryside ironically bolstered efforts to improve the true conditions of rural life, which were often less than ideal. A wide variety of reforms were

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<sup>28</sup> James H. Madison, “Reformers and the Rural Church, 1900-1950,” *Journal of American History* 73, no. 3 (1986): 645.

<sup>29</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 191, also 191-193.

suggested to make rural life more efficient, viable, and comfortable for rural families.

David Danbom has described the informal Country Life movement in the United States as “a bewildering array of reformers dealing with a constellation of rural problems.”<sup>30</sup>

Canadians mirrored the variety of American reform efforts but seem to have lacked a comparable unifying moniker.<sup>31</sup> James Murton has summarized that in Canada, like the US, the “reformers wanted a new countryside, an alternative, rural modernity, where new knowledge and new technologies could be married to traditional gender roles and traditional values.”<sup>32</sup>

While it was uniformly acknowledged in principle that any real solution would have to be produced by rural communities themselves rather than being imposed from outside, reformers were also quick to add that rural people clearly needed a guide to get them on the right track. As J.S. Woodsworth explained in his booklet *Studies in Rural Citizenship* (c.1914), “Most people need a bit of a jolt to set their thinking apparatus in motion. Our task is to give the jolt, not to think for anyone.”<sup>33</sup> The patronizing tone of these efforts was no different than that of social reform in urban areas. The difference

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<sup>30</sup> David B. Danbom, “Rural Education Reform and the Country Life Movement, 1900-1920,” *Agricultural History* 53, no. 2 (1979): 462.

<sup>31</sup> There is also no equivalent major Canadian study of the Country Life reform movement. Works that address it to some extent include David Demeritt, “Visions of Agriculture in British Columbia,” *BC Studies*, no. 108 (1995): 29-59; David C. Jones, “‘There Is Some Power About the Land’: The Western Agrarian Press and Country Life Ideology,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17, no. 3 (1982): 96-108; Margaret Kechnie, *Organizing Rural Women: The Federated Women’s Institutes of Ontario, 1897-1919* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003). While it is important not to generalize across the border, it is also important to note that reformers at the time understood the problems in the rural US and Canada to be largely the same. Writers on the Canadian situation drew heavily on American examples in their own work, and recommended reading lists for Canadians were filled with American titles. While the legislative environments were quite different in the two countries, much reform work was seen to be at the level of local communities, and so somewhat outside of provincial, state, and federal politics in either country. On the Country Life movement in the US, see especially William L. Bowers, *The Country Life Movement in America, 1900-1920* (Port Washington, NY and London: Kennikat Press National University Publications, 1974); David B. Danbom, *The Resisted Revolution: Urban America and the Industrialization of Agriculture, 1900-1930* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1979).

<sup>32</sup> James Murton, *Creating a Modern Countryside: Liberalism and Land Resettlement in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 56.

<sup>33</sup> J. S. Woodsworth, *Studies in Rural Citizenship* (Winnipeg: Canadian Council of Agriculture, [1914?]), 6.

was that most urban reformers at least lived in cities, whereas those making suggestions about rural life had in many cases never lived in the country themselves. Acknowledging that he, himself, was of the city, Woodsworth haughtily dismissed such concerns: “Some of the opinions given in these studies are offered by men who live in the city or who are not practical farmers. Well, all wisdom is not confined to the country, and sometimes an outsider can see things more clearly and in truer perspective than one who is ‘right up against’ the perplexing details of practical problems.”<sup>34</sup> While an outside perspective might sometimes be valuable, an opinion is not the same as an imposition, which is what many reform efforts came to feel like. For example, Linda Ambrose has described the ambivalent response to the 1913 *Agricultural Instruction Act* by the rural people it was meant to serve and argues “that the Borden government’s funding for agricultural education actually served to heighten rural discontent rather than to assuage it.”<sup>35</sup> This tension was apparent in all aspects of rural reform.

Among the range of efforts to improve rural life, changes to rural education were perhaps the most significant strategies in both Canada and the US.<sup>36</sup> The 1913 *Report of the federal Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education*, which included agricultural education in its purview and led to the passing of the *Agricultural Instruction Act*, opined that “nothing can be done by legislation to compel people to stay in the country, but much may be done by education to cause them to prefer to stay

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<sup>34</sup> Woodsworth, *Studies in Rural Citizenship*, 6.

<sup>35</sup> Linda M. Ambrose, “‘Better and Happier Men and Women’: The Agricultural Instruction Act, 1913-1924,” *Historical Studies in Education* 16, no. 2 (2004): 259.

<sup>36</sup> Bowers, *Country Life Movement in America*, esp. 86-101; Danbom, “Rural Education Reform”; Reynolds, *There Goes the Neighborhood*; Paul Theobald, *Call School: Rural Education in the Midwest to 1918* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995), 153-176.

there.”<sup>37</sup> Much of the commissioners’ time was spent investigating higher education for farmers and other rural people, but elementary school education also drew their attention. This coincided with a period in which North American elementary schooling in general was undergoing significant changes, what reformers called the emergence of the “New Education.” Overall, the view was that schooling should be made more child-centred and humane with teaching methods better adapted to the needs and interests of children, and that school curricula should be more practical and relevant, moving away from rote memorization and recitation to include manual education to better prepare students for a variety of paths—including rural life. These measures proposed a system of elementary education that sought to teach the whole child, not just the intellect. Reformers argued that “the whole child goes to school—body, mind and spirit and the training of hand, head and heart, should go on harmoniously.”<sup>38</sup> New additions to standard elementary curricula in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included various forms of gendered manual training, nature study, physical education, and health and temperance studies. None of these ideas were new—all were simply the contemporary iterations of ideas that had been in play throughout the nineteenth century—but their discussion and application in the context of larger social reform movements, and in the face of the perceived rural crisis, was intensified in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Canada. Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education, *Report*, vol. 1 (Ottawa: C.H. Parmelee, 1913), 39. Hereafter cited as RCITTE.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Neil Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 181.

<sup>39</sup> For a general overview of education reform and the New Education in Canada in the period, see Paul Axelrod, *The Promise of Schooling: Education in Canada, 1800-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 44-68 and 109-126; Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society*, 155-224; George S. Tomkins, *A Common Countenance: Stability and Change in the Canadian Curriculum* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1986), 98-154, esp. 98-128. Opinion was divided on the initiatives of the New

The most fully-formed and influential articulation of the New Education in Canada was in fact a movement to reform rural education and it is no coincidence that James Robertson, the head of the Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education, was its driving force. The Macdonald Robertson<sup>40</sup> movement was active between 1899 and 1910 and developed the ideas that would characterize rural education reform and theory in Canada for decades to come. Robertson saw the school as the best vehicle to create significant, lasting change in rural communities by teaching children skills, behaviours, and attitudes that they would later apply to their work and lives on the farm. In his typically sincere but mildly (sometimes overtly) patronizing tone, he told all who would listen that the movement “does not desire to destroy anything that now exists in rural districts, except weeds, but it hopes to help in building up something better than is now known and done, and thereby displace what is poor. It aims at helping the rural population to understand better what education is and what it aims at for them and their children.”<sup>41</sup>

Funding came from Sir William Macdonald, the tobacco baron and philanthropist. Over the decade, Macdonald and Robertson installed forty-eight fully-funded manual training demonstration centres in schools across the country; created and funded four large consolidated schools, one each in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Ontario; and created the Macdonald Rural School Fund, which financed school gardens and nature study in rural elementary schools in eastern Canada.

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Education in Canada. For a discussion of some of various responses see Robert S. Patterson, “The Canadian Response to Progressive Education,” in *Essays on Canadian Education*, ed. Nick Kach (Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises, 1986), 61-77.

<sup>40</sup> At the time it was also called the Macdonald movement or the Macdonald College movement.

<sup>41</sup> James W. Robertson, “The Macdonald College Movement,” *Proceedings of the National [American] Education Association* (1909): 92.

Macdonald College of McGill University and the Macdonald Institute at the University of Guelph were integral parts of the movement, offering training in agriculture and rural science, manual training, and domestic science to the next generation of teachers and leaders. Manual education and its attention to the “whole child” was at the heart of all these initiatives. Unlike the colleges, which were given permanence through endowments, the Macdonald Robertson initiatives were created with the hope that provincial and local education authorities would take up the mantle of manual education—and the costs of maintaining the programs—following their funded demonstration periods.<sup>42</sup>

By 1912, the Macdonald funding had run out. A year later, funding for rural education initiatives entered a new phase with the passage of the *Agricultural Instruction Act*, which gave ten million dollars of federal money to the provinces over ten years for rural education initiatives, mainly aimed at improving agriculture.<sup>43</sup> For the moment, however, provincial and local educators in Nova Scotia, as elsewhere, were sorting out if and how they might continue to administer the various programs within their regular budgets.

In Nova Scotia, many New Education initiatives, including traditional manual training and school gardens, were already well established before the Macdonald Robertson funding arrived. Education reform advocates such as Alexander MacKay, Superintendent of Education from 1891 to 1926, and Loran DeWolfe, later Director of Rural Science Schools, were loud and articulate voices provincially and on the national stage for the value of manual education, particularly in its rural forms. What the

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<sup>42</sup> On the Macdonald Robertson movement generally, see especially Kristen Jane Greene, “The Macdonald Robertson Movement, 1899-1909” (PhD diss, University of British Columbia, 2003).

<sup>43</sup> See Ambrose, “Better and Happier Men and Women.”

Macdonald Robertson funding provided then was not the ideas but a much needed financial boost to the means to properly instruct teachers, essential to the success and continued proliferation of these reforms. The Macdonald Manual Training School and the Rural Science Summer School for teachers were established in Truro, where the provincial Normal School and the Nova Scotia Agricultural College were increasingly collaborating in their training programs. Teachers holding diplomas or certificates from these training schools were eligible for grants from the provincial government to encourage them to use their new knowledge in the classroom.<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, the success of these initiatives was limited. For example, Robertson's efforts to encourage school consolidation were, overall, a failure in Nova Scotia. Unlike some parts of western Canada, where rural school consolidation was widely adopted quite early on, or in parts of the United States, where state education officials had more authority to enforce consolidation, eastern Canadian school districts undertook this reform very slowly.<sup>45</sup> This was due in large part to resistance from rural communities that were skeptical of the proposed advantages. For instance, while the Macdonald Consolidated school at Middleton, Nova Scotia, remained open, all but one of the rural school sections that were involved in the experiment returned to their local school systems following the subsidized trial period.<sup>46</sup> While provincial school officials continued to advocate consolidation, the locally-dispersed structure of school ownership in the province did not allow them to enforce action. A small number of districts did

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<sup>44</sup> See Jane Margaret Norman, *Loran Arthur DeWolfe and the Reform of Education in Nova Scotia, 1891-1959* (Truro, NS: Atlantic Early Learning Productions, 1989), esp. 34-35. See also Kristen Jane Greene, "Macdonald Robertson Movement," 45; Donald Macleod, "Practicality Ascendant: The Origins and Establishment of Technical Education in Nova Scotia," *Acadiensis* 15, no. 2 (1986): 63.

<sup>45</sup> Axelrod, *Promise of Schooling*, 115; Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society*, 194-196; Reynolds, *There Goes the Neighborhood*.

<sup>46</sup> RCITTE, 1:313; George Peabody, *School Days: One-Room Schools of Maritime Canada* (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane, 1992), 126.

make the change and received government support for conveying pupils, but opposition to consolidation remained strong for decades in Nova Scotia. Small, rural community-based schools, either one-room or slightly larger, were the norm well into the post war period.<sup>47</sup>

From the perspective of rural schools in 1912, the most relatively successful initiative of the Macdonald Robertson movement were school gardens and the accompanying courses in nature study. Greene writes that “The possibility of economic benefits through scientific agriculture appealed to vocationally-minded people, whereas the intellectual benefits of learning through studying nature and working the soil appealed to social reformers.”<sup>48</sup> Sutherland has argued that this convergence of aspirations meant that “For the minority of rural children who received any benefits from the new education, it was more likely to take this form than any other.”<sup>49</sup> In Nova Scotia, the five Macdonald Robertson school gardens were installed in communities around Truro, at Bible Hill, Old Barns, Brookfield, Belmont, and Great Village. A travelling instructor trained children in three main aspects of agriculture: “the selection of seed; the rotation of crops; and the protection of crops against weeds, disease, and insects.”<sup>50</sup> But beyond these more obvious lessons (and often in place of them), school gardens were ideally meant to be incorporated into all kinds of teaching exercises. For example, plots could be

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<sup>47</sup> On the history of the consolidation of rural schools in the Maritime provinces, see Peabody, *School Days*, 125-138. On the fates of the four Macdonald consolidated schools, and the efforts to encourage further consolidation after the subsidy period, see Kristen Jane Greene, “Macdonald Robertson Movement,” 174-180. The fight surrounding rural school consolidation in the Maritimes continued well into the 1960s and remains a sore point in many communities to this day. For a discussion of post war consolidation in one area of rural Nova Scotia, see Cindy Kiley, “Social Anchors of Community: Church, Rink and School in Post War Musquodoboit Harbour, Nova Scotia” (Masters thesis, Saint Mary’s University, 2001), 47-53.

<sup>48</sup> Kristen Jane Greene, “Macdonald Robertson Movement,” 114.

<sup>49</sup> Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society*, 187.

<sup>50</sup> Robertson, “Macdonald College Movement,” 94.

measured and divided for lively lessons in mathematics, or a gardening journal could be an exercise in English grammar and composition.<sup>51</sup>

In Nova Scotia it was this more informal use of school gardens, integrated into the daily curriculum, and in particular forming a basis for elementary science instruction, that saw the most encouragement. As mentioned above, school gardens were already established in Nova Scotia by the 1890s under the leadership of Alexander MacKay. In fact, Nova Scotia was often singled out in national and international literature as a leader in the movement and an example to be followed, occasionally because it was characterized as such an unlikely place for school gardening to flourish.<sup>52</sup> School gardens were officially supported by the province through legislation in 1904, later written into the new Education Act in 1911, which provided twenty-five dollars to any teacher who maintained a school garden “kept up to the standards of form and efficiency prescribed by the Council [of Public Instruction].”<sup>53</sup> Nature study had been part of the common school course of study since 1881, but the 1904 revision put further emphasis on local observations, to be taught in some form every day, ideally in conjunction with a garden.<sup>54</sup>

Robertson was not alone in his high, almost naive, hopes for the potential of school gardens to effect change in rural Canada. Edwinna von Baeyer has described the missionary zeal of school garden advocates, noting that “ecstatic descriptions became

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<sup>51</sup> See for example, the evidence from Percy Shaw regarding the many ways that a cutworm found in the garden could be implicated into a day’s lesson in RCITTE, 4:1741. See also Loran A. DeWolfe et al., “Relationship of the School Garden to the Classroom,” *Agricultural Gazette* 2, no. 4 (1915): 371-375.

<sup>52</sup> R. H. Cowley, “The Macdonald School Gardens,” *Queen’s Quarterly* (April 1905): 399; M. Louise Greene, *Among School Gardens* (New York: Charities Publication Committee, 1910), 15; James Ralph Jewell, “The Place of Nature Study, School Gardens, and Agriculture in our School System,” *Paedagogical Seminary* 13, no. 3 (1906): 273-274; James Collins Miller, *Rural Schools in Canada: Their Organization, Administration and Supervision* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1913), 78.

<sup>53</sup> Nova Scotia, “The Education Act,” in *Statutes of Nova Scotia 1911*, chapter 2 (Halifax, NS: Commissioner of Public Works and Mines, King’s Printer, 1911), section 79, clause 2. See also section 91.

<sup>54</sup> See *Nova Scotia Journal of Education*, April 1904; Alexander MacKay, “The Course of Study, How it is to be Understood and Utilized,” 1904, CIHM/ICMH Microfiche series, no. 73304.

common whenever a true believer described the movement.”<sup>55</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly, the garden of Eden was occasionally evoked.<sup>56</sup> In retrospect, many descriptions were merely overly romantic: “The garden is becoming the outer class-room of the school, and the plots are its blackboards. The garden is . . . a happy field of expression, an organic part of the school in which the boys and girls work among growing things and grow themselves in body and mind and spiritual outlook.” But others were simply far too optimistic about the transformative potential of a garden, suggesting, for example, that a few hours a week of agricultural work could make a student “a power over his environment, and, therefore, possibly, a great man among his fellow citizens.”<sup>57</sup> Still others were simply vague, both in their projected outcomes and in how to achieve them. Instructions in 1912 for teaching nature study were prefaced with the explanation that “the purpose of nature study has been defined as ‘Learning those things in nature that are best worth knowing, to the end of doing those things that make life most worth living.’”<sup>58</sup>

Certainly the children in Frank Adams’s photographs would have received some form of training in nature study, and many of their schools may have had a rudimentary garden. However, as strong as the support was—and it was very strong—the school garden project struggled against disinterest, impracticality, and simple non-participation. While the twenty-five dollar grant for maintaining a garden was a significant sum for a teacher whose yearly salary may have been less than two hundred dollars, in many cases the extra duties were simply too much to fit into the already crowded day of a multi-grade

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<sup>55</sup> Edwinna von Baeyer, *Rhetoric and Roses: A History of Canadian Gardening 1900-1930* (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1984), 37.

<sup>56</sup> See for example, Cowley, “Macdonald School Gardens,” 391.

<sup>57</sup> Cowley, “Macdonald School Gardens,” 401; Nova Scotia, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of Nova Scotia for the Year Ended 31st July, 1906* (Halifax, NS: King’s Printer, 1906), xli-xlii. Hereafter cited as *ARNS*.

<sup>58</sup> *Nova Scotia Journal of Education*, April 1904, 103.

classroom with minimal resources. In this, as with many other suggested reforms, rural teachers found that the “advice was good . . . but hard to follow.”<sup>59</sup> The rocky terrain in Adams’s photograph of Spry Bay (fig. 8) underscores the challenges of centrally-mandated programs conceived under idealized conditions. As von Baeyer has pointed out, “the school garden promoters did not recognize that the program had been nurtured and protected like a hot-house plant by monetary infusions and highly-trained personnel. They truly felt the ideal rural education was at hand.”<sup>60</sup> Teachers in communities such as those along the rocky coasts of Nova Scotia where growing conditions were less than ideal, and growing seasons were short—and coincided with the summer vacation—found it particularly difficult to participate in such programs, or to see their real value. This is not to say that they did not make any effort at all, or that their efforts were not acknowledged. It was duly noted in the community notes for Pleasant Harbour, a village down the coast from Spry Bay, that on a day in May 1912, teacher Ethel Glawson helped her students put in a “small school garden . . . after clearing away the play ground.”<sup>61</sup> What is unknown, however, is how long their garden lasted. The other schools in the June 1912 photographs were in areas more conducive to gardening, but even there the reality of yearly teacher turnover—the bane of every single attempted reform of rural education in Nova Scotia as elsewhere—made elaborate school gardens nearly impossible to maintain in the long term. Reading the plethora of primary sources that remain on the subject, one is given the impression that school gardens were widespread, yet out of some

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<sup>59</sup> Marta Danylewycz and Alison Prentice, “Teachers Work: Changing Patterns and Perceptions in the Emerging School Systems of Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Central Canada,” in *Women Who Taught: Perspectives on the History of Women and Teaching*, ed. Alison Prentice and Marjorie R. Theobald (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 144.

<sup>60</sup> von Baeyer, *Rhetoric and Roses*, 44.

<sup>61</sup> *Truro Daily News*, community notes for Pleasant Harbour, May 30, 1912, 8.

sixteen hundred schools in rural Nova Scotia, the number of funded school gardens in the years before the *Agricultural Instruction Act* peaked at 103 in 1905. In 1912 there were forty-two.<sup>62</sup>

Taking school gardens as a representative example of education reform philosophy in the early twentieth century, and juxtaposing official imagery of school gardens with Adams's photographs of rural schoolchildren provides a dramatic view of the discrepancy between idealized prescription and lived experience, and of the assertiveness of local conditions. The point of this line of inquiry is not to demonize the idea of school gardens, undoubtedly a wonderful concept that proposed to engage children with the world of nature around them—a fairly radical vision for education systems significantly reliant on book learning. The intention is purely to point to the disparity between proposed reforms, which received so much attention in the period, and the actual environments in which many rural children continued to go to school in early twentieth-century Nova Scotia. Such a comparison also draws attention to the embedded narratives and agendas of each form of representation and shows how school photographs may be implicated in historical analyses of education, not only as a form of evidence brought forward to the present, but as historical actors in the period under study.

One of the central features of any proper school garden was the rigid orderliness of its arrangement, both in terms of the process through which it should be created and used, and the actual physical arrangement of the plots in the ground. While local

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<sup>62</sup> *ARNS*, 1905, 3; *ARNS*, 1912, 3. This number does not account for small gardens such as Ethel Glawson's at Pleasant Harbour, nor for the dozens of "home-school gardens" that students tended on their own with supervision and instruction from their teachers. This was the most common form of educational gardening during and after the First World War, when gardening received a boost both from the *Agricultural Instruction Act* funding and from the belief that it was a patriotic activity. See Norman, *Loran Arthur DeWolfe*, 48-52; von Baeyer, *Rhetoric and Roses*.

circumstances, such as climate, space constraints, and the number of children, were meant to be taken into consideration, school garden advocates also insisted that the overall goals, plans, and uses for any *real* school garden should conform to certain predetermined criteria. Indeed, while it was suggested to teachers and school trustees that “Even a poor garden is of some educational value,”<sup>63</sup> in truth such efforts were deemed inadmissible into even the category of true school gardens. While gardens described as “a credit to teachers, pupils, and neighborhood, healthful and helpful in their general influence” were awarded funding, they were, according to one observer at least, “not school gardens in the best sense of the term.”<sup>64</sup> The true label was restricted to those such as the one illustrated in figure 35, drawn by Loran DeWolfe, the Director of Rural Science Schools for Nova Scotia. This diagram shows a suggested plan for a garden measuring one hundred feet by eighty feet. An elaborate ornamental border surrounds it, made up of various species of roses on one side, blackberries and raspberries on another, a wildwood hedge and climbing plants on the third, and a series of flowering bushes on the fourth. Once inside, the visitor would be met by a plot for grains, an elaborate display of flowers, and many tidy rows of vegetables and fruits, including lettuce, cauliflower, radishes, brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, beets, turnip, kale, broccoli, parsnips, salsify, beans, spinach, celery, onions, potatoes, corn, peas, tomatoes, carrots, swiss chard, various herbs, strawberries, asparagus, rhubarb, cucumbers, currants, and gooseberries.

A plan is required for the success of any garden, but in the explanatory notes for his diagram, DeWolfe is meticulous. He writes, for example, that “in the vegetable garden, the rows are uniformly twenty inches apart. As cauliflower and brussels sprouts

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<sup>63</sup> ARNS, 1908, 180.

<sup>64</sup> Miller, *Rural Schools in Canada*, 79-80.

should have more room than this, a row of radishes comes between.” He notes that this will teach the principles of companion cropping, while other areas of the garden, for example, “where cabbage or peas follow lettuce,” will teach successive cropping.<sup>65</sup> These are excellent lessons, taught, it would seem, equally well in gardens without precisely measured rows.

Underlying designs such as this—and there were many produced—were recommendations that gardens should teach real agricultural skills, as well as a more general appreciation of nature, as mentioned above, but also that they should contribute to the overall “beautification” of the school grounds. While this was certainly an admirable plan, the mind boggles to imagine it actually being carried out even in a rudimentary way at the majority of rural schools. More significantly for our purposes, the implication here is that the wild, unmanicured areas surrounding rural schools—the very scenes celebrated by Frank Adams in his photographs—required beautification, were not deemed “beautiful” in their natural state. A beautiful school ground was an orderly and productive school ground. Moreover, the proposed sites of school gardens were consistently referred to by reformers as though they were blank slates or empty spaces just waiting to be filled with tidy rows of beans, petunias, and rose hedges. On the contrary, as Adams shows, these areas were often filled with naturally occurring flora such as grasses, shrubs, trees, and wildflowers, as well as distinctive geological formations. The rocky landscape of the Spry Bay school has already been mentioned as one that challenged the impulses of the school gardening movement, but several others appear to be particularly unruly as well, including the lush setting of the Middle Stewiacke school (fig. 2), where tall plants have nearly overtaken a small boy sitting at

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<sup>65</sup> Loran A. DeWolfe, “The Model School Garden: Nova Scotia,” *Agricultural Gazette* 2, no. 3 (1915): 269.

the front right corner of the photograph, his body two-thirds obscured by the leafy foliage. The children of the Five Islands school (fig. 14) posed for their photograph arranged on a disorderly assemblage of old logs and random bits of wood with a messy patch of grass before them. Yet it is clear in the photograph that the space is not only visually dynamic, it is also an animated environment with which the children have been interacting. Some of them hold bouquets of wildflowers in their hands as they pose. A boy, Leslie Alcorn, at the top left of the photo has inserted himself into the skinny branches of an alder.

Without over-stating the obvious—that the proposed discipline of nature in the school yard replicated the kinds of discipline enacted on the bodies and minds of pupils in public schools—it is nevertheless worth noting the extent to which such orderliness was prescribed for all aspects of the elementary school experience. In the context of school gardens, Greene has argued that the type of rigid ordering seen in the plans for the gardens, which could be mandated and overseen by a centralized authority, was integral to the practices of the Macdonald Robertson movement as a whole. Indeed, she argues that the relative success and failure of the various arms of the movement hinged on “the ease with which” each could be “standardized and centrally controlled.”<sup>66</sup> With this in mind, the orderliness of the gardens should then be viewed not only as a *product* of the reform movement, but also as the means by which its aims were pursued. Visual materials such as DeWolfe’s garden plan and others discussed below suggest that the ideal was for this standardization to be exercised down to the minute levels of bodies and

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<sup>66</sup> Kristen Jane Greene, “Macdonald Robertson Movement,” 4.

soil.<sup>67</sup> But what is essential to note here is that the proposed discipline does not play out in the images produced by Frank Adams.

Adams's photographs document landscapes that appear to defy any outside imposition, and bodies that interact with these landscapes in intimate, highly unregulated ways. Corbett suggests that the very wildness of rural areas, celebrated by Adams, in fact contributed to the ability of rural communities to resist standardized education. He writes that "the normalizing of schooling operates more effectively in the context of urban spaces, already colonized by linear constitution of space and work time. Simply by their resistance to becoming engineered spaces, rural areas were sites for the development of localised identities, community, and idiosyncratic forms of resistance to the project of schooling."<sup>68</sup> By presenting these sites/sights and behaviours as virtuous and admirable, or at very least acceptable, Adams was actively contradicting official efforts to stamp out such unruliness.

Of course Adams did not always choose wild, natural backdrops. One exception is a 1911 photograph of Burncoat school (fig. 15), in which the teacher and children pose gathered around their neatly corded firewood, or at least what remains of the pile in June. While kindling is scattered messily about in the foreground, the main visual statement here is nevertheless one of a regulated, man-made scene, including tidy grazing fields in the distance, rather than the untouched backdrops of dark woods and tangled weeds seen in many of Adams's other photographs. Yet, even here, while by no means disorderly, and in fact quite precisely placed, Adams has posed his subjects in a casual, almost

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<sup>67</sup> On the discipline of the soil, see for example a memo from Robertson to the garden instructors in March 1905, which specified directions for "illustration plots" including instructions such as "all manured alike" and "no manure." James W. Robertson, "Memorandum sent to teachers in charge of Macdonald school gardens," March 31, 1905, [4], CIHM/ICMH Microfiche series, no. 97321.

<sup>68</sup> Corbett, "A Protracted Struggle," 28-29.

familial arrangement where the children and their teacher exude a certain relaxed quality.

Here, as elsewhere, Adams succeeds in capturing the image of a group of children, not a group of students. Within the restrictions of a fairly formal group portrait, Adams allows all his young subjects the full range of positions and expressions that he would allow any other group of people. For example, compare these school photographs to a picture taken during a picnic at Five Islands (fig. 36). Nellie Adams (centre front) and her friends with their party dresses, bonnets and bouquets are meticulously arranged and posed on a verdant backdrop, all without placing anyone in severe, straight rows—an arrangement that would have been totally inappropriate for such a festive occasion. The overall visual effect is simply a pleasant occasion. Similarly, in his best school photographs, Adams recreates the representational idiom of a moment to be captured, rather than an institution to be documented. Individuals are often unevenly spaced. Friends touch each other affectionately or cluster together while others set themselves apart and use the space to stretch out their small bodies. Like the picnic photograph, these groupings are not disorderly, and could not be mistaken for candid. However, many of them nevertheless confront our expectation for school photographs to embody a particular notion of “school” that insists on discipline and order. We expect straight lines. This is so much the case that some of Adams photographs risk being mislabeled in archives as something other than school photographs.<sup>69</sup>

Adams’s interpretation of “school” in this period seems to have included very few straight lines. As Corbett suggests, his decision to place his subjects in natural backdrops

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<sup>69</sup> When the photograph of Oyster Pond school was first described to me informally as documentation of a “Sunday school picnic,” it was a description that seemed perfectly acceptable. Only later was it revealed by another source to be a school photograph. Similarly, I originally interpreted the photograph of the Burncoat school to be a family portrait before taking a closer look.

made it virtually impossible for him to replicate the kinds of straight lines and standardization that would be available in other settings. For example, Adams's school photographs from a later period demonstrate the kind of uniformity available in urban settings. Here the grade two class of LeMarchant school in Halifax in 1929 sits posed on the back steps of their school (fig. 37). At first glance the grouping is not radically different from Adams's earlier rural photographs, but on closer inspection the differences emerge. Rather than the somewhat haphazard arrangements that follow the contours and random seating options of rural spaces, the steps here create four uniform, evenly spaced rows of seats so that everyone is able to pose in identical positions. Additionally, all the children in a single row are able to sit at the same level creating four straight lines of little faces across the photograph. The uniformity is heightened further by the fact that this is a photograph of a single grade. This means that the children are generally all about the same size, but it also points to the kinds of organizational gradations and categories that simply do not apply to small rural schools. In this way, Adams's photographs of rural schools replicated the contingency of their day-to-day ordering.

This is visible in his photographs, and it was put on display in the homes of some of these children. Adams's images privilege a particular vision of rural schooling that contrasts sharply with the vision proposed by reform advocates. Returning to the school garden as our representative example of reform initiatives, figure 38 shows a publicity photograph of children working in a Macdonald Robertson school garden in Galetta, Ontario, on a sunny day in late spring or early summer. This photograph conforms to the observation made by Sally Kolhstedt, that school gardens were "typically photographed during spring planting season or later when colorful tulips, daisies or sunflowers reached

full bloom and healthy vegetables” were on display.<sup>70</sup> The garden is certainly flourishing here, though some of its vibrancy and much of its detail is undoubtedly lost in this static black and white image. But what this photograph really highlights is that the children are actively *working* in their garden, rather than only enjoying it. Each child, boys and girls interspersed, is positioned with a rake, most with heads down, apparently engrossed in their chores. The exception is a small girl at the foreground of the photograph who holds a watering can. The scene is being carefully overseen by two men, presumably, their teacher and gardening instructor, who stand just outside the group of children. Their school is visible in the background. If the message here was not clear enough that the children were to be interpreted as the next generation of farmers, the caption “A busy half hour” further emphasizes the labour of the children, rather than the product of their efforts. Indeed, garden boosters would assert, as Ottawa school inspector R.H. Cowley did in a 1905 article in *Queen’s Quarterly*, that ultimately it is the child who is the product of the garden. Cowley writes that “the garden is the means, the pupil is the end,” and—returning to the theme of order—that “a well ordered pupil rather than a well ordered garden is the supreme end of it all.”<sup>71</sup>

While it is no surprise that children appear in photographs like this one, such images are also part of a spectrum of visual representations of reform in which children predominated. James Opp has noted that “children were prominent in the documentary activities of social reformers for a number of reasons. It was obviously easier to capture images of children than to take photographs of adults, who might have resisted the imposition. More importantly, however, the bodies of children drew attention to the

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<sup>70</sup> Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, “‘A Better Crop of Boys and Girls’: The School Gardening Movement, 1890-1920,” *History of Education Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (2008): 59.

<sup>71</sup> Cowley, “Macdonald School Gardens,” 399, 409.

moral codes ascribed to the social space that surrounds them. . . . The pliable nature of children in the face of their environment indicated that the space surrounding the child's body held a particular moral significance."<sup>72</sup> By showing these children at work in their garden in the context of a glowing article about the successes of school gardens, education reform advocates implicitly specified gardens as appropriate environments for children, and by extension "the cultivation of the soil as an ideal life-work"<sup>73</sup> for any rural person.

Clearly Adams did not intend to position schoolchildren as labourers in his photographs. If the relatively casual arrangement of bodies in his photographs contrasted with what is expected of school photographs generally, it contrasted even more dramatically with the intentions of reform advocates who wished to use images of children's disciplined bodies in highly organized landscapes to promote the ideal of manual education in rural schools and to symbolize the more profound discipline that would be its result. For example, Crowley notes that after some time working in a school garden, "pupils hitherto troublesome have become orderly and docile."<sup>74</sup>

On the contrary, many of Adams's photographs actually show children lounging on the ground, almost lying down, which is fairly precisely the opposite of disciplined work. Arms are folded or hands rest in laps. These are children at leisure, not at work. The boy at the front right of the class at Upper Stewiacke (fig. 7) seems particularly at leisure, while students at the very back of the photograph—three boys, and two girls—pal around, their hands on each other's shoulders. Adams's photographs are no less posed

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<sup>72</sup> James Opp, "Re-imagining the Moral Order of Urban Space: Religion and Photography in Winnipeg, 1900-14," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 13, no. 1 (2002): 85-86.

<sup>73</sup> Cowley, "Macdonald School Gardens," 399.

<sup>74</sup> Cowley, "Macdonald School Gardens," 417.

than the publicity photographs of school gardens, and his choice to emphasize particular aspects of the environment over others was just as explicit. It should be noted that Adams could just as easily have chosen to photograph the children indoors at their desks,<sup>75</sup> during their calisthenics drill, or standing in front of their schoolhouse (the latter a topic that will be returned to below). It is also possible, though unlikely, that school gardens sat just outside the frame of Adams's photographs and that he chose not to show them off. While the slight was not likely so explicit as this, and, indeed, it is unlikely that Adams aimed to frustrate the efforts of rural school reformers at all, it must nevertheless be noted that his images produced, and continue to produce, a range of meanings about rural schools that challenge those forwarded by reformers.

School gardens, like many of the other ambitious reforms promoted in the period, were simply at odds with the priorities and realities of rural life, particularly in small, remote places. Paul Axelrod has noted that "the challenge of preserving Canada's rural heritage was compounded by the special problems of country schools themselves."<sup>76</sup> Nova Scotia passed its Free Schools Act in 1864, clearing the way for accessible schools in communities across the province. However, the implementation of universal elementary education was a long and uneven process, particularly in rural areas where small dispersed populations, intransigent rate-payers, and a lack of teachers made setting up and running schools a significant challenge. Even when they were up and running, encouraging children's attendance at these schools remained a struggle well into the

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<sup>75</sup> This seems to have been the major representational idiom for school photographs in some other parts of North America in this period. See, for example, the various responses to the post "Class Pictures and School Photography" on the H-Education listserv, November-December, 2008, <http://www.h-net.org/~educ>.

<sup>76</sup> Axelrod, *Promise of Schooling*, 114.

twentieth century. Irregular attendance was often the best that could be hoped for, particularly in areas where seasonal labour was required from children, or where the schoolhouse was not always easily accessible by a dispersed population. In his 1900 report, one school inspector fretted that “berry-picking and lobster packing seriously affect the attendance in a number of the sections on the sea shore during the most favorable months of the year.” Ten years later, those concerns had not yet been fully addressed and the same inspector added that he felt that the summer vacation was too long and inconveniently timed for rural schools because “only those children living near the school building are able to attend regularly during the broken weather” of the winter.<sup>77</sup>

The seasonal patterns of rural life described in the introduction of this thesis defied the aspirations of reformers for standardized education applied uniformly across all communities. Corbett calls this “rurality in resistance” where the “typical economic activities” of rural places “are at odds with the structure of schooling.”<sup>78</sup> The inspector quoted above downplays the legitimacy of “berry-picking and lobster packing” as an excuse for missing school. Likewise, one of his colleagues notes sarcastically that “our country people are very slow in taking advantage of opportunities held out to them. Many of them seem to think that if their children were unable to pick strawberries in July or run about the hay fields in August, some extraordinary financial loss would be entailed.”<sup>79</sup>

The contingencies of rural life and the continuing tendency of rural people to view formal education among a spectrum of valuable pursuits challenged the efforts of reformers, and also challenges the historiography of the period. Historians have

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<sup>77</sup> *ARNS*, 1900, 61; *ARNS*, 1911, 64.

<sup>78</sup> Corbett, “A Protracted Struggle,” 24.

<sup>79</sup> *ARNS*, 1908, 178.

characterized the early years of the twentieth century as the period in which schooling was finally formalized across Canada following the immense efforts of education advocates, bureaucrats and others. For example, Neil Sutherland, whose work remains among the best national assessments of education in the period, writes that “out of all these efforts on the one hand and growing community pressure to conform on the other came first the idea, then the belief, and finally the ingrained social habit that going to school was not only what all children did as a normal part of their childhood but that they did so as a matter of course promptly every day over the whole school year for a gradually increasing number of years.”<sup>80</sup> While it is certainly true that this idea was normalized during this period, it nevertheless paints an overly rosy picture of the actual improvements taking place in the accessibility of Canadian education on the ground. Similarly, studies that focus on a particular aspect or aspects of reform have the effect of overemphasizing them and overstating their actual reach.

While education systems as a whole improved and expanded across the country, looking at the picture on a national scale overshadows the continued challenges of individual rural schools in the period, not to mention urban schools in underprivileged areas of cities and towns. For example, in the first decade of the twentieth century, a period that historians celebrate for its vast overall improvement in the qualifications of teachers, the annual reports of the Nova Scotia Superintendent of Education were consistently filled with words of concern for the unqualified teachers being hired throughout the province to fill rural schools where no other teachers could be engaged. The inspector for Halifax County expressed a common concern when he described the

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<sup>80</sup> Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society*, 168-169. This is mirrored in more recent work, for example Axelrod, *Promise of Schooling*.

ongoing problems faced in the recruitment of qualified teachers in his district. He reported that more than a third were “young girls from seventeen to twenty years of age, with no training other than that incidentally received in their common school course from teachers of limited scholarship and experience. This means that a very large proportion of schools in this division are taught by novices, the pupils of this year being the teachers next year.”<sup>81</sup> Corbett insists that historians must continue to note differences between rural and urban education norms and “challenge assumptions about state hegemony and the shape of ‘Canadian education’ as though this were a uniform entity.”<sup>82</sup>

For provincial education officials the “rural problem” was a much more specific problem relating to rural school attendance and teacher qualifications, but its solution proved to be equally elusive. George Perry has shown that well into the post war period, salaries and training standards for teachers in Nova Scotia lagged well behind those of the national average. Perry argues that local and provincial education authorities regularly made “concessions” to employ under-qualified, inexperienced, usually female, teachers throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to deal with apparent teacher shortages.<sup>83</sup> The result of these concessions was low wages which subsequently led many of their better-trained counterparts to leave the province, lured to the West, where wages and working conditions were far superior to those in Nova Scotia. It also convinced other

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<sup>81</sup> *ARNS*, 1910, 64.

<sup>82</sup> Corbett, “A Protracted Struggle,” 41.

<sup>83</sup> George Perry, “‘A Concession to Circumstances’: Nova Scotia’s ‘Unlimited Supply’ of Women Teachers, 1870-1960,” *Historical Studies in Education* 15, no. 2 (2003): 327-360. See also Patrick J. Harrigan, “The Development of a Corps of Public School Teachers in Canada, 1870-1980,” *History of Education Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (1992): 500-501.

promising young people to forgo a teaching career altogether, choosing instead to move to the cities and towns of the province or elsewhere for work.<sup>84</sup>

Frank Adams's photographs are an explicit visualization of this situation of non-attendance and young, inexperienced, female teachers. While many rural communities did contain very small numbers of children, the unevenly gendered and aged groups in some of Adams's photographs certainly did not represent the entire population. In particular, the striking absence of older boys in many photographs, as well as their overall rarity through the entire group of class pictures, points to a general prioritization of paid (or unpaid) labour over formal education among that segment of the population, at least in June when the majority of these photographs seem to have been taken. Indeed, this is so common that interpretive questions centre not on the absent boys, but on the ones who are present. Why, for example, is there a single strapping young man in the photograph of the Otter Brook school (fig. 3)? How is he different from the other boys of his age who have chosen, or been forced, to forgo class on this day?

At the same time, the presence of older girls in several of these photographs highlights the small age difference between them and many of their teachers. Indeed, many teachers are difficult to discern at all. In the photograph of Crossroads school (fig. 5), head teacher Della Mae Fulmore stands clearly apart, physically and in years, from her students, but her assistant teacher blends in unnoticed. At age 18, Stella Logan, seated

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<sup>84</sup> Perry, "A Concession to Circumstances." The flow of teachers out of the province was a constant subject of discussion in the annual reports of the Superintendent of Education, 1900-1913. On the recruitment of rural female labour into the industrial centres of the province, see D.A. Muise, "The Industrial Context of Inequality: Female Participation in Nova Scotia's Paid Labour Force, 1871-1921," *Acadiensis* 20, no. 2 (1991): 3-31. For an analysis of migration from Atlantic Canada that suggests that young women were at the forefront of the movement, see Patricia Thornton, "The Problem of Out-Migration from Atlantic Canada, 1871-1921: A New Look," *Acadiensis* 15, no. 1 (1985): 3-34. For a discussion of Maritime women's migration more generally, see Betsy Beattie, *Obligation and Opportunity: Single, Maritime Women in Boston, 1870-1930* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

at the far left of the second row, next to her sister Bertha and among several of her other siblings, had already been a teacher for at least a year.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, it is likely that one or more of the young women in the photograph of Masstown school (fig. 16) was a teacher, in addition to the more obvious woman standing apart at the left of the photograph. The young women in many other photographs stand out as teachers only because of the absence of others of their age in the pictures. The small, somewhat timid looking woman at the left of the photograph of Middle Stewiacke school (fig. 2) would be indistinguishable from the students in many other photographs. Only the photograph of Burncoat (fig. 15) shows a male teacher, underscoring the rarity of their presence in rural schools where wages were very low.

Many observers at the time accused some rural school trustees of intentionally maintaining the pattern of low wages and unqualified teachers in order to avoid the costs of a more qualified, and thus more expensive, teacher of which there were, they alleged, plenty available. This topic was consistently addressed in annual reports of the Superintendent of Education but for some reason the 1911 report was particularly hysterical: "The cause of poor schools and of vacant schools is due not partly, but entirely to the fact, that the trustees are not willing to pay the wage of a Glace Bay donkey driver for a teacher. It is a disgrace to our civilization that such a condition should exist without recognition by the wise men of the school section. . . . the parental and patriotic

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<sup>85</sup> Della Mae Fulmore is named as the teacher on the photograph's annotations. Stella Logan is listed only as a student, but her entry in the 1911 census indicates that she had already started teaching at that time. 1911 Census of Canada, Nova Scotia, Colchester, district 21, Upper Stewiacke East poll district, page 8, line 17.

intelligence of many of the inhabitants of the vacant school sections is of an order lower than those to whom we send missionaries.”<sup>86</sup>

While here MacKay is writing specifically about school sections with no school at all, in the context of the report the implication extended to sections that offered wages sufficient only to attract teachers of low qualifications.<sup>87</sup> As mentioned earlier, the true motives of rural communities in this matter are difficult to assess, but, in the absence of more direct primary documents, critically parsing the comments of education officials provides some clues. It is unlikely that most communities were as viciously anti-education, as “opposed to change,” or as “unwilling and hostile” as the officials suggest.<sup>88</sup> Many were legitimately impoverished. In her study of a rural school district in Quebec, Mary Anne Poutanen has described the difficult position faced by local school trustees who had to impose taxes on their often struggling neighbours.<sup>89</sup> That people were generally interested in their local schools is clear from the many bits of news about teachers and schools that appear in the rural community notes of the *Truro Daily News*.<sup>90</sup> However, in some cases small remote school sections, which contained only a handful of

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<sup>86</sup> *ARNS*, 1911, xvi. A “Glance Bay donkey driver” would have referred derisively to an unskilled mine worker. MacKay continued, complaining that Canadian missionaries preferred “to go to the ends of the earth among those who speak another language, than endure the inglorious martyrdom necessary to turn the hearts of the fathers to their own children in obscure localities in their own land.” For another particularly overt accusation, this one from WR Campbell, inspector for Colchester County, see *ARNS*, 1910, 115.

<sup>87</sup> Recommended salaries for teachers were scaled first by the gender of the teacher (with men receiving significantly higher wages) and then by the class of their teaching license, from A-class to D-class, the latter requiring only graduation from grade nine and a written qualifying exam. Miller, *Rural Schools in Canada*, 57; for a chart of national qualification standards, see 52-55. Each year in the middle of September, after school trustees had made an appropriate show of attempting to attract a qualified teacher, temporary licenses were allowed to be issued to teachers who did not meet even the minimum requirements of a D-class license. During the 1911-1912 year, forty-three percent of teachers in Nova Scotia held either a D-class or temporary license, with the vast majority of them concentrated in rural areas. *ARNS*, 1912, 4.

<sup>88</sup> *ARNS*, 1910, xvi; *ARNS*, 1911, xvi.

<sup>89</sup> Poutanen, “Unless she gives better satisfaction,” 247-250. See also Jean Cochrane, *The One-Room School in Canada* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1981), 40; Peabody, *School Days*, 102.

<sup>90</sup> At least once, the *Daily News* was also used as a vehicle to chastise neighbours who were not sending their children to school, noting the fines of two dollars being imposed by the trustees on “quite a number of our friends.” See *Truro Daily News*, community notes for West Liscombe, April 13, 1912, 3.

children, meant that the vast majority of rate-payers were not parents themselves and so felt the school tax to be an imposition. While on one hand this appears to have been a fairly simple anti-tax (and thus anti-government) attitude, one common solution proposed by the communities was that the provincial government should in fact pay for the school itself.<sup>91</sup> In other communities, however, as mentioned above, government impositions into schooling, such as recommendations for consolidation, were fought aggressively on the grounds that it was each community's right to maintain direct control and ownership over their own school, with trustees drawn from the membership of the community itself.

In attempting to access the impressions of the rural people who made these decisions, it is useful to return to Corbett's understanding of rural resistance. It is important to acknowledge alternative readings of this situation, such as interpretations of the opposition to consolidation as fervent community pride and self-preservation, rather than simply as ignorance or anti-education sentiment on the part of the rate-payers of the community. As Reynolds has argued in his study of Iowa, resistance to school reforms was the result of a complex admixture of social relations, community politics and economics that cannot be reduced to simple intransigence.<sup>92</sup>

Reynolds also emphasizes the specific place-based conditions of each community. It must be noted that some communities were in such remote or otherwise unfavourable locations that attracting any teacher at all was a significant challenge. While Nova Scotia was hardly a frontier society in the early twentieth century, there were still many areas that lacked significant populations and even basic services, including some in the interior of the province and the many island communities along the coasts. The shifting fortunes

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<sup>91</sup> See for example, *ARNS*, 1911, xvii; *ARNS*, 1910, xv-xvi.

<sup>92</sup> Reynolds, *There Goes the Neighborhood*, esp. 85-105.

of many resource-based communities, such as those surrounding gold mines or forestry projects, meant that those populations were largely transient and did not produce the settled institutions that would appeal to teachers. Majority black schools throughout the province also struggled to attract teachers and were often among the poorest school sections due to the historical and ongoing racism that marginalized their communities and prevented their access to educational, and other, resources.<sup>93</sup> While the school system in Nova Scotia in the early twentieth century was not officially segregated, the law was ambiguous on the topic with the result that segregated schools did exist. Other schools were informally, but nonetheless effectively, segregated due to “residential segregation,” especially in rural areas.<sup>94</sup> In 1911, the black school in Tracadie was unable to obtain a teacher at all, while two years later the school at Five Mile Plains was “in a very bad condition.” The county inspector seemed a bit disheartened to report that “this is a colored school, and the people are not wealthy. A new building is required, but it will be a heavy undertaking for the section.”<sup>95</sup> What is missing here, as above, is a sense of how the community felt about their school being in disrepair and whether this was a case of ambivalence or strictly one of financial hardship. (It is also worth noting that the standards for repair imposed by the inspector may not have been shared by this or any other community itself.) But the lack of a critical word against the community in the inspector’s report, which was so common in reports of condemned and vacant schools, suggests that he did not feel they were being intentionally neglectful. Subsequent

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<sup>93</sup> See Perry, “A Concession to Circumstances,” 336; Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 362-389. See also R. Bruce Shepard, “The Little ‘White’ Schoolhouse: Racism in a Saskatchewan Rural School,” *Saskatchewan History* 39, no. 3 (1986): 81-93.

<sup>94</sup> Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 376, 376-380.

<sup>95</sup> *ARNS*, 1911, 83; *ARNS*, 1913, 62.

evidence of the community's active attention to the school in Five Mile Plains is that in 1927, following a protest of their school taxes for unknown reasons, the community put up two hundred dollars towards their school fund to match that offered by the area's major employer, the Canadian Gypsum Company.<sup>96</sup>

The schoolchildren at Five Mile Plains were photographed sometime around 1912 by an amateur photographer, possibly the school's teacher. This photograph, featured by the Nova Scotia Archives in a virtual exhibition on its website, is a rare example of an early image of a majority black school.<sup>97</sup> However, as Eric Margolis has noted in his study of digital photo archives, it is very difficult to know whether school photographs of people of colour are "not present because they were not made, because many fewer were made, because they were not preserved, or because they were not archived."<sup>98</sup> In the context of Nova Scotia, the existence of this photograph, as well as the absence of many visible people of colour in Frank Adams's extant photographs, emphasize the social boundaries and limitations on mobility that belie the facility with which Adams himself moved about the province.

The inspector's close attention to the state of the schoolhouse in Five Mile Plains corresponds to the extensive attention given to schoolhouses in general in official literature on education. The schoolhouse was posited by education authorities as the ostensible "intellectual centre of the section even for those who long ago passed through" it, while the school's library would ideally furnish reading material for the entire

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<sup>96</sup> Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 380.

<sup>97</sup> See "School at Five Mile Plains where Miss DeWolf taught around 1912," *African Nova Scotians in the Age of Slavery and Abolition*, virtual exhibition, Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management, 2004, <http://www.gov.ns.ca/nsarm/virtual/africanns/archives.asp?ID=166>.

<sup>98</sup> Margolis, "Class Pictures," 14.

community.<sup>99</sup> More concretely, in the smallest communities the school often acted as a meeting house and centre for community activities. For example, in addition to the regular pie socials and other fundraising events, the schoolhouse in Meagher's Grant hosted a meeting of Liberal candidates campaigning in the 1911 election when they passed through the area. The schoolhouse in tiny Mooseland served as the chapel when Rev. William McLeod, the itinerant minister who served the various communities in the area, led a service in the village. The Mooseland correspondent to the *Truro Daily News* noted with certain pride that "Mr. McLeod was much pleased with the neat and tidy appearance of the up-to-date schoolroom," adding that "Bruce Jackson and Ernest Prest have just finished shingling and painting the roof of the schoolhouse."<sup>100</sup>

But beyond its physical significance, references to the schoolhouse often blurred into symbolic representation. As a rule, the physical state of the schoolhouse was read as a metonym for the community in which it was located. The symbolic weight assigned to the school building is not unique to this context. Various historians have shown how central community buildings, such as the town hall in Robert Tittler's early modern English example, have been used by community leaders both practically *and* metaphorically to "foster their [particular] image of civic culture" and have acted as symbols of civic authority as much as concrete sites of that authority.<sup>101</sup> In the case of the building and upkeep of the early twentieth-century rural schoolhouse, the opening passage of *Plans for Rural School Buildings* (1909), published by the Ontario Department of Education, is typical of the type of heavy-handed rhetoric that

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<sup>99</sup> See, for example, *Nova Scotia Journal of Education*, April 1911, 141.

<sup>100</sup> *Truro Daily News*, community notes for Meagher's Grant, June 5, 1911, 6; Mooseland, August 21, 1912, 7.

<sup>101</sup> Robert Tittler, *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Urban Community, c. 1500-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 119, passim esp. 93-97.

accompanied such discussions: “‘Show me your school-houses,’ said a shrewd farmer. ‘They will tell me more about the people of your township than I can learn in any other way. The school-houses have no prejudices, they speak the truth, and the whole truth, about the attitude of your municipality towards all that makes for genuine progress.’ That farmer was right. ‘Like people, like school,’ is true oftener than it is not.”<sup>102</sup> The same sentiment was expressed in the *Nova Scotia School Manual* (1911), which included plans and specifications for rural schools. The phrasing here was less folksy but no less evocative, particularly in its reference to the special position of children in the community. “The school house with its grounds is a very true index of the general public spirit and intelligence of the school section. Being the common centre of habitation for a large portion of the day of that part of every family naturally drawing forth the deepest emotions of affection and interest, the character of the school house and its environment must substantially reflect the sentiment of the community.”<sup>103</sup>

Given the weight and prevalence of this rhetoric, and the strong link that was meant to be drawn between a community and its school, it is therefore very surprising to note that Adams’s photographs of school groups from this period very rarely show schoolhouses at all, whether inside or out. Yet evidence about the character of these schoolhouses begins to reveal the logic of Adams’s choices. Official documents, and indeed extant school buildings, reveal the level of standardization imposed on and embraced by schoolhouse builders beginning in the late nineteenth century. For example, it was with palpable delight that one inspector announced the construction of two new

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<sup>102</sup> Ontario. Department of Education, *Plans for Rural School Buildings, with Estimates of Cost and Forms of Specifications and Agreements* (Toronto: L.K. Cameron, King’s Printer, 1909), 5.

<sup>103</sup> Nova Scotia. Council of Public Instruction, *Manual of the Public Instruction Acts and Regulations of the Council of Public Instruction of Nova Scotia* (Halifax, NS: King’s Printer, 1911), 119. Hereafter cited as NS, *School Manual*.

schools in his district in 1912, writing that “two large school buildings are now in process of erection in Sydney . . . They are exactly the same in every detail.”<sup>104</sup>

As mentioned above, the Nova Scotia *School Manual* provided three architectural plans for acceptable rural schoolhouses (as well as a single outhouse design) from which local trustees were compelled to choose. While the *Manual* was supplied to every school in the province, it was made clear for whom the architectural plans were intended.

Preceding several pages of very particular instructions, the authors note with no shortage of condescension that the “directions are intended more particularly for rural schools, as in the towns the custom has already been established by trustee and school commissioners, of examining the most modern improvements before proceeding to build, and of employing a competent architect.”<sup>105</sup>

Of the three architectural plans included in the *Manual*, Rural School House No. 2 was the most elaborately rendered in its illustrations, and was thus presumably the most highly recommended. But in the period 1900 to 1913, the most popular model for schools that had to be replaced seems to have been the simplest, smallest, and most basic, Rural School House No. 1 (fig. 39).<sup>106</sup> The design, by Halifax architect Herbert E. Gates, who also designed the period’s showpiece educational building, the Nova Scotia Technical College (now the Architecture building of Dalhousie University), included a variety of progressive features while maintaining the simplest overall plan possible. Placement of windows to allow for adequate lighting, and particular attention to heating and ventilation, with a focus on the “insidious” effects of “impure air” were both highlighted,

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<sup>104</sup> *ARNS*, 1912, 84.

<sup>105</sup> NS, *School Manual*, 119.

<sup>106</sup> In the county inspectors’ annual reports (*ARNS*, 1900-1913), Plan No. 1 is the only one ever mentioned directly as being built. The “identical” schools built in Sydney are the exception.

as was a discussion of the best possible seating arrangements (single desks adjustable to the sizes of the pupils) and those arrangements acceptable only “where economy is desirable” (double desks and seats).<sup>107</sup>

Yet like the school gardens described above, while these designs undeniably offered many advantages for the well-being of pupils, the extent to which standardization was prescribed appears unnecessarily suffocating. Every aspect of the construction was minutely attended to. For one example, the instructions for laying the floors read as follows: “Under floor to be of 1” dry hemlock and top floor of 1” narrow, mill-planed spruce, not to exceed 6” in width. Put stout paper between these floors and turn up 1” on walls.”<sup>108</sup> Of note here, as with all the instructions, is that these are not actually directions for how to lay a floor. It is presumed that the reader already knows how to do this, as well as how to put up walls, and so on, indeed how to build a schoolhouse. But despite this presumed knowledge, the builder nevertheless is not trusted to finish the job appropriately without instruction. Likewise, the instructions demand “two (or three) coats best white-lead paint” on “the whole exterior of the building,”<sup>109</sup> perhaps in fear that ignorant or miserly rural trustees might try to get away with just one coat of low grade paint on the school that they had built for their children. Or (worse still?) that they might paint their schoolhouse a colour other than white!

These details have no bearing on the soundness of the building and only serve to interfere with the possibility of vernacular forms of ornamentation or design in the finishing of the school house. It was noted in the *School Manual* that “More expensive, commodious and ornate buildings are not only permissible but desirable where school

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<sup>107</sup> NS, *School Manual*, 121-123.

<sup>108</sup> NS, *School Manual*, 279.

<sup>109</sup> NS, *School Manual*, 279.

sections can afford them.”<sup>110</sup> However, this qualifier, like the inclusion of the very public job at rural school sections implied by the schoolhouse instructions to begin with, only further marginalized small rural school sections that were not able to add such luxuries. Changes to the plans were permissible only if they “improved” the state of the schoolhouse, a subjective qualification linked significantly to cost: the alterations were only acceptable if they were “more expensive.” School sections with funds to spare were thus able to express themselves to some extent in terms of architecture and design while smaller and poorer school sections were not given leeway to improvise within their means.

The extent to which these minute prescriptions were actually applied in the building of new schoolhouses is difficult to ascertain; however, once again, what is important here is the discursive emphasis on the virtue of standardization and uniformity that pervades this literature.<sup>111</sup> The schoolhouse design instructions in the Nova Scotia *School Manual* underscore the fact that the schoolhouse itself, far from reflecting the unique identity of each community, instead acted as a further symbol of the standardization being inscribed on the landscape of rural Nova Scotia by the forces of educational modernization. While many communities embraced such forces and such symbols, others were less enthusiastic.

At any rate, it is clear that Adams did not believe that the schoolhouse was the most evocative spokesperson of community identity. Rather than positioning students in front of, or inside, their schools, Adams usually chose, as we have seen, to place them in

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<sup>110</sup> NS, *School Manual*, 121.

<sup>111</sup> On the importance of distinguishing between archival documentation of architecture and built artifacts see Kent Kleinman, “Archiving/Architecture,” in *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, ed. Francis X. Blouin and William G. Rosenberg (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 54-60.

unique local settings. Like the poem about Upper Stewiacke discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Adams chose to depict the natural scenery of the place, rather than the modern interventions that have been imposed on it. By celebrating these naturally occurring backdrops, Adams was showcasing the uniqueness of each community in a way that was at odds with the standardization espoused by reformers. And crucially, it was Adams's photographs, not the promotional materials, that were circulated and cherished among rural families. While his photographs eventually ended up in archives, they were originally destined for family photo albums and mantelpieces, contributing to the imagination and construction of particular family narratives. Burke and de Castro's claim that the school photograph straddles the boundaries between home and school is central to an appreciation of the potential clout of Adams's vision in relation to the seemingly much more influential voices of educational authorities.<sup>112</sup>

By taking them seriously, we must note that Adams did not make these images by mistake; their form, style, and content are as intentional as those of the more official documents. Yet Adams's haphazard arrangements seem to fit more closely with the contingencies and rhythms of rural life in Nova Scotia in 1912 than the representations of reformers who wished to impose systems of standardization and discipline on the bodies and landscapes of the province. As an itinerant photographer, working outside the bureaucracy of the school system, Adams's particular talents for composing groups of people and his emphasis on unique, locally-specific scenery made his school photographs particularly effective in visually articulating alternative meanings of community schooling.

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<sup>112</sup> Burke and de Castro, "The School Photograph."

## Conclusion

Frank Adams's work in rural Nova Scotia has left an enduring legacy for rural communities who continue to use his photographs as central artifacts in their efforts to imagine their pasts. The life of these photographs and their ability to produce meanings did not end in 1912. Further chapters could be written that discuss the many years of neglect and the more recent efforts at remembering that have accompanied these images through the past one hundred years, coinciding with a more general process of forgetting and remembering in rural communities more broadly.

Adams was only one of many photographers working in Nova Scotia in the early years of the twentieth century. Typically, a photographer of his prolific and wide-ranging output would have a body of their images collected in one place; perhaps an archive would even hold their negatives and some business records. At very least, their name would be known and associated with the area in which they worked. But until now, Adams has been almost entirely anonymous. Many photographers are commemorated as regional image makers, a status that could rightly be attributed to Adams as well. But most of them had studios and centralized business operations that were more easily collected by archival institutions dedicated to preserving the past of their communities or regions. For Adams and other itinerants, there is no one area to which they rightfully belong and so the memory of their work has remained as diffused and dispersed as their original practice. Unlike photographers with permanent studios, who are remembered as valued members of a particular community's past, the diffuse nature of an itinerant photographer's practice is more difficult to document and thus poses a significant challenge to social memory projects. The quite legitimate priorities of community

historical societies are clearly demarcated in their attention to the people in the images—people who lived in the community at one time—rather than to the origins of the photographs. The emphasis on genealogy in these institutions, both of families, and of the community itself, necessarily excludes anyone and anything peripheral to the established, linear narrative. This would hardly be notable, except that the photographs produced by itinerant photographers are anything but peripheral to these narratives. In particular, school photographs have often played a central role in visualizing the genealogy of a community. But an effective way to integrate itinerants into the history of the communities they visited is still a challenge to both local and academic historians. Writing about tramping, but with an observation that may be applied to all itinerant professions, Eric Monkkonen notes that “we do not know how to think about tramps. Our inability to integrate them into a coherent view of society or social history mirrors their apparent social condition.”<sup>1</sup> The marginal character of their lives has been replicated in historical scholarship.

This thesis has been an attempt to highlight the place of one itinerant photographer in the narrative of rural Nova Scotia in the early twentieth century. In light of the general mobility of rural communities at the time, this thesis has argued that photographers and other itinerants could simultaneously be outsiders and also important members of informally structured communities. This thesis has drawn on the many traces Frank Adams left behind to produce an image of his life and work and to speculate on one way that his practice was important to the rural communities he visited. In the context of widespread reform of education in the period, Adam’s photographs produced a

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<sup>1</sup> Eric H. Monkkonen, introduction to *Walking to Work: Tramps in America, 1790-1935*, ed. Eric H. Monkkonen (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 1.

vision of rural schools that challenged the imposition of standardization on the pupils and landscapes of rural Nova Scotia.

Many in depth studies of itinerants have been based on the emergence of a cohesive, if generally not complete, collection of photographs, negatives, or other materials that document that photographer's transient practice over some period of time.<sup>2</sup> This study began in the opposite way. It started with a single reference to Frank Adams in the Truro *Daily News* and grew outward from there, collecting and reorganizing disconnected photographs and other documentation to establish a new order that prioritized the photographer, thereby revealing a forgotten narrative. The photos are seen here as a cohesive whole, but this is perhaps the first time that they have been presented in this way. Arguably they were never meant to be collected together and rather each belongs to its own place in the province.

However, as Alan Trachtenberg has argued, and this thesis shows, bringing these images together invests them with a new sort of communicative power. He writes that "without an encompassing structure, individual images remained dangerously isolated and misleading. The structure endows each image with what Foucault calls 'enunciability,' the power to make a meaningful statement. Viewed at random, images lose their power to speak, except inchoately."<sup>3</sup> By bringing them together, the photographs are given the opportunity to speak in new ways, to tell a story that links rural communities together in a tradition of mobility and visual culture.

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, W. Hartley, *Otto Ping: Photographer of Brown County, Indiana, 1900-1940* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1994); Ann Hawthorne, ed., *The Picture Man* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Sybil Miller, *Itinerant Photographer: Corpus Christi, 1934* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Geraldine Tidd Scott, *Isaac Simpson's World: The Collected Works of an Itinerant Photographer* (Falmouth, ME: Kennebec River Press, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images As History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1989), 85, 88.

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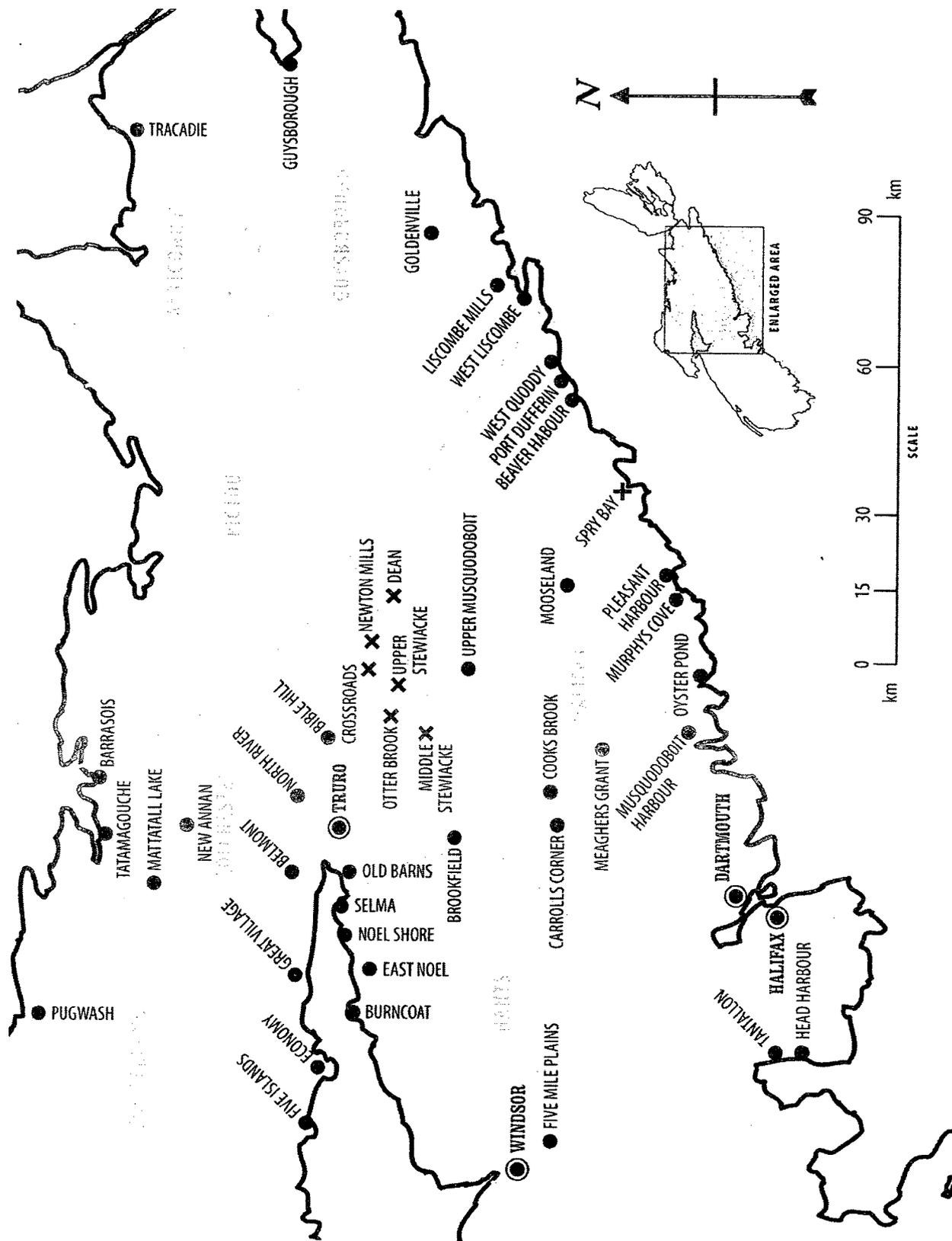




Figure 2. Frank Adams, Middle Stewiacke school, June 10, 1912.  
Stewiacke Valley Museum, photo albums, SCH Middle Stewiacke, P94-37.



Figure 3. Frank Adams, Otter Brook school, June 10, 1912.  
Stewiacke Valley Museum, photo albums, SCH Otter Brook, P93-7.



Figure 4. Frank Adams, Dean school, June 11, 1912.  
Stewiacke Valley Museum, photo albums, SCH Other--Dean, P07-138.



Figure 5. Frank Adams, Crossroads school, June 11, 1912.  
Stewiacke Valley Museum, photo albums, SCH Crossroads, P93-9.



Figure 6. Frank Adams, Newton Mills school, June 11, 1912.  
Stewiacke Valley Museum, photo albums, SCH Newton Mills, P05-15.



Figure 7. Frank Adams, Upper Stewiacke school, 1912.  
Stewiacke Valley Museum, photo albums, SCH Upper Stewiacke, P93-10.



Figure 8. Frank Adams, Spry Bay school, 1912.  
Little White Schoolhouse Museum, photograph files, #39.



Figure 9. Frank Adams, East Noel school, June 11, 1913.  
East Hants Historical Society Museum, Noel photo album, #132.



Figure 10. O. Bertram-Stubbs Studio, Carrolls Corner school, [c.1902].  
Little White Schoolhouse Museum, photograph files, #30.



Figure 11. Unknown photographer, Head Harbour school, 1904.  
Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management, St. Margaret's Bay Historical Society Collection #4,  
PANS N-1766.



Figure 12. Frank Adams, Noel Shore school, June 1913.  
East Hants Historical Society Museum, on display in museum.



Figure 13. Unknown photographer, Oyster Pond school, [c.1900].  
Lake Charlotte and Area Heritage Society Archives, school photograph collection.



Figure 14. Frank Adams, Five Islands school, c.1912.  
Colchester Historical Society Archives, photo box P33; 90.105.8.



Figure 15. Frank Adams, Burncoat school, 1911.  
East Hants Historical Society Museum, Noel photo album, #161.



Figure 16. Frank Adams, Masstown school, May 2, 1912.  
Colchester Historical Society Archives, photo box P41; 94.3.2.



Figure 17. Frank Adams, Guysborough Academy, 1913.  
Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management, Buckley Collection.



Figure 18. Unknown photographer, Tantallon school, June 2, 1914.  
Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management, St. Margaret's Bay Historical Society Collection #2,  
PANS-1764.



Figure 19. Photographer unknown, Portrait of Belle Waddell, Minnie Johnson, and Blair Johnson, [c. late 1870s]  
Stewiacke Valley Museum, photo albums, FAM P02-84.



Figure 20. C. W. Kelly Studio, Truro, Alice and Bert Creelman, [c. early 1890s]  
Stewiacke Valley Museum, photo albums, FAM P06-322.



Figure 21. Cox Bros. Studio, Halifax, real photo postcard, c.1910s. Collection of the author.



Figure 22. Photographer unknown, real photo postcard, date unknown. Collection of the author.



Figure 23. Photographer unknown, real photo postcard, date unknown. Collection of the author.

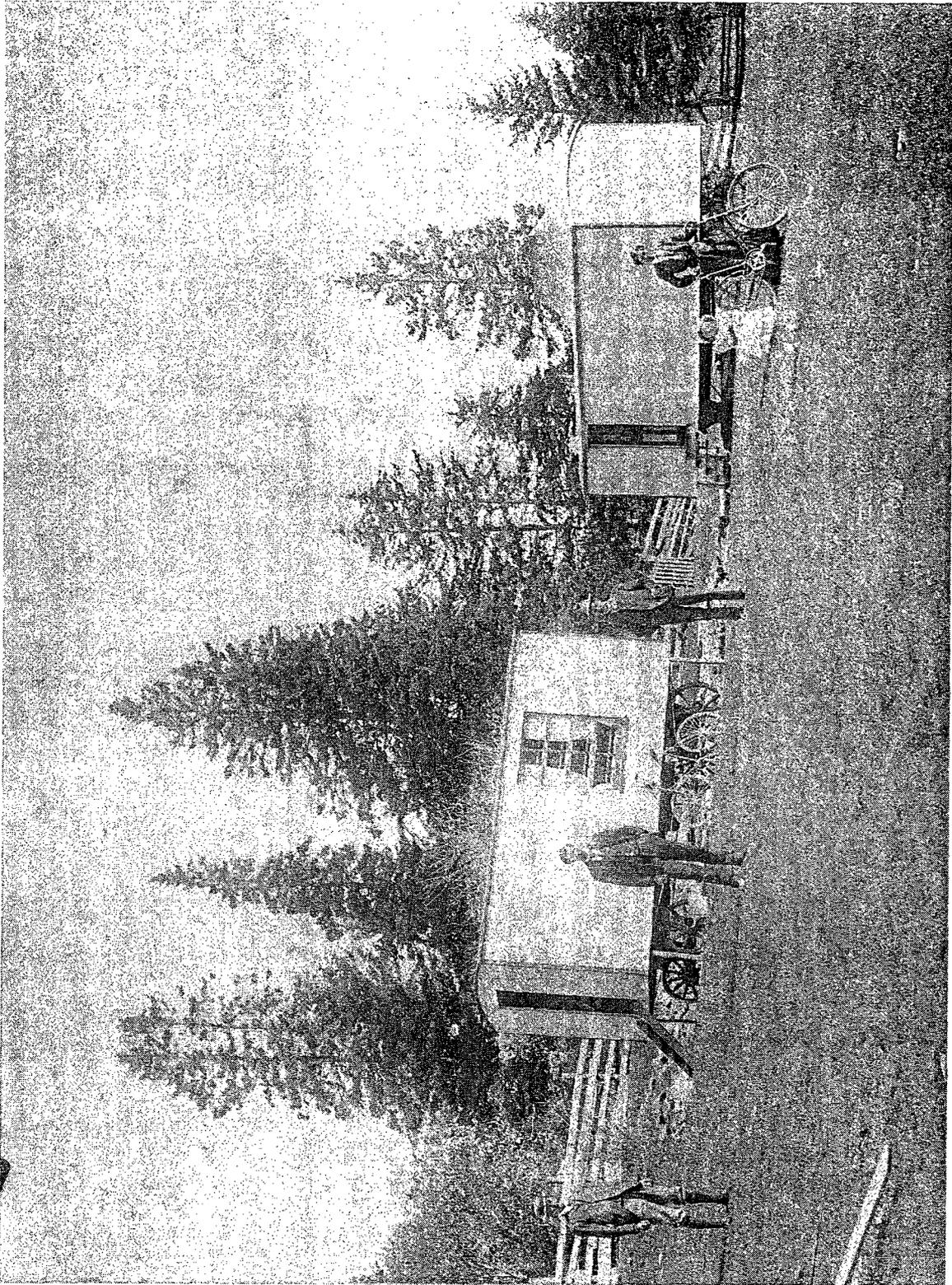


Figure 24. Photographer unknown, Frank Adams and others with mobile photo studio, c.1906.  
Sherman Hines Museum of Photography

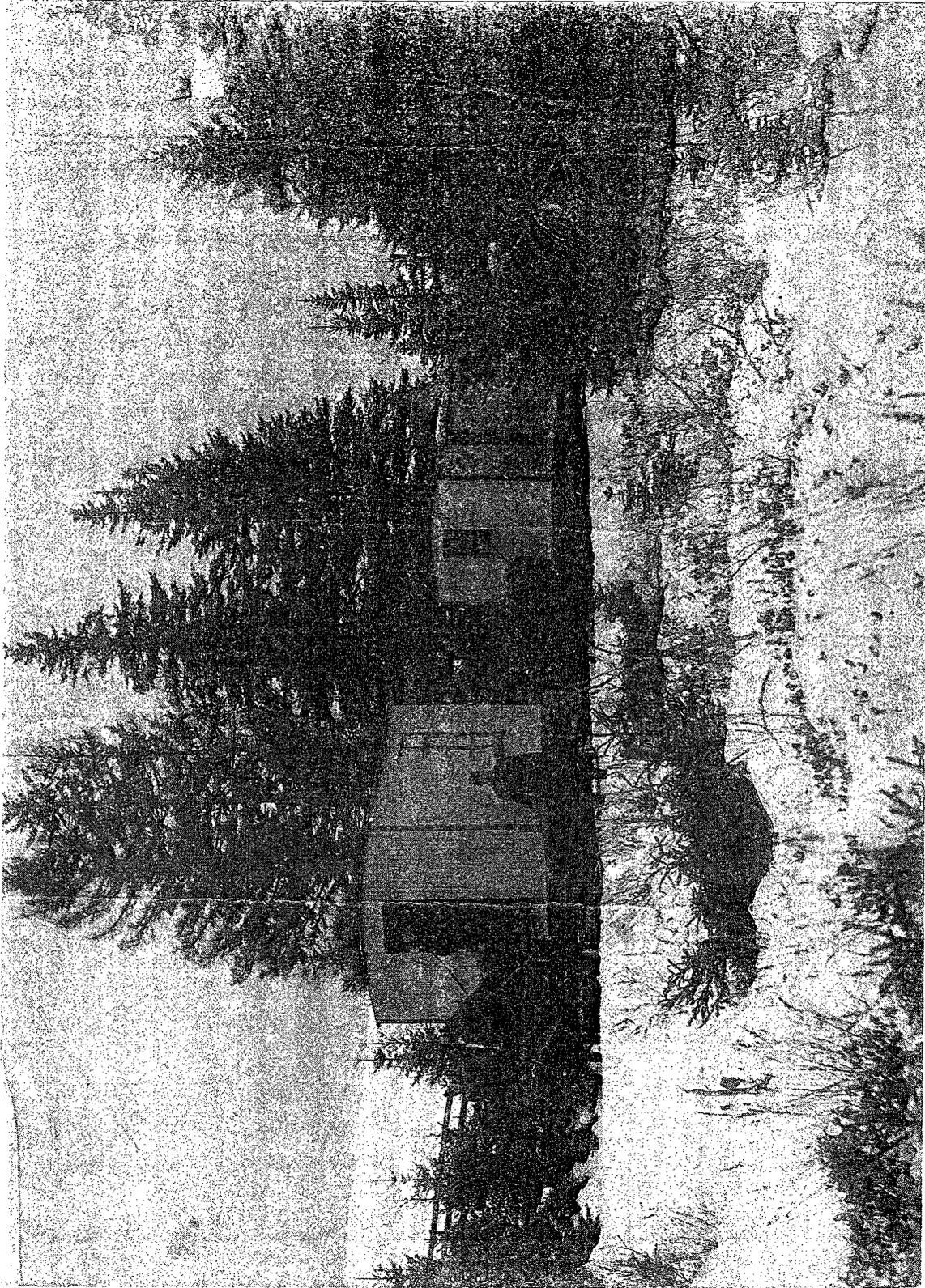


Figure 25. Photographer unknown, mobile photo studio, date unknown.  
Sherman Hines Museum of Photography.



Figure 26. O. Bertram-Stubbs Studio. Interior of the Stubbs family home, Wells, UK, date unknown. Sherman Hines Museum of Photography.

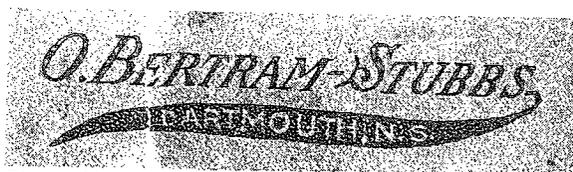


Figure 27. Brand logo of O. Bertram-Stubbs, Dartmouth, NS. Detail of picture frame.



Figure 28. Brand logo of F. Adams Photographic Artist. Detail of picture frame.



Figure 29. Frank Adams, Ladies Aid Society, Five Islands Presbyterian Church, October 11, 1912. Colchester Historical Society Archives, photo box P33; 90.103.3.



Figure 30. Frank Adams, Nellie Adams with doll, [c.1910].  
Sherman Hines Museum of Photography, Nellie Adams photograph album.



Figure 31. Frank Adams, Nellie Adams with Frank Adams, [c.1908].  
Sherman Hines Museum of Photography, Nellie Adams photograph album.



Figure 32. Frank Adams, "Puss N Boots" [c. 1910].  
Sherman Hines Museum of Photography, Nellie Adams photograph album.



Figure 33. Frank Adams, [c.1908]  
Sherman Hines Museum of Photography, Nellie Adams photograph album.



Figure 34. Frank Adams, "Pugwash, August, 1909."  
Sherman Hines Museum of Photography, Nellie Adams photograph album.





Figure 36. Frank Adams, "Five Islands Group," [c.1912].  
Colchester Historical Society Archives, photo box P33; 90.103.4.

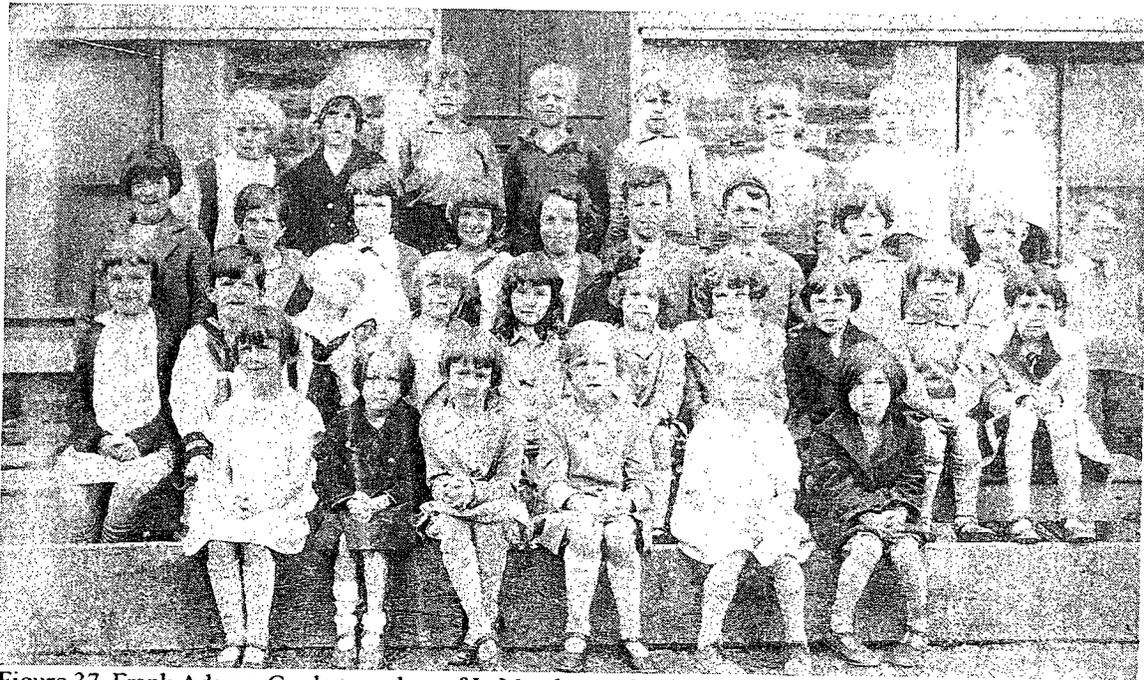


Figure 37. Frank Adams, Grade two class of LeMarchant school, Halifax, 1929.  
Courtesy Peggy Wright.



Figure 38. Unknown photographer, "A Busy Half Hour, Galletta School," in R.H. Cowley, "The Macdonald School Gardens." *Queen's Quarterly* (April 1905).

RURAL SCHOOL HOUSE NO. 1.

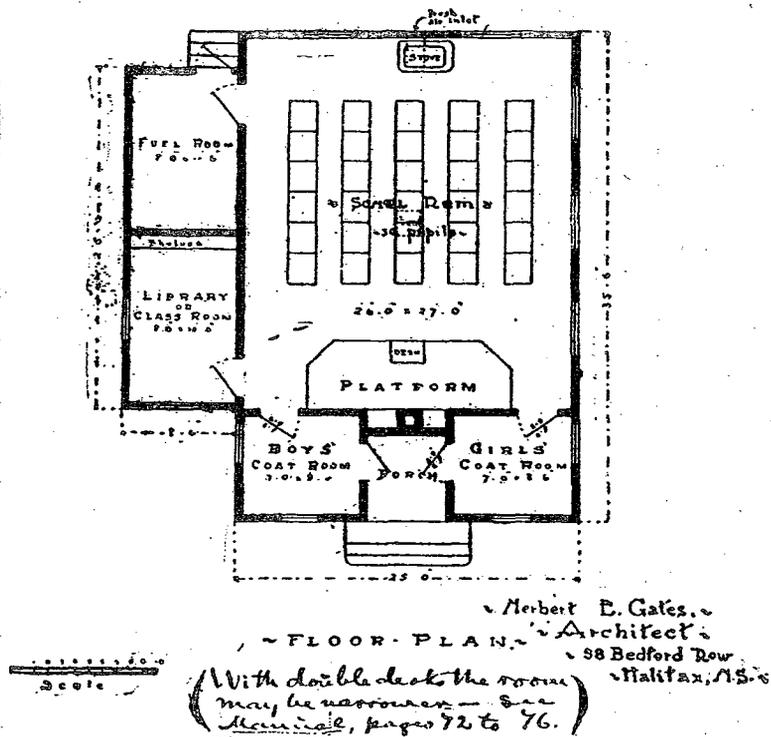


Figure 39. Herbert E. Gates, "Rural Schoolhouse No. 1," in Nova Scotia, Council of Public Instruction, *Manual of the Public Instruction Acts and Regulations of the Council of Public Instruction of Nova Scotia* (Halifax, NS: King's Printer, 1911).