

# The Impact of the Irish on New Brunswick Schools

Koral Lavorgna

The stereotypical occupations for the Irish have cast them in the role of canal worker, woodsman, tenant farmer, or cop, but never as teacher. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Irish teachers taught in one out of three New Brunswick schools. Most of the Irish immigrants who became licenced teachers came to this province with the intention of teaching school. Their early commitment to the classroom is evident from the brief gap between their time of arrival and the acquisition of a teaching licence. One in six Irish teachers became licenced to teach school the same year that they arrived in New Brunswick, and two out of every three Irish teachers had been granted a licence within two years of settling in the province. Not only did the Irish assume teaching positions very shortly after their arrival, but they remained in the profession, with many making a lifelong career of teaching. Their dedication to teaching is startling given the poor working conditions, the even poorer wages, and the high degree of occupational uncertainty. There were no guarantees in teaching, and the Irish experienced school closures, replacement by other teachers, and loss of income. Yet, many of the Irish found their own stability in teaching. The Irish immigrant teaching experience can be revealed through the most powerful political tool at their disposal, the petition.

Irish immigrant teachers worked within an education system in New Brunswick that had long been marked by indifference and disorganization. Although the exiled Loyalists brought with them a tradition of education forged in the former American Colonies, a well defined school system was slow to develop in New Brunswick. In large part, the new province did not have the resources to devote to education. The introduction of a series of Parish School Acts in 1802 initiated a governmental commitment to educating the youth of the province. None of these early school acts provided for an administrative body to regulate or set educational standards and practices. In the absence of a central authority or board of education, teachers had only the petition process available to them to lodge grievances, to request payment of salary, to request licence renewals and transfers, or to apply for licence.

Petitioning stemmed from the original licensing process. As early as 1784, prospective teachers submitted their application for licence directly to the Governor. Early on, a teaching licence was granted by the Governor without an examination of the applicant's qualifications, knowledge of the subjects to be taught, or an inspection of the school. The original licensing system was flawed and could not ensure that a qualified and capable instructor had been hired. The Parish School Act of 1816 introduced local Boards of Trustees, whose job it was to inspect established schools and to report on the character and moral conduct of teachers. Trustees' Certificates became part of the petitioning process and were submitted along with teachers' applications for licence. Even with the addition of the Trustees' recommendations, there was still no guarantee that capable, qualified, and skilled instructors were taking charge of schools in the province. Moral, upstanding citizens, who could act as role models for school aged children, could still be ignorant of the rudimentary branches of education.

By the 1810s, teachers submitted petitions to the Legislative Assembly addressed to the Lieutenant Governor. There were four types of petitions, including requests for licence, renewal and

transfer of licences, and payment of the Provincial Allowance. Most petitions followed a prescribed format, in which applicants identified their place of birth, their current place of residence, and often gave their age, marital status, or religion. Depending upon the nature and purpose of the petition, applicants might refer to the composition of the classroom including the number and gender of students as well as their religious affiliation.

Individuals who petitioned for licence usually did so after they had already taken charge of their own school. In 1820, Irish-born Walter Patterson was recommended for licence after teaching for about a year in Oromocto, Sunbury County. The primary reason that Walter Patterson and other teachers acquired their teaching licence was to become eligible for the Provincial Teaching Allowance. The community subscribed £10 in order to hire a teacher for a six month contract, but that “money” was often paid to teachers in the form of fuel for the school and board and lodging. A licenced teacher had access to the Provincial Allowance which paid them £20 annually, sometimes the only hard currency that teachers received.

In theory, to qualify for the Provincial Allowance, teachers were expected to renew their licences annually. As the teaching workforce expanded, the Legislative Assembly processed increasing numbers of petitions. Between 1816 and 1819, the total number of teachers’ petitions submitted to the Legislature rose from 18 to 45, and that number nearly doubled in 1820. Thereafter, the number of petitions increased in each successive year. Instead of applying for renewal the following year, teachers simply declared that they had been duly licenced and were teaching in a school house built or provided by the community. The practice of annual licence renewal never really emerged, but in 1842 a renewal directive was delivered to all teachers.

All teachers’ licences were in effect cancelled in 1842, and to remain eligible for the Provincial Allowance they had to participate in the renewal process. The provincial renewal reflected an attempt to standardize the licence and renewal application process by introducing new documentation to accompany the petition. Teachers were expected to include certificates from their clergymen testifying to their moral character, while also providing testimonials from the local School Trustees. The threat that the Provincial Allowance would be denied to any unlicensed teacher prompted 451 instructors to file for renewal at that time. The Irish complied with the new regulation, accounting for more than one-third of the teachers who renewed their licences.

Although the 1842 renewal was intended to introduce greater efficiency in the licensing system and to increase the accountability of teachers, the system was far from perfect. Catherine McCurdy, who did not renew her licence in 1842, suffered no consequences by ignoring the regulation. Her teaching licence had been issued in 1837 under her maiden name, Catherine Boyd. She continued to teach under her original licence after her marriage to Samuel McCurdy, also an Irish teacher. The County Antrim native taught school with her husband at St. Andrews, Charlotte County throughout the 1840s. Catherine McCurdy’s licence should have been invalidated on two counts. Not only should Mrs. McCurdy have renewed her licence when she married to reflect her name change, but she should have followed the provincial instructions for renewal in 1842. Having failed to act in accordance with the regulations on both occasions, Mrs. McCurdy still managed to collect the Provincial Allowance over the course of the next decade. It was only in 1851 when her husband left for California that Mrs. McCurdy petitioned for renewal of her licence. It would appear that Mrs. McCurdy remained eligible for the

Provincial Allowance because she taught in the same school with her husband. When left to run the school on her own, Mrs. McCurdy wisely decided that it was time to renew her expired licence. Evidently, licencing regulations were not rigidly enforced by the province, and teachers were aware of the flexibility in the system.

A licence was only valid in the parish where it was first issued. If teachers moved from the parish or county, they were required to apply for a transfer of licence to remain eligible for the Provincial Allowance. Teachers considered licence transfers and renewals synonymous, and they often petitioned for renewal when they moved from the local area. Most teachers observed this licencing regulation, whether they applied for a transfer or a renewal, but the Irish seemed particularly mindful of the rules.

Teachers were expected have a valid copy of their teaching licence in their possession. In the case of a lost or destroyed licence, teachers only replaced their licence when the more pressing need for a transfer or renewal prompted them to do so. Intending to present his licence to the School Inspector for a scheduled examination, William Lalor carried his licence with him to work. Unfortunately, as he crossed the Northesk River, his licence slipped from his pocket and landed in the water. Mr. Lalor went to school without his licence, but he kept searching for it and three weeks later he found it. Although he did his best to paste it back together, there was no saving the badly damaged document. Mr. Lalor waited to replace his licence until he required a transfer from Northesk to Nelson Parish, Northumberland County. Hugh A. Mount, whose licence had also been accidentally destroyed, only sought a renewal of his licence when the provincial regulations directed him to do so. Licenced in 1821, Hugh Mount did not replace the licence which had been destroyed by fire in 1825. The Donegal-born teacher's application for renewal had been prompted by his move from Lincoln, Sunbury County to Canning, Queens County.

Teachers who failed to apply for either a transfer or a renewal of licence, usually filed petitions for payment after they were denied the Provincial Allowance. Petitions for payment were among the most descriptive and revealing of all teachers' petitions. By their very nature, petitions were meant to be persuasive, and the details included in these petitions were intended to present a convincing claim. John Hinchey ignored the Provincial instruction for licence renewal in 1842, and eventually he paid the price. A native of County Limerick, Mr. Hinchey had been teaching in Blissfield, Northumberland County since 1821. Having apparently slipped through the administrative cracks, Mr. Hinchey continued to receive the Provincial Allowance until 1845 without the proper renewal of his licence. He soon lost this valuable income, and in 1847 he petitioned the Legislative Assembly for the pay that he considered was his due. He declared that he had given up his old licence in 1842, and he needed this money to provide for his wife and seven children. His appeal succeeded and Mr. Hinchey was again on the provincial payroll by 1849.

Teachers depended on the Provincial Allowance to augment their income, but they were not awarded this sum until after they had completed a six month term contract in their school. This payment system put many teachers in a precarious position, especially if their contract ended abruptly or extended beyond the scheduled term. John Haverty, who had taught for a year and a half in St. Stephen, stayed on for an additional six weeks to instruct the boys who had been away working. He next took charge of a school in a neighbouring district, and taught there for an abbreviated four and a half

months. Having taught for a total of six months between the two contracts, Mr. Haverty petitioned the Legislature praying that he would be granted the Provincial Allowance.

Irish teachers understood the petition process, generally adhered to provincial regulations, and navigated the system with relative ease. As greater numbers of Irish began to arrive and settle in the province, increasing numbers of these newcomers took up teaching as their occupation. In 1820, nearly one-quarter of the newly licenced teachers were Irish. Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, immigration continued unabated, and these Irish teachers came largely from the North of Ireland. Just over half of the Irish teachers who can be identified by place of origin emigrated from Ulster. Those who came from the northern province were drawn principally from Derry and Donegal. Nearly one-third of the Irish teachers came from Munster, and of those immigrants more than half had sailed from Cork. Proportionately, very few Irish teachers came from the east and west of Ireland. Leinster emigrants only accounted for one out of every seven Irish teachers, the majority of whom came from Dublin. Connaught did not export many teachers to New Brunswick, representing less than three percent of all Irish teachers.

Not surprisingly, Irish immigrants settled in counties near the New Brunswick ports of entry. Saint John, Northumberland, and Charlotte Counties attracted equal numbers of Irish teachers, and in total one-third of all Irish teachers settled in these three counties. A significant number of the Irish strayed from the ports of entry and filtered into York and Queens Counties. The greatest concentration of Irish teachers settled at Kings County. One in five Irish teachers resided in Kings County, and their movement into this area was probably the result of out-migration from both Saint John and Charlotte Counties.

Continued immigration throughout the 1830s placed demands upon the New Brunswick education system. With an ever expanding student body, the need for teachers intensified and the Irish were more than ready to offer instruction. During the 1830s, the Irish-born dominated the school system, comprising nearly 40 percent of all teachers. It was no accident that pivotal legislation related to education took shape during the 1830s coincident with this increased immigration. This decade witnessed the beginnings of an organizational framework for a largely unregulated system of teaching and education. For the first time female teachers were also specifically addressed in school legislation. Considerable attention was focussed upon education during the 1830s, and the Irish benefitted from this educational awakening.

Before the 1830s, provincial school acts made no reference to female teachers. The School Act of 1833, which finally addressed schoolmistresses, introduced limitations upon their employment. The 1833 Act restricted the number of female teachers eligible for the Provincial Allowance, setting the limit at two schoolmistresses per parish. If the number of female teachers in a parish exceeded this limit, they were denied the Provincial Allowance. The introduction of this measure suggests that female teachers were on the rise, and by virtue of this Act, they were being deliberately excluded from the profession. Even with this legislation in place, teaching became increasingly feminized. The School Act which followed in 1837 directed that three female school teachers per parish could collect the Provincial Allowance. These limitations on female eligibility for provincial money would later disappear, especially the number of schoolmistresses continued to rise. Eighty-seven new licences had been awarded in 1833, and just over one-quarter had been issued to women. Although the number of women who entered

teaching fluctuated over the next decade, schoolmistresses comprised no less than twenty-five percent of newly licenced teachers in any year during the 1830s. In 1838, 88 licences had been issued and forty-four percent of these had been granted to women.

The sharp increase in female teachers in the second half of the nineteenth century has been described as the “feminization” of teaching. The teaching workforce feminized fairly early in New Brunswick, and by the late 1850s the gap between male and female teaching had begun to close. In 1856, women comprised forty-four percent of all teachers. Two decades later, more than half the schools in this province were taught by women. Although Irish schoolmistresses were part of the feminization of teaching, they comprised a very small share of the workforce. Even among their countrymen Irish schoolmistresses accounted for only one in every fifteen Irish-born teachers.

Though they were few in number, Irish schoolmistresses showed a high degree of dedication to the profession. For many of these women, teaching was not simply a temporary occupation pursued until marriage. Although a significant number of Irish schoolmistresses remained single, an equal number continued to teach school after they married. Teaching from their homes enabled many of the married Irish schoolmistresses to continue in the profession. Rebecca Porter, the first female Irish teacher licenced in New Brunswick, began her teaching career in 1828. She kept school in Norton, Kings County before her marriage in the early 1830s. It is unclear if Rebecca (Porter) Guiou continued to teach during her marriage, but after she became widowed she kept school in a room attached to her house. Well into the 1850s, Mrs. Guiou continued to teach school in her home where she raised her family. Mrs. Guiou likely returned to teaching upon widowhood in order to support herself and her family.

Mrs. Eleanor Walker, a native of County Donegal, not only taught school while she was married but also after she became widowed. Mrs. Walker provided instruction in a room adjoining her house, which had been built on her husband’s land at St. Mary’s Parish, York County. Mrs. Walker’s school suffered for want of proper teaching materials with neither slates, rulers, pencils, nor even a dictionary in her possession. The School Inspector speculated that had Mrs. Walker not provided this school room, or had been unwilling to accept payment in the form of knitting and farm labour, no school would have been established in that district. Even so, Mrs. Walker only conducted her school on an occasional basis, possibly due to the demands of her farm and family. Mary Scully began teaching in Nelson, Northumberland County during the early 1840s. She continued to teach even after her marriage to J. Shanahan. With her classroom conveniently located in her kitchen, Mrs. Shanahan was able to contribute to the family income.

School and housing accommodations varied across the province, ranging from well constructed buildings to uninhabitable quarters. John McLaughlan’s school in Fredericton was praised for being spacious and well furnished, whereas Dennis Murphy’s school in Petersville, Queens County, was disparaged for being both poorly lit and “not at all comfortable.” Both of these teachers resided in the private dwelling where they kept school. Michael McNamara, who resided at Blackville, Northumberland County, taught school in a building that had been erected upon vacant Crown Land, and Mr. McNamara was fortunate enough to reside in the adjoining “Teacher’s Cabin.” Although separate living quarters were provided to teachers where possible, such an arrangement was uncommon. Many school houses were provided by the community, with funds raised by local subscription. In Botsford, Westmorland County, Gilbert Wall’s school had been built by the community on his own land. For the most part,

teachers either lived in their school house or boarded with families in the community where they taught. Some teachers were shuffled from house to house within the community over the course of their teaching contract. Thomas Haverty, a married man teaching school in St. Stephen, Charlotte County, complained to the School Inspector that the practice of “boarding out” deprived him of any opportunity to study. Mr. Haverty claimed that this living arrangement hindered any chance he might have had to improve his knowledge of the subjects he was required to teach.

Prior to 1837, teachers were not tested on their knowledge of the various branches of instruction. Initially, penmanship had been the sole qualification for a teaching licence. If a prospective teacher wrote in a fine hand, no licence would be denied. The School Act of 1837 marked an important step forward in the licencing process with the creation of County Boards of Education. The School Act of 1837 established a standard licencing procedure. Aspiring school teachers who petitioned for licence appeared before the Board of Education for examination. Applicants were judged on the basis of their moral character, knowledge level, and degree of loyalty. The last qualification emerged from the contemporary political mood, stemming from the seeds of rebellion sprouting in the Canadas. Applicants who passed the Board examination were then recommended to the Lieutenant Governor for licence. The screening process set in place by the 1837 Act was not only intended to weed out unqualified teachers but to elevate the standards of teaching and education in the province.

There was a growing consensus throughout the 1830s and 1840s that teachers lacked teaching methods and the appropriate knowledge base to instruct pupils. To improve the standard of education, however, teachers would first have to be trained in the art of instruction. Lieutenant Governors Sir John Harvey (1837-1841) and Sir William Colebrooke (1841-1848) both suggested that a training school should be established in the province. No advancements were made in this matter until the School Inspection of 1844-1845 revealed the poor state of teachers and education.

The New Brunswick education system received a failing grade in the School Inspection. The majority of schools in the province were judged to be backward and the teachers inept. Classrooms were disorganized, disorderly, and often lacked desks, chairs, and proper teaching materials. The absence of textbooks or any reading material, with the possible exception of the Bible, particularly concerned the School Inspectors. Teachers were criticized for either adhering to old modes of instruction or for having no teaching method at all. There were many lessons learned from the Inspection, but chief among them was the need for more qualified, educated, and trained teachers. Clearly, the delivery of education in New Brunswick was substandard, and the introduction of teacher training appeared to be the only solution.

Because the School Inspection focused upon educational standards and teaching methods, there were few examples of overt discrimination against teachers on the basis of ethnicity, age, or gender. School Inspector John Gregory complained that Cornelius Coughlan and Patrick Flanagan read with “national peculiarities.” Mr. Gregory was particularly startled by the persistence of these speech patterns in Patrick Flanagan, given the teacher’s age. Mr. Flanagan, who was 45 years of age when his school was inspected, had been teaching in Chatham, Northumberland County for eleven years. The County Westmeath native clearly had not shed his Irish accent. Inspector James Brown, himself a native of Scotland, thought that although Margaret Connor demonstrated fine penmanship, she was “somewhat tainted with the accent of the West of Ireland.” Inspector Gregory was perhaps a little

surprised by Sarah Good's academic achievements. Mr. Gregory commented that Miss Good, who taught at Dalhousie, Restigouche County, had a "respectable" knowledge of arithmetic "particularly for a female Teacher."

Irish schools were judged no more harshly than any other ethnic group. On the whole, the Inspectors commented upon classroom organization, the method of instruction, and teaching skills. The majority of teachers were considered woefully inadequate and largely unqualified to teach school. Neil Bradley had been teaching four years when his school was inspected in Waterborough, Queens County. The School Inspector, Dr. Earle, was critical of the slow progress made by Mr. Bradley's students at the Wiggins Cove School. Although some of the students could read fairly well, they absorbed little of the content. Mr. Bradley's failure to properly instruct his students was judged to be the result of his limited knowledge and poor methods of instruction. The students in John Keys' school in Upham, Kings County were described as backward, and the writing samples presented by both the teacher and students were considered "below mediocrity." Daniel Cunningham's school at St. David's Parish, Charlotte County was harshly criticized by Inspector James Brown. Mr. Cunningham, who had been licenced in 1831, had been teaching school in the Oak Bay district for nearly two years when his school was examined. The school building was in desperate need of repair, and the classroom was dirty and disorganized. Mr. Cunningham's knowledge of all branches of instruction was found to be insufficient and was "by no means equal to his pretensions."

The School Inspectors commonly complained about deplorable conditions, low teaching standards, and unproductive teachers. However, the picture was not completely bleak. About one-tenth of the inspected schools were considered to be in a "prosperous state." The Irish teachers matched the provincial success rate, with ten percent of their schools achieving this rank during the Inspection. Thomas E. Carter, who had been teaching for ten years at Lancaster, Saint John County, impressed School Inspector James Brown with the care and attention he paid to his students. Mr. Carter grouped his pupils into classes, while also offering individual instruction. He demonstrated a broad knowledge of the subjects to be taught, and rather importantly, he displayed excellent penmanship. John Kerr had only been teaching for two years at his school in Kennebecasis Cove, Kings County when his school was inspected. Mr. Kerr was not only deemed to be an excellent teacher but he was considered qualified to teach higher grades. Mr. Kerr did have more advanced students enrolled in the school, but as the inspection took place during the summer, these pupils were at work on the farm. Gilbert Wall, a native of County Kerry, taught in Botsford, Westmorland County. At the time of the inspection, Mr. Wall had been teaching for a total of twenty-one years, the last ten of which had been spent in his school in the Emigrant Road School District. Mr. Wall taught his students "carefully and correctly" using oral instruction by inviting questions and offering explanations.

The Inspectors stressed the importance of oral instruction, while advocating the abandonment of the old methods, in which students were taught by rote. The Inspectors reported that the most successful teachers embraced the new methods of instruction, but suggested that those who were wedded to the old system could be taught to use better techniques. To improve the state of education, it was recommended that teachers should be required to attend a training school. Teacher training schools, also known as Normal Schools, spread throughout North America during the 1840s. The Normal School Movement gained momentum after the training school at Lexington, Massachusetts had been

established in 1839. Egerton Ryerson was responsible for the creation of the first state supported Normal School in British North America, which opened in Toronto in 1847. The recommendation that New Brunswick teachers acquire training was in fact part of a wider educational movement sweeping North America, and the discussion of teacher training gained renewed vigor as a result of the School Inspection of 1844-1845.

The School Act of 1847 created a provincial Board of Education, replacing the County Boards which had been established a decade earlier. By the Act of 1847, the Board of Education had been granted the power to establish a Training School at Fredericton. Fueled by the Inspection Report and the newly appointed Board of Education, a Training School opened in the provincial capital in 1848. The introduction of the Training School not only altered the licencing process for new teachers but affected already licenced teachers. In light of the recommendations from the Inspection Report, prospective teachers were expected to attend the Training School in order to become licenced. However, in 1849, an exception to the rule permitted the Board of Education to grant, at their discretion, third class licences to female teachers or teachers in isolated districts. This concession undermined the attempts to standardize and professionalize education in New Brunswick.

The advent of the Training School introduced a licence classification system, which not only dictated the curriculum but established a new hierarchical pay scale. Teachers of the third class were expected to instruct students in Reading, Writing, Spelling, and basic Arithmetic; those of the second class taught the core subjects in addition to English Grammar, Bookkeeping, and Geography. First class teachers taught all these subjects plus advanced branches of Mathematics, Land Surveying, and Navigation. History was curiously absent from the course schedules. Prior to the new licence class divisions, all teachers were paid £20 annually for their services. Teachers who held a first, second, or third class licence were paid £30, £22, and £18 respectively. Although many seasoned teachers resisted training, the instant pay raise served as a powerful incentive for many other school teachers.

Compelled by obvious financial rewards, a significant proportion of the Irish attended the Training School. In fact, one in five Irish teachers attended the ten week training course. Just over twenty percent of those Irish graduated with a first class licence, while half of the attendees had been awarded a second class licence. A number of the Irish teachers who had previous classroom experience attended the Training School. Two of these teachers, not satisfied with their second class licences, went back to the Training School in order to be recognized as first class teachers. Only one Irish schoolmistress opted to enroll in the Training School. Margaret (Connor) Jagoe attended the institution with her husband, Irish-born Edward Jagoe, in 1849. Mrs. Jagoe, who had been granted special permission to attend, was awarded a second class licence while her husband achieved first class status.

Although the higher rate of pay was attractive, many Irish teachers did not want to surrender their schools in order to take the training course. William McClintock applied to the Board of Education for a licence on two separate occasions in 1849. The first time he simply requested that he be granted a licence, and the Board ordered him to attend the Training School. When he re-applied a few months later for a third class licence, the Board granted his request. The Board would not entertain any requests for licence above the third class without the candidate first attending the Training School. Cain Spillane penned a caustic teacher's petition in 1857, bitterly complaining about the payment system which was dependent upon attendance at the Training School. Mr. Spillane, who had kept school for seventeen

years in Richibucto, Kent County, decided against attending the Training School. Fears that his position would have been filled by another teacher kept him from enrolling in the institution. He believed that his students' achievements reflected his skills as a teacher, and he was convinced that he should be compensated on the basis of their accomplishments. Mr. Spillane argued that two of his former students, currently attending the Training School, were both expected to receive first class licences. He complained that as an unlicensed teacher he was paid a "miserable pittance," making less than a teacher of the third class. By remaining in his school, Mr. Spillane enjoyed a level of stability that came at the expense of financial security.

Very few Irish teachers came to New Brunswick with teaching experience or educational training; those with formal training or education accounted for less than five percent of all Irish teachers. Anna Mary Sharkey, who taught at the Madras School in Saint John during the 1830s and 1840s, received training at the Female Model School on Kildare Street in Dublin. She had been employed by the Society for Promoting the Poor of Ireland, which was associated with the Kildare Street Society. Timothy Daley also studied at the Kildare Street Society in Dublin and after settling in New Brunswick he taught school for more than a decade at Kingston, Kings County. The Kildare Street Society, also known as the Kildare Place Society, had been established in Ireland in 1811. Although these schools offered the promise of a non-denominational system of education, they were nonetheless slanted towards Anglicanism. These schools were later absorbed by the Church Education Society.

Before immigrating to Chatham, Northumberland County in 1841, Robert Thompson taught seventeen years for the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers. The Fishmongers of London, a trade guild, was granted an estate in County Derry, and therein established schools in addition to other business interests. These schools, which were to provide education primarily for the poor children resident on the estate, were intended to be non-denominational in their organization and operation. Religiously controversial texts were to be excluded from the Fishmonger schools, and teachers were to be hired based on their skill and qualifications rather than their religious affiliation.

Eugene Rogan, who came from County Cork, taught under Ireland's National School System for eleven years. When Mr. Rogan settled at Portland, Saint John, he taught an English and Classical School similar to the one he kept in Ireland. The National Schools, established in 1831, offered a universal system of education that was both state-supported and church-controlled.

From the National Schools in Ireland emerged a standardized curriculum along with an approved set of instructional textbooks. These textbooks, judged to be of superior educational quality, were imported to New Brunswick and were used in many schools throughout the province. However, the School Inspectors frequently complained about the absence of proper texts in most classrooms. Thomas Crowe taught his students using what Inspector James Brown described as "the most extraordinary medley of books" he had ever seen in a classroom. Inspector Brown suspected that these texts had been supplied by the parents and suggested that Mr. Crowe would have a successful school with the proper texts at his disposal. Patrick Leonard, a native of County Sligo, complained to School Inspector Earle that he was teaching at a disadvantage. Without a proper supply of texts, Mr. Leonard claimed that he could not group his students into classes for instruction.

Although Protestant and Catholic pupils were intended to be instructed together in religiously mixed classrooms under the National School system in Ireland, their education remained largely

separate. The education system in New Brunswick, derived from British roots, was denominational in character. It was common for both teacher and student to be members of the same religion, but this was not strictly observed in all classrooms. In New Brunswick schools it was relatively common for Irish Catholics to instruct religiously mixed classrooms, but Irish Protestant teachers rarely had Catholic students in their classrooms. John Kerr, Jr., an Irish Catholic, taught thirty students at his school in Westfield, Kings County, the majority being Catholic. All of the students in John Lahy's school in Andover, Victoria County were Baptists, while he was a Catholic. Anne Ellis and all the students of her school in New Bandon, Gloucester County were Anglican. Thomas Conner, himself an Anglican, taught school in St. Martins, St. John County, where most of his students were Baptists.

The religious composition of the New Brunswick classroom is not surprising given the rate of immigration of Protestant and Catholic teachers. Protestant teachers outnumbered Catholic teachers by a margin of three to one, with half of the Irish Protestant teachers adhering to the Anglican faith. Five percent of all Irish-born teachers changed their religion during the course of their career. Very few Catholics converted religion, and among Protestants, Anglicans commonly converted to Methodism.

As a group, Irish teachers were remarkably stable in their chosen occupation. Teaching has been regarded as a seasonal or temporary occupation, where men might combine teaching with work on the farm, whereas women were only expected to teach school until marriage. Neither men nor women were expected to remain in the profession for long, given the low pay, instability, and poor working conditions. At mid-century, one in five Irish teachers had been licenced during the 1820s. A significant proportion of the Irish teachers were voluntary immigrants, the majority having arrived long before the Famine. John Brooks, who arrived in 1848 after five years experience under the National Board of Education, came to New Brunswick with "the view to a better situation and more lucrative employment." Less than five percent of all Irish teachers were casualties of the Famine, and if more Famine immigrants had become licenced, they either quickly abandoned the profession or the province.

Teaching has often been considered a transient occupation, defined by frequent moves and a constantly changing workforce. Migrating in search of opportunity was common for teachers, with nearly two-thirds of the Irish teachers on the move. While this might appear to be a high rate of mobility, most of these teachers only moved once during their careers. Moving was most often motivated by economic conditions, sending teachers in search of more lucrative teaching positions elsewhere. In 1842 Hugh Moore left his school in Douglas, York County, where he taught since 1837. He moved to Fredericton in the hopes of procuring a better living for his large family. Mr. Moore settled permanently in Fredericton, where he taught school for the next thirty years. When he first moved to Fredericton, he kept school in a private dwelling. He later served as master of the Collegiate School before becoming principal of the Madras School, located on King Street. He taught until shortly before his death in 1876 at the age of 84.

Some teachers experienced higher rates of mobility, and moving between two and four times was not uncommon. George P. Davis moved frequently during the course of his teaching career. He began teaching in Dundas, Kent County in 1830, where he kept school for five years. He relocated to Weldford, but because of the "badness of the times," he moved a year later to Richibucto, Kent County. When the community could no longer afford to pay Mr. Davis, he opened a school in Wellington, Kent County in 1847, and there he remained until the early 1850s.

More than one-third of Irish teachers spent their entire careers in the same parish where they were originally licenced. James McAnary kept school at Norton, Kings County for fifteen years, from 1834 until 1849. David Bates, who was granted a teaching licence in 1833, taught at Waterborough, Queens County for about twenty years. Thomas Black emigrated from County Fermanagh in 1819 and settled in St. Martins, Saint John County, where he taught school from 1823 until at least 1851. Timothy Harley ran his school at St. Andrews for more than thirty years, having been first licenced in 1820. Although a great number of teachers never left the bounds of the parish where they lived and worked, it is possible that they changed schools within the same parish. This type of mobility is difficult to trace, and examples of this internal migration are rare. Pringle Shaw, who became licenced in 1841 for Johnston Parish, Queens County, changed schools in 1842. He switched schools in Johnston Parish because the new position offered a higher salary above and beyond his board and lodging.

For teachers on the move, they often taught at different schools within the same county; however, a significant proportion of Irish teachers moved between counties. Anthony B. Tayte, who emigrated from Ireland in 1828, became a licenced teacher that same year. He taught first in Gloucester County, but later moved to Westmorland County, where he kept school at Shediack for nearly a decade. By 1850, Mr. Tayte accepted a teaching position in St. George, Charlotte County. Anthony Tayte moved his family for the last time around 1864, finally settling south of the border at Salem, Massachusetts. It is not known whether Mr. Tayte pursued his teaching career after his move to the United States, where he died in 1879.

Davis P. Howe, who would also relocate to the United States, continued his teaching career after he left New Brunswick. In 1836, Howe emigrated from County Tipperary with his siblings, James and Margaret. Davis Howe became licenced the following year, and his siblings soon followed in his footsteps. The Howes all taught in Northumberland County. Davis Howe had charge of a school in Glenelg before taking a new teaching position in Chatham in 1849. After attending the Training School in 1850, Mr. Howe continued to teach at Chatham with a first class licence. Not content to pursue teaching alone, Davis Howe's résumé included newspaper publisher, book seller and binder, librarian, and politician. In 1856, Davis Howe founded *The Colonial Times and Miramichi Weekly Gazette*, which remained in print until 1864. Shortly after his unsuccessful bid to enter local politics in 1865, Mr. Howe left the Miramichi. Where he went next is unknown, but he eventually made his way to the United States. By 1880, Davis Howe was teaching school in Boston, Massachusetts, and it was reported that he was teaching at a private school in Portland, Maine the following year. Mr. Howe later returned to New Brunswick, living out the rest of his days in Saint John, where he died in 1895.

There was limited financial security in teaching, and in the absence of pensions most continued to teach well into their old age. William Quinn, from County Carlow, taught forty years in the New Brunswick school system. Impoverished, Mr. Quinn petitioned the Legislature in 1842 requesting money for "the necessaries of life" as he had become "old and grown grey in the parish school service." Patrick Bennett, who emigrated from County Meath during the late 1830s, taught in Kings, Charlotte, and Saint John Counties during his career. In between teaching contracts, Mr. Bennett was a frequent resident of the Saint John Alms House, becoming the first teacher at that institution. John Baird, former Sergeant Schoolmaster with the 74<sup>th</sup> Regiment, arrived in New Brunswick in 1818. For two decades he taught at the Madras school in Fredericton, but the demands of such a large school impaired his health. Baird's

wife assisted him in the classroom and after her death he took charge of a much smaller school in Tobique. After thirty-two years as a teacher, Baird left the profession when his health again failed him. The County Monaghan native petitioned the Legislature in 1857, indebted and wishing to return to Ireland. John Baird remained in Andover, Victoria County, where he died in 1858.

The experience of the Irish in New Brunswick challenges the accepted image of nineteenth century teachers. It has been assumed that those who became teachers had already failed at other occupations, or only taught until a better opportunity presented itself. Many of the Irish chose teaching as their first and only occupation, becoming licenced shortly after their arrival in the province. The Irish were remarkably persistent school teachers, especially in an occupation known to have an incredibly high turnover rate. They were drawn to teaching because of the opportunity for betterment and probably remained in the occupation because of the flexibility of the education system. Teaching required few skills, at least initially, was highly transportable, and came with a guaranteed income, no matter how meager. Licenced teachers were put on the provincial payroll, and if they were deprived of the allowance, they could appeal through the petition process. During the early nineteenth century there was no other occupation that held this small measure of financial security. To remain in teaching, especially given the poor pay and working conditions, suggests a devotion to the profession. Their persistence in the occupation combined with their willingness to attend the Training School helped professionalize teaching, and the Irish can be considered the first career teachers in New Brunswick.