

## **New Brunswick as a Home for Immigrants**

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Although the New Brunswick government welcomed and encouraged immigration after the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, there was never a clear settlement plan in place. Most immigrants, the Irish predominant among them, were unprepared for the challenges that settling in this province posed. They were strangers in a strange land, uncertain where to find employment, how to secure shelter, or how to work the land. Without any direction or settlement instructions, increasing numbers of immigrants wandered about the countryside in dire need of assistance. Initially the “emigrant problem” was addressed at the local level by concerned individuals who offered shelter and other necessities to “distressed emigrants.” This grassroots approach soon blossomed into the spontaneous formation of emigrant societies, which existed to provide advice and assistance to immigrants. Arising from conditions in the local context, emigrant societies had been established at Fredericton, Saint John, and St. Andrews by 1820. Although these organizations enjoyed some support from the provincial purse, they were established without governmental initiative. Leading members of the community provided the driving force behind the formation of these emigrant societies. For the next decade, emigrant societies offered the primary source of relief to immigrants. These organizations were supplanted when the government finally took a proactive role by creating a new office, Government Emigrant Agent. This sparse governmental framework, supported for a short time by County Emigrant Societies, channeled immigration and directed provincial policy at least until the 1870s. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the New Brunswick government remained at a distance from the problems associated with immigration, intervening only in response to crises or to provide supplemental assistance. During this critical period, the government’s immigration policy was administered largely by the initiative and vision of a select few individual ambassadors.

While immigration to the newly created Province of New Brunswick dwindled after the arrival of the Loyalists, it ground to a halt with the outbreak of the War of 1812. The gates were thrown wide open after the conclusion of that conflict, with the New Brunswick government encouraging immigration as a means of solving the current labour shortage. In 1816, £1,000 had been voted towards the first and only government sponsored immigration plan. At the same time that the New Brunswick government embarked upon this immigration scheme, thousands of immigrants had collected at the New York port, desperate to leave the United States. Unable to find work and struggling to make a living, these immigrants had applied to the British Consul, James Buchanan, for passage back to Great Britain. During one single week in August 1816, eight Scottish, ten English, and 76 Irish immigrants applied to Buchanan for return passage. Although he expected that he would eventually arrange to send the distressed immigrants back to their countries of origin, Buchanan granted, as a more immediate solution, a great many passports for Upper Canada. Buchanan advised that “if any are so mad as still to persist in emigrating, they should go direct to Canada.” At the time, the economic climate of British North America was considered much more favourable than that of the United States.

If conditions in New Brunswick had ever been superior to that in the United States, they quickly deteriorated. The rising immigrant problem served as inspiration for an untitled poem which appeared

in *The Royal Gazette* in 1817. Responding to the recent arrival of several vessels at Miramichi, the poet simply identified as "J.K." provided immigrants with well versed instructions. "Hapless strangers, rove no longer:/ Far from kindred, friends, or home:/ Spent with travel, cold and hunger:/ Now your harvest day is come./ Make the ants, your chief example,/ See! how they, their labors ply:/ Provides a store, secure and ample,/ To withstand your wintry sky."

J.K. advised immigrants to "rove no longer," encouraging individual industry and hard work. However, without employment prospects or the knowledge of where to look, immigrants were forced to roam aimlessly in search of work. The poor immigrant, who appeared both restless and rootless, soon became branded as a "distressed emigrant." The term "emigrant" was widely used during the first half of the nineteenth century, referring to the departure from the homeland, suggesting that the newcomer had not yet permanently settled in this province. The shift to "immigrant," denoting arrival in a new land, was made by the 1850s. However, well into the 1870s, officials in charge of immigration were referred to as "Emigrant Agents" as often as "Immigrant Agents." The use of "emigrant" will only be used to reflect its official application in organization titles, government offices, and in correspondence, but "immigrant" and "immigration" will be used in all other cases.

As immigration rapidly increased in the years after 1816, so too did the number of "distressed" immigrants. In June 1818, it was reported that 800 immigrants had arrived at Saint John from the North of Ireland and that a further 300 immigrants were expected to arrive aboard the next vessel. By 1819 the situation had reached critical mass with 7000 immigrants, drawn primarily from Ireland, landing at the St. Andrews and Saint John ports of entry.

"Distressed" quickly became synonymous with destitute, and this class of immigrant turned to the Overseers of the Poor for help, with varying degrees of success. There was no provincial funding set aside for the care and maintenance of destitute immigrants. The Overseers of the Poor, which operated at the Parish level, assisted local paupers. However, their resources were often limited and did not always reach isolated areas of the province. The Overseers, who were often reluctant to assist immigrants, might challenge the application for aid if they considered that their funds had been used unwisely. In 1823, the Overseers for St. David's Parish in Charlotte County petitioned the Legislature for part of the costs expended to care for Mrs. Robb, a destitute Irish immigrant, during the latter stage of her pregnancy. Mrs. Robb, already the mother of two children, had no visible means of support when she approached the Overseers for help in 1821. They accordingly provided her with assistance until the birth. Given Mrs. Robb's "insanity" after delivery, the Overseers extended support to the child during a period of nursing. Apparently Mrs. Robb recovered from her postpartum depression, at which point the Overseers terminated their assistance. The Overseers for St. David's Parish would later argue in a petition to the Legislature that helping Mrs. Robb was misguided given that there were a number of struggling farmers in need in their fledgling agricultural settlement. Upon reflection, the Overseers decided that providing this assistance had "subjected the Parish to a burden not naturally its own."

Although the New Brunswick government had set the immigration initiative in motion, there was no system in place to guide immigrants or to facilitate their successful settlement. The responsibility for indigent or distressed immigrants, especially in settlements that did not benefit from the Overseers of the Poor, fell largely upon the shoulders of concerned individuals. Charles Stewart, Barrack Sergeant stationed at Grand Falls, had arrived with the 74<sup>th</sup> Regiment in 1818. Over the next few years, Stewart

willingly assisted nearly one hundred poor and unfortunate immigrants, with more than sixty taking advantage of his hospitality in 1822 alone. The duration of their stay varied from a single night to more than a year, and he offered not only lodgings and provisions, but in some instances paid for passage to Madawaska. Paying passage helped facilitate the distressed immigrants' departure from this province.

With his post located on the road to Canada, Stewart frequently encountered weary immigrants intent on leaving the province. Generally they arrived at his door poorly clad, nearly frozen, hungry, and, in many cases, sick. As he was "bound by the ties of humanity," Stewart felt compelled to aid immigrants who found their way across the frozen river and through the woods to his station. He insisted that he could not "deny the weary a couch whereon to rest, nor the famished benighted traveller, ample food to stop his craving, nor can the cold be drove from the door, without being warmed and clad." Stewart assisted Thomas Croghan, native of County Roscommon, Ireland, who in 1816 had deserted the 102<sup>nd</sup> Regiment at St. Andrews. Croghan fled to the United States, remaining there until 1821. He was en route to Quebec, intending to take passage on a ship bound for Ireland, when a severe case of frostbite forced Croghan to take refuge with Stewart. Perhaps delirious from deprivation, Croghan initially appeared deranged to Stewart. Over the course of his stay with Barrack Sergeant Stewart, Croghan's physical injuries healed and his mental state improved. Stewart reported that after a four week convalescence with him, Croghan left his quarters fully recovered.

Without any governmental agency at his disposal, Barrack Sergeant Stewart had appealed to his Commanding Officer, Sir Robert Le Poer Trench for financial aid. Sir Robert Le Poer Trench, the youngest son of the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Clancarty, was sympathetic to the immigrant plight, and it is possible that he reimbursed Stewart for his expenses. Stationed at Fredericton, Le Poer Trench expressed general concern for the local immigrant population. He visited their "habitations," commenting upon the often miserable conditions in which they lived. With the local Overseers of the Poor already overburdened and generally reluctant to provide relief to indigent immigrants, Le Poer Trench collected donations from the officers and soldiers of the 74<sup>th</sup> Regiment for the relief of their fellow countrymen. Given his involvement with this cause, it is not surprising that Le Poer Trench was also instrumental in the formation of the Fredericton Emigrant Society.

In 1819, the arrival at Fredericton of nearly two dozen Welsh families focussed attention on the rising immigrant problem in that town. Prominent citizens gathered at a local coffee-house to organize an assisted settlement plan for the Welsh families. A committee was formed to identify needs and to solicit donations for clothing, tools, and other necessary provisions. There was some concern expressed that the committee had provided these immigrant families with far too many resources, that the individuals had not expended any effort in their own interest. In nineteenth century New Brunswick, hard work and individual industry were held in high regard, and it was feared that overindulgence might compromise or even destroy personal initiative. Creating a cycle of dependency was to be avoided at all costs. Committee members silenced the opposition by arguing that the only way for these people to become "useful settlers" was to provide the Welsh families with what they considered minimal assistance. Committee members acknowledged that "the prosperity of the settlement must ultimately depend" on the "industry of the settlers." Within a few months, the Fredericton committee helped to create a new community for the Welsh families at what became known as Cardigan Settlement.

Those who had complained about the assistance provided the Welsh families were actually critical of a committee that assisted a specific immigrant group to the exclusion of others in need. There was an apparent imbalance in the distribution of relief, especially in light of the arrival that year of thousands of immigrants, largely from Ireland. These concerned citizens argued for the formation of a new Society which could attend to the needs of all immigrants, not just a select group. The Fredericton Emigrant Society emerged from this debate, with a mandate to provide assistance and settlement advice to the growing population of distressed immigrants. The Fredericton Emigrant Society was the first organization of its kind established in this province. With Sir Robert Le Poer Trench installed as President, the Fredericton Emigrant Society was formed in September and its constitution ratified in December 1819. Lieutenant Governor George Stracey Smyth pledged his support with a £50 subscription and by accepting the office of Patron of the Society.

Because emigrant societies shared the same objective, the organizing principles among the different societies were remarkably similar. The Fredericton Emigrant Society mirrored the rules and regulations adopted by the Québec Emigrant Society, the latter organization having been established in August 1819. Emigrant societies had one main objective: to facilitate the successful settlement of immigrants. The Fredericton organization proposed to achieve this aim by helping individuals find employment and to provide destitute immigrants with pertinent settlement “information and assistance.” Membership dues funded the organization, with regular members paying five dollars and life members £10. Donations in the form of currency or provisions were always welcome, as these could be used to aid poor immigrants. Each month, the Society Members who were nominated “Visitors” were expected to investigate and report on “cases of distress with as much accuracy as possible.” The Emigrant Society also required that an Emigrant Office be opened, creating, most importantly, a registry of aid applicants. The register recorded the name and documented the particular circumstances of each immigrant who applied for assistance. The register would not only benefit those in search of work, but employers looking to hire people with specific skills. Notices appeared in *The Royal Gazette* advertising available labouring and domestic service positions, for which immigrants could submit applications at the Emigrant Office. The Fredericton Emigrant Society published the results of their immigrant intervention program in the newspaper. By January 1820, 16 immigrants had found work, 25 had received medical aid, and 14 had been furnished with food, clothing, and fuel. The Visitors helped improve the living conditions for a great many immigrants, making their dwellings “not only habitable, but cleanly and comfortable.”

At Fredericton, critics were disturbed by the distribution of relief which favoured one particular group of immigrants; however, at Saint John objections were raised by the vagueness of the term “emigrant.” Mr. Charles Parke volunteered to open a Register’s Office, with a Book of Register, at his office on Water Street. Immigrants applying for aid would be recorded in the register, in which they were required to “make known their circumstances, situation and objects.” A Registry Office was established at Saint John in October 1819, in part to chart the distribution of aid among the local immigrant population, but it had also been prompted by concern for the welfare of immigrants unprepared for the onset of winter. For those immigrants who could not get onto their own land before winter, they would be provided with huts on uncultivated land outside the city. Immigrants were expected to provide their own fuel, but if necessary they would be eligible for a few minor provisions.

The landowners agreed that the immigrants could have whatever crops they raised on the land that they cultivated, free of charge. This arrangement, devised for the winter of 1819-1820, provided temporary accommodation for the immigrant, while also benefitting the landowner. A number of prominent citizens subscribed funds in support of the new organization. Lieutenant Governor Smyth topped the list, but the Saint John Irish Society was next in line with a £25 subscription. The Register's Office served as a precursor to the Saint John Agricultural and Emigrant Society, which would soon assume responsibility for the education and welfare of immigrants.

Immigrants were expected to clear, cultivate, and settle the land, but few were adept in this regard. Teaching immigrants about agricultural pursuits soon became an integral component of the advice and information provided by the various emigrant societies. Fredericton kept its emigrant and agricultural societies separate, but the societies at Saint John and St. Andrews combined the two arms of the organizational framework. In January 1820, the Charlotte County Agricultural and Emigrant Society was established at St. Andrews.

The formation of emigrant societies was proof positive that unplanned immigration had created social and financial problems for the province. Clearly, the immigrant problem required action, but the initiative initially came not from the government but from concerned, prominent citizens. Communities apparently could not absorb or accommodate all of the newcomers, and soon many immigrants found themselves destitute and in a state of deprivation. Immigrants who proved themselves "useful settlers" were generally welcome in this province. They were especially welcome and accepted during periods of labour shortage. However, when work was in short supply, the immigrant of any extraction suffered prejudice and ostracism. Distressed immigrants, no matter what the reasons for their poverty, tainted and tarnished the image of all immigrants. During this same period, American communities also shunned the poor immigrant, even threatening legal action to prevent the introduction of additional paupers. In 1819, the Overseers of the Poor for the Town of Eastport, Maine invoked a law from 1794 which had the power to punish any person or ship captain who would knowingly deposit destitute or "criminal foreigners" in their midst. This legislation imposed steep fines on any person found in violation of its tenets.

The three Emigrant Societies established in New Brunswick covered the two busiest ports of entry as well as the Provincial Capital. However, immigrants arrived at other ports, namely at Miramichi, and countless others had moved into the interior attempting to settle land. Although these three organizations were active in fulfilling their mandate, they could not assist all the immigrants in their own areas let alone in remote parts of the province. Concerned that the Emigrant Societies had not made enough of an impact in correcting the immigrant problem, Lieutenant Governor Sir Howard Douglas called for the formation of a Provincial Agricultural and Emigrant Society in 1825. Aware of immigrant privation, Sir Howard Douglas had in 1824 attempted to equip immigrants with additional supplies and provisions, but evidently a more comprehensive effort was required. Although the Lieutenant Governor supported the Emigrant Societies through subscriptions and in his role as Patron, his plan to create a provincial organization would mark the first active governmental response to immigration. It would also be fleeting.

Sir Howard Douglas hoped to resolve, or at the very least address, a number of problems with the formation of the new provincial society. With his attention principally focussed upon land, labour,

and the accumulation of capital, the immigrant problem existed on the periphery of his plan. Sir Howard Douglas considered the province in a poor agricultural state, with the vast expanse of the interior largely undeveloped and uncultivated. The key to prosperity lay in the settlement of the land and the successful cultivation and marketing of crops, thereby generating profits that could be deposited in the banking system. Douglas promoted the accumulation of capital, which could only be accomplished in connection and in cooperation with the banks. Such a plan would ensure not only the successful settlement of the province but would secure a firm financial foundation. In dispensing advice to immigrants, poet "J.K." had also seemed to extol the virtues of saving over spending. In 1817, "J.K." wrote: "Think, ah! think who will support you,/ When you're waxing grey and old:/ Spend not then, what should comfort you/ Through a winter long and cold."

Douglas insisted that the Provincial Society should offer the poor immigrant "a great deal of charitable attention and protection." He further argued that the distressed immigrant should not attempt to clear the land without having first accumulated capital. Douglas suggested a settlement process in which the immigrant would initially sell his labour to farmers on productive and established farms. From this agricultural apprenticeship, the immigrant would acquire the skills necessary to clear and cultivate his own land, which he could later purchase using the money he had diligently saved in a bank account. Like the local emigrant societies, the Provincial organization also required the creation of a registry to help facilitate immigrant employment. While concerned for the welfare of distressed immigrants, Douglas was primarily guided by a desire to settle the interior and to improve the agricultural capabilities of the province. Within a few years of incorporation, the New Brunswick Agricultural and Emigrant Society relinquished its commitment to the "emigrant," becoming simply the New Brunswick Agricultural Society. That the New Brunswick Agricultural and Emigrant Society was shifting its mandate was already evident by May 1828, and the proceedings from the General Meeting published in *The Royal Gazette* revealed an organization dedicated solely to agricultural pursuits. Dropping "emigrant" from the organization title suggests that the provincial society had been as ill-equipped to deal with the immigrant problem as had the local Emigrant Societies. In promoting agricultural advances and farm technology, the Provincial Society could benefit all New Brunswick residents, not just immigrants.

Increasing numbers of impoverished immigrants arrived in the province throughout the 1820s. Community organizations grew ever more reluctant to dole out relief to distressed immigrants, fearing that they were supporting people who would only continue to be a drain on their limited resources. Poor immigrants were increasingly considered an unnecessary financial burden, and their arrival generated considerable apprehension. The Saint John Agricultural and Emigrant Society reported in 1828 that the class and physical condition of immigrants that had landed in the city showed a marked improvement over those who had arrived in 1827. The only exception was the arrival of the "deluded" Irish who had fled Brazil in the fall of 1828.

When the brig *Highlander* docked at Saint John in September 1828, carrying on board 171 destitute, demoralized, starving, sick, and scantily clad Irish immigrants, they received no fanfare in the port city. This group of Irish Catholic immigrants had never intended to embark for Saint John. They were part of a larger migration stream which found nearly 2500 Irish depart from the Cove of Cork bound for Rio de Janeiro in January 1827. Amid the promises of free passage, free land, warm climate,

generous wages, minimal living expenses, freedom from taxation, and, most importantly, the freedom to practice their religion, this large group of Catholic Irish willingly agreed to the immigration proposal. In return, they were expected to undergo military training a few hours each day, experience that would prove vital in the event of civil unrest. After their arrival in Rio de Janeiro, however, the Irish discovered that instead of being farmers they were expected to become fulltime soldiers. The inducements which made them leave Ireland proved to be false promises. The living conditions were appalling and food rations were meager and inconsistent with the Irish diet, bringing many to the brink of starvation. It is unclear if any of the Irish immigrants were pressed into military service, but apparently they steadfastly refused to take up arms for a foreign government. To punish the Irish for their refusal to join the army, reportedly every tenth man was imprisoned. Those who were incarcerated suffered all manner of indignity and privation. After a lengthy appeal to the British Consul, the Irish were successful in securing passage either back to Ireland or to any British Colony at the expense of the Brazilian Government. Six vessels were chartered, five of which returned to Ireland. The sixth ship set sail for Saint John, New Brunswick.

The reception of the Rio de Janeiro Irish was clouded not only because of their obvious poverty and illness, but because their loyalty and allegiance was in question. There were those who suspected that the Irish did indeed take up arms for a foreign power. It was generally believed that if the Irish had actually fought against the Crown, then they had forfeited their rights as British subjects. From the outset, the care of indigent immigrants had been a parish rather than a provincial responsibility, and objections to this arrangement surfaced with the arrival of the Irish from Brazil. Although there was reluctance about assisting these immigrants, the Saint John Irish Society quickly began the fundraising drive. Lieutenant Governor Douglas promised to double what had been raised by local subscription, using money from the King's Casual Relief fund. Within a few weeks, £32 had been collected and the Lieutenant Governor contributed a further £64. Members of Saint John Common Council who had been in charge of collecting provisions for sufferers of the 1825 Miramichi Fire set about the task of gathering clothing donations for this group of "near naked" Irish who were dressed for a tropical climate.

There was a measure of relief when the Irish from Rio de Janeiro began to move beyond the city limits. A couple of weeks after their arrival, two dozen had settled at Fredericton with an additional thirty having relocated to St. Andrews. Within a month, most of the Irish who had arrived from Rio de Janeiro had either moved further inland or found employment on farms near the city. All that remained were the sick who continued to convalesce in the hospital located on the Marsh Road.

The state of immigrants' health was a perennial concern for both residents and local officials. Conditions aboard the passenger ships were often deplorable, but they were considered especially so when more permissive Passenger Acts were in effect. Disease bred and rapidly spread on overcrowded, unsanitary, and undersupplied ships. A significant portion of the immigrant population that boarded passenger ships in 1826 and 1827 arrived not only destitute but in poor health. The first quarantine station had been established at Middle Island in response to the number of contagious vessels that had arrived at Miramichi during the 1827 season. The Passenger Act of 1828 remedied many of the passenger ship sins, but the possibility that diseased immigrants might infect local populations continued to concern local officials and residents alike. Discrimination against distressed immigrants continued to mount, especially given the impression that they were carriers of disease. However,

outside the sick and “deluded” Irish that arrived at Saint John from Rio de Janeiro, 1828 marked an improvement in the physical condition of immigrants. Fear itself was a contagion and panic spread rapidly in 1832 as many in New Brunswick awaited the arrival of a most dreaded disease: *cholera morbus*.

From early January 1832, *The Royal Gazette* ran articles almost every week on the spread of cholera throughout England. Coverage intensified when the disease reached Québec, its arrival blamed on the immigrant ships. Lower Canada had its own public health issues at the time, with unsanitary, overcrowded living conditions spreading disease, but the waves of immigration only exacerbated the problem. Although reports initially refuted the claims that cholera had arrived in Lower Canada, by June 1832 the mounting death toll could no longer be denied. That summer, thousands of immigrants arrived weekly at Québec, with more than 10,000 arriving in June alone. The association between disease and immigrant ships was not lost on residents of New Brunswick. In late June, *The Royal Gazette* published statistics showing the rapid spread of the disease in Québec. The report galvanized the Fredericton Emigrant Society into action, and two days later the organization insisted that, in the interest of preparedness, they construct a Cholera Hospital. The Fredericton Emigrant Society further suggested that when not in use for the containment of disease, the hospital be held in reserve for housing distressed immigrants. Although there were undoubtedly localized cases of cholera at that time, the disease did not reach epidemic proportions in 1832. The Fredericton Cholera Hospital, which stood for nearly eighty years in the vicinity of the Alms House, was a tangible legacy left by the Fredericton Emigrant Society. The construction of the Cholera Hospital in the fall of 1832 was in fact one of the last acts of a dying organization. The Fredericton Emigrant Society folded by 1834, and the Saint John Agricultural and Emigrant Society’s role in caring for immigrants faded with the appointment of Alexander Wedderburn as Government Emigrant Agent in 1831.

The New Brunswick government responded to the rise in immigration during the late 1820s by establishing the office of Government Emigrant Agent in February 1831. Between July and April 1826, 1550 immigrants had arrived at Saint John, and a further 3000 came by October of that year. In June 1829, 146 immigrants arrived at Saint John from England, but the Irish far outnumbered any other group with 2064 arriving at that time. A central agency was required to funnel immigration, and it was imperative that the Government Emigrant Agent be stationed at Saint John, the busiest port of entry. Within a few years of Wedderburn’s appointment, Assistant Emigrant Agents were positioned at Fredericton, St. Andrews, Miramichi, Shediac, Richibucto, Dalhousie, and Bathurst. In addition to assisting immigrants, Assistant Agents were expected to supply the Government Emigrant Agent with immigration information and statistics. The St. Andrews Emigrant Agent remained active for a number of years, but other Assistants were eventually dispensed with, having been replaced by County Treasurers who simply compiled quarterly immigration statistics.

The duties of the Government Emigrant Agent were daunting, diverse, and quite onerous. The Agent greeted immigrant ships, registered new arrivals, assessed the health of passengers, answered immigrant questions, facilitated employment and land acquisition, assisted reunion with family members, and communicated with British and American Emigrant Agents, among his numerous other tasks. Alexander Wedderburn, the first Government Emigrant Agent, had nearly a decade of experience dealing with the immigrant problem. A native of Aberdeen, Scotland, Wedderburn had been Secretary

of the Saint John Agricultural and Emigrant Society during the 1820s, and was active in fulfilling the aims and objectives of that organization. Wedderburn had been engaged as Government Emigrant Agent for perhaps eight or nine years when poor health necessitated the appointment of Moses H. Perley as Acting Emigrant Agent. Perley had undertaken all of Wedderburn's duties, but only assumed the title of Government Emigrant Agent upon the death of Alexander Wedderburn in 1843. Moses H. Perley was undoubtedly the most active and dedicated Emigrant Agent ever engaged by the province, and he worked diligently not only to help settle immigrants but to attract new migrants to these shores.

Edmund Ward, who was stationed at Fredericton, became the most prominent of the Assistant Emigrant Agents. Ward accepted the position of Assistant Emigrant Agent in 1840, a patronage appointment bestowed upon him by his friend, Lieutenant Governor Sir John Harvey. A native of Nova Scotia, Ward moved to New Brunswick in 1837, and in that same year founded the *Sentinel and New Brunswick General Advertiser*. A prolific editor and publisher, Edmund Ward printed a variety of newspapers and literary journals in Nova Scotia and Bermuda. As Assistant Emigrant Agent, Ward performed much the same duties as the Government Emigrant Agent from his office in the Tank House at Phoenix Square. He kept regular government office hours, suspending work each day at 3:00 p.m. When Ward left the province in 1844, no successor had been appointed to fill his vacancy. Edmund Ward was the first and only Assistant Emigrant Agent at Fredericton.

Even with Assistant Emigrant Agents installed around the province, the government recognized that immigration continued to pose significant challenges. To alleviate the burden placed upon Emigrant Agents, emigrant societies were to be revived, but this time, each county would have its own emigrant society. In May 1841, county sheriffs received a circular from the provincial government directing them that they must establish a County Emigrant Society. York County organized its Emigrant Society that same month, and Carleton, Gloucester, Queens, and Westmorland Counties followed in June. Saint John lagged behind these counties, but finally complied in July. Emigrant Societies were slow to form in counties that either did not have a substantial immigrant population or an established agricultural society. In most counties, emigrant societies targeted the membership of the local agricultural society. The Charlotte County Agricultural and Emigrant Society, which had remained in continuous operation since its founding in 1820, divided into two separate organizations in 1841.

The county societies were expected to raise £60 by local subscription before the government would match those funds. This arrangement put many societies at a disadvantage, rendering many of them inactive. They simply could not raise the money required to be eligible for the government grant. Although Gloucester County had founded its society early, there was little interest in or support for the organization. The society's inability to raise funds had been the result of its "scanty population of British Origin, and the want of a staple trade." The county and its inhabitants were too poor to make the necessary contributions, and this was an all too common problem among the various counties.

By the fall of 1841, emigrant societies had been established in nearly every county. The government not only issued reminders to delinquent counties to organize emigrant societies, but urged societies already in operation to adopt the resolutions of the Saint John Emigrant Society. These resolutions outlined a comprehensive and labour intensive plan designed to correct the immigrant problem. However, not every county society had the resources available to follow the Saint John resolutions. The York County Emigrant Society wanted to comply but found it impossible to do so. The

York County organization further argued that the Saint John resolutions were “adapted only to the situation of a Sea Board County, and appear intended rather to promote the removal of Emigrants than to assist in their permanent settlement in the Country.” The Saint John Emigrant Society recommended that “agents” be stationed on various roads throughout the county, and it was their job to patrol immigrants on their travels. After registering at the Emigrant Office, immigrants would be issued a “pass” which they would carry with them. Immigrants were encouraged to obtain testimonials of their character, conduct, and employability before they emigrated to this province. Providing these testimonials to an agent would help facilitate the immigrants’ search for employment. Ideally these certificates would be registered at the Emigrant Office and kept on file. Immigrants were to present both their pass and testimonials to the agent. So long as the immigrant did not have a history of refusing work, the agent would provide necessary aid and assistance. The pass would be so marked to indicate whether the immigrant had refused work at reasonable wages. The immigrant who refused work was ineligible for further aid from the society. Employment had always been the cornerstone of successful settlement and the chief aim of emigrant societies. Work refusal was tantamount to rejecting other forms of aid and relief, and this rejection was intolerable. One immigrant group in particular was habitually known to refuse work: the Irish.

It is uncertain whether any County Emigrant Society adopted the Saint John resolutions, or even if Saint John had managed to implement such an ambitious immigration plan. The County Emigrant Societies remained in service for the next few years, but these organizations were apparently defunct before the Famine. Weathering that crisis rested almost entirely upon the shoulders of the Government Emigrant Agent, with the assistance of health care professionals and the Board of Health. A Board of Medical Officers had been appointed at Saint John, Fredericton, and St. Andrews to help administer the health crisis. Because of his active communication with Emigrant Agents and other officials in Ireland, Moses Perley was well aware that an unprecedented number of immigrants would arrive at New Brunswick’s ports of entry in 1847. His information was indeed correct, and in that year a total number of 14,789 immigrants arrived in this province.

There was no handbook for the Emigrant Agent, but they provided their own for immigrants. Based on their expertise in the field, Alexander Wedderburn, Edmund Ward, and Moses H. Perley wrote their own emigrant guides. Part of a growing body of advice literature, emigrant guides provided the potential immigrant with valuable and useful settlement instructions. In essence, though, these guides were designed to attract immigration. Alexander Wedderburn’s guide, published in 1835 under the title *Statistical and Practical Observations relative to the Province of New Brunswick, Published for the Information of Emigrants*, answered questions posed by the Limerick Emigrants’ Friend Society. Alexander Wedderburn would release the second edition of his guide, complete with additional information, in time to compete with the publication of Edmund Ward’s emigrant guide in 1841.

Edmund Ward did not originally intend for his manuscript to address immigrant settlement. The title, *An Account of the River St. John: With its Tributary Rivers and Lakes*, hardly evokes the spirit of an emigrant guide. The manuscript reads more like a travelogue than an emigrant guide. Ward himself noted in his concluding remarks that his “object originally ... was to benefit my fellow-countrymen in Nova Scotia, many of whom are wasting their energies and their lives, upon a barren and unproductive soil.” Very few copies of his “guide” sold when it was first released in 1841, and marketing this

publication as an emigrant guide probably boosted sales in 1842. In his conclusion, Ward offered immigrants advice and cautionary notes drawn from his own experience as Assistant Emigrant Agent. He focused his attention upon immigrant wage earning potential. He addressed his comments to “persons from the old country, particularly those who arrive from Ireland.” He warned that wages were high only when labour was scarce and that they should not expect “extravagant remuneration for their services.”

After more than a decade as Government Emigrant Agent, Moses H. Perley offered his own sage advice in the 1857 publication, *Hand-Book of Information for Emigrants to New-Brunswick*. Perley covered a range of topics, including climate, the staples trade, land, labour, commerce, religion, and education. The most provocative section of Moses Perley’s guide came near the end of his treatise under the title “General Information to Emigrants.” Perley advised emigrants to come with enough capital to ensure their own subsistence or to facilitate their move into the interior. He cautioned the reader that only sick immigrants would be eligible for “public aid.” He further outlined a successful settlement plan that mirrored the one first suggested by Lieutenant Governor Sir Howard Douglas in 1825. Perley advised the newly arrived immigrant to work as a farm labourer for a few years in order to accumulate agricultural expertise. He warned the immigrant not to “fall into the common error of refusing reasonable wages on their first arrival.” Ideally, an immigrant arrived with £100 sterling in his pocket, £15 of which could be put towards the construction of a comfortable, 2-storey log house which measured 16 feet by 24 feet. Perley cautioned the immigrant against purchasing land until he had the means to provide for his family for 12 months, and even then he should not try to clear wilderness land. He should purchase partially cleared land, and Perley promised that there was a ready supply of farmers willing to sell their land, complete with house and farm equipment.

In promoting the province as a destination for immigrants, Moses Perley included a section not typically found in other emigrant guides. He proclaimed the province relatively healthy in his brief discussion of “Ordinary Diseases,” in an attempt to assure immigrants that there would be no repeat of the Famine. The range of diseases was the same here as that in the United Kingdom, and existed with the same or lesser intensity. There were other “classes” of diseases prevalent in the province, but these were often the result of “habitual drunkenness.” Perley concluded on a positive note, promising that “On the whole, there is much less sickness and mortality both among officers and men, than in any other part of the United Kingdom.”

Although the Famine brought masses of diseased and destitute immigrants to New Brunswick, immigration rates dropped immediately thereafter. Not only were fewer immigrants coming to this province, but those who did arrive quickly moved to the United States. In 1851, 2,165 immigrants arrived, but two out of every three promptly left the province. With the sharp decline in immigration, Moses Perley shifted his focus from adult to youthful migrants. He first approached the Poor Law Unions in England, promising that labour for individuals 14 years and older was in great demand in New Brunswick. His initial request to the Poor Law Board for 100 boys and 100 girls resulted in applications from 208 boys and 150 girls. Perley continued this course of action throughout the 1850s, also contacting the Foundling Hospital in the City of Cork, which yielded yet another source of youthful immigrants. Even with hundreds of youths en route to this province, immigration totals dropped to new lows after the mid-1850s. A paltry 1,539 immigrants arrived in 1855, but only 708 came the following year. In 1859, only 230 immigrants made their way to New Brunswick.

Attracting immigrants to this province not only became a matter of considerable discussion but the subject of an essay contest. In December 1859, the Saint John Mechanics' Institute offered cash prizes for the two best essays that addressed "New Brunswick as a Home for Emigrants: with the best means of promoting Immigration, and developing the resources of the Province." There were eighteen entries from all over the province, and five rather than two winners were selected by the committee. John Valentine Ellis, who would become editor of the *Saint John Globe*, was awarded first prize. James Edgar, editor of the *Journal and Acadian* at Woodstock, Carleton County, came in second. James Brown, land surveyor, politician, and school inspector, took third place. William Till, Jr., editor and founder of *The New Brunswicker or Colonial and Foreign Gazette*, was the fourth place winner. William Richard M. Burtis, barrister and editor of the *Temperance Telegraph*, claimed the fifth prize. The provincial government agreed to publish all five winning essays for distribution throughout the Canadian Provinces and the United Kingdom. There were 8,000 copies of the first two essays printed and 3,000 copies of each of the remaining essays. This contest produced five new emigrant guides promoting New Brunswick as a destination for immigrants, which James Brown distributed on a government sponsored excursion to England and Ireland in 1861.

In his award winning essay, James Edgar urged individuals to act as ambassadors for this province. Each person should take every opportunity to "advertise our country," whether here or abroad. More than a decade earlier, one person did precisely that. In 1844, Alleyn Charles Evanson wrote his own emigration pamphlet and bore the full cost of its publication. Evanson had emigrated from County Cork in 1822 and settled at Kings County. He had a reputation for helping immigrants, having built houses for many of them at his own expense. With labour in high demand in 1844, Evanson thought his fellow countrymen, who at the time were "clamoring for bread," should seize this opportunity. Evanson set sail for Ireland in February 1844, and once in Derry he had 5,000 copies of his emigration pamphlet printed. While distributing his pamphlet, Evanson was surprised to find so few New Brunswick emigrant guides in circulation. He counted 45 American emigrant guides, but only three for New Brunswick, including that written by Alexander Wedderburn. Upon his return to New Brunswick, Evanson applied to the government to be reimbursed for the publication costs, but his request was denied.

William Till, Jr. astutely observed in his winning essay that "population is wealth." While prosperity was the preferred outcome of immigration, the New Brunswick government was unprepared for the reality of accommodating great surges in its population. Although there were self-sufficient immigrants who settled in this province, it was the arrival of distressed immigrants that caused a sensation because of the tremendous related social and financial problems. The government was unprepared to deal with this situation, and relief was often provided by overburdened county agencies. This arrangement generated considerable resentment at the local level towards both the government and the distressed immigrant. The government, which was decidedly slow getting involved, permitted individuals and locally formed emigrant societies to respond to the immigrant problem. With the appointment of Emigrant Agents, the provincial government finally established a lasting bureaucracy to direct immigration policy and to enact solutions for lingering immigration problems. Because of a protracted period of unplanned immigration, population actually meant poverty in this province.

