The Cricketers of Digby and Yarmouth Counties, Nova Scotia, 1871-1914: Social Roots of a Village and Small-Town Sport

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Cricket in Nova Scotia, up until 1914, was a complex and deeply rooted sport. Rural and small-town cricket has attracted little historiographical attention, and yet multiple cricket clubs existed in villages and small towns. The adjoining counties of Digby and Yarmouth form a subregion in the southwestern part of the province where the social roots of cricket can be gauged and analysed. This essay argues that cricket long retained its place as a prevalent summer sport, and also contributed notably to the normalization of colonial settlement as well as to social linkages among settler communities.

IN AUGUST 1887, the Jubilee Cricket Club of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, played a two-innings match against opponents who styled themselves simply the “Eleven Old Cricketers.” The day did not go well for the younger team. Unfamiliar with the subtleties of the underarm bowling of their elders, the Jubilee batsmen struggled,

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and the result was a decisive victory for the Old Cricketers. The Yarmouth Times’s correspondent, identified only by the pseudonym of “Cricketer,” had sage advice for the Jubilee players. With the bat, they “should practise the straight batting and not shut both eyes and ‘swipe’ quite so much.” Their bowling was “straight and medium pace overhand, but lacks the most important thing, a good twist.” All in all, “Cricketer” admonished, “Practice a good twist, boys, and the next time you play the Old cricketers you will have better luck.”

The report did not provide a full list of the teams’ players, and of the Old Cricketers mentioned by name, only two can be identified with confidence. George Goldsmith was a carpenter and school janitor who in earlier years had appeared regularly for the most prominent among the town’s cricket teams, the Yarmouth Cricket Club. George Day was a Baptist minister who does not otherwise appear in the evidence regarding Yarmouth cricket, but was clearly an experienced bowler. Their respective approximate ages were forty-five and fifty-two years.

That the relative merits of overarm and underarm bowling were being discussed in the Yarmouth Times was not altogether surprising in the 1880s. Only in 1864 had full overarm bowling been legalized by the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), the London-based ruling body of this already-internationalizing sport, and even by the 1880s the distinction between roundarm and overarm bowling was not clear-cut. As late as in 1907, G. H. Simpson-Hayward, described in The American Cricketer as “a clever underhand medium pace bowler with plenty of break,” had the best bowling average on an MCC team touring the United States.

More significant in the Yarmouth report of 1887 was its underpinning premise that cricket was a thoroughly established, multigenerational settler sport. Historiographically, cricket in Nova Scotia—like Canadian cricket more generally—has frequently been portrayed as an elitist sport dominated by an imperial sensibility that rested on the predominance of English sojourners and recent immigrants among the participants, as well as on military provenance and an implicit deference to the cultural values of the imperial metropolis. Recent studies have revealed a more complex pattern, exploring social diversity and associated tensions within the sport. To date, however, such enquiries have focused primarily on Nova Scotia’s
capital city, Halifax, and on the areas of the province that experienced nineteenth-century industrialization, characterized economically by coal mining and by iron and steel manufactures. With the exception of some attention paid to the border area between Nova Scotia and neighbouring New Brunswick, rural and small-town areas have received little detailed study.7

This essay offers a portrayal of rural and small-town cricket in a significant subregion of southwestern Nova Scotia, defined by the two counties of Digby and Yarmouth. Although it does not attempt to generalize from this one geographical area to other portions of a province in which the settler population was socially and ethnically complex, there are nevertheless compelling reasons why this area offers a revealing case study: this was a subregion of very small places, which had little direct contact with imperial or military influences, and where the population was overwhelmingly composed of multigenerational settler families. Here, cricket was unquestionably the sport of an established settler colonial population.8 For the participants, it had everything to do with normalizing settlement, marking out settler space, and promoting social linkages among scattered settler communities. By the time of the first reporting of cricket in this subregion in 1871, the census-gathered population of the two counties, extending over a combined area of 4,638 square kilometres, was 35,587, made up of 17,037 for Digby County and 18,550 for Yarmouth County. The largest single town was the county town of Yarmouth (population 5,355 in 1871); the county town of Digby (1,951) and the other main centre of that county, Weymouth (1,440), were considerably smaller.9 Lacking the heavy industrialization that took place on the coalfields of the province, and relying principally on a marine-oriented economy as well as some limited agriculture, these counties experienced out-migration in the pre-1914 era to an extent that restrained population growth. The census of 1911 showed populations of 20,169 for Digby County and 23,220 for Yarmouth County. Yarmouth town—which did participate in medium-sized manufacturing to the extent of a cotton mill, a sailcloth factory, an iron foundry, and construction of steamboats—had grown to 6,600, while Digby town had declined to 1,247 and Weymouth had remained largely stable.10

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7 On the Nova Scotia-New Brunswick border area, see Reid and Reid, “Diffusion and Discursive Stabilization,” p. 96.
Certain other characteristics of the population were also salient. Both counties had substantial Acadian populations, largely in rural areas rather than towns. In Digby County in 1871, some 37.9 % of census respondents identified their origins as French, and 26.2 % in Yarmouth County.\textsuperscript{11} With a very few exceptions, however, Acadians do not appear in the evidence as playing cricket; nor, with any exceptions at all, do members of the much smaller Indigenous or African-descended populations. Also noteworthy was the rarity of recent immigrants. As early as in 1871, some 96.0 % of Digby County census respondents gave Nova Scotia as their birthplace (1.1 % had been born in either of the other Maritime provinces of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island; 1.9 % in the British Isles; and 0.7 % in the United States). In Yarmouth County, 96.6 % had been born in Nova Scotia (0.7 % elsewhere in the Maritimes; 1.6 % in the British Isles; and 0.8 % in the United States).\textsuperscript{12} Moreover, located at a considerable distance from Halifax—even though the extension of railways during the late nineteenth century reduced travelling times—and with frequent sea connections to Boston, this part of Nova Scotia had infrequent contact with imperial or military representatives, or even with the provincial elite as represented by and gathered around the institutions of the settler state in the provincial capital. In short, Digby and Yarmouth Counties represented together an area of the province where, according to the more conventional portrayals of Nova Scotian cricket, the sport simply should not have been played.

\textsuperscript{11} Census, 1871, vol. 1, pp. 324-25.
\textsuperscript{12} Census, 1871, vol. 1, p. 408.
“This Manly Art” : A Settler Sport

And yet, of course, cricket was played in the two counties, and extensively so at that. The evidence is uneven, and consists primarily of newspaper reports. Here as elsewhere, newspapers began to report regularly on sporting events—other than, in this subregion, boat-racing in various forms, on which coverage had an earlier start—during the years close to 1870. While it is true that in August 1845 the Yarmouth Herald carried an item squarely in the middle of its front page (reprinted from the New York Mirror) on “The Great Cricket Match” played in Montreal between a Canadian eleven and the St. George’s Club of New York, this was a conspicuously isolated exception to the rule. The first full reporting of cricket in either Digby or Yarmouth County was carried in issues of the Yarmouth Tribune in September and October 1871.

Over the years from 1871 to 1914, newspaper reports across the two counties made mention of seventeen adult cricket clubs and ten junior or school clubs—and this does not include the many occasions when less formal games were reported in towns and villages between such groupings as (most frequently) Married and Single teams, or (on occasion) the Awkward team and the Clumsy team, the Lean Men and the Fat Men, or variants of the Picked Eleven or Pick-’em-Ups. Some of the more formally established clubs appear to have operated only for short durations, and while the major town clubs—the Digby Cricket Club, the Weymouth Cricket Club, and the Yarmouth Cricket Club—lapsed at times and were subsequently revived, they fielded, at their peak, second and junior teams as well as the principal town eleven. Smaller centres such as the villages of Tusket, Ohio, and Hebron were also reported as fielding cricket teams in some years, with Hebron (its population reaching 767 in 1891 before declining to 640 by 1911) the most consistent. For Hebron, where cricket thrived perennially, the 1903 season in particular saw the village club operate teams at junior, intermediate, and senior levels, and the senior eleven proved capable at times of defeating both Yarmouth and Weymouth. That Hebron was a durable centre of cricket is clear from the evidence of a variety of newspapers, and yet it is also a case that exemplifies the variability of reporting. The anonymous Hebron social columnist for the Yarmouth Light happened to be a person who took an obvious interest in cricket, and much of the evidence of cricket within the community comes from this source. At the other end of the scale, small-town weekly (occasionally biweekly) newspapers typically had little or no reporting capacity outside of the personal activity of the editor or the reports that were delivered to the newspaper office in any given week. This brought limitations, meaning that sports reporting could disappear for short or extended periods, and therefore that cricket—like other sports, including

16 For the teams at different levels, see “Hebron,” Yarmouth Light, July 30, 1903, p. 8; on matches against Weymouth and Yarmouth, “Cricket at Hebron,” Yarmouth Times, August 25, 1903, p. 3.
the complementary and at times competing bat-and-ball code of baseball—was always liable to be underreported.

Even so, the evidence is sufficient to support a meaningful analysis of who played cricket in the two counties and why they did so. As a settler sport, cricket was played predominantly—though not exclusively—by English-speaking Protestants and by players who self-identified as having ethnic origins in the British Isles but were Nova Scotians of at least the third generation of settlement. The full extent of its antiquity is difficult to define in the absence of newspaper evidence before 1871. However, the evident awareness of the sport in the *Tribune*’s reporting in that year, and the knowledge of the rules that was routinely assumed in the newspaper’s readers, make it clear that cricket was not a novelty. It is likely that members of the Protestant clergy exerted a significant influence in communicating the updated codifications of the sport, as cricket was played at least as early as the 1860s at the universities that had Baptist, Church of England, and Methodist theological schools. Yet foundational vernacular sports tend by their nature to go unreported in written sources, and the origins of eighteenth-century settlement in Digby and Yarmouth Counties were largely in the colonies that became the United States, either as “Planters” from New England or as Loyalist refugees from the American Revolution. The early form of cricket known in the New England colonies as “wicket” would undoubtedly have been known to many of those migrants, even though it has been noticed by Nova Scotia historians mainly in the form played on ice—which has been claimed as a forerunner of ice hockey. In these contexts, the playing of cricket in a mature form in Digby and Yarmouth Counties by 1871 is not in itself remarkable. Indeed, in a context that takes into account the continuing significance of cricket as a sport in the northeastern United States, the sport as played in the two counties may be seen as a borderlands pursuit more so than an imperial one.

17 I owe this point to a discussion with Barry Moody, whose studies of Acadia University denote the importance of cricket to Baptist students.


As such, cricket had evident importance for settler colonial communities. It was played in part, of course, for the reasons that are common to many sports. Games played within villages and towns provided their participants with physical recreation and team participation. The contests between Married and Single teams had an extended pedigree both in England and in the United States, and they were frequent—even though rarely reported in detail—in Digby and Yarmouth Counties. As late as in 1911, the Hebron social columnist of the *Yarmouth Light* mentioned four Married vs. Single games during the month of July. The openness of these relatively informal encounters is exemplified by references to nonlocal participants. Included in one match was a crew member of HMCS *Niobe*—the Halifax-based principal vessel of the newly-established Canadian navy, then on a visit to Yarmouth—who had bicycled to Hebron and “was invited to join in the game.” The results were unfortunate for the sailor, who was “rather seriously injured, by being struck in the head by the ball,” but this did represent a rare example—the only other in the evidence being a match in 1885 between the Digby

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Figure 1. Cricket (and Croquet) at Yarmouth Central School, nineteenth century
*Source: Courtesy of the Yarmouth County Museum Archives, PH-60-Centre-3.*

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Cricket Club and the crew of the Royal Navy corvette Canada—of a connection between cricket in the two counties and the armed forces in any form.22

Another of the Married-Single encounters in Hebron in 1911 also involved a participant who was unorthodox even though clearly not inexperienced in the sport. The single men “were ably assisted by Miss Campbell of Toronto who is visiting her aunt…. Miss Campbell did some splendid work, fully sustaining her reputation as a star player.”23 A rare exception to the gendered character of Nova Scotia cricket as a male sport, Campbell was even more noteworthy in that as a player she was valued genuinely for the quality of her athleticism. When women played cricket elsewhere, notably in matches arranged by the students of King’s College, Windsor, these were often novelty encounters in which the male participants would be handicapped by playing left-handed and using baseball bats instead of cricket bats.24 Campbell obviously needed no such advantage. Yet there had already been one significant variation that was reported by the Weymouth Free Press in July 1902, in the form of a match in Weymouth between teams composed of Married and Single women. Of the nineteen players that afternoon—the teams were uneven, at nine Married and ten Single—twelve can be identified in the census records, and they shared key social characteristics with their male counterparts in the two counties. All twelve were Nova Scotia-born, and both parents of all but one were Nova Scotia-born. Eleven cited ethnic origins in the British Isles, and nine were affiliated with the Church of England. Most of the women were attributed no occupation in census records, although they did include Henrietta Dahlgren, a dry-goods clerk who was the daughter of a gardener, and Katherine McCormack, a telephone operator who was a farmer’s daughter.25 By parental—in each case, father’s—occupation, the players also included three daughters of merchants, as well as daughters of a house joiner, a store clerk, a painter, and a hotel proprietor. Half of the women had family connections with male cricketers. The reporting in the Free Press took a flippant tone, complicating the task of assessing the match as a contest, but the reporter took note of the six wickets taken by the nineteen-year-old Frances Rice for the Single team, and implicitly acknowledged the athletic quality of her bowling through a comparison with a well-known German exponent of physical culture. Rice had, it seemed, “the muscle of a Sandow.”26 While it is entirely possible that other such occasions went unreported, nevertheless the Weymouth match showed, on the one hand, that women’s cricket in this time and place was the exception proving the rule

22 “Hebron,” Yarmouth Light, August 3, 1911, p. 8; for the Digby-Canada match, see “Cricket,” Digby Weekly Courier, August 21, 1885, p. 2.
25 Emma Journeay, daughter of a house joiner, also became a store clerk, but is not identified as such until later in life, when she was living in the Boston area.
that the sport was predominantly male, and yet, on the other hand, that the women cricketers differed little socially from their more numerous male counterparts.

Beyond the purely recreational matches among arbitrarily made-up teams, contests between clubs within the same towns could stir up significant rivalry, especially when the clubs represented different neighbourhoods. However, much of the popular following of cricket was based on contests between the communities, whether towns or villages. When Weymouth played at home to Digby in July 1903, the Digby newspaper noted that the home supporters “felt somewhat ‘cocky,’ and the youth and beauty of Weymouth were early on the ground armed with tin horns and other noisy instruments to celebrate the victory they expected.” By the time Digby had substantially outscored Weymouth in the first innings, “the horns had long since disappeared and the only sound that was heard was the clang of the dinner bell.” Ultimately, however, even as Digby won the match, “the best of feeling prevailed between the teams.”

Yet socialization among settler towns and villages was a consistent theme of cricket reporting in the two counties, to the point that it was clearly no incidental element of any given day’s activities but rather served a social and cultural purpose that was integral and also gender-related. Some of the social occasions were formal, and apparently all-male. After the Yarmouth and Tusket clubs had played a three-match series in 1879—which Yarmouth won 2-1 with a nine-wicket victory in the final match in front of “numerous spectators”—the two teams dined at a Yarmouth hotel. There, they heard speeches not only by the umpires but also by the respective Church of England rectors, Richmond Shreve and Henry Sterns—Shreve having played in the second match for Yarmouth.

However, less ceremonious entertainment was the norm. In 1877, Digby captain W. Sawry Gilpin—whose occupation was recorded in both the 1871 and 1881 censuses simply as “hunter”—provided “a sumptuous dinner” at his house for the Digby and Annapolis teams at the midday break, following completion of the first innings of their match. A visit by the Digby team to Bridgetown in 1886, up the Annapolis River from Annapolis Royal, brought hospitality even before the match began. Leaving Digby by steam tug at 4:30 a.m., the players were entertained to breakfast at a Bridgetown hotel on their arrival four-and-a-half hours later.

and revisited the hotel for the midday meal. It may have done no harm that the Digby umpire John Daley was himself a hotelkeeper, and it seemed also that the Bridgetown players had no objection to two of Daley’s sons being members of the easily victorious Digby team, as the teams saluted each other with “three rousing cheers” at the end of the match.31

Figure 2. Digby Cricket Club, c. 1900


Male homosociality crossing the boundaries of communities, therefore, was an important element of cricket in the two counties. “We are glad to see,” noted the Digby Weekly Courier’s report on a Digby-Annapolis Royal match in 1877, “the good feeling which exists between these clubs in this manly art, and hope it will long continue so.”32 A similar sentiment was expressed in language more overtly redolent of settler colonialism in 1902, when the Yarmouth Light reported, following a match at Weymouth between the home club and Hebron, that “everybody was well pleased with the good playing and the amount of good nature showed by both sides. The Hebron boys say that Weymouth used them white and hope to meet them in friendly contest again.”33 Yet women also participated in the socialization that accompanied cricket. When the midday meal was served, as was the case more often than not, at the playing field rather than at a hotel, women of the host community were invariably involved. Newspaper reports in some cases cast them as the straightforward providers of food, as during a match with Digby at Weymouth in July 1903, when “the ladies of Weymouth had prepared a splendid dinner on the grounds … and everybody left the tables with the conviction that however partial the ladies were as far as concerned cricket, they were unsurpassed

as cooks.”34 On other occasions, however, the women were explicitly included within the bonds of friendship. Following the first innings of Digby’s home match against Annapolis Royal in August 1889, for example, “luncheon was … served on the grounds by the lady friends of the Digby team, amid the merry chit chat of the boys.”35 Similarly, during the 1904 season, when the Yarmouth Cricket Club entertained a touring team from Everett, Massachusetts, “lunch was served in the tents on the field, served by lady friends of the home team.”36 Serving food was, of course, common to all these vignettes, but “friends” were more than simply ladies of the community.

Figure 3. Yarmouth Cricket Club vs. Everett, Massachusetts, early twentieth century.  
Source: Courtesy of the Yarmouth County Museum Archives, 2004-197.2.

The Economy of Cricket
Socialization among villages and towns—sometimes extending to visitors from further afield—was, therefore, a significant goal in itself for the cricketers of Digby and Yarmouth Counties. It also underlined the amateurism that characterized the sport as it was configured in this subregion. Professionalism existed in Nova Scotia cricket, and in neighbouring New Brunswick, in the form of player-coaches hired by clubs in the larger centres, and possibly also in the context of incentives provided to working-class players.37 In the two counties, however, even as the principal clubs gravitated in the early twentieth century towards organized leagues, there is no hint in the evidence of players receiving financial rewards, even though they could appear and travel in a style that contrasted with the modest conventions of earlier years. League play was foreshadowed by an informal but focused series of contests in 1903 among the clubs from Hebron, Weymouth, and Yarmouth.38 The Nova Scotia Cricket League was inaugurated in 1906, but consisted only of three Halifax clubs and one from Windsor, and when it extended its range over the ensuing years it was northeast to Pictou County and Cape Breton rather than

37 For further discussion, see Reid, “Cricket, the Retired Feather Merchant, and Settler Colonialism,” esp. pp. 92-94; Reid and Reid, “Diffusion and Discursive Stabilization,” p. 96.
38 “Cricket at Hebron,” *Yarmouth Times*, August 25, 1903, p. 3.
southwest towards Digby and Yarmouth. At times, the clubs in the two counties had been compared unfavourably with those of Halifax, and especially with the Halifax Wanderers. When a match was proposed in 1892 between Digby and the Wanderers, the Digby Weekly Courier noted that “of course it can hardly be expected that Digby can defeat a team with such a record as that of the Wanderers.” A decade later the reporter for the Sissiboo Echo praised the Hebron team that had defeated Weymouth as “a representation of players strong enough in individual instances to play such teams as the ‘Wanderers’ or the ‘Philadelphians.’”

Perhaps owing partly to deference of this kind, or simply because of the convenience of waterborne communications, when the Bay of Fundy Cricket League was launched in July 1913 it was a three-way contest involving Digby, Weymouth, and the Saint John Cricket Club of New Brunswick. The Saint John club had frequently played in both Digby and Yarmouth Counties in previous years, and Saint John was a traditionally strong cricket centre in New Brunswick. However, Weymouth claimed the inaugural championship of the Bay of Fundy League with a win in Saint John before “a large number of spectators.” The second season of the league in 1914 ended inconclusively. Matches continued briefly after the declaration of the First World War on August 4, but what should have been the deciding encounter between Digby and Weymouth ended in a tie, both teams scoring 140 runs over two innings. A plan for a further match to settle the title was apparently never carried through.

In reality, the premature discontinuation of the Bay of Fundy League pre-empts any dependable judgment as to how well prepared the cricket clubs of Digby or Yarmouth Counties were to make the transition to league cricket. Even in the absence of player salaries, financial demands could be significant.

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39 “Home and Abroad,” Digby Weekly Courier, September 9, 1892, p. 2; “Cricket,” Sissiboo Echo (Weymouth Bridge), August 22, 1902, p. 2. The Wanderers’ match in Digby ultimately did not take place, owing to difficulties in arranging a time. The comparison with the “Philadelphians” in 1902 referenced the frequent visits made to Halifax in this era by touring teams from Philadelphia.

40 For an earlier Saint John visit, see “Cricket,” Yarmouth Light, July 20, 1905, p. 1.


43 “Friday’s Cricket Game,” Digby Weekly Courier, August 21, 1914, p. 5.
despite the statement of the former cricketer, baseball was exempt from similar pressures. Baseball and cricket had long coexisted in the two counties, with player rosters often overlapping. When uptown and downtown teams met in Yarmouth for “a friendly match at base ball” in August 1888, the listing of the uptown team was headed by Harry Munro, a law student who was (and would remain) a long-serving cricketer with the Mighty Dollar Club and the Yarmouth Cricket Club, and when the Digby Weekly Courier advocated in 1889 that the town should begin planning summer events it specified “a tournament of cricket and baseball.”44 A professional baseball coach was recruited for Digby that summer, and by 1897 allegations were being levelled that the Digby club itself had succumbed to illicit professionalism.45 However, the real beginning of professionalism in baseball in the area came amidst an upsurge in spectatorship for the sport that became especially evident in Yarmouth in 1909. When the Yarmouth team entertained visitors from Everett, Massachusetts, in June 1911, an estimated crowd of one thousand attended. It was the same number as had been estimated when the cricket team from Everett had visited Yarmouth in 1904, and significantly both umpires at the 1911 baseball game—Clarence Churchill and George Earl—were also regular players with the Yarmouth Cricket Club.46 Yet, in 1912, spectator-driven baseball in Yarmouth effectively collapsed, amid controversies regarding poaching of players and the absence of homegrown players as opposed to US imports. Even a further visit by the Everett team on Dominion Day failed to reverse the decline, the Yarmouth Light commenting that “it is quite needless to say that the attendance was poor, as usual,” and by the end of July the players had dispersed either to their US homes or to more prosperous teams in Halifax.47

Thus, whether baseball or cricket, there was an economic balance that was often difficult to strike in an area of small towns and villages. Cricket was exempt from the dilemmas that arose from financial compensation of players, but the expenses associated with the sport—equipment costs, maintenance of grounds, expenses to away games—still had to be paid for. It was true that cricket was fully capable of drawing a crowd, as demonstrated as early as in 1877 by “the large number of spectators” attending a Digby-Annapolis Royal match.48 However, with the exception of a match at Weymouth in 1891—when tickets were offered at 10¢ apiece—evidence is lacking of any effort to charge admission.49 Indeed, in July 1905 the Yarmouth club let it be known in anticipation of a visit by Weymouth that “the home club being under quite an expense in getting outside teams here and not having any way of charging admission to their grounds will take up a silver

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46 “Cricketer,” Yarmouth Herald, August 23, 1904, p. 2; “Baseball,” Yarmouth Times, June 18, 1911, p. 3.
47 “Base Ball,” Yarmouth Light, July 4, 1912, p. 5; “Exit Baseball,” Yarmouth Light, July 25, 1912, p. 5. On other sources of tension within Yarmouth baseball, see “The Baseball Situation,” Yarmouth Times, August 1, 1911, p. 3, and for a broader discussion see Howell, Northern Sandlots, pp. 141-45.
collection during the afternoon to help defray expenses."50 This came a few weeks after the club—following the example of the YMCA boys’ cricket club in the previous year—had held a fundraising concert at the town’s Royal Opera House.51 To be sure, there were other ways of charging spectators, and the Digby club’schartering of a vessel on which supporters would buy tickets to join the team for its voyage to Annapolis Royal in early August 1903 was undoubtedly not the only entrepreneurial venture of its kind.52

Yet the inescapable context was that cricket clubs could not exist without charging a fee to their members. Local clubs within towns, or village teams such as the Knockabout Club of Ohio, which appears never to have ventured further than the neighbouring village of Hebron, had minimal expenses. The town clubs, and a highly competitive village team such as Hebron, had greater needs that centred especially on travel costs. Accordingly, membership fees had key importance and their payment—or non-payment—could easily make the difference between viability or, as took place intermittently in each of the towns, the entry of a club into a period of dormancy before revival under a new set of officers who were often former or continuing players. Not for nothing did a restored version of the Weymouth club in 1902 promptly set its annual fee at $1.00, as well as striking a two-person committee of current players—the accountant Carl Dennis and the dentist A. F. Hogan—to solicit additional funds for the purchase of “necessary apparatus.”53 The cause was also advanced by a fundraising “High Tea” in mid-season.54 Although the renewed club initially had difficulty finding worthy opponents, since the Digby club was also in a period of temporary inactivity, it was eventually rewarded with home and away matches against Hebron, and by an approving comment from as far afield as the Saint John Sun to the effect that “cricket is rapidly coming to the fore in the maritime provinces and matches are being played every week in many towns and cities.”55

The Sun was accurate in identifying a period of resurgence across the Maritime provinces, with the establishment of league cricket an eventual product, and yet the laborious process of the Weymouth revival had also shown the fragile economics of the sport. While a membership fee of $1.00 was no doubt reasonable enough in the circumstances, the need to pay to participate was significant, and in historical context it raises questions as to who played and why. Reasons for the longstanding continuation of cricket related to the nature of small settler communities, as

50 “Yarmouth vs. Weymouth,” Yarmouth Times, July 11, 1905, p. 3.
53 “Weymouth Cricket Club,” Sissiboo Echo, May 16, 1902, p. 3.
54 “Local and General,” Sissiboo Echo, July 25, 1902, p. 3.
55 “Cricket,” Sissiboo Echo, June 20, 1902, p. 2; “Weymouth Cricket Club,” Sissiboo Echo, May 16, 1902, p. 3; “Local and General,” Sissiboo Echo, August 1, 1902, p. 3; “Local and General,” Sissiboo Echo, August 8, 1902, p. 3; “Local and General,” Sissiboo Echo, August 15, 1902, p. 3; “Cricket,” Sissiboo Echo, August 22, 1902, p. 2; Saint John Sun, reprinted in “Local and General,” Sissiboo Echo, August 29, 1902, p. 3.
noted above, provide part of the answer. The inclusion or exclusion of specific individuals or families, however, depended on other social and economic factors. For male cotton-mill workers in Yarmouth, for example, whose annual wages in 1911 averaged some $449.00, a fee of $1.00 would be substantial; for fishers or agricultural labourers who were perennially cash-poor, it would be out of reach—even though a few individuals seem to have been able to find ways to overcome the barrier.\(^{56}\) Despite the sport’s isolation in Digby and Yarmouth Counties from outright imperial and military influences, therefore, the question arises as to what degree this was, in effect, an elite sport.

**Social Roots**

Analysis of newspaper listings of cricket teams in light of census returns for the two counties can provide useful indications. From 1871 to 1914, some 428 male players were named in newspapers—though some among those whose full identity is obscure could have been duplicated—from whom 231 could be identified (75 from Yarmouth town, 69 from Digby town, 56 from Weymouth, 25 from Hebron, and five each from Ohio and Tusket, less four who played in more than one place).\(^{57}\) For each identified player, information could be compiled—with some gaps because of the inconsistencies in the questions asked from one census to another—on date and place of birth, place of parents’ birth, religious affiliation, self-identified ethnic origin, and occupation of player and/or of parent (almost invariably the father). Comparisons could then be made with overall census statistics for the two counties and for census-identified towns and villages. The results, of course, are more indicative and illustrative than offering statistically precise data. The limitations begin with the eccentricities of cricket reporting, in that there were many matches mentioned—and entire clubs—for which no listing of names was provided, and assuredly even more matches that were never mentioned at all. Therefore, the 428 names in themselves represent an arbitrary group of those who happened to appear in the newspapers. Many, as noted above, could not be identified. Some no doubt came and went between censuses, and so effectively left no trace. Others were mentioned in newspaper reports only by surname, and especially in communities where there were often multiple families that shared a surname, these individuals often could not be identified from among a substantial number of possibilities. Others yet, although provided

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\(^{56}\) For cotton mill wages, see Muise, “The Industrial Context of Inequality,” pp. 23-24.

\(^{57}\) The four who played in two separate places were George Blackadar (Digby and Hebron); William Cahoon (Digby and Weymouth); Boyd McNeill (Digby and Weymouth); and Frank Rice (Digby and Weymouth). Because Blackadar played in both of the counties, the aggregate of players in the two counties is 232, whereas the total number of identified players is 231. All numbers and percentages given for the identified cricketers are derived from the tables posted at: http://library2.smu.ca/handle/01/27081#.WlijONC4bOUk. Identification was based primarily on the Canadian censuses from 1871 to 1911, accessed through Ancestry.ca, although other documentation was also useful for confirmation purposes: directories, vital records, US censuses for those who became part of the large out-migration from the two counties, and attestation papers for enlistment during the First World War. Used to add significant details were the relevant county histories: Rev. J. R. Campbell, *A History of the County of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia* (Saint John, NB: J. and A. McMillan, 1876); George S. Brown, *Yarmouth, Nova Scotia: A Sequel to Campbell’s History* (Boston: Rand Avery Company, 1888); Isaiah W. Wilson. *A Geography and History of the County of Digby, Nova Scotia* (Halifax, NS: Holloway Bros., 1900).
with initials or even a first name, shared enough of their name with another person of likely sporting age that it was impossible to distinguish and identify either one. Nevertheless, patterns can be delineated among the 231 identified men and boys that offer at least a general portrait of who played cricket, and permit interpretive commentary on why they did so.

That this was a settler sport played by participants of clearly delimited ethnic origins—and primarily though not exclusively by Protestants—is confirmed by analysis of the identified players. First and foremost, as would be expected from the configuration of the general population in the two counties, the great majority of the male players—like, as noted above, their fewer female counterparts—had been born in Nova Scotia, and most of those whose parents’ birthplaces could be identified were at least third-generation settlers. Of the 122 players identified in Digby County (including Digby and Weymouth, principal town clubs as well as other teams), 89.3 % had been born in Nova Scotia, with another 5.7 % born in either New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island. While both parents of 57.4 % of the players had been born in Nova Scotia, in a further 13.1 % of cases both parents had been born in the Maritimes, and another 20.5 % had one parent born either in Nova Scotia or in one of the other Maritime provinces. Thus, some 91 % had at least one parent born in the region. For Yarmouth County (Yarmouth, Hebron, Ohio, and Tusket), the proportions were closely comparable but somewhat more weighted towards settlers of at least the third generation. The players themselves were 93.6 % born in Nova Scotia, with 2.7 % born in another Maritime province. Of the 110 Yarmouth County players identified, 70.0 % had both parents born in Nova Scotia, and a further 6.4 % had both parents born in the Maritimes. An additional 14.5 % had one parent born in the Maritimes, in this case all of them in Nova Scotia. Almost 91 %, therefore, had at least one parent born within the Maritime provinces, and the great majority of the parents were Nova Scotia-born.58 Just one player in each county had been born in the United Kingdom. William Duckham, who played for the Digby Cricket Club during the 1891 season, was listed in the census of that year as a provision merchant, even though he was only eighteen years of age and a lodger in the town. Aeneas Cameron, a player with the Yarmouth Cricket Club from 1879 to 1885, was a Scottish-born schoolteacher. They, along with the handful of others born in the United States or elsewhere, were the exceptions proving the rule that cricket was primarily a sport for the male members of longstanding settler families.

Self-professed ethnic origins among the identified players followed well-established patterns: majority English—though much more heavily so in Yarmouth County (74.5 %) than in Digby County (61.5 %)—with substantial minorities of Irish (19.7 % in Digby; 8.2 % in Yarmouth) and Scots (10.7 % in Digby, 10.0 % in Yarmouth). A few of the exceptions in Yarmouth County self-identified as having German or Dutch ancestry, but eight players in Digby County (all in Weymouth) and three in Yarmouth County gave their origins as French. Given

58 In the few cases where parents’ birthplaces could not be established these were counted as separate percentages. Therefore, it is likely that even more players would have had one or more Nova Scotia- or Maritime-born parents.
the much larger percentages of Acadian population in both counties overall, this was, of course, a marked though unsurprising underrepresentation. Some appear to have been anglicized, but the mother tongue of George Joseph Deveau, the son of a Hebron shoemaker who played in 1905 for the village junior team, was French. In Weymouth, the same went for two players who turned out for a Single against a Married team in 1906: Louis LeBlanc, a teamster, and Edward Grenier, a salesman. Grenier was of Quebec rather than Acadian origin, his father having been—unusually for a francophone—a travelling Baptist missionary. And when “the young boys of Weymouth Bridge” met in 1902 to organize a cricket club, although the captain was the merchant’s son Archie Beaton, the vice-captain was Charles Belliveau and the secretary-treasurer was James Muise—sons respectively of a shoemaker and a merchant tailor, and both francophone by mother tongue. Thus, although the language of cricket in both counties was, of course, English, a few francophones did participate.

Religious affiliation was the one major social characteristic by which the backgrounds of identified players in the two counties differed significantly, although within an overall pattern in which (counting the Church of England as Protestant) English-speaking Protestantism prevailed. Digby County had a larger Roman Catholic minority, at 15.6 % of the players. Of those nineteen Roman Catholic players, all but three were from Weymouth. The three from Digby town all professed Irish ancestry. The Roman Catholics from Weymouth, who represented 28.6 % of the cricketers of the town—by far the highest of any of the known cricket-playing communities—included seven of French origin, six Irish, two English and one Scottish. Yarmouth County had a smaller Roman Catholic minority of 7.3 %, including five players of Irish origins and three of French. When it came to the Protestant denominations, the two counties reflected the distinctions between the respective settler histories of their English-speaking populations. Yarmouth and the surrounding areas had been settled during the Planter era of the 1760s, largely by New England Congregationalists. Although supplemented by migrants of the Loyalist era and beyond, the earliest groups had remained numerically and culturally foundational. Congregationalism was overtaken during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by evangelical movements, beginning with the New Lights of the era during and subsequent to the American Revolution, and extending to the growth of Methodism following the turn of the nineteenth century. Religious affiliations coalesced into a preponderance of Baptists who included Freewill (or Free Covenant) Baptists as well as those in the denominational mainstream, and to a lesser degree Methodists, though with some Congregationalism persisting and also significant Presbyterian and Church of England minorities. Digby County was affected by similar demographic and religious currents, except that both Digby and Weymouth—while having experienced some Planter settlement—were Loyalist foundations as towns, and had significantly higher Church of England populations than did Yarmouth County. By 1871, the Church of England proportion in the overall non-Catholic population of Digby County was 17.6 %, and the Methodist 14.8 %, although both were greatly outnumbered by the 58.9 % of Baptists. Among the latter, Freewill
Baptists were a small minority, but in Yarmouth County they represented 27.7% of the non-Catholic population and were outnumbered only by the mainstream Baptists at 46.9%. Methodists (7.8%) in Yarmouth County, Church of England (6.9%), Presbyterians (4.5%), and Congregationalists (3.1%) lagged behind.59

The years up to the 1911 census saw some contraction of Church of England affiliation in both counties (especially in Digby County) and substantial Methodist increase (especially in Yarmouth County), but with combined numbers of Baptists continuing to represent clear majorities (61.8% of non-Catholics in Digby County, 68.3% of non-Catholics in Yarmouth County).60 In this context, the identified male cricket players showed, especially in Digby County, an overrepresentation of Church of England, Presbyterian, and Methodist players at the expense of Baptists. To some degree, this reflected the presence of these denominations in the towns rather than in rural areas, and so in the major town clubs. However, the 62.7% of known non-Catholic cricketers in Digby County who professed affiliation with the Church of England—compared with only 20.6% Baptists (including the single Freewill Baptist) and 10.8% Methodists—was substantially greater than the local census percentages of 1871 in Digby town (40.6%) and Weymouth (38.8%). In Yarmouth County, the religious affiliations of the cricketers tracked those of the overall population more closely—notably in Yarmouth town and the other known cricket-playing areas—but even though 44.6% of the known non-Catholic players were Baptists, including three Freewill Baptists who played for Tusket in the 1879 series with Yarmouth and a son of a Freewill Baptist minister who played the Yarmouth Cricket Club in 1905 and 1906, the Methodists, Presbyterians, and Church of England were all overrepresented.

**Villages and Towns**

Occupational characteristics of the cricket players and their families can be defined most clearly in the contexts of the socioeconomic and religious characteristics of the places in which they lived.61 Two of the villages are difficult to assess because of the low number of identified players. Tusket, a major centre of wooden shipbuilding in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, was reported as fielding a cricket team only for the 1879 series with Yarmouth. The larger surrounding area was attributed a population of 2,934 in the 1871 census, rising to 3,486 in 1881.

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60 *Census, 1911*, vol. 2, pp. 30-31, 40-43.
61 Occupational characteristics are presented qualitatively rather than quantitatively, reflecting ambiguities that exist in several individual cases as to the meaning and implications of census designations. “Merchant,” for example, was a highly variable term, spanning from the smallest retailer to the great merchants of Yarmouth, and the meaning could not always be clarified further from other sources. “Clerk” was another ambiguous occupation; in addition to purely clerical, white-collar occupations it could also include serving in a retail store or, alternatively, gaining experience in the lower ranks of what could be a family business of considerable wealth. A different approach is taken in Kirsch, *Baseball and Cricket*, with quantifications offered of occupational and other patterns among members of urban cricket and baseball clubs in New Jersey as well as in Philadelphia (esp. pp. 122-37, 144-57), although with the important caution that “for a variety of reasons, the percentages, means, and medians should not be viewed as precise figures but rather as close approximations that incorporate some degree of error. This is unavoidable because of the nature of the sources and the difficulties inherent in identifying players and linking their names to city directories and census manuscripts” (p. 266).
The large majority, however, were Acadians, and no apparently francophone names appeared on the team lists. As of the 1881 census count, therefore, the team was presumably drawn from the 581 inhabitants of non-French origins. Although fifteen players participated in 1879, only five can be fully identified. Ralph Blauvelt was a “town officer” affiliated with the Church of England, William Jeffery a ship carpenter, and Ansel Servant the son of a ship carpenter who by 1881 was a clerk. The latter two were Freewill Baptist, as was the farm labourer Edward Sullivan, while the fisherman Jacob Cunningham was a Baptist. Other than indicating a degree of social admixture, however, the number is too small to allow more general inferences. The same observations go for Ohio, where only five of the eleven team members from the Knockabout Club’s only recorded match could be identified. One, Ernest Crosby, was a miller and the son of a miller. The family name was associated with business ownership in the area, including in the village of Hebron, and another family member on the Knockabout team (Frank Crosby) was the son of a “merchant” who was one of the owners of a substantial shoe factory in Hebron. Frank, by 1891, was a dental student. The other three identified players had links with the agricultural cultivation established on the fertile pocket of land in the Ohio area. Brenton Porter was a farmer who was the son of a sea captain, while the two Wyman brothers were sons of a farmer, the elder brother being a law student by 1891.

Hebron, with its sustained cricketing activity over an extended period, offers a wider analytical scope. A very small place that retained elements of a rural character, Hebron was also the location of a number of boot and shoe factories that stood somewhere between artisanal workshops and manufacturing sites. The village had its small elite of factory owners, some members of which were cricketers, but in order to maintain cricket teams at a number of levels a wider social spectrum was required. The only major religious communities in the village were Baptist and Methodist, but of the twenty-five identified players, nineteen were Baptists and only four Methodists, with George Deveau the sole Roman Catholic and one other of unknown religious background. Depending on whether the player was junior or senior, in some cases their own occupations are recorded by the census and in others only the father’s occupation is known. Of the twenty-one fathers’ occupations, three were farmers, one a Methodist minister—the son also a Methodist minister—and one each a lumber manager, a sea captain, a blacksmith, and a labourer. Among the others, artisanal occupations related to shoemaking predominated, along with two machinists. However, in Hebron workplaces the

63 On the economy of Tusket at this time, see Don R. Pothier, History of Tusket, Nova Scotia (Tusket, NS: Argyle Municipality Historical and Genealogical Society, 2010).
65 For a description of the shoe factories, see W. O. Harding, “A Sketch of the Shoe Industry in Hebron, NS,” Yarmouth Light, February 8, 1940.
The line between artisan and factory owner was permeable. The father of Henry S. Crosby was a shoemaker in 1871, but by the time his son was playing for the Mayflower Cricket Club of Hebron he was a “merchant” and an owner of the H.H. Crosby Shoe Company. The father of Lloyd Patten was unambiguously a “shoe manufacturer,” while William Herkes was the father of three brothers who played in the junior team and was a “shoe and boot pincher” in 1891 who in other censuses was described as a merchant and a lumberman. Of the players themselves, only eleven have identifiable occupations. As well as the Methodist minister Douglas Hemeon, two were teachers from local families, and two were students while players (one of them later becoming a commercial traveller). Elbridge Doty was a blacksmith who later moved on to open an automobile repair shop, while his relative Farnham Doty was a sea captain. The remainder worked in occupations related to shoe manufacturing: two shoemakers, a machinist, and a laster. Hebron cricket was mixed in terms of social class, but heavily influenced by the village’s boot and shoe manufactures. The teachers and students appeared (with one earlier exception) among the players beyond the turn of the twentieth century, while the only identified labourer to have any involvement either as parent or player was Donald McKinnon of Ohio, the father of Malcolm McKinnon, a shoemaker who played for the senior team in 1902-03.

The towns showed a more complex configuration, owing not least to the existence in each case of a small professional elite that went beyond clergy and teachers to include lawyers, doctors, dentists, and civil servants. As a group, they were primarily university-educated at institutions in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick that, while not representative of a full societal spectrum, nevertheless subsisted by maintaining their openness to students from rural and small-town areas as well as those from middle-class urban families and even a small but significant working-class minority. Thus, the members of the professional elite were not necessarily inheritors of that status, although some undoubtedly were. Many of them had local family origins, and in terms of socialization they mingled with merchants and other business proprietors, who in turn aspired to send their sons—and, increasingly by the turn of the twentieth century, their daughters—to the same higher education institutions. In all of the towns of the two counties, there were also many families that lacked either the stability and status of the university-educated or the wealth of the ocean-trading merchants and equivalent business owners, but also had hopes for their younger members—hopes that might again lead to Maritime universities and sometimes to a return to local roots, although frequently in this period would result instead in out-migration to New England or to western areas of Canada or the United States. This middling range, in the context of Digby and Yarmouth Counties, included such parental occupations—which were also reflected in player occupations for those who were adult cricketers—as independent skilled artisans, retail merchants, clerks in government and professional offices, and mariners such as sea captains who had not yet become ship owners and might never do so.

66 In addition to census data, additional details have been added from Harding, “A History of Hebron.”
Weymouth
Weymouth’s economy was marine-oriented, but depended also on forestry and to a degree on the limited agricultural possibilities of the valley of the Sissiboo River. Its small professional elite supplied cricketers such as, among the longest-serving players of the Weymouth Cricket Club, Dr. Edmund O. Hallett, whose recorded cricket career extended from when he was a thirty-year-old local physician playing against Digby in July 1891 until he opened the batting for Weymouth against the same opponent in the final tied game in the Bay of Fundy Cricket League in August 1914. Hallett, whose father had operated the station canteen in the Nova Scotia railway town of Truro, was not the only doctor in the team, although Herbert Ellison was reported as a player only in 1883 and Frank Rice—who was one of a handful of players who had to cross St. Mary’s Bay to play his cricket—only in 1905 and 1906. Herbert Rice—possibly a relative, although he self-identified as a Roman Catholic of Irish origin, while Frank was English and, like Hallett, belonged to the Church of England—was a dentist and played in the same seasons, while Fred Hogan was another dentist and played from 1902 to 1914. The son and grandson of the former Church of England rector Philip J. Filleul played for the club in separate eras, as did the son and grandson of the local registrar of deeds, John McNeill. Cricket tended to run in families, and none more so than the five Weymouth cricketers (three of them the sons of a physician) who were descendants of the slave-owning Loyalist refugee Timothy Ruggles, who had established himself in nearby Annapolis County in 1784.67 The Campbell brothers, Ashton and George, were the sons of a general merchant who employed two servants, while H. R. Jones—described in the Digby Courier in 1913 as “probably the finest all round cricketer in the Provinces”68—was a student whose father was also a general merchant. These and others, mainly Church of England adherents although the McNeills were Methodists, represented the intermingled professional and merchant elites of this very small town.

However, they were not the entirety of Weymouth cricket. Others, including the relatively numerous Roman Catholics and the few Baptists who played for the Weymouth Cricket Club, or for other Weymouth teams, had different social origins—and, moreover, neither Church of England nor Methodist affiliation was necessarily synonymous with elite social status. The Methodist seaman James Brown and the Baptists William Cahoon and Lloyd Trask—respectively a labourer (who also played for the Digby Cricket Club) and the son of a fisher who became a sealer in a canning factory—apparently had short cricket careers, but Ernest Brooks, an adherent of the Church of England who was a blacksmith and the son of a blacksmith, played some twenty-six years with the Weymouth club. Nor did larger cricket families always come as clergy, physicians, or merchants. The brothers George and Herbert Hallowell, Roman Catholics of French origin, had long involvements with the Weymouth club. Sons of a contractor who later became a merchant and—in one of the rare census entries regarding a mother’s

occupation—of a dressmaker, George was a “lumberman” who was later a millwright and Herbert was first an upholsterer and then a dry-goods merchant. The Oliver brothers, Charles and Melbourne, had no census-listed occupation, but were the sons of a Roman Catholic family of French origin of which the father was a farmer. Holland Payson was another farmer’s son, who took up farming himself before becoming a railway worker and eventually a Yukon gold miner. Hastings Taylor, meanwhile, was the son of a general merchant who worked as a clerk, as did Ernest Titus, whose father was a boatbuilder. Thus, cricket in Weymouth was in part a pastime of the university-educated and of those of established mercantile wealth. Yet, even if labourers and fishers were the social outliers of the sport, artisan-entrepreneurs, retailers, and farming families were just as integral to it as were members of the town’s upper social strata.

**Digby**

Digby, slightly larger in population than Weymouth, had occupational characteristics connected with its status as the county town that also influenced the composition of the Digby Cricket Club. The practice of law, like cricket, tended to run in families, as exemplified by the brothers Allen and Harry Wade. Sons of a lawyer, Allen had already entered the family profession when playing for the Digby club while Harry was a law student during his playing days. Other cricketing lawyers included Albert Copp, Gerald Viets (also the customs officer), and Thomas Shreve, who reportedly played for the club only in 1877 and thirteen years later became the first mayor of the town. Two medical doctors played for the Digby Cricket Club—Frederick Kinsman, also a druggist, and the longstanding player Frank Rice, who also played at times for Weymouth. There were also civil servants such as Harry Churchill, the son of a banker who eventually became postmaster, and Boyd McNeill, the register clerk who also played for Weymouth and whose father served as the registrar of deeds. One schoolteacher, George Blackadar, and Alexander McRae, a son of the town’s academy’s principal, represented education, but no members of the clergy were recorded as players in Digby. The town’s merchant elite was also seemingly underrepresented, although George Blackadar’s father was a lumber manager and Aline Oliver’s was a shipbuilder. In a category of his own was Harry A. P. Smith, a player over a twenty-six-year span after beginning as a junior with the Fairfield club, who was the son of a physician, described by occupation in the 1891 census simply as “gentleman,” and eventually provincial game warden and sheriff for the county. Although Blackadar was a Baptist, McNeill a Methodist, and McRae a Presbyterian, most of the socially elite players in Digby were adherents of the Church of England. They shared the field with players designated in the census as labourers, but in Digby these were few and far between. The same William Cahoon who had earlier played for Weymouth also played for Digby in the Bay of Fundy Cricket League, while William Weir played for Digby Academy, graduated to the town club, and in the 1911 census was designated as a labourer doing odd jobs. Both were Baptists, as was Walter Blackadar, the labourer son of a shoemaker. The Methodist William Banks, who reportedly played only for the Mutual Club, was the son of a sexton
whose later occupation was “farm help”; also Methodists were the father and son Stephen and Maurice Raymond, who played frequently for the Digby Cricket Club in separate eras, the father (Stephen) denoted as fisherman and labourer in successive censuses. The brothers Frederick and George Baxter were the sons of a Church of England-associated labourer who had become a farmer, and each was described in the census shortly after appearing for the junior Fairfield team simply as “farmer’s son.”

In Digby, however, the great majority of the identified players were drawn from the middling range of the town’s occupational structure, and, with the exception of the three Roman Catholics and in the absence of Freewill Baptists, they covered the full range of Protestant denominations. A striking proportion came from seagoing families, with the sons of master mariners including William Bennett, Charles Hawkesworth, Hedley Hughes, Braynard Raymond, and three sets of brothers: Charles and Frank Burns, Bland and Edward Cousins, and Benjamin and John Waters. Many of these players followed their fathers to sea, and no doubt for this reason their cricket careers typically ended with junior teams. Of the players of the Digby Cricket Club, only two had seagoing fathers, and both followed shore-based occupations: Bernard McBride was the son of a ship steward who became a postal clerk, while Archibald Dillon, son of a master mariner, was a retail salesman. Retail was also represented by the jeweller John Stark, by Harry Short—accountant in a steamboat office who subsequently became a boot and shoe merchant—and by the retail clerks Henry Bakin and John Bent. The sons of the hotelkeeper and cricket umpire John Daley included four cricketers, two of whom played for the town club. The largest occupational grouping of all, however, encompassed a spectrum of skilled artisans. Examples included the printers Harry Burnham, son of a “mechanic,” and Charles Farnham, also a leading Freemason of the town and the son of a caulker. As with many printers of the era, Farnham was also connected with newspaper publication and in the early 1890s was business manager of the short-lived local newspaper The Canadian. As with other occupations, family connections existed among cricketers. The brothers Edward and William Brooks were sons of a carpenter who became, respectively, a shoemaker and a ship carpenter. The brothers Charles and Robert Clinton were sons of a tailor who followed the family craft before diverging as, respectively, a railway accountant and a cabinetmaker. Henry Dakin and Hedley Dakin were longstanding players in separate eras of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and may have been uncle and nephew; each was the son of a blacksmith and became a tinsmith. Otto Tobin, a shoemaker’s son, was a steamfitter, while William Winchester—who was on record as playing in only one match, for the temperance-related club known as Seaside Lodge—was a fireman whose father was a truckman. Finally, three players came from farming families, although only one was himself a farmer—William Carroll, reported as playing only in 1877—while the other two were the freight clerk Frank Barr and the store clerk Bert Lynch. All in all, Digby cricketers had a lesser influence of the local professional and business elite than those of Weymouth, and correspondingly a greater representation from other areas of society.
Yarmouth

Yarmouth, finally, was a larger town and, despite sharing a strong marine orientation with the other cricket-playing communities, had a greater diversity of occupations. Because of the significant number of clubs beyond the Yarmouth Cricket Club, it also had more cricketers. The town had an identifiable mercantile elite centring on six extended families, of which some had more than one significant branch. Four of the families were represented in the ranks of Yarmouth cricketers, although only one member played for the Yarmouth Cricket Club: Leslie Killam, son of the merchant Thomas Killam, reportedly played in the team only in 1891, while a student in mechanical engineering. Other merchant and ship-owning families, not in the highest rank of the great merchants, did provide cricketers to the club, although they did not themselves necessarily have mercantile occupations. Blake Burrill, for example, was a stockbroker, Barnard Crosby a clerk (though possibly in one of his father’s enterprises), and Thomas and Kenneth Moody (who were not brothers) were respectively an insurance broker and a clerk. Killam was a Methodist, Burrill a Presbyterian, and the others adherents of the Church of England. Yarmouth cricketers from the mercantile elite were more likely, however, to play in teams outside the principal town club, though none had long playing careers. Erastus and Irvine Lovitt, sons of one of the principal great merchants, George Lovitt, played in 1885 for the Milton club and—the same club by another name—the Mechanic club. An unidentified member of the Robbins family played for the Mighty Dollar club in the same year, while twenty years later two sons of the ship-owner Bedford Cann—Malcolm and Percy—played together for the junior Evangelines. The Lovitts and the Canns were Methodists, the Robbins family Baptist. The largest concentration of great merchant family members recorded to have taken the field together, however, had been in 1884 in a match within the town between the Fat Men and the Lean Men. A member of the Robbins family appeared for the Fat Men, while the Lean Men included members of both the Ryerson and the Cann families. Their teammates, however, were from less wealthy backgrounds. Although Fred Allen and Arthur Rogers of the Lean Men were sons of shipowners, others included the farmer Egbert Trask, the printer Henry Churchill, the organmaker Hiram Chute, the plumber John Fleet, and the mason John Pettit. The Fat Men included a member of the town’s professional elite, the dentist James Merrill, but also a similar spectrum of artisans who included a barber (William Brackett), a harnessmaker (George Grant), and the apparently anglicized Acadian Charles White, a blacksmith. Although Brackett and White were Roman Catholics, the rest were distributed among the Protestant denominations.

When it came to the Yarmouth Cricket Club, the few members of merchant families were joined over the years by three schoolteachers, and as longstanding players by the physician Clarence Churchill, the druggist John Alexander Craig, and the lawyer Harry Munro. The Church of England rector Richmond Shreve was the only clergyman, and played only from 1879 to 1881. The auctioneer’s son

Peter Carroll was for a time chief of police and played for the club in 1891. These players, and all the others, spanned the Protestant denominations, except for three Roman Catholics: the McLaughlin brothers, sons of a dry-goods merchant who pursued their own retail occupations as a jeweller (William) and a dry-goods clerk (Fred); as well as the boilermaker William Mallett (presumably, originally Maillet), who self-identified as having French origins. Like these three, other players were either connected with retail business or were skilled workers. Dry goods and groceries were represented more than once, while artisanal occupations included brick mason, tinsmith, and plumber. Two sons of the “old cricketer” George Goldsmith, George, Jr. and Gilbert, played for the club in 1903 and were respectively a plumber and an (unspecified) engineer. Conspicuous by their absence from identified Yarmouth cricketers, however, were fishers, labourers, and any of the workers from the industrial plants of the town. The cotton mill was represented by the sole appearance of Fred Allen for the Lean Men in 1884, but he was the son of a shipowner who only later became a cloth gauger at the mill. Yarmouth, while sharing basic characteristics with the other cricket-playing communities of longstanding Nova Scotia settlement, Protestant predominance, and ethnic origins primarily in the British Isles, did also show differences in (as would be expected from the general population of the county) the lesser prominence of the Church of England by comparison with Digby County, and the absence of the least wealthy, who in other centres were present even though not numerous. In smaller towns and villages, fielding a competitive team no doubt required openness to athletically-inclined members of any social class, while Yarmouth’s larger population removed this constraint. Even so, here as elsewhere, members of the localized professional and mercantile elite shared the field, and were outnumbered by, those from artisanal, retail, and clerical occupations.

Conclusion: Settler Ties and Leisure Time

As well, therefore, as offering male recreational opportunities, facilitating linkages among settler villages and towns, and bringing about social exchanges within and between communities that extended to women as well as men, cricket was a sport through which individual men rubbed shoulders with others who—in the restricted context of settler society—might differ socially from themselves, appreciably if not drastically. This interaction included Acadians only to a minimal degree, while Indigenous communities such as the reserve at Bear River—near Digby—were entirely absent, as were the African Nova Scotians who, notably at Weymouth Falls, had a sport tradition that included the career of the outstanding heavyweight boxer Sam Langford. Cricket was, in the most direct sense, a settler sport, and the settlers were either those who traced their ultimate ancestry to the British Isles or the minority of others who lived within that sphere. As such, the sport’s significance in this rural and small-town context was centrally and inescapably local. This was not the kind of cricket that would be covered in the august pages.

of The American Cricketer, or that would have been considered for inclusion in the collection of more imperially-oriented descriptions that was compiled by John E. Hall and R. O. McCulloch in 1895, entitled Sixty Years of Canadian Cricket.\footnote{John E. Hall and R. O. McCulloch, eds., Sixty Years of Canadian Cricket (Toronto: Bryant, 1895).} The horizons of Digby and Yarmouth cricketers could, of course, reach beyond the two counties, notably for those who took cricket as a social skill to one of the universities, or in the case of H. R. Jones played for the Wanderers while a student in Halifax.\footnote{Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame, Wanderers Cricket Club, Photograph 975.01.399.} Matches with teams from adjoining counties represented meetings with neighbours, while contests with Saint John reflected the reality that the Bay of Fundy had long been a thoroughfare rather than a barrier and those with visitors from Massachusetts likewise expressed longstanding demographic and cultural links, as the Digby wicket-keeper and batsman Fulton Titus exemplified in playing his cricket with the Everett club after joining the substantial out-migration from Nova Scotia to New England.\footnote{“Friday’s Cricket Game,” Digby Weekly Courier, August 21, 1914, p. 5.} In all cases, these outgrowths continued to depend upon, even as they extended, the characteristics of the sport as it was played in the two counties themselves.

Cricket in this context was all about the creation and maintenance of social and cultural networks, between settler communities and within them. Present only in very small numbers were labourers and fishers, and entirely absent—even though workplace teams existed elsewhere in the province—were workers in such a substantial plant as the Yarmouth cotton mill. Also participating only to a limited degree were members of the families of the great merchants of Yarmouth. The core membership of the cricket clubs was drawn in part from localized professional elites and the families of lesser though still-considerable merchants, but numerically predominating were those whose family origins, and—among the players of mature age—their own occupations, stood in the intermediate range of skilled artisans, retail merchants, sea captains, and clerical workers. Cricket, moreover, was time-consuming. The matches typically encompassed two innings for each team, shortened only in cases of an innings victory for one or the other team or when darkness fell—or, on occasion, when the away team had to catch a train—in which case a match could be deemed to have been decided on the first innings scores. In any event, a match could reliably be expected to take up the best part of a day. Among the traditional days for cricket to be played were holidays: Queen Victoria’s birthday, Dominion Day, and from its institution in 1894 Labour Day. The majority of the games, however, took place in midweek. Occasionally, this presented difficulties, as on an August Thursday in 1903 when a match in Hebron had to start late “because of the inability of the Weymouth team to leave home.”\footnote{“Cricket in Hebron,” Yarmouth Times, August 14, 1903, p. 3.} But, in general, weekday matches were unexceptional and ran smoothly.

The implication was that players must have the time to invest, and indeed that in the context of the town clubs and a competitive village club such as Hebron participation was, among other things, a public demonstration that the player did indeed have the leisure time to spend on the sport and also on necessary travel to
engagements away from home. For those whose occupation and wealth put them in the ranks of the localized elites, leisure would have been relatively easy to afford. A greater cost in terms of productivity and, in some cases, of lost wages awaited those of lesser means, and yet many found the sacrifice worthwhile. As with religious associations, as well as fraternal and temperance organizations, playing a local sport gave access to social networks, and facilitated doing business of either an occupational or a personal nature. Especially in its linkage with neighbouring towns and villages, with a gendered character predominantly male but also including women within the affinities of friendship, participation might also smooth the way towards a modest upward social mobility through association, and even alliance by marriage, with settler families of locally respectable character.  

As Matthew Cragoe has shown in a recent study of Wingham, in Kent, eighteenth-century English village cricket could fulfil a similar social and networking role. Without unduly conflating the social structures of eighteenth-century Kent with those of late-nineteenth-century Nova Scotia, these were common characteristics of rural and small-town sport in both contexts.

In terms of the broader historiography of Canadian sport, and in regard to the social and cultural consolidation of settler colonial communities, the experience of Digby and Yarmouth Counties suggests the need for a reappraisal of the role of cricket. This was a complex and multifaceted sport, and while the imperial and military influences represent a part of the reality—in the Nova Scotia context, primarily in Halifax, although even there were significant variations—they were very far from being universally predominant. It is time to reconsider the notions of Canadian cricket either as an exotic sport played by sojourning military personnel and by migrants of immediate British origin, or as a fragile and enfeebled pastime just waiting for baseball to sweep it aside. Cricket, at least in areas of earlier settlement, was more colonial than imperial. The pattern varied, of course, according to the timing of settler colonial incursions in British North America and then in the Dominion, but in Nova Scotia and no doubt in others of the central and more easterly areas of British-claimed North America, both cricket and baseball drew upon a complex pattern of vernacular bat-and-ball sports that had a remote English provenance but had been developing with some autonomy in the settlement contexts of eastern North America since the seventeenth century. The result, exemplified in Digby and Yarmouth Counties, was the emergence of cricket as a settler sport that had robust socially-rooted reasons for its existence.

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