NOTE DE RECHERCHE / RESEARCH NOTE

Almanacs and the New Middle Class: New England and Nova Scotian Influences and Middle-Class Hegemony in Early Prince Edward Island

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The dichotomous messages found in the almanacs of Prince Edward Island in the early nineteenth century reveal much about the emergence of an often conservative and yet commercially oriented middle class in the colony. A close analysis of almanacs clearly indicates the presence of intricate sets of socio-economic relationships between this rising middle class and the humbler classes. The editor's choice of materials was intended for two distinct audiences: the underclasses of tenants and labourers, who were encouraged to be industrious and were forewarned of the results of indolence; and an upper class which was in a position to benefit from advice on labour management and capitalist relations.

Les messages dichotomiques trouvés dans las almanachs de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard du début du XIX^e siècle en disent long sur l'émergence, dans la colonie, d'une classe moyenne souvent conservatrice, mais commerçante. Une analyse serrée des almanachs montre clairement la présence de toiles complexes de liens socio-économiques entre cette classe moyenne montante et les classes plus humbles. Le choix documentaire des directeurs visait deux auditoires distincts : les classes marginales de locataires et d'ouvriers non qualifiés, que l'on encourageait au zèle et que l'on mettait en garde contre les résultats de l'indolence et de la classe supérieure, qui pouvait tirer profit des conseils qu'on leur prodiguait sur la gestion de la main-d'oeuvre et les relations capitalistes.

Indolence or improper management in hay-time will soon give a sorry complexion to a farmer's affairs — a day or two lost or misemployed while the sun shines, and your grass suffers for lack of a scythe ... and while the sickle is rusting on a peg behind the door, and its owner is asleep or gone on a journey, [this] may be the means of introducing Mr. Deputy Sheriff on your

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premises, who will do more harm than a crop of thistles or a host of Hessian flies.

THUS DID THE JULY 1836 almanac for Prince Edward Island encourage tenant farmers to labour energetically, lest they become indebted and fall victim to the rent collector. Maxims like the above are conspicuous in the early nineteenth-century almanacs of Prince Edward Island. At face value they appear to be the rustic formulations of an unsophisticated press, and therefore of little concern to the historian beyond mere anecdote. Yet, upon closer analysis and deconstruction, many of the adages and other information inserted into Island almanacs reflect the emergence and influence of a middle-class ideology in what has, until quite recently, been represented by historians as a pre-commercial and pre-capitalist rural society. Such writings were calculated by key members of the middle class to foster industriousness, morality, and acceptance of the prevailing social hierarchy on the part of the tenant farm families of nineteenth-century Prince Edward Island.¹

The insights provided by early nineteenth-century Island almanacs into class dynamics are significant because they suggest starting points for rethinking questions not only of dominance and subordination in the Island's social structure, but also about the intersection of local, regional, and international forces on the productive orientation of the colony's early farm families.² The need to reconsider such questions in Island historiography can be explained by the distinctive manner in which the colony was settled. Following the expulsion of the Acadians in 1758, British authorities divided virtually the entire Island into proprietary estates in 1767, establishing an Old World system of landlords and tenant farmers that persisted until 1875. In a continent where freehold tenure was commonly regarded as the norm,

- 1 The collection of almanacs examined here includes William A. Rind, ed., "Almanack for the Year of Our Lord Christ, 1792" in *Royal Gazette, and Miscellany of the Island of Saint John*, January 14, 1792; James Bagnall, *The Prince Edward Island Calendar For Town and Country For the Year of Our Lord 1815* (Charlottetown: James Bagnall, 1815), Public Archives and Records Office of Prince Edward Island (hereafter PARO), 2702/550; and James D. Haszard, *The Prince Edward Island Calendar, For the Year of Our Lord 1829 [et al.]* (Charlottetown: J. D. Haszard, 1829, 1835, 1836, 1837, 1840, 1841, 1843, 1844, 1845, 1847). The 1829 almanac is found in Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions, A00667; the 1835 almanac, which is not attributed to Haszard because of a missing title page, is in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia (hereafter PANS), AY.F22.P93; all others are in the PARO 2353/334–341 collection.
- 2 R. James Sacouman comments extensively on the failure of Maritime historiography to examine early nineteenth-century class dynamics in "Semi-Proletarianization and Rural Underdevelopment in the Maritimes", *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, vol. 17, no. 3 (1980), p. 233. In those few instances where class conflict is mentioned, it is usually as a notation for other topics. The most significant of such writings is Rusty Bittermann, "Escheat! Rural Protest on Prince Edward Island, 1832–1842" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Brunswick, 1991); and the work of Ian Ross Robertson for the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, especially "Coles, George", vol. 10 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 183.

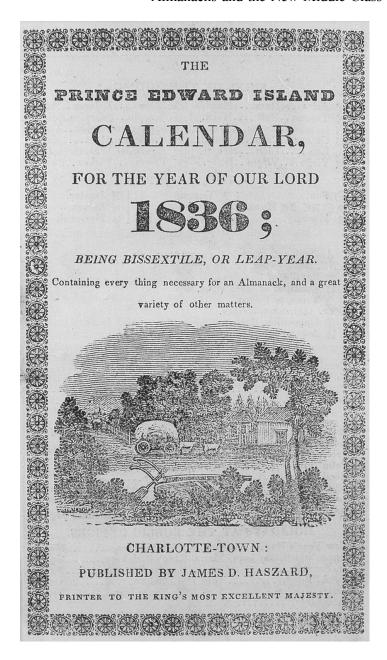


Figure 1 Cover from James D. Haszard's farmer's almanac for Prince Edward Island. The initial "B" for the Portland, Maine, engraver Abel Bowen is visible in the left foreground. Haszard began using this illustration in the early 1830s. Courtesy of the Prince Edward Island Public Archives and Records Office.

the political agitation that emerged between these two classes led to over a century of ongoing political struggles between tenant farmers, who sought freehold independence through an elected assembly, and a proprietary elite who used high governmental influence in London to maintain the *status quo*.³

So turbulent were the contests between these two groups that an historiography of polarization developed, focused on the proprietary system of tenants and landlords and the single issue of land tenure.⁴ Virtually all other issues of the colonial period pale before the study of the agitation surrounding land tenure — with few histories according even a limited analysis to the expansion of commerce, mercantile capitalism, and the rise of the middle class.⁵ Until recently, Island historiography concentrated on the establishment of the proprietary system as the one impediment to common land ownership, thus fostering the view of an undifferentiated rural society of self-sufficient tenant farmers on one part, and landlords and high government officials on the other. Yet such an interpretation is too simplistic, as it masks the complex conflicting class interests and mercantile capitalist development in the colony's pre-industrial period.⁶

Prince Edward Island was far from being a dichotomous society of tenants and landlords. A definable third or middle class of merchants, land agents, entrepreneurs, lawyers, and prospering tenant and freehold farmers emerged over the course of the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.⁷

- 3 For a fuller treatment of Island historiography and the myth of the uniqueness of the leasehold tenure system, see Matthew G. Hatvany, "Tenant, Landlord, and the New Middle Class: Settlement, Society, and Economy in Early Prince Edward Island, 1798–1848" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maine, 1996).
- 4 The word "polarized" is used to denote an historiography of polarization concerned almost solely with two opposing classes the tenantry and the proprietors.
- 5 Regarding the lack of analysis of historical issues beyond tenant-landlord relations, see M. Brook Taylor, *Promoters, Patriots, and Partisans: Historiography in Nineteenth-Century English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 228; J. M. Bumsted, "'The Only Island There Is': The Writing of Prince Edward Island History" in Verner Smitheram, David Milne, and Satadal Dasgupta, eds., *The Garden Transformed: Prince Edward Island, 1945–1980* (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1982), p. 20.
- 6 David Weale and Harry Baglole's *The Island and Confederation: The End of an Era* (Summerside: Williams & Crue, 1973) is to date the most comprehensive social history of the Island. Nonetheless, it promotes the theme of a pre-industrial "golden age" of agrarian independence, self-sufficiency, and egalitarianism among the entire farming population (pp. 79–81, 105–109) and fails to recognize that class stratification developed within an increasingly commercial farming economy. Bumsted remarks, "Although the ... land question has obscured lines of class on the Island, its society in fact was highly structured and dominated by a clever and ambitious élite" ("The Only Island There Is", p. 22).
- 7 My use of the term "middle class" denotes a gradation in society between the elite aristocracy and high government officers, and the agrarian producer class. For a more concise definition upon which the terminology of this paper is based, see Tom Bottomore, *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 74–77, 333–334.

Similar to the surrounding areas of Atlantic Canada and New England, where freehold tenure dominated, the presence of this middle class in the Island's proprietary system indicates a complex rural milieu internally stratified along social and economic lines. Island members of this distinct class often had one hand in an expanding commercial economy and the other in the proprietary system. As a result, the middle class played an historically elusive, yet nonetheless pivotal, role in the Island's socio-economic development.

While a few members of this emergent middle class attempted to create political and economic alliances of interest between the tenantry and themselves, 8 a majority of the Island's prominent merchants combined their commercial activities with those of land agent and petty proprietor. ⁹ The most prosperous barristers, too, were those who represented and were compensated by proprietory interests. There was also a segment of prospering tenant and freehold farmers who by the 1830s and 1840s were able to consolidate their landholdings and expand their commercial farming practices, based partially on the reserve supply of labour hired from among the economically marginal group in society.¹⁰

Origins and Ideology in the Almanac

One primary source that effectively illustrates the complexity of Prince Edward Island's early socio-economic development and the rise of the middle class is the farmers' almanac. Farmers' almanacs are a well-known element in rural North America with which most colonial historians are familiar; yet, in the midst of an historiography polarized around land tenure, no Island historian has deemed them worthy of close analysis. They are an example of how familiar sources can be utilized, with the right questions,

- 8 It is important to beware of attributing a single mentality to groups as large as the Island's "middle class". Some members of this class, mainly entrepreneurs, as Bittermann points out in "Escheat!" and Robertson indicates in "Coles, George", did attempt to create political and economic alliances of interest between tenant farmers and themselves to secure control of government revenues and to stimulate economic growth, they believed, through a redistribution of land to the tenantry.
- 9 See PARO, 2702/861, character affidavit of James Bardin Palmer, 1816. Signed by the most notable merchants in the Island, this document clearly indicates their connection with the proprietary system through mercantile activities and as land agents for absentee proprietors. See also Bittermann, "Escheat!", pp. 180-181; the remarks of the merchant and politician George Coles, who believed land agents were "more determined than the proprietors themselves to maintain the status quo", in Robertson, "Coles, George", p. 183; Basil Greenhill and Ann Giffard's discussion of the entrepreneur James Yeo in Westcountrymen in Prince Edward's Isle: A Fragment of the Great Migration (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), chap. 8, pp. 144-167.
- 10 For observations on the role of prosperous tenant and freehold farmers in hiring labourers from economically marginal families, see PARO H.F.83.74.1, David Ross diary; PARO 2540/1, Mrs. Joseph Stretch diary and account book. See also Rusty Bittermann, "Farm Households and Wage Labour in the Northeastern Maritimes in the Early 19th Century", Labour/ Le Travail, vol. 31 (Spring 1993), pp. 13-46.

to provide new insights into socio-economic history. Upon careful examination, Island almanacs record the diffusion of a capitalist ideology from more urban and modernized regions like New England, while their literary devices shed light on the rise of conflicting class interests and the consequent issue of power surrounding class domination and subordination apart from the immediate landlord-tenant relationship.¹¹

From the careers of the earliest almanac printers in what became Atlantic Canada, it is conspicuously apparent that these publishers were connected to the printing offices of eighteenth-century New England and the Middle Atlantic colonies. In the aftermath of the American Revolution, a number of Loyalist printers and their journeymen quit the new American republic, and a noteworthy few migrated to the Altantic region of British North America. ¹² Imbued with a politically conservative philosophy, many brought with them not only their particular craft skills, but also a rejection of American democratic values. ¹³

The Loyalist James Robertson, a Boston and later New York City printer prior to the American Revolution, transported the first printing press to the Island in 1786. He remained in the colony for only a short time, but began a newspaper which in 1792 included an almanac printed by his journeyman, William A. Rind. While little else is known about Rind's work with almanacs, more is known about his apprentice, brother-in-law, and successor James Bagnall, also of Loyalist parentage. After an apprenticeship with Rind on the Island, Bagnall resided for a short time in the early 1800s in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he entered into the production of almanacs. After relocating his printing concern to Charlottetown in 1810, he sold an annual

- 11 In the tradition of the French Annales School, my use of almanacs as a source of socio-economic and intellectual history is an attempt to utilize unexploited sources in rethinking the issue of class and class relations in early Prince Edward Island. Regarding Annales approaches, see Peter Burke, The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929–89 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); regarding the "deconstruction" of literature such as almanacs, see T. J. Jackson Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities", American Historical Review, vol. 90 (1985), pp. 567–593.
- 12 Individual studies in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* provide an overview of the earliest printers in the Atlantic region of British North America. See, for instance, Donald F. Chard, "Green, Bartholomew", vol. 3, p. 267, and "Henry, Anthony", vol. 4, pp. 342–343; Douglas G. Lochhead, "Bushell, John", vol. 3, pp. 90–91. See also the numerous almanac citations in Marie Tremaine, *A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints, 1751–1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952); Patricia Fleming, *Atlantic Canadian Imprints: A Bibliography, 1801–1820* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).
- 13 See J. M. Bumsted's overview of Loyalist migration in Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid, eds., The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994), pp. 179–183. For a similar analogy in Upper Canada, but one which also illustrates the conflicting differences in Loyalist ideology concerning democratic values, see Jane Errington, The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada: A Developing Colonial Ideology (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987).

bound almanac on the Island until at least 1819.14 That Bagnall printed and marketed almanacs in the colony's infant stage of development, when the population barely exceeded 9,000 persons, testifies to the prominent — yet overlooked — place almanacs held within Island society. I

The only known surviving almanac printed specifically for Prince Edward Island by Bagnall, The Prince Edward Island Calendar, For Town and Country For the Year of Our Lord 1815, while modest in content, is notable for its physical and literary similarities to New England and Nova Scotian almanacs of the same period.¹⁶ The weather predictions and astronomical tables are tailored to the Island, but the design and title originated in earlier eighteenth-century American almanacs such as the New England periodical Weatherwise's Town and Country Almanac.¹⁷ The existence of Bagnall's almanac clearly illustrates that the Loyalist printers did not sever their intellectual connections with the future United States upon quitting the republic. Even more so than Bagnall's work, the series of almanacs subsequently printed by his apprentice, James D. Haszard, demonstrates vividly the literary reliance of Island almanac printers on New England and Nova Scotian models and sources.

The son of Rhode Island Loyalists, Haszard was employed in the printing business by his uncle, James Bagnall, until he initiated his own business in 1823. In addition to printing a newspaper during his first year of business, in the following year Haszard undertook the production of an annual almanac, The Prince Edward Island Calendar, a work he published continuously for 25 years. The almanac sold for one shilling in the 1820s and was distri-

- 14 F. L. Pigot, "Robertson, James", Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 5, pp. 716-717; PARO, 2541/122, "James Robertson: Printer", unpublished manuscript. References to William A. Rind are found in Pigot, "Robertson, James", p. 717; and also in Marianne G. Morrow, "Bagnall, James", Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 8, p. 35.
- 15 The origins of Island almanacs are obscure and are completely overlooked in Fleming, Altantic Canadian Imprints, 1801-1820, and in the biography by Ian Ross Robertson of Island almanac publisher James Douglas Haszard, Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 10, pp. 339–340. Noteworthy, too, is the DCB study of James Bagnall by Morrow, which asserts that the premier Island almanac was published in 1815, thereby ignoring both earlier Island newspaper almanacs and, according to the Weekly Recorder of October 13, 1810, an 1810 bound almanac sold and most likely printed by Bagnall. See also PANS, AK.AY.A16, An Almanack for The Year of Our Lord 1809 (Halifax: Printed and folded by James Bagnall, Sackville Street); W. L. Cotton, Chapters in Our Island Story (Charlottetown: Irwin Printing Co., 1927), p. 92.
- 16 Knowledge of the existence of the 1815 Island almanac has been limited because of its preservation in the formerly private Smith-Alley Papers. Regarding this unique archival collection, see Matthew G. Hatvany, "Demographer's Delight: The 'Lost' DesBarres Census of 1810", The Island Magazine, vol. 39 (Spring/Summer 1996), pp. 10-11.
- 17 The similarities are based upon a comparison of Bagnall's almanac and that of Abraham Weatherwise [pseudonym], Weatherwise's Town and Country Almanac For the Year of Our Lord, 1783 (Boston: Robert Hodge, 1783). Comparisons with other New England, Middle Atlantic, and Nova Scotian almanacs were made through the pre-1801 microcard collection at the American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia, and the Nova Scotian almanac collection at PANS.

buted through Haszard's printing office in Charlottetown, as well as mercantile establishments across the Island. The almanac was an important publication in early Prince Edward Island because it provided readers with daily information about time, weather, tides, dates, and agriculture that would otherwise have only been available on an intermittent basis in the local colonial newspaper.¹⁸

Haszard's almanacs were written to serve a wide audience of upper- and lower-class readers, yet his total distribution is unknown. Urban and country gentlemen referred to them daily, and so, too, did many of the tenantry despite illiteracy, the prevalence of spoken Gaelic and French, and the low income level of marginal farmers.¹⁹ The range of printed serials like Island almanacs was extended both visually, through numerous wood engravings, and orally in communal gatherings where materials were translated and read aloud to those for whom reading was economically, scholastically, or linguistically out of reach. A letter from a schoolmaster to the editor of a Charlottetown newspaper in 1823 illustrates how the dissemination of written information was a community task: "My neighbours no sooner hear that I have received it [a newspaper], than they flock to hear what it contains ... those honest cottagers formed a circle around me, attentive to every word I read." Studies from other regions of northeastern North America also reinforce the idea of the general accessibility of periodicals like almanacs and indicate that such publications were regularly read by farmers of even modest incomes.²⁰

Self-described as essential guides to everyday farming concerns, Haszard's almanacs measured a slender seven-by-four inches and fit easily into a pant or jacket pocket for daily use. The multi-page preface preceding the monthly calendars commenced with the signs of the zodiac, consisting of those planets and constellations that were believed to govern the health and welfare of the individual. The diary of Benjamin Chappell, an artisan and small farmer from Charlottetown, indicates how closely early Islanders followed the movements of the heavens; Chappell commented for four

¹⁸ Robertson, "Haszard, James Douglas". While the known earliest surviving Haszard almanac is dated 1829, he began selling almanacs at least as early as January 1824, according to the *Prince Edward Island Register* of December 29, 1823. See also Cotton, *Chapters in Our Island Story*, pp. 93, 127.

¹⁹ Various references illustrate that almanacs were regularly consulted by government officers, physicians, merchants, and political leaders. See PARO, 2353/334– and 2353/342–, Daniel Hodgson's and John Mackieson's almanacs; John Sims's testimony in the *Prince Edward Islander* of July 12, 1844; PARO, 2524/20, letter from William Cooper to John LeLacheur, September 14, 1837.

²⁰ David D. Hall, "The World of Print and Collective Mentality in Seventeenth-Century New England" in Stanley N. Katz and John M. Murin, eds., Colonial America: Essays in Politics and Social Development, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), pp. 167–168; Bittermann, "Escheat!", pp. 84–85; Sally McMurry, "Who Read the Agricultural Journals? Evidence from Chenango County, New York, 1839–1865", Agricultural History, vol. 63, no. 4 (1989), pp. 1–18; Howard S. Russell, A Long Deep Furrow: Three Centuries of Farming in New England (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1982), pp. 117–118.

continuous months on the flight and significance of a visible comet. Comets and other extraterrestrial phenomena were believed by many to influence seasonal temperatures, and in 1816, the "year without a summer", Chappell wrote that the abnormally cool temperatures were the result of "Spots in the Sun one was so large as to be seen by the naked eye. This [is] the cause of the very cold weather."²¹

Scientific knowledge of the natural world possessed by most colonial farmers was limited, and God, the stars, and the planets were commonly thought "to affect life on earth in accordance with the adage, 'As above, so below". The almanac, therefore, served to connect the common farmer to a larger universe when it predicted the position of the sun, moon, stars, and comets as a guideline for making agricultural decisions regarding planting, harvesting, breeding, and gelding farm animals. The editor of the 1840 Island almanac surmised that "in this vast movement [of the cosmos], an individual may seem but a single kernel of grain; [yet] how can one get along without one of Haszard's Calendars? ... Everybody must have an almanac ... to regulate his affairs."22

While Haszard's almanacs conveyed traditional farming information regarding astrological movements, they did not fail to emphasize the growing role of science in the improvement and commercialization of agriculture in the more modernized regions of New England, Nova Scotia, and Great Britain, Specifically, much of the material in Haszard's almanacs is traceable to the contemporary Nova Scotian improver John Young and his celebrated The Letters of Agricola, which writings were intended to persuade the farmers of Nova Scotia to abandon their ancestral farming techniques for more scientific methods.²³ This intense interest in agricultural improvement was a middle- and upper-class concern that transcended the northeastern region of British North America.²⁴ In the case of Island almanacs, the focus on scientific agriculture and commercialization resulted from Has-

- 21 PARO, 2277, Benjamin Chappell day book and diary, September 6, 1811 January 24, 1812, and June 18, 1816. See the article on comets and the theory of their influence on temperatures in the Prince Edward Island Calendar, 1835.
- 22 Quoted in Carolyn Merchant, Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 141; "Lunar Influence on Vegetation", Prince Edward Island Agriculturalist, December 27, 1883, p. 3.
- 23 Many of the quotations in Haszard's almanacs were taken directly from Belcher's Farmer's Almanack For The Year of Our Lord... (Halifax: C. H. Belcher, 1824-), PANS, microfilm reels 3312-3314. In turn, much of the theory on agricultural improvement found in the almanacs of Clement Horton Belcher originated in the writings of John Young. See Shirley B. Elliott, "Belcher, Clement Horton", Dictionnaire biographique du Canada, vol. 9 (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1977),
- 24 See, for instance, Graeme Wynn, "Exciting a Spirit of Emulation Among the 'Plodholes': Agricultural Reform in Pre-Confederation Nova Scotia", Acadiensis, vol. 20, no. 1 (Autumn 1990), pp. 5-51; E. A. Heaman, The Inglorious Arts of Peace: Exhibitions in Canadian Society During the Nineteenth Century (forthcoming, University of Toronto Press).

zard's activity in the Prince Edward Island Agricultural Society. Established in 1827, the society's membership roll is a list of elite and middle-class government officers, barristers, merchants, land agents, shipbuilders, and leading community members. Farming was often not their mainstay or primary interest, yet most participated in agricultural improvement efforts. Such individuals had leisure time to devote to reading and experimenting with new and often dubious agricultural innovations. Because of their higher status, they viewed these endeavours as an opportunity to enlighten what they perceived to be the "wretched" and "slovenly" methods of the Island's tenant farmers. ²⁶

The increasing emphasis on new and scientific means of agricultural improvement in this period is best illustrated in the last pages of the 1841 Island almanac, Haszard's *The Prince Edward Island Calendar*, where for the first time a list of district agricultural societies and their founding dates is included. "The application of science to agriculture", the almanac asserts,

was one of the first benefits which the business of the farmer received ... formerly the farmer [was] ... presumed to understand by nature or instinct all that was necessary for the cultivator of the soil to know, [but] Agricultural societies have been found among the most efficient agents in promoting agriculture ... they stimulate inquiry, they invite discussion, they reward care and research.

Yet the application of science to farming was not considered a substitute for prudence and industry in the attempt to foster profits. Industriousness was encouraged throughout Haszard's almanacs with the aid of wood engravings of farmers diligently completing a different seasonal task for each month of the year. Quarter-page advice columns containing moralizing admonitions and other adages accompanied each illustration, such as this excerpt from the 1844 almanac: "There are some men who ... generally grind their axes on their neighbors [sic] grindstone, and think him unreasonable if he does not furnish a mug of cider and a boy to turn."

²⁵ The presence and motives of many middle-class individuals in the membership and leadership of improvement societies in the Maritimes is explored by Martin Hewitt in "The Mechanics' Institute Movement in the Martimes: 1831–1889" (Master's thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1986).

²⁶ Membership roll in Prince Edward Island Register, June 19, 1827. For an example of the class-biased views of agricultural improvers towards the tenantry, see the land agent John Lewellin's Emigration, Prince Edward Island: A Brief but Faithful Account (Charlottetown: James D. Haszard, 1832), reprinted in D. C. Harvey, ed., Journeys to the Island of St. John or Prince Edward Island, 1775–1832 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 181–183, 193–194; land agent and lawyer James Horsefield Peters, Hints to the Farmers of Prince Edward Island (Charlottetown: J. J. Pippy, 1851). For the history of early Island agricultural societies, see two unpublished papers by Elinor Vass, "Early Agriculture on Prince Edward Island and the Role of the Agricultural Societies, 1827–1845" (1975) and "The Royal Agricultural Society, 1845–1865" (1976), Confederation Center of the Arts Library, Charlottetown, P.E.I.

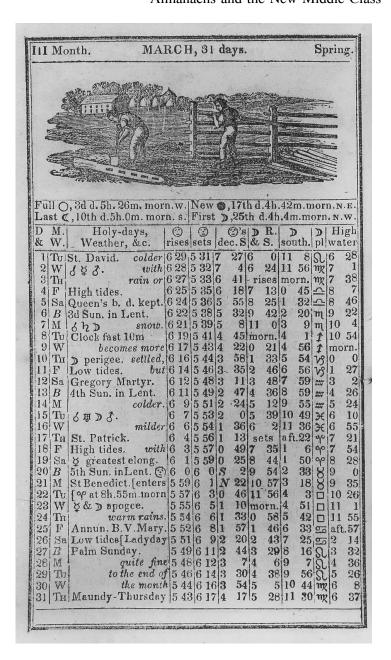


Figure 2 Wood calendar engraving illustrating two diligent farmers fencing their fields in the month of March, in Haszard's 1836 farmer's almanac for Prince Edward Island. The initial "B" for the engraver Abel Bowen is visible in the middle foreground. Courtesy of the Prince Edward Island Public Archives and Records Office.

Industriousness was also tied to the efficient use of time and labour, a dominant theme in Haszard's almanacs by the mid-nineteenth century. The 1837 almanac advocated a reliance on clocks to bring a consistent chronological reference to the households of the Island. While traditional Island historiography has depicted time in early nineteenth-century Prince Edward Island as dominated by agrarian rhythms, free of haste, careless of exactitude, the Island almanacs of the 1830s emphasized the precise hours kept by the urban middle class and treated the efficient use of time as a source of wealth. A perfunctory — almost industrial — burden of promptness was thus placed on the Island's farmers and labourers, as exemplified by the 1836 Island almanac, which encouraged punctuality: "Awake all hands at the peep of day! Tools all reasonably sharpened the night before, and spring to it in the cool of the sweet morning. Cut your grass while the dew is on, if you would have your scythe move slick and smoothly." 27

The emergence of wage-labour dependence between prosperous famers and their labourers in the scheme of agriculture was a significant economic development that almanacs record. While wage labour on farms had existed from the earliest period of settlement, the occurrence and length of this type of employment became increasingly important as capital-poor immigrants began flooding the colony, the Island's population rapidly expanded, and demographic pressures restricted access to land for later generations and settlers.²⁸ References to labour management were commonplace in Haszard's almanacs by the mid-nineteenth century, warning farmers that "Laborers may be faithful and careful, but they cannot enter fully into all the intentions and plans of the farmer ... a good farmer will be in the fields ... [supervising] his laborers."²⁹

The almanacs also provide a glimpse into the changing perception of the division of labour based upon gender. During the Island's early nineteenth-century settlement, writers often stated that women performed many of the difficult tasks on the farm: "the farmers' wives and daughters [help clear land], ... assist in the labours of the farm during seed-time, haymaking, and harvest." By mid-century, however, burgeoning middle-class values from

²⁷ Weale and Baglole, The Island and Confederation, pp. 108–109; Jacques LeGoff, Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 44–49; Jonathan Prude, The Coming of Industrial Order (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 36–37. The origins of this almanac quotation can be found in PANS, reel 3313, Belcher's Farmer's Almanack, July 1836.

²⁸ The population of the Island in the eight years between 1833 and 1841 expanded from 32,292 to 47,034 persons. PARO, Prince Edward Island, *Journals of the House of Assembly*, Appendix C, 1834, and Appendix N, 1842. For examples of late eighteenth-century farm wage labour on the Island, see Scottish Record Office, GD 293/2/17–21, Montgomery Papers. The increase in wage labour by midcentury can be seen in many of the merchant record books preserved in the PARO. See also Bittermann, "Farm Households and Wage Labour", pp. 13–46.

²⁹ Prince Edward Island Calendar, 1847.

more urbanized regions began redefining the perception of women's contribution to the Island's rural economy from productive to reproductive roles. While the reality of work for most women on the Island in mid-nineteenth century still included intense involvement in the sowing, reaping, and hauling of produce and the husbandry of farm animals, one Island almanac for 1845 paradoxically asserts: "A woman never appears more truly in her sphere, than when she divides her time between her domestic avocations, and the culture of flowers." It later continues: "A woman destitute of a love of flowers, seems a mistake of nature. The delicate, the fragile, and the beautiful, should have sympathies with all in nature that possesses the same qualities.",30

If Haszard's emphasis on frugality, industriousness, and middle-class values found within early Island almanacs bears a striking resemblance to the moralizing and idealizing of nineteenth-century industrialists in the more urban and modernized centres of New England and Nova Scotia, it is no coincidence. Outside of the astrological, meteorological, and local information specific to the colony, most of the commentary found within Haszard's almanacs was bought, "borrowed", or "pirated" from periodicals published in New England and Nova Scotia.³¹ Such practices were common in the milieu of early nineteenth-century North American publishing. In the case of Haszard's alamanac, the wood engravings he began using in the early 1830s for its cover and interior monthly calendar illustrations are identical to those adorning The Farmer's Almanack of Nova Scotia.³² In turn the Nova Scotia engravings, which were first used in 1828, were designed in 1820 by the Portland, Maine, engraver Abel Bowen for *The Maine Farmer's* Almanack. Many of the literary devices that were employed in the Island's almanacs were also borrowed from Nova Scotia, New England, and as far away as Great Britain — like the hay-cutting maxim quoted earlier, which was copied verbatim from the New England Farmer of 1824.33 Haszard

³⁰ John McGregor, British America (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1832), p. 329; Merchant, Ecological Revolutions, pp. 233-234. See also the role of women's labour mentioned throughout the David Ross diary, in the Mrs. Joseph Stretch diary, and also in the Peter MacNutt diary and day book, PARO 3552/1. On the changing perception of women's roles in Prince Edward Island, see Rusty Bittermann, "Women and the Escheat Movement: The Politics of Everyday Life on Prince Edward Island" in Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton, eds. Separate Spheres: Women's Worlds in the 19th-Century Maritimes (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994), p. 31.

³¹ Some meteorological and astronomical information in the almanacs originated with Island resident Dr. Benjamin St. Croix. See Prince Edward Island Register, July 8, 1925.

³² See, for instance, PANS, microfilm reel 3312, The Farmer's Almanack, For The Year of Our Lord, 1828 (Halifax: C. H. Belcher, 1828). In 1832 the name Belcher is added to the title of this almanac.

³³ Rollo S. Silver, The American Printer, 1787-1825 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), pp. 153-167; Bangor Public Library, Maine, The Maine Farmer's Almanack, For the Year of Our Lord 1820 [et al.], 1820-1850. Concerning Able Bowen, see Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., "Portland, Maine, Engravers of the 1820s", Old-Time New England, vol. 61, no. 3 (January-March 1971), pp. 59-65. Bowen's name and initial appear on the early Maine almanac covers and the monthly

relied heavily on outside materials for his almanacs, and while writing on behalf of the agricultural society on February 23, 1930, he reported that he intended to take a subscription to the *New England Farmer*, "to shew [*sic*] them [the Island's farmers] the great progress of our pains-taking neighbours, and stimulate them to corresponding exertions".³⁴

Cultural Hegemony

That such materials were read and easily circulated between different areas indicates that early Prince Edward Island was not, contrary to the prevalent theme of pre-1850s Island historiography, an insular and inwardly turned society as a result of geographic factors and the detrimental influence of the proprietary system.³⁵ The nature and development of the colony were closely entwined with the larger region of northeastern North America, and many of the Island's upper class shared common interests — including those of scientific improvement and commercialized farming — with other northeastern societies despite distance, political boundaries, and disparate forms of land tenure. But not all almanac commentary was transferable. For a second-generation Loyalist like Haszard, the well-known and ubiquitous references to democracy and freehold tenure found within New England almanacs were surely unpalatable.³⁶

As the leading printer in Prince Edward Island, Haszard was part of a growing middle class of merchants, prosperous farmers, land agents, and other entrepreneurs and professionals who in many cases aligned themselves with the interests of the proprietors and other dominant upper-class members to achieve a greater role and control in community and government affairs. Individuals like Haszard were interested in extending their profits as middlemen, yet concerned with maintaining the docility and industriousness of the under echelons of tenants and labourers that made many middle-class enterprises profitable.³⁷ Regarding the pecuniary and economic relationship of

- calendar illustrations, while his initial appears on the Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island almanac cover pages.
- 34 "Farmer's Calendar" in the *New England Farmer* (Boston: William Nichols, 1824), July 3, 1824; *Prince Edward Island Register*, February 23, 1830.
- 35 See the implied phrasing of Weale and Baglole in *The Island and Confederation* regarding the nature of early Island society; see also F. W. P. Bolger, ed., *Canada's Smallest Province: A History of Prince Edward Island* (Charlottetown: 1973 Centennial Commission, 1973).
- 36 Haszard's use of New England materials, sometimes via Nova Scotia, supports historical geographer Graeme Wynn's assertion of the existence of a nineteenth-century "Greater New England" which transcended the regional and national boundaries of the American and British northeast. See "New England's Outpost in the Nineteenth Century" in Stephen J. Hornsby, Victor A. Konrad, and James J. Herlan, eds., *The Northeast Borderlands: Four Centuries of Interaction* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1989), pp. 64–90.
- 37 For a clear illustration of how some members of the middle class acted to dominate and exploit the underclasses, see Greenhill and Giffard's portrayal of James Yeo in *Westcountrymen*, pp. 123, 143, 146

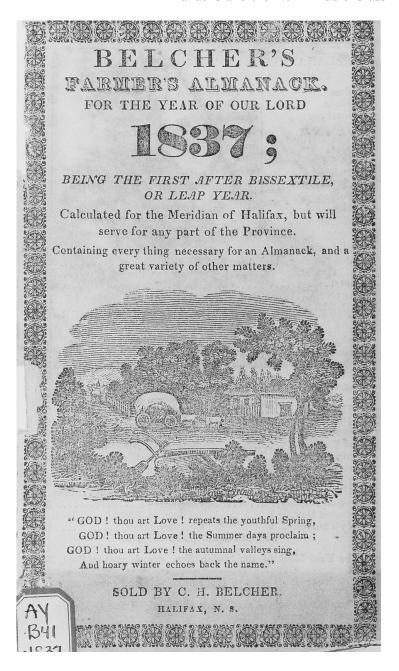


Figure 3 Cover from C. H. Belcher's almanac for Nova Scotia. Note the striking similarities between this cover and that of the Prince Edward Island calendar. Abel Bowen's initial as the engraver can be seen in the foliage in the left foreground. Belcher began using this illustration in 1828, a few years earlier than it appeared in Prince Edward Island. Courtesy of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia.



Figure 4 Cover from Daniel Robinson's farmer's almanac for Maine. In this wood engraving the artist's name, "A. Bowen", appears in the right foreground beneath the trees. This specimen was first used in 1820 and was revised by Bowen in 1840. Note the subtle differences between this cover and those used for the Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island almanacs. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Maine.

the middle class with the lower classes, Haszard editorialized in 1824: "Landlords, [and] landladies ... generally receive their money [rents] every six months — why should not shop keepers and tradesmen be upon the same footing?",38

Haszard's selection of information from New England and Nova Scotian periodicals, therefore, was calculated to foster industry, morality, and deference to superiors among the under classes.³⁹ American and Nova Scotian almanacs were laden with references to liberty, independence, and ownership of land — as, for example, this excerpt in a Maine almanac of March 1833:

If Virtue, Industry, Economy, [and] Union shall manifest themselves as the guardian spirits of our country — and Freedom soothed by their influence, shall ... make her abode with us forever ... [then] we will be the true sons of our fathers ... and continue to be, a great, free and happy people.⁴⁰

A comment from a Nova Scotian almanac of July 1830 is similar:

Haying and harvesting are now pressing avocations, but while the increasing heat & active labour of this month remind us that we are doomed to earn our bread by the sweat of our brow, let us remember that we cultivate a free soil, and pay no tithes.41

Yet such democratic and freehold tenure sentiments, prevalent in almanacs printed in such nearby places as the state of Maine and the colony of Nova Scotia, are conspicuously missing in Haszard's almanacs and newspaper. Haszard readily omitted allusions to liberty and freehold tenure and instead provided his own class-biased definitions for these terms, such as that written in 1823: "Independence — To be content with a little, and to secure that little by the exertions of useful industry, is the only certain way of becoming independent.",42

While he omitted references to democratic and freehold tenure values, he readily utilized the growing literature of industrial moralizing prevalent in the almanacs of modernizing New England and Nova Scotia. 43 The evils

- 38 Prince Edward Island Register, October 2, 1824.
- 39 Haszard's ideology is analogous to the much better-known Nova Scotian writer of the same period, Thomas Chandler Haliburton. A second-generation Loyalist, Haliburton envied the industriousness and commercial assertiveness of New Englanders, yet disdained the democratic social and political structure of New England.
- 40 Maine Farmer's Almanac, 1833.
- 41 The Farmer's Almanack (Halifax), 1830.
- 42 Prince Edward Island Register, August 16, 1823.
- 43 Chester E. Eisinger, "The Freehold Concept in Eighteenth-Century American Letters", Willian and Mary Quarterly, vol. 4 (1947), pp. 42-59, and "The Farmer in the Eighteenth Century Almanac", Agricultural History, vol. 28 (1954), pp. 108-112.

of alcohol, lethargy, and slovenliness were minutely described in Haszard's publications, while the benefits of order, industriousness, and acceptance of the prevailing social hierarchy were acclaimed. The almanac for 1829 warned in the month of April, "He that is negligent and sluggish in this month will be generally so throughout the year ... and a shabby farm is portentous of neglected morals and inclination to idleness, tippling, and litigation." The guidance for July of that year, in contrast, read that "this is a busy month, but the provident farmer finds no difficulty in getting through it, without any unnecessary waste.... He pays his hands well, keeps them well ... consequently his work goes on regularly and briskly."

As one who aspired to join the ranks of the landed elite, Haszard served as a proprietary agent, and he eventually achieved ownership of a small estate tenanted by a modest number of families and labourers. 45 It is therefore not surprising that the almanac literature he borrowed from New England and Nova Scotian periodicals omitted references to freehold tenure, while attempting to instil the values of industry, commerce, and scientific improvement in its readership. Haszard has been described as taking "an active and prominent part on the side of Conservatives', and, while he may have believed that he was appealing to the "free use of reason" in supplying his subscribers with information on scientific improvement, industry, and acceptance of the prevailing hierarchy, such information was in reality "riddled with class biases". It was a subtle form of class domination, or cultural hegemony — to place it in Gramscian terms — by a member of the growing middle class. Haszard and other members of his class attempted to introduce and encourage capitalist relations while maintaining the structures of a restricted system of land ownership. 46 Friedrich Engels wrote of an analogous pattern of middle-class hegemony in the mechanics' improvement societies of nineteenth-century England, noting that the humble classes "are taught to be subservient to the existing political and social order. All the worker hears ... is one long sermon on respectful and passive obedience in the station of life to which he has been called."⁴⁷

Because Haszard was often the primary and sometimes only printer in the

⁴⁴ The origins of these quotes can be found in *The Farmer's Almanack* (Halifax), 1829, for April and July.

⁴⁵ Robertson, "Haszard, James", p. 339; PARO, 4106, Jane Lightbourn Robinson, "Life of James Douglas Haszard", unpublished manuscript.

⁴⁶ Cotton, Chapters in Our Island Story, p. 127. E. A. Heaman makes a similar argument regarding the coordination of agricultural exhibitions in "Knowing and Showing in Lower Canada" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, St. John's, Nfld., June 1997).

⁴⁷ Friedrich Engels, writing in 1844 on the condition of the working class in England, quoted in Hewitt, "The Mechanics' Institute", p. 6. Regarding cultural hegemony, Gramsci writes that 'the rule of one class or group over the rest of society does not depend on material power alone", but upon establishing "its own moral, political, and cultural values as conventional norms of practical behavior". Quoted in Joseph V. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consiousness, and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 2–3.

colony, he was well placed to manage one of the principal means of disseminating information and knowledge. 48 The manner in which he chose to print or omit material was subjective, and in an information-starved society like early Prince Edward Island he was uniquely situated to influence the views, social relations, and daily practices of his readership. As the main conduit of written information and ideas, he actively refined such materials to fit his own social and economic class views. It is one of the paradoxes of Island almanacs that these publications were intended to empower the tenantry with the latest agricultural knowledge, yet were also supposed to "subject it to elite direction". 49 Such editing was a form of hegemony that limited the information, ideas, and expressions of those readers who did not share Haszard's particular class biases.

Nonetheless, Haszard's monopolistic control over the means of communication did not go completely undisputed. In 1828 a committee of politically disaffected middle-class individuals advertised on the mainland for a printer to establish a press in Prince Edward Island to allow dissenting opinions that could not be aired in Haszard's newspaper to be publicly expressed. The committee persuaded Nova Scotian printer John Henry White to locate in the colony. Yet White's press failed within a short time because of the many enemies it made among the powerful office holders in the government. The Assembly refused to honour printing contracts White had legitimately won from the government, while litigation over the matter exhausted the press's operating capital.⁵⁰

Others were also disturbed over the class biases they perceived in the Island's press. In an 1828 newspaper editorial, proprietary land agent John Lewellin emphasized the need for the Island's tenantry to adopt more scientific, industrious, and commercial farming habits to increase crop production and ultimately agricultural exports. Lewellin wrote: "Last year's exports exceeded the imports of agricultural products about £8000 ... therefore if the farmers would apply with unremitting industry to their proper calling, we might soon become an exporting country on a large scale." Lewellin's implication that the tenants of the Island were inefficient producers was challenged in a later letter to the newspaper that castigated middle-class agricultural improvers, specifically Lewellin, for their overly optimistic

⁴⁸ Haszard held the post of government printer from 1808 to 1811 and from 1830 to 1851. Ian Ross Robertson, "Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island, from 1856 to 1877" (Master's thesis, McGill University, 1968), p. 12.

⁴⁹ See the similar analogy for Lower Canada in Heaman, "Knowing and Showing", p. 6.

⁵⁰ John Henry White followed the pattern of earlier regional printers and had previously served in a printing office in New England. Marianne G. Morrow and Nicolas J. de Jong, "White, John Henry", Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 8, pp. 903-904; H. T. Holman, "Palmer, James Bardin", Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 6, p. 568. See also Ian Ross Robertson, "Whelan, Edward", Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 9, pp. 828-835.

⁵¹ An address to the farmers of St. Andrew's Parish, Prince Edward Island Register, February 19, 1828.

expectations of optimal tenant output. This critique of Lewellin stated that it was too easy to calculate upon paper the expected yields per acre, but that it always happened that "there was too much rain or too little, too hot or too cold, late or early frost, ... or Grubs, Grasshoppers, Mice, Rust, Mildew, Smut, or ... bad markets", which inadvertently set the "calculations at defiance". Middle-class improvers, the writer concluded, had "abandoned the plough and took to farming upon paper ... [and] directing others, without farming half a dozen acres [themselves]". ⁵²

In 1837 leaders of the pro-tenant Escheat Party ceased patronizing Haszard's newspaper because of its perceived middle-class bias and failure to support the initiatives of the tenants and other members of the lower class. A letter in 1842 to John Ings, editor of a newly established Island newspaper, complained of the illiberal policies of the colony's press: "With what hope of success could a hapless wight expect public sympathy [from Haszard] ... if his oppressor happened ... to have an HON. affixed to his name, or an ESQ. dangling at his tail?" Yet Ings's views, within a brief span, quickly came to reflect the same middle-class biases as Haszard's press. By 1844 Ings's patronizing advice to one disaffected pro-tenant supporter was for him to "bend his head patiently to the yoke, to put his pride or independence in his pocket, and, if he has anything else to do, to avoid politics as he would a common pestilence". Obviously, the resolve of many of the middle class to influence knowledge and thought through the control of written information was significant in early Prince Edward Island. 54

One individual who clearly understood the power relationship of domination and subordination between the lower and middle classes was Edward Whelan, editor of *The Examiner*. A radical Irish "reformer", Whelan immigrated to the Island and established a newspaper in Charlottetown in 1847 specifically to support the interests of the petty-farming population.⁵⁵ In one of his first editorials, Whelan wrote of his concern regarding the independence and freedom of the tenantry and small farmers to follow and act on their own initiative in Island politics:

We have ... witnessed attempts ... to controul [sic] the farming interests and the poorer country population in their choice of a representative — too open an

⁵² Letter to the editor, Prince Edward Island Register, April 8, 1828.

⁵³ PARO, 2524/20, Cooper to LeLacheur, September 11, 1837. In this letter it is stated that "We [Escheat leaders] have given up the gazette [Haszard's paper] and intend to support the *Colonial Herald* as long as he is deserving." For more on the Escheat Party, see Harry Baglole, "Cooper, William", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, pp. 155–158.

⁵⁴ See Prince Edward Islander, December 16, 1842 and July 19, 1844; Greenhill and Giffard, West-countrymen, pp. 135, 144.

⁵⁵ Peter McCourt, *Biographical Sketch of the Honourable Edward Whelan* (Charlottetown: Peter McCourt, 1888). See also Whelan's comments about serving the interests of the poor and agrarian populace in *The Examiner*, August 7, 1847.

attempt to bully them out of their votes by [members of the middle class have been made, and we can no longer] ... suffer their rights to remain unasserted.⁵⁶

The Significance of Deconstructing Almanacs

Certainly it is difficult to measure the full impact of hegemonic and more overt examples of domination and subordination in the Island's early society. Nonetheless, a close analysis of almanacs and other printed sources does reveal the presence of intricate sets of socio-economic relationships between the rising middle class and the humbler classes in early nineteenthcentury Prince Edward Island. When the information and maxims in almanacs are deconstructed, for instance, it becomes clear that the editor's choice of materials was intended for two distinct audiences.⁵⁷ Astrological information and anecdotal narratives were certainly directed towards the underclasses of tenants and labourers, and these encouraged industry while forewarning of the results of indolence. Other maxims and adages found within the Island almanacs clearly cater towards an upper class who possessed the means to utilize advice on labour management and capitalist relations.

The dichotomous messages found in the Island almanacs of this period reveal much about the emergence of an often conservative and yet commercially oriented middle class in the colony. While many within this group promoted a concept of a fixed social hierarchy based on the ownership and control of land, they were also highly influenced by the liberal ideas of industrial work relations and commercial assertiveness emanating from New England, Nova Scotia, and the British Isles. Until recently, the lack of significant class analysis, aside from landlord-tenant relations, in the historiography of nineteenth-century Prince Edward Island has denied the existence of conflicting interests in the daily relations between the lower class and the emergent middle class. This oversight has fostered an overly simplistic view of the colony's early society and economy and has led historians to view only the power of the proprietors and their land agents over the tenantry as impediments to the well-being of the Island's rural inhabitants.

Analysis and documentation of almanacs and other publications of mass consumption contitute a starting point for rethinking fundamental issues of power — of domination and subordination — in early Island history. In pursuing this direction, however, we must recognize the empiricist fallacy that what cannot be precisely observed and measured does not, therefore, exist. Communication in early Prince Edward Island was never an ideal situation — open, transparent, and undistorted by hierarchies. The concept of cultural hegemony, then, can be considered in new approaches that can

⁵⁶ The Examiner, August 7, 1847.

⁵⁷ For an analogous situation in Nova Scotia, see Wynn, "Exciting a Spirit of Emulation Among the 'Plodholes' ''.

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lead intellectual historians to understand how ideas were used to "reinforce or undermine existing social structures". ⁵⁸ An examination of class relations, as seen through almanac literature, reveals a much richer and more complex episode in the social and economic history of early rural Prince Edward Island that has often been recognized.