

“Bluenose Effrontery”: Dr. William Johnston Almon and the City of Halifax During
the United States’ Civil War

by

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Abstract

Popular historiography of the U. S. Civil War has traditionally underemphasized the war's foreign dimension and the role outside support and potential recognition played in the conflict. Recent literature, however, has begun to reverse this trend. Building upon recent studies, this thesis examines public opinion in Halifax during the Civil War. In a period characterized by divided opinion – both within the United States and abroad – Haligonians overwhelmingly supported the South for most of the conflict. This thesis explores public opinion in Halifax by studying one of the city's most prominent Confederate supporters, Dr. William Johnston Almon. By examining Almon and his community, the role certain factors played in influencing Haligonian support for the Confederacy – such as Northern provocations, sociopolitical ideology, and economic interests – can be better understood. This thesis contends that Almon's involvement in the Civil War was ideologically motivated and that he was not necessarily an outlier in Halifax.

List of Abbreviations Used

FRUS *Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs (Foreign Relations of the United States)*

NMM National Maritime Museum (Greenwich, United Kingdom)

NSA Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management

ORA *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion*

ORN *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*

TNA The National Archives of the United Kingdom

Acknowledgements

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Chapter One:
Introduction

Shortly after one o'clock in the afternoon on December 19th, 1863, Dr. William Johnston Almon watched with a small crowd of onlookers as a small American boat pulled in to Queen's Wharf in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Given the excitement and tension surrounding the vessel's arrival, several soldiers had been charged with permitting only people who were respectably dressed onto the wharf. As one of the city's most prominent physicians, descended from a line of similarly distinguished Haligonians, Dr. Almon encountered no difficulty getting onto the wharf. The tension created by the arriving vessel stemmed from an incident two days earlier in which three men from the Maritimes had been illegally arrested by the Union navy at Sambro Harbour, only a few miles distant. The seizure represented the culmination of a week-long chase of the Northern passenger steamer *Chesapeake*, which had been hijacked by Confederate agents off the coast of New England during the early morning hours of December 8th. The goal of the hijackers had been to outfit the *Chesapeake* as a Confederate commerce raider and use it to prey upon Northern shipping throughout the North Atlantic. However, following the takeover, which left one of the *Chesapeake's* original crew members dead, the vessel's captors found that they possessed insufficient coal to take to sea. The hijackers began scouring the ports and inlets that dotted Nova Scotia's Atlantic coast looking for coal, but ultimately their extended search for fuel allowed pursuing Union warships to catch up.¹

¹ This summary of events is drawn from Greg Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 134-210; Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 22 December 1863, 12 January 1864; Halifax *Novascotian*, 28

The seizure of the *Chesapeake* within British waters at Sambro represented a clear violation of Great Britain's neutrality in the American Civil War. The incident also represented a threat to the uneasy peace that had prevailed between the two Atlantic nations since the war began, which the arrest of the three British North American citizens only exacerbated. Alert American authorities sought to legitimize their seizure of the *Chesapeake* and the three prisoners by quickly turning them over to the colonial authorities in nearby Halifax. Two days later, when the American arrived at Queen's Wharf to release the prisoners, a number of high-ranking Nova Scotian and American officials were on hand to ensure that protocol was followed and that everything proceeded smoothly.²

Standing in the crowd of onlookers in a heavy winter coat was Lewis Hutt. A constable for the city of Halifax, he carried in one of his coat pockets a warrant from the mayor of Halifax for the arrest of George Wade, a New Brunswick man and one of the *Chesapeake's* original hijackers. When the American vessel was docked, the three prisoners onboard were brought onto the wharf. After a quick exchange between the Union vessel's ranking officer and Halifax's sheriff, J. J. Sawyer, the three men were declared free and their manacles were removed. Around this time, Dr. Almon, who had been watching from the crowd, called to a nearby rowboat to pull near the wharf, before then walking over to the freed prisoners as if to congratulate them. Upon reaching Wade, Almon leaned in and, in a whisper, told

December 1863; Halifax *Novascotian*, 18 January 1864; Halifax *Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864.

² Ibid.

Wade to jump into the waiting rowboat. Without saying a word, Wade quickly did just that, and by the time Constable Hutt emerged from the crowd of onlookers to make his arrest, the boat with Wade in it was nearly ten yards from the end of the wharf. A stir went through the crowd as Hutt rushed to the end of the wharf. Many on the wharf cheered and urged the boat to push on. Constable Hutt, seeing Wade escaping from reach, pulled his revolver and ordered the boat to return. Those rowing the boat had started to obey when, to the surprise of all present, Dr. Almon ran over, grabbed Hutt's arm, and attempted to wrestle the gun from his hand. Two other bystanders, Dr. Peleg Wisiwell Smith and Alexander Keith, Jr., soon joined Almon, and Hutt was quickly knocked to the ground in the ensuing scuffle. The rowboat immediately resumed its course, and before long the boat was out of sight and, more importantly, out of the jurisdiction of the arrest warrant.³

This incident, one of the most dramatic to occur in Halifax during the American Civil War, is in many ways representative of the larger currents of public opinion that coursed through the city at the time. Halifax was notorious for its pro-Confederate sympathies during the war, prompting on one occasion a Union naval captain to remark that the city "swarms with secessionists and their sympathizers . . ."⁴ Why many people in Halifax and certain pockets of British North America supported the South is uncertain and has been the subject of ongoing scholarly debate. The South, after all, still relied on slavery, which Britain itself had outlawed three decades earlier. This raises the question as to why one of Halifax's most

³ Ibid.

⁴ T. C. Harris to David D. Porter, November 6, 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 3, 320.

prominent citizens would openly side with the cause of the Confederacy, especially since he had no direct stake in the conflict and was violating British neutrality in the process. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the views of Dr. William Johnston Almon and, more broadly, public opinion in the Maritimes and British North America during the U.S. Civil War in order to understand why certain segments of the British North American population sympathized in the ways in which they did.

* * *

The importance of the transatlantic, Anglo-American context of the Civil War has often been underemphasized by Civil War scholars when they have examined how and why the American conflict developed as it did. One of the most influential recent studies that attempts to counter this restricted scholarly understanding is Amanda Foreman's 2010 book, *A World on Fire*, which examines the role Great Britain played in shaping the outcome of the Civil War. Taking a vast collection of individual biographies as the foundation for her work, Foreman argues that employing personal narratives in such an extensive manner allows one to better "understand the antecedents of . . . motives and decisions" that, in aggregate, had a profoundly influential effect on the course of the conflict.⁵ Drawing upon the words of Allan Nevins, Foreman argues that Great Britain's decision to remain neutral during the conflict was crucial to the South's eventual defeat. "No battle," Nevins

⁵ Amanda Foreman, *A World on Fire: Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 2012), xxiv.

says in his four-volume 1960 work, *War for the Union*, “not Gettysburg, not the Wilderness, was more important than the contest waged in the diplomatic arena and the forum of public opinion.”⁶

Foreman explores the stories of common British citizens who fought in the war and witnessed its effects firsthand. She also reexamines many of the more well-worn stories about the powerful political elites who worked either to precipitate or avert British recognition and intervention on behalf of the Confederacy. As other scholarship in the Anglo-American field has shown, both groups, the ordinary citizens and the established elites, significantly influenced the outcome of the war. For example, the role that common British citizens played in facilitating the blockade-running trade, as well as the construction of Confederate commerce raiders, was crucial for allowing the Confederacy to prolong the war as long as it did. In his 1958 book, *Blockade Runners of the Confederacy*, Hamilton Cochran estimated that the blockade-running trade might be “conservatively” estimated as having been worth \$150 million.⁷ Cochran suggests that the war might have ended nearly two years earlier were it not for the South’s continued access to supplies from abroad.⁸ When Frank Merli examined the British involvement in the construction of commerce raiders in 1965, he noted the havoc that vessels like the *Alabama*, *Shenandoah*, and *Tallahassee* wrought upon Union shipping. However, unlike

⁶ Ibid., 806; Allan Nevins, *War for the Union*, vol. 1, *War Becomes Revolution* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1960), 242.

⁷ Hamilton Cochran, *Blockade Runners of the Confederacy* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), 332.

⁸ Ibid., 333.

Cochran's high appraisal of the impact of blockade-running, Merli suggests that the unchallenged and tightening Union blockade, as well as the Union's ability to produce naval vessels at a much higher rate, ultimately limited the ability of commerce raiders to impact the outcome of the war.⁹

The scholarship related to the role Britain's citizenry played in the Civil War's actual combat is also significant for the question of wartime loyalties. An oft-cited 40,000 to 50,000 citizens of British North America are estimated to have fought for the Union army during the conflict.¹⁰ As scholars like Greg Marquis and Harvey Whitfield have noted, the border between the United States and British North America was a fluid concept during this time, meaning many British subjects possessed no qualms about enlisting with American forces.¹¹ While some, perhaps the foremost being Robin Winks, have debated the veracity of the 50,000 figure, more contemporary analysis provided by Marquis and Jim Cogle suggests that such an estimate is likely accurate if it is taken to include antebellum immigrants to the United States and American citizens residing in British North America at the

⁹ Frank J. Merli, *Great Britain and the Confederate Navy, 1861-1865* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), 251-252.

¹⁰ Robin Winks, *Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1960), 179-185; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 106; Goldwin Smith to Moberly Bell, September 2, 1904, in *A Selection from Goldwin Smith's Correspondence Comprising Letters Chiefly to and from His English Friends, Written Between the Years 1846 and 1910*, ed. Arnold Haultain (London: Hazell, Watson and Viney, 19[--]), 414.

¹¹ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 132; Harvey Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2006), 5-6.

outbreak of the war.¹² The numerical weight of such an influx of British subjects, then, would have significantly affected the North's ability to successfully prosecute the war. Such participation would have, Marquis suggests, positively influenced the opinions of friends and family of the soldiers back home as well.¹³

As for the South, increasing scholarly attention has also been given to the region's own foreign-born population. In 1965, during the wave of scholarship marking the war's centenary, Ella Lonn noted in *Foreigners in the Confederacy* that by 1860 approximately one in twenty Southerners was foreign-born.¹⁴ When Foreman examined this same subject 45 years later, she observed that many British subjects in both the North and South were harassed or coerced into enlisting during the early days of the war.¹⁵ Not all enlistments in the Union and Confederate forces, however, were the result of pressure or intimidation. A number of British adventure-seekers willingly traveled to the States in order to participate in the U. S. conflict. Foreman situates these enlistees in a broader context of British foreign enlistment that was occurring at this time, noting that such actions, which violated Great Britain's Foreign Enlistment Act of 1819, were similar to the hundreds of British enlistments in Giuseppe Garibaldi's forces in Italy during the early 1860s.¹⁶

¹² Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 106, 319.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁴ Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy* (1940; reprint, Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1965), 29.

¹⁵ Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 111-113.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

The diplomatic attitudes of Great Britain during this period have received most of the scholarly attention. Speaking about the popular misunderstanding surrounding the United States' age-old "special friendship" with Canada, John Thompson and Stephen Randall remark that "[s]uch platitudes belie the dissonance of the nineteenth century . . ." ¹⁷ Indeed, as Foreman notes, by the outbreak of the Civil War "the prevailing view in London was that Washington could not be trusted." ¹⁸ Positioning the British reaction to the American Civil War within the decades-old context of mutual antagonism between the two Atlantic powers is vital to understanding the varying responses that both Great Britain and its citizens had toward America's internal strife. The antebellum disputes over escaped and fugitive slaves, as well as the Oregon boundary and the subsequent near outbreak of hostilities on the Pacific coast at San Juan Island (stemming from the death of one of the islander's pigs), attests to the periods of disharmony that frequently characterized Anglo-American relations during this period. ¹⁹

Following the outbreak of war in America, Queen Victoria's proclamation of neutrality in May 1861 frequently proved to be problematic for the British government. For example, what courtesies the British should or should not extend to the Confederacy became the subject of intense debate. As Robin Winks initially notes, the British Colonial Office instructed the Governor-General of British North

¹⁷ John Herd Thompson and Stephen J. Randall, *Canada and the United States: Ambivalent Allies*, 3rd ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002), 1.

¹⁸ Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 19.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25, 51-2; Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (London: Longmans, 1967), 211; Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 155-157; Thompson and Randall, *Canada and the United States*, 31-32.

America, Sir Edmund Head, to continue to allow American vessels into port, even if they were to fly “some unusual or unknown flag or claim some new national character.”²⁰ The American government’s reaction to the war hardly improved the uncertain international situation. As Foreman points out, Congress’s opportunistic passage of the protectionistic Morrill Tariff on manufactured goods, which was followed by the Union navy’s blockade of Southern cotton exports, only heightened British worries about what the outcome of the war might mean for the British economy given its heavy reliance on textile manufacturing.²¹ Then, in December of that year, an overzealous Union naval captain seized two Confederate emissaries from the British mail steamer *Trent*, which resulted in an immediate spike in tensions on both sides of the Atlantic. The outraged British government demanded the release of the prisoners and quickly began to make preparations for war. Whether the threat of war was real, as Gordon H. Warren and Amanda Foreman argue, or whether it was simply a “popular, but not necessarily . . . diplomatic, crisis” as Winks contends, the ability of both nations to step back from the precipice of war contributed to a détente of sorts that followed. This period of relaxed tensions, Winks observes, lasted almost two years until the *Chesapeake* Affair of December 1863 and the more serious crisis that followed in the wake of the St. Alban’s Raid in October 1864.²²

²⁰ Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 36.

²¹ Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 68.

²² Gordon H. Warren, *Fountain of Discontent: The Trent Affair and Freedom of the Seas* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1981); Foreman, *A World on Fire*; Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 102-103.

Concerns about Great Britain becoming embroiled in the American conflict were particularly acute in British North America because it stood to be the primary battleground in any potential war, as it had been before during the War of 1812. Even over 50 years after its publication, Robin Winks' *Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years* stands as the foremost monograph about the British North American perspective of the American Civil War. While generally not adhering to the wider Anglo-American lens that Foreman would later use, Winks nonetheless occasionally employs a broader global context for analyzing British policy during the time, noting that concerns over American annexationist designs or the looming threat of a "cotton famine" were far from the only factors influencing imperial British policy at the time. He notes, for example, that concerns about Napoleon III, the increasing Japanese aggression in the Pacific, an uprising by New Zealand's Maori population, and the Schleswig-Holstein question all vied for British imperial attention during this period.²³

For Winks, one of the primary reasons behind the Anglo-American mutual antagonism during the early to mid-nineteenth century was the fact that British North America's very existence fundamentally clashed with isolationist principles advocated by certain adherents of the Monroe Doctrine.²⁴ Given the fears that lingered following the American attempts at forcible annexation in the War of 1812, William H. Seward's renewal of such blustery rhetoric early in the American Civil War hardly eased tensions north of the border. Winks noted that the 1861 election

²³ Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 80, 378.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

in the united Canadas prominently featured anti-American rhetoric as both parties in the election accused the other of possessing dangerous affinities toward the American republic.²⁵ He argues that many in British North America during the wartime period seem to have based their opinion of the American conflict on their own personal opposition toward a particular side rather than any real sense of support for the other.²⁶ Winks also suggests that while few might have actively support Northern policies, opposition to the South's continued practice of slavery, for example, might effectively (and reluctantly) push an individual into the Northern camp. Conversely, as English novelist Anthony Trollope noted at the time,

[British North American] sympathies are with the Southern States, not because they care for cotton, not because they are anti-abolitionists, not because they admire the hearty pluck of those who are endeavouring to work out for themselves a new revolution. They sympathize with the South from a strong dislike to the aggression, the braggadocio, and the insolence they have felt upon their own borders.²⁷

To Winks, then, antipathy rather than affinity was one of the most crucial determining factors behind public opinion.

The climate of anti-Northern sentiment that pervaded parts of British North America succeeded in frequently providing Southern diplomats, merchants, and instigators with a space in which they could freely operate.²⁸ Analysis of British North American opinion at this time has evolved from Helen Macdonald's 1926 assertion that wartime sympathies fell along Liberal and Conservative lines to a

²⁵ Ibid., 58.

²⁶ Ibid., 209-210.

²⁷ Anthony Trollope, *North America* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1862), 78.

²⁸ Ibid., 207-208.

more nuanced view put forward by Winks and Harry Overholtzer in the 1960s, and reaffirmed decades later by Marquis and Thompson and Randall.²⁹ Winks, for his part, contends that, “[i]t is impossible to declare with any exactness how much public opinion in the British North American provinces favored either the North or the South during the Civil War.”³⁰ He goes on to add, “The human desire to find a label and even a statistic for every sentiment conspires against impartiality.”³¹ A clean Liberal-Conservative dichotomy, he argues, would over-simplify a much more complicated phenomenon.

While one might not be able to determine with any precision the level of sympathy for the Confederacy in British North America, scholars generally agree that the number of Southern sympathizers was significant. The growing number of studies that detail the variety of plots executed from British North America during the latter stages of the war attests to this understanding. Oscar Kinchen’s 1970 book, *Confederate Operations in Canada and the North*, expanded on certain events Winks had cursorily examined a decade earlier. Kinchen’s work represented the first of a growing wave of scholarship regarding how the Confederacy attempted to utilize British North America for everything from diplomacy, to smuggling, to a base

²⁹ Macdonald argues that Canadian Liberals tended to side with Union while the Conservatives generally sided with the Confederacy. See: Helen G. Macdonald, *Canadian Public Opinion on the American Civil War* (1926; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1974), 7; Winks, *Canada and the United States*; Harry A. Overholtzer, Jr., “Nova Scotia and the United States’ Civil War,” (M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1965), 77; Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow*; Thompson and Randall, *Canada and the United States*, 34-35.

³⁰ Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 208.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 209.

for guerilla warfare. The number and the diversity of the plots described by Kinchen is staggering. His work details, among other things, an attempt incite revolts in the northwestern states of the Union, an attempt to secretly negotiate for peace at Niagara Falls, a plot to free prisoners-of-war on Lake Erie via a water-borne raid, the raid on St. Albans, Vermont, and a string of firebombings in New York City. Kinchen, while noting that many of these plots failed largely because of relentless U.S. intelligence work, nonetheless paints a picture of an innovative, though increasingly desperate, strategy pursued by Confederate agents in the latter stages of the war.³² When Adam Mayers revisited the same subject in 2003, he largely concurred with Kinchen, though he also contended that the plotters were largely doomed from the outset, saying that they were “led by a divided set of commissioners, with unrealistic expectations and little practical experience to effectively organize and implement their plans.”³³ Despite the high rate of failure, scholars have not ignored the impact that these operations had and potentially could have had on the war. Winks, for example, suggests that had such plots been

³² John Bell makes a similar observation in the opening pages of his book *Rebels on the Great Lakes*. Bell sees the Confederate operations in Canada as part of a larger theme of need-driven Confederate innovation, mentioning Confederate attempts to procure commerce raiders from Great Britain and the pioneering use of submarine warfare manifested by the CSS *Hunley* as examples of this trend: John Bell, *Rebels on the Great Lakes: Confederate Naval Commando Operations Launched from Canada, 1863-1864* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2011), 11-12. See also: Oscar A Kinchen, *Confederate Operations in Canada and the North: A Little-Known Phase of the American Civil War* (North Quincy, Massachusetts: Christopher Publishing, 1970).

³³ Adam Mayers, *Dixie & the Dominion: Canada, the Confederacy, and the War for the Union* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2003), 224.

executed in 1861, when tensions about Seward's rhetoric and British neutrality were high, war might indeed have been the result.³⁴

Scholars have also recognized that another important aspect of the U.S. - British North American relations during this period was the impact that the looming Fenian threat in North America had on public opinion and on American and British foreign policy. Foreman, for example, observes that the Civil War's early tensions and the prospect of a larger Anglo-American war proved to be a boon for Union recruiters. Drove of eager Fenians quickly flooded the Union ranks with the hope of gaining valuable military experience for their eventual intended showdown with Great Britain, which the British Foreign Office was acutely aware of.³⁵ In his own examination, Brian Jenkins noted that as the war dragged on and Union victory began to appear inevitable, tensions rose in British North America with the awareness that most of the Union army would likely soon be disbanded, leaving a significant number of out-of-work, militarily-experienced Fenians with cheap surplus weapons and ammunition easily available to them.³⁶ Jenkins observed that many in British North America considered William Seward's harsh rhetoric toward Great Britain during the war as evidence that he would be unwilling to take action against the Fenians. Others, Jenkins pointed out, assumed far worse, suggesting that

³⁴ Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 67.

³⁵ Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 116-117.

³⁶ Brian Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 48.

Seward might tacitly support the Fenians out of political opportunism because of the increasing political importance of the Irish vote.³⁷

Though the historiography of the Maritime colonies during the Civil War is generally limited, Greg Marquis' 1998 book, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, stands as the preeminent work of scholarship on the region's wartime experience. Marquis argues that while the Civil War scholarship on the Maritimes is sparse, the region was nonetheless important throughout the course of the war. In addition to the region's contribution to the Union and Confederate armies – he suggests as many as 10,000 of the region's residents participated in the conflict – Marquis explains that strategic and economic factors made the region significant in the eyes of leaders in Washington, London, and Richmond.³⁸ Marquis uses the *Trent* Affair as a prominent example to illustrate this point. Due to the fact that Halifax was one of British North America's few continuously ice-free harbours, British reinforcements to British North America during the crisis were necessarily siphoned through the city en route to their inland postings at Montreal and Quebec, even though Halifax lacked any direct rail connection to those cities at the time.³⁹ Given the fact that Halifax was also the base for Royal Navy during the summer months, both the city and region were strategically vital for defending British North America in the event of an Anglo-American war.⁴⁰

³⁷ Ibid., 47.

³⁸ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 106.

³⁹ Ibid., 26-27.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 12-13.

Marquis also challenges several key previously-held beliefs about Halifax's economic involvement in the Civil War. Working to correct erroneous assumptions like John Brebner's 1945 assertion that the ports of Halifax and Saint John "were regular bases of operation for Southern sea raiders and blockade runners," Marquis delves into the specifics of the illicit blockade-running trade that moved through the Maritimes while also examining the limited appearance of Confederate commerce raiders in the region.⁴¹ Compared to the primary blockade-running ports of St. George's (Bermuda), Nassau, and Havana, Marquis observes that vessels rarely cleared Halifax for Southern ports throughout most of the war. Only an outbreak of yellow fever in Bermuda and Nassau during the late summer months of 1864 succeeded in shifting significant volumes of blockade-running traffic north to the much more remote port of Halifax.⁴² Marquis observes, however, that despite Halifax's geographic disadvantages, the port nonetheless remained attractive to blockade-runners because of its refueling and repair facilities.⁴³ Stephen Wise, in his influential analysis of Civil War blockade-runners, remarks that Halifax's repair facilities were particularly important because many of the war's specially built blockade-runners were poorly constructed due to the haste to push them into service in order to capitalize on high wartime prices.⁴⁴ Marquis is also quick to note

⁴¹ John Bartlet Brebner, *North Atlantic Triangle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945), 163.

⁴² Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 247-248; *Dispatches from Bermuda: The Civil War Letters of Charles Maxwell Allen, United States Consul at Bermuda, 1861-1888*, ed. Glen. N. Wiche (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2008), 141-148.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 248.

⁴⁴ Stephen R. Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).

that the arrival of Confederate commerce raiders in port was an extraordinarily rare event during the war, which contextualizes, then, the significant public fanfare that accompanied the arrival of the CSS *Tallahassee* when it stopped in Halifax in August 1864.⁴⁵

Interest in the exploits of the Confederacy was not limited solely to the comings and goings of various Confederate-bound vessels in port. Marquis points out that many Maritimers, particularly in the ports of Saint John and Halifax, were also ardent supporters of Confederacy. Francis I. W. Jones, writing at the same time as Marquis, makes a similar observation, noting that the British policy of neutrality did not necessarily mean the attitudes of its citizens would conform to the empire's official posture.⁴⁶ In fact, the gulf between British policy and the actions and attitudes of some of its citizens appears to have been significant. Haligonians, according to Jones, were "enthusiastic participants . . . both directly or indirectly" in the blockade-running trade for the better part of the war.⁴⁷ Harry Overholtzer, Jr. similarly hints at the extent of Halifax's enthusiastic disregard for Queen Victoria's 1861 proclamation of neutrality when he observes that approximately 75% of the American consular dispatches coming out of the city during the war related to

⁴⁵ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 240.

⁴⁶ Francis I. W. Jones, "This Fraudulent Trade: Confederate Blockade-Running from Halifax During the American Civil War," *The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du nord* 9, no. 4 (1999): 35; Francis I. W. Jones, "A Hot Southern Town: Confederate Sympathizers in Halifax during the American Civil War," *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 2 (1999).

⁴⁷ Jones, "This Fraudulent Trade," 43.

blockade-running.⁴⁸ According to both Winks and Overholtzer, the American wartime threats against the Reciprocity Treaty, which established limited free trade in raw materials between the U.S. and British North America, also appears to have influenced public opinion to a certain degree.⁴⁹ Marquis minimizes economic considerations like free trade or the prospect of facing renewed American tariffs, however, arguing that these issues were not the most significant points of contention in the ever-changing arena of public opinion.⁵⁰

For Marquis, opinion in the Maritimes, was a diverse, complicated, and constantly changing phenomenon. “[T]he colonies,” he asserts, “were never of one mind on the Civil War.”⁵¹ The existence of what Marquis suggests was an early pro-Northern sentiment in the region quickly gave way to anti-Northern and pro-Confederate opinion following the North’s abysmal failure at the First Battle of Bull Run in July 1861 and the Union navy’s provocative seizure of the *Trent* that November.⁵² The fact that many in Nova Scotia and the rest of British North America had sons fighting in the Union army complicates such an event-based narrative about opinion at that time, as does the fact that, while profitable, blockade-running traffic paled in comparison to the volume of legitimate trade conducted between the Maritimes and New England during the war.⁵³ Like Marquis,

⁴⁸ Overholtzer, “Nova Scotia and the United States’ Civil War,” 59.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 61; Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 342-347.

⁵⁰ Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow*, 49.

⁵¹ Ibid., 133.

⁵² Ibid., 6.

⁵³ “Total Trade of Nova Scotia, 1860-1865,” in Overholtzer, “Nova Scotia and the United States’ Civil War,” 67; Daniel Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea: Yankee*

Winks also supports a nuanced understanding of British North American wartime opinion, suggesting that an array of factors were influential when it came to British North American public sentiment. Such factors, he contends, ranged from attitudes over slavery to lingering fear and irritation over remarks made by the U.S. press and government to a general distrust of the American democratic system, which caused many to reportedly view the war through the lens of “democracy on trial.”⁵⁴

* * *

The motivations that lay behind the Civil War sympathies of Dr. William Johnston Almon have generally received little attention in the historiography of the Civil War or the historiography of Halifax itself. This absence appears to be partially driven by the limited scholarly attention given to the region during the Civil War period. Another significant factor is the scarcity of primary source material that originated from Dr. Almon. Almon kept an extensive scrapbook as well as a number of letters and documents, but very little of the surviving material relating to Dr. Almon was actually written by the doctor himself. Thus, in analyzing Almon – his personality, his actions, and his motives – one is frequently compelled to rely on what other people wrote to him or wrote about him. Relying on such sources can also be problematic because many of the stories told about Almon’s Civil War exploits

Seafaring in the Age of Sail (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 211-212; Thomas H. Raddall, *Halifax: Warden of the North* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1965), 193.

⁵⁴ Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 214.

appear to have acquired an increasingly fantastical tenor after decades of telling and retelling by Halifax's citizenry. For example, some of the details regarding Dr. Almon in Claire Hoy's 2004 book, *Canadians in the Civil War*, are either incorrect or generally unbelievable.⁵⁵ Hoy repeatedly utilizes a newspaper account of Almon written published in 1896, as well as an account written by an Almon family member in 1929.⁵⁶ Both sources offer sensational and laudatory descriptions of Dr. Almon, and, apart from his more well-known wartime exploits, these sources tend to generalize or omit details regarding the rest of Dr. Almon's wartime experience. As a result, many of Hoy's conclusions – at least as they pertain to Almon – are coloured by the embellishments contained in his source material.

Other biographical sketches of Dr. Almon are more judicious in terms of their sources and analysis. Kenneth A. MacKenzie's 1951 article on the Almon family that appeared in the *Nova Scotia Medical Bulletin* succeeds in situating Dr. Almon in his broader family context. The article, though, is generally limited to a recounting of the Almon family's various honours and milestones. MacKenzie does, however, offer valuable insight into not only the Almon family's medical legacy, but also the family's political legacy, covering a period ranging from the Loyalist flight of Almon's grandfather from New England to Dr. Almon's own conservative political beliefs that he carried with him into the Canadian House of Commons and Senate in the latter

⁵⁵ Claire Hoy, *Canadians in the Civil War* (Toronto: McArthur & Co., 2004).

⁵⁶ William Dennis, "The Most Exciting Christmas Week Ever Known in the History of Halifax," *Halifax Herald*, 23 December 1896; Susan Almon, "William Johnston Almon," presentation to the Nova Scotia Historical Society, 11 January 1929, in MG 100, vol. 101, #45, NSA.

half of the nineteenth century.⁵⁷ Perhaps the best scholarly analysis of Almon is contained in Marquis' *In Armageddon's Shadow*. Though he focuses less on the details of Almon's early life, Marquis succeeds in providing the most comprehensive biographical examination of Almon to date by drawing attention to other aspects of Almon's wartime involvement besides simply his actions on Queen's Wharf. Marquis, for example, sheds light on the previously underexamined involvement of Dr. Almon's family in aiding the Southern war effort, which he shows ranged from the participation of Almon's wife in a charitable fundraiser for Southern prisoners of war to his eldest son's journey to the South to serve in the Confederate medical corps.⁵⁸ Marquis concludes that Almon, unlike many of the his financially-motivated contemporaries, was motivated by reasons that were "intensely personal" in nature.⁵⁹

* * *

The purpose of this thesis is to present a case study that both tests Marquis' hypothesis about the wartime sympathies of Dr. William Johnston Almon and examines larger interpretative issues arising from Almon's actions during the conflict. In addition to the greater biographical knowledge about the doctor that such a micro-level study adds, this thesis also situates Dr. Almon in a broader

⁵⁷ Kenneth A. MacKenzie, "The Almons," *Nova Scotia Medical Bulletin* 1951 (30): 31-36, in "Almon Family Scrapbook," MG1, vol. 14, NSA.

⁵⁸ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 204-206.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 169.

Haligonian, Nova Scotian, and British North American sociopolitical framework. Such a broader positioning is necessary because Dr. Almon's pro-Confederate activities did not occur in isolation and were frequently influenced by outside events. This study focuses not only on how Dr. Almon might have been influenced by his environment, but also on how an understanding of his actions and experiences can shed new light on Halifax's and British North America's own wartime experiences, along with the ideological and material forces that helped to shape those experiences.

Chapter Two analyzes the early years of Dr. Almon's life and his early wartime involvement. It situates Almon in the context of mid-nineteenth century Halifax, stressing that the environment of Almon's upbringing is fundamental to understanding his later attitudes and actions. The Almons were among Halifax's most prominent families, and the family's legacy of Loyalism, Anglicanism, and social elitism all left an impact on the young aspiring doctor. The social environment of Halifax at midcentury also appears to have played a significant role in the development of Dr. Almon. The city was closely tied, both by trade and by telegraph, to the American northeast, though familiarity in this case did not necessarily indicate goodwill. Halifax was also generally marked by racial and religious tensions during this period, which became increasingly important as questions over slavery and the threat of Fenianism moved to the forefront of public discourse as the war progressed. Despite possessing an anti-American disposition in a port frequented by Confederate agents and interlopers from even the earliest days of the war, Dr. Almon did relatively little to support the Southern cause during

the first two years of the war. Only with the involvement of his eldest son in the conflict and the opportune controversy surrounding the capture of the *Chesapeake* did Dr. Almon move toward a more active support of the Confederate war effort.

Chapter Three examines the role that Dr. Almon played in the *Chesapeake* Affair between December 1863 and January 1864. After first detailing the events surrounding the seizure of the *Chesapeake* itself, the chapter examines Dr. Almon's role in preventing the arrest of George Wade on Queen's Wharf. While several contemporaries described his actions on the wharf that day as spontaneous, evidence suggests that such appraisals were likely shaped by sympathy with the Almon's actions or by deliberate efforts to avoid creating further legal repercussions for the doctor. The legal proceedings that followed the Queen's Wharf incident are particularly revealing, both in terms of Dr. Almon's own fiery anti-Northern disposition as well as in terms of the unwillingness of Halifax's elite to convict one of their peers despite the array of incriminating evidence that existed against Almon.

Chapter Four explores the tireless pro-Confederate activity of Dr. Almon and his family over the course of the final sixteen months of the Civil War and beyond. When the CSS *Tallahassee* arrived in port in August 1864, Dr. Almon became once again personally involved in a Civil War vessel's controversial port of call by helping to procure a spar for the hunted Confederate warship. Dr. Almon's family was also extremely active in the Confederate war effort during this time: his wife participated in a fundraiser for Confederate prisoners of war; his eldest son served in the Confederate medical corps in South Carolina; and another of his sons served as a

crew member onboard a blockade-runner. During this time period, Dr. Almon frequently hosted or met with Confederate agents as they passed through Halifax on their way to the Canadas, Europe, or the primary blockade-running bases of Bermuda, Nassau, and Havana, which effectively made him an important contact for Southerners in the city. Following the war, despite his un-neutral wartime activity, citizens in Halifax deliberately chose to forget certain aspects of Almon's wartime actions, which allowed the doctor to go on to enjoy considerable political success and public acclaim. Almon's political success after the war also suggests that Tory political beliefs were still able to exert meaningful influence at the provincial and federal level in Canada, even into the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Chapter Five concludes by analyzing what the case of Dr. William Johnston Almon reveals about the larger question of British North American opinion during the U.S. Civil War and whether Almon, as Greg Marquis suggests, was primarily motivated by personal reasons. The advantage of micro-level case studies is that by looking into the minutiae of an individual's experience during this period, one can better appreciate which factors influenced an individual's actions and attitudes. By understanding the individual, one is better able to extrapolate understandings regarding the subject of public opinion. Dr. Almon's social, economic, and political biases all appear to have, to varying degrees, influenced his perception of the Civil War. The community in which Dr. Almon lived appears to have played a similarly significant role in his wartime sympathies, with his social status and the support he received from members of the Halifax community all influencing how he viewed the American conflict. In examining these aspects of Dr. Almon's wartime involvement,

this thesis confirms Marquis' general appraisal of the doctor and more broadly contends that while Almon was an outlier in terms of his prolific, ideologically-based support for the Confederacy, his actions on behalf of the South were normative in the context of the community of Halifax, which offered considerable support to him both during and after the U. S. Civil War.

Chapter Two:

Dr. Almon and Halifax during the Early Civil War Years

When news of the outbreak of the Civil War reached Halifax, most of the city's inhabitants, including Dr. William Johnston Almon, were not in favour of the southern Confederacy. By the end of 1861, however, many in the city would feel differently. The North's early battlefield failures and its provocative seizure of the British mail steamer *Trent* eroded much of the goodwill that Haligonians held toward the United States – Nova Scotia's largest foreign trading partner. Though other British territories observed those same events, specific circumstances in Halifax helped to shift much of the city's own public opinion against the North. The city was in many ways predisposed to resent Northern affronts given many of its citizens' roots in the Loyalist exodus of almost eighty years earlier, the profitability of blockade-running, and the experience of prolonged militarization during the *Trent* Affair. All of these factors appear to have helped create favourable attitudes in the city with regards to the South.

As the Civil War progressed, issues of race and ethnicity also likely played a role in how residents of Halifax viewed the American conflict. Though Great Britain had outlawed slavery in 1833, many in British North America viewed Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation with cynical skepticism following its issuance in September 1862, and while many in the colony might have voiced support for abolition in general, the history of white prejudice against the colony's black population suggests that the war's new emancipatory purpose likely resulted in few changed opinions in Halifax. As threats of Fenian incursions into British North America increased as the Civil War drew to a close, Halifax's sizable Irish-Catholic minority likely became a point of greater concern since many Protestants in the area

already possessed an uneasy relationship with the city's fastest-growing ethnic population. The general unwillingness of American authorities to act against Fenians in Northern states likely did little to improve Haligonian perceptions of the Northern government.

This chapter begins by analyzing the early life of Dr. Almon, including his family history, formal education, and rise within the community of Halifax. This period of his life was responsible for instilling him with many of the ideological beliefs (most notably his staunch Tory Loyalism) that would later impact his involvement in the U. S. Civil War and his career in Canadian politics. This chapter then moves into an examination of the sociopolitical contours of the city of Halifax during the mid-nineteenth century. By examining the military, economic, ethnic, and religious dimensions of Halifax at that time, the city's predisposition toward some degree of pro-Confederate involvement during the Civil War becomes evident. Factors including Halifax's strategic importance in the British empire, the city's highly competitive labour market, and the city's extensive history of reactionary nativism all appear to have contributed to Halifax's response to the American conflict. This chapter concludes by analyzing early Halifax's involvement in the Civil War and how Dr. Almon, in the midst of the city's growing support for the South, eventually came to support the Confederacy himself. In contrast to the almost static characterization he receives from Greg Marquis, this chapter contends that the Civil War involvement of Dr. Almon, like the city of Halifax, was fluid and changed depending on both local and distant circumstances as the war progressed. Unlike many of his peers, Almon's involvement in the Southern war effort did not begin

until later in the conflict. Only when the war had become “intensely personal”⁶⁰ did Almon appear prepared to actively and readily lend his time, energy, and resources to the Confederate cause.

The Early Life of Dr. Almon

William Johnston Almon was born on January 27th, 1816, in Halifax. The eldest son of Dr. William Bruce Almon and Laleah Peyton Johnston, William Johnston was born into one of Halifax’s most prominent families. His paternal grandfather, William James Almon, had served as a physician to the British army during the Revolutionary War and later took part in the Loyalist exodus from New England. His grandfather had arrived in Halifax in 1780 and had quickly risen to social prominence. In addition to his distinguished wartime service with the British, which reportedly included caring for wounded from the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775 and participating in the capture of New York the following year, William James Almon was also reputed to have enjoyed the social company of Prince Edward Augustus – King George III’s fourth son – during the Prince’s tenure in Halifax.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow*, 169.

⁶¹ Mackenzie, “The Almons,” 31, in “Almon Family Scrapbook”; Lois K. Kernaghan, “Almon, William James,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=2236 (accessed 12 April 2013); W. S. MacNutt, “Edward Augustus, Duke of Kent and Strathearn,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=2393 (accessed 12 April 2013). For more on Prince Edward during his time in Halifax, see William D. Naftel, *Prince Edward’s Legacy: The Duke of Kent in Halifax: Romance and Beautiful Buildings* (Halifax: Formac Publishing, 2005), <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/dal/docDetail.action?docID=10209368> (accessed 22 May 2013).

Having started his own private medical practice in 1783, William James also served as the Prince's physician-in-ordinary and he was reportedly one of the doctors who tended to the Edward following an injury to the Prince's leg in a horse riding accident in 1798.⁶² During one stretch in the postwar period in Halifax, William James was reportedly the only qualified physician in the city.⁶³ In the final years before his death in 1817, William James jointly pursued his private medical and pharmaceutical practice – one of the largest in Halifax at that point – with his son, William Bruce Almon.⁶⁴

William Bruce and his siblings helped cement the Almon family's status as members of Halifax's social elite during the early nineteenth century. His brother, Mather Byles Almon, went on to become a founding member and president of the Bank of Nova Scotia, sit in the colony's Legislative Council, as well as, at different times, serve as governor of Dalhousie and King's Colleges.⁶⁵ His sister, Amelia Elizabeth Almon, married her first cousin, James William Johnston, a future lawyer and head of Nova Scotia's Conservative Party – a position that briefly launched Johnston to the premiership on two separate occasions.⁶⁶ William Bruce, for his

⁶² Kernaghan, "Almon, William James"; MacNutt, "Edward Augustus, Duke of Kent and Stratheran."

⁶³ Kernaghan, "Almon, William James."

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ K. G. Pryke, "Almon, Mather Byles," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=4791 (accessed 12 April 2013).

⁶⁶ Colin D. Howell, "Almon, William Bruce," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=3214 (accessed 12 April 2013); D. A. Sutherland, "Johnston, James William," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=5067 (accessed 12 April 2013).

part, also joined the extended Johnston family by marrying J. W. Johnston's sister, Laleah Peyton Johnston, in January 1814, five years after he had attained his medical degree from the University of Edinburgh. Following the death of William James Almon in 1817, William Bruce inherited his father's medical and pharmaceutical practices. Over the course of his life, William Bruce was strongly dedicated to the advancement of medical science, though he reportedly was less enthusiastic about the business and political aspects of his trade.⁶⁷

William Johnston Almon was the eldest of eleven children born to William Bruce and Laleah Peyton Almon. Little is known about William Johnston's early years, but in 1829, at the age of 12, he matriculated at King's College in Windsor, Nova Scotia.⁶⁸ Originally located in New York City at what would later become Columbia University, King's had relocated to Nova Scotia during the Loyalist exodus where it eventually received its royal charter in 1802.⁶⁹ While at King's, William Johnston was classmates with a number of other individuals who would go on to become prominent later in life. Among his esteemed classmates were John Inglis, who later became famous for his defense of Lucknow during the Indian Rebellion of 1857, Edward Cunard, son of the famous shipping magnate, Gustavus Nicholls, son of the architect of Halifax's Citadel, John G. Gary, later a chief justice in British

⁶⁷ Howell, "Almon, William Bruce."

⁶⁸ Allan E. Marble, "Almon, William Johnston," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=6525 (accessed 13 April 2013)

⁶⁹ F. W. Vroom, *King's College: A Chronicle, 1789-1939* (Halifax: Imperial Publishing, 1941), 1, 8, 34.

Columbia, and Inglis Halliburton, son of the Chief Justice of Nova Scotia, Brenton Halliburton.⁷⁰

Following his graduation from King's in 1834, William Johnston traveled across the Atlantic to study at the universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. Given the nature of medical education at the time, pursuing a medical degree in the United States or British North America would have been impractical and undesirable for the aspiring doctor. British North America, for its part, had only conferred its first medical degree in 1833, a year before Almon completed his undergraduate work at King's. This educational milestone was marred by controversy, though, as doctors and educators engaged in an extended debate as to whether a medical degree also doubled as a license to practice.⁷¹ The United States was also an undesirable location for many aspiring British North American physicians because of the frequent schisms that marked American educational institutions. Such splits were frequently caused by instructors' personal ambitions as well as by significantly different schools of thought pertaining to medical theory.⁷² A general suspicion that American schooling might risk exposure to subversive republican principles only further detracted from the potential value of such an education in the eyes of many

⁷⁰ Halifax *Church Work*, 1 August 1920, in folder 7, volume 3, no 279, MG 1, NSA; Mackenzie, "The Almons," 32, in "Almon Family Scrapbook."

⁷¹ Barbara R. Tunis, "Medical Licensing in Lower Canada: The Dispute over Canada's First Medical Degree," in *Medicine in Canadian Society: Historical Perspectives*, ed., S. E. D. Shortt (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981), 137-138.

⁷² Joseph F. Kett, "American and Canadian Medical Institutions, 1800-1870," in *Medicine in Canadian Society*, 193-194.

prospective British North American students.⁷³ European institutions like the University of Edinburgh, however, stood in sharp contrast to the concerns that marked many North American schools at the time. A degree from such an institution was widely respected and was generally accepted as a license to practice in North America,⁷⁴ which appears to have effectively made William Johnston's decision to go to Europe in the educational footsteps of his father a relatively easy one.

After receiving his medical degree from the University of Glasgow in 1838, Dr. Almon returned to Halifax to join his father's medical practice and establish himself professionally.⁷⁵ His accession into prominence was, however, not preordained despite his family's high social standing. Dr. Almon would have to work to position himself as a respected and successful heir to the Almon name and member of the Halifax community. His first opportunity to establish himself socially occurred shortly after he returned from his studies in Europe in 1838, when, in the spring of 1839, Dr. William Johnston Almon challenged Joseph Howe, one of Nova Scotia's rising Liberal politicians, to a duel. The challenge stemmed from comments Howe had made in his newspaper, the *Novascotian*, alleging that J. W. Johnston, then a member of Nova Scotia's Executive and Legislative Councils, had improperly appointed John W. Ritchie to an unnecessary law clerk position. Ritchie, Howe

⁷³ Wendy Mitchinson, *The Nature of Their Bodies: Women and Their Doctors in Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 17.

⁷⁴ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 261.

⁷⁵ Marble, "Almon, William Johnston."

pointed out, was Johnston's son-in-law as well as a nephew to Dr. William Bruce Almon. Howe argued that if he himself had engaged in such a practice while in office, he would have provoked indignant outrage from the colony's Conservative ranks. Dr. W. B. Almon took offense to Howe's remarks and in return made what Howe biographer J. Murray Beck refers to as an "intemperate response."⁷⁶ Howe publicly replied by insulting not only the elder Dr. Almon's character, but also his medical skill and mental faculties, saying, "Intemperate abuse from one who rarely reasons very soberly, affects me but little, . . . I should as soon fear injury to a sound reputation from his malice, as benefit to a diseased body from his skill."⁷⁷

Dr. W. J. Almon, offended by Howe's insult of his father and perhaps threatened by the public denigration of his father's medical practice, demanded that Howe either apologize for his remarks or engage in "an affair of honour."⁷⁸ Such challenges were not especially uncommon for this time period. While the duel had mostly faded in the northern United States following the famous Hamilton-Burr duel of 1804, the practice nonetheless persisted in British North America and the America South well into the nineteenth century. In the South, dueling continued essentially until the end of the Civil War, with some members of Confederate army's

⁷⁶ J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe*, vol. 1, *Conservative Reformer: 1804-1848* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982), 192.

⁷⁷ *Halifax Novascotian*, 18 April 1839.

⁷⁸ A verbatim transcription of the exchange between Almon and Howe can be found in: J. A. Chisholm, "More Letters of Joseph Howe," *The Dalhousie Review* 12, no. 4 (January 1933): 489-490. See also: W. J. Banks, "This Day Recalls," newspaper clipping, in "Almon Family Scrapbook."

command even challenging each other in the middle of active campaigns.⁷⁹ In British North America, it was not until the 1840s and 1850s that dueling began to fall out of practice.⁸⁰ Challenges for duels were particularly common amongst younger men during this period.⁸¹ Since conceptions of class were still somewhat fluid in North America, duels, through what Bradley Johnson refers to as their ability to create “instant celebrity,” often served as a vehicle for social mobility, since dueling was typically seen as the reserve of the upper classes.⁸² Dueling was also popular with younger men because such encounters did not necessarily involve the killing of one’s opponent. Since honour was the issue that was at stake, an exhibition of willingness to defend that honour, even if that defense never actually occurred, was what was widely seen as important.⁸³ Due to the greater rewards and

⁷⁹ In one famous example, one of Robert E. Lee’s generals, Ambrose Powell Hill, challenged a superior, James Longstreet, to a duel despite the fact that the Union army was within twenty miles of Richmond: G. Moxely Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Neale, 1905), 85-88, <http://archive.org/details/recollectionsof00sorr> (accessed 20 November 2012). See also: Bradley A. Johnson, “A Succinct and Formal Violence: The Function of the Duel in Southern Literature, 1825-1950,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 2001), 7-8, <http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/dissertations/AAI3010644> (accessed 8 November 2012).

⁸⁰ Joseph C. Chapman, “Gentlemen, Scoundrels, and Poltroons: Honour, Violence, and the Duel in Nineteenth Century British North America” (M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1993), 150-151.

⁸¹ Johnson, “A Succinct and Formal Violence,” 32.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸³ When Howe fought John C. Halliburton in a duel a year later, Howe deliberately fired into the air after Halliburton’s shot missed. He later remarked, “I never intended to fire at him and would not for Ten Thousand Pounds”: Beck, *Joseph Howe*, vol. 1, 206; Krista Kesselring, “That Saucie Paradox”: The Politics of Duelling in Early Modern England,” seminar presentation, 16 November 2012; Johnson, “A Succinct and Formal Violence,” 30.

comparatively fewer risks involved with dueling, the young Dr. Almon had few disincentives to keep him from jumping to his father's defense.

The duel, however, never took place. According to a newspaper account published years later, Dr. Almon encountered "some difficulty in securing a suitable second."⁸⁴ Why Almon had such difficulties was never explained. One can only speculate if factors relating the standing of either Almon or Howe influenced this difficulty, or if attitudes about the duel's central issue or the political climate in general contributed to this reluctance. Attitudes about dueling itself do not appear to have likely influenced his inability to find a second, because a year later Howe fought his famed duel with John C. Halliburton, brother of Almon's King's classmate and son of Nova Scotia's chief justice, Brenton Halliburton.⁸⁵ The fame that Howe accrued from the duel, which featured Halliburton missing and Howe then "deloping," or deliberately firing his gun into the air, was viewed as sufficient for Howe to have the ability to refuse all such challenges in the future.⁸⁶ The duel also might have failed to materialize given the medical profession's general distaste for the practice.⁸⁷ Participating in a duel, especially if that duel resulted in the death of a prominent colonial politician and newspaper editor, could have created a significant barrier for Almon's future career success as a physician. Almon's failure to face Howe does not, however, appear to have been seen as an embarrassment or

⁸⁴ Banks, "This Day Remembers."

⁸⁵ Beck, *Joseph Howe*, vol. 1, 205-206.

⁸⁶ Banks, "This Day Remembers"; Beck, *Joseph Howe*, vol. 1, 206.

⁸⁷ Jonathon Daniel Wells, *Origins of the Southern Middle Class: 1800-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 80-81.

setback by either himself or members of the Halifax community. Rather, as subsequent events show, Almon's rapid climb in Haligonian society continued unabated following this incident.

Dr. Almon's establishment as a member of Halifax's upper class and medical community came sooner than anticipated. On July 12, 1840, William Bruce Almon died of typhus at the age of 52. The elder Dr. Almon had contracted typhus several weeks earlier when he tended to a ship filled with passengers afflicted with the disease that had arrived in Halifax.⁸⁸ Into the hands of the 24 year-old Almon passed most of his father's clientele, several charitable positions, and his father's drug store, which was located near Cronan's wharf on the Halifax waterfront.⁸⁹ Almon's father had been known for his lack of interest in the business aspects of medicine, and Almon himself might have carried such an attitude since he sold his father's store shortly after inheriting it, reportedly so he could focus on his duties as a physician.⁹⁰ The sheer volume of his other medical obligations also likely worked to facilitate such a move on Dr. Almon's part. In addition to his practice's wealthy client base, which generated most of his income, Almon also provided care for many poorer clients as well. Despite their frequent inability to pay, Almon had a reputation for never turning poorer callers away, regardless of the hour.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Mackenzie, "The Almons," 32, in "Almon Family Scrapbook"; Howell, "Almon, William Bruce."

⁸⁹ Mackenzie, "The Almons," 32, in "Almon Family Scrapbook."

⁹⁰ Ibid.; Howell, "Almon, William Bruce."

⁹¹ Dennis, "The Most Exciting Christmas Week," *Halifax Herald*, 23 December 1896.

In addition to his family's status and his successful business practice, Dr. Almon's charitable activities also reinforced his membership in Halifax's upper class. Noblesse oblige was expected of men of his social standing at the time, and charitable positions represented a publicly visible embodiment of such values. Dr. Almon received his first such position shortly after his return from Europe when he was commissioned to the mostly-honorary posting of assistant surgeon to the 5th Halifax Militia regiment.⁹² Almon likely would have had few duties with such a posting, since postings to the "old, but not . . . very respected institution," as Greg Marquis described it, were frequently based on patronage.⁹³ By midcentury, contemporaries noted that the militia's annual weaponless musters were conducted in "slipshod" fashion and were usually "sparsely attended."⁹⁴ Following his father's death, however, Almon inherited the much more demanding position of physician for the Halifax Poor Asylum, which continued a family legacy of similar postings that dated back to his grandfather.⁹⁵ Many physicians of the time lacked enthusiasm for such postings, however, since such work seldom contributed to their income. Wendy Mitchinson noted that many political figures of that era "took for granted that such 'unpaid' activity was part of any physician's normal workload."⁹⁶ Whether Almon was one of the fortunate few to receive compensation for his work, though, remains unclear.

⁹² "Commission appointing William J. Almon, M.D., as Assistant Surgeon in the 5th Halifax Regt. Militia," 27 April 1839, in "Almon Family Scrapbook."

⁹³ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 17.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁹⁵ Kernaghan, "Almon, William James"; Marble, "Almon, William Johnston."

⁹⁶ Mitchinson, *The Nature of Their Bodies*, 22.

The final step in Dr. Almon's effort to establish himself as one of Halifax's social elite appears to have come just four months after his father's death when he married his first cousin, Elizabeth Lichtenstein Ritchie, on November 19th, 1840.⁹⁷ While little surviving material provides insight into Elizabeth's life, Almon's marriage into the Ritchie family was a significant step for him both socially and professionally. Elizabeth's father was Judge Thomas Ritchie of Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, who, as one of the most powerful men in that part of the colony, was the subject of a popular local saying that declared, "Annapolis belongs to the Devil, the Church, and Judge Ritchie."⁹⁸ The Ritchie family, like the Almons, also carried a legacy of resistance to the American Revolution. Judge Ritchie's father, John Ritchie, had been briefly taken prisoner during an American raid on Annapolis Royal in 1781 before being paroled on the condition that he vow to not take up arms in the conflict again.⁹⁹ Two of Judge Ritchie's sons went on to achieve positions of prominence in the Maritimes by midcentury. His eldest son, John William Ritchie (whose controversial appointment had prompted Almon's challenge of Joseph Howe to a duel) was married to one of Dr. W. J. Johnston's sisters and was one of Halifax's

⁹⁷ Marble, "Almon, William Johnston."

⁹⁸ Allan C. Dunlop, "Ritchie, Thomas," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01e.php?id_nbr=4159&PHPSESSID=rh1cepblbkuih15chgm7stbrc7 (accessed 11 February 2013).

⁹⁹ Barry M. Moody, "Ritchie, John," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=2144 (accessed 11 February 2013).

most prominent lawyers, while his younger son, William Johnston Ritchie, was appointed as a judge in the New Brunswick Supreme Court in 1855.¹⁰⁰

One of Judge Ritchie's understudies had been James William Johnston, the future premier and leader of the Conservative party in Nova Scotia.¹⁰¹ J. W. Johnston, son of the subsequently famous Loyalist diarist, Elizabeth Lichtenstein Johnston, came from a family whose British imperial legacy was equally as strong as those of his Ritchie and Almon in-laws. In addition to his marriage to Amelia Elizabeth Almon, the sister of William Bruce Almon, his own sister, Elizabeth Wildman Johnston, had been the first wife of Judge Thomas Ritchie prior to her death in 1819.¹⁰² This complex network of interrelationship between the Ritchie, Johnston, and Almon families represented, as Neil J. MacKinnon observed, a "tradition of intermarriage," which, in effect, reinforced each family's high social standing in the broader Haligonian and Nova Scotian communities.¹⁰³

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¹⁰⁰ Gordon Bale and E. Bruce Mellett, "Ritchie, Sir William Johnston," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://www.biographi.ca/009004119.01-e.php?id_nbr=6395 (accessed 11 February 2013); Neil J. MacKinnon, "Ritchie, John William," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://www.biographi.ca/00904-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=5799 (accessed 11 February 2013).

¹⁰¹ Dunlop, "Ritchie, Thomas."

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Neil J. MacKinnon, "Ritchie, John William," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://www.biographi.ca/00904-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=5799 (accessed 11 February 2013).

The Port of Halifax at Midcentury

The period in which Dr. Almon established himself was one of transition for his Halifax community. The changes that the city underwent during the early to mid-nineteenth century were fundamental in influencing its population's reaction to the eventual war in the United States. Strategic, economic, cultural, and political factors all shaped the city's perception of the events unfolding in America, and while Dr. Almon inhabited a unique set of individual circumstances, he nonetheless existed as part of a broader community. The realities of Halifax at this time were fundamental in shaping Dr. William Johnston Almon's Civil War involvement.

Much like it was at the time of its founding in 1749, British imperial strategists saw Halifax as key to defending British possessions in the Western Hemisphere. As British North America's principle ice-free Atlantic harbour, Halifax represented a key port of entry for British forces and supplies in the event of war. Given British North America's long, difficult to defend border, British strategists generally believed that if war were to break out, only select locations like Halifax, Montreal, and Quebec would be defensible.¹⁰⁴ Due to this ascribed importance, Halifax was the most prominent garrison town in the Maritimes during the nineteenth century. When the Civil War broke out, only 4,300 British regulars were stationed in all of British North America. Of those troops, 2,100 – almost half of the

¹⁰⁴ Thompson and Randall, *Canada and the United States*, 37; Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 184; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 11, 24.

region's total deployment – were located in Nova Scotia.¹⁰⁵ The soldiers, typically stationed in and around Halifax, helped garrison Halifax's extensive harbour defenses, which included fortifications like Fort George (the Citadel), George's Island, McNab's Island, the York Redoubt, and batteries at Point Pleasant.¹⁰⁶ Despite the formidable depth of Halifax's fortifications, almost all of the city's defenses were outdated by the time of the U.S. Civil War. The rise of rifled artillery and ironclad vessels made that the city's older smoothbore cannons and masonry fortifications obsolete and extremely vulnerable.¹⁰⁷

Halifax was doubly important for the British military because the city served as the summer home for the Royal Navy's North Atlantic Squadron. The Royal Navy, in fact, was strategically regarded as the primary defensive force for British North America at this time due to the difficulties the British would likely face in mounting a land-based defense. In London, *The Times* praised the perceived prowess and importance of the Royal Navy while also noting British North America's landwardly precarious position during the early days of the *Trent* crisis, saying, "We can sweep the Federal fleet from the seas, we can blockade the Atlantic cities; but we cannot garrison and hold 350,000 square miles of country."¹⁰⁸ The commander of the Royal Navy's North Atlantic Squadron, Admiral Sir Alexander Milne, had only 14 vessels

¹⁰⁵ Kenneth Bourne, *Great Britain and the Balance of Power in North America: 1815-1908* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1967), 211; Gordon H. Warren, *Fountain of Discontent: The Trent Affair and Freedom of the Seas* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1981), 86.

¹⁰⁶ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 14-15.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰⁸ *The Times*, 2 December 1861.

under his command when the Civil War broke out. By September 1861, fear of the American conflict embroiling Great Britain had caused London to almost double that force by putting an additional 11 vessels under Milne's command.¹⁰⁹ Milne's flagship, the HMS *Nile*, was in many ways representative of the limitations facing the Royal Navy in North America at the time. Though impressive in appearance, the 78-gun sailing vessel was already obsolete since both the British and French navies had developed iron-clad warships capable of enduring broadsides from older, wooden sailing vessels.¹¹⁰ In addition to both the Union and Confederacy's own development of ironclad vessels, the swelling ranks of the Union navy, part of Northern efforts to implement the blockade of Southern ports, made British naval superiority along North America appear all the more suspect to British citizens and strategists. The fact that it would not be until 1866 that British North America would be visited by a British ironclad only seemed to highlight British North America's perceived vulnerabilities.¹¹¹ The Civil War period, then, was marked by an increasingly acute understanding among British North American officials regarding the limitations faced by the imperial army and navy in defending against a potential attack by the rapidly mobilizing and technologically advancing Union.

Halifax was also strategically important for Great Britain because the city represented a major trading port in the region. The shipping industry in Halifax was

¹⁰⁹ Warren, *Fountain of Discontent*, 83.

¹¹⁰ *Sea Power: A Naval History*, ed. E. B. Potter and Chester W. Nimitz (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1960), 238-240.

¹¹¹ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 268; Bourne, *Great Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, 209.

in fact booming at midcentury with over 1,400 vessels both arriving and clearing port in 1860.¹¹² This high volume of trade was due, in part, to transcontinental and global demands. Gold rushes in California, British Columbia, and Australia, as well as British imperial needs during the Crimean War and the Indian Rebellion, were all responsible for spikes in demand during this period.¹¹³ Most of the foreign shipping and trade that passed through Halifax, however, was destined for much closer to home. In 1860, 25.8% of all vessels arriving in Halifax were arriving from ports in the United States, a figure that represented by far the highest volume of trade originating outside British North America.¹¹⁴ Of all vessels clearing Halifax, 17.5% were also destined for American ports, making the United States similarly the largest non-British North American destination for vessels clearing Halifax.¹¹⁵ Several scholars have noted that the majority of this trade was destined for ports in New England. Thomas Raddall, for example, remarked that Boston was the “business centre of the universe” for Nova Scotians.¹¹⁶ Merchants in Boston likely held a reciprocal view, as Robert Albion, William Baker, and Benjamin Larabee have noted, since the Maritime colonies were “virtually an extension of the domestic

¹¹² Judith Fingard, *Jack in Port: Sailortowns of Eastern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 27.

¹¹³ W. H. Bunting, *Portrait of a Port: Boston, 1852-1914* (Cambridge: University of Harvard Press, 1971), 8; Douglas Fetherling, *The Gold Crusades: A Social History of Gold Rushes, 1849-1929* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 28-32, 73-77, 54-55.

¹¹⁴ Fingard, *Jack in Port*, 27.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Thomas H. Raddall, *Halifax: Warden of the North* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1965), 193.

coastal trade area” for New Englanders.¹¹⁷ In the nearby port of Salem, Massachusetts, Daniel Vickers observed a similar pattern, noting that “[b]y 1850 the customs officers recorded more entries from Nova Scotia . . . than all other foreign ports combined.”¹¹⁸ Ten years later, he adds, “that ratio had climbed to 3:1 . . .”¹¹⁹

The American South, on the other hand, did not constitute a major shipping destination for Maritime vessels or a major market for British North American goods. While the South was an important consumer of Nova Scotian gypsum (used for fertilizer and plaster) and fish (with an estimated 50,000 barrels being shipped to the South per year before the Civil War), the Southern market was generally smaller and more isolated, making it a lower priority destination for Nova Scotian merchants.¹²⁰ Yet this did not dispel the idea held by some Maritimers that the South represented an emerging economy worth establishing trading connections with. Indeed, in the decade prior to the Civil War, the South had experienced an unprecedented industrial boom, much like its northern counterpart. While these gains were smaller overall than the growth occurring in the North, the proportional value of the Southern economy had nonetheless increased at a remarkable rate. In the decade preceding the Civil War, the value of Southern manufacturing had

¹¹⁷ Robert G. Albion, William A Baker, and Benjamin W. Larabee, *New England and the Sea* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), 123.

¹¹⁸ Daniel Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea: Yankee Seafarers in the Age of Sail*, 211-212.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 212.

¹²⁰ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 36.

increased by 96.5%.¹²¹ Ultimately, though, the size of the Southern market and its more distant location made the region less attractive to Maritime seafarers.

During the mid-nineteenth century, patterns of trade in New England and the Maritimes were shifting due to technological advances and new labour opportunities. Part of what drove the changing national ratios of trade that Vickers observed, for example, was not an increase in the number of vessels arriving in port, but rather a rapid decrease in the number of vessels arriving from more distant ports during this time.¹²² This occurrence was a part of a broader trend of larger, steam-powered vessels beginning to dominate transoceanic trade during a period when North America generally became more continentally oriented. Increased settlement and transportation infrastructure within North America meant that residents in both the interior and in coastal regions were less-dependent on oceanic trade for living essentials or for conducting business because the vast resources of the continental interior could now begin to supply these needs. Labour was not lacking either, since wages for much-safer agricultural and industrial jobs were comparable if not better than wages earned by seafarers at the time.¹²³ The transition to steam power, which was well underway by the mid-nineteenth century, was also important in shaping the changing dynamic of trade since larger

¹²¹ Don Dodd, *Historical Statistics of the States of the United States: Two Centuries of the Census, 1790-1990* (Wesport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993), 313-336

¹²² In his book, *Young Men and the Sea*, Vickers highlights a series of “lasts” for Salem, including the city’s last vessel sailing to Manila (1858), Sumatra (1860), somewhere beyond the Atlantic (1870), and somewhere beyond the United States or Atlantic Canada (1877). See: Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea*, 211-212.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 213; Fingard, introduction to *Jack in Port*, 5.

steam-powered vessels provided faster travel times, increased hull capacities, and decreased labour (and hence wage) requirements.¹²⁴ The increase in vessel size meant that smaller ports like Salem and many of those that dotted the Nova Scotian coastline were less attractive or accessible for larger trading vessels. This had the effect of funneling higher volumes of trade into larger and better-equipped ports instead.¹²⁵ Thus, while many smaller ports were experiencing declines in seafaring by midcentury, major ports like Boston and Halifax remained prosperous.

Another important factor that influenced labour patterns at the time was a general labour shortage throughout the western Atlantic rim.¹²⁶ This labour shortage created a diverse array of employment opportunities that helped fuel competitive manufacturing and agricultural wages. This shift in earning potential helped drive many young men in the region away from seafaring. Vickers, for example, notes that a significant number of Nova Scotians were among those arriving in Salem looking for manufacturing jobs around midcentury.¹²⁷ Even in Nova Scotia other employment opportunities were opening up. In 1854, for example, work began on a railroad line from Halifax to Windsor prompting Joseph

¹²⁴ Fingard, *Jack in Port*, 23.

¹²⁵ The issue of harbour quality as opposed to size is well-illustrated by the case of Salem. By 1850, Salem had a population of 20,000, making it comparable in size to Halifax during that same period, but the city's shallow, muddy harbour and its proximity to the better harbour and facilities at Boston likely contributed to its early decline. Similar conclusions might be reached regarding smaller Nova Scotian ports like Windsor and Pictou as they related to Halifax. See: Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea*, 168, 177, 205; "Small Vessels on Registry, Major Nova Scotia Ports, 1825-1914," in Eric W. Sager, *Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada, 1820-1914* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 37.

¹²⁶ Fingard, introduction to *Jack in Port*, 5.

¹²⁷ Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea*, 213.

Howe to make a trip to New York for the stated reason of recruiting labourers for the project. In reality, Howe was illegally recruiting recently-arrived Irish-Americans for military service in Crimea,¹²⁸ but the fact that labour recruitment provided a plausible cover for his activities attests to the labour situation of the time.

Shortages in labour also increased competition among employers as they attempted to secure labour from the dwindling number of seafarers. This competition led to the rise of “crimping” in port cities. Crimping was a practice that typically involved a “freelance recruiter” enticing or coercing workers to desert or leave their current employment in favour of another job opportunity instead. This was often achieved by promising the potential recruit high wages or some type of bonus.¹²⁹ This practice helped fuel a rapid turnover within the seafaring labour market, and in many ports sailors frequently worked in casual dockside positions in anticipation of being recruited to fill in for deserters.¹³⁰ Halifax was not a particularly prominent port for crimping in the civilian labour force at midcentury, but the Royal Navy was plagued by desertions in both Halifax and other Maritime ports as seamen frequently absconded, oftentimes to America, in order to pursue

¹²⁸ J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe*, vol. 2, *The Briton Becomes Canadian: 1848-1873* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1983), 82; Raddall, *Halifax*, 187-188.

¹²⁹ Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow*, 96; Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 192-193.

¹³⁰ Fingard, *Jack in Port*, 101.

higher wages and work under less severe discipline.¹³¹ In 1848, Sir Alexander Milne wrote to the British Admiralty requesting an increase in pay for his men, stating, “The chief object to be attained is the encouragement of our Seamen to enter our service, or I should perhaps say to induce them to remain in it, instead of being led away by the Crimps at outports to enter into the American Navy . . .”¹³² Ten years later Milne lodged a similar complaint, saying, “In Nova Scotia & New Brunswick a large number of ships are built[,] but no Seamen are imported to man them. The consequence is the men from the Royal Navy are bribed and drugged by whole sale [sic] and carried off by dozens[.] . . . [H]igh wages are regularly offered at Portsmouth and men from our Navy are shipped off for America.”¹³³ The growth and shifts in employment opportunity that characterized this period resulted in the creation of an extremely competitive labour market in the Maritimes. When Union army bonuses and blockade-running profits began to influence this market during the American Civil War, many Nova Scotians, through their economic decision-making, became materially invested in the conflict.

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¹³¹ Ibid., 29, 232-233; Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 195; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 97.

¹³² Sir Alexander Milne to the British Admiralty, 21 February 1848, in *The Milne Papers: The Papers of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Alexander Milne, Bt., K.C.B. (1806-1896)*, vol. 1, 1820-1859, ed. John Beeler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 238-239.

¹³³ Sir Alexander Milne to Sir John Pakington, 28 March 1858, in Ibid., 684.

Ethnic, Religious, and Racial Tensions in Midcentury Halifax

The growth in employment opportunities in North America during this period also fueled significant increases in immigration. The increasing presence by those whom existing residents deemed to be “outsiders” frequently led to outbursts of reactionary nativism. Halifax, like many cities in British North America and the United States, had experienced a population boom during the mid-nineteenth century, with its 1841 population of almost 15,000 residents essentially doubling to 29,582 by 1871.¹³⁴ Much of this rapid growth was fueled by immigration, and many of those arriving during this period came from the British Isles, particularly Ireland. During the Potato Famine, for example, 12,200 Irish migrants landed in Halifax during May and June of 1847 alone.¹³⁵ While some of these migrants and those that followed them during the continued famine and abortive nationalist rebellion of 1848 later moved on to other locales, as many as 90% ended up settling in or around Halifax.¹³⁶

The mid-nineteenth century was a period of heightened tensions between Irish-Catholic settlers and more-established Protestant populations in North America, and Halifax was no exception to this pattern of ethno-religious antagonism.

¹³⁴ Susan Buggey, “Building Halifax: 1841-1871,” *Acadiensis* 10, no. 1 (1980): 90, <http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/Acadiensis/article/view/11541> (accessed 29 November 2012); Canada Department of Agriculture, *Census of Canada, 1870-71 = Recensement du Canada, 1870-71* (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1873), 428, http://eco.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.9_08056. (accessed 20 November 2012).

¹³⁵ A. J. B. Johnston, “Nativism in Nova Scotia: Anti-Irish Ideology in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century British Colony,” in *The Irish in Atlantic Canada: 1780-1900*, ed. Thomas P. Power (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1991), 26.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

Many Protestant residents at this time believed arriving Irish-Catholic immigrants to be inept and idle drunkards who were unindustrious pawns of the Roman papacy. Because of this belief, many settled Haligonians felt that the Irish-Catholic influx constituted a danger to the economic and moral well-being of Halifax and the colony of Nova Scotia as a whole. The perception of an Irish-Catholic onslaught was fueled by the fact that it was borne out by demographic realities. Between 1837 and 1851, the percentage of Catholics in Halifax rose from 35% to 42%, and by 1871 39.4% of the residents of Halifax were ethnically Irish. These proportions would remain more or less consistent throughout the Civil War era and into Confederation.¹³⁷ Also helping to fan the flames of nativism was the fact that, as Terrence Punch points out, the vast majority of those Irish migrants arriving were Catholic. "Protestant Irish in the Nova Scotia capital," Punch observes, "were not numerous and did not stand out as a distinct class in the community."¹³⁸

Attitudes toward arriving Irish-Catholic immigrants in Halifax were also likely influenced by concerns within the Anglican Church about Tractarianism during this time. Also known as the Oxford Movement, Tractarianism was an Anglican reform movement that advocated the restoration of many Catholic

¹³⁷ Scott See, "Variations on a Borderlands Theme: Nativism and Collective Violence in Northeastern North America in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," in *New England and the Maritimes Provinces: Connections and Comparisons*, ed. Stephen J. Hornsby and John G. Reid (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 127, ezproxy.library.dal.ca (accessed November 29, 2012); Canada Department of Agriculture, *Census of Canada, 1870-71 = Recensement du Canada, 1870-71*, 234-237, 326-327.

¹³⁸ Terrence M. Punch, "Anti-Irish Prejudice in Nineteenth Century Nova Scotia: The Literary and Statistical Evidence," in *The Irish in Atlantic Canada*, 17.

traditions within the Anglican church, including, among other things, a renewed emphasis on the Eucharist and acknowledgement of the authority of the Roman Catholic church. A number of Anglicans saw the movement's support for closer ties to the Catholic church as a dangerous regression toward a backward and authoritarian religious system. Additionally, some Anglicans had reason to fear that if Anglican authority did in fact derive from Rome, the Church of England might face disestablishment and defunding by the British government.¹³⁹ Thus, when Hibbert Binney, known for his advocacy of Tractarianism, was named Bishop of Nova Scotia in 1851, tensions rose among Anglicans in Halifax. Several parishes within Nova Scotia and Halifax sparred with Binney over issues relating to the bishop's authority over local churches in the colony. Among these churches was St. Paul's, the oldest church in Nova Scotia and the see of the Nova Scotian Anglican Church. Many prominent Halifax citizens attended services there, including the Almons.¹⁴⁰ Eventually, in October 1864 Binney opted to make St. Luke's church the colony's diocesan cathedral instead, thereby distancing himself from one of his more uncompromising congregations. Though attitudes toward Binney would improve in

¹³⁹ Concerns about loss of financing were not baseless during this time. In 1850, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel stopped funding the Nova Scotian Anglican Church following a decision to shift money toward missions in Africa and India instead: V. Glen Kent, "Binney, Hibbert," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=5372 (accessed 4 December 2012); "Oxford movement," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/436527/Oxford-movement> (accessed 4 December 2012).

¹⁴⁰ Kent, "Binney, Hibbert"; Halifax *Church Work*, 1 August 1920.

later years, at midcentury anxiety within the Anglican church in Halifax was pronounced.¹⁴¹

Within the charged racial and ethnic atmosphere that characterized this period, many of Halifax's Protestant residents responded to their eroding majority status with reactionary nativism that targeted Irish-Catholic residents. Such heated rhetoric often found traction in the realm of public discourse in the colony at this time, as is evinced by the example of Thomas Chandler Haliburton, the famous Nova Scotian writer. Haliburton frequently espoused nativist sentiments in his writings and conversations, making him one of the colony's more outspoken opponents of Irish-Catholic immigration. In 1851, for example, Haliburton proclaimed in his book, *Rule and Misrule of the English in North America*, that "Romanism" was attempting to "break down . . . civil power, reduce all ranks to a common level, and gradually weaken any constitutional connection between the several governments and Protestantism." The purpose of this plot, he said, was a prelude to an attempt to "overthrow [Protestant governments] in succession, or perhaps overwhelm them altogether."¹⁴²

Joseph Howe, who by mid-century was well-established politically and socially, also frequently targeted Irish-Catholics in his writing and public addresses. Unlike Haliburton, however, Howe's presence in the nativist camp was unusual

¹⁴¹ Kent, "Binney, Hibbert."

¹⁴² Thomas Chandler Haliburton, *Rule and Misrule of the English in North America* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1851), 354, <http://archive.org/details/rulemisruleofeng02hali> (accessed 29 November 2012).

given the fact that he had once served as head of the Charitable Irish Society between 1836 and 1838. Howe's membership in the society was not based on his ethnicity (he was fully English) or his religious convictions (he was and remained "militantly Protestant") but rather his avowed pro-Irish sympathies at the time.¹⁴³ Many Irish likely supported Howe early on because the rising Liberal star and newspaperman seemed to provide their community with a key ally in the public arena. This support quickly eroded, though, when Howe refused to support the movement to repeal the 1801 Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland.¹⁴⁴

Due to this lack of support on what many in the Irish community regarded as a key issue, most of the Irish electorate in the colony began to vote for the Conservative party instead. This shift ultimately embittered Howe and led to his vocal opposition of what he believed was an Irish-Catholic conspiracy at work in Nova Scotia.¹⁴⁵ Howe's political ally, William Young, agreed, lobbing accusations of a Catholic conspiracy during an address given before the colonial legislature:

What have we seen? The whole Catholic body, as one man, forsake the friends of a life time [sic], and prepare to walk *en masse* across the floor of this House, and coalesce with the Conservatives, their avowed political opponents, to defeat an administration, which we were told by a leading member of the Roman Catholic body, up to the close of the last session, retained their confidence. It is undeniable then, that a mysterious and powerful agency has affected this change . . ."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Herbert L. Stewart, *The Irish in Nova Scotia: Annals of the Charitable Irish Society of Halifax (1786-1836)* (Kentville, Nova Scotia: Kentville Publishing, 1949), 154, 157; Beck, *Joseph Howe*, vol. 1, *Conservative Reformer*, 305.

¹⁴⁴ Stewart, *The Irish in Nova Scotia*, 161.

¹⁴⁵ Joseph Howe, "To the People of Nova Scotia," 2 March 1857, microfiche, Killam Library, Dalhousie University.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

This shift in political allegiances was not the only factor that fueled the alienation of Howe from Halifax's Irish-Catholic electorate. The Gourlay Shanty Riot of May 26th, 1856, for example, was in many ways a breaking point in Howe's relationship with the Irish-Catholic community. The "riot," as it was called, was the result of angry Irish-Catholic railroad workers, then in the process of laying a new rail line between Halifax and Truro, violently retaliating to taunts they had received from fellow Protestant workers during a celebration of Corpus Christi Day. No one was killed in the melee, but the news of nearly 100 Irish-Catholics attacking a Protestant working family's camp created a sensation throughout the colony. Howe, whose tenure as commissioner for the colony's railroads was already marked by his illegal recruiting trip to New York, responded to this incident by claiming that Irish disloyalty was the key issue at play in the incident. In the press, Howe then went on to accuse Irish-Catholics of everything from fomenting "the dismemberment of this Empire" to undermining the war in Crimea.¹⁴⁷ Tensions continued into the following year as well. In early January 1857, a brawl erupted between Scottish and Irish railroad workers near St. Croix on the Halifax-Winsor rail line, and later that November Grand Lake in Halifax County was the site of another "disturbance" involving Orangemen and Catholics from the area.¹⁴⁸

The Halifax area's black population, a more-established group, also faced discrimination during this period. In examining the place of blacks in nineteenth-

¹⁴⁷ See, "Variations on a Borderlands Theme," 137-138; Beck, *Joseph Howe*, vol. 2, *The Briton Becomes Canadian*, 108-114.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

century Nova Scotia, David Sutherland has noted that “apart from the colony’s Mi’kmaq population, blacks ranked as the most marginalised of all Nova Scotian communities.”¹⁴⁹ Blacks in the Halifax area comprised a small but noticeable minority at midcentury, accounting for 3.0% of Halifax County’s population at the time of the 1871 census.¹⁵⁰ A sizable portion of this population resided in the communities of Preston and Hammonds Plains, with another smaller settlement known as Africville situated at the northern end of the Halifax Peninsula.¹⁵¹ The majority of these residents were “refugees” of the War of 1812 and their descendants. Many former slaves, hailing predominantly from the Chesapeake Bay and Georgia sea island regions, had been freed by British wartime emancipation measures and had been subsequently resettled in Nova Scotia after the war.¹⁵² While slavery had been abolished within the British Empire in 1833, due to the nature of the franchise in Nova Scotia (particularly property requirements) many blacks were unable to vote until the 1850s when the franchise was broadened to include all adult males. This, David Sutherland observes, had the ironic

¹⁴⁹ David A. Sutherland, “Race Relations in Halifax, Nova Scotia During the Mid-Victorian Quest for Reform,” *The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada* 7, no. 1(1996): 36, <http://www.erudit.org.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/revue/jcha/1996/v7/n1/031101ar.html?lang=en> (accessed 29 November 2012).

¹⁵⁰ Canada Department of Agriculture, *Census of Canada, 1870-71 = Recensement du Canada, 1870-71*, 326-327.

¹⁵¹ Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow*, 61.

¹⁵² Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2006), 30-40.

consequence of further marginalizing black interests given the black population's already small share of the electorate.¹⁵³

Though many within Halifax supported American abolitionists – as interest in an 1853 stopover by Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, seems to attest – even more within Nova Scotia's press and community were openly antagonistic toward the colony's black population.¹⁵⁴ Thomas Chandler Haliburton, for example, openly disdained the colony's blacks to an even greater extent than he did the region's Irish-Catholics. Blacks, he said, were better suited for a life of slavery and were in fact incapable of ever rising to the rank of "gentlemen." Haliburton cited similar American attitudes toward blacks as proof that his own attitudes toward them were neither "unnatural or unjustifiable, but . . . inevitable."¹⁵⁵ Samuel Ringgold Ward, a former escaped slave and outspoken abolitionist, concluded that it was "next to impossible to find a more malignant enemy to the Negro" than Haliburton.¹⁵⁶ Racial attitudes like those espoused by Haliburton fit a general pattern of prejudice in public rhetoric at the time, as many within the white community perceived blacks as lazy and inherently poor.¹⁵⁷ In 1847, one letter to the editor that appeared in the *Novascotian* declared that blacks

¹⁵³ Sutherland, "Race Relations in Halifax, Nova Scotia During the Mid-Victorian Quest for Reform," 48.

¹⁵⁴ Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 2 April 1853.

¹⁵⁵ Samuel Ringgold Ward, *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro: His Anti-Slavery Labors in the United States, Canada, & England* (1855; reprint, Chicago: Johnson Publishing, 1970), 180.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Sutherland, "Race Relations in Halifax, Nova Scotia During the Mid-Victorian Quest for Reform," 41-42.

were perpetual charity cases, calling them a “constant tax on the man who pays all taxes.”¹⁵⁸

On several occasions racial tensions rose beyond vocalized epithets and broad racial theorizations. On July 29th, 1847, a riot broke out during a provincial election that pitted Irish-Catholic supporters of the Liberal Party against outnumbered black supporters of the Conservatives. Though the fray lasted nearly two hours, no one was reportedly killed in the incident.¹⁵⁹ Seven years later another incident, while not reaching the level of violence, illustrated similar racial tensions at play when black community organizations in Halifax found themselves conspicuously excluded from an industrial exhibition being hosted by the city.¹⁶⁰ The outbreak of the Civil War in the United States helped to prompt additional racist dialogue in Halifax. In October 1861, the Victoria Rifles, a Halifax-based militia composed entirely of black volunteers, were verbally harassed at a provincial rifle match by a sergeant from the all-white Chebucto Greys militia. The incident prompted the white commander of the Victoria Rifles to resign in protest when provincial authorities proved unwilling to punish the offending sergeant. This incident is also notable because the Chebucto Greys’ honorary roll included many prominent Haligonians, like John William Ritchie, Myles Bather Almon, Alexander Keith, Jr. (nephew of the famous brewer), and Benjamin Wier (a successful

¹⁵⁸ *Novascotian*, 30 August 1847.

¹⁵⁹ *Halifax Acadian Recorder*, 31 July 1847; *Halifax Morning Sun*, 30 July 1847.

¹⁶⁰ Sutherland, “Race Relations in Halifax, Nova Scotia During the Mid-Victorian Quest for Reform,” 53.

merchant in the city).¹⁶¹ Of note is the fact that by the end of the Civil War in April 1865, three of these individuals – Ritchie, Keith, and Wier – would all be well-known within the city of Halifax and to American authorities as prominent Confederate sympathizers.

Dr. Almon and Halifax During the Early U.S. Civil War

When news of the first shots of the Civil War reached Nova Scotia via telegraph on April 13th, 1861, few in Halifax, including Dr. William Johnston Almon, appear to have openly supported the Confederate cause, and, many, in fact, offered expressions of sympathy upon learning of the outbreak of hostilities between the states. Joseph Howe, the premier of Nova Scotia at the time, declared to Nova Scotia's colonial legislature that the attack on Fort Sumter was "injurious to the interests of the civilized world."¹⁶² The legislature went on to pass a resolution that same day declaring the colonial leadership's sadness that "those who speak their language and share their civilization should be shedding each other's blood."¹⁶³ Such language of kinship and fratricide suggest a spirit of commonality that many British North Americans appear to have felt toward their American neighbours throughout the Civil War. The notion of kinship, in fact, appears to have been a powerful concept when it came to forming opinions about the U.S. conflict. In 1864, for example, Halifax's *Acadian Recorder* decried British assistance to the South as

¹⁶¹ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 64-65.

¹⁶² Halifax *Morning Sun*, 15 April 1861.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

“mercenary aid to a fratricidal war . . .,” and Robin Winks, in his analysis a century later, noted many British North Americans felt that any imperial embroilment in the American conflict would only further the scale of the current fratricide.¹⁶⁴

Following the outbreak of war, many British North Americans' involvement in the conflict became much more personal as thousands moved south to take up arms in the conflict. For many of the estimated 40,000 to 50,000 British North Americans who took part in the conflict,* enlistment came about due to a variety of motives and circumstances. Some British North Americans who were already in the states found themselves pressured or coerced into enlisting.¹⁶⁵ Others, as the war dragged on, volunteered because of enlistment bonuses advertised by traveling American crimps whose goal was to replenish the Northern army's depleted ranks.¹⁶⁶ Others, however, enlisted for more adventurous reasons. While the Crimean War likely proved too distant for many adventure-seekers at midcentury, the American Civil War presented a much more accessible opportunity to participate in a large conflict. The stakes of the conflict were also compelling since the future of the United States and likely the continent appeared to hinge on the war's outcome.¹⁶⁷ Proximity and accessibility remained driving factors with regards to which side prospective enlistees volunteered. The South, despite whatever

¹⁶⁴ Halifax *Acadian Recorder*, 27 August 1864; Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 96-97.

* See Chapter One for more on the origins of this figure.

¹⁶⁵ Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 111-113.

¹⁶⁶ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 97; Fingard, *Jack in Port*, 97; Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 192-200.

¹⁶⁷ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 108.

positive attributes British North Americans might have ascribed to it, was more distant and subject to an ever-tightening naval blockade. Matters of convenience, then, largely meant that most British enlistees would serve with the North.¹⁶⁸

While opinion of friends and family in British North America was likely influenced by individuals' enlistments in the Union army, the mass enlistment of another group in America – Irish-Catholic members of the Fenian Brotherhood – made many in British North America uneasy. Such tensions with Irish-Catholics in the American military were hardly new. In 1860, for example, Michael Corcoran, the commander of the all-Irish 69th of New York, had refused to march his regiment in a torch-light parade in New York City during a visit by the Prince of Wales.¹⁶⁹ What many British North Americans found troubling a year later was the avowed purpose of many of the Irish enlistees in the Union army: usage of the American conflict as training for an eventual attack on British North America and uprising in Ireland. In the early months of the war, Sir Edward Archibald, the British consul for New York, notified the Foreign Office in London about the threat posed by the considerable Fenian enlistments. Three regiments in New York were filled with openly Fenian members, and one of the most prominent brigades in the Union's Army of the Potomac, known as the "Irish Brigade," was led by Michael Corcoran and Thomas Meagher, the latter of whom was a revolutionary who had escaped from a penal colony in Tasmania.¹⁷⁰ The American government's general unwillingness to act

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 110.

¹⁶⁹ Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 117.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 116-117.

against the Fenian threat, both during and after the war, led many in British North America to believe that the American government tacitly supported the Fenian cause.¹⁷¹ Given the sizable Irish minority in Halifax, such concerns likely played a role in how residents viewed the American conflict.

Another dimension to the Civil War – the abolition of slavery – likely had little influence over how most Haligonians viewed the conflict despite the fact that it eventually became the war’s central and defining issue. The Union government’s initial hesitance to declare a war of abolition coupled with the limited nature of Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation produced cynical responses from many foreign observers about the sincerity of the North’s war aims.¹⁷² Halifax’s own environment of anti-black discrimination during this period likely limited the extent to which shifts in the North’s wartime aims influenced opinion within the city. During the summer of 1865, for example, a black congregation’s church in Dartmouth was burned by arsonists.¹⁷³ The following year, the city was the site of a trial in which two men were convicted of murdering an exploitive sea captain. Of the two men, one – a black Catholic – was sentenced to death while the ringleader – a white Baptist – was sentenced to life in prison.¹⁷⁴ Much like in the northern United States at this time, blacks’ freedom from slavery did not necessarily entail an egalitarian mindset on the part of their white compatriots, and while many in British North America might have espoused abolitionist rhetoric, few blacks experienced

¹⁷¹ Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction*, 47.

¹⁷² Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 317-318.

¹⁷³ *Halifax Citizen*, 22 July 1865.

¹⁷⁴ Fingard, *Jack in Port*, 167-168.

substantive difference in their treatment in British North America as compared with the United States. Lincoln's change in war aims might have helped forestall intervention by the British government, but his actions were significantly less successful in effecting changes in opinion among Nova Scotian residents.

For many British North Americans, of more immediate concern than the war's racial and ethnic dimensions were the war's material consequences. Though the war itself was being fought hundreds of miles away, the American conflict was nonetheless of immense economic importance for residents of the Maritimes. Following the outbreak of war, Nova Scotia absorbed a brief but marked decline in trade with the North, its leading trading partner. Nova Scotia's economy quickly rebounded, though, thanks to increased Northern demand for war materiel and provisions for its armies in the field.¹⁷⁵ During this period, demand for products like Cape Breton coal, various agricultural produce, and the province's rich deposits of gypsum all increased significantly.¹⁷⁶ Nova Scotia's material investment in the conflict also grew significantly because many American merchants, fearing Confederate commerce raiders like the famed *CSS Alabama*, began to register their vessels in Nova Scotia, thereby taking advantage of Great Britain's official neutrality and the protection offered by its Royal Navy.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ "Total Trade of Nova Scotia, 1860-1865," in Overholtzer, "Nova Scotia in the United States' Civil War," 67.

¹⁷⁶ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 36-38.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 39-40; Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea*, 211-212; Craig L. Symonds, *The Civil War at Sea* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2009), 84, <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?sid=b862971d-4d71-4e0a-a39f-e589babe0b60%40sessionmgr112&>

Such close involvement with the Northern wartime economy might then seem to suggest that British North American opinion would have favoured the North. During the early weeks of the Civil War, such pro-Northern partiality was indeed the case. However, several Northern setbacks, coupled with the rise of blockade running (which will be discussed in Chapter Four), proved instrumental in shifting British North American opinion toward the South for most of the remainder of the war. The first important setback was the Union army's decisive defeat at the Battle of First Bull Run in July 1861. Accounts of the rout of the Union army after its first major engagement were widely published in Northern, Southern, and British papers, and many press reports of the battle brought into question the ability of the North to successfully prosecute the war.¹⁷⁸ Particularly influential was the account of the battle printed by William Howard Russell, a correspondent for London's *The Times* who had previously become famous for his war reporting during the Crimean War. Though he arrived too late to witness the actual battle, his account of the Union army's panicked retreat to Washington was widely reprinted in the British press and ultimately resulted in his de facto blacklisting by Secretary of State William H. Seward and other American officials.¹⁷⁹ In describing the consequences of the battle, Greg Marquis called First Bull Run a "propaganda defeat" for the North

vid=1&hid=126&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=nlebk&AN=299595 (accessed 11 July 2013).

¹⁷⁸ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 6.

¹⁷⁹ Halifax *Novascotian*, 2 September 1861; Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 121-122, 138, 229-230.

that “turn[ed] neutral and even pro-Northern opinion [in British North America] toward the Confederacy.”¹⁸⁰

This military fiasco was soon overshadowed by the even more ominous prospect of British military involvement in the Civil War following the Union navy’s seizure of the British mail steamer *Trent* on November 8th, 1861. As provocative as the seizure of the two Confederate emissaries from the vessel was, the tense situation became worse as the incident was drawn out well over a month because the transatlantic cable, which had promised to dramatically reduce communication times, had not yet been repaired after its almost immediate failure a month after its completion in 1858.¹⁸¹ This loss of communication meant that messages between London and Washington had to cross the Atlantic via steamer, a process that turned what might have otherwise been a several day ordeal at most into a weeks-long crisis. In addition to creating a period of extended public outrage, the *Trent* crisis also created a climate of militarization in Halifax. During the crisis, 11,175 British regulars were sent to British North America and most of those soldiers passed through Halifax en route to their deployments farther inland.¹⁸² Those soldiers’ primary support, the colony’s long-neglected militia, was also made a priority by colonial administrators following this incident as the colony’s militia budget was increased and the militia’s rolls were expanded as patriotic British North Americans rushed to join. By May 1863, the militia in Nova Scotia numbered at 37,000, and less

¹⁸⁰ Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow*, 6.

¹⁸¹ Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 39.

¹⁸² Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 82.

than a year later that number had swollen to 46,000 members.¹⁸³ Halifax's obsolete harbour defenses were also targeted for improvement during this time, as new fortifications were constructed, existing ones renovated, and most of the harbour's older smoothbore cannons replaced with rifled pieces instead.¹⁸⁴ Though officials in both governments were briefly on friendlier terms following the aversion of a costly military conflict, large segments in both the American and British populations responded to the incident with bellicose nationalism. Individuals on both sides used the *Trent* Affair as evidence of the backward intransigence of the other, with Americans noting the irony of Britain's newfound concern for neutral rights after the War of 1812 while many British saw the incident as proof that American democracy was inherently "mobocratic" and untrustworthy.¹⁸⁵

To Dr. Almon, who had been born a year after the Treaty of Ghent into a family of Loyalists, these incidents likely only reaffirmed his deep-seated mistrust of the American government. Indeed, many contemporary descriptions of his political attitudes centre on his steadfast support of the British government and his staunch political conservatism. A description of Dr. Almon in his obituary in the *Ottawa Evening Journal* in 1901 noted that he was, "like his father[,] a Loyalist of the eighteenth century; not any kind of modern composite Liberal-Conservative or

¹⁸³ Charles Hastings Doyle to the Duke of Newcastle, 18 February 1864, in "Lieutenant Governor's Correspondence: Despatches from Governors of Nova Scotia to Secretaries of State," 9 July 1862 to 18 September 1865, RG1, vol. 127, NSA; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 32.

¹⁸⁴ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 34.

¹⁸⁵ Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 210-211; Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 194-195.

'lesser breeds without the law,' but a historic Tory with all his instincts alive to resent . . . the approach or concession to reform or democracy – as these things presented themselves to men of his school."¹⁸⁶ Another account from 1896 similarly attested to such political leanings on Almon's part, describing him as "an intense Britisher" and a "conservative of the old school."¹⁸⁷

During the early years of the U.S. Civil War, Dr. Almon was similarly outspoken with regards to his Loyalist-conservative views. In the fall of 1863, a traveling correspondent for the London *Telegraph* described an encounter he had with Almon during a brief stopover in Halifax:

I accompanied an English friend to the boarding house where he habitually stayed; I was introduced to the heartiest and most English-looking doctor I ever met with – a doctor who had a sumptuous engraving of Her Majesty the Queen over the mantle piece in his consulting room; who was a thorough going Conservative; who held the United States, one and all, in a lively hatred, who regaled me with sherry, . . . and gave me a copy of the "Life of Major Andre."¹⁸⁸

Perhaps just as telling as the fact that Dr. Almon freely discussed his pointed political views with new acquaintances is the writer's brief allusion to Almon's lifelong fascination with Major John André, the famed British officer who was captured and executed as a spy by the Americans in 1780 for his role in facilitating the defection of Benedict Arnold. Among the many items that populated Dr. Almon's sizable curio collection at his nearly 30-acre estate of Rosebank, located just outside of Halifax on the Northwest Arm, was a walking cane that was purported to have

¹⁸⁶ Ottawa *Evening Journal*, 20 February 1901.

¹⁸⁷ Dennis, "The Most Exciting Christmas Week," Halifax *Herald*, 23 December 1896.

¹⁸⁸ Halifax *Chronicle*, 14 September 1863, in Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 205.

once been owned by the ill-fated Major.¹⁸⁹ Almon's own Loyalist heritage appears to have similarly fascinated him, as several responses to inquiries about family history from that era can be found in surviving collections of his correspondence.¹⁹⁰

While Almon might have openly reviled the United States and its government, the early years of the Civil War did not see him take on a meaningfully active role in the conflict. One of the first recorded war-related actions that Almon took was his contribution to a relief fund for unemployed textile workers in Lancashire, England in October 1862.¹⁹¹ English textile workers had been particularly hard hit by the sudden constriction of the world cotton supply created by the Union blockade of the South. By early 1862, 27,000 workers in Lancashire, the most prominent textile-producing region in Great Britain, had been laid off, while another 160,000 workers had been reduced to part-time.¹⁹² By that summer, the number of charitable cases in Britain had tripled from the country's pre-Civil War levels.¹⁹³ The plight of these workers was well-covered in the British press, which helped spark a number of charitable initiatives aimed at mitigating the crisis, including the one to which Dr. Almon contributed. Dr. Almon's charitable contribution that targeted the negative consequences created by the Union blockade

¹⁸⁹ Among the other Revolutionary Era items housed at Rosebank were letters written by Benedict Arnold and the Duke of Wellington and a walking stick once owned by Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. John W. Regan, *Sketches and Traditions of the Northwest Arm: Halifax, N.S.* (1908; reprint, Willodale, Ontario: Hounslow Press, 1978), 146-147.

¹⁹⁰ "Almon Family Correspondence," in MG1, vol. 11, NSA.

¹⁹¹ Halifax *Acadian Recorder*, 1 November 1862; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 204.

¹⁹² Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 199.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 273.

represented his first material investment in the American conflict. While his opinion regarding the “cotton famine” in Great Britain is unarticulated in the surviving source material, the fact that the Northern war effort was creating pronounced hardship for British citizens likely did little to enhance Almon’s opinions of Northern wartime policies.

The only other known Civil War-related activity by Dr. Almon from the early years of the conflict was his sponsorship of a poetry contest at King’s College in June 1863. For the contest, students were tasked with writing an ode in both English and Latin that memorialized the recently deceased Confederate general, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, who had died following a friendly fire incident at the Battle of Chancellorsville.¹⁹⁴ Another, apparently separate poem can be found in Dr. Almon’s family scrapbook. While its origins are less clear, the poem is addressed to Dr. Almon and similarly laments the passing of “Stonewall” Jackson, proclaiming, among other things, that “by Right the Southernns attained their glorious triumphs . . .”¹⁹⁵ The North, on the other hand, was portrayed in an especially negative light in the poem:

Prevailing in number, fell Northernns are fighting.
The hunger accursed for gold, and the rock that is flinty
Is driving them on. They sharpen Mars’ weapons
By swelling in madness, disdainful and seek for
Authority, money and gain that is shameful.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Halifax *Church Record*, 22 July 1863.

¹⁹⁵ “Viro summo,” in “Almon Family Scrapbook.”

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

The nature of this contest and the existence of an additional poem on “Stonewall” Jackson from this time are revealing in the fact that they signal a shift on Dr. Almon’s part from simply anti-Northern rhetoric to a decidedly pro-Southern outlook on the conflict. While Almon was still not actively involved in the Confederate war effort at this time, his sympathies at this point had evolved to the verge of enabling him to do so.

In November 1863, a final shift in sympathies occurred when the American Civil War became, in the words of Greg Marquis, “intensely personal” for Dr. William Johnston Almon. On November 13th, Dr. Almon’s eldest son, the 22 year-old William Bruce Almon II, departed Halifax aboard the mail steamer *Alpha*, which was bound for Bermuda.¹⁹⁷ Upon reaching Bermuda, William Bruce intended to seek passage aboard a British blockade-runner for Wilmington, North Carolina, where, having recently completed his medical education at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City, he hoped to enlist in the Confederate medical corps.¹⁹⁸ While the events leading up to this departure remain unclear, including what role Dr. Almon played, if any, in his son’s decision, William Bruce’s departure represented the culmination of a series of transformations that were occurring

¹⁹⁷ C. S. Slayter, “Almon, Senator W. J. & His Descendants,” 1967, in MG 100, vol. 101, no. 45, NSA; Halifax *Citizen*, 14 November 1863; Halifax *Morning Sun*, 13 November 1863; Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow*, 169. For more on the regular route of the steamer *Alpha*, see “Dispatches of the United States Consuls in Halifax,” Killam Library, Dalhousie University; Glen N. Wiche, ed., *Dispatches from Bermuda: The Civil War Letters of Charles Maxwell Allen, United States Consul at Bermuda, 1861-1888* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2008).

¹⁹⁸ Halifax *Citizen*, 14 November 1863; Mackenzie, “The Almons,” 34, in “Almon Family Scrapbook”; “Death of a Confederate Physician,” newspaper clipping, in *Ibid.*

within the Almon family. In addition to Almon's anti-Northern rhetoric transforming into pro-Confederate language, William Bruce's departure signaled a further shift by the Almon family toward active participation in the war. While Dr. Almon had yet to take an active role in the conflict himself, a series of events in the coming weeks would ultimately result in the doctor becoming one of the most recognized Confederate supporters in British North America.

Conclusion

Specific circumstances within Halifax and within the Almon family made Dr. William Johnston Almon's involvement in the American Civil War much more likely. Almon was, like many of his peers in Halifax, descended from American Loyalists who had settled in Halifax following the American Revolution. For Almon, who was raised in such a family environment, attended a school founded by Loyalists, and took an active interest in his Loyalist roots, such lineage appears to have created both a staunchly pro-imperial outlook and a predisposition toward anti-Americanism. The prolonged militarized atmosphere generated by the *Trent* seizure likely validated such beliefs as the prospect of war appeared all too real to residents of Halifax as they watched regiment after regiment of British regulars disembark during the crisis.

The attitudes of the broader Haligonian community were also crucial in shaping the Almon family's Civil War sympathies. High prices and wages – fueled by booming wartime production in the North and blockade-running to the South –

enticed many in Halifax's highly competitive labour market to become materially involved in the conflict. In light of the city's generally anti-Northern disposition throughout the conflict, Halifax's material support for both the North and South suggests that profit was frequently, though not always, a deciding factor in terms of which side an individual was willing to support. Indeed, apart from the colony's emphasis on Loyalist traditions, the British imperial connection, and the region's nascent Canadian nationalism, material factors appear to have oftentimes overruled ideological considerations when it came to wartime sympathies. For instance, even after the war became one of abolition, few opinions in Halifax appear to have changed given the history of black discrimination that marked the region. Similarly, while originally based on political and theological issues, Nova Scotia's tension with its Irish-Catholic population also acquired an immediate, tangible urgency as the threat of Fenian incursions into British North America became more acute as the war neared its end.

Given the generally broad base of anti-Northern sentiment in Halifax, activity by Southern sympathizers was relatively easy to pursue during this period. For members of Halifax's social elite, the ease of such activity was even greater due to familial ties to the colonial leadership. As events in December 1863 and January 1864 would show, Halifax's upper classes possessed a willingness to protect one of their own from legal action, even if that legal action was prosecuting decidedly un-neutral activity. As 1863 drew to a close, Dr. Almon, piqued by Northern provocations and having sent his own son to serve in the Confederate medical corps,

was prepared to take an active role in the American Civil War if given the opportunity.

Chapter Three:

The Mockery of Law: Dr. Almon and the *Chesapeake* Affair,

December 1863-May 1864

With the American conflict “intensely personal” after his son’s departure for the Confederacy,¹⁹⁹ Dr. William Johnston Almon stood poised to take on a significantly more active role in aiding the Confederate cause. The international incident sparked by the hijacking of the American passenger steamer *Chesapeake* in December 1863 provided Dr. Almon with an almost immediate opportunity to become involved. The Union navy’s illegal seizure of the vessel near Halifax, combined with the unlawful arrest of Maritime citizens, provided the intensely pro-British Almon with both the opportunity and incentive to act on behalf of the hijackers. Almon’s open assistance in the escape of one of the *Chesapeake*’s captors would prove to be a launching point for many of the wartime exploits that would add to his Civil War legacy. The *Chesapeake* Affair also provides a revealing snapshot of the nature of public sentiment in Halifax at the time. Dr. Almon could not have acted as he did throughout the crisis without the backing of significant portions of the political and mercantile elite, or of the population as a whole. The willing intervention of both common citizens and members of the upper classes throughout the *Chesapeake* Affair attests to both the breadth and depth of anti-Union and pro-Confederate sympathies that existed in Halifax by that point in the war. Dr. Almon’s ability to escape legal consequences for his actions was not a result of his legal defense or a mishandled prosecution by the Crown, but was

¹⁹⁹ Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow*, 169.

rather, as R. H. MacDonald has contended, a direct result of actions taken by Halifax's upper classes to protect Almon.²⁰⁰

This chapter begins by examining the circumstances surrounding the hijacking of the *Chesapeake* and the subsequent events that unfolded leading up to the vessel's recapture near Halifax. After detailing the *Chesapeake's* recapture by the Union navy in Nova Scotian waters, this chapter moves into an examination of Dr. Almon's assistance in the escape of the *Chesapeake* pirate George Wade along with the legal charges leveled against Dr. Almon afterward. This chapter concludes by situating the *Chesapeake* Affair and Almon's actions in a broader framework by analyzing both the local and diplomatic ramifications of the incident. This chapter contends that because of the Nova Scotian government's inaction, the *Chesapeake* Affair served as a launching point for Dr. William Johnston Almon's support for the Confederacy. Having faced no consequences for his actions, Almon was freed to aggressively and extensively offer personal support for the Confederacy throughout the remainder of the war, helping to make both himself and the city of Halifax strategically important for the Confederacy.

The Hijacking, Pursuit, and Recapture of the *Chesapeake*

At 4:00 in the afternoon on December 5th, 1863, the American steamer *Chesapeake*, commanded by Captain Isaac Willett, left New York Harbor destined for Portland,

²⁰⁰ R. H. MacDonald, "The Second Chesapeake Affair," *Dalhousie Review* 54 (winter 1974-1975): 681.

Maine. Onboard was a cargo of flour, sugar, wine, and other such items valued at between \$80,000 and \$100,000, as well as an additional 22 passengers, many of them late-arriving. Willett, a Brooklyn man, was an experienced seaman by this point in his career, having served for thirty years in the American merchant marine, and by December 1863, he had served as master of the *Chesapeake* for nearly a year and a half.²⁰¹ The *Chesapeake's* usual 36-hour route between New York and Portland had proven to be eventful for Willett and his crew in the past.²⁰² Just five months earlier, Willett had pushed the *Chesapeake* into service during the Northern pursuit of the captured Northern vessels *Caleb Cushing* and *Archer*. The pursuit, which occurred in late June 1863, was a consequence of an audacious Confederate strategy aimed at both damaging Northern shipping and augmenting the South's own fledgling navy. In May 1863, the famous British-built Confederate raider CSS *Florida* had captured the Northern vessel *Clarence* and converted it into commerce raider.²⁰³ Under the command of Lieutenant Charles W. Read, the *Clarence* captured six vessels, including a barque known as the *Tacony*. Read eventually attempted to lose his Northern pursuers by transferring his command to the *Tacony* and burning the *Clarence*. The *Tacony* captured over a dozen more vessels before Lt. Read again

²⁰¹ Testimony of Isaac Willett, [undated], in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 535-536; *Halifax Citizen*, 19 December 1863; Deposition of Isaac Willets [sic] and Daniel Henderson, 22 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 497; Francis I. W. Jones, "Treason and Piracy in Civil War Halifax: The Second Chesapeake Affair Revisited," *The Dalhousie Review* 71, no. 4 (1991): 479, <http://ojs.library.dal.ca/dalhousiereview/article/view/dr714jones/0> (accessed 8 November 2012).

²⁰² Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 141.

²⁰³ Report of Lieutenant J. N. Maffitt, [11] May 1863, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 649.

attempted to lose his pursuers by setting the *Tacony* ablaze and transferring his command to another recently captured vessel, the fishing schooner *Archer*.²⁰⁴

From there, Read's plan became even more ambitious as he took the *Archer* into the harbour of Portland, Maine, where, keeping his vessel's identity a secret, he quietly captured the revenue cutter *Caleb Cushing* as it lay at anchor shortly after midnight on June 27th.²⁰⁵ Equipped with two cannons, the *Caleb Cushing* stood to be a valuable addition to the Confederacy's small fleet of commerce raiders. As Read attempted to take the *Caleb Cushing* out of the city's harbour early that morning, Portland's citizens, alerted by the vessel's sudden departure, organized a pursuit force that included four steamers, including Captain Willett's *Chesapeake*, which had already been preparing to leave port. Carrying soldiers from the 7th Maine Volunteers, along with approximately 50 armed citizens and two cannons from the local arsenal, the *Chesapeake* served as the lead vessel for the Northern pursuit. Having expended most of its small supply of ammunition firing at pursuing vessels, the *Caleb Cushing's* Confederate captors set a fuse to the vessel's powder magazine and abandoned the ship, which exploded and sank soon thereafter. The fishing schooner *Archer*, which had departed Portland before the *Caleb Cushing*, was captured a short while later.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Report of Lieutenant Charles W. Read, 30 July 1863, in *Ibid.*, 654; Report of Lieutenant Charles W. Read, 19 October 1864, in *Ibid.*, 655-656.

²⁰⁵ Report of Lieutenant Charles W. Read, 19 October 19 1864, in *Ibid.*, 656-657.

²⁰⁶ Report of Jediah Jewett, 27 June 1863, in *Ibid.*, 322-325.

Five months later as Captain Willett and his crew left their pier on the North River in New York City, no one appeared to suspect that 17 of the *Chesapeake's* late-arriving passengers soon intended to embroil the vessel and its crew in another Confederate intrigue. In fact, any sort of conspiracy would have seemed particularly unlikely to the *Chesapeake's* crew because all of the vessel's late arriving passengers were citizens of Great Britain or British North America, of whom only one, Henry A. Parr, had spent meaningful amount of time in the South.²⁰⁷

During the early morning hours of December 7th, the prevailing sense of calm and routine aboard the vessel dissipated when Captain Willett was awakened by the *Chesapeake's* first mate, Charles Johnson, who informed Willett that the *Chesapeake's* second engineer, Orin Schaffer, had been shot. Unclear whether he was dealing with simple murder or perhaps something more, Willett went out to investigate. He spotted Schaffer's legs hanging from a gangway, and he went up to investigate when several shots rang out with bullets sending up splinters close to where he stood. Captain Willett attempted to make his way to the *Chesapeake's* wheelhouse, but he was grabbed and confronted at gunpoint by H. A. Parr, who identified himself as a first lieutenant who was seizing the vessel in the name of the Confederacy.²⁰⁸

While the specific origins the plot to seize the *Chesapeake* remain unclear, downturns in the fortunes of the Confederacy on the battlefield and in the

²⁰⁷ Parr, who was born in British North America, had reportedly lived in Tennessee for seven years: James P. Holcombe to Judah P. Benjamin, 1 April 1864, in *Ibid.*, 552.

²⁰⁸ Testimony of Isaac Willett, in *Ibid.*, 536.

diplomatic arena forced many Confederates and their sympathizers to pursue increasingly desperate strategies beginning in 1863. In addition to its costly defeat at Gettysburg, rout at Chattanooga, and loss of control of the Mississippi River with the fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson, the South's military failures had also limited any international willingness to recognize the Confederacy. In the last days of 1862, Confederate President Jefferson Davis captured the prevailing mood of many Southerners when he exhorted his colleagues against expectations of foreign intervention, saying "[P]ut not your trust in princes,' and rest not your hopes in foreign nations. This war is ours; we must fight it out ourselves . . ." ²⁰⁹

Given the South's already precarious supply position, many Confederate agents began to pursue more covert tactics for procuring goods and warships. In Great Britain, Confederate agents headed by their purchasing agent, James Dunwoody Bulloch, worked to have warships secretly constructed in British shipyards.²¹⁰ Construction frequently involved leaving key military-style features absent so as to not alert British authorities or American agents as to the vessel's true purpose. Vessels constructed in this manner would typically, upon departing from

²⁰⁹ The words "put not your trust in princes" are a direct quotation of Psalms 146:3 of the King James Bible: Jefferson Davis, Speech at Jackson, Mississippi, 26 December 1862, in *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, vol. 8, 1862, ed. Lynda Lasswell Crist, Mary Seaton Dix, and Kenneth H. Williams (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 576, 582n.

²¹⁰ Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 143.

Great Britain, proceed to another neutral port or to a mid-ocean rendezvous with another vessel, where the vessel's final outfitting as a warship would take place.²¹¹

Acquiring vessels in such a manner was inherently risky because the extended construction period allowed many opportunities for the vessel's discovery by American agents or by British authorities policing the empire's neutrality.²¹² Due to the risks, some Confederate agents sought instead to acquire new, completed warships by capturing Northern or naval vessels (as had been the case in the *Caleb Cushing* incident) or merchant vessels with the intent of then retrofitting them as a commerce raiders (which the crew of the CSS *Florida* had pursued in their initial capture of the *Clarence*). While the seizure of the *Chesapeake* had not been officially sanctioned by the Confederate government – indeed, Jefferson Davis would eventually have to dispatch a University of Virginia law professor, James P. Holcombe, on a fact-finding mission to determine the legality of the *Chesapeake's*

²¹¹ John Baldwin and Ron Powers, *Last Flag Down: The Epic Journey of the Last Confederate Warship* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2007), 8-9; Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr., *The C.S.S. Florida: Her Building and Operations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965), 32-33; Warren F. Spencer, *The Confederate Navy in Europe* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1983), 46, 51-60, 140-141, 198.

²¹² The vessel *Alexandria*, for example, was seized by British officials while still under construction in April 1863. Other vessels like the *Alabama*, *Georgia*, and *Florida* were able to successfully escape port before seizures could be successfully organized by the British government: Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 222-223, 281, 409-410, 455.

seizure – the intent behind the capture of the *Chesapeake* appears to have been the eventual conversion of the cargo and passenger liner into a commerce raider.²¹³

Shortly after the *Chesapeake's* capture, the ringleader of the hijackers, a 23 year-old English-born Maritime resident by the name of John Clibbon Brain, took command of the steamer and renamed the vessel the *Retribution II*.²¹⁴ The original *Retribution* had been a Confederate privateer that had operated first under the command of Thomas B. Power and later under a Shelburne, Nova Scotia native named Vernon Guyon Locke. Locke, who frequently went by the alias John Parker, was eventually forced to condemn and sell his vessel in Nassau after it had become unseaworthy, but he retained possession of the vessel's letter of marque even after its sale.²¹⁵ How Locke and Brain met remains unclear, though one rumour suggested that Brain was a skipper on the original *Retribution*; however, by the time of the *Chesapeake's* capture, Brain had gained possession of the *Retribution's* letter of marque and Locke was on Grand Manan Island, New Brunswick, awaiting the arrival of the captured steamer.²¹⁶

²¹³ Judah P. Benjamin to James P. Holcombe, 15 February 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 544; William H. Turlington to Geroge Davis, 4 January 1864, in *Ibid.*, 540; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 200.

²¹⁴ John Harley to the Receiver General, 14 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 473; James P. Holcombe to Judah P. Benjamin, 1 April 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 552, Testimony of Isaac Willet, in *Ibid.*, 537; Robin Winks, "The Second Chesapeake Affair," *American Neptune* 19 (1959): 52.

²¹⁵ Judah P. Benjamin to James P. Holcombe, 15 February 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 544.

²¹⁶ John Parker [Vernon G. Locke] to John Clibbon Braine, 2 December 1863, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 541; Halifax *Novascotian*, 21 December 1863; Nathaniel Gunnison to William H. Seward, 14 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 523; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 139

The *Chesapeake* arrived at Seal Cove on Grand Manan on the morning of December 8th, 1863. Several of the vessel's captors went ashore before returning a short while later with Locke, who was using his alias, John Parker. Following his arrival, Locke took command of the *Chesapeake*, which next proceeded north to the vicinity of Saint John, New Brunswick. The purpose of this leg of the journey was unclear to observers at the time, and it has mostly remained so for subsequent scholars. The American consul for Saint John, J. Q. Howard, speculated at the time that the *Chesapeake* was attempting to secure a supply of coal.²¹⁷ Robin Winks, in his analysis, has offered a similar theory, believing that the Saint John trip represented a failed attempt to secure the coal that was needed for the *Chesapeake* take to the high seas.²¹⁸ Indeed, conflicting reports about the *Chesapeake* making contact with several vessels during this time period appears to corroborate this hypothesis. Greg Marquis, though, observed that if that were the purpose of the *Chesapeake's* detour, then it represented a significant failure.²¹⁹ Worse than the *Chesapeake's* apparent inability to secure coal was the significant misstep its captors made when they chose to release most of the vessel's captives in the vicinity of Saint John during the early evening hours of December 9th. All of the *Chesapeake's* passengers and crew, with the exception of two engineers and three firemen, were placed in a rowboat, and deposited offshore in the Bay of Fundy. As the *Chesapeake* proceeded south, presumably to continue its search for coal, the freed captives eventually made landfall at Saint John at 4 a.m. on December 9th where they quickly

²¹⁷ J. Q. Howard to William H. Seward, 9 December 1863, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 515.

²¹⁸ Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 247.

²¹⁹ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 146.

raised the alarm.²²⁰ One of Halifax's preeminent financiers of blockade-runners, Benjamin Wier, later opined that this move represented a "fatal mistake" by the *Chesapeake's* hijackers.²²¹

Due to Saint John's telegraph connection with both Halifax and the United States, pursuit by the Union navy was rapidly organized and provisions were made with British North American authorities to secure the arrest of the *Chesapeake's* captors should the vessel attempt to make landfall at any British North American port. Gideon Welles, the American Secretary of the Navy, ordered at least ten Union naval vessels in pursuit of the *Chesapeake*, though several were unready to take to sea on such short notice. Eventually, though, a small fleet of warships was in pursuit of the *Chesapeake*, including the *Vicksburg*, *Sebago*, and *Grand Gulf* which departed from New York City; the *Ella and Annie*, *Ticonderoga*, and *Cornubia* from Boston; the *Niagara* from Gloucester; and the *Dacotah* from Portsmouth.²²²

Aware of the *Chesapeake's* need for coal, American authorities in the Maritimes scrambled to ensure colonial cooperation with the American pursuit. The Vice Consul in Halifax, a New Hampshire-born Universalist minister by the name of

²²⁰ Testimony of Isaac Willett, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 537.

²²¹ Benjamin Wier to Norman S. Walker, 5 January 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 542.

²²² Gideon Welles to J. B. Montgomery, 9 December 1863, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 515; J. B. Montgomery to Gideon Welles, 9 December 1863, in *Ibid.*; J. B. Montgomery to Gideon Welles, 10 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 517; Gideon Welles to Craven, 10 December 1863, in *Ibid.*; H. Paulding to Gideon Welles, 10 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 518; Gideon Welles to Pearson, 10 December 1863, in *Ibid.*; J. B. Montgomery to Gideon Welles, 11 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 521; A. C. Rhind to Gideon Welles, 11 December 1863, in *Ibid.*; S. H. Stringham to Gideon Welles, 16 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 524.

Nathaniel Gunnison, worked to secure the cooperation of the Nova Scotian government once it became clear that the *Chesapeake* was heading in the direction of Nova Scotia.²²³ Nova Scotia's primary American official, consul Mortimer Melville Jackson, previously a supreme court judge in Wisconsin, was out of the colony at the time after his wife's health had necessitated a brief return to the states.²²⁴ Gunnison had previously filled in for Jackson on such occasions, and in his latest departure Jackson vouched for Gunnison's character, informing Secretary of State William H. Seward that Gunnison was "a most loyal citizen of the United States" and "a gentleman of high character & standing . . ."²²⁵ Concerns over the loyalty of officials in the increasingly pro-Confederate city of Halifax were not baseless. Halifax's previous American consul, a New Englander by the name of Albert Pillsbury, had reportedly become deeply involved in Halifax's blockade-running trade, including the shipment of war materiel to the South.²²⁶

While his whereabouts during the *Chesapeake* crisis remain unclear, consul Mortimer Jackson clearly remained apprised of developments in the navy's hunt for the ship. On December 10th, Jackson telegraphed Gunnison instructing him to keep

²²³ Nathaniel Gunnison, *An Autobiography of the Rev. Nathaniel Gunnison*, 2nd ed., ed. Foster N. Gunnison and Herbert Foster Gunnison (Brooklyn: Herbert Foster Gunnison, 1910), 7, 16, <http://archive.org/details/autobiographyofr12gunn> (accessed December 12, 2012).

²²⁴ Mortimer M. Jackson to Frederick W. Seward, 30 September 1863, in "Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax."

²²⁵ Mortimer M. Jackson to Frederick W. Seward, 27 October 1863, in *Ibid.*; Mortimer M. Jackson to William H. Seward, 10 December 1863, in *Ibid.*

²²⁶ In reporting on Pillsbury's actions, Nathaniel Gunnison opined, "If any one scoundrel deserves hanging, I think Pillsbury [sic] is the man": Nathaniel Gunnison to R. Frothingham, 16 October 1861, in *ORN I*, vol. 6, 353-354.

Secretary of State Seward informed of any developments and telling him to take action to secure the cooperation of Nova Scotian officials in seizing the fleeing vessel.²²⁷ On December 14th, having received reports of the *Chesapeake's* whereabouts along the Nova Scotian coast, Gunnison wrote to Charles Tupper, the colony's provincial secretary, requesting that the Nova Scotian government take steps to detain the *Chesapeake* and arrest its hijackers.²²⁸ Presaging the difficulties that were to plague American officials in the coming weeks, Tupper initially refused to take action, saying the colony's legal experts "do not see upon what grounds, as at present informed, they can legally interfere."²²⁹

In the meantime, as American warships closed in on the Nova Scotian coast and as Gunnison worked to secure official cooperation in Halifax, the *Chesapeake* had left the Bay of Fundy and was in the process of making its way north along Nova Scotia's Atlantic coastline, "prowling around for coal," as the *New York Times* described it.²³⁰ Taking advantage of thick fog, rough seas and their greater knowledge of the colony's waterways, the *Chesapeake's* hijackers sought to secure a supply of coal and lose any Northern pursuit by frequently taking shelter near the

²²⁷ Mortimer. M. Jackson to Nathaniel Gunnison, 10 December 1863, in "Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax."

²²⁸ Affidavit of Nathaniel Gunnison, 14 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 472-473.

²²⁹ Charles Tupper to Nathaniel Gunnison, 14 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 473.

²³⁰ *New York Times*, 14 December 1863, <http://www.nytimes.com/1863/12/14/news/pirate-chesapeake-sea-her-departure-shelburne-ns-saturday-she-prowling-around.html?pagewanted=1> (accessed 31 May 2013).

hundreds of inlets and islands that marked the Nova Scotian coast.²³¹ The *Chesapeake* passed Cape Sable on the south of the Nova Scotian peninsula on December 10th, reaching Shelburne that evening.²³² The next morning, the American consular agent for Shelburne, Cornelius White, reported to Gunnison in Halifax that a vessel identifying itself as the *Jane*, a blockade-runner destined for Bermuda, was anchored 2 miles off shore. With no name or flag showing, White was eventually able to learn from locals that the vessel's skipper, George Parker, was likely Vernon Locke, who, as a native of Shelburne, had likely been recognized by residents of his hometown.²³³ The unknown vessel reportedly attempted to procure coal there before departing for farther up the Nova Scotian coast.²³⁴

By the morning December 17th, the *Chesapeake* was anchored in Sambro Harbour, within mere miles of the entrance to Halifax Harbour. Piecing together the *Chesapeake's* flight up Nova Scotia's Atlantic coast is difficult due to the absence of narratives provided by the vessel's captors, as well as due to the often-conflicting nature of reports generated by American authorities and the Maritime press. What is known is that after leaving Shelburne, the *Chesapeake* continued its trek northward, eventually coming to anchor in the La Have River on December 14th. The *Chesapeake* remained at anchor there for two nights, before departing on the

²³¹ Thomas T. Craven to Gideon Welles, 23 December 1863, in *ORNI*, vol. 2, 534; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 153.

²³² Gideon Welles to Montgomery, 10 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 517; Gideon Welles to Craven, 10 December 1863, in *Ibid.*; Gideon Welles to Pearson, 10 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 518; Gideon Welles to Paulding, 10 December 1863, in *Ibid.*

²³³ Cornelius White to William H. Seward, 15 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 523-524.

²³⁴ I. Washburn to William H. Seward, 11 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 520.

morning of December 16th.²³⁵ During its time at the La Have River, efforts to procure coal were once again pursued, with significant quantities of the *Chesapeake's* cargo being offloaded and sold to locals, including 25 bales of cotton, 300 barrels of wine, and a church bell originally destined for a congregation in Maine.²³⁶ The captors hoped that the money from these sales would help secure the *Chesapeake's* desperately needed supply of coal and finally allow the vessel to make its escape to the open sea.

It was during this period that reports began to circulate that John C. Brain had been nearly arrested by the American Vice Consul for Liverpool, Nova Scotia, Dr. Joseph D. Davis. Having left the *Chesapeake* during the vessel's brief stop at Shelburne, Brain had been proceeding overland toward Halifax, possibly in possession of significant quantities of money.²³⁷ While details of his encounter with Davis are sparse, Brain reportedly showed the vice consul his naval commission, letter of marque, and alleged instructions to seize the *Chesapeake*. Davis was reportedly unable to make an arrest because, as Nathaniel Gunnison tersely noted, "citizens interfered."²³⁸ While the nature of this alleged interference remains

²³⁵ John Harley to James McNab, 16 December 1863, in "Colonial Office and Predecessors: Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Original Correspondence," October-December 1863, CO 217/233, TNA; Affidavit of Patrick Connors, 6 January 1864, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 556.

²³⁶ John Harley to the Receiver General, 18 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 473; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 154.

²³⁷ Halifax *Provincial Wesleyan*, 23 December 1863; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 155.

²³⁸ Joseph D. Davis to Nathaniel Gunnison, 14 December 1864, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 471-472; Nathaniel Gunnison to William H. Seward, 14 December 1863, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 523.

unknown, other reports said to have later been made by Brain appear to corroborate this account.²³⁹

After over a week of vainly searching the Maritimes for coal, the captors of the *Chesapeake* finally found success. Just before 4 a.m. on December 17th, the *Investigator*, a Halifax-based collier, steamed into Sambro Harbour for a rendezvous with the fugitive *Chesapeake*. The night before, an unnamed *Chesapeake* hijacker – possibly Brain, possibly Locke – had arrived in Halifax and solicited for coal among the city’s merchants. The individual eventually succeeded when he made contact with John E. Holt, a local captain. Holt, however, does not appear to have been an accidental customer. According to port records, Benjamin Wier, one of Halifax’s most prominent financiers of blockade-runners, was the owner of the *Investigator* and had sold the vessel to Holt that same day.²⁴⁰ While the reasons behind this sale are not readily discernable, Wier was likely motivated at least in part by a desire to keep his involvement in the *Chesapeake*’s flight as discreet as possible. With Holt likely acting as his proxy, Wier agreed to ship coal to the *Chesapeake* at Sambro and two unemployed dockside brothers, William and Alexander Henry, agreed to sign on

²³⁹ While Gunnison never cast aspersions over the conduct of the doctor, Davis later demanded more than the \$50 he was initially given in compensation for his actions and testimony with regards to the case, arguing that he had been “instrumental to the recapture of the *Chesapeake*.” Davis eventually received a total of \$450 in compensation from the United States government. See: Nathaniel Gunnison to Charles Tupper, 10 December 1863, in “Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax”; Mortimer Jackson to Frederick W. Seward, 19 January 1864, in *Ibid.*; Halifax *Novascotian*, 28 December 1863; Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow*, 326 n. 54.

²⁴⁰ Mortimer Jackson to Frederick W. Seward, 20 August 1864, in “Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax”; “Shipping Registers, Halifax,” miscellaneous “S”, vol. 52C, no. 37,587, NSA.

with Holt for what appeared to be a lucrative, if brief, stint of employment.²⁴¹ Shortly after the *Investigator's* arrival at Sambro, contact was made with the *Chesapeake*, which lay conspicuously anchored 300 yards from shore, and the lengthy process of coaling commenced soon thereafter.²⁴²

Around 7:20 that morning, a third unexpected vessel was spotted entering Sambro Harbour: the USS *Ella and Annie*. The American warship, captained by Lieutenant J. F. Nickels, had been scouring the Nova Scotian coast looking for the *Chesapeake* since its departure from Boston a week earlier. Rough weather and low fuel had briefly forced the vessel back in Halifax on the 15th, but Lieutenant Nickels quickly took the *Ella and Annie* back to sea following receipt of word that the *Chesapeake* was anchored on the La Have River. Finding the *Chesapeake* gone upon their arrival, Nickels had proceeded to nearby Lunenburg, where he learned of the *Chesapeake's* arrival at Sambro. Nickels arrived at the entrance to Sambro Harbour that night, but his entry was delayed as he attempted to procure a pilot familiar with the harbour. Finally securing one the following morning, he entered the harbour and quickly spotted the *Chesapeake* and *Investigator* at anchor. Nickels moved quickly to take the ship, having heard rumours (likely dating to the vessel's pursuit of the *Caleb Cushing*) that the ship had been outfitted with a pair of cannons. By the

²⁴¹ Affidavit of John E. Holt, 4 January 1864, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 554; Affidavit of William Henry and Alexander Henry, 4 January 1864, in *Ibid.*, 552.

²⁴² Affidavit of William Henry and Alexander Henry, 4 January 1864, in *Ibid.*, 553.

time members of the *Ella and Annie* boarded the *Chesapeake* at 7:50, most of the *Chesapeake's* captors had already fled to shore.²⁴³

About an hour after Nickel's crew boarded the *Chesapeake*, another naval party proceeded to board the *Investigator* as well. The boarding party, under orders from their commanding officer, immediately began searching the vessel. Captain Holt, outraged that his British-owned vessel was being summarily searched by a foreign vessel in British waters, demanded to know the authority by which the search of his vessel had been given. The commander of the boarding party, in words that would soon be widely reprinted in the local press, reportedly responded by gesturing to his pistol and saying, "This is my authority." The Union officer then warned Holt to keep quiet unless he wanted to be arrested and taken back to Boston as a prisoner.²⁴⁴

The search of the *Chesapeake* and the *Investigator* resulted in the arrest of three men. Both of the Henry brothers, who had been recruited the night before in Halifax, were taken as prisoners, as was a New Brunswick man by the name of George Wade who had been found sleeping below decks on the *Investigator*.²⁴⁵

While the Henry brothers' ties to the *Chesapeake* hijackers were extremely weak, Wade's connection to the affair was much more significant: he had been one of the

²⁴³ Report of J. F. Nickels, 22 December 1863, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 527.

²⁴⁴ Halifax *Novascotian*, 28 December 1863; Affidavit of John E. Holt, 4 January 1864, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 554-555.

²⁴⁵ Other rumours from the period suggest that Wade might have been hungover: Hoy, *Canadians in the Civil War*, 188; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 162; Halifax *British Colonist*, 22 December 1863; Affidavit of William Henry and Alexander Henry, 4 January 1864, in *Ibid.*, 552-554.

Chesapeake's original captors.²⁴⁶ All three of the arrested men were taken aboard the *Ella and Annie* and Nickels ordered a prize crew aboard the *Chesapeake* in preparation for both vessels' departure for Boston now that the hunt for the fugitive vessel was over.²⁴⁷

Dr. Almon and the Queen's Wharf Incident

Around 10 o'clock that morning, as the *Ella and Annie* was making preparations to leave for Boston with the *Chesapeake*, another Union warship, the USS *Dacotah*, arrived at Sambro Harbour. The *Dacotah*, under the command of A. G. Clary, had been delayed in its search by poor weather and low fuel and had only reached Shelburne two days earlier. Quickly making up ground, the *Dacotah* had reached the La Have River on the evening of the 17th and had quickly pushed off again for an aggressive search of the bays and inlets of the Nova Scotia coast at daylight the following morning. Upon spotting the vessels at Sambro, Commander Clary made contact with Lieutenant Nickels and learned of Nickels' illegal arrests and seizure as well as his plans for returning the vessel to Boston. Appearing to sense the provocative nature of Nickels' actions, Clary ordered the *Ella and Annie* and

²⁴⁶ Arrest warrant, 17 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 474-475; Halifax *Novascotian*, 28 December 1863.

²⁴⁷ Report of J. F. Nickels, 22 December 1863, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 527.

Chesapeake to proceed at once with the *Dacotah* to Halifax in order to turn the vessel over to Nova Scotian authorities and legitimize its seizure.²⁴⁸

The three vessels entered Halifax Harbour that afternoon, and Clary made contact with Vice Consul Gunnison regarding the *Chesapeake's* retaking.²⁴⁹ Given the arrival of the three vessels, along with the speculation surrounding the *Chesapeake's* flight, not to mention the vessels' lack of communication with anxious colonial authorities on shore, the acting Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia, Major General Charles Hastings Doyle, impatiently messaged Clary inquiring as to the purpose of his visit as well as "the circumstances under which the steamship *Chesapeake* has been this day taken out of the harbor of Sambro," which, he testily noted, was "a Nova Scotian port."²⁵⁰ Doyle, a career soldier and a veteran of the Crimean War, had assumed command of the British army forces in eastern British North America and Bermuda in late 1861. In 1862, Doyle had been called upon by imperial officials to fill the temporarily vacant post of Lieutenant Governor for Nova Scotia until another appointment could be made.²⁵¹ Doyle's message to Clary, sent through the Provincial Secretary, Charles Tupper, clearly indicated his distaste for the Americans' breach of port protocol by not communicating with shore. Doyle

²⁴⁸ A. G. Clary to George F. Pearson, 18 December 1863, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 527; J. F. Nickels to S. H. Stringham, 22 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 22 December 1863.

²⁴⁹ Charles Hastings Doyle to the Duke of Newcastle, 23 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 467; J. F. Nickels to S. H. Stringham, 22 December 1863, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 527; A. G. Clary to George F. Pearson, 18 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 529.

²⁵⁰ Charles Tupper to commanding officers of United States ship, 17 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 475.

²⁵¹ Ronald H. McDonald, "Doyle, Sir Charles Hastings," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=5490 (accessed 16 February 2013).

also made a point of demonstrating to the Union commanders that he and other Nova Scotian authorities were already at least partially aware of the circumstances surrounding the *Chesapeake's* recapture.

Commander Clary, accompanied by Vice Consul Gunnison, met with Charles Tupper that evening shortly after Doyle's message had gone out. Clary explained that Nickels had spotted an American vessel in Sambro Harbour flying a flag of distress and had moved in to assist the vessel, only learning upon reaching the vessel that it was the *Chesapeake*.²⁵² This account reveals a highly favourable recasting of that morning's events by Clary and Gunnison. In his own subsequent report to American officials, Nickels specifically noted his concern about approaching the *Chesapeake* if it proved to be carrying cannons, something he claimed he had heard prior to reaching Sambro. Additionally, the *Chesapeake's* flag of distress was not hoisted by the vessel's remaining captives until after the ship had been abandoned following the *Ella and Annie's* appearance.²⁵³ Much more importantly, Clary made no mention to Tupper about the arrests of either Wade or the Henry brothers.

Tupper ordered that the *Chesapeake* could not leave Halifax Harbour until the circumstances surrounding the *Chesapeake's* seizure had been further

²⁵² A. G. Clary to Charles Tupper, 17 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 475-476; A. G. Clary to George F. Pearson, 18 December 1863, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 529.

²⁵³ J. F. Nickels to S. H. Stringham, 22 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 527; Affidavit of Patrick Conners, 6 January 1864, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 556-557.

investigated.²⁵⁴ In the meantime, American warships continued to arrive in Halifax from their pursuit, and within days the *Niagara*, *Acacia*, and *Cornubia* all sat at anchor in front of Halifax.²⁵⁵ The presence of five American warships in the harbour raised tensions in Halifax more than they otherwise would have; no vessels from the Royal Navy were in port at that time since the North Atlantic Squadron had already made its annual relocation south to Bermuda and the Caribbean. Admiral Sir Alexander Milne, who was then in the process of touring various ports in the West Indies, would not even learn of the *Chesapeake's* seizure until his return to Bermuda on February 8th.²⁵⁶ Left with only a lone revenue cutter and the city's network of shore batteries, the colonial government faced a challenging decision about what action to take if the vessels attempted to leave port. According to Tupper biographer E. M. Saunders, when Lieutenant Governor Doyle asked Tupper about the possibility of Commander Clary attempting to leave port, Tupper responded by saying, "In that case, you must sink his vessel from the batteries."²⁵⁷ In a subsequent letter written to the British admiralty, Doyle explained his similar convictions,

²⁵⁴ Charles Tupper to A. G. Clary, 18 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 476.

²⁵⁵ Jones, "Treason and Piracy in Civil War Halifax," 485 n7.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 483; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 164; Secretary of the Admiralty to Alexander Milne, 22 January 1864, in "The Papers of Sir Alexander Milne, 1st Bt., Admiral of the Fleet, 1806-1896," MLN/108/2, Caird Archive and Library, NMM; "The Papers of Sir Alexander Milne," MLN/105/3.

²⁵⁷ E. M. Saunders, ed., *The Life and Letters of Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Tupper, Bart., K.C.M.G.*, vol. 1 (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1916), 91.

saying “[H]ad they attempted [to leave], I was prepared . . . to use my best efforts to prevent them.”²⁵⁸

On December 18th, the day after the *Chesapeake’s* arrival in port, two separate incidents made the “*Chesapeake Affair*,” as the local press had begun calling it, even more volatile.²⁵⁹ The first incident involved the fugitive hijackers of the *Chesapeake*. On December 17th, prior to receipt of word about the *Chesapeake’s* recapture at Sambro, Lieutenant Governor Doyle had finally, after repeated petitions by Vice Consul Gunnison, issued an arrest warrant for Brain and the rest of his fellow hijackers.²⁶⁰ The arrest warrant was granted in accordance with the Anglo-American Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842, which made provision for, among other things, criminal extraditions.²⁶¹ Later that day, two city policemen and a county officer proceeded overland to arrest Brain and his companions near Sambro. When they reached the small fishing village, they encountered a man who they believed to be Brain accompanied by eleven other men walking “in a body and . . . fearlessly about the place.” The men were reportedly well-armed and, looking to intimidate the officers, “indulged in the sport of firing a few shots in the air.” Given

²⁵⁸ Charles Hastings Doyle to James Hope, 29 March 1864, in “Lieutenant Governor’s Correspondence.”

²⁵⁹ In the Maritimes, Brain’s seizure of the passenger steamer *Chesapeake* was frequently referred to as the “Second *Chesapeake Affair*”; the implicit “first” affair refers to the HMS *Shannon’s* capture of the USS *Chesapeake* near Boston during the War of 1812. See: Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 22 December 1863, Halifax *Novascotian*, 28 December 1863; Halifax *Evening Reporter*, 12 January 1864.

²⁶⁰ Nathaniel Gunnison to Charles Tupper, 10 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 470; Affidavit of Nathaniel Gunnison, 14 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 472-473; Arrest warrant, 17 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 474-475;

²⁶¹ Arrest warrant, 17 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 474-475; Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow*, 179-180.

the hijackers' numbers, their desperation, and their "defiant air," the three policemen, fearing bloodshed if they attempted to execute their warrant, departed Sambro and returned to Halifax.²⁶²

The second and much more significant incident of that day was the colonial government's discovery of the arrests of George Wade and the two Henry brothers, along with their continued custody aboard the *Ella and Annie* in Halifax Harbour. This discovery came about shortly after the *Investigator* returned to Halifax from Sambro. While few details are known of what followed, Captain John E. Holt apparently solicited legal aid in order to present a sworn statement to Lieutenant Governor Doyle detailing the actions of the Union navy. At some point, contact appears to have been made with Dr. William Johnston Almon, who proceeded to employ his uncle, Attorney General James William Johnston, and later his brother-in-law, John William Ritchie, in his investigation of Holt's claims.²⁶³ How contact with Almon was made remains unknown, though his esteemed reputation, his work with the poor, and staunch anti-Americanism likely made him one of the more approachable members of the colonial elite. What is known is that on the morning of December 18th, three sworn affidavits were presented to Lieutenant Governor

²⁶² Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 19 December 1863; Halifax *Novascotian*, 21 December 1863.

²⁶³ Halifax *Novascotian*, 28 December 1863; Halifax *Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864.

Doyle: one from Holt; one from Daniel Murphy, a member of Holt's crew; and one from Susan Henry, wife of one of the arrested Henry brothers.²⁶⁴

Doyle's response was swift. In a message sent to Commander Clary through Tupper, Doyle refused to permit the departure of any of the American vessels in port "until due investigation has been made into these allegations of the violation of international law."²⁶⁵ In a later communication, Doyle made clear his belief that "a grave infraction of international law [had] been committed . . ."²⁶⁶ Clary, who had already been making preparations to hand the *Chesapeake* over to the Nova Scotian government for adjudication, offered to hand over both Wade and the Henry brothers to the colonial government.²⁶⁷ In the communication that followed, a pair of meetings was arranged for the following day. At one o'clock, George Wade and the Henry brothers were to be received by Nova Scotian authorities on Queen's Wharf on the Halifax waterfront. An hour later the *Chesapeake* was to be received by the revenue schooner *Daring*.²⁶⁸

While the language of indignation was restrained in much of the correspondence between Commander Clary and Nova Scotian government officials, the citizens of Halifax proved to be far less reserved in expressing their outrage over

²⁶⁴ Charles Hastings Doyle to the Duke of Newcastle, 23 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 467; Affidavit of John E. Holt, 18 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 477; Memorial of Susan Henry, [18 December 1863], in *Ibid.*, 476-477; Affidavit of Daniel Murphy, 18 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 478-479.

²⁶⁵ Charles Tupper to A. G. Clary, 18 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 479.

²⁶⁶ Charles Tupper to A. G. Clary, 18 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 480.

²⁶⁷ A. G. Clary to Charles Tupper, 18 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 480.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

the illegal seizure and arrests. Writing under the pseudonym “Fair Play,” one local individual, quite possibly Dr. Almon, published affidavits given by Captain John Holt and two of his crew members in the Halifax press. In a brief preface to his submission, written in the form of a letter to the editor, the writer insinuated that the Union navy was in fact the guilty party, saying, “I . . . leave a discerning public to decide when and where an act of robbery as well as piracy was committed.”²⁶⁹ The editor of the *Morning Chronicle* expressed similar disgust, asserting that Commander Clary appeared to have “illfully [sic] and deliberately concealed the truth and made a statement false and totally inexcusable.”²⁷⁰

The morning of December 19th, Gunnison petitioned Lieutenant Governor Doyle for another arrest warrant, which now included the names of eleven of the *Chesapeake* conspirators. Among those enumerated on the warrant were John C. Brain, Henry A. Parr, and, most importantly, George Wade.²⁷¹ With the prisoners’ release set for one o’clock that afternoon, time was of the essence in securing a warrant for Wade’s arrest. Doyle granted Gunnison the warrant, and Gunnison proceeded to put a copy in the hands of Halifax’s city marshal, Garrett Cotter.²⁷² After Gunnison’s departure, Doyle, sensing both the great interest and growing

²⁶⁹ The author bases this connection on the striking similarities that exist between the language used in the December 28th editorial and language used in a statement given by Dr. Almon before the Halifax Police Court less than two weeks later: *Halifax Novascotian*, 28 December 1863; *Halifax Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864.

²⁷⁰ *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 22 December 1863.

²⁷¹ Requisition by Nathaniel Gunnison, 19 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 482.

²⁷² Warrant, 19 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 482-483; Garrett Cotter to Philip Carteret Hill, 21 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 485-486; *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 12 January 1864.

sense of animosity by many individuals in the city, ordered local soldiers to ensure that only colonial authorities, the American vice consul, and “respectably dressed” citizens be permitted onto Queen’s Wharf.²⁷³

About fifteen minutes before one o’clock, Dr. William Johnston Almon arrived at Queen’s Wharf.²⁷⁴ Almon had been active during the previous two days, having secured his brother-in-law’s legal services to assist him in his investigation of the Union navy’s seizure and arrests at Sambro, but the exact extent of his activity remains unknown. Similarly uncertain is whether Dr. Almon arrived at Queen’s Wharf that day with any plan in mind. Robin Winks suggests he did not.²⁷⁵ Several other scholars, including Francis I. W. Jones, Claire Hoy, and Greg Marquis appear to believe that he did.²⁷⁶ What is known is that upon arriving at Queen’s Wharf, Dr. Almon spotted Constable Lewis Hutt and walked over to talk to him. The 44 year-old Hutt, who had been ordered by Doyle that morning to execute the warrant for Wade’s arrest, possessed what one later report described as a “chequered” history.²⁷⁷ Hutt had at one time sworn loyalty to the United States, having served in the American navy during the U.S.-Mexican War, and he had worked over the following decade as a sailor until his appointment to the local police force in the

²⁷³ Halifax *British Colonist*, 12 January 1864.

²⁷⁴ Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 12 January 1864; Halifax *Novascotian*, 18 January 1864; Halifax *Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864.

²⁷⁵ Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 252.

²⁷⁶ Jones, “Treason and Piracy in Civil War Halifax,” 478-479; Hoy, *Canadians in the Civil War*, 193-197; Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow*, 175.

²⁷⁷ Halifax *Acadian Recorder*, 3 October 1882.

early 1860s.²⁷⁸ Just two days earlier, Hutt had become personally involved in the *Chesapeake* affair: he had been one of the three policemen who had encountered the vessel's armed and defiant hijackers near Sambro.²⁷⁹ In his later description of their brief encounter, Hutt recalled Almon's inquisitive nature, saying "[h]e asked me what I was doing. I made answer, was going to arrest George Wade. He asked me if I had a warrant. I told him 'yes.'" Almon asked to see the warrant, which Hutt showed to him. Almon quickly noticed the signature of Halifax's mayor, P. C. Hill, and remarked that "it was a shame" before leaving again.²⁸⁰

Approximately fifteen minutes later, a boat from the USS *Ella and Annie* arrived at Queen's Wharf. A sizable gathering of officials and onlookers had congregated on the wharf by this time. Among the officials present were American Vice Consul Nathaniel Gunnison, Provincial Secretary Charles Tupper, the colony's Solicitor General, William Alexander Henry, Halifax's sheriff, J. J. Sawyer, and Lieutenant Governor Doyle's aide-de-camp, Captain Clark. Among the crowd of approximately 40 onlookers that had been allowed onto the wharf was Dr. Almon, whose whereabouts after his initial encounter with Hutt have never been fully accounted for.²⁸¹ Constable Hutt had also made his way into the crowd by this

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 19 December 1863; Halifax *Novascotian*, 21 December 1863.

²⁸⁰ Lewis Hutt to Garrett Cotter, 21 December 1863; Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 12 January 1864; Halifax *Novascotian*, 18 January 1864; Halifax Evening Reporter, 19 January 1864.

²⁸¹ One family account suggests that Dr. Almon used this intervening time to make arrangements for Wade's escape. These claims, however, are not corroborated by any other source material: Almon, "William Johnston Almon"; Charles Hastings

point, and, with Wade's arrest warrant in a pocket of his heavy winter coat, he waited for the prisoners' release so that, after two or three minutes had elapsed, he could re-arrest Wade as he tried to leave the wharf. The idea of briefly setting Wade at liberty had originated with Vice Consul Gunnison, likely as a way of distancing the colonial government's custody of Wade from the initial illegal arrest at Sambro.²⁸² Elsewhere in the crowd were Dr. Peleg Wisiwell Smith and Alexander Keith, Jr. Little is known of Dr. Smith both before and after the Civil War, though one account suggests that he later became the sheriff of Digby, Nova Scotia.²⁸³ Keith, on the other hand, was a nephew of the famous Nova Scotian brewer, Alexander Keith, and had a reputation for Confederate support by this point in the war, which was only surpassed by his reputation for stealing from those with whom he had dealings.²⁸⁴ Keith frequently did business with the various blockade-runners who appeared in port, and one of the most famous, a Southerner by the name of John Wilkinson, described Keith's sycophantic interactions with the Southerners whom he encountered: "By dint of a brazen assurance, a most obliging manner, and the lavish

Doyle to the Duke of Newcastle, 23 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 469; *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 12 January 1864; *Halifax Evening Reporter*, 12 January 1864; Charles Hastings Doyle to Lord Lyons, 14 January 1864, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 507; *Halifax Novascotian*, 18 January 1864; *Halifax Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 175; Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 252-253.

²⁸² *Halifax British Colonist*, 22 December 1863; *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 12 January 1864; *Halifax Novascotian*, 18 January 1864.

²⁸³ Almon, "William Johnston Almon."

²⁸⁴ John Wilkinson, *The Narrative of a Blockade Runner* (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1877), 177, <http://archive.org/details/narrativeablock00wilkgoog> (accessed 18 March 2013); Ann Larabee, *The Dynamite Fiend: The Chilling Story of Alexander Keith Jr., Nova Scotian Spy, Con Artist & International Terrorist* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 2005), 23-66.

expenditure of money . . . he ingratiated himself to nearly every southerner who visited Halifax although he was a coarse, ill-bred vulgarian, of no social standing in the community.”²⁸⁵ Keith’s presence on the wharf, then, appears to have had more to do with his connection to his uncle than with any sense of respect that he was accorded by the broader Halifax community.

When the boat from the *Ella and Annie* had docked, a Union officer appeared and came onto the slipway by the wharf, and, after briefly conversing with Nova Scotian authorities and Vice Consul Gunnison, the officer had Wade and the Henry brothers, who were all in irons, brought onto the slip. The names of the three individuals were read aloud, and, after confirmation of their identities, the men were declared free and released. At this point, Dr. Almon emerged from the crowd and beckoned to a nearby rowboat, appearing to indicate that he wished to speak with it.²⁸⁶ Moments later, the two men manning the boat, Bernard Gallagher and Jerry Holland, both residents of nearby Ketch Harbour, had pulled their boat next to the wharf.²⁸⁷ Dr. Almon then walked in the direction of Wade, shook his hand as if to congratulate him, and then told Wade to get into the waiting rowboat. Without saying a word, George Wade walked over to the edge of the slip and did just that.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ Wilkinson, *The Narrative of a Blockade Runner*, 177.

²⁸⁶ Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 12 January 1864; Halifax *Novascotian*, 18 January 1864; Halifax *Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864.

²⁸⁷ Almon, “William Johnston Almon”; Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 12 January 1864.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*; Halifax *Novascotian*, 18 January 1864; Halifax *Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864.

Following the declaration of Wade and the Henry brothers' freedom, many in the crowd appear to have momentarily stopped paying attention to what was happening at the end of the slip. In the crowd Constable Lewis Hutt, who was waiting to make his arrest of Wade, heard an individual ask, "What man is that going in the boat?"²⁸⁹ Nearby, City Marshal Garrett Cotter also observed one of the prisoners getting into a boat. Cotter asked Vice Consul Gunnison who the man was, and Gunnison quickly informed Cotter, "That's Wade, that's Wade."²⁹⁰ City officials and many of the gathered onlookers rushed toward the edge of the slip. Constable Hutt, seeing the boat almost ten yards from the edge of the wharf, pulled his revolver and ordered Bernard Gallagher to return to the boat to the wharf.²⁹¹

Gallagher and Holland had begun to obey when Dr. Almon suddenly seized Constable Hutt's arm and attempted to prevent the constable from raising his weapon.²⁹² A brief scuffle ensued, at which point Alexander Keith, Jr. and Dr. P. W. Smith joined Almon. Hutt was eventually wrestled to the ground, where he was reportedly held for several minutes. One witness suggested that Keith attempted to pry the gun from Hutt's hand while also preventing another constable from coming to Hutt's aid. As this was happening, many of the onlookers on the wharf called out

²⁸⁹ *Halifax Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*; *Halifax Novascotian*, 28 December 1863.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 12 January 1864; *Halifax Novascotian*, 18 January 1864; *Halifax Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864; Lewis Hutt to Garrett Cotter, 21 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 485.

for the boat to push on and cheered when Hutt was brought to the ground.²⁹³ As Hutt became engaged with the three men on the slip, Gallagher and Holland resumed their southward course toward the entrance to the harbour. When the boat had gotten “fairly clear of the wharf,” Wade reportedly called out, “I thank God and the Queen for my liberty.”²⁹⁴ As the boat began to pull out of sight, City Marshal Cotter, whose access to a nearby commissariat boat was blocked by the crowd of onlookers, approached the commander of the American boat that had brought the prisoners and asked for help pursuing the boat carrying Wade. The commander, however, likely because of a desire to avoid embroiling the American navy in any further controversies, refused this request.²⁹⁵ A short while later, Wade had cleared the city limits of Halifax, which set him outside the jurisdiction of the arrest warrant that Lieutenant Governor Doyle had signed that morning.²⁹⁶

As Wade had begun to make his escape, Lieutenant Governor Doyle’s aide-de-camp ordered the commander of the guard at Queen’s Wharf, Lieutenant Charlton Reyne of the 16th Foot Regiment, to retrieve the soldiers that had been

²⁹³ Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 12 January 1864; Halifax *Novascotian*, 18 January 1864; Halifax Evening Reporter, 19 January 1864.

²⁹⁴ Halifax *Novascotian*, 28 December 1863; Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 22 December 1863.

²⁹⁵ Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 12 January 1864; Halifax *Novascotian*, 18 January 1864; Halifax Evening Reporter, 19 January 1864; Garrett Cotter to P. Cateret Hill, 21 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 486.

²⁹⁶ According to Almon family legend, both Gallagher and Holland proceeded by boat to Ketch Harbour, where Wade was eventually provided with a horse that he then took to Hantsport, Nova Scotia. From there he allegedly crossed the Bay of Fundy and returned to his home colony of New Brunswick: Almon, “William Johnston Almon”; James William Johnston to Charles Hastings Doyle, 13 January 1864, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 528.

charged with keeping unwanted onlookers away. By the time Reyne returned with them, however, he was informed that they were no longer needed.²⁹⁷ Reyne's retrieval of his men is the only event that suggests any action was contemplated against Dr. Almon, Dr. Smith, and Keith, Jr. that day. Following Wade's escape, Dr. Almon appears to have been allowed to leave the Halifax waterfront unmolested.

Legal action was almost unavoidable after Dr. Almon publicly assisted in the escape of a high-profile criminal suspect. Almost immediately after Wade's escape, Vice Consul Gunnison made his way to the local telegraph office where he informed Secretary of State William H. Seward of the events of that had just taken place. Gunnison's initial report to Seward singled out "Doctor Almon in particular" as one of the men aiding in Wade's escape.²⁹⁸ After informing Washington, Gunnison then turned his frustrations to the Nova Scotian authorities. While Charles Tupper had reportedly been present for the prisoner release at the waterfront, his whereabouts during the incident remain unknown and his account of the events on the waterfront is conspicuously absent from the otherwise well-recorded testimony regarding the events on Queen's Wharf. Whether out of redundant formality or an actual effort to inform the provincial secretary of what had taken place, Gunnison wrote to Tupper that citizens of Halifax, again including "Dr. Almon in particular," had prevented the arrest of the "pirate" George Wade. The vice consul testily

²⁹⁷ "Statement of the Services of Charlton M. Rodney Reyne," 1858, WO 76/239/58, TNA; *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 12 January 1864; *Halifax Novascotian*, 18 January 1864; *Halifax Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864.

²⁹⁸ Nathaniel Gunnison to William H. Seward, 19 December 1863, in "Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax."

inquired as to whether “such conduct is in accordance with the friendly relations subsisting between the two powers and the treaty made by them for the extradition of criminals.”²⁹⁹ Despite his frustrations, Gunnison nonetheless reiterated his desire for colonial authorities to take steps toward arresting Wade.³⁰⁰ Gunnison lastly turned his ire toward the municipal authorities in the city of Halifax. In a terse message to Halifax’s mayor, Philip Carteret Hill, Gunnison criticized both the city’s ability and willingness to arrest Wade, saying, “As it is evident, from what has just transpired on Queen’s Wharf, that the pirates of the Chesapeake cannot be arrested in this city, I therefore feel it incumbent on me to notify you that the United States government at present will not require the further services of the police of this city.”³⁰¹

Though Lieutenant Governor Doyle would urge the Halifax police to continue in their efforts to apprehend Wade,³⁰² the government of Nova Scotia, despite all of the controversy surrounding the illegal seizure and arrests at Sambro, was clearly facing considerable embarrassment of its own. The *New York Herald*, in a piece reprinted in Halifax by the *British Colonist*, decried Wade’s rescue by a “mob” composed of “prominent citizens,” and even railed against the character of the citizens of the Maritimes, saying the seizure had been committed “by a party of men

²⁹⁹ Nathaniel Gunnison to Charles Tupper, 19 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 483.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ Nathaniel Gunnison to Philip Carteret Hill, 19 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 484.

³⁰² Charles Tupper to Philip Carteret Hill, 19 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 483; Thomas T. Craven to Gideon Welles, 23 December 1863, in *ORNI*, vol. 2, 535.

who of the kind known as Blue Noses [sic] – men with the cold blood and feeble circulation of reptiles . . .”³⁰³ In Halifax, the *Acadian Recorder*, while loudly supporting Almon’s actions on Queen’s Wharf, nonetheless criticized the “great deal of imbecility manifested on the part of those who sought the arrest of Wade.”³⁰⁴ The authorities’ inability to apprehend the *Chesapeake* hijackers even became the subject of popular ridicule in the form of a pun. “Why are our policemen like persons without talent?” readers of *Novascotian* were asked. “Because,” readers were told, “they are *Braine*-less.”³⁰⁵

Dr. Almon’s actions, however, did not receive unanimous support in Halifax. In a January 4th editorial appearing in the Halifax *Morning Sun*, the paper’s editor, A. J. Ritchie (of no apparent relation to Almon’s in-laws), voiced his disappointment that the doctor had insulted not only the United States government, but also “the majesty of England.”³⁰⁶ Ritchie went on to write that a member of the “provincial aristocracy” could not expect to freely break the law, since colonial aristocrats were, professionally, “little higher than the trader” to the elites in England.³⁰⁷ Ritchie’s voice, however, appears to have been but one of a small and not very vocal minority.

³⁰³ Halifax *British Colonist*, 26 December 1863.

³⁰⁴ Halifax *Acadian Recorder*, 26 December 1863.

³⁰⁵ While most contemporary sources place an “e” at the end of his name, Brain did not use such a spelling when signing letters. See: Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow*, 323 n13; *Novascotian*, 18 January 1864.

³⁰⁶ Halifax *Morning Sun*, 4 January 1864.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

The *Sun*, according to Harry Overholtzer, Jr., was one of the only pro-Union newspapers in Halifax.³⁰⁸

Meanwhile, as debate over the *Chesapeake's* capture and Almon's actions swirled in Halifax, Gunnison continued to criticize the colonial government's handling of Wade's escape in his dispatches to Washington. On December 21st, Gunnison lamented to Seward, "I would . . . say that this city is nearly as secesh [secessionist] as the city of Charleston, S.C. and justice may not be expected from this city only as is forced through [British minister to Washington,] Lord Lyons."³⁰⁹ He went on to add, "I have held two personal interviews with His Honor the Administrator [Lieutenant Governor Doyle] and I believe he is anxious to have them [the *Chesapeake* hijackers] arrested. They are, some of them, still in the city & the police are under command to apprehend them. Still they are not apprehended. The reason is obvious to me . . ."³¹⁰ Indeed, the continued presence of the *Chesapeake* hijackers in Halifax was a point of tension between Gunnison and the colonial authorities during the final days of 1863. "Braine . . .," Gunnison informed Seward, "boasted that he was perfectly safe in Halifax, & it is a fact that he walked about the city . . ."³¹¹ To American officials, the colonial government, like its citizens, appeared to be supporting the hijackers.

³⁰⁸ "Chart of Opinions of Newspapers," in Overholtzer, "Nova Scotia and the United States' Civil War," 85.

³⁰⁹ Nathaniel Gunnison to William H. Seward, 21 December 1863, in "Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax."

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

* * *

Dr. Almon before the Halifax Police Court

Pressure to act finally caused the colonial government to charge Dr. Almon, Dr. Smith, and Keith, Jr. for their involvement in Wade's escape. On January 2nd, warrants were served charging the three men with "obstructing [a] Policeman in Discharge of his Duty."³¹² The Nova Scotian authorities were unable charge the three men with the more serious offense of assisting escape, since, as per Gunnison's suggestion, Wade had been declared free and was not yet in the custody of Nova Scotian officials at the time of his escape.³¹³ Almon, Smith, and Keith appeared before Halifax city magistrates to answer the charges the same day their warrants were issued, and a hearing date of January 5th was initially set by the court. Dr. Almon, however, requested additional time to prepare his defense. He also requested that the proceedings, normally conducted behind closed doors, be opened to both the public and the press. Dr. Almon's request was granted and a new date of Monday January 11th was set.³¹⁴

³¹² Halifax Court of General Sessions of the Peace, *Grand Jury Book, 1863-1875*, in RG 34, vol. 312, P. 21, NSA.

³¹³ Halifax *Novascotian*, 18 January 1864; Dennis, "The Most Exciting Christmas," Halifax *Herald*, 23 December 1896; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 209-210.

³¹⁴ Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 12 January 1864; Halifax *Novascotian*, 18 January 1864; Halifax *Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864; *New York Times*, 13 January 1864 <http://www.nytimes.com/1864/01/13/news/chesapeake-case-wade-rescue-case-trial-prisoners-bailed-appear-before-supreme.html> (accessed 11 July 2013); Mortimer M. Jackson to Frederick W. Seward, 21 January 1864, in "Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax."

Serving as legal representative for Dr. Almon and his fellow defendants was Almon's brother-in-law, John William Ritchie. Ritchie was already deeply involved in the legal proceedings stemming from the recapture of the *Chesapeake*. In addition to Dr. Almon's employment of him to investigate the initial claims that British citizens had been arrested at Sambro, Ritchie had also been employed by Confederate agents and supporters to represent Southern claims for custody of the *Chesapeake* in the Vice Admiralty Court in Halifax.³¹⁵ Ritchie was widely regarded as one of the most able lawyers in Halifax, and until only a few weeks previous his pro-Confederate sympathies appear to have been relatively unknown. When news of the *Chesapeake's* initial seizure reached Mortimer Jackson, the traveling Halifax consul telegraphed Washington to recommend employing Ritchie in the event of any legal proceedings in Nova Scotia pertaining to the vessel's custody.³¹⁶ Much like Almon, Ritchie similarly appears to have undergone a progression of increasing involvement in the American conflict, and the *Chesapeake* Affair appears to have represented a similar turning point for him.

Likely complicating Ritchie's efforts to defend the three men were revelations pertaining to Alexander Keith, Jr. that were wired to American officials in Halifax shortly before the January 11th court proceedings. In addition to the potentially problematic departure of William Bruce Almon II for the Confederacy ,which had been covered in the Halifax press, Ritchie also had to contend with news

³¹⁵ John William Ritchie to Benjamin Wier, 5 January 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 544.

³¹⁶ Mortimer M. Jackson to Frederick W. Seward, 12 December 1863, in "Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax."

of Keith's scandalous involvement in an arms smuggling operation, which had come to the attention of American and Nova Scotian authorities in Halifax several days after the Queen's Wharf incident. The plot was uncovered when the postmaster for New York City, Abram Wakeman, intercepted a coded message that was to be delivered in the city. Forwarded to officials in the U.S. Military Telegraph Corps in Washington, a team of code-breakers quickly deciphered the message.³¹⁷ In light of the recent hijacking of the *Chesapeake*, the message's contents proved to be unnerving. The message's opening paragraph read, "Briggs is here. The two steamers will leave here about Christmas. Lamar and Boners left here via Bermuda two weeks ago. The 1,000 rifled muskets came duly to hand, and were shipped to Halifax as instructed. We will be able to seize the other two steamers as per programme."³¹⁸ The message had been written by an individual identified only as "J. H. C." to the Confederate Secretary of State, Judah P. Benjamin, and it contained instructions for Alexander Keith, Jr. to "detach" the primary message and "forward as before."³¹⁹ These instructions suggest that, rather than attempting a more risky landward route, "J. H. C." hoped that Keith, who was involved in wartime smuggling in Halifax, would get the message to the South via blockade-runner. Word of this plot reached Vice Consul Gunnison on December 23rd. Gunnison promptly messaged Charles Tupper, informing him of the intercepted message and suggested

³¹⁷ Larabee, *The Dyanamite Fiend*, 41-43; David Homer Bates, "A Rebel Cipher Despatch: One which did not Reach Judah P. Benjamin," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 97 (June-November 1898), 105-109.

³¹⁸ Larabee, *The Dynamite Fiend*, 43; J. H. C. to Alexander Keith[, Jr.], 18 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 465.

³¹⁹ J. H. C. to Alexander Keith[, Jr.], 18 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 465.

that a Rebel plot to recapture the *Chesapeake* was possibly afoot.³²⁰ Tupper promptly placed a guard on the *Chesapeake*, and, while nothing more came of the uncovered plot, tensions in Halifax remained high in the wake of the previous week's events.³²¹

Less than three weeks after news of this plot reached colonial officials, curious citizens and members of the Halifax press crowded into Halifax's municipal court house to watch the preliminary proceedings against Dr. Almon, Dr. Smith, and Keith, Jr. The hearings, which began at noon and lasted until 7:30 that evening, were presided over by Halifax's mayor, Philip Carteret Hill, and Alderman William Roche, a merchant and shipping agent from the city's waterfront. Also in attendance was the Nova Scotian Attorney General James William Johnston, who, in addition to giving and answering questions during the proceedings, was also serving as an observer for Lieutenant Governor Doyle.³²²

Such an array of officials hardly seemed to promise a fair trial in that particular legal setting. Halifax's Police Court had been plagued by allegations of political corruption since the court's inception in 1841, and efforts to create a

³²⁰ Nathaniel Gunnison to Charles Tupper, 23 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 487.

³²¹ Charles Tupper to Nathaniel Gunnison, 24 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 488; *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 26 December 1863; *Halifax Novascotian*, 28 December 1863.

³²² Business card for William Roche, [undated], in MG3, vol. 6063, NSA; James William Johnston to Charles Hastings Doyle, 13 January 1864, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 527; *Halifax British Colonist*, 12 January 1864; *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 12 January 1864; *Halifax Citizen*, 12 January 1864; *Halifax Novascotian*, 18 January 1864.

stipendiary magistracy would not succeed until 1867.³²³ Additionally, Johnston, as many in Halifax already knew, was Almon's uncle, and had already been involved in the *Chesapeake* case when Almon had employed him and J. W. Ritchie in the initial investigation of the *Ella and Annie's* arrests at Sambro. Hill, for his part, also appeared potentially biased. J. Murray Beck has observed that the Halifax mayor possessed close family ties to the "tory-Anglican-merchant establishment" of Halifax, which included, for example, his second cousin Hibbert Binney, the Anglican bishop of Nova Scotia.³²⁴

As the proceedings opened, Mayor P. C. Hill emphasized that the case before the court was unusual in nature, and the fact that it was open to the public ought not be interpreted as a precedent for future cases, especially since the court was only meeting for a preliminary hearing.³²⁵ Following Hill's opening remarks, the first of the court's seven witnesses was called to testify: Constable Lewis Hutt. As one of the key witnesses and central participants in the events on Queen's Wharf, Hutt's testimony was crucial to the Crown's case against Almon, Smith, and Keith. Hutt, however, fared badly under questioning from the city magistrates, and even worse under questions posed by both J. W. Ritchie and Dr. Almon, who took the unusual step of asking questions as a defendant. Ritchie and Almon succeeded in casting

³²³ Philip Girard, *Lawyer and Legal Culture in British North America: Beamish Murdoch in Halifax* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 138, 144-145.

³²⁴ J. Murray Beck, "Hill, Philip Carteret," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/hill_philip_carteret_12E.html (accessed 11 February 2013).

³²⁵ *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 12 January 1864; *Halifax Morning Sun*, 13 January 1864; *Halifax Novascotian*, 18 January 1864; *Halifax Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864.

doubt as to whether Hutt, who had been wearing a heavy winter coat over his usual police uniform on the wharf, was readily identifiable as a police officer. If Hutt had indeed been difficult to identify as a policeman, then the intervention of Almon, Smith, and Keith might be interpreted not as interference with a police officer, but rather as the prevention of a man they thought to be an armed rogue from firing on the rowboat containing George Wade. Hutt's testimony was hardly helped by his inflated estimate of over 100 persons on the wharf, or by his dismissive attitude toward whether his gun could have accidentally gone off. Hutt's responses to the latter line of questioning prompted Alderman Roche to remark at one point, "You are a very dangerous man to have a pistol, in that case."³²⁶

The parade of witnesses that followed included the city marshal, Garrett Cotter, Halifax's sheriff, J. J. Sawyer, two policemen, Lieutenant Charlton Reyne of the 16th Foot Regiment, and an attorney who had been present at the wharf, M. Myers Gray.³²⁷ Many of the questions that followed highlighted inconsistencies in witness testimony. Hutt's estimate of the size of the crowd on Queen's Wharf was repeatedly attacked, as was his belief that no one was in imminent danger when he pulled his Colt revolver when he ordered Gallagher and Holland to return to the wharf. Some of the questions took on pointedly political tones. City Marshal Garrett Cotter, for example, was at one point forced to field a question by Dr. Almon about

³²⁶ Due to its verbatim transcripts of both questions and witness testimony, the coverage provided by the *Evening Reporter* will be the primary source most utilized by the author in providing specifics of the January 11th court proceedings: *Halifax Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*; John Lovell, *Lovell's Canadian Dominion Directory for 1871* (Montreal: John Lovell, 1871), 1651.

whether American authorities had assisted him in a previous case involving the murder of a Halifax police constable onboard an American vessel.³²⁸ While such evidence would normally have been irrelevant and inadmissible during typical court proceedings, Almon's questioning, which represented a clear effort to pander to the city's considerable anti-Northern bloc, appears to have been allowed to stand.

The testimony that made the greatest impression on observers was that of Lieutenant Reyne. In a message from Lieutenant Governor Doyle to Lord Lyons, the British minister in Washington, Reyne's testimony was singled out for specific mention. Similarly, in the Halifax *British Colonist's* truncated coverage of the proceedings, Reyne's testimony was the only statement included in its entirety.³²⁹ Reyne testified that he believed Dr. Almon's actions contained no evidence of premeditation, and he greatly bolstered the defense's case by opining that "it was impossible for any one [sic] to tell that [Hutt] was a policeman."³³⁰ Reyne also testified that as commander of the guard by Queen's Wharf, he had turned many people away from the wharf, which suggested that the crowd on the wharf was not a "mob," as the American press had characterized it, but rather a gathering of Halifax's most respected citizenry.³³¹

Following the conclusion of the witness testimony, J. W. Ritchie, with the support of Alderman Roche, attempted to argue that the case before the court was

³²⁸ Halifax *Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864.

³²⁹ Charles Hastings Doyle to Lord Lyons, 14 January 1864, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 507; Halifax *British Colonist*, 12 January 1864.

³³⁰ Halifax *Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

meritless and should not proceed to the Grand Jury. Ritchie believed that Hill had the authority to decide the case that day, arguing that the case was trivial since the court dealt with “far more important and graver” cases on a daily basis. Ritchie argued that the court possessed no incriminating evidence against the three defendants, all of whom he suggested had acted out of a humanitarian instinct to prevent bloodshed. The reason the case was still before the court at all, he suggested, was because of pressure to appease the American government.³³²

Hill flatly dismissed Ritchie’s undisguised attempt to cast aspersions over his motives and denied American pressure having any bearing on his handling of the case. Hill stressed that the hearing that day was merely preliminary, and he was only tasked with determining whether a “sufficient . . . presumption of guilt” existed to send the case to a Grand Jury.³³³ Such evidence, he argued, clearly existed, saying, “It is absurd to say there is no case against these gentlemen.”³³⁴ Hill pointed out that regardless of whether Constable Hutt had been difficult to recognize as a police officer, Almon had talked to Hutt before the incident on the wharf, had recognized him as a police officer, and had been shown the warrant in Hutt’s possession at that time. Following this statement by Hill, Ritchie dropped his opposition to sending

³³² *Halifax Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864.

³³³ *Ibid.*; *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 12 January 1864; *Halifax Novascotian*, 18 January 1864.

³³⁴ *Halifax Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864.

the case to a Grand Jury, quite possibly because he sensed that any ruling secured that day would likely be unfavourable to the defendants.³³⁵

When it came time for the defendants to enter their pleas, Dr. Almon used the public platform afforded by the courtroom to loudly denounce the wartime actions of the North. After detailing for the court how he had heard that a Nova Scotian had been seized by the American navy at Sambro, Almon essentially undermined Ritchie's defense of his spontaneous humanitarian intervention by describing his outrage at the illegal arrests. He indicated to the court that he had known in advance of the intended re-arrest and extradition of Wade, and added that he could not allow Wade to be sent to "a land where law is a mockery and justice is denied – where judges have been imprisoned for giving a decision different to the man that sits on the throne at Washington – where that safeguard of civil liberty, the *habeas corpus*, is no longer in force."³³⁶ Dr. Almon continued in his statement to level more specific accusations, including one alleging that American officials had improperly utilized the colony's telegraphs during the *Chesapeake* crisis by sending messages out on a Sunday despite the American Telegraph Company's reported policy against sending messages on that day.³³⁷ In conclusion, Dr. Almon condemned the American and Nova Scotian authorities for their greater utilization of force during

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Jesse Hoyt, superintendent of the American Telegraph Company in Nova Scotia, published letters to the editor in most of Halifax's newspapers denying Almon's accusations. See: *Halifax Evening Reporter*, 12 January 1864; *Halifax Morning Sun*, 13 January 1864; *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 14 January 1864; *Halifax Weekly Citizen*, 16 January 1864; *Halifax Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864.

the *Chesapeake* crisis, citing the attempted arrest of Brain at Liverpool, the seizure of Wade at gunpoint at Sambro, and Hutt's attempted arrest on Queen's Wharf as evidence of a trend in official abuse of coercive power. At the end of what the Halifax press later described as a "lengthy" and "animated" address, Dr. Almon finally entered a plea of "not guilty."³³⁸

In the wake of Dr. Almon's protracted statement, Dr. Smith and Keith, Jr. offered brief, almost identical defenses of their own. Each said he had been on the wharf that day out of curiosity and that their only motives in intervening had been to prevent bloodshed.³³⁹ Upon the conclusion of their statements, Hill adjourned the court for the day. In preparation for the April meeting of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court, Dr. Almon, Dr. Smith, and Keith entered a joint bond of £200 each to ensure their appearance in court at that time.³⁴⁰ Until that time, the three Queen's Wharf defendants could only wait.

Aftermath of the *Chesapeake* Affair

The impact of the *Chesapeake* Affair proved to be far-reaching. In Washington, Secretary of State William H. Seward repeatedly expressed his frustrations with the colonial government's handling of the situation in his dispatches to the American

³³⁸ Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 12 January 1864; Halifax *Novascotian*, 18 January 1864.

³³⁹ Halifax *Evening Reporter*, 19 January 1864.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*; Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 14 January 1864; Halifax *Weekly Citizen*, 16 January 1864.

legation in London. The Nova Scotian government's insistence on trying the issue of the *Chesapeake's* custody in the Vice Admiralty Court, he indicated, "occasioned surprise and disappointment" in Washington.³⁴¹ Both Seward and President Lincoln were of the opinion that Lieutenant Governor Doyle was fully capable of returning the *Chesapeake* to its rightful owners "without requiring the illegality of the seizure to be judicially proved."³⁴²

More frustrating for the Union government was how the case of the *Chesapeake* clearly seemed to illustrate the Confederacy's abuse of British neutrality. Drawing upon the already prevalent Confederate use of British ports for blockade-running and supplies for their warships, Seward cited the *Chesapeake* Affair as further evidence of the growing problem created by uncontested Confederate operations in British territory, oftentimes with "direct aid and co-operation from British subjects."³⁴³ Queen Victoria's "premature" declaration of neutrality was, according to Seward, "engendering a border war" between Northern authorities and the increasing number of Confederates operating in British North America.³⁴⁴

In London, while British officials recognized the seriousness of the *Chesapeake's* seizure, few appear to have expressed significant concern regarding

³⁴¹ William H. Seward to Charles Francis Adams, 7 January 1864, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 72-73.

³⁴² *Ibid.*; William H. Seward to Charles Francis Adams, 11 January 1864, in *Ibid.*, 77; William H. Seward to Mortimer M. Jackson, 24 February 1864, in *Ibid.*, 559.

³⁴³ William H. Seward to Charles Francis Adams, 11 January 1864, in *Ibid.*, 77.

³⁴⁴ William H. Seward to Charles Francis Adams, 17 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 45.

the incident. The head of the Colonial Office, the Duke of Newcastle, appears to have been one of the individuals who was instrumental in generating such a limited response. According to biographer F. Darrell Munsell, Newcastle was “a sincere advocate of responsible government in its most liberal and extensive form,”³⁴⁵ and, as a result, he permitted officials in Nova Scotia to respond to the *Chesapeake* crisis independent of interference from London. Another important factor was the immediate, if qualified, disavowal of the Union navy’s actions offered by Union Secretary of State William H. Seward. Shortly after receiving news of the *Chesapeake’s* seizure at Sambro, Seward promised to censure Lieutenant Nickels of the USS *Ella and Annie* – though he had been motivated, he said, by “patriotic and commendable zeal” – and ensure that no future encroachments upon British territory would occur.³⁴⁶ The prompt acceptance of this disavowal by the British minister to Washington, Lord Lyons, helped in defusing the easily combustible situation.³⁴⁷ Perhaps best illustrating the coolheaded reaction by the British government to the *Chesapeake* Affair was a response by the Duke of Newcastle to one of Lieutenant-Governor Doyle’s dispatches from Nova Scotia. In forwarding one of Doyle’s messages to a colleague, Newcastle wrote, “On account of the interest of the case, I pass this on for your inspection, but I apprehend that there can be no doubt that all we have to do with this dispatch at present is forward a copy to the

³⁴⁵ F. Darrell Munsell, *The Unfortunate Duke: Henry Pelham, Fifth Duke of Newcastle 1811-1864* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985), 250.

³⁴⁶ William H. Seward to Lord Lyons, 18 December 1863, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 2, 405; William H. Seward to Lord Lyons, 9 January 1864, in *Ibid.*, 474-475.

³⁴⁷ Lord Lyons to William H. Seward, 19 December 1863, in *Ibid.*, 406; Lord Lyons to William H. Seward, 29 February 1864, in *Ibid.*, 536.

Foreign Office to be laid before Earl Russell.”³⁴⁸ Apart from giving formal approval for Doyle’s handling of the case, the British imperial government was minimally involved in the direct handling of the *Chesapeake* Affair.³⁴⁹

Why the issue of the *Chesapeake* never generated a crisis like that of the *Trent* Affair has been the subject of scholarly debate. According to Robin Winks, the adroit handling of the affair by Secretary of State Seward and British minister to Washington Lord Lyons was primarily responsible for the relatively quick resolution of the affair. Winks downplays the “verbal salvos” traded at the local level by American and Nova Scotian officials, asserting that, if anything, those heated exchanges enhance the astute statesmanship conducted by Seward and Lyons in Washington.³⁵⁰ Greg Marquis similarly cites efforts on the part of the Seward and Lyons as instrumental to preventing the crisis’s escalation, though he also draws attention to the fact that lengthy delays in communicating with London meant that, apart from telegraphing Washington, officials in Nova Scotia had handled the affair independently out of necessity.³⁵¹

While the oft-attributed handling of the affair in Halifax and in Washington appears to have played a key role in keeping the issue of the *Chesapeake* from

³⁴⁸ Duke of Newcastle to Sir Frederic Rogers, endorsement on Charles Hastings Doyle to Duke of Newcastle, 21 January 1864, in “Colonial Office and Predecessors: Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Original Correspondence,” January-August 1864, CO 217/234, TNA.

³⁴⁹ Duke of Newcastle to Charles Hastings Doyle, 12 March 1864, in “Colonial Office and Predecessors: Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Entry Books,” 1 March 1858-4 February 1865, CO 218/36, TNA.

³⁵⁰ Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 254.

³⁵¹ Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow*, 163, 176.

escalating like the *Trent* Affair, several other factors appear to have been similarly important. One of the foremost appears to have been the different tenor in Anglo-American relations at the time of the *Chesapeake* Affair as opposed to the time of the *Trent's* seizure. Unlike in 1861, Union and British officials possessed significantly less uncertainty regarding the intentions of each other; British officials generally accepted that the Union government did not possess immediate annexation designs for British North America, and American officials recognized Great Britain's general reluctance to recognize or offer open support to the Confederacy. Equally important was the nature of the *Chesapeake* crisis itself. Unlike the *Trent* Affair – in which the seized Confederate emissaries were taken as prisoners back to the North, thereby adding the issue of custody to the illegal arrests – Union officials immediately turned the *Chesapeake* over to Nova Scotian authorities, which ultimately gave the British the power to adjudicate the violation of sovereignty themselves.

Despite the relative lack of diplomatic controversy, at the local level a number of citizens in Halifax had begun to question the fairness of the *Chesapeake* proceedings, particularly with regards to the trial of Almon, Smith, and Keith. In addition to the suspected partiality of the city's Police Court, questions were raised by several observers to the proceedings about the absence of certain key witnesses. In a letter to the editor appearing the Halifax *Morning Sun*, one reader questioned why the two oarsmen of the boat used in Wade's escape, Bernard Gallagher and Jerry Holland, had not been called upon to testify.³⁵² Making matters appear more

³⁵² Halifax *Morning Sun*, 20 January 1864.

suspicious was the fact that Gallagher and Holland were far from the only witnesses conspicuously absent from the proceedings. Both of the Henry brothers, who were on the wharf at the time of Wade's escape, were not called on during the proceedings, and neither were the two highest-ranking colonial officials who had been present: Solicitor General William Alexander Henry and Provincial Secretary Charles Tupper. Such absences undermined the legitimacy of the legal proceedings in the eyes of some observers. As the anonymous reader of the *Morning Sun* pointed out, "When the friends of the Chesapeake heroes . . . talk so loudly about the *mockery* of law and justice in the United States, Nova Scotians expect the men in whose hands they have entrusted the administration of justice would be careful to avoid giving a pretext for the same charge against our courts."³⁵³

Interest in the legal proceeding was not simply limited to the public in the United States, Great Britain, and British North America. On February 15th, 1864, James P. Holcombe, a University of Virginia law professor, was commissioned by Confederate President Jefferson Davis to travel to Nova Scotia to serve as the representative for Confederate interests.³⁵⁴ After running the blockade and reaching Bermuda, Holcombe's arrival in Halifax was delayed several days by stormy weather. He finally succeeded in reaching Halifax on March 23rd, but upon arrival he learned that the Vice Admiralty Court had already issued a ruling in the

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Judah P. Benjamin to James P. Holcombe, 15 February 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 544-550.

case of the *Chesapeake*.³⁵⁵ On January 13th, Judge Alexander Stewart had ordered the restoration of the *Chesapeake* to its original owners pending confirmation of the *Chesapeake's* title and the payment of court fees. The *Chesapeake* had finally set sail for Portland, Maine four days before Holcombe reached Halifax.³⁵⁶ Holcombe nevertheless set about investigating the grounds for Southern claims to possession of the *Chesapeake*, and, as the commissioner quickly discovered, the Confederacy's case was extremely weak. None of the hijackers, he learned, possessed strong ties to the Confederacy, and the non-transferrable letter of marque used by Vernon G. Locke applied to a different vessel and granted authority to a different commander. In reporting his findings to Richmond, Holcombe concluded that the Confederate government would be best served by distancing itself from the *Chesapeake* Affair, saying, "I should deem it unwise . . . to compromise the Confederacy by assuming . . . responsibility."³⁵⁷

Holcombe also brought the actions of Halifax's Confederate sympathizers to the attention of President Davis and Secretary of State Benjamin. Holcombe wrote,

³⁵⁵ Georgiana Walker, 7 March 1864, in *The Private Journal of Georgiana Gholson Walker, 1862-1865, with Selections from the Post-War Years, 1865-1876*, ed. Dwight Franklin Henderson (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing, 1963), 73; Georgiana Walker, 17 March 1864, in *Ibid.*, 79; Charles Maxwell Allen to William H. Seward, 10 March 1864, in *Dispatches from Bermuda*, 120; James P. Holcombe to Judah P. Benjamin, 1 April 1864, in *Ibid.*, 551.

³⁵⁶ Report of the Proceedings in the Court of Vice-Admiralty, 13 January 1864, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 1, 544-548; Report of the Proceedings in the Court of Vice-Admiralty, 10 February 1864, in *Ibid.*, 548-549; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 200.

³⁵⁷ James P. Holcombe to Judah P. Benjamin, 1 April 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 553.

I can not [sic] close this communication without bringing to the attention and notice of the Government the generous sympathy and liberal contribution in every matter in which the interests of the Confederacy were supposed to be involved of some prominent gentlemen in this city, and especially of Dr. Almon, Mr. Keith, Mr. Weir [sic], and Mr. Ritchie. They have given money, time, and influence without reserve, as if our cause had been that of their own country.³⁵⁸

Holcombe went on to add, "I feel that the gentlemen whose names I have given are entitled to some special acknowledgement from our Government of their handsome conduct, and I am certain it would be highly appreciated by them and would exercise a happy influence on this community."³⁵⁹ Jefferson Davis agreed with Holcombe's recommendation, and on May 23rd, Dr. William Johnston Almon, along with Alexander Keith, Jr., Benjamin Wier, and John William Ritchie, received letters of thanks from Holcombe written on behalf of the Confederate president.³⁶⁰ The letter received by Almon thanked him for his "disinterested sympathy," that he had "frequently and effectively manifested." The letter also contained a ringing defense of the Confederate right to international recognition, saying that "testimonials of kindness . . . are appreciated with peculiar sensibility at a juncture when the Confederacy is isolated by the action of European Governments from that friendly intercourse with other nations, which it knows to be its right, and of which it is conscious it is not undeserving."³⁶¹ Later that summer at a presentation at the Halifax Hotel, Professor Holcombe, after offering profuse expressions of the thanks, awarded Almon's brother-in-law, J. W. Ritchie, a silver plate as a gift for his services

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Judah P. Benjamin to James P. Holcombe, 20 April 1864, in Ibid., 555-556.

³⁶¹ James P. Holcombe to William Johnston Almon, 23 May 1864, in "Almon Family Scrapbook."

rendered on behalf of the Confederacy throughout the *Chesapeake* Affair.³⁶² For his part, rumour suggested that Dr. Almon refused any further compensation for his actions.³⁶³

On the afternoon May 16th, a Grand Jury finally heard the case of Dr. Almon, Dr. Smith, and Keith, Jr. While the particulars of the proceedings remain unclear, the following day's newspapers tersely reported that "the jury found no bill."³⁶⁴ Such a ruling, which received minimal press, appears to have been a foregone conclusion in the eyes of many Haligonians at that point, particularly since it came on the heels of a New Brunswick court's dismissal of charges against three of the *Chesapeake's* hijackers who had been arrested in Saint John.³⁶⁵ As R. H. MacDonald noted in his analysis of the Queen's Wharf proceedings, "It would seem that Halifax, where blood runs deep, was protecting its own."³⁶⁶ Holding out little hope that justice would be served, Nathaniel Gunnison succinctly expressed the sense of outrage felt by many in the North when, briefly putting aside his universalist beliefs, he declared "[a] terrible retribution awaits this city of Halifax for its complicity in treason and piracy."³⁶⁷

³⁶² Halifax *British Colonist*, 8 September 1864.

³⁶³ Almon, "William Johnston Almon."

³⁶⁴ Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 17 May 1864; Halifax *Morning Sun*, 18 May 1864; Halifax *Novascotian*, 23 May 1864; "Halifax Court of General Sessions of the Peace," Grand Jury Book, 1863-1875, RG34-312, vol. 21, 1864, NSA.

³⁶⁵ Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 17 May 1864; Halifax *Morning Sun*, 18 May 1864; Halifax *Novascotian*, 23 May 1864; William H. Seward to Lord Lyons, 21 March 1864, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 2, 562-563.

³⁶⁶ MacDonald, "The Second Chesapeake Affair," 681.

³⁶⁷ Gunnison, *An Autobiography of the Rev. Nathaniel Gunnison*, 36.

* * *

Conclusion

The *Chesapeake* Affair, while never reaching the severity of the previous *Trent* crisis, signaled a renewal of Anglo-American tensions as British neutrality became increasingly contested during the final months of the Civil War. The use of British territory by Confederate agents and sympathizers to plan and launch attacks on Northern targets significantly degraded Anglo-American relations, and the frequent pro-Confederate support offered by British citizens succeeded in further aggravating such tensions. When the case of the *Chesapeake* broke, individuals in both the United States and British North America used the *Chesapeake* Affair, as they had the *Trent* crisis, as proof of their preexisting biases: the British were quick to decry the lawlessness of the American navy while citizens in the North vociferously denounced the latest instance of “bluenose effrontery” orchestrated by Dr. Almon and the rest of his Haligonian “mob.”³⁶⁸

While allegations of bias were leveled by supporters on both sides in Halifax during the crisis, the *Chesapeake* Affair effectively illustrates the considerable depth of Confederate sympathy in both Halifax and the surrounding colony. In addition to the lack of criminal convictions resulting from the incident, citizen intervention on behalf of the hijackers at both Liverpool and Queen’s Wharf indicates a willingness by both common citizens and the colonial elite to boldly and spontaneously act on the behalf of the *Chesapeake*’s captors. Such willingness appears to have been

³⁶⁸ MacKenzie, “The Almons,” 34, in “Almon Family Scrapbook.”

readily manifested despite the risk of injury, death, or serious legal consequences that such actions might have produced for these individuals. Such a base of popular support appears to have given an individual like Dr. William Johnston Almon the ability to act in the *Chesapeake* Affair with relative impunity. Dr. Almon was already related by blood or marriage to many of Nova Scotia's social and mercantile elites, and, as the legal proceedings following the Queen's Wharf incident appear to indicate, the colonial aristocracy possessed little willingness to convict one of their own regardless of the evidence that existed against him. With many of the city's public favouring his actions and most of his social peers unwilling to condemn him, the *Chesapeake* Affair appears to have, if anything, emboldened Dr. Almon and those around him while also transforming Almon into a highly visible and respected figurehead for Confederate supporters in Halifax. In the following months, Dr. Almon's involvement in the Civil War would increase greatly as he again became involved in the arrival of a controversial vessel in Halifax. Additionally his growing involvement in the city's blockade-running trade, along with his free association with many of the Confederate agents who passed through the city, resulted in one New York paper describing him as "[t]he notorious Dr. Almon."³⁶⁹

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

Chapter Four:

“All in His Power”: Dr. Almon’s Pro-Confederate Support in Halifax, 1864-1865

Several months after the *Chesapeake* had departed Nova Scotia, Halifax once again became the subject of intense British and American scrutiny when the Confederate commerce raider CSS *Tallahassee* entered port. Fresh from wreaking havoc upon American shipping along the Atlantic seaboard, the *Tallahassee* arrived hunted, damaged, and desperately needing coal. The Confederate vessel benefited from a profuse outpouring of support from Halifax's pro-Confederate population, one of the most prominent being Dr. Almon. Having faced no consequences for his actions during the *Chesapeake* Affair months prior, Almon faced few disincentives when he once again involved himself with a controversial vessel's arrival in port.

Throughout 1864 and 1865, Almon became increasingly involved in other aspects of the Confederate war effort. As Halifax briefly became a hub for illicit wartime smuggling during the summer of 1864, one of Dr. Almon's sons joined the blockade-runners and served with them until the last days of the war. This flurry of blockade-running activity happened to coincide with a significant increase in the number of Confederate agents passing through the city. With the war beginning to turn against the South, Confederate operatives were dispatched to locations ranging from the Caribbean to British North America to Europe, all with the hope that the Confederacy might succeed in procuring supplies, damaging the Northern war effort, or securing international support. As Confederate operatives began to pass through Halifax with increasing frequency, Dr. Almon became closely associated with many of them, making him an important contact and source of aid for Confederate foreign agents.

This chapter begins by examining the case of the CSS *Tallahassee*. After first examining the background of the raider's cruise, it explores the vessel's time in port, including the contrasting interactions its crew had with Nova Scotian officials and with local residents, particularly Dr. Almon. This chapter then examines the port of Halifax's involvement in the blockade-running trade, including background information on the trade itself and details about how Halifax briefly became a hub for the Atlantic blockade-running fleet during the latter part of 1864. The role of one of Dr. Almon's sons in the blockade-running trade is also examined, along with the impact that blockade-running may have had upon public opinion in Halifax during the war. This chapter then moves into an examination of the connections that Dr. Almon held with various Confederates and Confederate sympathizers during the latter part of the war, including his connections to spies, emissaries, pirates, and men associated with more infamous plots. Lastly, this chapter examines the implications of Almon's postwar political success as it relates to the historiography of Canadian Toryism and Liberalism, while also analyzing the legacy of the Civil War in Halifax and how Dr. Almon's place in that narrative stands as a telling example of the city's active part in both remembering and forgetting the conflict.

This chapter contends that the failure of Nova Scotian officials to punish Almon in the wake of the Queen's Wharf incident effectively enabled him to openly and energetically support the Confederacy for the duration of the war. Without fear of legal consequences, which, as R. H. MacDonald has noted, was likely related to his

upper class standing,³⁷⁰ Almon was able to aid the cruise of the CSS *Tallahassee*, participate by proxy in the blockade-running trade, and associate with a diverse range of Confederate agents and sympathizers. This chapter will also argue that the tacit support that Almon received for his actions continued into the postwar years as well and allowed Almon, who had repeatedly violated British neutrality and supported a foreign rebellion by a slaveholding society, to prosper politically and become a publicly celebrated individual, showing that continued support for Almon's wartime actions and his Tory politics existed well into the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The Cruise of the CSS *Tallahassee*

The origins of the *Tallahassee's* appearance in Halifax lay in the series of reverses suffered by the Confederacy during the spring and summer of 1864. By August 1864, Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia lay under siege by the forces of Ulysses S. Grant at Petersburg, just 24 miles from Richmond, while to the south the city of Atlanta appeared poised to fall to the army of William Tecumseh Sherman. The outlook for the Confederate navy was similarly grim. On August 5th, a Union fleet under the command of Admiral David Farragut had defeated the Confederates at the Battle of Mobile Bay, effectively closing another of the Confederacy's dwindling number of ports. This defeat came on the heels of the loss of the

³⁷⁰ MacDonald, "The Second Chesapeake Affair," 681.

Confederacy's prized commerce raider, the CSS *Alabama*, which had been sunk by USS *Kearsarge* near Cherbourg, France, less than six weeks earlier.

Sensing the tide of the war beginning to shift, and holding on to hope of Confederacy's ability to influence the Northern elections to be held that November, Confederate Secretary of the Navy, Stephen R. Mallory, ordered the recently converted blockade-runner, CSS *Tallahassee*, to take to sea from Wilmington with orders to target Northern shipping.³⁷¹ Commanding the *Tallahassee* was the 33 year-old Commander John Taylor Wood. Born in Minnesota in 1830, Wood was the grandson of American president Zachary Taylor and a veteran of the American navy during the Mexican War. Following the war, Wood attended and graduated from the United States Naval Academy, where he eventually became an instructor in 1860. After the outbreak of war, Wood resigned and joined the Confederate navy where, among other postings, he commanded a gun aboard the ironclad CSS *Virginia* during its famed clash with the USS *Monitor* near Hampton Roads. Wood later served as an aide to Confederate President Jefferson Davis, who he was related to by marriage.³⁷²

³⁷¹ John Taylor Wood, "The 'Tallahassee's' Dash into New York Waters," *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, new ser., vol. 34 (May-October 1898), 409.

³⁷² David A. Sutherland, "Wood, John Taylor," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=7152 (accessed 21 June 2013); Arthur Thurston, *Tallahassee Skipper: The Biography of John Taylor Wood, Merrimac Gunner, Soldier-at-Sea, Guardian of the Confederate Treasury, Adopted Nova Scotian* (Yarmouth: Lescarbot Press, 1981), 215-217; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 212-213.

During the late evening hours of August 6th, Wood ran the *Tallahassee* past the Union blockade off Wilmington.³⁷³ Having been a blockade-runner only 17 days earlier, the *Tallahassee* was fast – capable of reaching as high as 14 knots – as well as maneuverable thanks to its twin screw design.³⁷⁴ Despite these advantages, the vessel was lightly armed, carrying only three guns, and was manned by a comparatively inexperienced crew of approximately 120, many of whom were of suspect loyalty.³⁷⁵ After braving the fire of a pair of Union blockaders, Wood was able to outrun pursuing Union vessels and reach the open sea by the following afternoon.³⁷⁶

After losing contact with the *Tallahassee* off the coast of Wilmington, almost a week passed before Union authorities received any word of the vessel's whereabouts. At 5 p.m. on August 12th, a telegram arrived in Washington from Fire Island (one of the barrier islands of Long Island) informing Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles that the CSS *Tallahassee* had burned four vessels the day before, while bonding one and sinking another.³⁷⁷ Almost immediately after receipt of this news, Union warships were launched in pursuit of the *Tallahassee*. Despite the vessel's legitimate outfitting as a commerce raider, reports from both Union naval

³⁷³ "The Tallahassee: Complete Rebel History of Her Depredations," *New York Times*, 29 September 1864, <http://www.nytimes.com/1864/09/29/news/tallahassee-complete-rebel-history-her-depredations-she-ran-wilmington-harbor.html?pagewanted=1> (accessed 21 June 2013); Wood, "The 'Tallahassee's' Dash into New York Waters," 409-410.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*; B. S. Osbon to G. V. Fox, 12 August 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 3, 137.

³⁷⁵ "The Tallahasee," *New York Times*, 29 September 1864; B. S. Osbon to G. V. Fox, 12 August 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 3, 137; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 213-214.

³⁷⁶ "The Tallahassee," *New York Times*, 29 September 1864.

³⁷⁷ William H. Ludlow to Gideon Welles, 12 August 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 3, 137.

commanders and the Northern press were quick to condemn the Confederate vessel as a “pirate.”³⁷⁸ Within days, a squadron of 14 Union warships was converging on the Atlantic seaboard of the United States in search of the *Tallahassee*. Among those vessels were the USS *Dacotah* and the USS *Grand Gulf*, both of which had taken part in the pursuit of the *Chesapeake* eight months earlier.³⁷⁹

In the meantime, reports continued to pour in regarding the *Tallahassee*'s rapidly growing list of prizes. Following the initial reports of August 12th, news of five more seizures arrived on August 14th, with a deluge of 15 additional vessels being reported the following day.³⁸⁰ Reports indicated that the *Tallahassee* was progressively working its way up the Atlantic coast, but no intelligence as to its

³⁷⁸ H. Paulding to Gideon Welles, in *Ibid.*; B. S. Osbon to G. V. Fox, 12 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 137-138; A. Ludlow Case to Navy Department, 12 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 138; Hiram Paulding to Stevens, 12 August 1864, in *Ibid.*; Gideon Welles to Senior Naval Officer at Hampton Roads, 12 August 1864, in *Ibid.*; Gideon Welles to S. H. Stringham, 12 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 139; Gideon Welles to C. K. Stribling, 12 August 1864; in *Ibid.*; Gideon Welles to William Rogers Taylor, 12 August 1864, in *Ibid.*; Hiram Paulding to Senior Naval Officer at Hampton Roads, 12 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 140; “Highly Important,” *New York Times*, 13 August 1864, <http://www.nytimes.com/1864/08/13/news/highly-important-rebel-pirate-off-coast-depredations-tallahassee-she-captures.html> (accessed 21 June 2013); “The Rebellion,” *New York Times*, 14 August 1864, <http://www.nytimes.com/1864/08/14/news/the-rebellion.html> (accessed 21 June 2013).

³⁷⁹ Hiram Paulding to George M. Ransom, 13 August 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 3, 142; C. K. Stribling to Gideon Welles, in *Ibid.*, 143; S. H. Stringham to Gideon Welles, in *Ibid.*; S. H. Stringham to Gideon Welles, 14 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 146; S. H. Stringham to Gideon Welles, 14 August 1864, in *Ibid.*; William Rogers Taylor to Gideon Welles, 14 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 147; J. H. Upshur to Gideon Welles, 15 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 148; G. S. Blake to Gideon Welles, 15 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 148-149.

³⁸⁰ Hiram Paulding to Gideon Welles, 14 August 1864, *Ibid.*, 144; George M. Ransom to Gideon Welles, 14 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 145; Hiram Paulding to Gideon Welles, 14 August 1864, in *Ibid.*; George A. Stevens to Gideon Welles, 15 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 148; G. S. Blake to Gideon Welles, 15 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 148-149.

destination could be gained.³⁸¹ Given the remarkable pace of the *Tallahassee's* destruction and how little was known about the vessel, rumours began to circulate that greatly exaggerated the speed and prowess of the Confederate vessel as well as the scope of its attack. One early unsubstantiated rumour reported that the *Tallahassee* had turned one of its prizes into another commerce raider, much as the *CSS Florida* had done with the *Clarence* a year earlier.³⁸² A different report – apparently drawing on lingering resentment from the *Chesapeake* Affair – suggested that a Nova Scotian vessel was offering some sort of assistance to the *Tallahassee* during its raids.³⁸³ The report of a tending vessel was partially true, since the *Tallahassee* had briefly employed one of its captured vessels, the American pilot boat *James Funk*, but that vessel was cast off and burned after only one day's use.³⁸⁴ Another report from the captain of one of the *Tallahassee's* victims declared that the Confederate cruiser registered at 1,000 tons (well over twice its actual weight), carried a crew of 140 men, and was capable of steaming at the amazing speed of 18 knots.³⁸⁵

Until more substantial intelligence could be gathered, the *Tallahassee* would remain everywhere in the public imagination and yet nowhere to be found.

Following its last sighting in the vicinity of Cape Cod on August 14th, the

³⁸¹ G. S. Blake to Gideon Welles, 15 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 148-149.

³⁸² Gideon Welles to Senior Naval Officer at Hampton Roads, 12 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 138.

³⁸³ "The Rebellion," *New York Times*, 14 August 1864, <http://www.nytimes.com/1864/08/14/news/the-rebellion.html> (accessed 2 July 2013).

³⁸⁴ "The Tallahassee," *New York Times*, 29 September 1864; "List of vessels captured by the *C.S.S. Tallahassee*," in *ORNI*, vol. 3, 703.

³⁸⁵ George M. Ransom to Hiram Paulding, 17 August 1864, in *ORNI*, vol. 3, 152.

Tallahassee's movements remained unknown until two days later when a telegram from Halifax Consul Mortimer Jackson informed Washington that the *Tallahassee* had been sighted near Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, where it had sunk six vessels the day before.³⁸⁶ From there, the question for Union pursuers was what course would the *Tallahassee* take next. Wood could conceivably choose to take his vessel out to sea to prey upon American transatlantic shipping, while he might also choose to attack vessels in the Bay of Fundy or make for a neutral port like Halifax, Saint John, or St. George's (Bermuda).

Unbeknownst to his Union pursuers, John Taylor Wood was facing several urgent problems. Of primary concern was his vessel's depleted supply of coal. The CSS *Tallahassee's* supply of coal had dwindled to only 40 tons by the time it reached Nova Scotian waters, despite the fact that Wood had taken on an extra supply of coal before leaving Wilmington. Wood needed approximately 100 tons of coal to return to Wilmington and more if he desired to continue raiding elsewhere.³⁸⁷ Also of concern was damage that the *Tallahassee* had suffered during its capture of the sizable ship, the *Adriatic*, on August 12th. The 989 ton vessel carrying 163 passengers, most of whom were German immigrants bound for New York, had collided with the *Tallahassee* as the two vessels pulled alongside each other

³⁸⁶ Mortimer M. Jackson to Gideon Welles, 16 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 149.

³⁸⁷ Wood, "The 'Tallahassee's' Dash into New York Waters," 410; John Taylor Wood to Stephen R. Mallory, 31 August 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 3, 702; Thurston, *Tallahassee Skipper*, 217.

following the *Adriatic's* surrender.³⁸⁸ The *Tallahassee's* main mast had been snapped off and swept overboard during the collision, which also took part of the vessel's iron bulwark railing with it.³⁸⁹ The damage caused by this collision reduced the *Tallahassee* to one functional mast and, of more importance, severely limited Wood's auxiliary means of propulsion as his coal supply continued to dwindle.

Wood had already captured a vessel carrying coal, the Maine ship *James Littlefield*, but the prospect of transferring coal by boat between the vessels on the open sea appeared far too dangerous and time consuming for the Confederate commander.³⁹⁰ Wood instead decided to make for nearby Halifax in order to procure a supply of coal and, if possible, make repairs to his damaged mast. Arriving at the entrance to Halifax Harbour in a thick fog on the morning of August 18th, Wood secured the pilotage of a local fisherman and by midmorning was anchored in front of the city.³⁹¹

The Halifax that John Taylor Wood encountered differed somewhat from that which the *Chesapeake* pirates had encountered eight months earlier. In May 1864, Sir Richard Graves MacDonnell had been appointed by the Colonial Office as the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia, a move that finally filled the vacancy that had been filled by Major General Charles Hastings Doyle for the previous nine months.

³⁸⁸ "List of vessels captured by the *C.S.S. Tallahassee*," in *Ibid.*, 703; "The Tallahassee," *New York Times*, 29 September 1864.

³⁸⁹ *Halifax Citizen*, 20 August 1864; "The Tallahassee," *New York Times*, 29 September 1864.

³⁹⁰ Wood, "The Tallahassee's Dash into New York Waters," 413.

³⁹¹ "The Tallahassee," *New York Times*, 29 September 1864.

Formerly the administrator of Britain's Gambia River settlements, the island of St. Vincent, and the territory of South Australia, MacDonnell brought to Nova Scotia a reputation for heavy-handed rule and outspoken intolerance of differing political views.³⁹² Also in port at the time was Admiral Sir James Hope aboard the North Atlantic Squadron's new flagship, the HMS *Duncan*. Hope, who had taken over the post previously held by Admiral Sir Alexander Milne, was a veteran of the Crimean War and action on the Peiho River in China in 1859. Like his predecessor, Admiral Milne, Hope was esteemed by his contemporaries as a capable diplomat.³⁹³

Upon reaching Halifax, Wood immediately went aboard the HMS *Duncan* to call upon Admiral Hope. The reception that Wood received differed significantly from the reputation that Northern and Southern papers had previously bestowed upon Halifax following the *Chesapeake* Affair. His initial encounter with the British admiral was, in his own words, "very cold and uncivil."³⁹⁴ Hope was facing pressure from British authorities to show no favouritism toward Confederate warships, and, as a result, he had not engaged in the customary greeting aboard the visiting vessel. When Wood arrived on the *Duncan*, the admiral further eschewed standard courtesies including standing to greet Wood, shaking his hand, or even offering his

³⁹² Peter Burroughs, "Phipps, George Augustus Constantine, 3rd Earl of Mulgrave and 2nd Marquess of Normanby," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/hippys_george_augustus_constantine_11E.html (accessed 24 June 2013); Peter Burroughs, "MacDonnell, Sir Richard Graves," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/macdonnell_richard_graves_11E.html (accessed 24 June 2013).

³⁹³ Halifax *Provincial Wesleyan*, 23 December 1863; James Hope to Alexander Milne, 15 March 1864, in "The Papers of Sir Alexander Milne," MLN/114/4, NMM; Thurston, *Tallahassee Skipper*, 248.

³⁹⁴ John Taylor Wood to Stephen R. Mallory, 31 August 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 3, 702.

visiting commander a seat. Keenly aware of the slights he was receiving, Wood later wrote, "His manner and tone were offensive."³⁹⁵ Wood informed Hope that his purpose in visiting the port was to take on a supply of coal, and that he intended to return to sea immediately upon procuring it. Hope indicated that such any decisions regarding what the *Tallahassee* was permitted to do in port ultimately lay with Lieutenant-Governor MacDonnell.³⁹⁶ Going ashore to converse with the Lieutenant-Governor, Wood received a similarly cool reception, but received what he believed were no objections to his vessel staying in port for what Wood estimated would be two or three days.³⁹⁷

As the crew of the *Tallahassee* immediately set about procuring a supply of coal and making repairs, American consul Mortimer Jackson petitioned the colonial government to refuse use of the city's port facilities to the Confederate raider.³⁹⁸ Jackson also requested that colonial authorities detain the *Tallahassee* because of alleged violations of international law that had taken place during the vessel's cruise.³⁹⁹ While such allegations had no basis in fact, Jackson appears to have hoped that such complaints might produce a *Chesapeake*-style investigation capable of delaying the *Tallahassee's* departure long enough to allow pursuing Union warships to catch up with it. Provincial Secretary Charles Tupper, however, rejected Jackson's

³⁹⁵ John Taylor Wood to Stephen R. Mallory, 6 September 1864, in *Ibid.*, 705.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ John Taylor Wood to Stephen R. Mallory, 31 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 702; Richard Graves MacDonnell to Edward Cardwell, 18 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 706.

³⁹⁸ Mortimer M. Jackson to Gideon Welles, 18 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 151.

³⁹⁹ Mortimer M. Jackson to Charles Tupper, 18 August 1864, in "Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax."

initial claims, stating that sufficient evidence did not exist to warrant the *Tallahassee's* detention.⁴⁰⁰ The colonial government was acutely aware of the fleet of Union vessels hunting the Confederate cruiser and knew that any undue delay in the *Tallahassee's* departure might result in the vessel's capture and allegations of un-neutral activity on the part of the British.⁴⁰¹ Unless the Confederate raider violated Great Britain's neutrality, the Nova Scotian government was unwilling to intervene.

While the colonial government had chosen to adhere to strict standards of neutrality, the pro-Confederate population of Halifax was openly hospitable toward the crew of the *Tallahassee*. The Catholic Archbishop of Halifax, Thomas Louis Connolly, reportedly opened his home to the crew of the Confederate cruiser, and other members of the community, including Alexander Keith, Jr., Benjamin Wier, and Charles Pilsbury (editor of the Halifax *Morning Journal* and son of the former American consul) were said to have been openly sympathetic with the crew of the arrived vessel as well.⁴⁰² One member of the *Tallahassee's* crew, Dr. William G. Shepardson, suspected insincerity on the part of some Haligonians. Apart from some of the more committed members of the local elite, Shepardson opined that the warmth expressed by many Haligonians was the product of "an interested

⁴⁰⁰ Richard Graves MacDonnell to Edward Cardwell, 18 August 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 3, 706; Charles Tupper to Mortimer M Jackson, 18 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 707.

⁴⁰¹ Richard Graves MacDonnell to Edward Cardwell, 23 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 708.

⁴⁰² "The Tallahassee," *New York Times*, 29 September 1864; Mortimer M. Jackson to Frederick W. Seward, 22 January 1864, in "Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax."

friendship.”⁴⁰³ Indeed, the *Tallahassee*'s urgent material needs, coupled with a flourishing blockade-running trade in Halifax at the time,⁴⁰⁴ appear to have fostered more materialistic motives amongst residents during the Confederate raider's time in port.

One of the prominent Haligonians singled out by Dr. Shepardson for his “sympathy in something else besides empty words” was Benjamin Wier, of the firm Benjamin Wier & Co.⁴⁰⁵ Greg Marquis argues that Wier appears to have been similarly motivated by profit during the Civil War period; however, Wier's involvement with the Confederate cause, primarily in the realm of blockade-running, was far more extensive than that of most Haligonians.⁴⁰⁶ Following the *Tallahassee*'s arrival, Wood ordered one of his crew members to contact Wier and arrange for a transfer of coal to the Confederate vessel.⁴⁰⁷ Arrangements were successfully made and that afternoon the tugboat *Neptune* towed the *Tallahassee* to Woodside on the opposite side of Halifax Harbour, where the Confederate vessel

⁴⁰³ “The Tallahassee,” *New York Times*, 29 September 1864; J. Cutler Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 508.

⁴⁰⁴ On 22 August, three days after the *Tallahassee* left Halifax, Mortimer Jackson wired Washington to report that a total of five blockade-runners were currently at Halifax: Mortimer M. Jackson to William H. Seward, 22 August 1864, in “Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax.”

⁴⁰⁵ “The Tallahassee,” *New York Times*, 29 September 1864.

⁴⁰⁶ Mortimer M. Jackson to Frederick W. Seward, 20 August 1864, in “Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax”; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 169.

⁴⁰⁷ John Taylor Wood to Stephen R. Mallory, 31 August 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 3, 702; Royce Gordon Shingleton, *John Taylor Wood: Sea Ghost of the Confederacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979), 136.

began to take on a supply of coal from a Prussian brig, the *Marie Griefswold*, which had just arrived with a supply of Welsh anthracite coal.⁴⁰⁸

Dr. Almon and the Flight of the CSS *Tallahassee*

As the Confederates attempted to procure a new spar, which might potentially prove to be vital in the event the *Tallahassee* did not immediately reach another port after departing Halifax, they received significant assistance from Dr. William Johnston Almon. While the particulars of Dr. Almon's efforts remain unclear, the account provided by Dr. Shepardson describes the effort Dr. Almon made to assist the Confederate crew:

Dr. Almon, especially, has done all in his power, and we were indebted to him for many kindly acts. Through his energy we obtained a mast to replace the one lost, and his whole time, while we were there, seemed devoted to us. I have reason to be very grateful to him, and many Confederate officers can say the same, for he is never weary of good deeds.⁴⁰⁹

John Taylor Wood corroborated this account in his own recollection years later, recalling that “[t]o a distinguished gentleman of the medical profession we were indebted for a new spar . . .”⁴¹⁰ Dr. Almon's tangible assistance to another controversial vessel in Halifax, especially given the outcry that had resulted after the

⁴⁰⁸ Mortimer M. Jackson to William H. Seward, 18 August 1864, in “Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax”; Halifax *Morning Sun*, 19 August 1864; Halifax *Acadian Recorder*, 20 August 1864; Halifax *Evening Reporter*, 20 August 1864; Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 20 August 1864; “The Tallahassee,” *New York Times*, 29 September 1864; Wood, “The ‘Tallahassee’s’ Dash into New York Waters,” 414.

⁴⁰⁹ “The Tallahassee,” *New York Times*, 29 September 1864.

⁴¹⁰ Wood, “The ‘Tallahassee’s’ Dash into New York Waters,” 414.

Queen's Wharf incident eight months earlier, attests to the apparent depth of his Confederate sympathies, as well as his confidence that his aid to the Confederacy would not provoke a meaningful response from the Nova Scotian government.

Dr. Almon's assistance came during a key juncture in the *Tallahassee's* stay in Halifax. The Confederate vessel had already been plagued by allegations of depredations of "the greatest inhumanity" in the Northern press, but reports that the *Tallahassee* had taken on 180 tons of coal – far more coal than that needed to reach Wilmington – prompted Lieutenant-Governor MacDonnell to take steps to expel the Southern vessel from port.⁴¹¹ The reports that prompted this abrupt decision originated with observations made by several British officers who had boarded the *Tallahassee* for the purported purpose of inspecting the vessel's machinery, though in reality they had been charged with ensuring that the *Tallahassee* did not take on more coal than necessary.⁴¹² Upon receipt of these officers' report, Lieutenant-Governor MacDonnell immediately wrote to Commander Wood, informing him of his "surprise that you are still in port," saying that he had told Wood on his arrival that the Confederates' stay in the port of Halifax could not exceed 24 hours. MacDonnell added that any coal taken aboard the *Tallahassee* after the 24 hour mark would need to be immediately discharged.⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 415; Richard Graves MacDonnell to Edward Cardwell, 23 August 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 3, 707; Halifax *Morning Sun*, 19 August 1864.

⁴¹² John Taylor Wood to Stephen R. Mallory, 31 August 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 3, 702.

⁴¹³ Richard Graves MacDonnell to John Taylor Wood, 19 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 705.

Facing expulsion from port with what he believed to be an insufficient supply of coal, Wood immediately protested MacDonnell's decision. MacDonnell informed Wood that, according to his observers who had visited the *Tallahassee*, a supply of 100 tons of coal would be sufficient for the vessel to reach Wilmington. Wood insisted that such a quantity was insufficient, and added that, having already received permission to remain in port for two or three days, any changes in policy by the Nova Scotian government would be highly improper.⁴¹⁴

Returning to the *Tallahassee* facing the prospect of a premature departure from port, Wood was surprised to find eleven armed boats from the British frigate *Galatea* hovering near his vessel under orders to oversee Wood's compliance with the Lieutenant-Governor's orders. Going below decks, Wood was further surprised to learn that, contrary to the reports on which MacDonnell had acted, the *Tallahassee* only carried 80 tons of coal at the time of his return. Wood immediately protested to MacDonnell that his vessel had not violated British neutrality during the coaling process, and he requested that additional time be allowed for his vessel to take on its final complement of coal as well as its new mainmast.⁴¹⁵ Relieved that the *Tallahassee* had not in fact violated British neutrality, MacDonnell agreed to allow the vessel an additional 12 hours in port and he ordered *Galatea's* armed vessels away from the Confederate cruiser.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁴ John Taylor Wood to Stephen R. Mallory, 31 August 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 3, 702.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*; "The Tallahassee," *New York Times*, 29 September 1864.

⁴¹⁶ Richard Graves MacDonnell to John Taylor Wood, 19 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 704; Charles Tupper to John Taylor Wood, 19 August 1864, in *Ibid.*

Preparations were made for the *Tallahassee* to leave port as soon as the vessel had finished coaling and had loaded the main mast procured by Dr. Almon. Wood was keenly aware that Union pursuit was rapidly closing in on Halifax and that any unnecessary delay might result in the *Tallahassee* having to run through an expectant Union fleet outside of Halifax Harbour. Not taking the time to erect the steamer's newly acquired mainmast or to search for an estimated 27 men who had deserted while in port, Wood secured his new spar to the vessel's deck and, shortly after midnight on August 20th, approximately 40 hours after its arrival, the *Tallahassee* steamed out of Halifax Harbour. According to both the Halifax press and the account of Dr. William G. Shepardson, the *Tallahassee's* cruise out of Halifax Harbour was uneventful and it succeeded in making the open sea unopposed.⁴¹⁷ However, according to an account published by John Taylor Wood 34 years later, the *Tallahassee*, fearful of the prospect of Union warships roving just outside of Halifax Harbour, had taken the much shallower and narrower Eastern Passage out of Halifax on the east side of McNabs Island with the aid of a pilot who had been supplied by Benjamin Wier.⁴¹⁸ Though many subsequent historians like Arthur Thurston and Greg Marquis have accepted Taylor's account, Francis I. W. Jones points out that the absence of this event from other contemporary accounts casts

⁴¹⁷ Halifax *Acadian Recorder*, 20 August 1864; Halifax *Citizen*, 20 August 1864; Halifax *Evening Reporter*, 20 August 1864; Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 20 August 1864; Halifax *Morning Journal*, 22 August 1864; "The Tallahassee," *New York Times*, 29 September 1864; John Taylor Wood to Stephen R. Mallory, 31 August 1864, in *ORNI*, vol. 3, 702.

⁴¹⁸ Wood, "The 'Tallahassee's' Dash into New York Waters," 415-416.

doubt on its authenticity.⁴¹⁹ While his voyage out of Halifax may have been uneventful, Wood did succeed in scoring one last success. Despite his vessel's near-expulsion from port, Wood succeeded nonetheless in taking aboard a total of 120 tons of coal in Halifax prior to his departure.⁴²⁰

Wood's hurried departure ultimately proved unnecessary. The first Union pursuit vessel, the USS *Pontoosuc*, did not reach Halifax until around noon the following day.⁴²¹ Later that afternoon, after consulting with Consul Mortimer Jackson and Lieutenant-Governor MacDonnell, the commander of the *Pontoosuc* proceeded northward toward the Gulf of St. Lawrence, acting on reports that the *Tallahassee's* next targets would be fishing vessels in that area.⁴²² Such reports, Greg Marquis contends, were likely the result of deliberate misinformation, because the following day, after clearing the Nova Scotian coast, the *Tallahassee* turned south for Wilmington.⁴²³ Wood had originally intended to attack Northern shipping between the Delmarva Peninsula and Cape Fear, but fuel limitations, coupled with his desire to avoid a yellow fever outbreak that was afflicting Bermuda, compelled

⁴¹⁹ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 232-233, 338 n58; Thurston, *Tallahassee Skipper*, 256-260; Jones, "This Fraudulent Trade," 44 n. 18.

⁴²⁰ John Taylor Wood to Stephen R. Mallory, 31 August 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 3, 702.

⁴²¹ Mortimer M. Jackson to William H. Seward, 20 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 159; Richard Graves MacDonnell to Edward Cardwell, 23 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 708; Richard Graves MacDonnell to Edward Cardwell, 31 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 709.

⁴²² Mortimer M. Jackson to William H. Seward, 19 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 156; Richard Graves MacDonnell to Edward Cardwell, 31 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 709.

⁴²³ "The Tallahassee," *New York Times*, 29 September 1864; Shingleton, *John Taylor Wood*, 138-139; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 234-235.

him to return directly to the Confederacy.⁴²⁴ On the evening of August 26th, the *Tallahassee* successfully ran the Union blockade and reached Wilmington, bringing its cruise to a close.⁴²⁵

Though the *Tallahassee's* raid on Northern shipping resulted in the capture of 31 vessels and the diversion of a number of Union warships away from the Northern coast, Wood's cruise ultimately proved to be costly for the Confederacy.⁴²⁶ Several months after the *Tallahassee's* cruise, the Governor of North Carolina, Zebulon Baird Vance, and the commander of the Confederate garrison in and around Wilmington, William H. C. Whiting, wrote to officials in Richmond, complaining about the effect the *Tallahassee's* cruise had had upon the port of Wilmington, one of the Confederacy's vital ports for supplies. The disruption of Northern trade achieved by the *Tallahassee's* raid, they contended, had been more than offset by losses due to the added attention and subsequently increased blockading presence at Wilmington.⁴²⁷ According to estimates by Whiting, the cruise of the *Tallahassee* had resulted in the costly destruction or capture of approximately ten or eleven blockade-runners.⁴²⁸ From Petersburg, General Robert E. Lee voiced his own concerns to the Richmond government, cautioning officials there against

⁴²⁴ "The Tallahassee," *New York Times*, 29 September 1864; John Taylor Wood to Stephen R. Mallory, 31 August 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 3, 703.

⁴²⁵ "The Tallahassee," *New York Times*, 29 September 1864; Wood, "The 'Tallahassee's' Dash into New York Waters," 416.

⁴²⁶ "List of vessels captured by the *C.S.S. Tallahassee*," in *Ibid.*, 703-704.

⁴²⁷ William H. C. Whiting to Zebulon Baird Vance, 26 September 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 10, 750-51; William H. C. Whiting to Stephen R. Mallory, 6 October 1864, in *Ibid.*, 774-775; William H. C. Whiting to James A. Seddon, 11 October 1864, in *Ibid.*, 781-782; Zebulon Baird Vance to Jefferson Davis, 14 October 1864, in *Ibid.*, 783.

⁴²⁸ William H. C. Whiting to James A. Seddon, 11 October 1864, in *Ibid.*, 782

endangering the only port of supply for his army.⁴²⁹ While Stephen R. Mallory, the Confederate Secretary of the Navy, disagreed with Whiting's assessment, Confederate President Jefferson became furious with Whiting for his "ignorance . . . and disregard of the rights of others on whose service it was no part of his to duty to report." In addition to disregarding Whiting's report, Davis proceeded to replace the Wilmington commander with the battle-tested General Braxton Bragg.⁴³⁰

Another consequence of the *Tallahassee's* cruise was that it revealed a shift in policy on the part of the British government toward the Confederacy. During his time in Halifax, Dr. Shepardson of the *Tallahassee* noted a "a change in . . . feeling" by local officials that was "plainly seen."⁴³¹ While Shepardson blamed fear of Yankees and the influence exerted upon the colonial government by Lord Lyons, "who is, as is well known, completely under the thumb of . . . Mr. Seward," a pronounced change in government policy was apparent nonetheless.⁴³² Given the greater American agitation with Confederate abuse of British neutrality, as was evinced during the *Chesapeake* affair, plus growing British frustrations with those same actions, efforts to avoid displays of favouritism were stringently pursued. While members of the Haligonian public, including individuals like Dr. Almon, continued to openly

⁴²⁹ Robert E. Lee to James A. Seddon, 23 September 1864, in *Ibid.*, 747-748.

⁴³⁰ Jefferson Davis, 21 October 1864, endorsement on William H. C. Whiting to James A. Seddon, 11 October 1864, in *Ibid.*, 782; Jefferson Davis to Braxton Bragg, 15 October 1864, in *Ibid.*, 784-785; Stephen R. Mallory to Jefferson Davis, 22 October 1864, in *Ibid.*, 793-794.

⁴³¹ "The Tallahassee," *New York Times*, 29 September 1864.

⁴³² *Ibid.*

sympathize with the Confederacy, the British government, in the face of increasing Confederate activity within its territories, redoubled efforts to enforce its neutrality.

British Blockade-Running during the U. S. Civil War

While incidents like the hijacking of the *Chesapeake* and the cruise of the *Tallahassee* served as landmark cases in the ebb and flow of Anglo-American public opinion, the illicit blockade-running trade spawned by the Civil War was also significant in terms of its impact on sentiment in North America. The Union blockade of Southern ports fueled high prices for goods in the South, and the Confederacy's urgent need to finance its war effort meant that cotton could be purchased by blockade-runners for low prices, sometimes as little as 6¢ per pound. Such cargoes could then be resold in the North, Great Britain, and elsewhere for prices as high as 54¢ per pound, assuring successful blockade-runners a profitable role as middlemen.⁴³³ The involvement of British citizens in blockade-running – and indeed the majority of blockade-runners appear to have been British – gave many in Great Britain and British North America a material investment in the Southern cause. Such involvement, according to Francis I. W. Jones, appears to have had an impact on opinion in places like the city

⁴³³ Stanley Lebergott, "Through the Blockade: The Profitability and Extent of Cotton Smuggling, 1861-1865," *Journal of Economic History* 41, no. 1 (1981): 868-869 JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2120650> (accessed 18 March 2013).

of Halifax, which was involved in the blockade-running trade throughout the war and briefly served as a key hub for the trade in the summer of 1864.⁴³⁴

Despite the Union navy's increased size and strategy of progressively eliminating of key blockade-running ports throughout the war, vessels continued to slip past Union blockaders until the last days of the war. Though the Confederate government attempted to take on a greater role in blockade-running later in the conflict, the overwhelming majority of blockade-running trade was conducted by merchants and trading firms. The reason for primacy of the private sector in blockade-running appears to be twofold. First, as Craig L. Symonds has observed, the Confederate government was neither logistically equipped nor ideologically inclined to take on a significant role in the blockade-running trade. The South possessed only two shipyards at the outset of hostilities – those at Norfolk and Pensacola – and the need develop naval military capabilities was of far more pressing importance to officials in Richmond. Additionally, the mantra of laissez-faire economics that Southern politicians had trumpeted prior to the war meant that few Southerners would likely support an increased government involvement in economic affairs.⁴³⁵

The second reason for the predominance of private blockade-running relates to the greater capital needs the blockade-running trade took on as the war

⁴³⁴ Jones, "This Fraudulent Trade," 35, 42.

⁴³⁵ Symonds, *The Civil War at Sea*, 49; Merli, *Great Britain and the Confederate Navy*, 247-249; Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 19-20; Cochran, *Blockade Runners of the Confederacy*, 18-19.

progressed. Early in the war, blockade-running vessels consisted of a wide variety of existing merchant craft, many of which included slower sailing vessels. However, as the war continued and the effectiveness of the Union blockade continued to improve, steamers became the choice means of running the blockade because of their greater speeds, greater maneuverability, and their lack of dependence on highly visible sails. The greater capital needed to acquire and maintain these more-effective steam-powered vessels meant that larger merchant firms would ultimately come to dominate the blockade-running trade, including firms like Benjamin Wier & Co. of Halifax, Fraser, Trenholm & Co. of Liverpool, and the Palmetto Importing and Exporting Company of Charleston.⁴³⁶

The demand for capable blockade-runners eventually gave rise to a new class of vessels built specifically for that purpose. While Confederate purchasing agents were attempting to covertly construct Confederate warships in British shipyards, British trading firms were also involved in the construction of a fleet of vessels designed specifically for evading Union warships and navigating the shallow waters that surrounded many Southern ports. The typical custom-built blockade-runner was designed to be difficult to see, particularly during the night or early morning or early evening hours, which was when most blockade-runners attempted

⁴³⁶ Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 143; Cochran, *Blockade Runners of the Confederacy*, 43, 87, 165; Taylor, *Running the Blockade*, 93-94; Dave Horner, *The Blockade Runners: True Tales of Running the Yankee Blockade of the Confederate Coast* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1968), 5.

to make their runs in and out of port.⁴³⁷ Most of these vessels possessed a long, low profile – typically painted a dull grey or white – and were generally equipped with spare rigging, if the vessel possessed any at all. Such vessels were also designed to draw very little water and rely on side-paddle or screw propeller propulsion.⁴³⁸ The fuel of choice for blockade-runners was anthracite coal because it produced little or no visible smoke, making detection by Northern blockaders especially difficult.⁴³⁹ While many blockade-runners of this design proved to be very effective, a significant number were poorly constructed in the rush to accrue wartime profits.⁴⁴⁰ The Glasgow-built blockade-runner *Will-o'-the-Wisp*, for example, was “shamefully put together” according one contemporary, and the vessel was repeatedly forced to travel to Halifax for repairs throughout the course of its service in the war.⁴⁴¹

With the Confederacy unable to supply most of its own wartime needs, the cargoes blockade-runners carried became crucial to the Confederate war effort. War materiel proved to be one of the South’s foremost concerns throughout the course of the war. Though the region had experienced proportionately rapid

⁴³⁷ Wilkinson, *The Narrative of a Blockade-Runner*, 86; Cochran, *Blockade Runners of the Confederacy*, 174; Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 110.

⁴³⁸ Wilkinson, *The Narrative of a Blockade-Runner*, 86-87; Warren F. Spencer, *The Confederate Navy in Europe* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1983), 194; Merli, *Great Britain and the Confederate Navy*, 236-238; Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 108.

⁴³⁹ Merli, *Great Britain and the Confederate Navy*, 238; Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 108.

⁴⁴⁰ Cochran, *Blockade Runners of the Confederacy*, 89-90.

⁴⁴¹ Charles Maxwell Allen to William H. Seward, 29 December 1863, in *Dispatches from Bermuda*, 108-109; Charles Maxwell Allen to William H. Seward, 18 January 1864, in *Ibid.*, 111; Thomas E. Taylor, *Running the Blockade: A Personal Narrative of Adventures, Risks, and Escapes during the American Civil War* (London: John Murray, 1896), 101-102.

industrialization prior to the conflict, the Confederacy's demand for armaments outstripped its ability to supply for that need on its own. For example, during the period from September 1862 to September 1863 the South imported over 113,000 small arms through the blockade – over three times the number of small arms manufactured in the South at that same time.⁴⁴² Also of concern was the Confederacy's ability to feed its armies and civilian population. Though the South was a heavily agricultural region, cotton production needed to be maintained in order to finance the war effort, and poor transportation and distribution mechanisms throughout the Confederacy accentuated the region's food shortages.⁴⁴³ Because of this need, foodstuffs were frequently imported by the South with one of the most popular imports being meat, which was often procured by Confederate purchasing agents in British North America and even in the North for shipment through the blockade.⁴⁴⁴ Medical supplies were also coveted by blockade-runners. While the Confederacy was capable of manufacturing homemade substitutes for certain medicines, most supplies – like chloroform, ether, and quinine – needed to be imported from abroad.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴² Cochran, *Blockade Runners of the Confederacy*, 48.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 47-49.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 37; Ludwell H. Johnson, "Beverly Tucker's Canadian Mission, 1864-1865," *The Journal of Southern History* 29, no. 1 (1963): 88-99, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2205103> (accessed 20 February 2013).

⁴⁴⁵ Cochran, *Blockade Runners of the Confederacy*, 196; Guy R. Hasegawa, "Southern Resources, Southern Medicines," in James M. Schmidt and Guy R. Hasegawa, eds., *Years of Change and Suffering: Modern Perspectives on Civil War Medicine* (Roseville, Minnesota: Edinborough Press, 2009), 107.

To minimize the risks associated with illicit wartime trade, most blockade-running vessels operated from intermediary ports like St. George's, Nassau, or Havana, while cargos for those vessels often originated from more distant locations, such as ports in the United States, British North America, or Europe. There were several reasons that these ports became the primary launching point for blockade-runners. One of the foremost factors was their neutral status and close proximity to the South. The distance from Bermuda to Wilmington was 674 miles. Nassau stood only 515 miles from Charleston and was just 500 miles from Savannah.⁴⁴⁶ Havana was the closest neutral port along the Confederacy's Gulf coast and resultantly served as the primary launching point for blockade-runners traveling to ports like Mobile, Galveston, or the neutral port of Matamoros, Mexico, which lay across to the Rio Grande from Brownsville, Texas.⁴⁴⁷

Another reason for the importance of St. George's, Nassau, and Havana was those ports' ability to serve as hubs of blockade-running traffic. Because of their neutral status, cargos both to and from the Confederacy could be transshipped with near impunity. This practice was an important facet of the blockade-running trade. By transferring goods from regular ocean-going vessels to specially-designed blockade-runners, firms in the North, Great Britain, and elsewhere could engage in blockade-running indirectly and, as a result, with significantly reduced risks.⁴⁴⁸ The flurry of un-neutral activity that this practice sparked was described by Confederate

⁴⁴⁶ Cochran, *Blockade Runners of the Confederacy*, 44.

⁴⁴⁷ Taylor, *Running the Blockade*, 145; Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*; Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 411.

⁴⁴⁸ Horner, *The Blockade Runners*, 5.

blockade-running captain John Wilkinson during a stopover in Nassau in 1863 where he witnessed the abundance of cotton in the port awaiting shipment to the United States, Europe, and elsewhere. Drawing from Coleridge, Wilkinson exclaimed, "Cotton, cotton, everywhere! Blockade-runners discharging it into lighters, tier upon tier of it, piled high upon the wharves, and merchant vessels, chiefly under the British flag, loading with it."⁴⁴⁹ Despite the presence of illicitly obtained cotton, British and Spanish authorities did little to thwart the trade of the much sought after commodity. Goods destined for the Confederacy, usually declared to port officials as generic "merchandise" destined for other neutral ports, appear to have faced a similar absence of serious scrutiny.⁴⁵⁰

Blockade-Running in Halifax and the Case of Charles Almon

The port of Halifax, despite its excellent harbour and facilities and long history of smuggling before the war, did not figure prominently in the blockade-running trade until the summer of 1864. Prior to that time, the port was primarily used as a base for refueling and repairing blockade-runners, as well as a base for transshipping goods to the ports of St. George's and Nassau.⁴⁵¹ Halifax's repair facilities were

⁴⁴⁹ Wilkinson, *The Narrative of a Blockade-Runner*, 86.

⁴⁵⁰ Frank Evan Vandiver, John Tory Bourne, and Smith Stansbury, *Confederate Blockade Running through Bermuda, 1861-1865: Letters and Cargo Manifests* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1947).

⁴⁵¹ Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 191-192; Jones, "This Fraudulent Trade," 35; Daniel Samson, *The Spirit of Industry and Improvement: Liberal Government and Rural-Industrial Society, Nova Scotia, 1790-1862* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008).

particularly important throughout the war. Located in Dartmouth and owned by the Chebucto Marine Railway (whose principal investor included individuals like former American consul Albert Pilsbury and Benjamin Wier & Co. associate John Wylde), the Dartmouth slips were the closest neutral facilities to the Confederacy that remained open to blockade-runners after the British government closed its repair facilities at Bermuda to smugglers in early 1864.⁴⁵² Given the poor construction of such vessels, Halifax's facilities were crucial for keeping blockade-runners in service throughout the war.

Several factors had made Halifax initially unattractive to blockade-runners during the war. Foremost was the port's distance from the Confederacy: Halifax lay 800 miles northeast of Wilmington. Such a distance meant not only greater travel times, but also greater demand for coal in order to complete such runs.⁴⁵³ In addition to the heightened expenditures that such additional demand might incur, the acquisition of coal itself became increasingly difficult due to a variety of prohibitions on the export of anthracite coal that had been enacted by both the United States and British North America in 1864.⁴⁵⁴ However, as the case of the *Tallahassee* illustrates, coal could still be acquired in the port of Halifax – even by

⁴⁵² Edmund Hammond to Alexander Milne, 15 March 1864, in "The Papers of Sir Alexander Milne," MLN/114/4, NMM; Charles Maxwell Allen to William H. Seward, 10 March 1864, in *Dispatches from Bermuda*, 120; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 55.

⁴⁵³ Jones, "This Fraudulent Trade," 39.

⁴⁵⁴ William H. Seward to Lord Lyons, 18 March 1864, in *FRUS, 1864*, vol. 2, 561; Proclamation by Viscount Monck, 6 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 683.

warships – after such prohibitions had been enacted, though its sale and transport came under increasing scrutiny by both British and American authorities.

According to Francis I. W. Jones, another reason for Halifax’s infrequent utilization was the constant stream of information provided by Halifax consul Mortimer M. Jackson, who, unlike his counterparts in Bermuda, Nassau, and Havana, possessed a direct telegraph link to Washington.⁴⁵⁵ While the effectiveness of such communication is debatable given the significant distance between Halifax and the Union’s blockading fleet, Jackson’s dogged efforts may have nonetheless deterred a number of potential blockade-runners given the repercussions such identification could potentially have on a trader’s other legitimate activities. Concerns of this nature were not baseless, as was illustrated in late 1864 when Consul Mortimer Jackson refused to countersign the passport of Alexander Keith, Jr. for travel to the North due to Keith’s public reputation as both a “Confederate agent and blockade runner . . .”⁴⁵⁶

Despite these obstacles, a significant portion of the Confederacy’s Atlantic blockade-running traffic shifted to Halifax during the summer of 1864, following an outbreak of yellow fever in the ports of Bermuda and Nassau. The outbreak, which began in June, gradually worsened as the summer wore on. By late July, the American consul for Bermuda, Charles Maxwell Allen, wrote to Washington saying, “There is much talk among the blockade runners here of sending their steamers to

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁶ Mortimer M. Jackson to William H. Seward, 30 December 1864, in “Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax.”

Halifax on account of the prevalence of yellow fever at this port.”⁴⁵⁷ By August, after the outbreak had worsened and assumed what Allen called a “most malignant nature,” the overwhelming majority of blockade-runners destined for the ports of Wilmington and Charleston were originating from Halifax.⁴⁵⁸

Given Halifax’s competitive labour market, many of the city’s seafarers were already amenable to joining the blockade-runners given the high wages afforded by the trade. Francis I. W. Jones noted that the average sailor could potentially earn “twice his annual pay” after completing a single successful run of the blockade.⁴⁵⁹ According to Stephen R. Wise, captains could make as much as \$5,000 after a single completed trip. Pilots could earn as much as \$3,500 per trip, while engineers and first officers could make as much as \$2,500 and \$1,250 respectively. Even ordinary crew members were able to earn as much as \$250 after a single trip.⁴⁶⁰ In contrast to the higher potential wages emphasized by Wise, Francis B. C. Bradlee offers lower estimates in his analysis of the more typical pay given to blockade-runners. According to Bradlee, blockade-running firms typically paid captains \$1,000 after a completed voyage, with pilots typically receiving \$750, chief engineers \$500, first

⁴⁵⁷ Charles Maxwell Allen to William H. Seward, 1 July 1864, in *Dispatches from Bermuda*, 141; Charles Maxwell Allen to William H. Seward, 29 July 1864, in *Ibid.*, 147.

⁴⁵⁸ Consul Allen recorded only one arrival from Wilmington for the months of August and September during this epidemic: Charles Maxwell Allen to William H. Seward, 26 September 1864, in *Ibid.*, 153; Charles Maxwell Allen to William H. Seward, 5 August 1864, in *Ibid.*, 148.

⁴⁵⁹ Jones, “This Fraudulent Trade,” 43.

⁴⁶⁰ Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 110-111.

officers \$250, and ordinary seamen \$50.⁴⁶¹ Even by the standards indicated by Bradlee, blockade-running remained an extremely lucrative trade for seafarers.

While such earning potential was key for attracting sailors, other practices on the part of both blockade-running firms and the Union navy added to the appeal of blockade-running. Perhaps one of the most important was the practice of paying a sailor half of his wages in advance.⁴⁶² Since a successful run through the blockade was not a certainty, this practice provided sailors with a degree of economic security even in the event a voyage ended in capture or shipwreck. Another equally important factor was the Union navy's practice of immediately releasing neutral citizens captured aboard blockade-runners. When blockade-running vessels were captured, the American navy did not arrest British citizens onboard as prisoners-of-war because such citizens were protected under British law. Unless a blockade-running vessel resisted (thereby legally becoming a "pirate"), the American navy typically proved to be unwilling to upset relations with Great Britain, which, as a result, meant that naval commanders seldom went beyond confiscating the offending vessel and its cargo.⁴⁶³ As a result, most crew members captured from blockade-runners were released by the Union navy at the nearest neutral port. Such economic and political protections, coupled with minimal risks to life or limb,

⁴⁶¹ Francis B. C. Bradlee, *Blockade Running During the Civil War: And the Effect of Land and Water Transportation on the Confederacy* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1974), 143-144.

⁴⁶² Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 110; Jones, "This Fraudulent Trade," 43.

⁴⁶³ Jones, "This Fraudulent Trade," 37; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 51.

ultimately meant that sailors faced few, if any, disincentives when it came to their involvement in running the blockade.⁴⁶⁴

While Halifax's time as hub of blockade-running was brief – by November Consul Charles Maxwell Allen reported more blockade-runners in Bermuda than at any other time⁴⁶⁵ – the city's short experience with wartime smuggling likely influenced the decision of Dr. Almon's son, Charles McColla Almon, to join the blockade-runners. While little is known about the reasons behind the 17-year old Almon's decision to participate in the blockade-running trade, the ability to become directly involved in the Confederate war effort with few accompanying risks likely made such an opportunity appear particularly appealing to both him and his father.⁴⁶⁶ The ease with which involvement in blockade-running could be pursued also likely facilitated Charles' actions. By late 1864, several Haligonian businessmen and firms were well-known throughout the city for their involvement in wartime smuggling, including Alexander Keith, Jr., G. C. Harvey, and the associates of Benjamin Wier & Co.⁴⁶⁷ For someone with the social stature and wartime reputation of Dr. Almon, finding a prominent and lucrative position for his son in one of those firms would have been relatively easy.

⁴⁶⁴ Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 110; Jones, "This Fraudulent Trade," 37; Symonds, *The Civil War at Sea*, 49.

⁴⁶⁵ Charles Maxwell Allen to William H. Seward, 16 November 1864, in *Dispatches from Bermuda*, 159-160.

⁴⁶⁶ Slayter, "Almon."

⁴⁶⁷ Mortimer M. Jackson to William H. Seward, 20 August 1864, in "Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax."

Charles ultimately ended up serving aboard “a couple of blockade-runners” as a supercargo during the final months of the war.⁴⁶⁸ While little is known of his service aboard such vessels, a letter written in the summer of 1865 from Dr. Almon’s second son, Thomas Ritchie Almon, suggests that Charles’ service was eventful. Written while he was studying in Paris, Thomas makes reference in his letter to an individual not knowing about his younger brother’s “attempts at smuggling in Galveston.”⁴⁶⁹ Since the majority of blockade-running traffic from Halifax and Bermuda was destined for Wilmington, Charles’ involvement in blockade-running at Galveston suggests that such activity took place after the fall of Fort Fisher on January 15th, 1865, when the bulk of blockade-running traffic shifted to the few remaining Confederate ports along the Gulf of Mexico.⁴⁷⁰

This timing, along with the implied failure that Thomas references when describing his brother’s “attempts” at Galveston, suggests that Charles probably served aboard the *Will-o’-the-Wisp*, the only Halifax-connected vessel that failed to run the Union blockade at Galveston after mid-January 1865.⁴⁷¹ According to Union naval records, the *Will-o’-the-Wisp* ran the Union blockade in a thick fog on February 8th and ran aground somewhere near Galveston. The blockade-runner’s crew was successful in removing both the vessel’s cargo and most of its engine components

⁴⁶⁸ Slayter, “Almon”; Dennis, “The Most Exciting Christmas Week,” *Halifax Herald*, 23 December 1896; *Halifax Church Work*, 1 August 1920.

⁴⁶⁹ Thomas Ritchie Almon to Elizabeth Ritchie Almon, 20 July 1865, in “Almon Family Correspondence.”

⁴⁷⁰ Mortimer M. Jackson to Frederick W. Seward, 18 February 1865, in “Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax.”

⁴⁷¹ “Steam Blockade Runners Unable to Reach Gulf Ports, January 1862 - June 1865,” in Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 283.

before linking up with Confederate cavalry troops nearby. The following day, several Union warships arrived and burned what remained of the steamer's wreck.⁴⁷² If Charles had indeed been aboard the *Will-'o-the-Wisp*, the tightening Union blockade likely prevented him from leaving Galveston until sometime that summer after the Confederate forces in the region under General Kirby Smith finally surrendered.⁴⁷³

Charles Almon's involvement in wartime smuggling sheds light on the attitude of his father as well as the general sentiment within the broader Halifax community. For Dr. Almon, his willingness to allow his young son to serve aboard a blockade-runner adheres to a personal pattern of increasing wartime involvement. Despite the risks associated with his eldest son's service in the Confederate medical corps and his own involvement in both the *Chesapeake* and *Tallahassee* affairs, by 1865 Dr. Almon appears to have remained willing to become even more involved in the Confederate war effort. This trend of continually-increasing Confederate support lasted, as one can see from the case of Charles, until literally the final days of the war.

Though Charles is, on the one hand, a specific case study in blockade-running participation, he is also in many ways representative of the city of Halifax's

⁴⁷² George F. Emmons to J. S. Palmer, 8 February 1865, in *ORN I*, vol. 22, 32; Report of M. B. Woolsey, 10 February 1865, in *Ibid.*, 34-35; Report of C. E. McKay, 10 February 1864, in *Ibid.*, 35-36; Report of John F. Harden, 10 February 1865, in *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴⁷³ "Steam Blockade Runners Clearing Texas Ports, February 1862-June 1865," in Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 275.

economic involvement in the Civil War. While legitimate trade with the North thrived during the Civil War years, the adventure and profitability of blockade-running appealed to significant segments of the population. For a young male individual like Charles – who, as Almon’s fourth son, likely stood to gain little in the way of inheritance from his father – such involvement likely appeared to be not only exciting, but economically and socially advantageous. The fact that his involvement in blockade-running would serve a cause greatly championed by his father likely helped make his decision to participate in that trade a relatively easy one.

Charles, however, was also atypical of individuals involved in the blockade-running trade. While blockade-runners did attempt to reach Texas until the final days of the war, many individuals and firms involved in wartime smuggling began to cut ties with blockade-runners and pursue legitimate avenues of trade as the transition to a peacetime economy began to appear imminent. Benjamin Wier, one of the foremost financiers of blockade-runners in Halifax, was one of the many in Halifax to pursue such a strategy as the war drew to a close.⁴⁷⁴ In this context, such late wartime involvement on the part of Charles and his family appears to belie motives beyond simple economy expediency. His involvement in the blockade-running trade, though carrying economic many incentives, appears to have been at its root ideologically motivated.

⁴⁷⁴ According to the blockade-runner Thomas E. Taylor, specially constructed blockade-running vessels were “practically valueless” on the open market after the war. See: Taylor, *Running the Blockade*, 164; David A. Sutherland, “Wier, Benjamin,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio.php?id_nbr=4774 (accessed 21 January 2013).

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Dr. Almon and his Ties to the Confederacy and its Sympathizers

During the latter part of 1864, probably after the *Tallahassee* affair, an editorial appeared in a New York newspaper lambasting the citizens of Nova Scotia for being “abettors of secessionists.” One of the examples of the “Bluenose effrontery” that the paper criticized was “the notorious Dr. Almon.” According to the paper, Almon was a “friend and correspondent of Jeff Davis” and a “boon companion of Southern brass and pirates who hover about the shores of Nova Scotia.”⁴⁷⁵ While Almon was not a friend of Confederate President Jefferson Davis – he had merely received a letter of thanks written on the president’s behalf – the paper’s accusation regarding Almon’s friendship with other Confederate elites is much more substantial. Dr. Almon’s increasing involvement in the Confederate war effort coincided with a significant increase in the number of Confederate agents and sympathizers passing through Halifax en route to various assignments in British North America, the Caribbean, or Europe. Having escaped legal consequences for his actions on Queen’s Wharf, Almon faced little deterrent as he and his family increasingly began to associate with various Confederates and their supporters.

One of the most prominent examples of the Almon family’s close ties to the Confederacy was William Bruce II’s service in the Confederate medical corps. Having left Halifax in November 1863, William Bruce spent over a month in Bermuda before finally boarding a blockade-runner bound for the Confederacy. The

⁴⁷⁵ Mackenzie, “The Almons,” 34, in “Almon Family Scrapbook.”

vessel he booked passage on was the brand new Glasgow-built steamer, *The Dare*, which had only recently reached Bermuda for the first time.⁴⁷⁶ During the early morning hours of January 3rd, 1864, *The Dare* departed from St. George's, Bermuda reportedly bound for the Bahamas.⁴⁷⁷ The vessel's true destination, however, was the prominent blockade-running port of Wilmington.⁴⁷⁸

On January 22nd, a week and a half after the Police Court hearings in Halifax and nearly three weeks after William Bruce's departure from Bermuda, Halifax consul Mortimer Jackson wrote to Washington informing Assistant Secretary of State Frederick W. Seward that reports had arrived in Halifax saying that the son of Dr. William Johnston Almon had been captured onboard *The Dare* off of Wilmington.⁴⁷⁹ How Consul Jackson heard of the capture of William Bruce Almon is not clear; however, while *The Dare* did fail to reach Wilmington, no passengers or members of the vessel's crew were taken prisoner by the Union navy. According to Union naval records, *The Dare* was spotted by Union blockading vessels off of Wilmington during the early morning hours of January 7th, 1864. Two Union warships gave chase and opened fire, which began a five hour-long chase that ended

⁴⁷⁶ Mortimer M. Jackson to Frederick W. Seward, 22 January 1864, in "Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax"; Charles Maxwell Allen to William H. Seward, 21 December 1863, in *Dispatches from Bermuda*, 106-107; Vandiver, Bourne, and Stansbury, *Confederate Blockade Running through Bermuda*, 123.

⁴⁷⁷ Georgiana Walker, 3 January 1864, in *The Private Journal of Georgiana Gholson Walker*, 59; Vandiver, Bourne, and Stansbury, *Confederate Blockade Running through Bermuda*, 123; "Schedule of Blockade-Running Vessels," in *Dispatches from Bermuda*, 213.

⁴⁷⁸ Charles Maxwell Allen to William H. Seward, 18 January 1864, in *Dispatches from Bermuda*, 111.

⁴⁷⁹ Mortimer M. Jackson to Frederick W. Seward, 22 January 1864, in "Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax."

only when *The Dare* ran aground on the Carolina coast. Braving rough seas and a torrential downpour, several boats from the pursuing Union warships attempted to reach shore and seize the vessel and its passengers. The Union shore party found the vessel deserted, and ultimately the only prisoners taken that day were sixteen Union seamen who were stranded on the Confederate coast after their boats swamped.⁴⁸⁰

While little is known of his experience during *The Dare's* ill-fated attempt to run the blockade, eight days after his arrival in the Confederacy William Bruce received a military passport in Wilmington permitting him to travel to Richmond, Virginia to report for duty.⁴⁸¹ A pass issued in Henrico County, Virginia on January 26th indicates William Bruce reached Richmond at that time, but six months passed before the young Nova Scotian doctor was accepted for duty. One family account written over sixty years later suggests that Confederate authorities initially suspected William Bruce of being a Northern spy.⁴⁸² Whatever the reason, William Bruce was finally accepted for duty by the Confederate medical service on August 17th, 1864.⁴⁸³

Ordered to report to South Carolina for assignment, William Bruce was appointed as an assistant surgeon in the Ladies Hospital in Columbia on August

⁴⁸⁰ E. H. Faucon to S. P. Lee, 8 Jan 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 9, 388-389; Robert Wiley to E. H. Faucon, 7 January 1864, in *Ibid.*, 389.

⁴⁸¹ Military passport for "Dr. Almon," 15 January 1864, in "Almon Family Scrapbook."

⁴⁸² Almon, "William Johnston Almon."

⁴⁸³ F. T. Miles to William Bruce Almon II, 17 August 1864, in "Almon Family Scrapbook."

26th.⁴⁸⁴ The Ladies Hospital, so-called because of its staffing by volunteer women from the surrounding community, was situated in a former railcar factory near the Charlotte Railroad line.⁴⁸⁵ During his time there, William Bruce likely encountered significant challenges in his work given the limited supplies he would have possessed and the frequently ersatz nature of Southern medicinal substitutes. William Bruce also appears to have suffered from illness during his time in Columbia. Contemporaries ascribed William Bruce's early death from tuberculosis in February 1867 to the fact that he likely contracted the disease during his time in the South. This theory appears to be corroborated by the fact that, between August 1864 and February 1865, William Bruce was granted two separate leaves of absence that totaled 90 days in all.⁴⁸⁶

William Bruce's short term in Columbia ultimately ended when the city was evacuated as the Union army under William Tecumseh Sherman neared the city. Making his way overland to Florida, he finally surrendered to Union forces near

⁴⁸⁴ Special order from Adjutant and Inspector General's Office to William Bruce Almon II, 26 August 1864, in *Ibid.*; Order from Adjutant and Inspector General's Office to William Bruce Almon II, 26 August 1864, in *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁵ [Mrs. Campbell Bryce] to Seddon, 8 March 1864, in "Confederate Hospitals in South Carolina Research Files, 1861-1991," folder 23, comp., Thomas More Downey, 1992, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina; Mrs. Campbell Bryce to M. M. Blake, 13 October 1862, in *Ibid.*; Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies Hospital, ca. September 1862, in *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁶ Halifax *Evening Reporter*, 30 September 1865; Special Order from Headquarters of the Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, 19 November 1864, in "Almon Family Scrapbook"; Special Order from Headquarters of the Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, 21 February 1865, in *Ibid.*; Obituary for William Bruce Almon II, in "Almon Family Scrapbook"; Almon, "William Johnston Almon"; Hasegawa, "Southern Resources, Southern Medicines," in *Years of Change and Suffering*, 118-119.

Gainesville on June 19th, over a month after the Confederates in the area under Major General Sam Jones had capitulated to Union troops. William Bruce was immediately paroled after swearing an oath not to take up arms against the United States, and later that summer he was back in Halifax, where he quickly became a staunch defender of the former Confederacy and its cause.⁴⁸⁷

Dr. Almon's wife, Elizabeth Lichtenstein Almon, also appears to have been involved in the pro-Confederate activities of her husband and sons. While little material remains regarding her attitudes or actions during the war, Elizabeth appears to have been well-apprised of the events occurring in the male-dominated world that surrounded her. For example, Elizabeth was the recipient of the letter in which Thomas Ritchie Almon mentions Charles' service aboard a blockade-runner, and another letter from the Southern physician Luke Pryor Blackburn to Dr. William Johnston Almon, asked Almon to introduce two of his Confederate colleagues to "Mrs. Almond [sic] and family . . ." ⁴⁸⁸ In addition to being knowledgeable of the wartime associations of her family, Elizabeth also appears to have periodically taken an active role in the Confederate war effort. Perhaps the most public display of Confederate support on Elizabeth's part occurred in the fall of 1864, when she and several other prominent women in Halifax (including the daughter of the former American consul, Albert Pilsbury) organized a fundraiser for the Southern Prisoners

⁴⁸⁷ Certificate of parole for W. B. Almon, 19 June 1865, in "Almon Family Scrapbook"; Halifax *Evening Reporter*, 30 September 1865; Sam Jones to Israel Vodges, 12 May 1865, in *ORA* I, vol. 47, pt. 3, 485.

⁴⁸⁸ Luke Pryor Blackburn to William Johnston Almon, 26 January 1862 [sic], in "Almon Family Correspondence"; Thomas Ritchie Almon to Elizabeth Ritchie Almon, 20 July 1865, in *Ibid.*

Relief Fund. The fundraiser was organized to help Southern prisoners-of-war in Northern prison camps, and by the time of its completion, \$2,500 had been raised.⁴⁸⁹ While her involvement in the Confederate war effort might not have been on the scale of that of her husband or children, Elizabeth nonetheless played an important role in publicly supporting her husband's activities, since, as Leonore Davidoff has noted, Victorian women often served as "arbiters of social acceptance or rejection" for their families.⁴⁹⁰

Dr. Almon also appears to have maintained connections with a number of prominent Confederate sympathizers within the city of Halifax as well, the most famous being the Irish-born Catholic archbishop for the colony, Thomas Louis Connolly. Known for his urbane and dignified manner, Connolly frequently served as a mediator between Nova Scotia's Irish-Catholic population and the colony's Protestant majority, and his open rejection of Fenianism enhanced his reputation as a political moderate within Nova Scotia.⁴⁹¹ During the Civil War, Connolly was one of the Halifax's most prominent Confederate sympathizers. A Southern observer noted during a visit by the archbishop to Bermuda that Connolly "warmly espouse[d] the Southern cause."⁴⁹² During the CSS *Tallahassee's* brief stop in Halifax

⁴⁸⁹ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 204.

⁴⁹⁰ Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Women and Society in Victorian England* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1973), 16.

⁴⁹¹ Georgiana Walker, 6 May 1864, in *The Private Journal of Georgiana Gholson Walker*, 91; David B. Flemming, "Connolly, Thomas Louis," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://biographi.ca/en/bio.php?id_nbr=4912 (accessed 21 January 2013).

⁴⁹² Georgiana Walker, 6 May 1864, in *The Private Journal of Georgiana Gholson Walker*, 91.

in August 1864, Connolly was recorded as being among Halifax's most welcoming citizens, reportedly opening "his heart, his house, and his purse" to the crew of the Confederate warship.⁴⁹³ Dr. Almon, despite being Anglican and "an intense Britisher," appears to have maintained cordial relations with the Roman Catholic archbishop.⁴⁹⁴ A dinner invitation from Connolly can be found in a scrapbook that Dr. Almon kept, and, in addition to asking that his Southern colleagues be introduced to the rest of the Almon family, Confederate physician Luke Pryor Blackburn also requested that Dr. Almon introduce his friends to the Catholic archbishop as well.⁴⁹⁵

Of all the Confederate sympathizers in Halifax, one of the most active – and least reputable – that Dr. Almon associated with was Alexander Keith, Jr. Nephew of the famous Nova Scotia brewer, Alexander Keith, the younger Keith, known to many as "Sandy," was actively engaged in unscrupulous activities in Halifax even before the U. S. Civil War. In 1857, a gunpowder magazine in the North End of Halifax exploded, leaving one local resident dead. Though an investigation by the city of Halifax ended inconclusively, many believed that the explosion was not an accident. Keith, Jr. was a prominent suspect during the investigation due to suspicions on the part of the community that the magazine had been destroyed by Keith in order to cover up his embezzlement of funds, which had allegedly occurred while he was

⁴⁹³ "The Tallahassee," *New York Times*, 29 September 1864.

⁴⁹⁴ Dennis, "The Most Exciting Christmas Week," *Halifax Herald*, 23 December 1896.

⁴⁹⁵ Thomas Louis Connolly to William Johnston Almon, [undated], in "Almon Family Scrapbook"; Luke Pryor Blackburn to William Johnston Almon, 26 January 1862 [sic], in "Almon Family Correspondence."

working as a manager for construction crews on the Halifax-Windsor rail line. Despite facing heavy suspicion, Keith, Jr. was never formally accused, likely because, as biographer Ann Larabee contends, the citizens of Halifax were reluctant to charge a member of a prominent local family.⁴⁹⁶

During the Civil War, Alexander Keith, Jr. proved to be extremely opportunistic in his business dealings with the Confederacy and its sympathizers. In April 1864, Keith acquired the Confederate blockade-runner *Caledonia*, which was operated and insured by a merchant from Charleston, H. W. Kinsman.⁴⁹⁷ According to Halifax Consul Mortimer Jackson, the 500-ton Quebec-built vessel appeared poised to run the Union blockade following Keith's purchase; however, the day after Keith registered the vessel, it sank under mysterious circumstances off the coast of Nova Scotia.⁴⁹⁸ Following the loss of the vessel, Keith reportedly collected the vessel's insurance money, worth \$32,000, which H. W. Kinsman, the vessel's actual owner, never succeeded in recouping.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁶ Larabee, *The Dynamite Fiend*, 7-10.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., 44; "Shipping Register, Halifax," no. 41,596.

⁴⁹⁸ Another vessel called *Caledonia* – a 450-ton Glasgow-built steamer – was already engaged in the blockade-running trade between Bermuda and Wilmington at that time. The vessel was ultimately captured by the Union Navy in May 1864. See: Charles Maxwell Allen to William H. Seward, 10 March 1864, in *Dispatches from Bermuda*, 120; Charles Maxwell Allen to William H. Seward, 7 April 1864, in Ibid., 124; Mortimer M. Jackson to Frederick W. Seward, 12 March 1864, in "Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax"; Mortimer M. Jackson to William H. Seward, 9 April 1864, in Ibid.; Pierce Crosby to S. P. Lee, 30 May 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 10, 106; "Shipping Register, Halifax," no. 41,596; Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 291.

⁴⁹⁹ Larabee, *The Dynamite Fiend*, 61.

Keith was involved in a number of other intrigues in and around Halifax throughout the war, the scale of which is particularly apparent in his participation in a plot to smuggle Union-built locomotives into the Confederacy. The plot originated in the summer of 1864 when Luther Rice Smoot, the Quartermaster General for the state of Virginia, approached Keith and Dr. William Johnston Almon about a proposed scheme involving the purchase of two locomotives in Philadelphia. The purchased locomotives were to be transported to Halifax, where they would then be loaded onto blockade-runners and smuggled into the South in order to aid the Confederacy's failing transportation infrastructure.⁵⁰⁰ While Almon's role in the plot is not specified in any surviving source material,⁵⁰¹ his role was likely financial, given the nature both of the plot and of his other actions at that time, mostly notably his financial assistance to the crew of the *CSS Tallahassee*. Keith traveled to Philadelphia in July to order the construction of the locomotives, and by August the two locomotives had been completed. The plot quickly fell apart, however; on August 16th, Union officials seized the locomotives after noticing that the wheel gauge for the locomotives matched the rail width for American, not British North American, rail lines.⁵⁰²

According to Ann Larabee, Keith had succeeded in getting multiple individuals and firms – who likely did not know of each other's involvement – to

⁵⁰⁰ An autograph from "L. R. Smoot" can be found in the scrapbook kept by Dr. Almon: "Almon Family Scrapbook"; Larabee, *The Dynamite Fiend*, 53-55; Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 181.

⁵⁰¹ Larabee, *The Dynamite Fiend*, 204.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 57; Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 60-61.

invest in the locomotive scheme. At the time of the locomotives' seizure, Keith carried approximately \$60,000 more than the cost of the locomotives.⁵⁰³ Such a cycle of high-stakes fraud eventually forced Keith to leave Halifax in December 1864.⁵⁰⁴ Absconding with a mistress and several hundred thousand dollars, Keith made his way to rural Missouri, a place he presumably felt beyond the reach of his fraud victims. Luther Smoot, however, succeeded in learning of Keith's whereabouts through an acquaintance in Halifax, and in December 1865 he arrived in Missouri. Securing the support of a federal marshal, Smoot entered Keith's home and confronted him at gunpoint in the middle of the night, which resulted in the quick return of most of his money.⁵⁰⁵ Smoot remained unsatisfied, however. Years later, with accompanying testimony provided by Dr. William Johnston Almon, he submitted an unsuccessful petition to a United States Senate claims committee, saying that because of Keith he had experienced "ruinous loss."⁵⁰⁶

Dr. Almon appears to have been associated with other notorious Confederate conspirators in addition to Keith. One was the Confederate seaman Thomas Egenton Hogg, whose wartime record bears a striking similarity to that of the *Chesapeake* pirate, John Clibbon Brain. While little is known of his association with Almon, an autograph of Hogg's was kept by Almon in his family scrapbook.⁵⁰⁷ Hogg

⁵⁰³ Larabee, *The Dynamite Fiend*, 56-57.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 89-93; Wilkinson, *Narrative of a Blockade-Runner*, 177-179.

⁵⁰⁶ According to Larabee, the deposition by Dr. Almon has been lost and is no longer with the rest of the material relating to Smoot's petition: Larabee, *The Dynamite Fiend*, 93-94, 204.

⁵⁰⁷ Autograph of "T. Egenton Hogg," in "Almon Family Scrapbook."

became famous on November 18th, 1863, when, along with five other men – none of who possessed a commission from the Confederate government – he successfully orchestrated the hijacking of the American steamer *Joseph L. Gerrity*, which was bound from Matamoros, Mexico to New York City. Hogg took the captured steamer south to Belize, where he sold the vessel's cotton of cargo and then fraudulently reregistered the vessel as a Confederate blockade-runner.⁵⁰⁸ Following this incident, which was disavowed by Confederate authorities, Hogg remained in the Gulf region, and a year later, on November 10th, 1864, Hogg and six other Confederate agents were captured by American naval officials onboard the Northern steamer *Salvador* near the Bay of Panama.⁵⁰⁹ Several days earlier, American officials had received tips indicating that Hogg and his associates were plotting to book passage aboard the *Salvador*, where, once clear of the Panamanian coast, they intended to hijack the vessel and use it to conduct raids on American commerce in

⁵⁰⁸ James M. Mason to Judah P. Benjamin, 2 April 1864, in *ORN II*, vol. 3, 1082-1083; Thomas Egenton Hogg to Judah P. Benjamin, 3 May 1864, in *Ibid.*, 1111-1112; Statement of Thomas Egenton Hogg, 4 May 1864, in *Ibid.*, 1112.

⁵⁰⁹ Judah P. Benjamin to Henry Hotze, 5 May 1864, in *Ibid.*, 1112-1113.

the Pacific.⁵¹⁰ Hogg ultimately spent the remainder of the war imprisoned in San Francisco at Alcatraz.⁵¹¹

One of the most infamous Confederate figures with whom Almon associated was the Confederate physician Luke Pryor Blackburn. Blackburn, a Kentucky native, passed through Halifax in August 1863 en route to Toronto, where he briefly worked to procure supplies for Confederate blockade-runners.⁵¹² After having likely met Almon during his brief stopover in Halifax, Blackburn wrote to the doctor in January 1864 asking him to meet and make introductions for two of his colleagues traveling to Halifax. Blackburn added, "I will be down in a few weeks[.] Say to Fields I will bring Welch [anthracite coal] and money with me[.]"⁵¹³ Before traveling to Halifax, Blackburn first made his way to Saint John, where he had been

⁵¹⁰ Unlike the seizure of the *Joseph L. Gerrity*, Hogg's plot regarding the *Salvador* had been ordered and condoned by the Confederate government: Stephen R. Mallory to Thomas Egerton Hogg, 7 May 1864, in *ORN* I, vol. 3, 356. See also: Thomas Savage to Alexander R. McKee, 3 October 1864, in *Ibid.*, 302-303; G. F. Pearson to Gideon Welles, 12 November 1864, in *Ibid.*, 352-353; H. K. Davenport to G. F. Pearson, 12 November 1864, in *Ibid.*, 354-355; Alexander R. McKee to William H. Seward, 4 January 1864, in *Ibid.*, 409-410.

⁵¹¹ Keith Clark, G. F. Pearson, and H. K. Davenport, "T. Egerton Hogg – A Footnote," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 84, no. 3 (1983): 302, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20613922> (accessed 14 June 2013).

⁵¹² Nancy Disher Baird, *Luke Pryor Blackburn: Physician, Governor, Reformer* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1979), 21.

⁵¹³ Luke Pryor Blackburn to William Johnston Almon, 26 January 1862 [sic], in "Almon Family Correspondence."

called to serve as an expert witness regarding Jefferson Davis's handwriting in the trial of the three captured *Chesapeake* conspirators that was taking place there.⁵¹⁴

Blackburn spent a significant portion of that following summer in Bermuda, where he helped treat victims of the islands' yellow fever outbreak. His actions there earned him the appreciation of the British Admiralty, who expressed their gratitude to the doctor with a gift of £100 for his service.⁵¹⁵ A year later, however, startling revelations cast Blackburn's actions in Bermuda in a disturbing light. On April 14th, 1865, Bermuda consul Charles Maxwell Allen wrote to Washington informing officials there of a plot by Blackburn to distribute clothes infected with yellow fever in several Northern cities for the purpose starting outbreaks of the disease there. Clothes collected by Blackburn during his time treating yellow fever victims had reportedly been kept by the doctor with the intent of shipping the infected articles to New York and other Northern cities.⁵¹⁶ Blackburn had initially attempted to contract the famous blockade-runner Thomas E. Taylor to ship the clothes, but Taylor roundly rejected the proposal, later saying that he had "shouted at him, not in the choicest language, to leave . . ."⁵¹⁷ Taylor later opined, "It is difficult to conceive of such a diabolical idea . . ."⁵¹⁸ Blackburn eventually succeeded

⁵¹⁴ Blackburn testified that the handwriting on the letter of marque carried by Brain matched that of Confederate President Jefferson Davis: Newspaper excerpt, 31 January 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 2, 539.

⁵¹⁵ Baird, *Luke Pryor Blackburn*, 25.

⁵¹⁶ Charles Maxwell Allen to William H. Seward 14 April 1865, in *Dispatches from Bermuda*, 180-182; Mayers, *Dixie & the Dominion*, 55-56, 157-158; Baird, *Luke Pryor Blackburn*, 24-25.

⁵¹⁷ Taylor, *Running the Blockade*, 130.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

in persuading an associate, Godfrey J. Hyams, to distribute the clothes. Hyams, however, suffered from what Adam Mayers describes as a “crisis of confidence” and informed American authorities of the plot.⁵¹⁹ Blackburn was arrested in Montreal on May 19th. He was tried there that October, and, while no court records of his trial remain, prosecutors ultimately failed to secure a conviction of Blackburn.⁵²⁰ Even though the medical science behind Blackburn’s plot was flawed – yellow fever is transmitted by mosquitoes, not by contact with clothing or other objects – the willingness of Blackburn to pursue designs for biological warfare on a civilian population in the North is a troubling revelation regarding one of Dr. Almon’s wartime acquaintances.

Among Dr. Almon’s other Confederate contacts was the famous Southern spy, Isabella “Belle” Boyd. Boyd had risen to fame in 1862, when she had served as an informant to Confederate General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson and helped enable the Confederates’ decisive victory at the Battle of Front Royal, Virginia.⁵²¹ After several arrests, which effectively ended her career as a spy, Boyd attempted to travel to Europe in May 1864 aboard the blockade-runner *Greyhound*, but her vessel was captured by the USS *Connecticut* shortly after departing Wilmington.⁵²² Fearing another term of imprisonment, Boyd initiated a relationship with one of her captors, Lieutenant Samuel Wylde Hardinge, who quickly proposed marriage to Boyd during

⁵¹⁹ Mayers, *Dixie & the Dominion*, 157-158; Baird, *Luke Pryor Blackburn*, 28.

⁵²⁰ Baird, *Luke Pryor Blackburn*, 28, 32.

⁵²¹ Belle Boyd, *Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison*, ed., Curtis Carroll Davis (South Brunswick, New Jersey: Thomas Yoseloff, 1968), 145-167.

⁵²² Boyd, *Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison*, 249, 256; John J. Almy to S. P. Lee, 10 May 1864, in *ORN I*, vol. 10, 42-43.

the *Greyhound's* trek north to the prize court in Boston.⁵²³ When the vessel reached New York for a brief stopover, Lieutenant Hardinge assisted in the escape of Boyd as well as the captain of the *Greyhound*, which resulted in Lieutenant Hardinge's arrest and dismissal from the Union navy. After leaving New York, Boyd traveled to British North America; first to Niagara Falls, and then east to Quebec where she departed for Europe.⁵²⁴ Several weeks later, after breaking a brief parole that he had been granted, Hardinge passed through Halifax as he attempted to reach Boyd in Europe.⁵²⁵ During his stopover, Hardinge appears to have made contact with Dr. William Johnston Almon. Several months later, after the wedding of Hardinge and Boyd had taken place in England, Hardinge wrote to Almon asking if the doctor could forward to him a "book of signals" that he had apparently left in Halifax by accident.⁵²⁶ Later that November, Hardinge attempted to return to the United States, but he was arrested and imprisoned as a deserter soon after his arrival.⁵²⁷ During his time in prison, which lasted until February 1865, Boyd sent several letters to her husband via Dr. Almon with instructions for the doctor to "take good care of him[.]"⁵²⁸

Dr. Almon also possessed ties to a number of Confederate officials, one of who was Major Norman S. Walker, the Confederate disbursement agent for

⁵²³ Ibid., 264.

⁵²⁴ Ibid., 272-278.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., 278.

⁵²⁶ Samuel Wylde Hardinge to William Johnston Almon, 31 August 1864, in "Almon Family Correspondence."

⁵²⁷ Boyd, *Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison*, 291.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., 349-350; Belle Boyd Hardinge to William Johnston Almon, 16 December 1864, in "Almon Family Scrapbook."

Bermuda. Major Walker and his wife, Georgiana, traveled to Halifax in October 1864 after having spent the summer in England escaping the yellow fever outbreak in Bermuda.⁵²⁹ Once in Halifax, the Walkers, despite their disdain for the climate, found the city extremely welcoming.⁵³⁰ Georgiana noted in her diary, “We have rec’d much kindness & attention, & found the society intensely Southern.”⁵³¹ During their time in the city, the Walkers befriended Dr. Almon, who “gave . . . a little evening party” to his Southern guests one night.⁵³² The Walkers returned to Bermuda in January 1865 and arrived two days after the fall of Fort Fisher.⁵³³ The Almon and Walker families remained in touch throughout the rest of the war, as is evinced by the fact that Major Walker and his wife were frequently utilized by the Almons to relay messages to their son in South Carolina.⁵³⁴ In February 1865, Major Walker also assisted the Almons by writing a letter of introduction for Thomas Ritchie Almon, then studying in Paris, to John Slidell, the Confederate emissary to France and one of the men captured during the *Trent* Affair.⁵³⁵

Among the other wartime contacts of Dr. Almon were the Confederate emissaries Nathaniel Beverly Tucker and Brigadier General William Preston. The

⁵²⁹ Dwight Franklin Henderson, ed., in introduction to *The Private Journal of Georgiana Gholson Walker*, 21.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*; Georgiana Walker, 14 November 1864, in *Ibid.*, 114.

⁵³¹ Georgiana Walker, 14 November 1864, in *Ibid.*, 114.

⁵³² *Ibid.*

⁵³³ Henderson, ed., in introduction to *The Private Journal of Georgiana Gholson Walker*, 24.

⁵³⁴ Norman S. Walker to William Johnston Almon, 10 February 1865, in “Almon Family Correspondence”; Georgiana Gholson Walker to William Johnston Almon, 18 March 1865, in *Ibid.*

⁵³⁵ Norman S. Walker to William Johnston Almon, 10 February 1865, in *Ibid.*

Virginia-born Tucker, who had served as an American consul in Liverpool prior to the war, passed through Halifax in April 1864 en route to Niagara Falls where he planned to join other Confederate agents, including former Secretary of the Interior, Jacob Thompson, and former Alabama senator Clement C. Clay.⁵³⁶ In addition to his personal desire to disrupt the upcoming Northern elections in any way possible, Tucker had also been assigned by the Confederate government to secretly negotiate with Union officials regarding a potential cotton-for-meat trade deal. Though both sides ultimately failed to reach an agreement, revelations of the negotiations sparked outrage among some in Washington who had learned about the negotiations in early 1865. One of the North's chief negotiators, Thomas C. Durant, was eventually called to testify before a congressional committee investigating allegations of contraband trade, but because trade with the Confederacy was not explicitly illegal, investigators were unable to take any action against Durant and his associates.⁵³⁷

Almon became associated with Tucker during the emissary's brief stopover in Halifax in April 1864.⁵³⁸ In addition to making contact with one of Halifax's most prominent Confederate sympathizers, Tucker also appears to have sought out the

⁵³⁶ Ludwell H. Johnson, "Beverly Tucker's Canadian Mission, 1864-1865," *The Journal of Southern History* 29, no. 1 (1963): 88-90, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2205103 (accessed 20 February 2013); Ruth Ketring Nuermberger, *The Clays of Alabama: A Planter-Lawyer-Politician Family* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1958), 234-266.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, 90-94; Mortimer M. Jackson to William H. Seward, 27 June 1865, in "Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax"; Nathaniel Beverly Tucker to unnamed Confederate official, 31 October 1864, in *FRUS, 1865*, vol. 1, 18-19.

⁵³⁸ B. Thompson [Nathaniel Beverly Tucker] to William Johnston Almon, 18 April 1864, in "Almon Family Correspondence."

Halgonian doctor because of an injury he had suffered to one of his thumbs, which had become infected during his travels. According to Tucker's wife, Dr. Almon was eventually forced to amputate the first digit of her husband's thumb.⁵³⁹

The other Confederate emissary with whom Almon had contact was General William Preston, who represented the highest-ranking Confederate official Almon encountered during the war. In 1864, Preston was appointed by Jefferson Davis as the Confederate ambassador to Emperor Maximilian's court in Mexico. After waiting several weeks for the French-installed Habsburg prince to arrive in Mexico from Havana, Preston departed for Europe to confer with Confederate agents there about issues of Confederate recognition. In August, Preston traveled to British North America where he stayed for three months with his family in Montreal. On December 13th, Preston departed from Halifax to attempt to reach Mexico again. Again failing to receive any recognition as a diplomat from French authorities there, Preston ultimately returned to Texas via Matamoros, which represented the only time he spent on Mexican soil.⁵⁴⁰ The only surviving trace of Dr. Almon's brief affiliation with Preston is a photograph of the general in the doctor's family

⁵³⁹ Jane Ellis Tucker, *Beverly Tucker: A Memoir by His Wife* (Richmond: Frank-Baptist Printing, 1893), 22, <http://archive.org/details/beverlytucker00tuck> (accessed 17 June 2013); Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 243.

⁵⁴⁰ Mortimer M. Jackson to William H. Seward, 22 December 1864, in "Dispatches from United States Consuls in Halifax"; Peter J. Sehlinger, *Kentucky's Last Cavalier: General William Preston, 1816-1887* (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 2004), 174-188.

scrapbook, which includes a note inscribed to Almon that reads, “with kind regards[,] W Preston.”⁵⁴¹

Remembering the Civil War in Postwar Halifax

For citizens of British North America, the end of the Civil War in the spring and summer of 1865 meant the replacement of anxiety about the conflict spilling onto British North American territory with other concerns, such as American threats to abrogate the Reciprocity treaty, the threat of cross-border Fenian incursions, and the negotiations underway for the formation of a Dominion of Canada. For some individuals and communities, the end of the U.S. Civil War did not produce significant change. As Greg Marquis notes, “The American rebellion cannot be said to have dominated political or personal life in the colonies, and it possibly bypassed many locales and internal minorities . . .”⁵⁴²

For others, however, the experience of the war created lasting legacies. Unable or unwilling to live in the United States after the war, a number of Southerners moved to British North America following the collapse of the Confederacy. Because of the city’s reputation for hospitality toward the South, Halifax became the home of several prominent Confederates after the war, including the former commander of the CSS *Tallahassee*, John Taylor Wood, and the famous Southern blockade-runner John Wilkinson. Wood and Wilkinson went into business

⁵⁴¹ Photograph of General William Preston, in “Almon Family Scrapbook.”

⁵⁴² Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow*, 294.

with each other for a time, and their office on the Halifax waterfront was known to prominently display the Confederate flag.⁵⁴³

For the Almon family, the end of the Civil War does not appear to have altered attitudes regarding the conflict in any meaningful way. In August 1865, well after the final Confederate units had surrendered or disbanded, Dr. William Johnston Almon received a considerable gift of a silver salver, two cut glass decanters, and six chased silver goblets from a group of Southerners in Halifax as a token of thanks for his service during the war.⁵⁴⁴ A month later his son, William Bruce II, who had returned from the Confederacy following his surrender, wrote a pointed letter to the editor that appeared in the Halifax *Evening Reporter*. In it, William Bruce took issue with a generally positive portrayal of Northern prisoner of war camps that had appeared in Halifax's *Presbyterian Witness*. Attempting to contrast the tales of hunger and brutality that he had heard from Confederates who had been in Northern camps, William Bruce contended that Union prisoners of war in South Carolina "never . . . received the slightest insult in my presence . . ."⁵⁴⁵ While he acknowledged the apparent validity of emerging accusations about the treatment of prisoners in Andersonville, Georgia, William Bruce contended,

⁵⁴³ Wilkinson, *Narrative of a Blockade-Runner*, 250-251; Thurston, *Tallahassee Skipper*, 357-358; Shingleton, *John Taylor Wood*, 203; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 275.

⁵⁴⁴ Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 10 August 1865; Halifax *Novascotian*, 14 August 1865.

⁵⁴⁵ Halifax *Presbyterian Witness*, 16 September 1865; Halifax *Evening Reporter*, 30 September 1865.

“Horrible as the evidence . . . is, there has nothing come out that has not been equalled in the North.”⁵⁴⁶

Despite having openly supported the Confederacy and repeatedly violated Great Britain’s official neutrality, Dr. Almon suffered no consequences of note after the war; in fact, Almon appears to have thrived. In addition to his honorary postings in Halifax prior to the war, Dr. Almon was also subsequently selected in 1867 as the chair of the medical board for Halifax’s new Provincial and City Hospital, and between 1868 and 1875 he served as the president of the faculty of medicine at Dalhousie College. Almon also became an important political figure on the national scene in the Dominion of Canada after he was elected to serve in the House of Commons in 1872. Serving there as a member of the Conservative Party until 1874, Almon was later appointed to the Senate, where he served until his death in 1901.⁵⁴⁷ Despite his continued support for the former Confederacy after the war – in fact, some accounts suggest he visited the South for the first time following the conflict⁵⁴⁸ – the electorate in Nova Scotia appears to have, if anything, tacitly condoned Dr. Almon’s wartime actions when they elected him as one of their representatives in the House of Commons. Given the sentiment espoused by many in city of Halifax during the conflict, Dr. Almon appears to have been in many ways truly representative of his constituency.

⁵⁴⁶ Halifax *Evening Reporter*, 30 September 1865.

⁵⁴⁷ Marble, “Almon, William Johnston”; Halifax *Church Work*, 1 February 1920.

⁵⁴⁸ Almon, “William Johnston Almon”; *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 20 February 1901.

Dr. Almon's success also stands in sharp contrast to much of the prevailing scholarly literature dealing with the Canada's "Liberal Order Framework."⁵⁴⁹ While a transition to liberalism was indeed underway in Canada and in Nova Scotia during the mid-nineteenth century, the ability of someone like Dr. Almon, who contemporaries described as "a Tory of the eighteenth century,"⁵⁵⁰ to be elected suggests the scope of the liberal groundswell written about by scholars like Daniel Samson has been, at least in the case of Nova Scotia, somewhat overstated. As J. Murray Beck has pointed out, the Conservatives in Nova Scotia were winners of four straight federal elections between 1878 and 1891, and though they only won once at the provincial level during that same span (1878), their members were frequently called upon to fill "other attractive positions" at the national level, which resulted in a significant extension of province's political influence on the national stage.⁵⁵¹ Almon's political success and continued popularity after the war indicates that, as scholars like Allison O'Mahen Malcom and Jerry Bannister have illustrated,⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁹ Ian McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 4 (2000): 617-645; Samson, *The Spirit of Industry and Improvement*.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 20 February 1901.

⁵⁵¹ J. Murray Beck, "The Party System in Nova Scotia," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science / Revue canadienne d'Economie et de Science politique* 20, no. 4 (1954): 520, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/138560> (accessed 18 March 2013).

⁵⁵² Allison O'Mahen Malcom, "Loyal Orangemen and Republican Nativists: Anti-Catholicism and Historical Memory in Canada and the United States, 1837-67," in Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordon, eds, *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 211-212; Jerry Bannister, "Canada as Counter-Revolution: The Loyalist Order Framework in Canadian History, 1750-1840," in Jean-François Constant and Michael Ducharme, eds., *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 98-146.

sufficient support for Tory political beliefs lingered within Nova Scotia and the Dominion of Canada, though the case of Dr. Almon suggests that such support continued well into the latter part of the nineteenth century in some places.

While in many ways his wartime sympathies appear to have been fueled by opposition to Northern wartime policies, Dr. Almon, along with many in Halifax, appear to have found a degree of political common ground with the South, perhaps even reconciling the region's slaveholding history with their own ideological sensibilities. Even though slavery had been outlawed in Great Britain three decades prior, the emphasis that such a stratified social and economic system placed on class, privilege, and paternal leadership likely held a degree of appeal for a staunch social conservative like Dr. Almon. Economically, slavery might have held a similar appeal as well. While he was an avowed conservative, Almon appears to have held some degree of liberal economic belief, as is evinced by his proxy involvement in the free trade issue of blockade-running. To an economic liberal, even though slavery violated liberalism's key belief in the importance of individual autonomy, the institution's ability to maximize profits by significantly reducing labour costs likely gave many advocates of economic liberalism in the racially prejudiced atmosphere of Nova Scotia the ideological pretext needed to support a system that they morally had every reason to abhor. In this sense, Dr. Almon's support of the Confederacy during the U. S. Civil War might not have marked him as a political outlier both during and after the conflict, which likely played a considerable role in allowing the doctor to experience the considerable political success that he did.

Decades later, even after the prevailing attitudes of the Civil War had had an opportunity to settle, the citizens of Halifax nonetheless continued to remember and celebrate the wartime actions of Dr. Almon. In a three-page special that appeared in the Halifax *Herald* on December 23rd, 1896, the chief editor of the paper, William Dennis, offered a laudatory and sensationalized retelling of the life and Civil War exploits of Dr. Almon. Appearing under the headline “The Most Exciting Christmas Week Ever Known in the City of Halifax,” Dennis focused his piece on Dr. Almon’s actions on Queen’s Wharf on December 19th, 1863, though he also gave special mention to the Almon family’s illustrious history, Dr. Almon’s various medical accomplishments, as well as his extensive curio collection. Dennis, however, conspicuously downplayed the brazen illegality of *Chesapeake* pirates’ actions, contending, among other things, that the murder of *Chesapeake* engineer Orin Schaeffer was “but an act of war” and that the charges against Dr. Almon for his interference with Constable Lewis Hutt were nothing more than an attempt by Nova Scotian authorities to “cover” for their own ineptitude.⁵⁵³

Perhaps equally as telling as Dennis’s hagiographic treatment of Dr. Almon is the article’s relative silence regarding another famous Halifax Confederate sympathizer, Alexander Keith, Jr. Though Keith received mention for his actions on Queen’s Wharf, Dennis did not connect Keith to the infamous rifle-smuggling plot uncovered during that same period, despite the fact that the plot was already

⁵⁵³ Dennis, “The Most Exciting Christmas Week,” *Halifax Herald*, 23 December 1896.

explicitly mentioned in his narrative.⁵⁵⁴ While the rest of Keith's unsavory wartime activities were similarly not mentioned, the most telling silence in Dennis's narrative occurred with regards to the ignominious circumstances surrounding Keith's death. In 1875, having continued his increasingly risky cycle of fraud well after the end of the Civil War, Keith attempted to blow up the German passenger steamer *Mosel* as a part of an insurance fraud scheme. Keith had intended for the vessel to explode at sea, where the vessel's loss would be unexplainable, but the time bomb that he had left to be loaded onto the vessel exploded prematurely on the docks of the German North Sea port of Bremerhaven, killing 81 people. Knowing that his involvement in the explosion would quickly be uncovered, Keith committed suicide.⁵⁵⁵ Biographer Ann Larabee, echoing R. H. MacDonald's analysis of the *Chesapeake* Affair, contended that Haligonians were unwilling to acknowledge what Keith had done and, through public denial, continued to actively protect the reputation of Keith's family. According to Larabee, "Halifax closed protectively around the Keiths and refused to entertain the possibility that a member of the family, despite his faults, would have been capable of the crime of the century."⁵⁵⁶ This policy of deliberate denial and silence appears to have been successful for over a century: prior to the publication of Larabee's biography of Keith in 2005, Keith had become, apart from his involvement in the Queen's Wharf incident, all but absent from North American historiography. Over three decades after the war, William Dennis effectively illustrated the city's unofficial mindset -- people and events from

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Larabee, *The Dynamite Fiend*, 3, 143-146.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 182.

the war that could not be effectively sanitized were ultimately to be discarded and forgotten instead. Even in his scrapbook, where most of his wartime associations were carefully chronicled, Dr. Almon kept no material directly relating to Alexander Keith, Jr.

Conclusion

The events in Halifax between the spring of 1864 and the end of the U. S. Civil War shed a great deal of light on public opinion during that time. While the city possessed excellent port facilities and a generally anti-Union sentiment throughout much of the conflict, it did not become overwhelmingly popular with Confederate agents or blockade-runners until a series of events outside of its control – the yellow fever outbreak in Bermuda and Nassau as well as the Confederacy’s increasingly desperate strategies for achieving its military, diplomatic, and economic gains – led to the port’s heightened prominence. This increase in Confederate activity in the city gave many, including Dr. William Johnston Almon, the opportunity to repeatedly act on the behalf of the Confederacy in a manner that they might have otherwise been unable to.

The events of 1864 and 1865 also reveal the complexity of segments of public opinion in Halifax. While the actions by members of the public during the *Chesapeake* Affair suggest more ideological dimensions to the city’s sentiment, the complaint offered by the *Tallahassee*’s Dr. William Shepardson about Halifax’s

“interested friendship”⁵⁵⁷ with the Confederacy appears to be a telling indicator of a much more materialistic basis for support among many in the city’s business establishment. As is evident in the case of Benjamin Wier, the prospect of economic gain was a powerful motivator, though that same motivation could prove to be equally powerful with regards to the fleeting loyalty shown as the impending defeat of the Confederacy became increasingly evident.

In comparing his actions during the latter part of the U. S. Civil War to those of his Haligonian contemporaries, Dr. Almon can be seen as both typical and exceptional. Though he became actively involved in the war relatively late compared to many of his peers, Almon’s spirited support of the Confederacy following the Queen’s Wharf incident appears to have mirrored the support of many of his fellow Haligonians. The intensity of Almon’s activity, however, far surpassed many of his peers. Unlike many of his more materially motivated contemporaries, Almon’s “intensely personal” ideological motivations, as Greg Marquis described them,⁵⁵⁸ appear to have driven the doctor to become increasingly involved in the Confederate war effort, even as the Confederate defeat began to seem inevitable. Imbued with the privileges of Halifax’s upper class, Almon possessed little fear of backlash from the both the colonial government or his local community, which

⁵⁵⁷ “The Tallahassee,” *New York Times*, 29 September 1864.

⁵⁵⁸ Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow*, 169.

ultimately permitted the doctor to become one of the foremost perpetrators of
“Bluenose effrontery.”⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁹ MacKenzie, “The Almons,” 34, in “Almon Family Scrapbook.”

Chapter Five:

Conclusion

On May 22nd, 1865, as the American Civil War was drawing to a close, former Halifax Vice Consul Nathaniel Gunnison penned a letter to his former adversary, Dr. William Johnston Almon, as he waited for a steamer in Windsor, Nova Scotia that was to carry him back to the United States. "It was my intention," he wrote, "to call upon you before leaving the City and personally express my sense of obligation to your fair professional services during my illness . . ." He continued,

Having never received a bill, I have presumed that you have considered the limited means at my command, &, although not of my faith yet, gave me a Clergyman's benefit.

Please accept my thanks and the thanks of my family for your kindness. We feel that we are greatly indebted to you . . . through whose promptings & skill my . . . life was saved. We shall ever remember you with gratitude.⁵⁶⁰

Despite having fought vigorously for Almon's prosecution in the wake of the Queen's Wharf incident near the end of the war, Gunnison nonetheless felt compelled to write to Dr. Almon after the conflict to thank him for his services that, just weeks before the *Chesapeake* Affair, had saved his life.⁵⁶¹ While his attitudes and actions might lend themselves to an almost caricature-like portrayal of the doctor, Almon, as with all individuals, was fundamentally complex and even capable of eliciting admiration from his most dogged opponents. Though most previous scholarly surveys of Nova Scotia during the mid-nineteenth century have treated Almon as a one-dimensional paragon of Loyalist and anti-American sentiment, an in-depth case study such as this allows for a closer examination of many of the factors that

⁵⁶⁰ Nathaniel Gunnison to William Johnston Almon, 22 May 1865, in "Almon Family Correspondence."

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

contributed to Almon's actions and the ebbs and flows of public sentiment in Halifax during the U.S. Civil War.

Perhaps what is most striking about the case of Dr. Almon is that despite all of the activity that he performed on behalf of the Confederacy, his actions in Halifax were not unusual. As the war progressed, a number of residents and visitors to Halifax remarked about the city's apparently overwhelming support for the South. While Union sympathizing segments did exist within the city of Halifax, most contemporaries estimated that the city, on the whole, strongly favoured the Confederate cause. Operating within this environment, Almon by himself was not necessarily a noteworthy individual.

The sheer enthusiasm of Almon's involvement in the Confederate war effort, however, was atypical for most Halifaxians. While many individuals traded with blockade-runners or offered support to Confederate agents passing through, Almon energetically offered support heedless of the risks such support might entail. Making Almon's support of the South more remarkable is the fact that he was active only during the latter years of the U. S. Civil War. While many in the city of Halifax had begun to support the Confederacy – or at least openly oppose the Union – after the Battle of First Bull Run and the *Trent* Affair in 1861, Almon only became involved in the city's pro-Southern activities after his son had left to serve in the Confederate medical service and after British neutrality had been violated at Sambro in December 1863. A similar contrast in involvement is apparent during the latter years of the war: while many began to abandon their support of the South in

favour of renewed ties with the North as Northern victory began to appear inevitable, Dr. Almon persisted in his support of the South, even into the postwar years.

Dr. Almon also differed from many Haligonians with regard to the motivations for his wartime actions. While Almon and other members of the city's upper classes appear to have been motivated by sociopolitical factors, including Loyalist political beliefs and possible ethnic and racial attitudes, many of the city's workers and merchants were far more influenced by the potential for economic gain that the war had created. A significant number of sailors and merchants in the city participated in the blockade-running trade both directly and indirectly, and while legitimate trade with the Union still dominated during the conflict, the city's economic ties to the South, coupled with repeated American provocations, helped push many of the city's residents into the pro-Confederate camp despite its odious connection to slavery. The case of Dr. Almon is illustrative of not only the apparent ability of individuals within the British Empire to rationalize their support for the slaveholding Confederacy, but also the fact that while many individuals possessed economic motives to their pro-Confederate sympathies during the war, not all did.

Such differences in motive also help illustrate the wide representation that the pro-Confederate movement in Halifax possessed. In addition to the seafarers and merchants who profited from repairing, coaling, and shipping cargo through blockade-runners, respected members of the city's non-mercantile upper class were willing to involve themselves in the war effort as well. In fact, individuals like

Almon, Archbishop Thomas L. Connolly, and Alexander Keith, Jr. appear to have lent an air of respectability to the pro-Confederate movement in Halifax. The willingness of individuals like Alexander Keith, Jr. to become involved in blockade-running, or Charles Almon to serve as a supercargo on a blockade-runner, or Dr. Almon to orchestrate the escape of George Wade with the help of two local fishermen attests to the wide range of social participation in the pro-Confederate cause in Halifax and the willingness of members of the city's upper classes to cross class lines in order to support that effort.

Though members of Halifax's upper classes were willing to collaborate with members of the city's working class during the war, differences in social class ultimately had a significant impact on how individuals were able to become involved in the Southern war effort. The case of Dr. Almon is particularly revealing in this regard. Despite the inconsistencies in his legal defense and the fact that he never contested the assertion that he interfered with a Halifax policeman on Queen's Wharf, Dr. Almon and his fellow actors at Queen's Wharf were ultimately able to escape legal consequences for their reckless actions. As scholars like R. H. MacDonald and Ann Larabee have opined, Halifax's upper classes possessed a ready willingness to forgo enforcement of the rule of law in order to protect one of their own – many of whom they were related to by blood or marriage.⁵⁶² Thus, the proceedings in the Queen's Wharf case, with the absence of several key witnesses and its premature end before a grand jury, came to exemplify the legal privileges

⁵⁶² MacDonald, "The Second Chesapeake Affair," 681; Larabee, *The Dynamite Fiend*, 7-10, 35-36.

associated with membership in Halifax's upper classes, as would the case of Alexander Keith, Jr., who never faced public censure from the leadership of Halifax, despite being one of the city's most infamous and prolific criminals. Neither Almon nor Keith faced reproof from city officials or members of the community for their actions, and such tacit approval appears to have effectively enabled them to act with impunity and become increasingly involved in the Confederate war effort as a result.

Even after the conflict had ended, Dr. Almon remained a popular member of the Halifax community despite having openly and repeatedly violated Queen Victoria's declaration of neutrality and having zealously supported a failed foreign rebellion carried out by a slaveholding society. Ultimately this popularity allowed Almon to experience political success. While scholars like Ian McKay and Daniel Samson have rightly observed a trend toward liberalism in British North America during the mid to late nineteenth century,⁵⁶³ the political longevity of an individual like Almon stands in contrast to such scholarship regarding both the demise of Loyalist political beliefs in Canada and the apparent meteoric rise of liberalism during that same time. Despite his wartime support for the defeated Confederacy and continued advocacy of Tory principles, Almon thrived politically after the war. At least within the confines of Halifax, sufficient support for Tory politics appears to have existed during the latter part of the nineteenth century that allowed an individual like Almon to become a significant political figure at the provincial and federal levels of government.

⁵⁶³ Samon, *The Spirit of Industry and Improvement*; McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework."

The fame of Dr. Almon and the strategic significance of Halifax were not inevitable at the outset of the conflict, however. While Almon and his community possessed certain qualities that made their involvement in the Civil War more likely (including Almon's class status and strong pro-British sentiments and Halifax's excellent port facilities), contingency played a significant role in dictating wartime involvement at both the individual and community level. The *Trent* Affair of 1861, for example, was instrumental in forming community opinion in Halifax during the war. The war scare and prolonged militarization that resulted from the incident helped to produce a marked shift in public opinion away from support for the Union. For Almon, the *Chesapeake* Affair of December 1863 was a similarly chance event that provided him with the opportunity to take on a meaningfully active role in the American conflict for the first time. Were it not for the *Chesapeake's* illegal seizure at Sambro and the arrest of three Maritime residents by the Union navy, Almon, an inveterate defender of British pride, might not have otherwise been stirred into meaningful action during the war. Similarly, chance events like the arrival of the *CSS Tallahassee* and the arrival of most of the Atlantic blockade-running fleet after an outbreak of yellow fever in Bermuda and Nassau were crucial in helping to shape the reputation that Dr. Almon and his community received for Confederate sympathy.

The postwar legacy that surrounded Dr. Almon and his peers in Halifax appears to in many ways reflect a careful and deliberate preening of public history on the part of the city's citizens. Largely absent from the city's public memory of the conflict was any reflection about the city's questionable ties to supporters of a

slaveholding society; rather, romanticized accounts of daring seamen like John Taylor Wood or John Clibbon Brain were largely circulated instead. The wartime actions of Dr. Almon received similarly selective remembrance. Following the war, despite having obstructed justice in the case of the *Chesapeake* and repeatedly disregarded Great Britain's official neutrality, Dr. Almon was lionized by the public. As is evident from the career of Alexander Keith, Jr., only when an individual's actions became too repugnant to otherwise sanitize did citizens in Halifax elect to condemn a member of their own community, though such censure was typically only manifested through historical silence.

In his analysis, Greg Marquis concluded that the Civil War involvement of Dr. William Johnston Almon was, at its root, "intensely personal" in nature.⁵⁶⁴ This thesis, which has sought to test that assertion, largely concurs with Marquis' conclusion. Dr. Almon appears to have been primarily motivated by sociopolitical factors during the U. S. Civil War, and his non-economic basis for action stands in contrast to many of his peers with within the larger frameworks of Halifax, Nova Scotia, and British North America. The fact that Almon's involvement in the Confederate war effort was not unusual in the city of Halifax is also noteworthy in light of the scholarship of individuals like Amanda Foreman and Robin Winks, which frequently emphasizes the generally divided nature of public opinion in Great Britain and British North America.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶⁴ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 169.

⁵⁶⁵ Foreman, *A World on Fire*; Winks, *Canada and the United States*.

Marquis' characterization of Almon, however, tends to present the doctor's support of the Confederacy as relatively static over the course of the war. Further examination reveals this depiction to be inaccurate: Almon's pro-Confederate activity, much like the larger currents of British North American public opinion, was dynamic and changed over the course of the war. Almon only became significantly involved in the conflict toward the end of 1863 after his son had left to serve in the Confederate medical corps and after the *Chesapeake* had been illegally recaptured by the Union navy at Sambro. Motivated by these events and having likely reconciled his ideological beliefs with his potential support for the Confederacy, he assisted in the escape of George Wade at Queen's Wharf and, receiving no rebuke from colonial authorities, many of whom he was related to either directly or indirectly, he continued to liberally support the Confederate cause until the end of the war. Almon's wartime actions appear to have if anything transformed him into a local celebrity and helped to launch his political career, allowing him to remain a celebrated part of local lore throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century. The political success of Almon during this period is also noteworthy because it stands in contrast to much of the current scholarship regarding ascendant liberalism in Canada during the nineteenth century, while similarly suggesting that Tory political ideology possessed, at least in Nova Scotia, greater longevity than recent historiography has suggested. Though this case study cannot be said to be a definitive examination of British North American popular opinion during the U. S. Civil War, the example of Dr. William Johnston Almon is nonetheless illuminating with regard to the considerable – and seemingly exceptional – support Haligonians

offered to the Confederacy and the role that social and political ideology and material concerns played in influencing how individuals in Halifax and elsewhere responded to the U.S. Civil War.

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Appendix A: Glossary of Names

Charles Maxwell Allen: American consul for Bermuda during the U. S. Civil War.

Charles McColla Almon: Fifth child and fourth son of Dr. William Johnston Almon. Served as a supercargo for blockade-runners during the latter part of the U. S. Civil War.

Elizabeth Lichtentein (Ritchie) Almon: Daughter of Judge Thomas Ritchie of Annapolis Royal. First cousin and wife to Dr. William Johnston Almon.

Laleah Peyton (Johnston) Almon: Wife to William Bruce Almon and mother to Dr. William Johnston Almon.

Mather Byles Almon: A prominent Halifax businessman and brother to Dr. William Bruce Almon.

Thomas Ritchie Almon: Second son of Dr. William Johnston Almon.

Dr. William Bruce Almon: A prominent Halifax physician and father of Dr. William Johnston Almon.

Dr. William Bruce Almon II: Eldest son of Dr. William Johnston Almon. Served as an assistant surgeon in the Confederate medical corps. Died of tuberculosis in 1867.

Dr. William James Almon: Loyalist refugee from New England who settled in Halifax. Grandfather to Dr. William Johnston Almon.

Dr. William Johnston Almon: Prominent Halifax physician and one the city's most active Confederate sympathizers during the U. S. Civil War. Later served in the Canadian House of Commons and Senate.

Dr. Luke Pryor Blackburn: Southern physician from Kentucky. Indicted but not convicted in an 1865 plot to deliberately spread yellow fever in Northern cities.

John Clibbon Brain: One of the leaders of the hijacking of the *Chesapeake*.

Thomas Louis Connolly: Roman Catholic Archbishop of Halifax and open supporter of the Southern cause.

Garrett Cotter: City Marshal for Halifax. Was present during the Queen's Wharf incident of December 1863.

Joseph D. Davis: American Vice Consul for Liverpool, Nova Scotia during the *Chesapeake* Affair.

Major General Charles Hastings Doyle: Commander of British land forces in eastern British North America and Bermuda. Served as interim Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia from 1862 to 1864.

Bernard Gallagher: Resident of Ketch Harbour, Nova Scotia. Assisted in the escape of George Wade from Queen's Wharf in December 1863.

Nathaniel Gunnison: A Universalist minister originally from New Hampshire. Served as the American Vice Consul for Halifax during the *Chesapeake* Affair.

Thomas Chandler Haliburton: Famous Nova Scotian author and outspoken nativist.

Isabella "Belle" (Boyd) Hardinge: Prominent Confederate spy during the U. S. Civil War. Married Lieutenant Samuel Wylde Hardinge after escaping to England in 1864.

Lieutenant Samuel Wylde Hardinge: Union naval officer who assisted in the escape of "Belle" Boyd from Union custody. Married Boyd in England in 1864.

Philip Cartaret Hill: Mayor of Halifax. Presided over the Police Court hearings arising from the Queen's Wharf incident of December 1863.

Alexander Henry: Brother to William Henry. Arrested by the Union navy along with his brother and George Wade at Sambro during the *Chesapeake* Affair.

William Alexander Henry: Solicitor General for Nova Scotia. Present during the Queen's Wharf incident of December 1863.

William Henry: Brother to Alexander Henry. Arrested by the Union navy along with his brother and George Wade at Sambro during the *Chesapeake* Affair.

James P. Holcombe: Confederate legal expert dispatched by Jefferson Davis to British North America in the wake of the *Chesapeake* Affair.

Thomas Egenton Hogg: Confederate mariner. Orchestrated the hijacking of the *Joseph L. Gerrity* in 1863 and was arrested for attempting to hijack the Northern passenger ship *Salvador* in 1864.

Jerry Holland: Resident of Ketch Harbour, Nova Scotia. Assisted in the escape of George Wade from Queen's Wharf in December 1863.

John E. Holt: Master of the Halifax collier *Investigator* when it was stopped and searched by the Union navy at Sambro during the *Chesapeake* Affair.

Vice Admiral Sir James Hope: Commander of the Royal Navy's North Atlantic Squadron beginning in the spring of 1864. Succeeded Admiral Sir Alexander Milne.

Joseph Howe: One of the most prominent Liberal politicians in Nova Scotia during the nineteenth century. Challenged to a duel by William Johnston Almon in 1839.

Lewis Hutt: A Halifax constable and the officer charged with arresting George Wade on Queen's Wharf in December 1863.

Mortimer Melville Jackson: Former Wisconsin supreme court judge and American consul in Halifax during the U. S. Civil War.

Amelia Elizabeth (Almon) Johnston: Sister to William Bruce and Mather Byles Almon. Wife to James William Johnston.

James William Johnston: Uncle to Dr. William Johnston Almon and husband to Amelia Elizabeth Johnston. A prominent Conservative politician in Nova Scotia. Was Attorney General for Nova Scotia during the *Chesapeake* Affair.

Alexander Keith, Jr.: Prominent Confederate supporter and swindler during the U.S. Civil War. A key figure in the Queen's Wharf incident of December 1863, he committed suicide after destroying the German passenger steamer *Mosel* in 1875.

Vernon G. Locke: One of the leaders in the hijacking of the *Chesapeake*.

Richard Lyons, Lord Lyons: British minister to Washington.

Richard Graves MacDonnell: Successor to Charles Hastings Doyle as Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia in 1864.

Admiral Sir Alexander Milne: Commander of the Royal Navy's North Atlantic Squadron until 1864.

Henry Pelham-Clinton, 5th Duke of Newcastle: British Secretary of State for the Colonies until 1864.

Henry A. Parr: One of the leaders in the hijacking of the *Chesapeake*.

Albert Pilsbury: American consul to Halifax before the U. S. Civil War. Supported the Confederacy during the conflict.

Brigadier General William Preston: Confederate emissary dispatched to the court of Emperor Maximilian in Mexico in 1864.

Lieutenant Charlton M. R. Reyne: An officer with the 16th Foot Regiment in Halifax and a key witness in the Police Court proceedings stemming from the Queen's Wharf incident.

John William Ritchie: Son of John Ritchie and brother-in-law to Dr. William Johnston Almon. As a prominent Halifax barrister, he represented Dr. Almon and the other participants in the Queen's Wharf incident before Halifax's Police Court.

William Johnston Ritchie: Son of John Ritchie and brother-in-law to Dr. William Johnston Almon. Was a prominent judge in New Brunswick during the U. S. Civil War.

J. J. Sawyer: Sheriff of Halifax. Present during the Queen's Wharf incident of December 1863.

William H. Seward: American Secretary of State under Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson.

Dr. William G. Shepardson: A Confederate physician aboard the *CSS Tallahassee*. Wrote the most comprehensive contemporary account of the cruise of the *Tallahassee*.

Dr. Peleg Wisiwell Smith: A Nova Scotian physician and a key figure in the Queen's Wharf incident of December 1863.

Luther Rice Smoot: Confederate Quartermaster General for Virginia. Organized a plot to smuggle locomotives into the Confederacy onboard blockade-runners.

Nathaniel Beverly Tucker: Confederate emissary to British North America. Assigned to negotiate a potential cotton-for-meat agreement with Northern officials.

Charles Tupper: Provincial Secretary for Nova Scotia during the U. S. Civil War period.

George Wade: One of the *Chesapeake* hijackers. Was arrested by the Union navy at Sambro and made his escape with the help of Dr. William Johnston Almon during Queen's Wharf incident.

Georgiana (Gholson) Walker: Wife to Norman S. Walker, the Confederate purchasing agent for Bermuda.

Major Norman S. Walker: Confederate purchasing agent for Bermuda. Husband to Georgiana Gholson Walker.

Benjamin Wier: Head of Benjamin Wier & Co., one of the chief blockade-running companies in Halifax during the U. S. Civil War.

John Wilkinson: Successful Confederate blockade-running captain. Briefly lived in Halifax after the U. S. Civil War.

Isaac Willett: Captain of the Union passenger steamer *Chesapeake* when it was hijacked in December 1863.

John Taylor Wood: Confederate commander of the *CSS Tallahassee*. Moved to Halifax following the Civil War.

Appendix B: Photograph of Dr. William Johnston Almon



Topley Studio, Almon, "William Johnson [sic], 1816-1901," 1873, photograph, Library and Archives Canada, http://collectionsCanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3214279&rec_nbr_list=3448997,3460516,3460517,3214279,3477760,3214278,518571,540898,447756,527043 (accessed 6 August 2013).

**Appendix C: Photograph of the CSS *Tallahassee* in Halifax,
August 1864**



A photograph taken of the CSS *Tallahassee* in Halifax Harbour on August 18th or 19th, 1864. Note the vessel's missing mainmast, which was lost in a collision with the passenger ship *Adriatic* on August 12th, 1864.

Photograph of the CSS *Tallahassee*, August 1864, in photograph collection, "Transportation: Water: Steamships," NSA.