“A Good Show in a Good House to a Good Audience”: Early Film Exhibition in the Maritime Provinces, 1896–1919

by

Gregory Canning

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
November 2015

In Memory of Karen Canning

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

My dissertation investigates early English film exhibition in Canada's Maritime provinces (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island) between 1896 and 1919. Particular focus is placed on the attempts made by exhibitors to attract and maintain targeted audiences throughout the transitional eras of motion pictures (1896–1919). The goal of this thesis is to investigate the history of motion picture exhibition in the English communities of the Maritimes while focussing on the moral, social, and practical concerns that this industry created in these communities during the transitional eras. This thesis links motion picture exhibition directly to the emergence of "modern life" which is also connected with enhanced discussions of mass entertainment, public health, public safety and moral betterment.

Between 1896 and 1919 the early film industry experienced challenges from the "novelty era" of film exhibition (1896-1898), the rise of the nickel theatres (1907) to the close of the First World War and the end of the flu pandemic (1919)—a twenty-three-year time period which witnessed several "transitional eras" of film exhibition. It was also during these transitional eras that the Maritime provinces experienced the promise of advanced capitalism followed by the devastation of the Great War in popular society and the economy.

This thesis explores the advertisements, give-aways and events that exhibitors used to attract and maintain a respectability as well as the government and public attempts to regulate the film industry, through licencing, regulation and censorship and the response of the film industry. Specifically this thesis investigates the baby give-aways, fire exit complaints and the films created in the Maritime provinces during the transitional eras. This thesis concludes that motion pictures were accepted in the Maritime provinces through negotiation, and it was the exhibitors who guided and championed this negotiation through advertising.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"I promise nothing complete; because any human thing supposed to be complete must for that very reason infallibly be faulty." – Herman Melville, Moby Dick

In the process of researching this dissertation, I have been greatly assisted by the staff and volunteers at the archives and libraries around the Maritime Provinces and at the National Library. I am grateful for the advice, support and information that have been offered by all. Special thanks go to those librarians at Dalhousie University and the Document Delivery Programme; the speed and efficiency of this programme greatly accelerated my research.

My research and writing have been particularly supported by my helpful and informative committee. I am deeply grateful for their combined patience with my work and for their encouragement. Many thanks to Dr Darrell Varga, my co-supervisor for the numerous meetings, and for offering insight into unique areas of research; and to Dr J.A. Wainwright for the invaluable editorial advice. I am also indebted to Dr Jason Haslam for educating me in the fundamentals of cultural studies and to Dr Claire Campbell, whose assistance in the early years greatly influenced the historical aspects of this thesis. Dr William Baker also deserves special thanks, for volunteering for this committee in the final months, and for offering invaluable editorial advice.

This project has benefited from the assistance and support (both financial and emotional) of the administration and faculty of the Interdisciplinary PhD Programme and of Graduate Studies at Dalhousie University. If not for the encouragement of Dr Jack Duffy, this thesis would never have begun, thank you. A debt of gratitude also goes to those whom I shared office space with in the early days of this degree; the communal and collaborative

nature of sharing space with interdisciplinary students nurtured my curiosity and broadened my research parameters beyond those that could have been offered in traditional academic silos.

I am appreciative for the encouragement and advice which has been offered to me by colleagues at Mount Saint Vincent University. Dr Randi Warne, thank you for the support and the assistance in my research and my teaching. Phoebe Smith also deserves special mention, for her enthusiasm and support. And thanks as well to Dr Graham Reynolds, at Cape Breton University who encouraged me at the very beginning to pursue this project.

Finally, and most importantly, thank you to my wonderful, supportive family. Without you this would not have been possible. Logan and Quinn, thank you for your inspirations and distractions. Tracy, your love and encouragement has been immense and more than any husband could ask for. Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to the memory of my mother, without whom I could never have gotten this far.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

> "The man who undertakes to run a Vitascope in the Maritime Provinces has no picnic." (Cited as A. Holland to Raff, September 9, 1896, Raff and Gammon Collection)[1]

INTRODUCTION

The exhibition of motion picture films symbolized the undeniable arrival of the modern era to Canada's Maritime provinces (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island). As with the rest of Canada and the United States, Maritimes communities witnessed many of the challenges that faced the budding film industry in the years spanning the "novelty era" of film exhibition (1896-1898), when traveling/itinerant film exhibitors would present films in the communities they passed through, to the close of the First World War—a twenty-three-year which witnessed several "transitional eras" of both film exhibition and the modern age. By the time permanent film exhibition houses were established across North America in the mid-1910s (venues commonly known as "nickel theatres" or "nickelodeons" due to their five-cent price of admission), the attention paid to this growing industry—and to this wildly popular type of entertainment—often catapulted to the forefront of public discourse.

As Maritimers negotiated how to absorb these new venues into their communities, questions and concerns regarding the content of the films, the composition of the audiences, and the physical safety of the theatres were often voiced. Fortunately for the current research, these concerns (as well as advertisements and notifications on behalf of the film exhibition industry) were commonly expressed via print media—and are therefore still available for our consideration. "A Good Show in a Good House to a Good Audience", the quote found in the

[1] Robert C. Allen, *Vaudeville and Film1895-1915: A Study in Media Interaction* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 98.

title of this thesis, comes from the sole surviving newspaper from the town of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, in 1909.[2] The quote is offered in the advertisement as a summary of the position and audience that all theatres in the region wanted to achieve.

This thesis will answer the following question: What was the position of motion picture exhibition as popular entertainment between the years 1896 and 1919—a period known for containing several "transitional eras" of film exhibition and a timespan that witnessed massive regional changes in terms of economy and society—in the communities of Canada's Maritime provinces? To assess this question, the research will simultaneously consider two fundamental issues that cannot be divorced from a study of early motion picture exhibition in Canada's Maritime provinces: (1) the social impacts of increased urbanization and modernization[3]; and (2) the rise of Canadian nationalism—a factor further complicated by the distinct regional identities of the Maritimes. Keeping these issues in mind, and focusing on the development of a Maritimes cinema culture between 1896 and 1919, we will come to see how Maritimes theatre owners, itinerant exhibitors, public officials, and audiences negotiated the exhibition practices of the new medium to create a regularized and stable film exhibition industry.

As mentioned above, newspapers appear at the centre of this investigation into the history of motion picture exhibition in the Maritimes region[4] between 1896 and 1919.

---

[2] Advertisement, *The Daily News* (Lunenburg), April 2, 1909, 3

[3] For a look at some of the cultural aspects associated with modernity in the Maritime provinces, see: Colin Howell, *Northern Sandlots: A Social History of Maritime Baseball* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Ian McKay, *Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994); Judith Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax* (Halifax: Pottersfield Press, 1989); Susan Morton, *Ideal Surroundings: Domestic Life in a Working-Class Suburb in the 1920s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Michael Boudreau, *City of Order: Crime and Society in Halifax, 1918-35* (Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2012); and Renée Lafferty, *The Guardianship of Best Interests: Institutional Care for the Children of the Poor in Halifax, 1850-1960* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012).

[4] Complications with the term "region" abound in the historiography of the Maritimes. Many authors have used the concept of region to define the relationship these three provinces have shared with each other, yet there is still no consensus on whether or not the geographical area of the Maritimes can truly be considered as a political and cultural "region." Although it is true that there are many different cultural groups, ethnicities, and other

Newspapers were at the core of public discussions on many topics during this transitional time period—and this holds true for the public discussions associated with early motion picture history as well. Indeed, the print media was the dominant means of offering the public a dialogue on the nascent film exhibition industry—giving voice both to the industry (exhibitors and, to a limited extent, producers) and to those who were interested in offering praise or placing restrictions on it. As such, archived Maritimes newspapers from communities across Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island capture commentary on early film-related topics ranging from the first premiere of the Vitascope in Halifax in 1896, to concerns about the safety of the booming nickel theatres beginning around 1907, to notices regarding the forced closure of the theatres due to pandemic flu in 1919. The industry journal, *The Moving Picture World*, also offers a unique glimpse at the topic from the point of view of producers and exhibitors.

In summary, this thesis, entitled "A Good Show in a Good House to a Good Audience: Early Film Exhibition in the Maritime Provinces, 1896–1919," investigates early English film exhibition in Canada's Maritime provinces and places particular focus on the attempts made by exhibitors to attract and maintain targeted audiences throughout the transitional eras (1896–1919), from the novelty era of film exhibition through the nickelodeon period (beginning in

---

distinguishing factors within the geographic region of the Maritimes, it has been convincingly argued by Margaret Conrad, Ian McKay, and Ernest Forbes over the past thirty years that the Maritime provinces *can* indeed be considered to be a "region" within Canada. See: Margaret Conrad, "Regionalism in a Flat World," *Acadiensis*, 35 (2006); Ian McKay, "A Note on 'Region' in Writing the History of Atlantic Canada," *Acadiensis*, 29 (2000); and Ernest Forbes, "Aspects of Maritime Regionalism 1867-1927," The Canadian Historical Association, Historical Booklet No. 36 (1983). For further discussion of the concept of "region" and the borderland issues that permeate discussions of the Maritime provinces, see: William H. New, *Borderlands: How We Talk About Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998); and Stephen J. Hornsby and John G. Reid, eds., *New England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).

1907 in the Maritimes, when permanent movie houses were established) and up until the end of the First World War.

BACKGROUND

MODERNIZATION IN THE MARITIMES

The years between 1896 and 1919 witnessed massive transitions taking place in Canada's Maritime provinces. In fact, the time period in question has been viewed as being a critical stage in the development of modernity throughout North America. According to Stephen Kern, the period from around 1880 to the end of the First World War was a defining moment when "a series of sweeping changes in technology and culture created distinctive new modes of thinking about and experiencing time and space."[5] These changes were particularly apparent following 1890, which marked the installation of electricity and increased access to export markets across the region.

Around this time, economies across North America were moving away from traditional barter/exchange systems and towards an advanced capitalist economy driven by mass-marketed and mass-produced goods, exportable resource exploitation, and secondary manufacturing. This was certainly the case for the Maritimes as well. The newly modernized industries that were established in the Maritimes—in the communities of Amherst, New Glasgow, and Truro in particular—created growth in population and prosperity never before seen in the Maritimes.[6] The most notable of these industries included the steel works in New

---

[5] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1. Although Ben Singer uses this quote to assert that films reflected an urban, chaotic life, it can also be used to service the argument that Maritimes communities, without the distinction of many of the outward symptoms of modernity that have been documented in the major North American cities, also experienced modernity and its effects.

[6] For some perspective on the effects of modernity in the Maritimes, see: Peter J. Wylie, "When Markets Fail: Electrification and Maritime Industrial Decline," *Acadiensis*, 17 (1987): 75 and L.D. McCann, "The Mercantile-Industrial Transition in The Metals Towns of Pictou County, 1857-1931," *Acadiensis*, 10 (1981) 34.

Glasgow and the textile factories in Truro. Amherst enjoyed a meteoric increase in size, more than doubling its population in the period under study, and also became one of the most economically important towns in the region. Indeed, the Maritimes began its foray into the modern industrial period with great promise of success, as manufacturing and primary resource exploitation appeared to be propelling the region briskly forward in the late nineteenth century. This prosperity would last for nearly thirty years.

As Georg Simmel has argued in his writings on modernity, the most important feature of "modern times" was the rise of the money economy—and the disconnection between producers and consumers that this new economy created. Modern markets were "supplied almost exclusively by production for the market, that is, for entirely unknown purchasers who never appear in the actual field of vision of the producers themselves."[7] This vast distance between the producers and the purchasers was a marked difference over any other historical era, and it created a rationalized economic relationship that was based entirely in the newfound money economy. As people became increasingly able (and willing) to purchase many of the goods and services that they had once been content to produce for themselves, communities

[7] Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903) in *The Blackwell City Reader* ed. Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson, (Oxford and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 12. See also, Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*, Ben Fowkes and David Fernbach, trans. (Toronto, Penguin Books Canada, 1990).

Figure 1-1: This photo of a line of delivery wagons arriving at one of Charlottetown's stores, taken by W.A Mitchell c.1900 from the corner of Queen and Richmond Streets in Charlottetown, illustrates the modern face of Maritime cities: note the wide boulevards and a crowded skyline dominated by electrical wires and store signs. Vintage Charlottetown Facebook page, November, 2012.

(including those in the Maritimes) became increasingly dependent on the money economy brought in by modernized industries.[8]

While often associated with urban areas in particular, these modern economic changes (as represented by the money economy) were also in evidence in the Maritimes at the turn of the century. As Colin Howell indicates, "Supplementing the earlier prominence of skilled artisans, many more unskilled labourers and semi-skilled operatives now took up positions in, for example, Amherst's boot and shoe factory, Trenton's steelworks, or Truro's woollen mill."[9]

[8] Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," 12; and David Frisby, "Georg Simmel: First Sociologist of Modernity," *Theory, Culture and Society*, 2 (1985): 55.
[9] Howell in Forbes and Muise, 142.

What is more, provincial capitals such as Charlottetown became even more important centres of commerce (see Figure 1-1). Clearly, the Maritime provinces were adapting to modernity as symbolized through economic and industrialized changes.

The ways in which such adaptations paralleled the rise of capitalism and the money economy in the Maritimes have been explored by scholars such as Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, and others.[10] In *Backwoods Consumers and Homespun Capitalists*, Beatrice Craig offers that the rise of a market culture (the money economy) in the Madawaska region of New Brunswick's Saint John River Valley corresponded closely with the changes in international markets in the 1860s, as marked by the beginnings of "consumer culture." Through an investigation into the purchases made at general stores, Craig notes that there was an increase in the importance of less durable (and often non-essential) items that were imported into the region as the "world of goods" began to emerge. [11]

A similar investigation by historian Steven Maynard has also illuminated the changes that took place in the rural economies of the Maritimes. Specifically, Maynard found that, prior to the 1890s, the economy of Hopewell, Nova Scotia was largely based on a barter system that allowed for a dependence on home production and self-sustainable practices.[12] However, as a

---

[10] The distinction between the historians' varying takes on the economic effects of modernity can be gaged in the way that each understands the "vehicle of movement" for modernity. According to Benjamin, the vehicle of movement is capitalism, which in his view created the changes associated with modernity. Georg Simmel, on the other hand, argues that it was the money economy that created the essential linking structure of modernity. See: Simmel, 12-13 and Frisby, 59.

[11] Beatrice Craig, *Backwoods Consumers and Homespun Capitalist: The Rise of a Market Culture in Eastern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 199. Craig illustrates that the rise of a capitalist market culture in the Madawaska Valley of the Upper Saint John River was not as simple as the standard history supposes, with complex exchange networks created to serve local markets formed within the region for active participants in the market. She sheds new light onto the workings of the rural economy in New Brunswick, illustrating that the long standing "staple thesis," which was used to account for the underdevelopment of the Maritime provinces, not only applied to manufacturing, but also to farming.

[12] Steven Maynard, "Between Farm and Factory: The Productive Household and the Capitalist Transformation of the Maritime Countryside, Hopewell, Nova Scotia, 1869-1890," in Samson. Also in this volume, Rusty Bittermann works to rebuff the myth of the independent yeoman farmer of Maritime literature through an investigation into the necessity of off-farm work for many of the small farmers of Prince Edward Island. See

capitalist and industrialized society began to take hold, small communities like Hopewell and those in the Madawaska Valley were fundamentally altered as money replaced barter as the main form of trade. Simultaneously, communities became less self-sufficient and their needs were increasingly met through the purchase of goods from beyond their borders.

Indeed, as the geographic distance between the producer and the consumer increased, essential items such as foodstuffs and clothing were increasingly imported to, and purchased at, a local store instead of being produced within the home and community. Importantly to this thesis, cinematic culture and motion pictures could never have taken hold without industrialization and the shift towards the new "money economy."

Although communities in the Maritimes did not necessarily alter their economic outputs radically, the mode of production was drastically different as the Twentieth Century progressed. Electrification, scientific management, and the increase of rational, science-based knowledge into the old economies of agriculture and aquaculture, lumber production, and textile manufacturing created both increased production and an increased workforce.[13] As illustrated by L. D. McCann, over 40 communities in the Maritime provinces were recognized as passing the threshold of being officially "urban" (with populations eclipsing 1,000 residents) by 1871, due in large part to the increase in industrial output.[14]

Against this backdrop of economic and industrial change, Maritimes communities prospered to varying degrees. As the first generation of Acadiensis historians has made abundantly clear, many communities in the Maritimes largely embraced such "modern" changes as the Twentieth Century took hold. For instance, John Reid's *Six Crucial Decades:*

Rusty Bittermann, "Farm Households and Wage Labour in the Northeastern Maritimes in the Early 19th Century," in Samson.

[13] Wylie, *Acadiensis*, 17 (1987): 75.

[14] McCann, *Acadiensis*, 10 (1981): 34.

Time of Change in the History of the Maritimes illustrates how in the early 1880s, many communities in the Maritimes excelled in innovation and industrialization—though these winning industries were often centered in areas with established populations and distinct geographic advantages, such as transportation links or direct access to abundant natural resources.

The changes in industrialized economic practices did not completely exclude rural economies, however. As industrialized processes and transportation improved, so too did agriculture and aquaculture—staples of the rural Maritimes economy. Notably, the opening of new markets and an increase in international competition acted as the impetus for rural farmers and fishermen to improve production and enhance efficiencies, thereby strengthening these outfits. The traditional industries of lumber mills and inshore fisheries also remained in the Maritimes, and were often similarly enhanced by economic changes. However, the prosperity accompanying modernization across the Maritimes was largely uneven. It was too often absent from geographically sprawling and non-industrialized rural areas, which were particularly vulnerable to out-migration of populations from the rural countryside to the major towns, where new factories and industries were established.[15]

Alongside these population shifts, the turn of the twentieth century also witnessed an increased level of professionalization and specialization in public health and safety and social betterment, as can be witnessed in the laws regulating public spaces and in the increased professionalization of certain vocations such as those in healthcare and education.[16] These

---

[15] John Reid, *Six Crucial Decades: Times of Change in the History of the Maritimes* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1987), 131.

[16] Cathy James, "Reforming Reform: Toronto's Settlement House Movement, 1900-20," *Canadian Historical Review*, 8 (2001), 55-90, Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008) and Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

social changes marked the arrival of "modernity" in much the same way as industrial and economic shifts did. Indeed, modernity could be found in a variety of experiences within a community and was not limited to such outwardly visible emblems as trolley cars and wide boulevards with bustling traffic (see, Fig. 1-1). Advances in public safety and public health, both of which were tied to increased urbanization and changes in manufacturing, saw doctors, social workers, psychologists, educators, police, and a cadre of "other professionally trained folk" working with the conviction that their expertise and specialized knowledge—as based in scientific methods—could offer significant improvement to individual lives and broader communities.[17]

Such socially progressive movements, which in the Maritimes were largely based in the larger communities, could also be seen in the small towns of the region. For instance, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), active temperance organizations, and child welfare professionals could be found across many Maritimes towns and villages, as well as in the local newspaper reports. There is no evidence of any community in the Maritimes resisting the social "progress" that accompanied modernization in the *fin-de-siècle* era. Indeed, for the most part, it seems that these social and economic shifts took hold across the Maritimes (to varying degrees) with very little (if any) resistance. By the time the Twentieth Century dawned, modernity—or, at least, some variation of it—had arrived on Canada's eastern shores.

THE MODERNITY THESIS

While the region clearly experienced changes related to modernity, could the Maritimes be considered as "modern"? After all, even though there was a notable shift from rural to urban

[17] Rene Lafferty, *The Guardianship of Best Interests: Institutional Care for the Children of the Poor in Halifax, 1850-1960* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 13. See also Cook.

living, from non-industrialized to industrialized practices, and from barter/exchange to the money economy, the majority of the region remained largely rural at the turn of the twentieth century.[18] Were sprawling urban metropolises and massive immigration a prerequisite in order for a people to be fully "modern"? In order to understand how modernity influenced the introduction and acceptance of motion pictures in the Maritimes in the transitional eras of the early Twentieth Century, it is necessary to explore the academic conceptions of modernity, particularly as espoused by the so-called "modernity thesis."

Film historians have been using a conception of the modernity thesis to better articulate the arrival of motion pictures in the cultural landscape of the *fin-de-siècle* era. Miriam Bratu Hansen, Tom Gunning and Ben Singer have all used a conception of modernity to assist in their interpretation of the introduction, reception and success of motion pictures in North American and European cities or metropolises.[19] This theory has been interpreted through cultural theorists including Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, Jürgen Habermas, and Georg Simmel,[20] along with others from the Frankfurt School, who have written at length about the

---

[18] According to Census Canada data compiled in 1901, the national divide between urban and rural populations was 63% rural versus 37% urban, while in the Maritimes the spread was much wider, with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick both reporting a similar difference of 72% rural and 28% urban (NS) and 77% rural and 23% urban (NB), while PEI was significantly more rural at 84%. Population, Urban and Rural, by Province and Territory (Canada) http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/demo62a-eng.htm

[19] Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Con*texts (New York: Columbia University Press: 2001), 21; Tom Gunning, "The Whole Town's Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity," *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 7(1994); Miriam Bratu Hansen has also written extensively on modernity; see: Miriam Hansen, "Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: 'The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology'," *New German Critique*, 40 (1987); "Room-for-Play: Benjamin's Gamble with Cinema," *October*, 109 (2004); and *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1991).

[20] These four theorists are featured prominently in the collected essays of *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*. Miriam Hansen has also written extensively on Benjamin and modernity; see: Miriam Hansen, "Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: 'The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology'," *New German Critique*, 40, Special Issue on Weimar Film Theory (1987); and *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1991). See also: David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1986); Habermas and Habib, "Modernity versus Postmodernity," 3-14; and Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1989).

concept of modernity. One central idea in their writings is that of the metropolis; indeed, many of the authors who focus on modernity have placed this concept within the environment of large cities, beginning famously with Paris, France.[21]

The importance of the commercial and social environment of the city to an expression of modernity is stressed by Georg Simmel in his foundational work, *The Metropolis and Modern Life*.[22] Simmel argues that the metropolis engendered in inhabitants an intensification of emotional life due to the "swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli."[23] He argues that the rush of the city streets with vehicular and pedestrian traffic, along with the "tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational and social life," created the "intellectualistic quality" that necessarily accompanied modernity.[24] The slower pace of small towns, according to Simmel, negated the mental effects of these stimuli upon the individual. To Simmel, small towns rested more on "feelings and emotional relationships," allowing the inhabitants a "steady equilibrium of unbroken customs."[25] Benjamin's writings also focus on the metropolis in terms of the effects of modernity. In his view, too, according to his

---

[21] Paris is the focus of Walter Benjamin's unfinished work, *The Arcades Project*, Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). It was in the metropolis of Paris, delighting in the crowded boulevards and dazzling arcades, that the *flâneur* was defined by Benjamin. This bourgeois male of the metropolis wandered the arcades of Paris before Haussmannization (the massive altering of the boulevards, parks and public works of Paris, named after the architect of the renovations, Georges-Eugène Haussmann) and "emphasized the mobility and fluid subjectivity and pleasure" of the consumer-oriented urban environment. Benjamin understood the *flâneur* as the observer of the patterns and rhythms of the urban environment and as an exemplifier of spectators in the city. Although the *flâneur* retains a class and gender specification in Benjamin's writing and in the sources he cites (most notably, the poet Charles Baudelaire, whose *The Painter in Modern Life* figures large in *The Arcades Project*), he should not be conceived as a historically specific person. Rather, according to Simmel, "his focus on this Parisian urban type has allowed scholars to extrapolate from the descriptions of the *flâneur* to envision a historically specific mode of experiencing the spectacle of the city in which the viewer assumes the position of being able to observe, command, and participate in this spectacle all at the same time." The *flâneur* and variations on this persona figure large in conceptions of spectators in film studies and film history. Simmel also places this metropolis at the centre of his work, and Paris also features prominently in the essays included in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*.

[22] Simmel.

[23] Ibid., 11.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 12.

unfinished *Arcades Project*, modernity was exclusive to the metropolis.[26] It was the large population, the mass circulation of bodies and goods, the anonymity of glances in crowds, and the "exercise of consumerism" that created the impression that the urban environment was a required condition of modernity.[27]

In terms of the "exercise of consumerism," the economy of the modern city was viewed by many thinkers as being the most important factor in regards to the concept of modernity. This is where a major distinction lies between the city and the small town, or—more specifically—the modern era and what came before. Indeed, the interruption brought about by modernity, which Simmel and Benjamin comment on, stemmed mostly from this economic shift, which precipitated the other shocks and changes that were recorded.[28] On the one hand, for Benjamin, the modern changes to social relations were closely tied to consumerism and capitalism. On the other hand, Simmel believes that it was the more generalized change from a barter/exchange system to a money economy that was the "spider that weaves society's web."[29] Also for Simmel, these changes included "punctuality, calculability and exactness," which he conceived as being essential qualities for life in the modern metropolis, as time itself became a commodity.[30] Indeed, to some commenters, it is the development of commodified time that was "the prime exemplar for the commodification of social relations."[31]

---

[26] Vanessa R. Schwartz, "Walter Benjamin for Historians," *The American Historical Review* 106, (2001), 1733. See also, Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999).
[27] Simmel, 12.
[28] Ibid.,13; Andrew Benjamin "Benjamin's Modernity," *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin* 1st edition, ed. David Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2004. Cambridge Companions Online).
[29] Frisby, "Georg Simmel: First Sociologist of Modernity", 11.
[30] Simmel, p.13. Commodified time, a concept commented on by Karl Marx and Simmel among many others, appears as one of the most unifying markers of modernity in the urban context. See Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity," and the response to this essay by Anthony Giddens, "Modernism and post-modernism," *New German Critique*, 22 (1981), 15-18.
[31] Giddens, 16.

Linking these ideas to the Enlightenment, as defined by Habermas, and commodified time, as offered by Karl Marx, Anthony Giddens views these social transformations as the base elements of modernity.[32] In defence of Simmel's theory, it can be argued that although the Enlightenment precipitated a notion of rational scientific thought in the arts and sciences (with the rationalization of time being part of this logical thought), it was not until these notions were disseminated to the general population through the implementation of the money economy that regions outside of the metropolis were inundated with many of the other characteristics of modernity. Regardless, this traditional view of modernity as being exclusively tied to the metropolis—a view commonly known as the "modernity thesis"—has permeated historic thought for decades.

The modernity thesis has been central to many interpretations of the viewing practices of early cinema's mass audiences. For instance, Miriam Bratu Hansen argues that the works of Benjamin are essential for an understanding of modernity and the place of motion pictures in culture and society.[33] In "Room-for-Play: Benjamin's Gamble with Cinema," Hansen investigates multiple versions of Benjamin's most famous work, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility."[34] It is from the study of multiple editions and translations of this article that a notion of the importance of cinema's position in a conception of modernity can be discerned, without any indication of the urban spaces that some theorists require. Focusing on the language of Benjamin, his earlier works, and the translations of key words in the text, Hansen highlights that cinema was crucial to an understanding of modernity

---

[32] Ibid.

[33] See, Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*; "Benjamin and Cinema: Not a One-Way Street," *Critical Enquiry*, 25 (1999); and "Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: "The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology," *New German Critique*, 40 (1987).

[34] Hansen, "Room-for-Play." Hansen uses multiple editions of Benjamin's text, offering that there were (at least) two different titles for the article. This title comes from the 1936 draft of the Artwork essay.

and could offer a hope for relieving the shocks and fissures of modern.[35] As interpreted by Hansen, Benjamin argued that it is shared public perceptions of cinema that offered the ability to train "human apperceptions and reactions" to the shocks and fissures of modernity.[36]

Many film historians, though, have placed modernity and cinema squarely in the urban environment. In *Melodrama and Modernity*, Ben Singer argues that there were two essential characteristics of modernity as it relates to motion pictures: the large mass of people that inhabited the metropolises and the barrage of stimuli that formed the visual and aural environment of the cosmopolitan city. [37] These markers of "urban modernity," however, did not conform to the realities of the modern rural or small-town experience. For instance, when motion pictures arrived in such Maritimes towns as Amherst, Campbellton, and Summerside in the late nineteenth century, they did not necessarily accompany the same shocks and distractions as present in Toronto or New York.[38] Despite this, audiences in smaller Maritimes communities still watched the same films as those urbanites attending shows in New York City.

The distinction is that this concept of modernity, as conceptualized by film historians such as Singer and Tom Gunning, usually relates mainly to the films as they are viewed in metropolitan, urban theatres. In fact, neither researcher argues that the modernity thesis is applicable to all instances of film exhibition, such as exhibition in smaller communities. The same can be said of Vanessa Schwartz and Leo Charney, who—in their introduction to *Cinema*

---

[35] Ibid., 28-29.
[36] Ibid, 29
[37] Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, 21; Gunning, "The Whole Town's Gawking" and Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*.
[38] Ibid; and Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 1997), 85.

and the Invention of Modern Life—argue that modernity, as it applies to the cinema, cannot be considered outside of the context of the city.[39]

This raises a number of pressing questions: If the urban environment of the metropolis was a prerequisite for modernity, why was cinema—an emblem of modernity—seemingly just as present and accepted in rural areas and smaller communities, like those of the Maritimes? In fact, as the contributors to *Hollywood in the Neighborhood* illustrate, there was widespread acceptance of cinema by those very audiences who lived outside of cities.[40] But if those regions were so ill-prepared for the visual "shock" of the cinema, why was it so well received there?

Importantly for this thesis, metropolitan audiences from larger cities—which have been the focus of the majority of early film exhibition studies—are not wholly representative of those audiences found outside of the metropolis. The concept of the centrality of the metropolitan experience to film exhibition, the so-called "gothamcentric" model of history, has been challenged by many historians looking at film exhibition outside the large urban centres.[41] However, that does not necessarily mean that those audiences outside the cities were not equally as "modern," regardless of what the modernity thesis dictates.

True, audiences outside the metropolis were neither saturated with the noise and movement of the stereotypical urban environment, nor confronted on a regular basis by widespread anonymity (two conditions commonly viewed as core concepts of the modernity thesis).[42] And yes, the image of the *flâneur* (i.e., the bourgeois, consumer-driven metropolitan

---

[39] Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz, eds., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1995), 3.
[40] Fuller-Seeley, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood*, 7.
[41] The term "gothamcentric" was coined for the film exhibition context by Robert Allen in "Decentering Historical Audience Studies," in Fuller-Seeley, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood*, 20.
[42] Singer, 25.

male) wandering the streets of Paris was a foreign—though not necessarily alien—concept to the residents of *fin-de-siècle* Maritimes communities.[43] But that does not mean that Maritime audiences did not experience some variation of modern cinematic culture.

It is true, as Tom Gunning notes in an essay concerning the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904, that those from outside the urban environment were often overwhelmed by many of the symbols of modernity, such as the huge crowds that were found at the fair and the brightly lit fairway.[44] In fact, it is this mythic image of the rural resident being dazzled by the bright lights of the city on which the stereotypical country rube that commonly populated early films was based. The most notable of these was Uncle Josh, who was the title character in a 1902 comic film directed by Edwin S. Porter for the Edison Company.

Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show (Edison Manufacturing Company, 1902) was a humorous short film that played on the idea of a naive spectator who could be tricked into believing that the images projected by motion pictures were real. The protagonist of the film appears as the only member of the audience, standing in a stage box as shown in Figure 1-2 (although this may have been to simulate the space between the actual audience in the hall and the projected hall shown in the film). The short films offered on the screen are

Figure 1-2: *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* (Edison Manufacturing Company, 1902). Josh attacks the screen, revealing the operator behind the screen.

[43] Charney and Schwartz, 5-6.
[44] Tom Gunning, "The World as Object Lesson: Cinema audiences, visual culture and the St. Louis World's Fair, 1904," *Film History*, 6 (1994), 426. This result was also reported by Keith Walden in his 1997 work, *Becoming Modern in Toronto*, 6.

representations of a selection of earlier filmed subjects, such as those featuring a Parisian dancer and a speeding locomotive. For the majority of audiences, these films would have already been familiar, as they were representations of the earliest filmed subjects.

Uncle Josh, however, is not at all familiar with the images on the screen—or how they are being projected. At the start of the show, he first looks to see where the images are coming from. At the appearance of the dancer, he jumps to the stage and dances with her. When the image changes to the speeding locomotive, he dives back to the safety of his box in fear of the oncoming train, only to return to the stage with the starting of the next short film, a humorous portrayal of a country couple. Josh enjoys the slapstick styled humour of the scene, but becomes incensed when the couple reunites; he moves to attack them, only to discover the screen at last (see Figure 1-3). He then redirects his frustrations to the projectionist, who has been revealed behind the screen.

Figure 1-3: *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* (Edison Manufacturing Company, 1902). Uncle Josh searches for the source of the image in front of him.

Uncle Josh was a character that was repeated in numerous films—all (mistakenly) based on the theme of the country rube who does not understand the reality of the screen. In this way, he was projected as being akin to the indigenous individuals in the forests of South America who were—as reported by anthropologists—confused by the moving images. Notably, these films (and this character)

were not only shown in the urban theatres of New York, Boston, and Toronto, but were also part of the travelling exhibitions that toured outside the metropolises.[45]

Uncle Josh is important to this background discussion of early "modern" film exhibition in the Maritimes because his character points to how the modernity thesis is at odds with the actual reality of modernity as it materialized in small-town North America, including the Maritimes. As far as historians can tell, the country rube confused by the realism of cinema's projected images has little basis in reality. In fact, this type perhaps only existed as part of the early cinema's promotional press to promote the startling realism of the projected images. In his 1999 article "The Panicking Audience," Stephen Bottomore offers that audiences in non-urban regions were just as unlikely to be scurrying from their seats to avoid the oncoming train as were audiences in the city.[46] And although some non-urban residents may have experienced some confusion when suddenly thrust amid the throngs and into the brightly lit fairway at the St. Louis World's Fair, they were not fundamentally different from their urban-dwelling fellow citizens and were quickly able to adapt their senses to the new cues of modernity, including those of the cinema.[47]

Indeed, to date, there has been no evidence indicating either a mass fear of, or widespread aversion to, the cinema in non-urban regions of North America. Instead, motion pictures appear to have thrived in the non-urban centres that had both the population and the economic base to support early itinerant motion picture performances and, later, permanently established nickelodeon theatres. Why, then, does the modernity thesis (as argued by many

---

[45] Stephen Bottomore, "The Panicking Audience?: Early Cinema and the 'Train Effect'," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television*, 19 (1999), 184; Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, 321-2.
[46] Bottomore, 184. In fact, Bottomore shows that there was no evidence of this ever happening, offering that it was instead an urban myth created to sell the reality claims of the motion picture images.
[47] Ibid, 201.

film historians) appear to exclude these "modern" audiences? And how do we reconcile the popular notion of country bumpkin Uncle Josh with modernity as experienced in the Maritimes?

THE MODERNITY THESIS REVISED

As Tom Gunning notes, modernity was not a singular adjustment affecting all regions of North America at the same time; rather, it had "a different pace in different areas of the globe."[48] Thus, perhaps the best way to conceptualize modernity in relatively rural areas like the Maritimes is that non-urban residents experienced a *variation* of modernity. After all, it is undeniable that less populous areas did, indeed, experience modernity—as evidenced by the changes witnessed in non-urban economies and social movements beginning in the mid-nineteenth century.

Furthermore, the populations of these regions were increasingly coming into contact with those technological and societal changes that were considered to be undeniable signs of modernity.[49] Electric street lights, regular train travel, predictable and stable policing, and a highly developed consumer economy can all be viewed as distinctly "modern" advancements. What is more, newspapers—a key signal-mark of modernity as the "nervous systems of the modern world"—were prominent in nearly every town in the Maritime provinces by the turn of the century.[50]

---

[48] Gunning, in Charney and Schwartz, 15. This is also a recurrent theme in Marshall Berman's resourceful work, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York, Simon and Schuster: 1982).
[49] See, Steven Maynard, "Between Farm and Factory: The Productive Household" and "The Capitalist Transformation of the Maritime Countryside, Hopewell, Nova Scotia, 1869-1890," and Daniel Samson, "Dependency and Rural Industry: Inverness, Nova Scotia", in Daniel Samson, ed., *Contested Countryside: Rural Workers and Modern Society in Atlantic Canada, 1800-1950* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994).
[50] For links between newspapers and modernity, see: Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1989), Berman, 18-19, Russell Johnston, *Selling Themselves: The Emergence of Canadian*

Coupled with these advancements was the arrival of modern heterosocial entertainments such as itinerant vaudeville, as well as illustrated lectures and moving pictures. The result was that, undeniably, even the non-metropolis Maritimes experienced many of the aspects of modernity as defined by the modernity thesis. And as motion pictures are considered by many theorists to be an emblem of modernity, the repeatedly successful showings of motion pictures in Maritimes communities indicate that this region did, satisfy another of the major prerequisites for being considered thoroughly "modernized" during the early Twentieth Century.

Thus, in terms of the "modernity thesis" and how it applies to the current research, it seems clear that the concept of modernity must be flexible—and must offer some relevance to the majority of North American citizens who were living outside of the metropolis. As Fuller-Seeley indicates, there can be a "middle ground" where the modernity thesis can be adapted to life in non-urban regions.[51] It is just such "middle ground" that this current thesis will seek to attain. Researchers from other fields of cultural history have taken this position, using other emblems of modernity such as electricity, telephones, and radios to argue that while these technologies *did* have an impact on non-urban life, this impact was experienced differently in more rural communities as compared to the metropolitan experience.

The opposition to the application of the "modernity thesis" to non-urban areas is best illustrated in Ben Singer's *Modernity and Melodrama*. In this work, Singer argues that the "urban environment of modern capitalism brought about some kind of fundamental change in the human 'sensorium,' creating a pervasive new 'mode of perception' which ultimately had a

---

Advertising (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), Paul Starr, *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern* Communications (New York: Basic Books, 2004) p.250-60 and Olsson, 16-18.

[51] Fuller-Seeley, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood*, 6.

significant impact on the development of cinema."[52] This view places a singular emphasis on the visual and auditory stimuli (i.e., electrified signs, trolley cars, etc.) that affected the urban population—and thereby appears to exclude the non-urban population, as it was not as privy to such significant changes in stimuli.

Yet, it is argued, these physical markers of modernity are only superficial symbols of change; this is why Ronald Walters questions the use of the modernity thesis in film history, arguing that it might prove more advantageous to conceive of modernity as having multiple variations.[53] For instance, as described by Fuller-Seeley in *Hollywood in the Neighbourhood*, Walters positions a notion of modernity that is defined not superficially, but by the processes of consolidation, bureaucratization, professionalization, specialization, and globalization.[54] This conceptualization of modernity corresponds much more readily with the current historical understanding of the Maritimes region at the turn of the twentieth century, as illustrated by Reid, Howell and McKay.[55]

Indeed, social historians researching non-urban and rural American history have shown that reactions to modern technologies in small towns and villages were unique in that consumers were *actively negotiating* their experience with modernity. In fact, smaller communities "took bits and pieces of 'modern life' and melded them with a mixture of traditional community ideologies to invent their own hybrid versions of modernity."[56] With motion pictures appearing in nearly all communities, including those communities of the

---

[52] Singer, 9.
[53] Ronald Walters, "Conclusion: When Theory Hits the Road," in Fulley-Seeley, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood*, 250-260.
[54] Ibid., 256.
[55] See Reid, *Six Crucial Decades*, 127-151, Howell, *Northern Sandlots* and "The 1900s" in Forbes and Muise, and McKay, *The Quest of the Folk*.
[56] Ibid, p.7. Claude Fisher is one of the most important social historians in this field to look at the introduction of communication technologies such as the telephone to rural areas of the United States. See, Claude Fisher, *America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone to 1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1992).

Maritimes, this technology can certainly be considered part of this "hybrid modernity." It is how Maritimers *actively negotiated* their experience with motion pictures that this research will seek to reveal.

LAMENTING MODERNIZATION/INDUSTRIALIZATION IN THE MARITIMES

While the Maritimes may well have been "modern" (or at least some variation of it), that does not mean that they were catapulted into a new ideal reality. Many Maritimers felt a growing disappointment with industrialization by the turn of the twentieth century, with some beginning to feel that modernity's new economic realities were not delivering as much economic prosperity to the region as had once been hoped. This disappointment with the industrial age, however, does not indicate an aversion to the symbols of modernity (e.g., motion pictures). Indeed, Maritimers were no strangers to the flow of changing technologies and culture. Rather, due to its location on the easternmost coast of North America, the Maritimes region had long enjoyed relatively close ties with Europe, the Caribbean, the northeastern United States, and the western Canadian provinces through historic and well-established trade links. Maritimers did not shy away from modern conveniences such as newspapers, telephones, or the radio; rather, they embraced them—just as they embraced semi-professional sports and motorized transportation.[57]

Furthermore, the frustration that many Maritimers felt with industrialization cannot be attributed to a "failure" of modernization in the region. In fact, the modern professionalization of health, education, and the social sciences took place in Maritimes centres at pace with other more urbanized locations such as Montreal and Toronto—indicating that the Maritimes

[57] See Howell and MacKay.

actually embraced the social model of modernity.[58] Indeed, regardless of its relatively small populations and its modestly prosperous industries, the Maritimes region should not be seen as unwilling to accept modernity per se—just as modernity did not depend on heavy industrialization or massive populations to be introduced.[59] Likewise, it should not be concluded that modernity failed in the region.

As the rural regions of the Maritimes began to depopulate, and as industrialization rapidly took hold, a romanticized vision of the past began to be celebrated by many Maritimers. These rose-tinted recollections of days gone by were aided by popular works of fiction such as Sir Charles G.D. Roberts' *The Heart That Knows* (1906) and Lucy Maud Montgomery's celebrated *Anne of Green Gables* (1908).[60] These works will be briefly described below, as they help to illustrate Maritimers' growing unease with industrialization—an unease that led to political action following the First World War.

Roberts' novel, set primarily in the small community of Westcock, New Brunswick, created an idyllic and nostalgic portrait of a Maritimes community during the golden age of sail (generally conceived as being the 19th Century). The details of the landscape and seascape are taken from the author's memory of the community of his youth, as he spent the first fourteen years of his life in the Tantramar region. Despite this surface sheen, Roberts' small-town depiction reflects a mixture of both the flaws and wholesome aspects that are present in any small, isolated community—including the narrow-minded characters who harass and ostracize

---

[58] Lafferty, 13.
[59] This argument is made in many of the works of sociologist Claude Fisher, who investigates the role that communication technologies such as the telephone have had on populations in the United States. He asserts that assumptions about "modern" innovations are often unfounded and should be challenged. See Claude S. Fisher, "The Revolution in Rural Telephony, 1900-1920," *Journal of Social History*, 21 (1987) 5. This is also a conclusion of Charles Musser and Carol Nelson in their 1991 study of the itinerant film exhibitor Lyman Howe. See Charles Musser and Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880-1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).
[60] Howell in Forbes and Muise, 178.

his protagonist, Louella Parsons, her son Seth, and the heroic pastor and church community that support them.[61] The descriptions of the foreign shores and modern cities visited by Seth when he goes in search of his father contain a level of fear and chaos for the Maritimer, and it is only through a return to the Tantramar that a peaceful resolution to the story can be achieved.

For Anne Shirley, the title character in Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, there is no travelling beyond the comforts of Prince Edward Island, and no concept of "the modern" enters the narrative. The story offers less jaundiced characters and a less mature conflict than Roberts', though the descriptions offered of Cavendish, PEI are similar to those of Westcock. Still, the landscape and community come alive in this novel with warmth and romance, and it is the bucolic environment that provides much of the stability and comfort for the troubled character of Anne Shirley.[62]

What these two very different novels have in common is that they both depict happy pastoral portraits of quaint Maritimes communities—unmarred by modernization—and of citizens who appear unwilling to adapt to the massive changes that were reshaping society throughout much of urban North America at the time of their writing. That these visions of the past did not correspond with the reality of life in *fin-de-siècle* Maritimes, however, has been made obvious by multiple works on regional history produced over the past thirty years.[63]

For instance, the idea that the population of the Maritimes suffered under modernity, and were therefore collectively looking back to an era prior to its changes, has been thoroughly debunked in Ian McKay's book *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection*

---

[61] Charles G. D. Roberts, *The Heart That Knows* (Boston: L.C. Page and Company, 1906).
[62] L. M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables* (Boston: L.C. Page & Company, 1908).
[63] For examples of these authors, see n.4.

in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia. McKay asserts that the perception of anti-modernism—which has become part of the largely accepted reason for the economic difficulties in Nova Scotia (and, so it could easily follow, the entire Maritimes region)—has largely been a construction of the cultural industry of the provincial government. Specifically, he cites tourism operators in particular as having the incentive to create the image of so-called "folk and innocence," which could form the basis of a successful tourist industry.[64] Notably, this "folk and innocence" is nothing at all like Uncle Josh's character from early film history; where Uncle Josh was overcome by the modern world he could not understand, the innocent folk of these works of fiction are portrayed as having nothing to gain from the introduction of modernity. It can be argued that Roberts' and Montgomery's novels play into this 'folk and innocence' narrative nicely.

However, as McKay asserts, the people of the Maritimes were *not* collectively anti-modern and were not locked in a past that was no longer relevant—no matter what nostalgic affectations Roberts and Montgomery were striving for. On the contrary, they were active in shaping a future for themselves that attempted to adapt to the changing political and economic realities of the twentieth century.[65] Was this process without its own challenges, however? Certainly not. In fact, as economic and political importance began to be centralized in "Upper" Canada, where before it had been centred in the Maritimes, there was a growing displeasure expressed with at least some of the changes of modernity and in particular of the modern economy, as shown by burgeoning Maritime Rights sentiments (discussed below). Notably, this displeasure grew in the decades following the publication of Roberts' and Montgomery's

[64] McKay, 22.
[65] Ibid., 26-28.

nostalgic novels; by the end of the First World War, the Maritimes region was struggling to maintain its economic base as industries moved west and political power followed suit.

THE RESEARCH: MOTION PICTURES IN MODERN-ERA MARITIMES

As this thesis will reveal, the cinematic culture of the Maritime provinces can provide some important insights for future investigations into the social and cultural changes that were taking place in the Maritimes during the transitional eras (between 1896 and 1919), as well as the unique regional responses to these changes. As mentioned above, print media (i.e., newspaper) archives will offer a significant contribution to the research, as the subject of motion pictures and movie houses often appeared in the papers during the transitional eras, both in advertisements and as a subject of much interest (and concern).

In Maritimes communities, like elsewhere across Canada and the United States, newspapers—arguably one of the harbingers of the modern era—were offered to subscribers and interested citizens on a daily, bi-weekly, or weekly basis even before the onset of the first motion picture exhibition in 1896. From their inception, they carried with them reports and opinions of local events and news from across the globe.[66] By incorporating new technologies in wired communication (e.g., telegraphs, newswires, and telephones), newspapers became even more capable of providing Maritimers with a refracted mirror of the world's events and politics. Through this lens, readers could gain information about (and form opinions of) global news, local events, politics, and cultural movements. As the Maritimes progressed into the modern (and further to the transitional) era, newspapers, too, shifted. One key shift was that they began offering an increasing amount of space for paid advertising promoting the new

[66] Olsson, 15.

commodities and services that came with industrialization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Through these archived newspaper advertisements, articles, editorials, and discussions one can glean how Maritimers formed their own unique "cinematic culture" during the transitional eras of film exhibition. Notably, the cinematic culture of a region does not necessarily depend on a thriving film production culture, nor does it even depend on the existence of film production in the area; rather, the term "cinematic culture" refers to how audiences *interact* with the cinema available to them. Proving this statement has been a recurring challenge for the study of film exhibition history—particularly in Canada. However, historians have recently devoted much time to showing that audience interaction (and not necessarily film production) is indeed a key component of cinematic culture.[67]

For instance, film historian Peter Steven argues that placing too much focus on film production had, in the past, limited the discussion of Canadian cinema—and, in turn, Canadian culture. Writing of Canadian cinema in the pre-World War One era, he asks, "Must we tie a Canadian film culture to production alone?"[68] This thesis also holds the view that Canadian cinematic culture in the first two decades of the twentieth century was not dependent on film production; in fact, when the focus is placed solely on the Maritime provinces, film production is nearly entirely excluded from the notion of cinematic culture.

Regardless of the fact that there was very little actual film production in the Maritimes during the early Twentieth Century[69], there was still a thriving film exhibition industry, with

---

[67] This is the premise of many film histories written recently. For the more recent examples, see: Fuller-Seeley, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood*; Rick Altman, *The Sounds of Silent Cinema* (New York: Columbia University, 2008); and Moore, *Now Showing*.

[68] Peter Steven, 'Pleasing Canadians: A National Flavour for Early Cinema, 1896-1914,' *The Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 12 (2003): 7.

[69] Only one film produced in the region made a significant impact on Canadian film, and that was the celebrated 1913 film adaptation of the famous Longfellow poem, *Evangeline*, produced by the short-lived Halifax film

dedicated motion picture theatres or itinerant exhibitors operating in nearly every city, town, and village in the region. This widespread embrace of motion pictures was arguably an extension of Maritimers' longstanding enjoyment of travelling vaudeville shows and circuses.[70] It was also surely advanced by a number of other economic and social factors particular to the modern age as it was dawning on the Maritimes, as will be discussed in the coming chapters.

What is clear is that the conditions were right for the various populations within the region to accept motion pictures, "the single most expansive discursive horizon in which the effect of modernity [is] reflected, rejected or denied, transmuted or negotiated."[71] What these conditions were, and how they were negotiated and accepted by Maritimes communities, is the focus of this thesis.

The emphasis of this thesis will be on the responses of Maritimes communities, Maritimes exhibitors, and the film industry to the various stages of film exhibition as the medium of motion pictures moved through the transitional eras between 1896 and 1919. Among these transitions are the changes to exhibition practices; from itinerant exhibitors travelling the region, to established, continuous motion picture theatres. Another transitional era can be marked by the changes in films; from the short films that focused on showing the audience scenes, to the narrative cinema that eventually lead to the rise of the feature films. Finally, a transitional era can be delineated between 1909 and 1919, as theatres begin to

---

production firm, the Canadian Bioscope Company. The company collapsed at the start of World War One and the film was subsequently lost. See Chapter Five for a description of the reception of this film in Nova Scotia. For further discussion on the production of the film, see Morris, 49-51.

[70] Audiences in the Maritimes were familiar with the vaudeville shows and circuses that frequented every populated corner of North America, and it was through these travelling amusements that motion pictures first gained a popular audience. See Calvin Pryluck, "The Itinerant Movie Show and the Development of the Film Industry," in Katheryn Fuller-Seeley, ed., *Hollywood in the Neighborhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 37-52.

[71] Miriam Bratu Hansen, "America, Paris, the Alps: Kracauer (and Benjamin) on Cinema and Modernity," in Charney and Schwartz, 365.

maneuver towards a more respectable and inclusive (within defined, racial parameters) audience. Specifically it will ask the question, "What was the position of motion picture exhibition as popular entertainment between the years 1896 and 1919—a period known for containing several "transitional eras" of film exhibition and a timespan that witnessed massive regional changes in terms of economy and society—in the communities of Canada's Maritime provinces?"

The towns and cities selected for inclusion in this thesis have been chosen due to the position of these communities on the major transportation routes into and out of the region, as well as the size of the communities. Of course, the selection was also limited by the resources available for the research, namely complete or at least reliable newspaper resources. The towns of Liverpool, Antigonish, Truro, New Glasgow, Pictou, Amherst, Yarmouth, Digby, Campbellton, Newcastle, Chatham, Moncton, St. Stephen, Woodstock, and Summerside, as well as the cities of Saint John, Fredericton, Halifax, and Charlottetown will be included in this detailed study of film exhibition. All of these communities have substantial archived resources, with at least partial newspaper records for the eras under study.

Notably, the communities of Amherst, New Glasgow, Truro, Moncton, and Charlottetown appear most frequently in this study. This is due to the presence of active theatre houses in their communities and a near-complete newspaper record for the period studied, as well as their having dramatically felt the changes of modernity. Indeed, all five communities saw a remarkable rise in industrial output during the era of industrialization in the Maritimes, as discussed above. What is more, Amherst had a particularly active theatre, which featured detailed newspaper advertising. This town, along with Truro and Moncton, is also ideally located on the mainland transportation route between the provincial capitals of Halifax and

Saint John, making all three communities essential to the new markets of central Canada and the United States.

As we take a closer look into the cinema culture of Maritimes communities, there are two connected issues that must be discussed before the main research question—What was the social and economic positioning of motion picture theatres between the years 1896 and 1919 in the communities of the Maritimes?—can be thoroughly answered. As mentioned above, these subsequent inquiries relate to: (1) the social impacts of increased urbanization and modernization, and how these factors affect film exhibition; and (2) the rise of Canadian nationalism and the regional struggles against outside influences, including those introduced by modernity. These two issues will be briefly introduced below, and then investigated in detail in subsequent chapters.

Social factors affecting film exhibition in the Maritimes

In studies of the metropolises of North America, the negative social effects of cinema appear to be a leading focus of social reform and "social uplift" groups, church officials, and governments of all levels. In the large metropolises, including New York, Toronto and Chicago, these social reform campaigns were focused on the working-class and immigrant populations. It was these individuals who were believed to be in need of social uplift and protection from the vices and potential moral dangers of the metropolis; which included the motion picture shows.[72] The goal of some of these urban reformation campaigns was to limit

[72] The argument for a "standardized audience" in early film history is one of the myths that many film exhibition historians have attempted to debunk. Scholars such as Paul Moore, Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, and Charles Musser have studied the history of film exhibition in small towns and cities throughout North America, looking to show that theories such as the "modernity thesis" and the cinema of attractions cannot be placed blindly on any location, and also that there is no "universal spectator" on which to rest theories of early audiences. See Charles Musser, "Rethinking Early Cinema: Cinema of Attractions and Narrativity," *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 7 (1994): 203-231; Ronald G. Walters, "Conclusion: When Theory Hits the Road", in Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, ed., *Hollywood in the Neighborhood: Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008),

this potentially vulnerable population's exposure to cinema.[73] This so-called "gothamcentric" take on motion picture exhibition history (focusing on the metropolis) has been a dominant narrative of film exhibition history until only recently, when it was recognized that a broader scope of inquiry—one that incorporated smaller communities—should be pursued.

In those regions that lacked this immigrant or large working-class element, such as, the Maritimes, reform groups often had a different perspective of itinerant exhibitors and the operation of motion picture theatres.[74] In smaller cities like St. John's, Newfoundland, Des Moines, Iowa, or Wilmington, North Carolina, the cinema was generally viewed with more promise than apprehension by these groups.[75] In fact, there is research showing that theatres in smaller cities were often offered less restrictive rules under which to operate, and in some instances were even encouraged by these groups and local governments to expand or upgrade their facilities. For instance, in his celebrated investigation into the leisure habits of the working class in Worcester, New York, Roy Rosenzwieg details how reform groups promoted the cinema to combat the patronage of taverns and bars.[76] Furthermore, Douglas Gomery, in *Shared Pleasures*, illustrates the lengths the town council of Paris, Texas took to equip the

---

250-262; Paul S. Moore, "Early Picture Shows at the Fulcrum of Modern and Parochial St. John's, Newfoundland," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 22 (2007): 447-471; and Kathryn H. Seeley, *At the Picture Show: Small Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1996).

[73] There is a plethora of works written on the audiences of these large cities. For example, see: Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby, eds., *American Movie Audiences: From the Turn of the Century to the Early Sound Era* (London: British Film Institute, 1999), Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema, 1907-1915* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); and Michael Aronson, *Nickelodeon City: Pittsburgh at the Movies, 1905-1929* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008).

[74] See Moore, "Early Picture Shows." For a Swedish perspective on this, see, Åsa Jernudd, "Reform and Entertainment: Film Exhibition and Leisure in a Small Town in Sweden at the End of Nineteenth Century," *Film History*, 17 (2005): 88-105.

[75] See Moore, "Early Picture Shows," and Fuller-Seeley, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood* for examples of studies into film exhibition in smaller cities.

[76] Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 191-215.

local theatre with sound equipment in the 1930s,[77] under the reasoning that the theatre would act as an enticement for future settlement of the town.

While this generalization about theatres being more easily accepted in smaller communities has been gleaned primarily from research performed in the United States, it seems to hold just as true for the relatively stable and mono-ethnic cinema-going populations of the Maritime provinces.[78] For instance, letters to the editor of *The Truro Daily News* argued that a modern theatre, offering "clean vaudeville, moral drama and educational pictures," would aid in attracting quality workers to the town's factories and mills.[79] It was due to the importance that influential citizens in these communities placed on these sites of amusement that they were perceived as essential to the growth of the community. My published research into the theatres in Truro, Nova Scotia, concludes that this community went to great lengths to make its theatres central community institutions.[80] To what lengths did other communities in the Maritimes go to promote local film exhibition? In the Maritime communities where promoting regional immigration was just as important as preventing out migration, did many Maritimes towns place this much emphasis on their theatres? Did citizens go so far as to place tax dollars behind supporting theatres, or were these businesses treated as equals to other commercial establishments as retail stores, restaurants, and hotels? The position that theatres commanded in the towns and cities of the Maritimes has to be ascertained so as to understand the social value that citizens placed on motion pictures and their exhibition.

---

[77] Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1992), 222.
[78] See, Fuller-Seeley, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood*; Fuller-Seeley, *At the Picture Show*; and Charles Musser and Carol Nelson. This does not presume that the smaller communities were "mono-ethnic", only that the ethnic or racial minorities were not offered a voice or a position in the motion picture exhibition history.
[79] Local and General, *Daily News* (Truro), November 9, 1911, 1.
[80] Greg Canning, "Moving Pictures at the Opera House: The Introduction of Motion Pictures to the Town of Truro, Nova Scotia, 1897-1914," *Rain/Drizzle/Fog: Film and Television in Atlantic Canada*, ed. Darrell Varga (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2009), 47-65.

Thus, the questions that need to be asked for the Maritimes region are this: How did reform groups and religious organizations react to the new medium of motion pictures in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and PEI? And how did social reform groups such as the well-established and powerful temperance leagues respond to the opportunities (and potential problems offered) by the cinema as exhibition practices changed over the course of the transitional eras?[81]

To answer these questions, this thesis will explore how various religious groups and social reformers in Maritimes communities used the theatres both to attract audiences and to prevent vice—not unlike their contemporaries in larger urban centres. In fact, this was the case in Truro, Nova Scotia, where the Diamond Jubilee Temperance Association (DJTA) Theatre was operated by a social uplift group; it also held true in cases where exhibitors were encouraged to show religious films such as the various incarnations of the *Passion Play* in concert with religious holidays.[82]

The above questions will be complemented by an investigation into the regulation of film exhibition in the Maritimes, as influenced by various social reform groups, religious organizations, and governments. It is apparent that films were censored locally, though there is limited evidence that this was under consideration of regional mores. The regional governments followed the leads of the larger metropolises, either in other parts of Canada or in

---

[81] For a look at the temperance movement in the Maritimes, see, Clifford Rose, *Four Years with Demon Rum: The Autobiography and Diary of Temperance Inspector Clifford Rose* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1980), Craig Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), Ernest Dick, "From Temperance to Prohibition in 19th Century Nova Scotia." *Dalhousie Review*, 60 (1981): 530-52, and Margaret Strople, "Prohibition and movements of social reform in Nova Scotia 1894 - 1920" (Masters diss., Dalhousie University, 1975).

[82] See also: Canning in Varga, 54; George Potamianos, "Moving Audiences in Placerville, California, 1908-1915," in ed. Fulley-Seeley, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood*, 82-3; Musser and Nelson; and Moore, "Early Picture Shows", 641. For details on The Passion Play and the religious aspects of early film exhibition, see Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, 208-18.

the United States, when it came to which films to censor.[83] This denied the influence of local concerns, and yet there appears to have been little evidence of frustrations or major concerns over the content of motion pictures. There is also evidence that motion picture exhibition sites caused suspicion that manifested in social concerns over the health and safety of audiences. These concerns were in many cases due to the hetero-social entertainment medium of motion pictures, which crossed not only gender but also class barriers. It also appears that nickelodeons were singled out in many communities when concerns about the health and safety of a community arose due to the changes brought about by modernization.

Illustrating how theatres in Maritimes communities were addressing concerns related to health and safety issues during the transitional eras will offer a perception of the saturation of concepts of modernity within the region. An in-depth investigation into the positions of specific movie houses across the Maritimes will also ascertain the ways in which these businesses attempted to navigate such concerns and take a central place in the social lives of their respective communities.

Maritime Rights and the effect of regional struggles on film exhibition in the Maritimes

The questions regarding the moral or social impact of cinema on the Maritime provinces will blend with the third path of inquiry for this thesis regarding the struggles faced during the region's integration into the relatively new Canadian nation. As mentioned above, the modern industrial era brought only modest economic gains to the Maritimes, although the

[83] For the influence of banned films and of the local conditions of the censoring of films, see Steven J. Ross, "The Revolt of the Audience: Reconsidering Audiences and Reception During the Silent Era," in Stokes and Maltby, 105.

changes it induced in the region were sizeable. One such change was a shift in the geographic concentration of economic (and therefore political) power in Canada.

The Maritimes had once been a leading place of influence in the "New World" following European colonization, as it enjoyed distinction as an important military and economic centre, acting as a gateway to North American trade and also as a base of operations for British and Canadian coastal defences.[84] Furthermore, from before Confederation, the Maritimes had had a strong link with the New England states, both economically and socially; this relationship, in part, defined the Maritimes as a seat of power in British North America and, later, early Canada. At the turn of the twentieth century, however, the Maritime provinces witnessed a steep decline in economic and political importance as the power centre of the nation consolidated its influence west, within the triangle of Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal.

Before long, the Saint Lawrence River and the Great Lakes had eclipsed the Atlantic trade routes in importance as Canada's trading focus shifted from Great Britain to the United States. And as the British army and navy pulled out of Halifax in early 1900, Canada's own forces were ill-equipped to take their place—and were thereby unable to reinstate the political and economic importance of the city through military presence. This point was made painfully obvious following World War One, as the mass demobilization of soldiers contributed to an already perilous economic situation in the province, removing a major source of population and income for the provincial capital.[85]

Indeed, in the context of the young country of Canada, the Maritimes' pride of place as an economic and political centre of the nation began to dissolve, particularly as Canadian

[84] For a look at the social effects of the post-war period on Halifax, and specifically the Richmond District of the city, see Morton.
[85] Forbes, "Aspects of Maritime Regionalism," 36.

nationalism began to form in earnest across Canada.[86] In fact, it seems clear that Maritimers were not entirely amenable to the idea of Canadian nationalism as it was being projected from Ontario and Quebec. Maritime political leaders and social activists were, as early as the 1890s, calling for a renegotiation of the terms of Confederation, as well as recognition of the Maritimes region as being distinct. In response to the Maritimes' relative decline in prosperity and influence, the Maritime Rights movement was formed with the goal of restoring the former economic and political power of the region. The movement officially began its political machinations in 1919, after years of informal protests about the downgraded position that the Maritimes region was put in following the formation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867.[87] This challenge to Canadian nationalism could be expressed through motion pictures, yet with limited production in the Maritime Provinces it is more likely that any frustrations with Canadian nationalism can be witnessed in the silence surrounding the increasing domination of American content on the screens in the Maritimes.

Any study into the regional character of film exhibition in the Maritimes brings into question the community-based reactions to such things as the American tenor of the films, the lack of Canadian content, and the lack of a regional voice. As audiences in Ontario and Quebec called for *Canadian* stories to be reflected in the motion pictures that were exhibited in their theatres, Maritimes audiences did not echo this call.[88] Maritimes audiences appear complacent

---

[86] For a recent look at regional identity and the Maritime Provinces, see Colin Howell and Peter Twohig, "A Region on Film: Metropolitanism, Place, and Meaning in NFB Films," in Varga, 1-21.

[87] Ernest R. Forbes, *Challenging the Regional Stereotype: Essays in the 20th Century Maritimes* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1989), 100-113. Forbes was among the first to write a critical history of the Maritime Rights movement, arguing that it had its roots in the first two decades of the twentieth century and that the official start of the movement in 1919 was simply the culmination of nearly twenty years of complaints. See also: Ernest R. Forbes, *Maritime Rights Movement, 1919–1927: A Study in Canadian Regionalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979).

[88] For examples of Canadian reactions to early American films, see: Moore, *Now Playing*; Germain Lacasse, "American Film in Quebec Theater," *Cinema Journal* 38 (1999); and Louis Pelletier, "An Experiment in

in accepting the dominance of American stories on the screen. Local content was promoted, when it was made available by producers and exhibitors, yet not to the exclusion of the mostly American content. There also appears to have been no backlash against locally controlled or national theatre chains in the Maritimes, but there exists the impression of a desire to accept any exhibitor who was willing to set up a theatre in a community.

A Brief Introduction of Early Film Exhibition in the Maritimes

When motion pictures were first introduced to North American theatre audiences at Koster & Bails Music Hall in New York City in April 1896, the entertainment was advertised as the latest technical marvel of the nineteenth century.[89] In this very early period of film history, projecting moving pictures was a novel entertainment—though it was not entirely unique. The projection of moving images at that time was just the latest link in a long chain of "screen practice," as film historian Charles Musser has termed the pre-history of cinema. In his 1990 work, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907*, Musser does an excellent job of detailing the difficulties of defining a starting point for the history of motion pictures. What he offers instead is a history of images being projected onto screens for collected audiences—thus illustrating that motion pictures were a continuation of "magic lantern" traditions, which extend back to at least the 1600s.[90] In this way, the novelty era of film exhibition (a short two-year period between 1896 and 1898) was not the beginning of motion picture history so much as the premier of a new device for projecting images onto the screen in the tradition of screen practice.

Historically Correct Canadian Photoplays: Montreal's British America Film Manufacturing Co.," *Film History* 19 (2007): 98-110.

[89] Musser 113-6. The advertisements for the show describe the Vitascope as the latest marvel from the "Wizard of Menlo Park" and connect this device with the other inventions to come out of Thomas Edison's laboratory, including the Phonograph and Kinetophone.

[90] Ibid., 15.

The capability to exhibit moving images was the result of two relatively simple (though incredibly important) advances in film technology. The first was flexible and sensitive film stock, capable of recording "stable images of an instant of motion"; the second was film stock that could allow images to last for more than an instant for the viewer.[91] Initially, the companies that pioneered the technical aspects of film projection were in control of the exhibition of motion pictures. Inventors such as Thomas Edison, the Lumière bothers, and the Latham family loom large in the novelty era as providers and licensees of patented film exhibition technologies. And although there certainly were a legion of others offering moving picture devices, it was Edison's Vitascope and the Lumière brothers' Lumière Cinématographe that dominated the theatres of North America during the initial novelty era of film exhibition.[92]

There were distinct technical differences between the projector designed by Edison and that of the Lumière brothers—namely, that Edison's Vitascope was exceedingly complex, while the brothers' Cinématographe was comparatively simple. Itinerant exhibitors touring North America with the first commercially available motion picture projector, which was designed by Edison, were aware of the technical complexities and limitations of the machine.[93] Premier among the Vitascope's shortcomings was that it required a specific electrical voltage that was oftentimes only available in North America's large metropolitan centres. In fact, it was this very shortcoming that created a black mark on the Maritimes' first motion picture exhibition experience.

This Maritimes premiere of this device occurred in Halifax on September 10, 1896, at

---

[91] André Gaudreault, ed., *American Cinema, 1890-1909: Themes and Variations* (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, New Jersey, 2009), 12. These two innovations remained, for the most part, unchanged for the history of motion pictures. In fact, the basic technology of motion pictures changed very little throughout most of the twentieth century, until the advent of digital projection in the 1990s.
[92] Musser, 131-158.
[93] Ibid., 21-22.

the Academy of Music and under the auspices of the regional exhibitors and rights holders, the Holland brothers (see Figure 1-4).[94] Despite the best efforts of electricians from the Halifax Electric Tramway Company to achieve the direct current of 110 volts required by the Edison device, only a direct current of 500 volts could be obtained from the Halifax electrical grid, which operated on an alternating current of 104 volts.[95] The Holland brothers accepted the loss of income[96] from this failed exhibition and cancelled the rest of their Maritimes tour, registering their official complaints with the Edison Corporation that "The man who undertakes to run a Vitascope in the Maritime Provinces has no picnic."[97] As Charles Musser has commented, this was only one of many complaints made by many Vitascope entrepreneurs about the shortcomings of the machine. Beyond revenue loss for the exhibitors, this technical shortcoming of the Edison Vitascope effectively excluded a large portion of the potential North American market from enjoying this new form of entertainment—at least until an improved device became available.


ACADEMY MUSIC
Thursday, Friday and Saturday and Saturday Matinee,
Sept. 10, 11, 12
EDISON'S VITASCOPE !
First exhibition in the Maritime Provinces of Edison's latest triumph.
PRICES—10, 20 30 cents. Matinee—Children 10c. ; Adults 20 cents.
Machines leased, Territory sold.
HOLLAND BROS., Ottawa,
mh Sole Agents for Canada.

Figure 1-4: Advertisement, *Halifax Herald*, September 9, 1896, p.8.

This was not the only impediment to the proliferation of motion pictures to some regions of North America, however. For instance, Musser also offers evidence suggesting that

[94] "Was Not a Brilliant Success," *Morning Chronicle* (Halifax), September 11, 1896, 1.
[95] "The Vitascope and Its Difficulties in Halifax," *Herald* (Halifax), September 11, 1896, 8.
[96] This loss would be approximately $5832.00 in 2015, with an inflation rate of 3.8% per annum. The letter to the manufacturers of the Vitascope from A. Holland is quoted in: Robert C. Allen, *Vaudeville and Film1895-1915: A Study in Media Interaction*, (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 98.
[97] Cited as A. Holland to Raff, September 9, 1896, Raff and Gammon Collection. See Robert C. Allen, *Vaudeville and Film 1895-1915: A Study in Media Interaction* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 98.

there were general difficulties in gaining audiences for the new technology in the "more rural areas." Quoting complaints from exhibitors touring rural Maine and Tennessee, he suggests that there were limited economic motives for touring exhibitors to venture away from the large cities due to lack-lustre ticket sales and prohibitive licensing fees in the smaller communities.[98] This impediment, too, can be largely traced back to the Edison device, namely because the films and their licensing were controlled by The Edison Company. Thus, there is no evidence that audiences in rural areas (including the Maritimes) were in any way *averse* to motion pictures or new projector technologies—only that some technical and practical problems were present during the novelty era.

[98] *Ibid*., p.22. See also Charles Musser, *Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1990), 128-130.

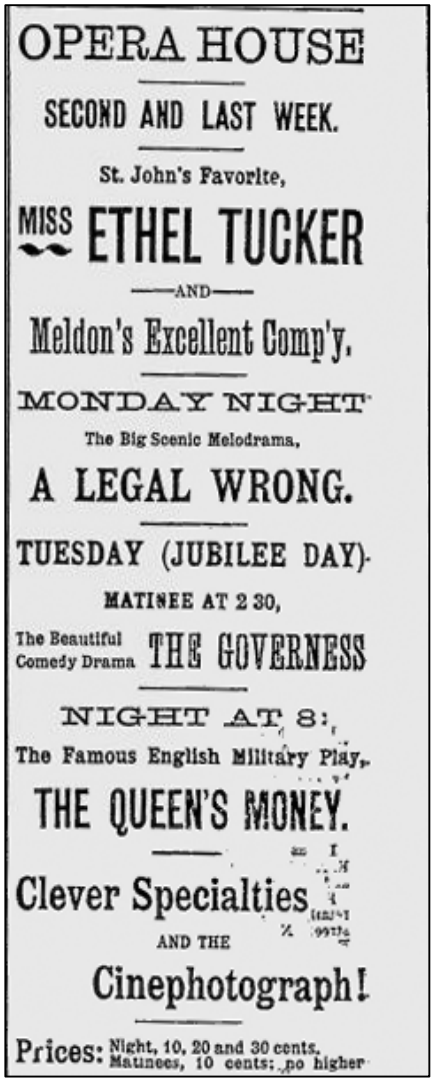


Figure 1-5: Advertisement, *Saint John Daily Sun*, July 21, 1897, p. 2. In this advertisement, the Lumière Cinephotograph is highlighted at the bottom of the copy—though there is no mistaking that the main attraction of the show is Ethel Tucker and the live plays.

This initial acceptance of motion picture exhibition in the Maritimes is evidenced by the appearance of other projectionists in the months following the failed September 10 show in Halifax. During the last three months of 1896, at least three different projectionists were hosted by communities in the region; notably, these projectionists all offered projected motion pictures independent of Edison's Vitascope. By the summer of 1897, there were at least six different touring groups offering films.[99] Included in the six were three vaudeville troops: John C. Rice's Comedians, Professor Wormwood's Dog and Monkey Show, and Ethel Tucker (both alone and with the Miles Ideal Stock Company). Also included were three projectionists touring with their machines alone: these machines were coined the Projectoscope, the Kinetoscope, and the Lumière brothers' Lumière Cinematograph (see Figure 1-4). By the time the projection of motion pictures advanced beyond the two-year novelty era, this "emblem of modernity"[100] was firmly

[99] Paul Moore, "Mapping Early Cinema's Mass Public: A 'New Cinema History' of Film Debuts Coast-to-Coast in Canada in 1896 and1897" *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 21 (2012): 25

[100] Motion pictures, and specifically the proliferation of nickel theatres, has been labelled as a distinct marker of modernity in the majority of historical works concerning motion picture exhibition history. See: Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Tom Gunning, "The Whole Town's Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity," *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 7 (1994); Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz, eds., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1995); and Jan Olsson, *Los Angeles Before Hollywood: Journalism and American Film Culture* (Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2008).

entrenched in the routines of many travelling entertainment groups as they toured North America, including the communities of the Maritimes.[101]

The popularity of early motion pictures with audiences created the market pressure need to propel the producers of motion picture projectors to continually strive for improvements in both the adaptability of the devices and their ease of use. After the initial years of mechanical failure, the improvements in motion picture projectors quickly made the machines simple to operate in nearly all conditions. Those who were designing and selling projectors were in a tight competition to create as many opportunities as possible for their machine to become the dominant device in the market. In service of this goal many barriers to the operation of projectors were reduced and by the late 1890s motion pictures were made available to as wide a market as possible.[102]

The Novelty Era of Film Exhibition: Reception and Impressions in the Maritimes

It is difficult to gauge exactly who was in the audience at these novelty era motion picture exhibitions in the Maritimes. There was no detailed description of the audience at Halifax's Academy of Music on the night that the first Vitascope exhibition failed. Likewise, when the Opera House in Saint John first hosted a motion picture machine (in this case, the Cinographoscope) on November 23, 1896, there was neither a description of the audience nor a review of the show printed in the community's newspapers. Indeed, it was not a common practice for newspapers to report on which segment of society was filling the seats during any entertainments (including motion picture exhibition). However, some assumptions about

[101] Gomery, 16-17, Musser, 122-124. Musser also indicates that a focus restricted to the vaudeville-cinema interaction is reductive, because early motion pictures had a multiplicity of exhibition practices. See Musser and Nelson, 278.
[102] Charles Musser in Gaudreault, 47.

audience makeup of these early shows can be made based on the descriptions of audiences from other similar communities in North America, as well as from evidence gleaned about the characters of the theatres that were hosting the shows.[103]

Much like those shows in the larger metropolises of North America, motion pictures were first exhibited in the Maritimes at those theatres that were positioned at the forefront of popular entertainment in their respective communities. In Halifax and Saint John, these first shows in 1896 were offered at the communities' largest and most popular theatres: The Academy of Music in Halifax and the Opera House in Saint John. This venue choice may indicate to some extent the composition of the audience. Indeed, as in other small communities in North America, the audiences at these turn-of-the-century shows in the Maritimes most likely consisted of the white, mildly affluent individuals—those with the money, mobility, and time to visit the theatre.

Furthermore, both the Academy of Music and the Opera House advertised coming attractions in the local newspapers. Although there is no evidence that newspapers were the sole advertising venues for these theatres, these print advertisements do illustrate that the desired market for the theatres was the reading public.[104] Notably, there were other advertising techniques common to the novelty era. These included handbills, posters, and calls to passers-by. However, there remains no direct evidence that either the Academy of Music or the Opera House used these alternative advertising strategies to advertise their motion picture showings—although bill posters were required at both theatres, according to the *Julius Cahn's Theatrical*

[103]Musser, 183.
[104] Paul Moore, "Advance Newspaper Publicity for the Vitascope and the Mass Address of Cinema's Reading Public," in *A Companion to Early Cinema*, André Gaudreault, Nicolas Dulac, Santiago Hidalgo, eds. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 386

Guide of 1897.[105]

Finally, the location of these theatres also hints at the likely composition of the audiences for the early motion picture showings. In Halifax, the Academy of Music was located near the prominent corner of Spring Garden Road and Barrington Street, close to the residence of the Lieutenant-Governor. In Saint John, the Opera House was located on a block between Union Street and Waterloo Street in the heart of the community's downtown.[106] Both theatres were positioned in neighbourhoods that were linked to the historic past of the cities—near churches, historic cemeteries, and city markets—making them ideally situated to attract large urban audiences while also casting for a wider audience among a wider range of the community.[107]

The advertisements that remain for these early motion picture exhibitions also illustrate the desired audiences for these shows. Figure 1-4, from *The Saint John Daily Sun*, is emblematic of the style of advertising that accompanied the arrival of a vaudeville group or itinerant exhibitor. Notably, in the ad, the name of the theatre is directly followed by mention of New York—and thereby linking the coming entertainment with wider acceptance from the metropolis of New York. Boston is also mentioned in this advertisement so as to confirm that this motion picture show is, indeed, acceptable entertainment for the citizens of Saint John. Other advertisements similarly promoting metropolis acceptance of motion pictures can also be found in newspapers from Amherst, Newcastle, and Charlottetown during the novelty era of

---

[105] Cahn, 694-5.
[106] Smith, "People, Place, and Performance," 421.
[107] Smith illustrates that despite the prominent locations and the initial support of the cultural elite and merchant classes of these cities, there remained difficulties in sustaining opera houses on the scale of those found in the larger and more geographically connected communities on the American eastern sea board and the Montreal-Toronto corridor. Ibid.

film exhibition.[108] And while the acceptance of metropolitan American audiences was not necessarily a requirement for the success of an itinerant exhibitor showing films in the Maritimes, it did create an aura of a more worldly view for those who desired a connection with the metropolis.

These advertisements were not expressly targeted towards any specific type of audience. Similarly, there were no overt policies that banned certain potential audiences from Maritimes theatres[109] which was the unfortunate case in other North American communities. For example, the innovative *Going to the Show* internet site, which "documents and illuminates the experience of movies and moviegoing in North Carolina," cites a number of instances in North Carolina where both laws and separate theatres were introduced for segregation purposes.[110]

In comparison, blacks, natives, and other minority groups were not *officially* segregated from Maritimes theatres, either through overtly expressed theatre policies or through advertising. Although there is no evidence that these audiences were generally present, this does not mean that they were entirely absent from theatres, either—only that their participation in cinematic culture was not recorded. This may have been due to the relatively small size of minority populations in the Maritimes region. For instance, in Judith Fingard's history of Victorian Halifax, it is offered that blacks comprised only three percent of the city's population in the 1860s (though even that figure is suspect, and that the real number was significantly

---

[108] Advertisement, *Amherst Daily News*, September 21, 1898, 4; Advertisement, *Union Advocate* (Newcastle), October 13, 1897, 3; and Advertisement, *Daily Examiner* (Charlottetown), August 27, 1897, 5.

[109] The Theatres, Cinematigraphs and Amusements Act (Nova Scotia, 1915) offers no policy on racial segregation or discrimination. See: Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: Published for the Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History by University of Toronto Press, 1999), 230. Despite this apparent lack of influence in the operation of theatres, the black population in Nova Scotia did possess enough influence to have the exhibition of *The Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915) delayed for over a year in 1916. For more detail on this, see Chapter 5.

[110] "Docsouth: Going to the Show" http://docsouth.unc.edu/gtts/

higher).[111] The aboriginal population in the Maritime provinces was dramatically smaller, though the statistics are equally suspicious. The Mi'kmaq population in the region was 3459 in 1871, 0.45% of the general population, according to the statistics collected by the national government.[112] Regardless, the historical record appears on the surface to conclude that minorities in the Maritimes were not influential enough to create any rules that expressly restricted their movements, at least as far as motion picture exhibition is concerned. This does not mean that racism was not inherently present in some theatres, however; the 1946 incident involving African-Canadian Viola Desmond at the Roseland Theatre in New Glasgow makes that assumption rather impossible to believe. [113] Rather, it just means that any discriminatory intimations that were present were not published or advertised, perhaps because these communities were small enough that everyone was already aware of them.

Thus, it seems clear that the audiences that gathered to see the touring motion picture machines in the Maritimes region during the novelty era mainly consisted of the culturally dominant middle-class—that is, of those with the money and the free time to indulge in popular amusements.[114] Reinforcing the concept of middle-class acceptability of the medium,

---

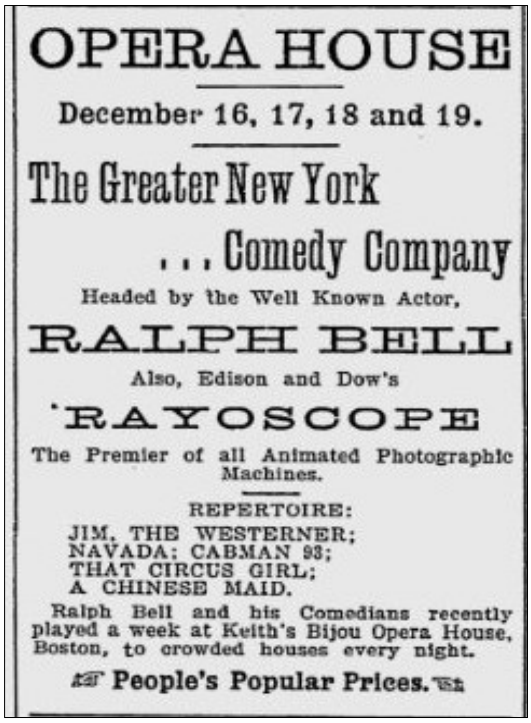
[111] Judith Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax* (Halifax: Pottersfield Press, 1989), 38. The 3% figure is suspect, according to Fingard, because this population was not accurately accounted for in the official census record, due in part to poverty and mistrust. The actual population was most likely higher. See also: Robin Winks, *Blacks in Canada: A History, 2nd Edition* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 484.

[112] Statistics Canada, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/98-187-x/4151278-eng.htm#part2. Much like the black populations in the Maritimes, the aboriginal population distrusted government census takers. As well there were unique challenges to who the census takers saw as aboriginal, making this population estimate most likely far below the actual population. For a more detailed and impassioned investigation into the relations between the dominant white population of the Maritimes and the Mi'kmaq people, see Daniel Paul, *We Were Not the Savages: A Micmac Perspective on the Collision of European and Aboriginal Civilization* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1993).

[113] This was what Viola Desmond realized in her now famous 1946 incident at the Roseland Theatre in New Glasgow. There was no advertised colour barrier in theatres, but a hidden law based on taxes within the price of tickets. For more on this court case and the effect of Desmond's challenge to the unspoken segregation rules, see Backhouse, 226-271.

[114] This audience included a small portion of female and youth, though these were minority proportions and not yet to the level that could cause concern for moral guardians. These concerns became evident in the later Nickelodeon period starting in 1908 when theatres were attempting to maximise audiences and purposely courted both women and youth. See below, Chapter 2.

these devices often accompanied touring vaudeville groups (which were already deemed "acceptable" types of entertainment), with prices of admission based on a similar "ten-twenty-thirty" system, as Musser found in his research into the early American screen.[115]


OPERA HOUSE

December 16, 17, 18 and 19.

The Greater New York

... Comedy Company

Headed by the Well Known Actor,

RALPH BELL

Also, Edison and Dow's

'RAYOSCOPE

The Premier of all Animated Photographic Machines.

REPERTOIRE:

JIM, THE WESTERNER;
NAVADA; CABMAN 93;
THAT CIRCUS GIRL;
A CHINESE MAID.

Ralph Bell and his Comedians recently played a week at Keith's Bijou Opera House, Boston, to crowded houses every night.

People's Popular Prices.

Figure 1-6: An advertisement for an upcoming motion picture exhibition. *Saint John Daily Sun*, December 10, 1896, p.2.

In terms of motion picture ticket prices in the Maritimes during the novelty era, the highest price charged was thirty cents for premium reserved seating, while matinees were offered for ten cents for any seat in the hall. These prices indicate that the shows were structured to attract those (middle-class) audiences that were already predisposed to participating in the money economy and were willing to pay for entertainment. Still, the advertisements for the shows proclaim that these exhibitions were being offered at "People's Popular Prices," (see Figure 1-5) suggesting that the cost of admission could be borne by a sizable portion of the population and not just the wealthy.[116]

Thus, even as early on as during the novelty era, motion pictures were being offered by exhibitors to mass audiences in the Maritimes, not just to specialized audiences consisting of the upper classes or educated individuals who were interested in the latest scientific toys.[117]

---

[115]Musser, 183.

[116] See above, Figures 1-4 and 1-5. This early price structure was set by the theatres and did not yet include any amusement tax levied by the government. Backhouse, 230.

[117] Musser indicates that it was thought by some in the novelty-era film industry that perhaps this was the limited future of the motion picture projector. See Musser 103-105.

These mass audiences were one reason why the touring motion picture devices kept returning to the Maritimes. Exhibitors observed that audiences in the Maritimes, like elsewhere in North America, were interested in the entertainments that they offered—and, more importantly, were willing to pay the admission costs.

Maritimes audiences were clearly comfortable with paying for entertainment—and, in this way, seemed relatively comfortable with modernity in general, as represented through moving pictures. As Georg Simmel emphasised, the money economy was the central pillar of a conception of modernity—and this region was clearly comfortable participating in this economic system, as evidenced by their motion picture attendance.[118] The region was also clearly at ease in terms of trading with distant producers—they had enjoyed longstanding trade ties with America, after all—and thus had a comfort with the potential "foreignness" of the films.[119]

However, this widespread comfort with modernity and interest in motion pictures was not a guarantee for industry success. As noted above, some North American exhibitors were unable to attract audiences in rural areas or small towns—which likely kept some exhibitors away from the Maritimes region. There were also concerns among a few exhibitors that potential audiences in the less urban, less modern regions of North America were unwilling to pay for motion picture exhibitions.[120] These concerns do not appear to have any basis in the history of film exhibition in the Maritimes, however; there is no evidence of audiences collectively avoiding or rejecting motion pictures in this region due to the price of admission.

---

[118] Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903) in Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson, eds. *The Blackwell City Reader* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 12

[119] See John Reid, *Six Crucial Decades: Times of Change in Maritime History* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1987), 91-118; and Colin Howell, "The 1900s: Industry, Urbanization, and Reform," in *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, eds. E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 163-4.

[120] Musser, 128-130.

In fact, it seems clear that Maritimes communities provided the paying mass audiences the exhibitors required.

Beyond the Novelty Era: Into the Nickelodeon Era of Film Exhibition in the Maritimes

As motion pictures moved from the novelty era of exhibition in 1896 to 1898 to a more stable and prolific phase of itinerant exhibition as the century ended, exhibitors began to tour the Maritime provinces with increased regularity. In the year 1900 there was four itinerant exhibitors making full tours of the Maritime provinces, visiting both the major transportation corridor of Amherst, Halifax and Moncton, and the smaller communities of Chatham, Bridgetown, and Liverpool.[121] This illustrates both the viability of the early film exhibition industry in the Maritimes, as well as the popularity of the entertainment within this market. Interestingly, the novelty period of film exhibition in North America, including the Maritimes (1896-1898), did not lead directly to the widespread establishment of permanent movie houses (i.e., nickelodeons).

Indeed, while motion pictures were a popular addition to touring vaudeville shows and were well regarded as accompanying entertainments for itinerant exhibitors during and following the novelty era, they did not immediately usurp all other types of entertainment for turn-of-the-century audiences. In fact, in 1900, there were no obvious indications that moving pictures would, in time, dominate leisure-time entertainment in North America. In the years between the end of the novelty era (1898) and the beginning of the nickel boom (1905; 1907 in the Maritimes), itinerant motion picture shows did remain popular—but so too did other

[121] The itinerant exhibition companies, The Bioscope Moving Pictures Company, The Edison Wargraph Company and Professor Nicholes travelled extensively in the Maritimes, offering views of international news, specifically the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa. "The Bioscope Picture," *Liverpool Advance*, March 28, 1900, 2, "The Waragraph Coming," *Ibid*., December 12, 1900, 2 and *Union Advocate* (Newcastle), April 11, 1900, 3.

travelling amusements and local forms of entertainment.[122]

Leading up to 1905, however, motion pictures were becoming a more popular and less expensive form of entertainment—so much so that permanent movie houses began to be established across the continent. One strategy that assisted in establishing regular audiences for motion pictures was the projection of current events such as the Spanish-American War in the United States, the Anglo-Boer War in Canada, and the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of Queen Victoria[123]; various filmed boxing matches were also important in creating a permanent (and mounting) appetite for motion pictures.[124] These events were used by itinerant exhibitors to increase the popularity and perceived importance of motion pictures for audiences, namely through displaying the immediacy and relevance of the images projected. At the same time, production companies were also experimenting with early forms of storytelling through movies. It was through these two capacities—recounting current events and storytelling—that the film exhibition industry began to move beyond the itinerant model of motion picture showing.

Famously, in June 1905, Harry Davis opened a storefront theatre named the Nickelodeon on Smithfield Street in Pittsburgh. This advancement marked the beginning of the so-called "nickelodeon boom"—and a major step toward creating a permanent mass audience for motion pictures across the United States and Canada.[125] In 1906, exhibitors throughout North America began to establish purposely built venues or converted theatres for the primary purpose of exhibiting motion pictures. These early theatres, often termed "nickelodeons" in

---

[122] Musser, 417-490,
[123] See Musser, 172-73, for more about Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.
[124] See Streible for an in-depth investigation into fight films and their influence on the early history of motion pictures in the United States. For a focus on early cinema, and the influence of boxing pictures, see, Jesús Costantino, "Seeing without Feeling: Muybridge's Boxing Pictures and the Rise of the Bourgeois Film Spectator," *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 44 (2014): 66-81.
[125] Aronson, 16.

reference to their common price of admission, were designed to show films with accompanying music as well as other visual entertainments such as lantern slides, illustrated songs, or magic slides; in many cases, these venues were also sites for hosting vaudeville shows and community events as well.[126]

The first continuous motion picture hall opened in Saint John, New Brunswick, at the B.F. Keith theatre on April 15, 1907 (see Figure 1-7). This theatre, part of the B.F. Keith chain of theatres across the New England and Canada, was only the beginning of this city's prominence in the Maritime film industry.[127] Saint John became the centre for not only the film exchanges in the region, but also for F.G. Spencer, the local film mogul who dominates the film exhibition industry in the Maritime provinces during the era studied. This first "nickel" theatre was quickly followed by another in Halifax (May 2), Truro (June 8), Amherst (June 24), Charlottetown (July 29), and Pictou (October 1).[128]


AMUSEMENTS

The Nickel

(Formerly Keith's Theatre.)

OPENING MON. 15th April

Continuous Performance devoted to

MOVING PICTURES

— AND —

ILLUSTRATED SONGS

Open from 12 midday to 6 p.m.; 7 p.m. to 10.30 p. m.

ADMISSION 5c.

Figure 1-7: Advertisement for the change at the Keith's theatre in Saint John. *The Saint John Sun*, April 11, 1907, p.2.

These theatres were following a business trend that indicated that motion pictures were popular

[126] See Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 119-220 for a discussion of the aural accompaniments that were common with films during the nickelodeon era of exhibition, especially the oft ignored illustrated songs.
[127] For more on the importance of B.F. Keith theatres in the proliferation of motion pictures and to the conversion of vaudeville theatres to nickelodeon theatres, see Musser, 428.
[128] This is not an exhaustive list. Many Maritime communities opened continuous motion picture theatres in 1907 following the example of the Saint John Nickel (or some of the many American examples).

enough with a mass public that a permeant show with moving pictures as the main attraction was viable.

In 1907 and the years following, motion pictures started to become the dominant form of entertainment in North America as basic nickel theatres became fixtures in many towns and cities. The Maritimes, too, began to see an abundance of nickelodeons—though their appearance was not without at least some concern. Interestingly, while the acceptance of itinerant motion pictures had seemed to signify a general acceptance of modernity just a decade before, the proliferation of nickel theatres seemed to be calling this comfort into question—at least for some concerned citizens. In July 1907, Halifax, Nova Scotia's chief of police Nicholas Power reportedly issued a call to rein in the licensing of nickel theatres. This call was delivered through the print news media amidst a flurry of motion picture theatres opening their doors in Halifax over the late spring and early summer of 1907. Indeed, by mid-1907, four motion picture theatres had already opened in Halifax, and at least two more were reportedly applying for licencing with the city.[129]

According to an article printed in the Halifax newspaper *The Daily Echo*, Police Chief Power reportedly based his resistance against the proliferation of these nickel theatres on evidence taken the "crusade against Nickel Theatres" in New York, Chicago, and other American cities.[130] Interestingly, Police Chief Power's concern was not with the physical safety of the theatres or the moral content of the films, but with the influence of commercialized entertainment on the youth of the city. Based on this evidence, the police chief was purportedly concerned that these newly installed motion picture theatres were dangerous

[129] "Against the Nickel," *The Daily Echo* (Halifax), July 12, 1907, 1.
[130] Ibid.

because they supposedly tempted youths—a target audience—into theft and other criminal activity in order to illegally procure the price of admission. Clearly, the relatively rapid growth of nickel theatres was eliciting some social concerns (and perhaps even revealing some unease with modernity), as will be discussed in later chapters.

Perhaps in response to such concerns, by 1915, these popular nickelodeons—which were accessible to a wide cross-section of modern audiences—were being replaced by more opulent and respectable motion pictures theatres in larger communities throughout North America. This trend in theatre upgrading was an attempt by exhibitors to increase the patronage of more respectable middle-class audiences. As the theatres underwent an upgrade, the films on offer in these venues also began to change. No longer focusing primarily on short subject "actualities" of real life events or short humorous films, most film producers moved towards creating longer narrative cinema and serial programmes.[131] As the decade proceeded throughout the First World War years, motion pictures—with the assistance of the newfound celebrity star system and the proliferation of standardized advertising—began to enjoy the immovable position as the most popular form of commercial leisure-time amusement.

Indeed, despite numerous challenges, the motion picture exhibition industry flourished in the Maritime provinces. Motion picture exhibition needs to be perceived as both a commercial entertainment and, on a broader scale, as a symbol of modernity (or, at least, one variation of it) that experienced a sometimes uneasy existence in the region, as demonstrated by Police Chief Power's concerns. In the end, however, motion pictures *were* accepted as part

[131] For a discussion on the lengths of films and the mistaken belief that the switch to feature films was an immediate and universal switch, see Ben Singer, "Feature Films, Variety Programs, and the Crisis of the Small Exhibitor," in, *American Cinema's Transitional Era: Audiences, Institutions, Practices* ed. Charlie Keil; and Shelly Stamp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 76-100, and Rob King, "The Discourses of Art in Early Film, or, Why Not Rancière?" in *A Companion to Early Cinema*, ed. André Gaudreault, Nicolas Dulac, and, Santiago Hidalgo (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 141-162.

of everyday life and culture. This thesis will investigate what negotiations were required for this acceptance in order to demonstrate the cinematic culture that took hold in the Maritimes provinces during the transitional eras (between 1896 and 1919). The goal of this thesis will be to investigate exactly how films were accepted by target audiences—and the lengths that exhibitors went to in order to make this happen.

SUMMARY OF THE THESIS CHAPTERS

This thesis is segmented into five chapters covering the development of cinematic cultures in the Maritime provinces beginning in 1896 and ending in 1919.[132] Instead of arguing that there was a single overarching culture that can be defined for the region, it will assert that there were separate yet interconnected cinematic cultures present throughout the region. Indeed, the historical differences in the cities of Halifax, Saint John, and Charlottetown illustrate that the Maritime provinces did not share a unified culture—in cinema or otherwise. Thus, this thesis will show how these varying communities within the region (uniquely and collectively) reacted to the imported culture offered through the cinema.

Chapter Two will deal with the advertising of motion picture theatres in the Maritime provinces beginning in 1907, during what has been termed the "nickelodeon" period due to the establishment of permanent movie houses, or nickelodeons and the price of admission; five cents. Through an investigation into the newspaper advertising of various Maritimes community newspapers, the chapter will aim to ascertain what target audience(s) these theatres were trying to attract. Through examining the giveaways and special events promoted by

various Maritimes theatres, the chapter will explore the lengths that theatres were willing to go to in order to win their desired patronage and become stable and respectable businesses.

Continuing with the investigation into permanent film exhibition sites and consideration of the composition of audiences in the region, Chapter Three will investigate the physical dangers that were associated with the cinema. This chapter will open by offering a discussion of the national and international debates regarding the dangers that motion picture theatres were perceived to have posed. An assessment of how Maritimers in particular responded to the perceived physical dangers of movie houses will help us to gauge the level of acceptance that motion picture exhibition garnered in Maritimes communities. Through this discussion, we will also be able to see *who* was perceived as being in the audience of these theatres, particularly by those who were concerned with the social betterment of the population. This chapter will also offer an investigation into the government's response to the proliferation of nickel theatres in the region.

Chapter Four will further investigate the perceived physical dangers of theatres, though the focus will be on the dangers of disease and the perceived potential that these sites held both for disease transmission and for the education of audiences. The discussion will be enhanced by an analysis of a selection of the films presented in the region, as well as of the additional entertainments and information that sometimes accompanied motion pictures. There will also be a close examination of the Spanish Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and its effect on the motion picture theatres of the Maritimes region.

Chapter Five will investigate the use of motion pictures to offer moral uplift and education to audiences through the nickelodeon era to the end of World War One. This chapter will begin with an investigation into the production, distribution, and reception of the Canadian

Biograph Company's 1913 production of *Evangeline* (Canadian Biograph Company, 1914, lost), the first feature-length motion picture produced in Canada and a film that is well recognised as using local images to promote Nova Scotia as a destination for modern American tourists.[133] The issue of censorship and the attempts at regulating the film exhibition industry in the Maritime Provinces will also be examined through looking at the release of the film *The Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915). This chapter will also consider the response of Maritimes theatres during the First World War to the societal changes brought about by the conflict. The thesis will end with a short concluding chapter that will offer a summation of the arguments made in each chapter.

One common theme of the chapters described above will be their consideration of the level of societal acceptance and respectability that motion picture exhibition achieved in Maritimes communities over the twenty-three years of the transitional eras of film exhibition (1898–1919). Another common theme will be the effects of modernity on the cinematic culture of the region in question. Through an investigation into the research published in the field of film exhibition, this thesis will also examine how the so-called "modernity thesis" can be adapted to the conditions found in the Maritimes during the transitional eras of film exhibition. As such, each chapter will assess how modernity was accepted in the region, with motion pictures being used as the measure of this acceptance.

[133] Morris, 50-1.

CHAPTER 2 "WE CATER ESPECIALLY TO LADIES AND CHILDREN": GIVEAWAYS AND MATINEES DURING THE NICKELODEON ERA, 1907-1917.[1]

INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to gain and maintain a desirable and respectable audience that was at least partially made up of women, the Orpheum theatre in Truro, Nova Scotia, advertised on November 24, 1910 that it was raffling off a healthy white baby boy to a lucky ticket holder.[2] This was not an elaborate hoax as were other so-called "baby giveaways" in theatres across North America. On the contrary, this appears to have been an authentic raffle for a child.

Figure 2-1: "Come early tonight AND GET THE BABY," is the advice offered in the accompanying column describing the evening's show. Advertisement, *Daily News* (Truro), November 26, 1910, p.8.

Offering giveaways of goods and cash was a well-known technique that motion picture theatres used to draw crowds in the nickelodeon era—a time when motion picture theatres wanted to gain respectability and market share by welcoming women and children into their audiences. The Orpheum had a history of offering giveaways; in fact, it had been offering everything from chickens to watches to gain a greater share of the audience.[3] Like the managers of the Orpheum, theatre managers across the Maritimes used giveaways as a relatively easy and low-cost way to both expand their market and create a loyal audience. They

[1] Advertisement, *The Daily News* (Amherst), August 19, 1907, 8.
[2] "The Orpheum," *The Truro Daily News*, November 24, 1910, 8.
[3] Advertisement, October 21, 1910, 8; December 3, 1910, 8.

also hosted special events, offered special pricing, and presented special moral-focused presentations to build and maintain a desirable audience of women and child patrons.

This chapter will discuss the various means that motion picture exhibitors used as they attempted to promote their theatres in the Maritime Provinces between 1907 and 1917—a period known as a series of transitional eras. This period of motion picture history was marked by significant changes to the production, distribution, and exhibition of cinema. It witnessed the beginnings of the studio system that survived into the post-World War Two era, as well as the beginning of the cult of celebrity surrounding film stars and the increasing complexity of the films themselves.[4] However, to theatre operators concerned only with film exhibition, the most important thing was to fill their seats and to make their venues both respectable and financially viable in the modern era. Offering giveaways, hosting special events, adjusting prices, and presenting special matinees were among the most popular means used by exhibitors to promote their businesses and create a heterosocial (i.e., mixed gender) public space where women and men could comingle socially.

Such heterosocial public spaces as theatres were a relatively modern idea that has been linked to an understanding of modernity in the urban environment.[5] Much like urban

---

[4] For an investigation into these "transitional eras" of motion pictures, see, Charlie Keil and Shelley Stamp, eds., *American Cinema's Transitional Era: Audiences, Institutions, Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), Charlie Keil, *Early American Cinema in Transition: Story Style, and Filmmaking, 1907-1913* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001) and Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema, 1907-1915* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). What these works all illustrate is the difficulty in offering periodization for cinema as there is no point in which one phase of cinema existed without another. This is one reason why 1907-1917 is considered a series of transitional periods, because so many different filmmaking and viewing practices overlapped and mingled.

[5] See, Erika D. Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), specifically chapter five detailing the arrival of the American-styled department story, Selfridge & Co. in Edwardian London, 142-177. This topic is also reproduced by Rappaport in, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 130-155.

entertainment venues such as dance halls and vaudeville theatres, and similar to metropolitan commercial spaces such as department stores, motion picture theatres in the Maritimes and beyond wanted to attract both genders of the dominant Anglo population in order to maintain a successful business in the advanced market economy.[6] Theatres were also looking to expand this market further to include the children and youth of this community—a segment of the population largely ignored by other public spaces. Newspaper advertising was a means by which these businesses specified and attracted the audiences they wanted, by notifying the public of special offers, events, and pricing that targeted certain demographics of the wider population.

Through examining the advertising of giveaways, special events, and targeted pricing, an image can be gained of the potential audience that nickelodeon era motion picture exhibitors in the Maritimes desired for their theatres. The challenge for theatre operators/exhibitors during this period lay in the near complete absence of any coordinated advertising campaigns originating from the producers and distributors of films. Therefore, exhibitors were for the most part on their own during this transitional period of film history in terms of promoting both the films and their theatres. As such, they were able to seize the opportunity to tailor their advertising messages specifically to local audiences.

By investigating into the newspaper advertising of theatres in the Maritimes from 1907 to 1917, I will show how giveaways, special events, targeted pricing, and themed matinees

[6] French Acadians, the Black community, the aboriginal populations, and any non-white immigrants are absent in the historical record pertaining to film exhibition in the transitional eras. There is no mention of attempts of any Maritime theatre attempting to create a space, separate or inclusive, for any population aside from the dominant Anglo population between 1896 and 1919. There is evidence of the indirect influence that the Afro-Acadian population could exert on film exhibition, something detailed in Chapter 5, below in the banning of *The Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915) in Nova Scotia.

were used by theatres to attract specific audiences. The first part of this chapter will look into the advice that was available to Maritime theatre managers in terms of the best practices available for promoting and building their businesses—and their audiences. The goal of these promotions was twofold: to attract audiences to the theatre for the economic survival of the business, and to elevate the respectability of the theatre within the community. These two goals were not exclusive of each other. Rather, they were intrinsically linked, with respectability (as correlated to the numbers of women and child patrons attending a theatre venue) being an essential ingredient to the financial success of a theatre.

The second part of this chapter will look into how theatre operators used advertising gimmicks such as giveaways and special events—including baby giveaways—to draw in the audience they particularly desired. The third part will explore how special pricing was also used to target certain types of patrons (namely, children) in order to enhance both the number of women in attendance, as well as the respectability of the venue. Lastly, the fourth part of this chapter will examine how special matinees with a moral focus were used by theatre operators to both influence and retain the children in their audiences.

COMINGLING IN TRANSITIONAL ERAS OF FILM AND SOCIETY

The nickelodeon era and the early feature film era, (both termed transitional eras, taking placed between 1907 and 1910, and 1912 and 1917 respectively) overlapped with eras of transition in terms of both the economy and society in the Maritimes. By 1907, the effects of modernity—both positive and negative—had been realized in many of the communities in Canada's Maritime Provinces. The first wave of modern economic change had begun in the mid-nineteenth century and was characterized by the development of locally controlled secondary manufacturing of goods for local and international markets. However, by the 1870s

and 1880s, the modernized Maritimes economy was facing many limitations, as local investors were slow to participate and locally initiated businesses were quickly consolidated through financial capital from Upper Canada.[7]

The so-called second wave of industrialization, which took place in the late 1800s and early 1900s, was characterized by the development of the coal and steel industries. The pattern of outside control of regional industries was further entrenched, creating the "highly paradoxical" consequence of "the rapid loss of control over the regional economy by its indigenous capitalists [which] accentuated underdevelopment in the long term."[8] Accompanying this second wave of industrialization was the rapid population growth of a string of communities that formed a band from Moncton to Glace Bay along with the two major seaports of Halifax and Saint John. This increase in these towns' populations came largely from the out-migration from the nearby rural regions, some of which had witnessed growth in the first instance of industrialization but were experiencing a decline as the second wave exposed the weaknesses in the regional economies.

Along with this increased industrialization and intra-regional migration, social changes were arriving with rapid speed. These changes were met with reform campaigns headed by the Maritimes' religious, professional, business, and political elites. These campaigns took

---

[7] For some indications of the economic history of the Maritime region immediately before and after confederation in 1867, see: T.W. Acheson, in "The Great Merchant and Economic Development in Saint John, 1820-1850," *Acadiensis Reader: Atlantic Canada Before Confederation*, ed. P.A. Buckner and David Frank (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990), 173-197, John G. Reid, *Six Crucial Decades: Time of Change in the History of the Maritimes* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1987), 93-160, and "Part Three: Living With Disparity" in, *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History*, ed. Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 233-348.

[8] Ian McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes, 1901-1914," *Acadiensis* 13 (1983): 6. See also, Colin Howell, "The 1900s: Industry, Urbanization, and Reform," in *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* ed. E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993), 164-174 and T.W. Acheson, "The National Policy and the Industrialization of the Maritimes, 1880-1910," *Acadiensis* 1 (1972): 3-28, David Frank, "The Cape Breton Coal Industry and the Rise and Fall of the British Empire Steel Corporation," *Acadiensis* 7 (1977): 3-34.

inspiration and guidance from the wider Social Gospel crusade that was active throughout North America at the time.[9] Through the Social Gospel's emphasis on professional management, efficiency, and public responsibility in the new modern times, these Maritimes social reform campaigns looked to governments, churches, and the professional classes to take on a more active role in instigating changes to society.[10] It was through the implementation of reforms to public health, education, labour relations, public morality, and recreation that the creation of an efficient, prosperous, peaceful, and healthy society was meant to evolve in the modern era.

Although many of the goals of these Social Gospel–inspired reforms were not fully realized in the Maritimes when the nickelodeon era of motion pictures began in 1907, there were advances through the modernization of public education and health reforms that could be held out as successes.[11] Women of the region, however, saw few discernible changes to their positions in society. The complications of the *separate spheres* argument, which contended that women were superior in domestic spaces while men were physically, intellectually, and mechanically advanced, inhibited the promotion of the suffragists' arguments in the Maritimes—as they did throughout the industrialized world at the time.

Despite the lack of an obvious comparison between the experiences of women living in

---

[9] For an investigation into the social gospel movement in Upper Canada and the links to the wider North American reformation movement, see: Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

[10] For looks at the rise of the reformation movement in the Maritimes and the links between this region and the wider movement across North America see, E.R. Forbes, "Prohibition and the Social Gospel in Nova Scotia," *Acadiensis*, 1 (1971): 11-36, David Frank and Nolan Reilly, "The Emergence of the Socialist Movement in the Maritimes, 1899-1916," *Labour/La Travail*, 4 (1979): 85-113, Judith Fingard, *The Dark Side of Victorian Halifax* (Porters Lake, Halifax: Pottersfield Press, 1989), and Howell in Forbes and Muise, 178-190.

[11] See, Fingard, Howell in Forbes and Muise, pp.178-190, and Jane Jenkins, "Baptism of Fire: New Brunswick's Public Health Movement and the 1918 Influenza Epidemic," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History*, 24 (2007): 318.

the small towns of the Maritimes and those of turn-of-the-century urban centres, a connection can be made through a focus on the increased presence of women in public spaces, particularly commercial spaces. Although this increased public presence was touted by some as a victory of equality, it was also beset with impediments, as illustrated by Erika Rappaport in her detailed investigation of women and shopping in the affluent West End of *fin-de-siècle* London.[12] For instance, women who were attracted to the West End for the commercial pleasures of the metropolis were also met with restrictions on property rights and their "liability to debt."[13] Women of the Maritimes were also experiencing similar negative pressures in terms of their lack of financial rights and responsibilities, although these pressures also came with the increased consumption opportunities offered in the mass culture of the late industrial era. Motion picture theatres were active in their participation in this strategy of attracting female consumers, although for the entertainment industry there was not the same direct pressure to enter into the consumer market.

The widespread social changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also had a significant impact on the children of the dominant white, Anglo community. Although retail advertisers did not direct the same attention to youth as they did to women, youth did not escape the Social Gospel–inspired reform movements, which saw young people as being essential to their plans for the reformation of society. Through addressing education, housing, health, and public spaces such as parks and playgrounds, there were many attempts to improve the conditions experienced by children in the *fin de siècle* era across the Western world. One place in which evidence for the concern held for children can be found is in the way that youth

[12] Rappaport, 7.
[13] *Ibid*.

education was prioritized in the work of moral reformers.

Schools were regarded as the ideal sites for the dissemination of a moral education based in Christian traditions, though due to the separation of religious education and public education that was agreed to in the Maritimes following the ratification of the 1867 Constitution, a complicated curriculum resulted.[14] In a 1910 report, the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia at the time, A.H. McKay, quotes the rules for teachers as they are printed in every school register: "The schoolroom and grounds is an elementary and miniature world in which the pupil has an opportunity of developing nearly all of the moral points of character required for useful living in the great world of mature human activity."[15] And while there was no strict curriculum developed in Maritime schools for moral education, there *was* the expectation that children would gain this moral knowledge both from schools as well as from the wider community—including community entertainment venues. For theatres in particular, this extracurricular emphasis on the moral education of children created an opportunity—though it was an opportunity to be explored with great caution.

ADVICE FOR THEATRE ADVERTISING IN THE MODERN TRANSITIONAL ERAS

Amid all of these aforementioned social changes, theatre operators in the Maritimes and beyond seemed to grasp the fact that social norms and expectations were shifting when it came to the roles of women and children in the modern age—and it was clear that these changes could ultimately be used to benefit their theatre businesses. An analysis of the newspaper advertising offered by motion picture exhibitors in the Maritimes will expose some of the

[14] D.A Muise, "The 1860s: Forging the Bonds of Union," in Forbes and Muise, 28.
[15] A.H. MacKay, "Moral Instruction in the Public Schools of Canada", in *Moral Instruction and Training in Schools: Report of an International Inquiry*, *Volume II*, ed. Michael E. Sadler (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), 289.

strategies employed to attract and maintain audiences in Maritimes communities. Guided by the trade press and the prevailing advertising tactics of the time, Maritime theatre managers in the nickelodeon era were well aware of the benefits of attracting women and children to their theatres in the hopes of creating a heterosocial commercial space. Not only could attracting these desirable population segments increase profits, but they could also provide the stability and respectability needed to maintain a business that tended to operate with such thin profit margins as film theatres.[16]

As with any business, moving picture theatres desired to make a profit from the nickels and dimes they collected. To achieve this goal, many theatre owners searched for expert opinions. *The Moving Picture World* (*MPW*), one of the most popular trade journals for motion picture theatre managers and owners throughout North America, was one source of such expertise.[17] Founded in 1907 and published in New York City, *MPW* offered not only film reviews and industry news, but also practical advice on running a theatre in either a large metropolis or a small community.

More specifically, *MPW* offered guidance on such topics as where to buy or build a theatre, the best type of projector, and how to deal with the electrical issues common to

[16] For evidence of the thin margins, see Scott Curtis, "A House Divided: The MPPC in Transition," in Keil and Stamp, *American Cinema's Transitional Era* and Kathryn H. Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1996).
[17] Although there had not been any direct evidence for the percentage of subscriptions received in the Maritimes for *The Moving Picture World*, theatres in the region did appear in the journal on a regular basis, either as announcing the opening of a theatre or changes in the management. These notices were culled from local sources by the editors of the *MPW*. As well, in 1916 the exhibitors of the Maritime Provinces united under the banner of the Motion Picture Exhibitors' League of the Maritime Provinces of Canada, citing inspiration for the organization coming from F.H. Richardson the specialist from *MPW*, who lectured in Saint John in early 1916. "Maritime Provinces Organize," *MPW*, October 14, 1916, 248-9. For more details on this organisation and Richardson's visits to the region, see below, Chapter 5.

operating a moving picture theatre.[18] Columns were also published on how to best advertise a theatre using a wide variety of means, including newspapers, posters, handbills, and special events. As with the electrical advice, the details offered in the advertising columns were technical, with entire sections dedicated to such topics as the font and layout of handbills or the size and designs of posters. This detailed technical discourse—which was really a "how to" guide for theatre operators—was intended to enhance the profitability and stability of motion picture theatres across North America, for the ultimate benefit of the film production industry.

In terms of how to fill theatres with desirable audiences, Maritime theatre operators also turned to a number of recognized experts on the topic. Epes Winthrop Sargent was perhaps one of the most well-known experts on motion picture theatre advertising. Sargent began his career in 1896 writing influential reviews of vaudeville shows for a number of New York City newspapers, including for the specialty publication devoted to stage entertainment, *Variety* (of which he was one of the founders). In 1910, Sargent moved to writing film scenarios and commenting on film advertising.[19] Through the columns he published mainly in *MPW*, which were summarized in his 1915 book *Picture Theatre Advertising*, theatre managers sought to attain some expertise on how best to promote their theatres and the films offered within.[20] In all of Sargent's advice offered to film exhibitors regarding advertising, he is consistent in stating that the theatre building itself is their most important asset towards attracting—and maintaining—an audience. Indeed, in the nickelodeon period, during which Sargent was most prolific on the subject, it can be argued that the theatre building was just as

---

[18] For an example of *The Moving Picture World*'s attention to detail regarding the electrical and technical advice offered, see the writings of F.H. Richardson, in particular his monograph published by *The Moving Picture World* titled, *The Motion Picture Handbook* (New York: World Photographic Publishing, 1910).
[19] Michael Aronson, *Nickelodeon City: Pittsburgh at the Movies, 1905-1929* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), 105.
[20] Epes Winthrop Sargent, *Picture Theatre Advertising* (New York: Chalmers Publishing Company, 1915).

important, if not *more* important, than the films that were thrown on the canvas. After all, according to Sargent, "Your house is a permanent feature. Films are transient."[21] In *Picture Theatre Advertising*, Sargent gives theatre managers many ideas on how to best promote their theatres using techniques that focus on the physical theatre house rather than on the films that are shown therein. He also provides abundant detail about other advertising techniques for motion picture theatres, such as the formatting and style of newspaper advertising and the importance of giveaways. Indeed, Sargent argued that for a theatre to succeed financially, newspaper advertising was essential and that giveaways and special events were important tools to both attract audiences and to create and maintain a respectable entertainment venue.[22]

As the motion picture industry was relatively new, the advice that Sargent offered for the promotion of motion picture theatres was gleaned in large part from the advertising methods commonly employed by other industries, including department stores and circuses across North America. In fact, many entrepreneurs in various industries and from around the world looked to successful North American department store advertising for guidance. For instance, in Erika Rappaport's investigations into the opening of the Selfridge department store in London's West End in 1909, she illustrates how Gordon Selfridge brought American styles of store promotion to Great Britain. Making use of the popular press in London, which had the capacity to create inexpensive and frequent advertisements, Selfridge imported unique "Wanamaker-styled publicity techniques to London."[23] Specifically, through using the advertising techniques he had learned his from his employ with Marshall Field's emporium in

---

[21] Ibid.,
[22] Ibid., 82-92; 225-233.
[23] Erika D. Rappaport, "'A New Era of Shopping': The Promotion of Women's Pleasure in London's West End, 1909-1914," in Charney and Schwartz, 135. "Wanamaker-style" was the term used to link the advertising in London to that dominant American retailer, John Wanamaker, who has been considered the pioneer of many of the advertising techniques used in this era of early mass consumerism.

Chicago, Selfridge created relationships with many of the London newspapers. Then, through generous advertising accounts and the offering of special events for reporters, he was able to "gain full media support" for his own department store.[24]

Though arriving late in London, Wanamaker-styled advertising—using bold, attention-grabbing text and images to highlight the desirability and respectability of the product—was already well known throughout North America. Linked to the rise of mass consumption and mass journalism, the Wanamaker style of advertising exemplified by the large American department stores had been used in Canadian newspapers since the 1890s.[25] The events and discussions encouraged through these advertisements, such as the giveaway promotions or the special newspaper features, aligned with those which Sargent advocated for in his writings. Theatre owners were offered this advice in order to assist in attracting wide populations, including women, who were also particular targets for Wanamaker style advertising. Through drawing mass crowds, these advertisements functioned to manufacture and promote the heterosocial commercialized leisure spaces which allowed for the identification of theatres (and department stores) as part of the modern commercial culture.

Sargent's advertising advice was applicable to theatres located in large urban centres as well as to those in smaller communities. As film historian George Potamianos indicates in his investigation into the motion picture theatre in Placerville, California, the strategy for maintaining a steady audience in a small town relied on "giveaways, the alignments with local

---

[24] Ibid.

[25] For a history of advertising in Canada, see: Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), 13-82, Russell Johnston, *Selling Themselves: The Emergence of Canadian Advertising* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) and David Monod, *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

businesses, the promises of a clean theatre and heavy newspaper advertising."[26] These obvious measures to attract an audience, however, still did not guarantee success. And while there was no ready-made formula to ensure a stable and profitable theatre audience in any community, there were some guidelines that could greatly increase a small town theatre's chance of success.

According to Potamianos, the Elite theatre in Placerville was one such theatre that was able to position itself as more than just an entertainment venue. In fact, perhaps tapping into Social Gospel thinking, the manager created the feeling that the theatre was an essential component of the community, and that it was less a business and more akin to a social service. The positioning of the Elite as both a venue for entertainment and a heterosocial gathering place for the public was done by pricing strategies, special events, extensive and detailed newspaper advertising and alignments with local institutions.[27] Taken together, these promotions created a perception among members of the community that the theatre was more than a commercial enterprise; it was viewed as a public institution.

Potamianos notes that the films projected in the Elite were not the focus of the theatre's newspaper promotions. Giveaways figured prominently in the advertising of the theatre, along with special events, promises of a clean facility and alignments with local business. It was through these promotions and positioning that the manager of the Elite moved to build and maintain a stable audience and create the habit of film-going in the small community of Placerville.[28] The next section will look at how motion picture theatres in the Maritimes used giveaways and special events to illuminate what types of patrons the theatre managers were

[26] George Potamianos in Fuller, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood*, 83
[27] Ibid., 81.
[28] Ibid., 83.

trying to draw—and the lengths to which they were willing to go to attract this population.

ATTRACTING WOMEN AND CHILDREN TO SMALL MARITIME THEATRES

During the nickelodeon era beginning in 1907, one of the major challenges of operating a nickel theatre in a small community was the limited size of the permanent population.[29] This lack of a large potential audience caused small town theatre managers to use any and all means at their disposal to attract and maintain as large an audience as they could. As a result, Maritime theatre operators faced unique challenges that were unknown to their counterparts in larger North American cities, but were aligned with those of smaller communities across the continent.

In urban North American centres with large and diverse populations, theatre managers were afforded the opportunity to offer shows aimed at specific audiences; for instance, they were able to present ethnic or culturally specific films. The numerous studies of New York City theatres reveal instances of the German, Italian and Jewish communities being serviced by a number of neighbourhood theatres, which programmed films and vaudeville shows that spoke directly to these specific cultural groups. In Judith Thissen's investigation into the Jewish audiences of New York, she argues that members of this community were able to negotiate their own entertainment exclusive from the mass culture offered by others.[30]

In contrast, theatres in small Maritime towns like Campbellton, Charlottetown,

---

[29] Transient populations consisting of summer vacationers or seasonal workers were never really a concern for theatre operators in the Maritimes in terms of special advertising features. In St. Stephen, New Brunswick, where there was a large American vacationing population throughout the summers, there is no evidence that the theatres provided any special events or programs aimed at the tourist populations. The same can be said for Digby and Pictou in Nova Scotia, each of which had large, temporary population increases during the summer months.

[30] Judith Thissen, "Jewish Immigrant Audiences in New York City, 1905-14," in *American Movie Audiences: From the Turn of the Century to the Early Sound Era*, ed. Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (London: British Film Institute: 1999), 15-28. Also in this book are Giogio Bertellini's look at Italian audiences (29-45), and Alison Griffiths and James Latham's article on Harlem from the same period (46-63).

Yarmouth or Bear River were not able to focus their films towards a single, narrowly defined, ethnic community. Not only were these towns smaller and therefore unable to support highly targeted shows, but they were also more homogeneous in terms of the racial demographics of their populations as compared to cities such as New York. Therefore, these small town Maritime theatres could not survive by focusing on a narrow segment of the population as those in New York were shown to. Rather, these Maritime theatres had to attempt to appeal to *all* members of the white, Anglo community; which contained diverse religious and ethnic groups. Among the best means of doing so was by attracting an audience of middle-class women and their children—which not only filled seats, but also had the additional benefit of adding a layer of respectability to these modern institutions.

In fact, female consumers were a common target for theatre managers across North America in the nickelodeon era. Numerous studies into early North American film exhibition have shown that women were not only essential to the bottom line of the theatres, but also to the survival of the entire film industry. Scholars Kathy Peiss, Ben Singer, Kathryn Fuller-Seeley and Miriam Hansen have all discussed this point in their studies of early American cinema.[31] In Peiss's ground-breaking book, *Cheap Amusements*, she demonstrates that in turn-of-the-century New York City, working-class women were involved in a complex cultural conversation, negotiating their place in it though their participation in dance halls, amusement parks and theatres that appealed to them. The young working-class women who were the focus of her study were in control of their own culture, and those business owners who ran the leisure sites understood this and garnered their patronage. Businesses that were attendant to the

[31] Kathy Piess, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, Fuller, *At the Picture Show*, Miriam Hanson, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 60-89.

entertainment needs of the desired young female population had a larger measure of success than those that looked towards challenging this population through entertainments deemed respectable in the eyes of the middle-class reformers. This apparent tautological argument of control through participation was in fact more nuanced because these young female consumers actively chose entertainments that suited their desires, and not those that were selected by others as appropriate. Popular culture in North American cities was transmitted neither from the top down nor from the bottom up, but was instead negotiated—with young women as full participants in these negotiations.[32] In an investigation into small town audiences, Katheryn Fuller-Seeley further demonstrates that women were essential both to the theatres and to the creation of a fan culture in early film history.[33] In her 1996 monograph, Fuller-Seeley investigates numerous small town theatres throughout the north-eastern United States, elucidating the importance of women and children to the survival of these businesses. She also uses fan magazines, such as *Photoplay*, to argue that women, children and teenagers were the targets of the producers and advertisers of motion pictures.[34] Anne Morey also displays this in her investigation into the film-going audiences in Wilmington, North Carolina, observing that women were always the interest of exhibitors because they held the "imprimatur of the middle class" and as such lent acceptability to the theatres in general.[35] For this reason, women and youth have been shown to be the focus of moving picture advertising throughout the United States between 1907 and 1917.

Transposing this evidence of the importance and power of female audiences to the

---

[32] Piess, 187.
[33] Fuller, *At the Picture Show*.
[34] Ibid., 197.
[35] Anne Morely, "Early Film Exhibition in Wilmington, North Carolina," in Fuller-Seely, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood*, 53-74.

cultural industry of the transitional eras to the Maritime Provinces, Colin Howell has illustrated in his work *Northern Sandlots* that women were an essential element of the leisure activities that took place in the region.[36] In his research into baseball, for instance, Howell demonstrated that attracting women was not only looked upon as a way to increase the gate receipts, but also as a way to calm a potentially volatile male audience and raise the overall respectability of the event.[37] Although volatile audiences may not have been a concern for film exhibitors, my research will indicate that women were nonetheless an essential component in the financial success of the theatres in the Maritimes, just as they were in theatres in the United States.

ATTRACTING THE TARGET AUDIENCE THROUGH PROMOTIONS

While the cinema may have offered a new technology and a new entertainment medium, the techniques used for product promotion were not unique. And although theatre operators were challenged with attracting and maintaining an audience while offering an ephemeral product along with the experience of the theatre, their advertising plight was in no way distinctive. Circuses, vaudeville, professional sports and live theater were all dealing with similar challenges. Therefore, theatre operators borrowed advertising techniques from these adjacent entertainments.[38] However, as has been noted by Janet Staiger, motion pictures were a particularly difficult challenge for exhibitors to advertise, as they did offer distinctions in certain important ways from other entertainment products in the marketplace.[39]

---

[36] Colin Howell, *Northern Sandlots: A Social History of Maritime Baseball* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 1995).
[37] Ibid., 77.
[38] Ibid.; see also, Fuller-Seeley, p.56-60 and Alexandra Keller, "Dissemination of Modernity: Representation and Consumer Desire in Early Mail-Order Catalogs," in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1995), 156-182.
[39] Janet Staiger, "Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking about the History and Theory of Film Advertising," *Cinema Journal* 29 (1990) 3.

Among the distinctions for motion picture shows was the reproducibility and lack of originality of the films viewed. The extra filmic events and tangible objects offered by the motion picture theatre were among the only unique aspects available to audiences. Unlike the live theatre or sporting event which offered a unique entertainment experience, the main attraction of a nickelodeon theatre was the projection of a film that was a pre-recorded show that was not unique to the theatre. Exhibitors were challenged in creating a unique and attractive experience within their theatre while offering a mechanically reproduced entertainment. Even when there was only one theatre in a community, advertising was essential for the creation of a stable, consistent audience: And in many instances, this advertising included special events and giveaways.

GIVEAWAYS

One commonality with all of these entertainments, however, was that the only physical item that many consumers took home was a ticket stub. Thus, offering something to take home—what was known as a "giveaway"—was a technique used by theatre operators to offer the consumer the potential to acquire a tangible object while enhancing their experience of being in the venue.[40] Thus, giveaways soon became one of the most popular means for attracting audiences to theatres, both in the Maritimes and across North America.

Epes Winthrop Sargent devotes a large portion of *Picture Theatre Advertising* to advising theatre managers not only about the style of giveaways and some of the items to be offered, but also about what effects these schemes could have on their theatres' revenues—and those of their competition. His recommendation for exhibitors, aside from maintaining a good

[40] Keller, in Charney and Schwartz, 163.

working knowledge of the laws relating to lotteries in their region, was that giveaway prize schemes could be useful in building up "matinee business or dull nights."[41] Giveaways certainly did seem to build business for theatres, and the most profitable giveaways appear to have been those that encouraged repeat visits to the theatre through offering tickets for a prize to be given out at the end of the week.[42]

Run in a similar fashion to a lottery, the chance of winning was increased by repeated visits to the theatre so that additional tickets could be obtained. This was the strategy used at Liverpool's Opera House in both 1908 and 1912. The theatre offered such prizes as barrels of flour, turkeys, dishes, and small pieces of furniture such as a lady's dressing table or a rocking chair; these were the sorts of useful, practical household goods and food items that dominated the giveaways. These prizes were awarded to the audience members holding the winning tickets at the Saturday night shows.[43]

It is clear from the prizes offered at Liverpool's theatre in 1908 and 1912 that the target for the promotions was the female audience—which, as we have seen, was courted by theatre operators in order to create a respectable entertainment business. There was nothing on offer that would have particularly appealed to the men in the audience (although men were almost always listed as the winners of the prizes in the local newspapers). Indeed, the prizes were overwhelmingly domestic, which was predominantly feminine in character by the gender-based social conventions of the time. It is clear, then, that the management was looking to attract a female audience—though not to the exclusion of male patrons, as they could also

[41] Sargent, 227.
[42] Ibid., 229. Sargent specifies that these contests are best for small towns, as they can be linked with local merchants who can share in the advertising and the cost of the prizes.
[43] For example, see, *Liverpool Advance*, December, 23, 1908, 2, April 10, 1912, 2.

benefit from winning a barrel of flour, a rocking chair, or a turkey. It is unclear if one male winner, Fred Johnson, enjoyed his lady's dressing table.[44]

A similar theme runs through the so-called country store nights offered at the Music Hall in Sackville and the Opera House in Campbellton, New Brunswick (see, Figure 2-2).[45] These country store nights were advertised as a night of multiple prizes to be given away, and as the name suggests, these were items that could be found in a country store. In Sackville, the prizes listed included flour, fowls, meats, sugar, apples, and soap, along with a "number of other useful things."[46] Thus, it is clear that Sackville's Music Hall was also courting a domestic-focused audience, as its giveaway offer was for consumable items that would be welcomed in any home. The value of such country store nights to a theatre was not only that it could gain a large, desirable (i.e., female) audience, but also that the winners of the prizes could be viewed receiving their prize on the stage, illustrating the success of the promotion—and the respectability of the theatre by way of its heterogeneous patrons—to the audience.

Figure 2-2: Advertisement, *Sackville Post*, November 12, 1909, p. 8.

It is clear that giveaways in nickelodeon era movie theatres were largely geared towards

[44] Advertisement, *Liverpool Advance*, April 17, 1912, 2.
[45]Country Night advertisements begin at the Music Hall in Sackville in 1909 and continue sporadically until 1913, see, Advertisement, *Sackville Post*, November 12, 1909, 8 (Figure 2-3) and Advertisement, *The Tribune* (Sackville, NB), March 13, 1913, 8. In Campbellton, a similar advertising campaign can be observed between 1909 and 1914. See, Advertisement, *The Graphic* (Campbellton), January 12, 1909, 4 and June 25, 1914, 1.
[46] Advertisement, *The Tribune* (Sackville, NB), October 26, 1911, 1.

attracting and maintaining a female audience, and movie theatre operators were not shy in making this link. For instance, when opening in 1907, Amherst's Palace theatre not only offered a silver tea service as a giveaway, but in its first newspaper advertisement, highlighted that it catered to women and children specifically, with "no vaudeville and only refined entertainment."[47] A solid silver tea service was also the prize offered at Yarmouth's Wonderland Theatre in 1908.[48] At the Happy Half Hour in Chatham, the prize on Christmas Eve 1907 was a gramophone, won by Ester Feinbrook's lucky ticket number 4975.[49]

The domestic-focused giveaways offered by theatres in the Maritimes were in many ways similar to those offered at nickelodeon-era theatres throughout North America between 1907 and 1917, where women were widely courted as the preferred audience for motion pictures.[50] The fact that such domestic prizes were offered in the instances cited above confirms that female audiences were indeed the desired patrons for motion picture theatres in the Maritimes from the very beginning of the nickelodeon era. This conforms to the notion developed in studies of American nickel theatres, which holds that these sites assisted in expanding the public spaces available to women.[51] Indeed, theatres required the patronage of this segment of the population to maintain a viable—and respectable—business, and the giveaway of useful domestic items drew in this targeted female audience.

In addition to women, children were also a very important audience to any motion

---

[47] Advertisement, *The Daily News* (Amherst), November 14, 1907, 8. The tea set is offered on December 16, 1907, 4.
[48] Advertisement, *The Yarmouth Herald*, February 18, 1908, 4.
[49] Local and Provincial, *Commercial* (Chatham), December 31, 1907, 2.
[50] See Richard Abel, *Americanizing the Movies and "Movie-Mad" Audiences* (Berkeley, University of California Press: 2006), 89-96, Leslie Midkiff Debauche, "At the Movies in the 'Biggest Little City in Wisconsin'", in *Hollywood in The Neighborhood* ed. Kathryn H. Fuller-Seeley (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2008), 158-163.
[51] Steven J. Ross, *Working-Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1998), 22.

picture theatre in the nickelodeon era, and bringing this audience into the theatre was a priority at nearly every theatre in the Maritimes. Giveaways again proved an obvious means for gaining the favour of youth, and they were also used to make the community's parents more willing to send their children to the movies. When giveaways were specifically targeted at children, the items being awarded were often less useful than the items being offered to attract women. In many instances, these child-focused giveaway items were small, such as the unspecified prize worth twice the admission price of five cents at the Grand Opera House, Moncton in 1909, or the Fry's chocolate offered at the Music Hall in Sackville, New Brunswick, in the same year.[52] In fact, candy was a common giveaway theme during the transitional eras, with Amherst mothers being reminded to send their children to the candy matinee at the Palace on Saturdays in 1908, as bags of candy were offered to every child.[53] Exhibitors also offered more elaborate prizes aimed just at children, such as the jar of pennies offered in Yarmouth's Royal Opera House to the child who guessed the correct number of pennies in the jar.[54] In 1911, Amherst's Palace held a contest for skates and a season pass to the rink, and, more elaborately still, in 1913 the Orpheum in Truro offered a pony and a riding outfit.[55] The Princess Theatre, also in Truro, offered bookmarks to children, featuring a picture of Marie Eline, the Thanhouser Kid, along with a moral message, presumably more for the eyes of parents: "A good rule to make a good life: Study hard! Don't get discouraged; Obey your parents and attend the Princess."[56] What's more, likely with a child's sense of wonder in mind, the Royal Opera House of Yarmouth generously offered a motion picture projector to the lucky coupon holder attending

---

[52] Guessing Contest, *Yarmouth Times*, October 30, 1908, 3 and Advertisement, Daily Times (Moncton), July 2, 1909, 8 and Advertisement, *Sackville Post*, December 24, 1909, 8.
[53] Advertisement, *The Daily News* (Amherst), September 25, 1908, 4.
[54] Advertisement, Royal Opera House.
[55] The pony and outfit was the prize offered at the Princess Theatre, in Truro. Advertisement, *The Daily News* (Truro), March 10, 1913, 8.
[56] *MPW*, Vol.18, No.9 (November 29, 1913), 999.

the matinees over the Christmas vacation in December of 1908.[57]

While giveaways were often directed at women and children in order to attract this desirable segment of the population to theatres in the Maritimes, some giveaways had no clear audience member in mind. Cash was perhaps the prize that was least affiliated with a specific audience demographic. The cash values given away were often modest, rarely more than five dollars, which in 1907 was enough money to purchase a good pair of shoes.[58] In one memorable giveaway at Pictou's Fairyland theatre in 1907, the management offered five dollars in gold to the holder of the lucky coupon. This was a prize that had been advertised for the entire week, and was only given to the ticket holder if they were in attendance on the Saturday night—again showcasing how giveaways were intended to fill seats on a repeat basis and generate revenue for theatre operators.

Special Events

As mentioned above, theatre operators across North America wanted to attract children to their exhibitions because the presence of children—often in conjunction with women—lent theatres a certain degree of respectability in the eyes of the general community. When it came to attracting children and youths to movie theatres, special events were as popular as giveaways—and, in fact, these two approaches were often combined in Maritime theatres.

Special events were regularly offered to coincide with holidays, such as Christmas, or with important events in the lives of children, like a new school year. For instance, school supplies were used as an enticement for children at the beginning of the school year at the Truro's Lyric theatre in 1910, though this was one gift that was probably directed more

[57] "Royal Opera House," *Yarmouth Times*, December 11, 1908, 3.
[58] Advertisement, *Campbellton Events*, July 4, 1907, 5.

towards drawing in the adult audiences.[59] Nearly every theatre in the Maritimes and beyond viewed Christmas and the Christmas season as an essential period in terms of sales and revenue. Without exception, theatres in the region were opened on Christmas Day, and many aimed their shows directly towards families—specifically children—by offering candy, small prizes, and visits from Santa Claus. For instance, Santa was present at the Wonderland Theatre in Truro on Christmas Day in 1908, handing out presents to every child in the audience along with chances to win two dolls and two Christmas trees.[60] Mr. Claus also appeared at the Palace in Amherst that same holiday, handing out Christmas stockings to each child.[61]

Special events such as these, while surely enjoyable for the children and their parents, ultimately served the purpose of helping the theatres not only to generate income through ticket sales, but also to establish trust within the community. For instance, the largest theatre-sponsored special event that took place in the Maritimes during the nickelodeon era was the picnic offered by the Lyric theatre in Truro in August of 1910. Children met at the theatre in the morning, and were then paraded through the town and over to Victoria Park where they were offered a day of free entertainment and games at the expense of Mr. Stanley, the theatre manager. According to the *Truro Daily News*, over two hundred children attended the picnic and it was a resounding success, spanning over five hours from the time the parade started to the time female attendants took the exhausted children back to their respective homes.[62] Despite the enthusiasm that was expressed for this event in the local newspaper, however, it was not enough to keep the theatre in business; by the end of 1910, the Lyric was closed.[63]

---

[59] Advertisement, *The Daily News* (Truro), October 21, 1910, 8.
[60] Advertisement, *Ibid*., December 21, 1908, 1.
[61] Advertisement, *The Daily News* (Amherst), December 21, 1908, 4.
[62] "Two Hundred and Five Children Attend Lyric Picnic," *The Daily News* (Truro), August 18, 1910, 4.
[63] Advertisement, *Ibid*., December 10, 1910, 4.

Although special events like the picnic offered by the Lyric or the visit from Santa Claus offered by the Palace in Amherst were popular with children and parents, they were not replicated as often as giveaways for theatre promotion. Indeed, giveaways seemed to be the more attention-grabbing of the two advertising approaches—and perhaps no giveaway in Maritime movie theatre history was as attention-grabbing as the giveaway of a healthy baby boy, as was offered at several Maritime theatres between 1908 and 1911.

Baby Giveaways

While special events and product and cash giveaways made up the bulk of advertising promotions in Maritime theatres during the nickelodeon era, there was also a third (though much rarer) type of promotion employed by some motion picture theatres: baby giveaways. These promotional gimmicks, while meant to attract and maintain certain desirable (i.e., female) patrons much like the other female-focused giveaways discussed above, have come to represent how theatre operators' self-directed use of advertising gimmicks had the potential to go too far and actually *harm* the theatres' reputations instead of enhance them.

Baby giveaways were by far the most dramatic form of promotion used to secure a greater ratio of women in the heterosocial motion picture audience. Indeed, as their name suggests, baby giveaways were promotions centred on the promise of raffling off a live human baby as a way to stir up interest in the theatre and fill seats with desirable female patrons. Baby giveaways of one form or another were not unheard of across North America during the nickelodeon era of film exhibition.

In fact, in *Picture Theatre Advertising*, Epes Winthrop Sargent argues that the promise

of giving away a baby could be used as a trick to get audiences into the theatre.[64] Notably, in his view, no real babies were actually meant to be given away as prizes; rather, the mere promise of such a giveaway was the actual promotion. In a chapter on various advertising schemes, Sargent advised theatres to advertise the promised baby giveaway in local papers as if it was really going to happen, and to not reveal the false promise until the final moment on stage, when the audience was to be surprised and delighted by the giveaway of a prize more akin to a suckling pig dressed in a doll's clothes. Sargent explains that advertising a baby giveaway was similar to other far-flung publicity schemes such as stage weddings and pie-eating contests, the only limit of which was the inventiveness of the motion picture exhibitor and his "quickness to take advantage of the local happenings of the moment and his ability to foresee or make celebrations."[65] This is a clear indication of the high degree of self-direction that exhibitors were facing (some with more success than others) in terms of promoting their theatres in the nickelodeon era.

The Orpheum in Truro certainly took the literal approach to the baby giveaway when it raffled off an actual healthy baby boy on November 26, 1910, to much fanfare. After ample advertising in the *Daily News* leading up to the promotion, the theatre was reportedly busy that night. Although there remain no details of what happened inside the theatre during the baby giveaway, it was published in the *Daily News* the following day that Charles Yuill of Commercial Street won the prize—a healthy, white, bouncing baby boy.[66] That the Truro baby giveaway in 1910 was not a ruse or a fake (as was intended by Sargent) can be verified with some accuracy through the census of 1911, which stated that the household of Charles Yuill, of

---

[64] Sargent, 249. Holding weddings on stage was warned against by Sargent as it could "cheapen the tone of the theatre."
[65] *Ibid*., 240.
[66] *Ibid*., November 28, 8.

Commercial Street was registered as having one child, a year old.[67]

The goal of this extreme advertising promotion was to attract attention for the theatre and to widen the audience—particularly, it seems, the female audience (though, again like the lady's dressing table, a man won the prize). Indeed, the Orpheum's management was using a baby in the same way it had used the giveaway of watches two weeks earlier: as a way to increase their share of the small Truro market. While by all accounts the Orpheum took a major risk by taking the idea of a baby giveaway much farther than advertising theorists had ever intended, there remains no evidence of any negative repercussions for the Orpheum, either in the local press or from the town council. It could be argued that this event even assisted the theatre in getting the better of its competition, the Lyric Theatre, which was not offering any prizes on this night. It appears to have worked, because in less than two months the Lyric closed, with the owner stating that Truro was too small for two theatres.[68]


ORPHEUM.

BIG DOUBLE BILL.

TWO VAUDEVILLE ACTS. (Four people).

Both of the acts which appear at the Orpheum for the next three days are distinct features, and combined with excellent pictures will make a Great Big Show.

Wessons Walter and Wesson,

In their Musical Comedy.

Hotel Repose

The act is full of hearty laughs and witty dialogue. Comic Songs are introduced all through the playlet, and Master Wesson is a sure hit in his wonderful

Buck and Wing Dancing.

Wesson's Dancing will be the hit of the act as far as Truro is concerned

Leslie Feather.

Acrobatic Hand Balancing.

Feather is just as light as his name implies, his execution of acrobatic and hand balancing is wonderful to say the least.

Feather executes all difficult feats and shows all of the stereotyped stunts of the ordinary gymnast.

Alice in Wonderland.

A beautiful picture production of the famous fairy story. Be sure to send the children to the Matinee Saturday.

The Tout's Remembrance

S & A

Novel Navigation

Edison

A Son's Forgiveness

This grand portrayal of human emotion is a dramatic production for excellency.

LIVE BABY GIVEN AWAY

Save Your Coupons

The person holding the LUCKY TICKET on Saturday night will be presented with a BEAUTIFUL BABY. See the reading column.

AFTERNOONS 5c. EVENINGS 10c

Figure 2-3: Advertisement, *Daily News* (Truro), November 24, 1910, p.8.

Unbelievable as it may seem, Truro was not the only town in the Maritimes to have a baby giveaway, nor was it the first. That distinction goes to Yarmouth and the Royal Opera

[67] 1911 Census Data, http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/1911/pdf/e001967987.pdf
[68] *The Truro Daily News*, December 10, 1910, p.8

House, which, after using the approach of giving away pennies to children, began advertising that it would be giving away a baby to the lucky ticket holder at a Thursday night show in November of 1908. The program that was advertised along with the baby giveaway appears to be fitting: the Baby Burnett Show, which consisted of a seven-year-old performer singing and acting on the stage along with a selection of films.[69] A November 10, 1908 advertisement from the *Yarmouth Herald* offered details of the week's shows along with the far-fetched prize to be offered after Baby Burnett's final performance:

> What will surprise the people of Yarmouth is to know that a real live baby is to be offered as a prize on Thursday night. Every admittance from now until Thursday will receive a coupon on the baby and the winner will step upon the stage and receive the prize. The baby is under six months of age and the management has offered to redeem it with cash at the box office, should the winner so desire.[70]

The Yarmouth baby giveaway is similar to the Truro baby giveaway in that, in both cases, the child was claimed to have been procured from outside the town (though not so far outside of town as to make it foreign). It was also advertised as a white, male baby, making the prize in both cases a valuable addition to most of the rather homogeneous community's working-class families, who likely would not have so warmly accepted a child from another race into their homes.[71]

Importantly, like the dressing table or the bag of flour given away in other Maritime theatre giveaways, the prize of a baby could be viewed as a female-focused prize that still had

---

[69] Advertisement, *Yarmouth Herald*, November 10, 1908, 3.
[70] "Royal Opera House," *Ibid*., 4.
[71] Racism was not an overt public policy in the Maritimes in this period in history because the population of minorities of colour were not large enough to warrant public discourse on the level seen in the large American cities. See, Judith Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax* (Halifax: Pottersfield Press, 1989). See also Robin Winks, *Blacks in Canada: A History, 2nd Edition* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 484.

some appeal to a male audience. Aside from the somewhat dubious link to a maternal instinct that these prizes attempted to appeal to, baby giveaways were also coded as a prize for a women because of the division of domestic labour in the homes, where it was primarily the women who cared for any children. The tickets were also voluntarily taken by the audience, meaning that any patron who did not desire the prize was free to withhold their entry into the contest, though they were welcome to watch the spectacle unfold on the stage—which was the true purpose of the baby giveaway, as it filled seats with desirable female patrons.[72] One significant distinction in the structure of the Yarmouth baby giveaway as compared to the subsequent Truro baby giveaway was that the Yarmouth theatre offered the winner the opportunity to either take the child home or redeem him for the cash equivalent, a value not recorded in the newspapers.[73]


ROYAL OPERA HOUSE.
THIS - WEEK - ONLY
Baby Burnett.
The seven year old actress in catchy character songs. New Song on Wednesday and Friday.
Real Live Baby
Will be given away to the holder of the lucky ticket on Thursday night of this week. A coupon with every admission up to and including Thursday.
nov 10 1i

Figure 2-4: Advertisement, *Yarmouth Herald,* November 10, 1908, p.3.

The reaction of the town of Yarmouth to the first baby giveaway in Maritime theatre history was also distinct from that to the baby giveaway performed in Truro. In Truro, there was no mention of the baby giveaway aside from the advertisements placed in the local newspaper. In Yarmouth, however, there was a mild outcry from the three newspapers in the

[72] Advertisement, *Yarmouth Light*, November 12, 1908, p.4.
[73] In the *Yarmouth Light*, the advertisement reads: "Should the lucky person wish the management will buy the baby back at a price to be agreed upon." "Royal Opera House, *Ibid*., 5.

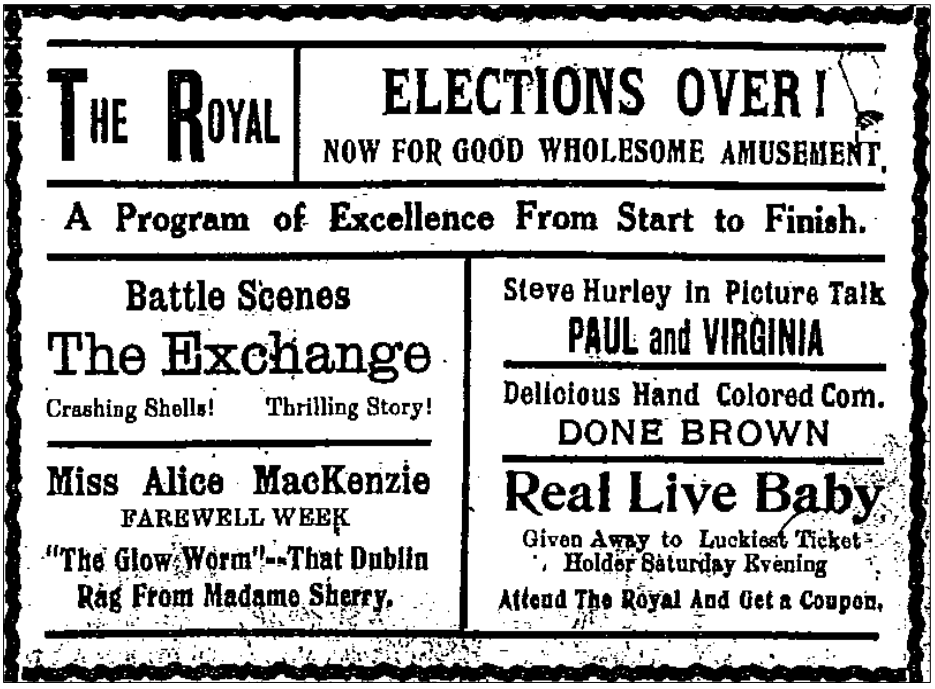


Figure 2-5 Advertisement, *The Weekly Gazette* (Chatham), September 25, 1911, p.2.

community. All three stated some measure of disdain for the contest, while also confirming its validity. However, none actually promoted either closing the theatre or for a public boycott of the show. They did, however, argue for some self-restraint on the part of the theatre operators' self-directed advertising. For example, the Yarmouth *Herald* editorialized that "While we ourselves advocate and recommend energetic advertising, it should not be carried to this extent. The baby is under six months of age and comes from a suburb of Yarmouth. Doubtless the novelty of the affair will crowd the Royal on Thursday, as the management is determined to carry out the idea and will have the baby on the stage at the drawing."[74]

In terms of the promotional value of the Yarmouth baby giveaway, it seems that the theatre was in fact successful in the goal it was trying to achieve: filling theatre seats. All three papers agreed that the show would be popular because of the baby giveaway and the assurance that no unwilling patron would be saddled with the prize due to the voluntary nature of the

[74] "That Baby Prize," *Yarmouth Herald*, November 10, 1908, 4.

contest.[75] There is no way to confirm who won the Yarmouth baby giveaway, as the papers did not report this. This absence of a reported winner does lead to some scepticism about the veracity of the contest, though if it were a dupe (as Sargent actually intended), the newspapers which confirmed the prize and admonished the contest would most likely have reported on this.

The third and final instance of a baby giveaway in the Maritimes took place in Chatham, New Brunswick. The Royal Theatre of Chatham was newly leased by F.G. Spencer, the owner of the largest theatre chain in the Maritimes, in August of 1911. On September 25 of that year, a baby was offered as a prize to the "luckiest ticket holder" at the Royal, though this contest was not replicated at any of Spencer's other theatres (See, Figure 2-5).[76] Whether this contest was a dupe or the real thing remains unclear, though many signs suggest that it may have been a ploy to simply fill seats at the newly acquired venue.

The evidence that leads to this doubt includes the advertisement for the baby giveaway in Chatham, which was not as heavy in detail as it had been in both Yarmouth and Truro. Also, there was no recorded public reaction to the contest in the newspaper—which may suggest that the editors knew/believed that a real baby was never actually intended to be given away that night (although there was no reaction in the Truro papers either, and by all accounts it seems that a real baby was given away in that instance). Thus, it is entirely possible that Spencer and the management of this theatre were perhaps looking to gain public interest through the unfulfilled promise of a baby giveaway, and thereby used this promotional technique in the way which Sargent actually intended: as a dupe to attract patrons—particularly women—to the theatre.

---

[75] *Yarmouth Times*, November 10, 1908, 3, *Yarmouth Light*, November 12, 1908, 5.
[76] Advertisement, *The Weekly Gazette* (Chatham), September 25, 1911, 2.

USING PRICING SCHEMES TO ATTRACT DESIRED AUDIENCES TO MARITIME THEATRES

There is little doubt that women were one target audience for theatres in the Maritime Provinces, and the aforementioned giveaways were generally targeted specifically at them. But children were also considered an essential component of the potential theatre market, as illustrated above by the special events and giveaways hosted by theatres to attract children to their venues. The fact that children, along with women, were theatres' desired patrons is emphatically illustrated by the Crystal Hall (formerly the Opera House) in Amherst in its very first newspaper advertisement for the continuous motion picture show, stating that they "cater especially to Ladies and Children."[77] Indeed, many Maritime theatres in the transitional eras offered children considerable attention through their advertising and special events, indicating that children were viewed as an essential source of income for these theatres—a fact that was also made clear in the advice offered by the commentators published through *MPW*.[78] This was not only because children represented potential gains at the box office, but they were also considered to be an obvious link to the adult populations of the community—especially the women, who were the real target population.

Despite the financial advantages of attracting children to theatres, managers were wise to make careful approaches to this population. The youth of a community were a challenge to theatres, for their attendance was marred with numerous complications. Some of these complications related to the supposed impressionability of youth and the popular belief that films were a detrimental influence on them.[79] However, it was not only the films that were

---

[77] Advertisement, *Amherst Daily News*, August 19, 1907, 8.
[78] Richardson, 164-5, and Sargent, 240-1. Sargent makes a point throughout his work to emphasise the importance of children to the film exhibitors.
[79] Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early-Twentieth Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 75 and Jane Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (Toronto:

perceived as being a negative influence—the theatre buildings themselves were also considered a site of danger for youth, a topic that will be explored in the next chapters. Theatre managers who wanted to attract this young segment of the community were therefore forced to tread carefully and take their cues from the reactions of the wider population.

One obvious tactic for attracting children (and women with children) to theatres was to lower the admission cost for this demographic. When theatres began offering continuous motion picture shows beginning in 1907, prices often ranged from between five and twenty-five cents for general audiences, though in some instances exhibitors specified special lower prices for children. For instance, in Campbellton, New Brunswick, the Opera House offered special lower pricing for children at one of its first shows in 1908 (i.e., ten cents for children, fifteen cents for adults, and twenty-five cents for reserved seating), indicating a strong desire to attract children. This price structure was maintained throughout the 1908 season.[80]

Similar pricing structures geared towards attracting children (and their mothers) could be found in many motion picture theatres throughout the Maritimes in the nickelodeon era. In 1908, the Liverpool Opera House had an admission of ten cents for adults and five cents for children—a pricing structure which was also found in Summerside at the Happyland Theatre in 1907.[81] These reduced prices for children remained in nearly all Maritime theatres for as long as prices remained high enough that there was still room to profitably offer a lower price. However, as competition between theatres increased, many managers were forced to reduce their general prices to maintain an audience while hoping that the volume of patrons would

---

Macmillan Company of Canada, 1909), HTML Edition, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16221/16221-h/16221-h.htm 79.

[80] Fine Show This Week. *Campbellton Events*, January 9, 1908, 5.

[81] Advertisement, *Liverpool Advance*, April 29, 1908, 3.

make up for the reduction in per-person box office receipts. For instance, the abovementioned Opera House in Campbellton was forced to change its two-tiered pricing structure in January of 1909, when the general admission price was lowered to ten cents.[82]

CHALLENGES TO ATTRACTING THE DESIRED AUDIENCES TO MARITIME THEATRES

While children could be a very valuable clientele for a theatre, as demonstrated through theatres' pricing structure meant specifically to attract this demographic, they could also be a potential detriment to the theatre's relationship with the surrounding community. This detriment would become apparent if theatres were seen to be placing too much emphasis on attracting children, for some social factions were vocal in warning against the ill effects of children being exposed to too many motion pictures.

For instance, as Jane Addams described in her 1909 book, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*, of the many perceived dangers of the modern metropolis, theatres were among the most concerning. Based on stories and interviews she culled from large American cities, Addams described the negative effects of modernity on the working youth of American cities, particularly those emigrating from rural regions. *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* offered descriptions of the negative effects of the commercialization of pleasure, as working youth spend their hard-earned dollars mainly on theatres and dance halls, to their moral detriment: "I am sorry to say [that many entrepreneurs] have . . . organized enterprises which make profit out of this invincible love of pleasure."[83] She placed the blame on the shoulders of dance hall and theatres owners.

Addams further argued that popular theatres in the modern city were providing the

[82] Opera House, *Graphic* (Campbellton), January 12, 1909, 4.
[83] Addams, 5.

material for youth delinquency. Her work details numerous instances in which the youth of cities were drawn to commit immoral or even illegal acts through an imitation of the scenes that were projected in the nickel theatres. Ultimately, Addams asserted that the five-cent theatre was a serious detriment to the financial, mental, and physical health of modern youth, and that modern young people were being deprived by such low-brow "soul-destroying pleasures" of the city. [84] One possible solution that Addams offered was to introduce youth to opportunities to participate in social and moral uplift (i.e., high-brow) entertainments in the vein of Schiller, Shakespeare, and Molière.[85]

This notion of an uplift theatre was linked to the tradition of offering educational moving pictures by itinerant exhibitors. As illustrated by Charles Musser and Carol Nelson in their investigation into the popular exhibitor Lyman Howe, these shows were popular with middle-class audiences in many communities in the United States. This also conforms to the educational lectures that were offered in the Maritimes by Professor John A. Nicholls, who toured the region to much fanfare between 1899 and 1900.[86]

Indeed, Addams was not unique in advocating for the socially beneficial uses of motion pictures, though during her historical moment she was among the most important (and most listened to) voices on the topic.[87] By suggesting that the barriers between high-brow and low-brow entertainments be abolished by offering high-brow productions at nickel theatres,

---

[84] Ibid., 103.
[85] Ibid., 88-90. For an investigation into the distinctions between highbrow and lowbrow culture and how historically these distinctions have been created, see Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988). The film industry also attempted to introduce highbrow entertainment with the *film d'art* inspired movement. Richard Abel, ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, Routledge: New York, 2005, 337-9.
[86] "Academy of Music," *Daily News* (Amherst), March 23, 1899, 3; Sunday Entertainments," *Ibid*., May 3, 1899, 2; "Academy of Music," *Ibid*., March 23, 1899, 3; and *The Casket* (Antigonish), January 25, 1900, 8
[87] Hanson, 221, Bowser, 38-39 and Cook, 203.

Addams proposed raising the level of entertainment offered to the lower and working classes that frequented these theatres.[88] Through the use of film stories that were based on canonized literature, using actors from the legitimate state or by offering motion pictures created with clear moral purpose, groups such as Addams' Hull House desired to create a cinema of uplift that could better the morals of the audience. For communities such as those in the Maritimes that were not beset with concerns over the influx of large groups of working-class immigrants during the modern industrial age, the idea of aligning motion pictures with upper-class entertainments retained the message of social uplift and connected the theatre with an image of respectability. After all, modernity, even as felt by those outside the metropolis, retained the desire to "promote moral progress, the justice of institutions, and even the happiness of human beings."[89]

Situating motion picture viewing as upper-class entertainment also came with commercial implications that were beneficial to theatre operators as well. The creation of an impression of upper-class alignment has been conceived as one strategy which was used to enhance the acceptability of a behavior or product among the middle classes. Indeed, according to John Kasson, "[f]or much of the urban middle-class life the cultivation of bourgeois manners served as an instrument of inclusion."[90] Indeed, when a product or activity was dressed in upper-class guise, it was not actually being positioned for that class, but for the masses that

---

[88] This notion of removing the barriers between high and low art in motion pictures can also be witnessed in the film industry and the move towards increased production of feature length films based in canonized literary and historical works, following the success of the Film d'Art films. This is emblemized in the region by the Canadian Bioscope Company's production of *Evangeline* (1914). For details on this film and its relation to the movement towards more "quality" motion pictures, see below, Chapter 5.

[89] Jürgen Habermas and Seyla Ben-Habib, "Moderity versus Postmodernity," *New German Critique*, 22, (1981), 9.

[90] John Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility in Nineteenth Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1991), 43.

saw this positioning as a stamp of approval. This is not analogous to the upper classes offering to improve those they saw beneath them, but to the common folk selecting their amusements based on the perception of upper-class acceptance. Although this top-down notion of cultural dissemination has been challenged on numerous occasions, advertisers (including theatre operators) continued to use these methods. [91]

Therefore, for those Maritime theatres that were *not* presenting so-called high-brow entertainments, too much overt advertising to children would not only make the theatre less attractive (and less respectable) to the adult population of the town, it could bring on undue pressure from those who were looking to morally protect the children of the community. Thus, a delicate balance was needed on the part of theatre operators between offering shows that would attract children while also making sure that they did not offend or discourage adult audiences.

A case in point comes from the town of Pictou, where the Women's Temperance Union (WTU) was in a battle with the local moving picture theatre, the Fairyland, in 1910. Mrs. M. McKay, the President of the Pictou branch of the WTU, placed heavy blame on the movie theatre for countering their work in the community. This was in response to the Fairyland having won a campaign to repeal the curfew law that had been in place in Pictou for four years at the behest of the Pictou WTU. The abolition of the curfew, according to McKay, had led to children—the best patrons of the moving pictures—to "stealing and lying to get money for the show." [92] However, her frustrations were likely undermined by the rumors that even members

[91] See Piess, where she illustrates how the young working women negotiated their culture in fin de siècle New York. See also Levine, Paul Moore, "Everybody's Going: City Newspapers and the Early Mass Market for Movies," *City and Community*, 4 (2005), 339-357 and Hanson.
[92] "Nova Scotia Women's Temperance Union Proceedings of Annual Conventions 1896-1902, 1904-1910, 1910," 47.

of the WTU were going to the shows.

McKay's complaints were registered despite efforts by the Fairyland theatre, which had actually offered socially uplifting shows the previous year consisting of lantern slides with moral lessons dedicated specifically for the children of the town for the low cost of five cents. These matinee performances were projected on a "special machine" purchased specifically for the purpose of displaying these slides.[93] Despite growing concerns over the moral danger posed to children by low-brow theatre, the Fairyland's children's moral matinee show in 1909 appeared as a single effort, and was not continued or modified. This indicates that although Maritime theatre operators were likely aware of pressures from the community to deliver uplifting entertainment to children, and that they may even have responded to these pressures through concerted efforts to offer a respectable moral balance, there was in many instances no business case for turning their theatres into full-fledged moral education halls.

Despite their desire to maintain a respectable reputation, many theatres did, however, attempt to attract children with specially created programmes that had entertainment (not moral) value targeted directly at children. Although shows with some moral lessons were perhaps desired most by many of the community's adults, it was the entertainment show that was most popular among children. Thus, when it came to special theatre programming directed specifically at children, a balance between these two approaches was usually struck by theatres in the Maritimes.

For instance, in Bridgetown, Nova Scotia, a special children's night was organised by the Royal Theatre, a temporary theatre operated for the summer of 1908 by the American

[93] "Entertainment for Children," *Pictou Advocate*, April 17, 1909, 1.

Amusement Company out of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) building. This was the first continuous motion picture theatre to operate in the community, and their premiere advertisement demonstrates the respectability which the management was hoping to achieve with the show. They offered that not only was everyone in the community welcome to the shows, but that clergy were encouraged to attend and that mothers were to feel safe entrusting their children to the theatre; "Nothing will be allowed in these concerts that could offend the most refined or the most sensitive."[94] However, they also mentioned that the show was to consist of some "real funny pictures," indicating the balance that the Royal was trying to strike.[95] Indeed, it's clear that the Royal saw the value in targeting children in order to build its business, and this children's evening show cost only five cents per ticket for children.

Evening performances were rarely organized for children, though at the Royal there was no option advertised for a matinee. An afternoon performance was far more popular for children, such as the one offered at the Summer Theatre in Truro in 1910. However, unlike at Bridgetown's Royal, the Summer Theatre in Truro apparently did not advertise that they were selecting appropriate films for the children, such as the nursery stories or other subjects clearly marketed towards children. Instead, they were simply offering 6,000 feet of features that had been shown over the previous week.[96] This was the same style of children's programme offered at the Dreamland Theatre in Moncton, where the advertisement encouraged mothers to send "their little ones" for an afternoon of entertainment, which shows that not all Maritime theatres were sensitive to striking a balance between morality and entertainment when it came

[94] "The Royal Theatre to Open in Bridgetown," *Weekly Monitor* (Bridgewater, NS), May 20, 1908, 4.
[95] "Royal Theatre Announcement," *Ibid*., July 1, 1908, 5. Unfortunately, the titles of these films were not recorded.
[96] "Summer Theatre Tonight," *The Daily News* (Truro), May 27, 1910, 1.

to attracting their young patrons and pleasing the general community.[97]

ATTRACTING DESIRED AUDIENCES THROUGH CHANGING COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

Some theatres appeared to be especially sensitive to how communities viewed the moral standing of their venues and of motion pictures in general. One of the best examples of motion picture theatres in the Maritimes trying to bolster their moral standing in the community during the transitional eras came from Amherst and a partnership between the YMCA, an organization that was known in the community for its social betterment campaigns, and the Empress Theatre. This partnership was specifically intended to promote the Empress Theatre as a respectable modern entertainment business.

The Empress was opened in December 1911 by F.G. Spencer to be the newest addition to his theatre chain; Amherst was a fitting town for motion picture theatre expansion, as it was the fastest-growing community in Nova Scotia at the time, with the largest industrial output of the region.[98] With over 1,100 seats, the Empress was built to be the preeminent theatre in not only Amherst, but in all of Nova Scotia. While the preview of the opening indicated that the management would keep bringing a variety of "good theatrical attractions" to town,[99] it was motion pictures which formed the majority of the shows at the Empress—and it was these that were used to increase the respectability of the theatre in the community.

Indeed, the Empress Theatre's manager, Mr. Kelty, worked hard to position that theatre

---

[97] "A Great Success," *Moncton Daily Times*, June 2, 1908, 7.
[98] F.C. Spencer owned a chain of theatres throughout Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and was a prominent individual in the Maritime film exhibition community during the transitional era. See above, Chapters 3 and 5 for more information on the theatres he controlled and his influence on the industry. It is unfortunate than an exhaustive search into New Brunswick archives has yet to bring out any results on the business practices or personal papers of this influential figure in the history of film exhibition in the region.
[99] "The Empress," *The Daily News* (Amherst), December 18, 1911, 4. This comment also illustrates the moral positioning of the editors of *The Daily News*.

as more than just a site for entertainment. In fact, it appears to be the desire of the theatre's management to create a site for respectable leisure in this progressive town. Upon the second week of the theatre being open, the management advertised that it had, in partnership with the YMCA, placed a barrel near the entrance of the theatre for contributions to the Salvation Army, with the editors of Amherst's *Daily News* opining that anyone who could afford the ten cents admission to the shows could also offer an equal amount to the deserving poor of the town.[100] The installation of this charity barrel marked the first attempt made by this theatre and its owners to weave the theatre into the moral fabric of the Amherst community—and, by extension, to presumably solidify a loyal and desirable audience of female and children patrons for years to

OUR WEEKLY DRAMATIC SUPPLEMENT

THE NEWS Dramatic Supplement. Issued Every Saturday.

THE EMPRESS — Johnson and Bonnell, Eccentric Dancers Monday.

Regarding the Opinions of Public Instructors in the U. S.

THE GEM — Tiny Williams Bids Farewell

Spencer Gets Bernhardt-Rejane Pictures for Canada

EMPRESS

TO-NIGHT

"ANITA" Novelty Violiniste

PICTURES

Picture Machine and Film Talk

NEXT WEEK Johnson & Bonnell Some Real Dancers.

Matinee Daily at 3.15. Sat. 2.30

GEM

TINY WILLIAMS FAREWELL SONG "Good-Bye Mandy"

PICTURES

Special Saturday Matinee. Extra Attractions

Coming to the Empress

High Class Dramatic Company in St. John

Figure 2-6 Our Weekly Dramatic Supplement, Daily News (Amherst), February 24, 1912, p.5

[100] *Ibid*., December 22, 1911, 2.

come.

Another way in which the management of the Empress and its sister cinema, the Gem, attempted to raise the respectability of these theatres within the community was by placing special motion picture supplements in Amherst's only daily newspaper, the *Daily News*. These pieces, which were published under the title of "Our Weekly Dramatic Supplement" for a short duration beginning in 1912, were designed to position the viewing of motion pictures as a respectable pastime, and also to cast new light on the Empress and the Gem in order to position them as more than simple sites of entertainment.

Indeed, the journalistic-styled articles published in "Our Weekly Dramatic Supplement" were designed to highlight the benefits of motion pictures as moral and social entertainment. Included in the first edition of the supplement was a syndicated article on the positive effects of motion pictures, originally published in the *Ladies Home Journal*, along with locally written articles that spoke to the moral quality of the shows offered at the Gem and the Empress. These columns were also used to illustrate to the reading public how the management of these two Amherst theatres went to great lengths to consult religious leaders and school officials whenever possible in terms of the films that were to be exhibited.[101] Placing an emphasis on the moral security of its motion pictures, the managers of the Amherst theatres were attempting to make the population of the community more comfortable with films and, through association, with the theatres as well.

---

[101] The reading public was the desire audience for motion picture theatres in the transitional era. This is the assertion made by Moore in "Everybody's Going." Using the arguments offered by a reinterpretation of Chicago Sociology's text *The City*, states that the newspapers were essential for urban audiences in negotiating the "modern city culture". The assumed audience for the newspapers was the middle-class, literate, Anglo-Saxon, and English speaking majority of Toronto. Although Amherst was a far smaller town, the presumed audience of the newspaper is not any different.

This supplement appears to have been unique to Amherst, despite the fact that both the theatres featured were, as stated above, part of the Spencer chain of theatres that existed throughout the Maritimes. No other newspaper in the region promoted motion pictures and theatres on this level, either. One possible reason for this exceptional situation of "Our Weekly Dramatic Supplement" could be the perception within Amherst during this period of resounding social change that the status of the town was rising from a rural community to a diversified industrial centre.[102]

By aligning the Empress and Gem theatres in Amherst with the concerns of Jane Addams and the moral uplift movement, the unstated goal appears to have been to recast this expanding modern town as a metropolis with the same fears, dangers, and distractions as those cited by Addams as being present in Chicago and New York. That the supplements were an initiative born in Amherst and not Halifax or Saint John likely illustrates that some influential individuals in the town believed that Amherst was a community that could benefit from being conceived of as being just as "modern" as large American cities.[103]

Rooted in the second-wave industrial economy of the manufacturing era, Amherst was thought to be one of the most dynamic economies in the region.[104] Although this town deeply

---

[102] Amherst was thought to be among the most diversified economies of the Maritime Provinces, with factories that were not based in the old economies of resource extraction, but in the manufacturing economy, creating items for the modern world. These included rail cars, pianos, clothing, boots and shoes, steam engines and boilers, enamel ware, furnaces and furniture. For a more detailed discussion of Amherst in this transitional era of the regional economy and film, see Chapter 5. See also, C. Mark Davis, "Small Town Reformism: The Temperance Issue in Amherst, Nova Scotia," in *People and Place: Studies of Small Town Life in the Maritimes*, ed. Larry McCann (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1987), 125-134 and Colin Howell, "The 1900s: Industry, Urbanism and Reform," in *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, ed. E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 155-191; Nolan Reilly, "The General Strike in Amherst, Nova Scotia, 1919," *Acadiensis* 9 (1980), 56-77 and T.W. Acheson, "The National Policy and the Industrialization of the Maritimes, 1880-1910," *Acadiensis* 1 (1972), 3-28.

[103] For an investigation into this anti-modern cast which Nova Scotian communities were placed in, see: Ian McKay, *Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1994).

[104] Reilly, 58.

felt the collapse of the regional economy after the First World War, those living in the community during the brief period of success saw great optimism for the future.[105] Although the decline in the economy started in 1908 and continued for the next 15 years, the community was not prepared to surrender to the collapse, and believed in the promise of progress that modernity offered—a promise that could be seen to be symbolized by the presence of modern and morally progressive motion picture theatres.

Creating newspaper columns to advertise a business and masking them as editorial content was not unique to the theatres in Amherst. This was similar in style and format to the campaigns utilized by Selfridge in London, where editorials to promote Selfridge's department store written under the name "Callisthenes" were offered.[106] Adapted from the advertising styles of John Wanamaker and his contemporaries in the United States, these articles were written by the store staff and provided a glorification of commercial culture while also offering readers a glimpse into the business of shop keeping from behind the counter.

As with all advertising created during this era of mass consumption, these special columns were designed to direct readers about where to shop and what to buy, and to offer an overall positive view of consumer culture. The desire was to link the Selfridge store with the emerging middle-class female consumers, promoting the store as a destination for women and the activity of shopping as female entertainment.[107] Similarly, the "Our Weekly Dramatic Supplement" column was an editorial campaign that offered Amherst readers textual arguments for the advancement of commercial culture—specifically, for the viewing of motion

[105] This optimism—a faith in the progress promised by the changes initiated through the money economy—led many in the town to believe in the "Busy Amherst" label. See Ibid.
[106] Rappaport in Charney and Schwartz, 135.
[107] *Ibid*., 136.

pictures. It was through these tactics that Spencer's advertisers believed they could attract a desirable middle-class female audience by casting the Empress and Gem theatres as a safe and respectable site for heterosocial interaction.

It was through the "Our Weekly Dramatic Supplement" that Empress Theatre announced its partnership with the social uplift movement of the YMCA, thereby further cementing its status as a morally respectable community institution. As was noted in the April 27, 1912 edition of the supplement, American social uplift groups (including churches, women's institutes, and charity boards) were cooperating with theatre managers to use films for the promotion of their moralistic goals. After illustrating the modernity of the idea through offering examples of its use in American metropolises, the supplement asserted that the YMCA was using the Amherst theatres in connection with its work.

In this article, quoted in the *Halifax Evening Mail*, it was suggested that the Amherst partnership was unique in the province at this time, and that through the work the partnership with the YMCA's representative, John Bradford, these "places of amusement" were being moved into places of social uplift and enlightenment.[108] The *Halifax Evening Mail* reporter concludes the piece by wondering why similar action had not yet been taken in Halifax by groups such as the Women's Council. Clearly, the Gem and Empress theatre managers in Amherst were taking the self-directed promotion of their theatres in a positive direction in terms of responding to modern concerns—and cementing a desirable audience for the theatre's own long-term benefit.

[108] "The Picture Theatre," *The Daily News* (Amherst), April 27, 1912, 5.

PROMOTING MORAL VALUES WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY PROMOTING THEATRE GOALS

Despite the article detailed above, it was not until the following year that any concrete programs were offered at the Amherst theatres that appeared to be specifically aimed at achieving social uplift or enlightenment. On April 18, 1913, the Empress Theatre began an ambitious programme aimed directly at the children of the town. Importantly, the Empress surrendered its ticket sales from that program, offering the show for free to children—a telling sign that the positive effect of a favourable moral view of the theatre was a new gain for the bottom line of this most modern of theatres. The theatre was advertised as being closed to adults, excepting those accompanied by children; specifically, mothers were encouraged to chaperone their children, both to supervise and to advise the exhibitors on changes they would like to see made to the programme.

As stated by the advertisement, "once a week was enough for a child to attend the motion picture theatre and this should be in the afternoon rather than the night"[109]—a statement that seemed to directly respond to social concerns that children were viewing too many morally detrimental motion pictures (as it had been reported by Bradford in the Amherst newspaper that the majority of children attended more than once a week). While counter to the accepted business model of a theatre, the argument that once a week was enough for children to be at the theatre did completely fit within the discussions regarding youth theatre attendance and increased moral health in the modern world. If theatres were causing (as Addams and Chief Power of Halifax asserted) a rise in juvenile crime, either through a mimesis of what children were witnessing on the screens or, according to Power, thieving in order to gain the funds to attend the shows, a theatre such as the Empress could gain stature in the community through

[109] "Children's Films," *Ibid*., April 18, 1913 4.

this style of advertising. By offering to restrict youth attendance and presenting special programming aimed specifically at the moral education of children in the community the Empress theatre would not only increase its own position in its community, but presumably would also increase the overall patronage of those who looked upon modern motion picture theatres with suspicion.

Importantly, the advertisement for the Empress's Children's Theatre used the weight of Bradford's endorsement as proof that the show would be both morally uplifting and an educational opportunity; interestingly, it could also be argued that the show was an opportunity for Bradford, the so-called "YMCA expert," to extend his personal brand as the moral guardian of the community.

John Bradford was an important local figure in the moral reform and youth movement in Amherst. He had recently arrived Amherst from the United States, where he had been the head of the Playgrounds Association in Pensacola, Florida and had also been active in advocating the importance of moral education for children, specifically in the promotion of motion picture theatres as sites for furnishing positive, instructive entertainment. Bradford therefore arrived in Amherst with an already established reputation for community work—a reputation so notable that the newspaper in Auburn, New York (where Bradford had worked as the YMCA manager before moving to Amherst), quoted the Pensacola paper in stating that "wherever he goes or whatever he does, John Bradford can always use Pensacola as a reference. His work here speaks for itself."[110] Bradford was therefore viewed by the theatre managers of Amherst as an important person to be associated with because he could lend moral

[110] "Bradford Moves Again," *The Auburn Citizen* (Auburn, New York), August 25, 1911, 8.

legitimacy to their venues and aid in promoting them as respectable public institutions with moral importance—a belief that, once established, would help to maintain a thriving audience and high ticket sales through the mere effects that a positive moral reputation could have on the financial reality of a theatre venue.

Through partnering the Empress with Bradford and the YMCA for its special children's programmes, the theatre managers were fostering the theatre's brand as a venue for more than simple entertainment.[111] For instance, through a four-column newspaper article penned by Bradford and published in the entertainment section of *The Daily News*, the special children's programme is situated at the forefront of positive child entertainment. The article, titled "The Problem of Child Entertainment," offered that children were poorly serviced by motion picture entertainment in general. Bradford cited findings that most children interviewed did not enjoy the shows they saw (and they reported seeing more than one a week) because they did not understand what was being presented on the screen. Bradford therefore wanted to use the theatres in his new hometown of Amherst to create a better class of entertainment for children in the Amherst community.

In this effort, Bradford partnered with the Empress as the site for the Children's Theatre because it was the most modern of the three theatres in Amherst. It was a "model of its kind from the standpoint of ventilation, sanitation and lighting."[112] It was also the largest theatre in the town, with seating for 873, meaning Bradford could project his message of social uplift to the largest possible audience of children.[113]

---

[111] Further evidence for this brand that Kelty was establishing for the Empress theatre can be found in Chapter 5, below.
[112] "The Problem of Child Entertainment," *The Daily News* (Amherst), May 16, 1913, 5.
[113] Ibid.

Under Bradford's guidance, the Children's Theatre in Amherst appears to have been modeled on many of the social uplift suggestions made by Jane Addams in *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*, from the films chosen to the wording used to promote the programs. And while Bradford stated that he took great care in selecting only the best, most morally sound films, this was only his first step in creating a show that would attract not only the children of Amherst, but also the mothers of the community. To assure parents that both the entertainment and the environment at these motion picture shows would be in the best interests of the children, an "experienced woman of recognized standing in the Community" was secured to lead the corps of volunteers in the theatre.[114] The public nurse who was known for school inspections was touted as the best choice for the matron in charge, not only because she was already known to the parents and children of the town, but also because she was a medical professional. Moreover, this nurse was to head a full company of upstanding women, including teachers and the leaders of Camp Fire groups, who were selected to assist the children at the show—and, ultimately, to further assure parents of the beneficial nature of the entertainment. Finally, to offer surety to parents that these shows were to be well supervised, Bradford informed the newspaper audience that members of the Daughters of the Empire and the Girls Community Work Committee were going to be in attendance at all the shows with their own children.[115]

The supervision of the Children's Theatre was not exclusive to social uplift authors like Addams. Sargent was also an advocate for this style of motion picture show, both in his columns in the *MPW* and in his book, *Picture Theatre Advertising*. He even details the idea of

[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.

using a matron in charge, suggesting that exhibitor's partner with either the teachers of the community or those interested in the welfare of children. For Sargent, not unlike for Bradford, the purpose of these measures was to provide a way to change the impression of mothers towards "those horrid movies" and to create a respectable site for entertainment.[116] Notably, the advertising for the Children's Theatre in the *Daily News* spoke directly to mothers; fathers were completely ignored in any extant print discussion of the programmes.[117] It was the mothers whom Sargent also looked to for the success of the shows; they were the *real* target audience, while children appear to be simply the ones who filled the seats.[118]


CHILDREN'S THEATRE
EMPRESS
Saturday Afternoon 2 30 o'clock
PROGRAMME
1 - Picture -- "Where Plaster Comes From"
2 - Misses Lulu and Marjie Gibbs Clog Dancing
3 - Picture and Story Telling -- "The Kiddies' Christmas"
4 - Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs' in a Musical Sketch "School Days"
5 Picture -- "The Mysterious Flame"
6 Edward Bolton and Myron Gibbs "The Funny Clown"
GOD SAVE THE KING

Figure 2-7 Advertisement, *Daily News* (Amherst), May 21, 1913, p.5. This is an example of the programme that was offer to children at the Empress. Note the mixture of films and live acts in the programme.

In terms of the films offered to children at these Empress Theatre matinees, they were chosen by Bradford to further the programme's dual goals of entertaining children while also reassuring mothers. In Bradford's article in the *Daily News*, he stated that it was a difficult task to procure films that promoted social and moral education. It was through "cooperation of the closest kind" with the various levels of the General Film Company (the film exchange that the Empress dealt with exclusively) that the Children's Theatre was able to secure appropriate titles, such as "*Cinderella*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *The Red Piper* (also

[116] Sargent, 79-80.
[117] Advertisement, *The Daily News* (Amherst), April 18, 1913, 4.
[118] Sargent, 79-80.

known as *The Pied Piper*), *The Magic Wand*, etc., etc.," along with carefully selected dramatic, historical, nature, and travel films.[119](See Figure 2-7) Notably, these films (which were obtained at a cost to the theatre, according to the advertising) were all selected solely for the children's matinee performances, and none were offered during the regular revenue-generating shows throughout the week.[120] This further illustrates that the Empress management was not interested in the direct profits when it came to its Children's Theatre initiative, but that the benefits of this program came from the prestige and status as a respectable heterosocial space that these shows gained the theatre in the eyes of the community.

According to the reviews offered in the *Daily News*, this children's programme was a resounding success, with crowds of children—and their mothers—coming to the theatre for the Saturday matinees.[121] This success was temporary, though, lasting only three months until it was announced that the Empress's manager, Mr. Kelty, was to be transferred to Saint John. The *Daily News* published with some measure of regret that at the end of June, the popular manager of the Empress was to being sent to take over the management of the Opera House in Saint John—the premier theatre in the Spencer chain. Despite a petition sent to Spencer by "many prominent citizens of Amherst," on June 30, 1913, the newspaper reported that Kelty and his wife had left town. The citizens were to be reassured, however, that he would still maintain a direct oversight on the programmes offered at the theatre from his position as the manager of the Saint John Opera House.[122]

---

[119] "The Problem of Child Entertainment," *The Daily News* (Amherst), May 16, 1913, 5.
[120] Ibid.
[121] "Short Review of Community Work," *Ibid*., May 13, 1913, 1, "The Children's Theatre," June 3, 1913, 4.
[122] "Going to St. John," *Ibid*., June 30, 1913, 1.

Figure 2-8 Gem Theatre takes over offering the children's programme in Amherst as it changes from education to entertainment. Advertisement, *Daily News* (Amherst), May 29, 1914, p.4.

While the new management of the Empress took pains to convince the community that the Children's Theatre initiative would continue, the children's shows were never again heralded in the press as offering educative entertainment and the last children's matinee took place in March of 1914.[123] Although Bradford appeared to have been the head of the move to create the Children's Theatre, without Kelty, this initiative was quickly abandoned by Spencer's Empress Theatres. What's more, after Kelty's departure, the notices for child-specific shows became very sporadic in the *Daily News*, and by May 1914, the children's shows had all moved to the smaller, less prestigious Gem Theatre and renamed Gem Kiddies, (see, Figure 2-8) with no mention of any cooperation with community groups such as the YMCA, and without the social and moral educative focus that Bradford had previously brought the Children's Theatre.[124]

CONCLUSION

Giveaways, prizes, special events, and children's matinees were not the financial mainstay of any Maritime theatre during the nickelodeon era of film exhibition. These were not gimmicks that could in isolation sustain profitability of a theatre over an extended period. In many cases, these events were devised by theatre managers to enhance the profile of the theatre

[123] "Children's Theatre," *Ibid*., July 4, 1913, 4.
[124] Advertisement, *The Daily News* (Amherst), May 29,1914, 4.

in the community by creating respectability amongst the potential audience—particularly amongst women.

When managers offered special event or a lottery-styled giveaway (even a baby giveaway), the aim was both to place people in the seats and to raise the prestige of the house by increasing the number of female and child patrons frequenting the venue, as the presence of women and children acted as a barometer for the acceptance of a venue in the community. By increasing the respectability of a venue in this way, theatre managers were aiming to secure the stable and long-term support of the overall community. The desire to turn Maritimes motion picture theatres into respectable heterosocial spaces fit for the modern age illustrates a growing sense of modernity that linked the Maritime region to the larger metropolises of North America.

Adjusting pricing structures to attract children was another means of drawing desirable audiences to motion picture theatres. Lower prices for children were not used in all theatres in the Maritimes during the transitional eras, however, although most theatres that had room in the ticket price did reduce the charge for children. This was done not only to attract youth to the shows, but to attract parents (mainly mothers) in order to promote the respectability of the theatre and thereby ensure regularized theatre attendance.

While motion picture theatre promotions aimed to raise the prestige and overall respectability of theatres by attracting specific (i.e., desirable) patrons, some theatres such as the Empress in Amherst also engaged in initiatives that would directly elevate the moral standing of motion picture viewing in the eyes of the community. By tackling head-on the charges levelled against motion picture theatres for defiling the moral standing of youth in modern cities, the Empress Theatre's management sought to improve the moral education of

that modern town's children through matinee programs targeted specifically at the moral education of young people—as well as being targeted at those young people's mothers, who held ultimate influence over the respectability and continued patronage of any theatre in the nickelodeon era.

CHAPTER 3 DANGEROUS PLACES: FIRE, PANIC, AND THE POTENTIAL FOR DISASTER IN MARITIME MOTION PICTURE THEATRES, 1897 – 1912.

"People are not killed by fires in theatres but generally kill each other because of their ignorance of the moving picture machine and the film."[1]

INTRODUCTION

Historically, to communities in Canada's Maritime Provinces, the anxiety of a devastating fire was not an abstract fear based on reports from other regions. Rather, for most citizens in the region, where towns and cities were constructed largely of wood, concern over large-scale combustibility was a rational fear based on local history and evidence. Those who looked at preventing fire disasters, as well as those who were concerned enough to voice their opinions, were quick to single out any site in their communities that posed the potential for combustibility.[2] For the first decade of the twentieth century, theatres—particularly those that exhibited motion picture films—were often identified as sites of potential danger across North America. As industrialization attracted an increasing number of working class people to urban centres, the real potential for fire that these venues posed mixed with the anxieties brought on by the changing composition of modern North American communities. As a result, many residents were left feeling particularly hostile towards the presence of motion picture theatres in their communities.

This chapter will focus on the safety threat that motion picture theatres were thought to pose to Maritimes communities, as informed by the experience of modernization across North

[1] "An Interesting Feature," *Daily News* (Amherst), February 17, 1912, 5
[2] William Novak, *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 52.

America. It will examine how theatre operators, various levels of government, and influential citizens in the Maritimes responded to the perceived dangers of motion picture exhibition, and will explore the debates that took place in the governments and popular press, particularly the newspapers, regarding how to mitigate the potential for danger. This investigation into the debates surrounding the safety of film exhibition can gauge the levels of apprehension in Maritime communities towards the potential for danger that was apparently inherent in this modern entertainment. This chapter will link both to the previous chapter which investigated attempts to create respectable and financially stable businesses based in film exhibition in the Maritimes, and proceeding chapters, investigating the moral and physical dangers which challenged the industry. The debates in this chapter, like those above and below not only offer insight into the concern in communities regarding these new social businesses, but also illuminate anxieties for the social and economic changes that were brought about through modernization.

MODERNIZATION IN THE MARITIMES

Beginning in the 1850s and 1860s, industrial capitalism in North America forced widespread changes to industries and social structures.[3] Instead of using human labour to fuel resource-based industries, the industries of the modern era sought to use mechanized processes and scientific management to increase efficiencies and profits. The resulting changes are referred to as modernization. Beginning in the Maritime Provinces in the 1850s, modern industrialization was accelerated with the establishment of rail lines connecting most of the region to central Canada, a condition of the 1867 signing of Confederation. This process of

[3] Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903) in *The Blackwell City Reader*, in Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (Oxford and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002) p.12. See also, Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press: 2001), 20-36.

industrialization lasted until the First World War, presenting many dramatic changes to both the cities and the smaller industrial communities of the region.[4] Although many factories in the Maritimes continued to work in the old economies of food, lumber, and textile production as industrialization took root, the means through which many of these factories operated were drastically different. A new focus on coal extraction as well as iron and steel production also flourished across the Maritimes in this *fin de siècle* era, forever changing the industrial economy of the region.

Massive changes to North American industries and communities were also occurring due to the newfound availability of electricity to factories and towns. As of 1900, electricity in the Maritimes was being "purchased from central electric stations rather than direct own-generated water or steam power," though not on a massive centralized scale as seen in Upper Canada during this period.[5] One result of this modern industrialization was the increased population of Maritime towns, with a percentage growth in urban populations of over 15% between 1871 and 1901.[6] These growing communities were largely erected around pre-modern era village cores that had been overwhelmingly constructed of wood. This combination of urban, industrialized communities and wooden buildings posed the potential for fire—a risk of which Maritimes communities were aware.

---

[4] See John Reid, *Six Crucial Decades: Times of Change in Maritime History* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1987), p.91-118 and ed. E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 13-154.

[5] Peter J. Wylie, "When Markets Fail: Electrification and Maritime Industrial Decline," *Acadiensis* 17 (1987): 75 and 93. Wylie concludes that the failure of industrialization in the Maritimes that took place following the First World War was due in part to the failure of Maritime industry to capitalize on central electrification.

[6] L.D. McCann, "The Mercantile-Industrial Transition in The Metals Towns of Pictou County, 1857-1931," *Acadiensis* 10 (1981): 34. McCann offers statistics for Nova Scotia only in his paper. According to Census Canada data compiled in 1901, the national divide between urban and rural populations was 63% rural versus 37% urban, while in the Maritimes the spread was much wider, with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick both reporting a similar difference of 72% rural and 28% urban (NS) and 77% and 23% (NB), while PEI was significantly higher, at 84% rural. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/demo62a-eng.htm.

In general, the social and economic changes ushered in via modernization were initially received with feelings of optimism among populations in the Maritimes. Communities such as Amherst, Pictou, and Truro, Nova Scotia saw great advances in wealth and industrial output, creating the expectation that these improvements were both sustainable and positive. Indeed by the 1890s, citizens across the Maritimes were feeling the industrial, economic, and societal effects of modernization, and generally believed that these were improving society. For instance, rising economic wealth had led to improved health and education for some populations in the Maritimes. However, these benefits were not enjoyed equally by all segments of society, which created a growing gap between classes and the perception of difference. As the upper and middle classes benefitted from advancements in their quality of life, they began to hold the belief that they had a duty to offer direction and assistance to those who were conceived as being of a lower class. As a result, organizations such as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) dedicated themselves to social uplift and to the protection of populations that were considered vulnerable and in need of education about how to live within the new parameters of society.[7] Despite the general optimism that initially flowed through the Maritimes on the heels of modernization, there were also feelings of anxiety regarding the changes that were overtaking industry and society. These anxieties became especially apparent as the economic

[7] For examples of the rise of social betterment campaigns in the Maritimes, see Judith Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax* (Halifax: Pottersfield Press, 1989), 25-28; Ernest Forbes, "Prohibition and the Social Gospel in Nova Scotia," *Acadiensis*. 1 (1971): 11-36; C. Mark Davis, "Small Town Reformism: The Temperance Issue in Amherst, Nova Scotia," in *People and Place: Studies of Small Town Life in the Maritimes* ed, Larry McCann (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1987) 125-134; Clifford Rose, *Four Years with Demon Rum: The Autobiography and Diary of Temperance Inspector Clifford Rose* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1980); and Renée N. Lafferty, *The Guardianship of Best Intentions: Institutional Care for Children of the Poor in Halifax, 1850-1960* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012). For a national perspective, see: Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

fortunes of the region began to show signs of strain after the initial boom of industrialization came to a close following the First World War. As the Canadian economy moved away from the old industrialism, marked by labour intensive manual resource extraction and towards mechanized resource extraction and refinement along with sophisticated technical manufacturing, this led to a centralization of industry in Central Canada. There were calls for corrective economic measures such as preferred tariffs and direct investments from the federal government and more diversified industrial activities, just as there were arguments made for augmentations to the modern social order that industrialization and urbanization had created.[8] Yet there were no calls for a return to the pre-industrialized past, either economically or socially.

The growing disquiet that the Maritimes witnessed during the years of initial modernization in the late nineteenth century was cued by the vast number of changes being witnessed and by the speed at which they were occurring. This apprehension—and even fear—was a well-documented reaction to the conditions of modernization in urban centres across North America.[9] For contemporary commentators in the early 1900s, the railways and streetcars were often employed as symbols of modernity, and much criticism, anxiety, and fear was directed towards them.[10] The heightened emotions associated with the railway were also captured in the art and entertainment of the time.[11] For contemporary urban audiences, the

---

[8] Wylie, McCann.
[9] Singer, 59-90.
[10] For a more complete discussion of the apprehensions that Maritime communities had regarding modernization, see Chapter 1. For further discussion, see Chapters 4 and 5. See also, Singer, 55-90 and Simmel, 17-18, Jane Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1909), HTML Edition, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16221/16221-h/16221-h.htm and Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1918).
[11] Nicholas Daly, "Blood on the Tracks: Sensation Drama and the Dark Face of Modernity," *Victorian Studies* 42 (1998/1999): 50. See also, Singer and Lynne Kirby, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997)

mixture of speed and the potential for disaster created the feeling that rescue from these modern machines was not possible without a spectacular triumph of individual heroism.[12] Emblematic of these concerns, motion pictures such as the serialized films *The Perils of Pauline* (General Film Company, 1914) and *The Hazards of Helen* (Kalem Company, 1914-17) played to enthusiastic audiences in theatres throughout the Maritimes.[13] The introduction of electricity to North American communities created similar feelings of fear and anxiety. Unlike the fear of the rails, these concerns were not fed through melodrama and entertainment, but through newspapers reports of fires caused by faulty electrical circuits and the occasional electrocution of individuals or animals.[14]

These two symbols of modernity—railways and electricity—came to symbolize broader concerns regarding the massive industrial, economic, and societal changes that were occurring across North America and altering not only the large cities, but also those progressive smaller communities that were affected by rapid urbanization. In the Maritimes, the reporting and dramatization of the potentially disastrous outcomes of modernity were met with apparent acceptance and calm. Despite the popular memories and contemporary experiences of disastrous fires that destroyed Maritime communities, the region's population offered no evidence of wide-spread fears or anxieties.

---

[12] Daly, 55.
[13] For *Perils of Pauline*, see; Advertisement, *Sackville Tribune*, May 6, 1915 and Advertisement, *Amherst Daily News* April 15, 1915, 4. For *Hazards of Helen*, see; Advertisement, *Amherst Daily News* March 8, 1915, 4. Linking these films to fears of the modern see Kirby, 110-116 and Singer, 221-262.
[14] Thomas Edison is perhaps most famous for enhancing the concern over the danger of electricity through the staging of an electrocution of an elephant, a stunt performed to promote his DC power over the AC power of the completion, Westinghouse and to promote the use of direct electrical current as an improved method of capital punishment. Richard Abel, *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 22

FIRE AND THE MARITIMES

The Maritimes were not alone in suffering tragic losses due to fire. For only a few examples of many, in 1871, the Great Chicago Fire claimed an estimated 250 lives, and two separate fires in Michigan in that same year claimed up to 3,000 lives.[15] Given the continent's tragic history of devastating fires throughout the industrialization era, it is no surprise that anxiety surfaced once even a tentative link was made between combustibility and the motion picture projection. Once this link was made in the popular North American consciousness, theatres came under intense public scrutiny.

One particularly poignant example of the dangers of fire in a modern Maritimes community took place in Windsor, Nova Scotia on October 17, 1897. A blaze that began in the town's core at 3:00 a.m. quickly spread, fanned by near hurricane–strength winds, to engulf the

Figure 3-1: The devastation of the Windsor fire, photographed by J.W. Livingston. NSARM Photo Collection: Places: Windsor: Fires. http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/Builtheritage/archives.asp?ID=120

[15] John Pauly, "The Great Chicago Fire as a National Event" *American Quarterly*, 36 (1984): 669, 681.

entire downtown. While there were no reported fatalities and only a few injuries, over 3,000 of the town's 3,500 inhabitants were forced into a temporary shelter erected by a detachment of military troops from Halifax. The damages were reported to have reached in excess of 3 million dollars—the equivalent of over $80 million today—with over 80 percent of the town's buildings heavily damaged or destroyed.[16] Photographs of the town following the disaster, taken by J.W. Livingston, show a devastated landscape with only the ghostly remnants of chimneys and the burned-out skeletons of trees and brick buildings (Figure 3-1). By all reports, the town was nearly completely destroyed by this event.

While industrialization was not directly to blame for igniting the Windsor fire of 1897, the crowding of the largely wood-constructed downtown core due to modern urbanization likely played an exacerbating role. The *New York Times* reported that the fire was started in a barn in the heart of Windsor's business district. Some blamed an overnight lightning strike for starting the blaze, while the *New York Times* speculated that the flames had originated from the carelessness of "some drunken man," illustrating a fear of the modern in terms of how urban centres encouraged not only the crowding, but also of the so-called uncivilized behaviour, of the lower classes.[17] The Windsor fire of 1897 appears to be the most severe disaster to have affected a Nova Scotia community in the nineteenth century, although a series of non-fatal fires

---

[16] $83,333,333.33 in 2014 ($1 in 1897 is now worth $27.78). To achieve this result I consulted the Inflation Calculator at DaveManuel.com, which uses date from the Oregon State University's inflation conversion factors (http://www.davemanuel.com/inflation-calculator.php).

[17] "Big Fire in Windsor, N.S." *New York Times*, October 18, 1897, 1. These concerns about the dangers of public intoxication are linked to the concerns over modernity expressed by both the temperance organizations of the Maritimes and in the writings of such influential social reformers as Jane Addams, who includes this evil in her *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*. See also *n.6*, above. The *New York Times*' interest in fire disaster in a small community in Nova Scotia misfortune was in part because of the paper's attempt to appeal to sensationalist elements through the reporting of disasters. For more on the so-called *Yellow Journalism* of the late Victorian era in America, see: Robert E. Park, "The Natural History of the Newspaper," *The American Journal of Sociology*, XXIX (1923): 273-289, David R. Spencer, *The Yellow Journalism: The Press and America's Emergence as a World Power* (Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 2007) and W. Joseph Campbell, *Yellow Journalism: Puncturing the Myths, Defining the Legacies* (Westport, Connecticut, Praeger Publishers, 2001).

in downtown New Glasgow in the 1870s was also devastating to that community's business district and economy.[18]

For the Maritimes region as a whole, the Saint John, New Brunswick fire of 1877 is considered to be the largest and most expensive fire in the Maritimes of the nineteenth century, although the near complete ruin of Campbellton, New Brunswick in a 1910 fire was perhaps the most destructive for a smaller community.[19] Both of these fires, like the Windsor fire, were not blamed on industrialization, but again pointed to the vulnerability of the wooden construction at the core of communities that were modernizing. However, the explosion and resulting fire in Halifax, Nova Scotia on December 7, 1917 dwarfs all other fire-related disasters in the Maritimes. The so-called Halifax Explosion left approximately 2,000 individuals dead, an entire neighbourhood flattened, and the majority of the city's buildings sustaining at least some damage.[20] Despite this disaster consisting of an explosion followed by a fire in the rubble of the destruction, the lesson taken from by city planners was that the wooden structures of the last century were not suitable amidst the potential dangers of the modern city.[21] All of these events also illustrated the importance of fire prevention to city

---

[18] New Glasgow's downtown was thrice ravaged by fire in the 1870s, first in 1873 and again in 1874 and 1875 without loss of life. These fires were costly to the business community of New Glasgow, but did not appear to cause the same level of human suffering as there were few residences lost.

[19] This excludes the repeated burning of St John's, Newfoundland, in 1819, 1842 and the great fire of 1892, which devastated the city and left 11,000 people homeless. Jenny Higgins, "The St, John's Fire of 1892," *Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Web Site* (http://www.heritage.nf.ca/law/fire_1892.html).For a more detailed contemporary record of the Saint John fire, see: Russell H. Conwell, *History of the Great Fire in Saint John, June 20 and 21, 1877* (Boston: Russell, 1877). For a contemporary assessment of the Campbellton fire, see: "Campbellton's Progress Since Disastrous Fire," *Graphic* (Campbellton), January 13, 1911, 1. Theatres were not mentioned in the damage assessments in neither of these fires.

[20] The Halifax explosion has been the subject of several books, most notably Gorsebrook Research Institute for Atlantic Canada Studies, Colin D. Howell, and Alan Ruffman, *Ground Zero: A Reassessment of the 1917 Explosion in Halifax Harbour* (Halifax, NS: Co-published by Nimbus Pub. and Gorsebrook Research Institute for Atlantic Canada Studies at St. Mary's University, 1994), Janet F. Kitz, *Shattered City: The Halifax Explosion and the Road to Recovery* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1989), and Suzanne Morton, *Ideal Surroundings: Domestic Life in a Working-Class Suburb in the 1920s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) which deals with the after effects of the disaster in the re-built Richmond Heights region of Halifax.

[21] Morton shows in her book, *Ideal Surroundings*, that although Hydrostone District within the Richmond Heights area of Halifax was not the only district visited with complete destruction by the 1917 explosion, it was unique in

planners and communities, and fostered a sense of hyper-vigilance towards fire safety among citizens across the Maritimes.

Maritime governments responded to the concerns regarding the modernization and urbanization of the region during the early Twentieth Century through the enactment of fire safety laws. Intended as legislative tools to enforce the "government obligation" to promote safer communities, these laws also in effect set out to control the seemingly reckless growth and urbanization associated with modernity. Indeed, these fire safety laws and codes were built on lessons learned from past disasters and were designed to protect citizens and property—not to punish or restrict community members or industry. These regulations were particularly enforced in terms of motion picture theatres, for these venues were perceived as posing a particular risk for starting fires in the modern era.

MOTION PICTURES AND THE POTENTIAL FOR FIRE

The common North American perception that motion picture theatres were potential incendiary sites developed as these sites were increasing in popularity in the nickelodeon era. This concern was based in large part on the moving picture apparatus and the mechanized means of projecting images. Specifically, the highly flammable nitrate film stock, when exposed to incandescent lamps powered by electricity, made for an ignitable combination—a phenomenon that has been well reported over the past one hundred years. Despite these two seemingly incompatible and volatile technical aspects of film projection, it was almost exclusively human error that was the cause of any fires involving motion pictures.[22] In fact, the

---

that the buildings were constructed and maintained under the watchful eyes of the Halifax Relief Commission. These domestic and small commercial buildings were constructed with Hydo-Stone concrete blocks and built to reflect an English-style garden suburb, with the emphasis on safety and recreating a European sense of community. Morton, 20.

[22] Roger Smither, ed., *This Film is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film* (London: FIAF, 2002). This excellent volume is a celebration of the near 50 years of film history that involved using nitrate film stock, the

potential for danger was perceived by nearly all who were involved with the early projecting and promotion of films, just as it was with those who were charged with regulating film exhibition. Therefore, efforts were undertaken to mitigate these dangers. Projectors were placed in "fireproof" boxes, nitrate film was protected in steel canisters, and operators were educated and licenced in the proper means of controlling the devices. Yet these measures did little to alter the common perception that motion picture theatres were places of particular danger.

The projector and film stock were merely the most prominent symbols of the dangers posed by motion picture theatres. Incorrect seating style, insufficient ventilation of the space, and ineffective means of entry and exit were among a multitude of other concerns that people voiced about these buildings. Although most motion picture theatres had previously functioned as conventional theatres or other public buildings, they underwent heightened scrutiny both in the press and in government after they were converted to continuous motion picture theatres and their projectors were permanently installed, something which is discussed in detail below.

However, in the earliest years of the 1900s, when motion pictures were travelling exhibitions set up in other venues, such concerns over the potential hazards posed by motion picture equipment had not yet taken root. It was not until motion picture exhibition became permanently established in communities that these concerns became deep-rooted and widespread. As it was, however, only two motion picture related fires are on record in the

---

highly flammable platform from which motion pictures were created. With over 100 contributors, this book illustrates many of the contemporary issues that film preservationists have with nitrate film. It also contains an entire section on the fires that were caused by nitrate film in theatres, archives, and homes. Archivist Sam Kula argues that in most of the more famous fires related to nitrate film, it was human error and incompetence that caused both the fires and the deaths; the dangerous film stock was only the accelerant. The book argues that nitrate film stock performed amazingly well over its history despite being maligned as "dangerous and volatile" in the popular memory.

Maritimes. One outside of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island in 1900, and the other in Saint John, New Brunswick in 1907—and neither even came close to being considered a disaster.

The view that motion picture audiences were in danger in the first place was cemented in many people's minds by such infamous events as the 1903 fire in Chicago's Iroquois Theatre and the 1908 disaster at the Rhoads Opera House in Boyertown, Pennsylvania—both of which caused mass casualties, and both of which soon became fixed in North America's collective memory as metaphors for the broader need to control the crowding of modernized public spaces by modernized crowds.

Chicago's Iroquois Theatre had been completed in accordance with existing fire codes only six weeks prior to the disaster, which occurred on December 30, 1903. The theatre was crowded beyond capacity for a matinee production of a staged presentation of Mr. Bluebeard, with over 2,300 people in attendance—the majority of whom were women and children.[23] What was perhaps most shocking about the incident was that the disastrous fire caused little structural damage to the theatre, as most damage was considered to be cosmetic.[24]

Despite the building having been declared "absolutely fireproof" upon its opening, a fire erupted when a floodlight exploded over the stage, leading to great amounts of smoke and a widespread panic that caused the death of over 600 members of the audience.[25] It was the crush of bodies—over two hundred deep at one exit—that clogged the exits and prevented the audience from escaping the danger. In addition to the panic, the negligence of the theatre management and builders also contributed to the mass fatalities. Eye-witness reports cited a culmination of contributing factors, including doors that swung into the theatre (instead of

---

[23] Jane Barnette, "The Matinee Audience in Peril: The Syndicate's Mr. Bluebeard and the Iroquois Theatre Fire," *Theatre Symposium*, 20 (2012): 25.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 24

outward toward the lobby) and locked gates leading from the gallery. Other fire protection–related factors, such as the failure of a fire-stifling asbestos curtain to lower, the lack of fire-fighting apparatus, and the absence of a fire alarm in the theatre, also combined to result in the massive loss of life.[26]

Figure 3-2: McNeil Block, 1912. Although at the time of this photo a theatre was no longer located here, this does illustrate the height and design of the building, which was common for many theatres in the Maritimes in operation in the late-nineteenth century. http://www.parl.ns.ca/industry/Business-Factory/HLPMcNeil84.jpg

This disaster did not go unnoticed by Maritime residents. A few days after it occurred, the event was referenced by the editors of New Glasgow's *Eastern Chronicle* newspaper, who raised concerns about the comparative safety of that town's sole theatre, McNeil's Hall. Located on the third floor of the McNeil Block on the corner of Provost Street and McLean Street in the downtown core of New Glasgow, this multi-use theatre which itinerantly showed motion pictures was a popular, though not necessarily modern, entertainment venue (Figure 3-2). In fact, the outdated theatre had come under the scrutiny of the editors over three years before, in April 1900, after the venue had put on a successful series of amateur theatricals and Biograph motion picture presentations. At that point in time, the editors had entered a plea for an "up-to-date" hall of better quality to meet the needs of the modernizing town, as the current hall was a "disgrace to the enterprise, intelligence and good taste of the citizens" of New Glasgow.

[26]Ibid. 23-29, and "A Tragedy Remembered", *National Fire Protection Association Journal*, 4 (1995): 75

McNeil's Hall, they argued, was not suited to offering the modern shows that the modern community desired.

Although the *Eastern Chronicle*'s editors remarks about the outdated McNeil Hall did not include any safety concerns in 1900, the newspaper's renewed pleas for a suitable theatre following the news of the Iroquois fire in 1903 certainly did reference such concerns. After a quick profile of the disaster in Chicago, the editors of the *Eastern Chronicle* asked the question, "What about New Glasgow?", arguing that their town was just as likely to be the site of such a calamity.[27] They predicted that if a fire were to erupt in the theatre atop McNeil's Block, a tragedy not unlike the one that befell the Iroquois Theatre was sure to ensue. The wood construction and location of the theatre were the primary concern referenced in the article, although, in light of the Iroquois Theatre tragedy, the threat of a panicked audience was also highlighted.

In order to avoid a similar tragedy from taking place in New Glasgow, the editors of the *Eastern Chronicle* did not stop at merely proposing updated and safer exits for McNeil Hall. Instead, they proposed replacing McNeil's Hall with a new, safer theatre funded by private industrialists. Until such a modernized theatre could be built, the editors argued that the present third-story theatre should at least be outfitted with proper fire escapes consisting of stairs with hand rails. Although McNeil Hall did have a version of a fire escape already in place, it was considered "a delusion and a snare" to audiences, as it consisted of a platform and a series of vertical ladders. The editors further proposed that two or three police officials be stationed at the exits to take charge should panic ensue amongst the crowd. Clearly, the editors' concerns and suggestions were directly informed by the Iroquois Theatre disaster.[28]

---

[27] "The Chicago Horror" *Eastern Chronicle* (New Glasgow), January 8, 1904, p.1
[28] *Ibid*.

In the next issue of the *Eastern Chronicle*, the editors replied to community concerns that had been raised regarding the previous week's commentary about McNeil's Hall. The newspaper all but revoked its previous call to have McNeil Hall closed—due to the fact that there was little appetite to take on a new building project. Instead, the editors reiterated the need to address the dangers posed by the hall's exits in the event of an emergency. The editorial clarified that New Glasgow audiences were no more susceptible to panic (i.e., no more "socially combustible") than those of any other community. In fact, it argued the opposite, referencing the core Maritimes-ness of the population. Specifically, it cited that the people's extensive experience with "artificial heat in this country" made New Glasgow audiences even more aware of the inherent dangers of fire, which should also leave them less susceptible to panic caused by smoke—the root cause of the Iroquois Theatre disaster. The newspaper further suggested that any panic that might present itself could be prevented or at least mitigated among the citizens of New Glasgow by first removing "foolish nerves" and then adopting more stoicism in the face of trauma.

The article then proposed educating the masses—particularly immature young men—about how to act in modern public spaces. Specifically, it suggested that the young men of the community "school themselves to be cool and calm in any emergency requiring coolness," as the Iroquois Theatre disaster had shown that it was the young male citizens who were often first to escape the fires, leaving women and children behind.[29] In lieu of a new theatre building, it seemed that the *Eastern Chronicle* editors decided that properly controlling the audience through education was the preferred means of creating safe theatres in the Maritimes.

[29] *Ibid*., January 19, 1904, 1.

The debate laid out in the *Eastern Chronicle* exemplifies how the modern demographics of Maritimes towns—namely, an increased disparity between the classes of citizens—brought about at least some unease amongst the more refined classes. In fact, it was only as motion pictures became popular with the lower-class masses that the potential dangers posed by public entertainment venues came to the attention of the newspapers and politicians at all. Prior to that, when large numbers of middle- and upper-class citizens had flocked to theatre halls and opera houses, little attention was paid to the safety of the venues. Certainly there had been no discussions about controlling and educating *those* audiences. In contrast, in the modern era, concerns were often voiced immediately following shows that were popular with a wide proportion of the population. For instance, the first editorial regarding McNeil's Hall in 1900 in the *Eastern Chronicle* came following a popular Biograph motion picture show, and the second followed both the disaster in Chicago as well as a busy holiday season at the theatre.

ATTEMPTING TO CONTROL MODERN CROWDS IN MARITIMES MOTION PICTURE THEATRES

The first motion picture–related fire in the Maritimes happened at the Falconwood Lunatic Asylum. Completed in 1879, Falconwood was a hospital for the mentally ill and located outside of Charlottetown (Figure 3-3). This converted mansion was thought to be the pinnacle of modernized mental health care on Prince Edward Island, offering patients not only care, but also constructive work and the productive use of their time. This model of care was known as "moral therapy" which was modelled after the modern conception of social uplift for those who were unable to generate this uplift independently.[30] In keeping with this modern

[30] Moral therapy or moral treatment as it is more commonly named is the term used by Sharon Myers in her investigation into the Falconwood Asylum, where she describes the treatment of Minnie McGee. Myers describes this style of care as offering greater liberties for the inmates and the absence of physical restraints, using instead

Figure 3-3: Falconwood Lunatic Asylum. This engraved image of the hospital, produced a year after its opening, was reproduced from a photograph for the *Canadian Illustrated News*, a popular nineteenth century magazine published in Montreal. *Canadian Illustrated News,* Vol. XVII, No. 12, Page 180. Reproduced from Library and Archives Canada's website *Images in the News: Canadian Illustrated News* (http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/canadian-illustrated-news-1869-

moral therapy–style of care, modern entertainments were also offered to patients.[31] These included skating on an outdoor rink, reading magazines and newspapers, and playing games. In 1900, these entertainments included motion pictures for the first time.

On February 21, 1900, two businessmen, F.S. Jost and W.P. Doull, offered the patients and staff an evening of some of the most technically advanced entertainment available on the Island at that time—which included motion pictures. Doull and Jost had experience in electrical works and musical instruments, as Jost was the manager of the Charlottetown Milles Brothers store, which specialized in sewing machines, pianos, and organs, and Doull was an electrician and machinist.[32] The evening's program consisted of musical entertainment offered through Jost's gramophone, as well visual entertainment provided by a stereopticon and a Biograph motion picture machine, operated by Doull (Figure 3-4).

---

physical and mental labour and "refreshing fatigue" as the treatment for encouraging proper behavior. Sharon Myers, "The Apocrypha of Minnie McGee: The Murderous Mother and the Multivocal State in 20th-Century Prince Edward Island." *Acadiensis* 38 (2009): 12.

[31] Ibid.

[32] *McAlpines Prince Edward Island Directory, 1900* (Saint John, NB: The McAlpine Publishing Company, 1900), 97, 206.

The evening was reportedly well received by the patients and staff in attendance, and the operators were preparing to close their set with a final short film sequence from the Biograph when the canister of nitrate film ignited. The resulting fire could have become a disaster had Doull and Jost not been able to contain the flames to only the film reels. Indeed, in the subsequent reporting on the incident, the event was labelled to be "of no consequence," as there were no serious injuries or damage to the building. The only loss of note was of the films, which were of considerable value.[33]

Since the burning of the films was a minor accident of no consequence, it caused no detrimental reactions on the part of the press or government. This relatively blasé response to the fire was in keeping with the general response to the motion picture apparatus in the Maritimes at the time, as popular concerns about the technology had not yet taken root in Maritimes communities. In fact, at this time, Maritime audiences appeared to be not at all concerned about the safety of the devices, and neither were public officials. There are no recorded protests or complaints about motion picture devices have been recorded in this early era of itinerant film exhibition.

The Falconwood incident was the only reported fire involving a motion picture device in the Maritimes during the itinerant period of film exhibition. Indeed, aside from the occasional failure of the apparatus to operate due to inconsistent electrical services, the early years of film exhibition in the Maritimes did not involve any disasters or notable misfortunes. The following nickelodeon era of motion picture exhibition, which began in earnest in the Maritimes in 1907, also saw only one reported incident involving fire in the Maritimes. By this time, the nickelodeon era was in full swing and concerns about the potential hazardousness of

[33] "Biograph Films Burned", *Daily Examiner* (Charlottetown), February 22, 1900, 1.

motion picture equipment had made it to the Maritimes, which no doubt coloured the local reporters' take on the noteworthiness of the event.

On September 13, 1907, a small fire caused minor damage to the West End Nickel theatre in Saint John, New Brunswick. The fire was started when a spark from the rheostat landed in the cellulite film tank below. Notably, the projector in question had been sold without a proper fireproof case, which was commonly provided with projectors due to the combustibility of the film. The fire caused minor injuries to the wrists of the projector operator, Charles Clark, and it was reported that his clothes also caught fire. Although the incident resulted in no other injuries among employees or patrons, this fire was covered extensively by the local newspapers.

Saint John's *The Globe* gave the most descriptive reporting of the event, though it placed the fire at the West End Theatre in Fairville, on the other side of the city. *The Globe*'s description of the fire leans towards the dramatic, saying that the operator only narrowly escaped death in the fire, which engulfed the projection booth. *The Globe* theatrically concludes that, had the operator stayed in the booth for even a moment after the film had ignited, "escape would have been impossible." The article concludes rather anti-climactically by stating that the only damage to the theatre was the loss of the films, which were valued at between two and three hundred dollars.[34] There was no description of the audience's reaction to the fire. Saint John's *Evening Times* newspaper offered the following, less dramatic, take on the fire:

> About nine o'clock last evening, the Carleton firemen were called out for a blaze in the west end Nickel moving picture show in the City Hall. The fire, however, did not amount to much. The fire is attributed to the igniting of the celluloid film from a spark. The operator of the machine is reported to have

[34] "Fairview News", *Globe* (Saint John), September 14, 1907, 1.

> burnt his hands quite severely. About three hundred people were in the show house at the time and the accident caused much excitement.[35]

Neither of these Saint John daily papers appear to view this event as a harbinger of potential problems for motion pictures or for motion picture audiences in the Maritimes. This is not entirely a surprising result, as both of these paper received advertising money from the theatre on a regular basis. However, the event received some international attention from the United States which did shed some doubt on the increasingly popular motion picture pastime. New York's *The Moving Picture World* (*MPW*) trade publication reported this fire as a serious and potentially disastrous event, not only for the theatre and audience, but also for the motion picture industry as a whole. It published a detailed description of the fire, focusing on the reactions of the audience and the potential for greater disaster rather than on the relatively unremarkable experience of the projectionist. Such dramatizations only lent to the growing anxiety over the safety of motion picture theatres that was sweeping North America—although it seems that Maritimes communities, which had experienced no serious theatre disasters firsthand, dealt with such anxieties through education and legislation, and not through heavy-handed tactics such as closing of theatres and explicit restrictions on audiences.

DRAMATIZING THE THEATRE FIRES IN THE MARITIMES

In its reporting of the 1907 fire at Saint John's West End Nickel, the *MPW* highlighted the fact that there was fortunately no loss of life or serious injury among the near three hundred people in the audience—although this mere observation suggests to readers that there very well could have been substantial trauma.[36] The *MPW* article goes on to describe in some detail the experiences of the women and children in attendance, thereby perpetuating the idea that these

---

[35] *Evening Times* (Saint John), September 14, 1907, 1.
[36] "Trade Notes," *The Moving Picture World* (*MPW*) 1 (September 28, 1907): 469-70.

members of the audience were in greater danger when panic ensued. Specifically, it described the chaos among the women and children in the audience as smoke filled the theatre hall, which had been plunged into darkness for a short time. It then stated that there was a dash to the exit, where benches were broken and a woman fainted. One "boy" was also injured when he fell over a gallery banister and dropped twelve feet.

In the *MPW*'s version of events, the projectionist Charles Clark denied receiving any injury in his efforts to cut the electric current to the smouldering projector—this despite the report in *The Globe* that his clothes had been burned and his wrists singed in an attempt to extinguish the flames and the report of even more severe injuries from the *Evening Times*. The *MPW* reported little damage to the theatre, mentioning that the fire was confined to the fireproof projector box and was extinguished by a couple buckets of water thrown by the firemen who had responded quickly to the call. The *MPW* also reported that the management of the theatre was also quick to issue an apology to the community and to offer assurances that it had learned from the incident and would now encase the combustible celluloid film in an iron-sheathed tank. There were no legal ramifications to this event in Saint John. The proper safety equipment that the *MPW* advocated was provided by the manufacturers of the projectors and was in no way required by municipal regulations in Saint John. Due both to the newness of the device and the lack of public concern regarding the physical safety of the entertainment, city officials appeared to have no interest in regulating the industry. Aside from licensing the sites as businesses, there was no capacity for inspection or regulation noted in the city, nor was this incident considered important enough to warrant such action.

As reported by the *MPW*, the West End Nickel was returned to operation as usual the following Saturday without further incident, and with the hope that the fire had not caused

damage to the reputation of the theatre. As suggested by the rather forgiving local newspaper reports, no harm had been done. To the editors of the *MPW*, however, the managers' assurances were not sufficient. For them, the greater responsibility lay with the machine supplier that had failed to provide a fireproof case. In the *MPW*'s view, there was "no excuse for such gross stupidity and carelessness."[37] Clearly, the *MPW* wanted to accentuate the dangers that improper motion picture theatre apparatuses posed—and that needed to be contained and regulated by the industry to prevent further official restrictions.

It is perhaps not surprising that the editors of the *MPW* gave such attention to what the theatre and the local Maritimes newspapers considered to be a minor incident. As was becoming popular belief in North America, even a small fire had the potential to cause a massive disaster in a crowded theatre, and the steps to prevent one were already well known and available in 1907. This made the potential for disaster even more horrific, as motion picture theatre fires were viewed as completely preventable. However, for trade publications like *The Moving Picture World*, fires such as these were abhorred not only for their potential to cause harm, but also (and perhaps primarily) for their ability to damage the fledgling motion picture theatre industry.

Importantly, it seemed that the West End Nickel fire did not cause any notable panic among the Saint John's audience. In fact, it was only a publication from a major American city that placed any focus at all on the "panicked" audience. The local papers saw no need to comment on the audience's reaction to the incident, perhaps because the panic was short-lived, there were no serious injuries, and everyone made it out the exit. While the response of the Maritime press and apparently the mass of the public to the potential danger that these theatres

[37] *Ibid*., 470.

posed may seem blasé, it was likely due to the fact that the Maritimes had never experienced a real theatre disaster firsthand.

This conclusion can be drawn because of the total lack of a public conversation about the safety of these entertainment sites following the incident in Saint John. As will be examined further later in this chapter, there are no vocal portions of the Maritime population calling for regulation or restriction on motion picture theatres due to concern over fire safety in 1907. There is a general silence in the halls of government and the popular press regarding the overall safety of these businesses following the fire of the West End Nickel.

CONTROLLING MODERN MOTION PICTURE AUDIENCES

As *The Moving Picture World* coverage of the Saint John motion picture theatre fire illustrated however, growing anxieties were evident regarding modern motion pictures across North America. While many of these concerns focused on the potential for fire that motion picture equipment posed, these fire safety concerns were only exacerbated by a growing unease among the public—particularly the middle and upper classes—over how venues that had once been reserved for the entertainment of the more refined classes were now gathering places for large crowds of lower-class individuals. Indeed, the popular and affordable new entertainment medium of motion pictures tended to attract a different kind of audience than the more traditional entertainments of concerts and live theatre had. Often, motion picture audiences were made up of many of the individuals who had been brought to urban centres via industrialization—namely, lower-class young men.

Across North America, modern motion picture audiences were often perceived as being "immature and uncivilized, as feminine, juvenile and foreign."[38] This perception created stiff opposition among the traditional ruling classes to the exhibition of motion pictures. This opposition materialized in a sense of urgency around controlling motion picture audiences—namely, the lower-class masses—due to their supposed immaturity and gender. Ruling-class citizens were often left searching for a means to regulate the movements of these newly mobile masses of lower-class citizens. One of the most accessible means of control offered was through the legislated management of the public spaces in which the masses collected—including motion picture theatres.[39]

Anxieties towards audience composition were only exacerbated by anxieties regarding the potentially explosive medium used to present motion pictures. The result was a feeling of general anxiety about what historian Paul Moore calls the "socially combustible" nature of modern motion picture theatres.[40] In his investigation into the nickelodeon era in Southern Ontario, Moore defines a film audience as a "temporary voluntary crowd paying to be together."[41] This audience, focused on the entertainment and not each other, combined with the electricity and celluloid created the potential spark that he labelled as "socially combustible." Fear of these sites in Ontario and their potential for disaster caused many actors in both the municipal and provincial governments to move towards legal regulations regarding the designs of the theatres and the locations in which they were licensed to operate.[42] In some cases, these licencing regulations acted as a sanctioned avenue for political interference in the

---

[38] Paul Moore, *Now Playing: Early Moviegoing and the Regulation of Fun* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 58.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 46-7.
[41] Ibid., 56.
[42] It is interesting that the concern that Moore details originated not from social reformers or the fire services but from the commercial sites that neighboured motion picture theatres. Ibid., 62.

establishment of new motion picture theatres. Indeed, some licences were withheld based on concerns for both fire safety and the composition of the audience or the race of the owners of these sites.[43] The need to mitigate the potential for fire that motion picture equipment posed was one obvious way to simultaneously implement crowd-controlling legislation that could be directly used as part of the "civilizing process" on modern audiences.

SHATTERING THE ILLUSION OF THEATRE SAFETY IN THE MARITIMES

New Glasgow was not the only Maritimes community publicly debating how best to control the risks associated with popular theatres and motion picture venues and their audiences. Rather, as more and more entertainment venues were converted into continuous motion picture theatres, discussions revolving around the safety of theatres took place throughout other Maritimes communities as well. For example, in 1908, in the town of Windsor, council took action against the Dreamland Theatre three months following its opening as a dedicated motion picture theatre.

In September 1907, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) began operating the Dreamland Theatre out of a former storefront in downtown Windsor. [44] Profits from the theatre were diverted to the temperance society, with forty dollars going to the Payzant Memorial Hospital annually.[45] It was not until January, 1908, following three months of successful operation, that Windsor's town council took interest in the hall, after it proved to be popular with the mainly lower-class masses. At this time, the Mayor's office issued a letter

[43] Ibid., 49.
[44] Windsor Town Council Minutes, September 24, 1907. It is noted in the council minutes that because the theatre is operated by a benevolent society that it could operate in the town with a free license. The normal cost for a theatre operation in the town was $1 a night.
[45] Ibid.

of complaint to the operators of the theatre regarding its supposedly unsafe conditions, as brought about by the audience.

Specifically, the letter stated that the audience crowded the hall's entrance, which was a concern since such crowding would block the exits in an emergency. The letter further threatened that if action was not taken to ensure free exit from the hall and proper control over the crowds, then the organization's motion picture licence would be revoked[46]—as noted above, a common recourse for governments wanting to control modern motion picture audiences. The similarity between this political discussion and the discussion that had taken place three years earlier on the pages of the New Glasgow newspaper lies in the complainants' understanding of the composition of the audiences. The mass appeal of the entertainment was at the heart of the complaint in both cases, as these crowds were thought to be without the control and reserve that was expected within the community.

The Crystal Hall in Amherst faced similar complaints when it was transformed into a popular continuous motion picture theatre in September 1907. Located in the centre of downtown Amherst, Crystal Hall was surrounded by churches, inns, stores, and offices. Like the Dreamland Theatre in Windsor and McNeil Hall in New Glasgow, Crystal Hall had served the community in another incarnation—in this case, a multi-purpose music hall offering vaudeville and stage entertainment—before it had become a dedicated motion picture theatre. There had been no safety concerns about the crowding of the theatre when Oscar Wilde had lectured there in 1882 or when the Ethel Tucker Company played there with the cinephotograph projector in 1897.[47] Nor were any safety concerns voiced only three months

[46] Windsor Town Council Minutes, January 28, 1908.
[47] "The Ethel Tucker Co.," *The Daily News* (Amherst), July 8, 1897, 1.

before, in June 1907, when a show of continuous motion pictures accompanied by illustrated songs was attempted there for the first time in the community's history.[48]

After the theatre became dedicated to motion pictures and gained popular success, however, the editors of the Amherst newspaper, *The Daily News*, took notice of the seemingly dangerous threat that the crowding of the theatre's front entrance posed. Despite not having patronized the theatre since its name change, the editors of *The Daily News* believed that the crowded entryway would keep people from fleeing to safety if a fire ignited within. In particular, the editors cited the potential risks that existed when crowds of people were entering and exiting the theatre at the same time. Since the motion pictures were played continuously, a changeover of the audience occurred at least twice an evening at Crystal Hall, and several times on Saturdays. According to the editors of *The Daily News*, the problem was that the building had only one entrance, used for both entry and exit, and there resulted an alarming "*crush* at the doors" when the audience changed over.[49] In their opinion, it was only a matter of time before there was a disaster resulting in injury or death.

However, before the venue had become a continuous motion picture theatre, there had been no concerns voiced about the safety of the entrance. As in New Glasgow and Windsor, at issue for the Crystal Hall was the changing composition of the audience, which now included the "always present gang of fresh youths, too old to kiss their mother and too young to kiss anyone else." It was these youths who were viewed as the problem by the newspaper's editors, as they were immature and unable to restrain themselves from pushing the other patrons—

---

[48] "Opera House," June 24, 1907, 3. This transformation of an existing theatre into a nickel theatre was common throughout the rural and small urban communities in North America. See Kathryn H. Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 47-75.

[49] "Crystal Hall", *The Daily News* (Amherst) September 3, 1907, 8. Emphasis added.

namely, women and children—in the "most indiscriminate manner."[50] Clearly, to *The Daily News* editors, the Amherst motion picture audience was "socially combustible" due to its modern makeup. Such patronizing remarks clearly show that despite the fact that the paper ran motion picture theatre advertisements, moviegoers were not viewed as part of the newspapers' readership. Likely they were considered to be too immature and uninterested in the welfare of the community to read the newspaper.

The solution offered by *The Daily News*'s editors, aside from the obvious alterations to the entrance and exit of the theatre, was that a special policeman be assigned to the theatre to clear the crowds and keep order on the sidewalk as the audience was waiting to enter the theatre after the previous show. More illumination at the exit was also suggested to prevent impending disaster. Within a month the owners of the theatre had responded to the editors' complaint, going so far as adding a heated waiting room to the entrance so that moviegoers could wait in comfort for the previous audience to exit the space.[51]

As the public and political discussions surrounding McNeil Hall, the Dreamland Theatre, and Crystal Hall demonstrate, by the time permanent motion picture theatres were a fixture in the Maritimes, many Maritimes communities were concerned about the safety of these venues. Importantly, there is no indication that any of these concerns had to do with the content of the motion pictures or any otherwise moral concerns. Rather, the concerns expressed

---

[50] *Ibid*. Social fears of youth is a topic that has been of great interest for researchers of social history. Initially, social reformers like Jane Addams wrote and spoke in fear of the danger to social mores due to modern cities and youth culture. In particular, her 1909 work *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* was particularly influential. More investigation on this topic can be viewed below and in Chapters 2 and 5. See also: Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early-Twentieth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), Michael Aronson's, *Nickelodeon City: Pittsburgh at the Movies, 1905-1929* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008) and Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers & Leisure in an American Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Within the region, see: Lafferty, Fingard and Morton.

[51] *The Daily News* (Amherst), October 25, 1907, 3.

were all for physical safety, and many of these had been directly informed by the disastrous outcome of the Iroquois Theatre fire in Chicago in 1903. Potential solutions to these safety concerns, particularly regarding crowding of theatre exits, targeted not only safer theatre design, but also better crowd management and increased official supervision to neutralize the "socially combustible" audience. Indeed, in all of these cases, controlling the unrefined modern masses that were particularly drawn to the motion pictures was the real focus of the commentaries. Indicative of this modern-minded class-based focus was the patronizing tone of the publications when the topic of motion picture theatres was raised. It was the motion picture audience that was a public danger according to the editors, and without official interference, they were destined to bring a disaster.

EDUCATING HOMETOWN AUDIENCES: THE MARITIMES APPROACH TO IMPROVING THE SAFETY OF MOTION PICTURE THEATRES

The discussions around the Dreamland Theatre and Crystal Hall were taking place in the months immediately preceding a fatal theatre fire Ontario. In 1908, a dedicated motion picture theatre in St. Catharines, Ontario, caught fire when the film ignited, killing the young projectionist.[52] Communities throughout that province reacted in a predicable manner, with newspapers and politicians calling for reviews of the safety of motion picture theatres. Because the projector had caused the death of the projectionist in St. Catharines, and was believed to have been the cause of 171 deaths in a disastrous fire at the Rhoads Opera House in Boyertown, Pennsylvania, only a few months before (though subsequent investigations proved

[52] Moore, 45.

otherwise[53]), many concluded that these dangerous machines had to be better regulated through legislation.[54]

In Ontario, as in many other highly urbanized districts throughout North America, regulations had already long been in place regarding fire safety in theatres by that point. However, these early adopted safety regulations—many of which had been reviewed and fortified following the Iroquois Theatre fire at the end of 1903—proved insufficient to contain a blaze ignited by the explosive mixture of cellulose nitrate, incandescent lamps, and electricity. Other regulated measures such as the installation of asbestos curtains, outward swinging doors, and illuminated exits also appeared to be insufficient in totally preventing further theatre disasters in dense urban areas—or at least this was how the debate was framed in Ontario in 1908. This is not surprising, for as discussed above, the "socially combustible" dimension of theatre safety was just as important as the fire safety element—especially in North America's largest cities. However, fire safety remained the primary rationale for foraying into the policing of both the safety and social aspects of motion picture theatres in Ontario.[55]

Although many influential Maritimes citizens spoke out about the safety of motion picture theatres—especially regarding the behaviour of modern and immature motion picture audiences—it seems that many Maritimes communities remained comparatively blasé about regulating audiences to maintain control. As was the case with McNeil Hall, Dreamland Theatre, and Crystal Hall, discussed above, many Maritimes communities saw increased

[53] Smither, 2002, 433.
[54] Moore, 45-46.
[55] Moore, 45-73

education, not necessarily more regulation, as the way to disarm "socially combustible" audiences.

In North America's most urbanized areas such as New York, Chicago, and Toronto, the threat that motion picture audiences posed was especially acute. This difference was perhaps due to the fact that immigrant populations made up a large proportion of these metropolises' motion picture audiences. This immigrant component likely only added to the already present anxieties over the threats that "uncivilized" motion picture audiences posed.[56] While immigrant populations were considered especially "uncivilized" and needed to be particularly regulated and controlled, it seems as if the relatively homogeneous Maritimes audiences were thought to need primarily education.

Similar to most other regions in North America, the audiences in the Maritimes were perceived to be comprised of mostly women and children, as well as young men, as the reports from Windsor and Amherst indicate. However, one major difference in Maritimes audiences as compared to those of New York, Toronto, Chicago, or Pittsburgh was the distinct lack of a major immigrant population—a population that, to the modernized way of thinking, was in particular need of regulation and policing.[57]

Although Maritimes populations were certainly in flux during the industrializing period, it was largely due to intra-regional movements, not immigration.[58] Beginning in the 1870s and extending well into the new century, there was a de-population of the rural areas of the Maritimes as the region faced massive economic changes along with increased urbanization and emigration to Western Canada. This widespread shift from rural to urban life meant a

---

[56] Ibid.
[57] See, for example: Fuller, *At the Picture Show*; Fuller-Seeley, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood*; Aronson and Rosenzweig.
[58] Larry McCann, "1890s: Fragmentation and the New Social Order," in Forbes and Muise, 139.

population boom to the industrializing towns of the Maritimes, though these new inhabitants were not considered to be "immigrants" and were not looked upon with the same level of suspicion and fear that was present towards newcomers in the heavily urbanized regions of Canada and the United States.[59] Indeed, many Maritime communities were not openly concerned about the racial or ethnic composition of the audiences, in part because the citizens of smaller communities like New Glasgow and Amherst still felt that they were connected to their fellow citizens through homogeneous composition.[60] This further indicates the marginalization and ill-treatment of the visible minorities in the Maritimes. Native communities, Black populations and Acadians do not appear in the public discourse in the region at this time.[61] The perception of homogeneity that the press projected was inclusive only of the dominant, Anglo, white community. This was generally true despite the obvious distinctions in religion and ancestry within these supposedly connected communities.[62] In Maritimes motion picture theatres, audiences were generally not considered to be "other," as shown by the *Eastern Chronicle*'s focus on how the very 'Maritimes-ness' of New Glasgow audiences would help avert a disaster.

The diversity of the Maritime Provinces during the transitional eras between 1907 and 1917 is a topic that has been on the periphery of many social histories of the region. As

---

[59] For my work on Truro, see: Gregory Canning, "Moving Pictures at the Opera House: The Introduction of Motion Pictures to the Town of Truro, Nova Scotia, 1897-1914," in *Rain/Drizzle/Fog: Film and Television in Atlantic Canada*, ed. Darrell Varga (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2009), pp.47-66. For examples of the American immigrant populations and their effects on the motion picture industry, see Aronson and Rosenzweig.
[60] Research performed on the temperance movement in the Maritime Provinces supports this view of connectedness within many of the small communities in the region. See, Davis, in McCann, 125-134.
[61] French Acadians, the Black community, the aboriginal populations, and any non-white immigrants are absent in the historical record pertaining to film exhibition in between 1896 and 1919. There is no mention of attempts of any Maritime theatre attempting to create a space, separate or inclusive, for any population aside from the dominant Anglo population. There is evidence of the indirect influence that the Afro-Acadian population could exert on film exhibition, something detailed in Chapter 5, below in the banning of *The Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915) in Nova Scotia.
[62] Reid, 94.

indicated in Chapter Five, below, the Black population in the Maritimes was centered in and around Halifax, with very limited dispersion outside this metropolis. According to the 1911 census of Canada, 6,541 men, women and children who self-identified as black resided in Nova Scotia, while 1,079 lived in New Brunswick and only 81 were counted in Prince Edward Island.[63] Acadians, while more numerous, were similarly ignored in the public press in relation to film exhibition. Aboriginal populations were similarly marginalized, as they also do not appear in the public discourse about film exhibition from this time.[64] It has only been in recent historical work that these absences have been addressed, though not in film exhibition. This is not because historians are not interested in these populations in regards to this topic, but because the historical record is absent. Minorities appear to have been not included in the audience of motion picture theatres, either as a segregated population or as a periphery audience.

Perhaps due to this lack of immigrant population, the discussions that took place in the Maritimes following the 1908 St. Catharines fire and Boyertown disaster were not as urgent as they were elsewhere, such as in Ontario. For instance, in April, 1909, when the Chatham, New Brunswick town council requested that new exits be placed in that town's Masonic Hall, which had recently been converted into the Happy Half Hour continuous motion picture theatre, the

---

[63] *The Canada Year Book, 1929: The Official Statistical Annual of the Resources, History, Institutions and Social and Economic Conditions of the Dominion* (Minister of Trade and Commerce, Ottawa, 1929), 109-114. Harvey Whitfield comments on the absence of historical work on the African community in the Maritimes outside the geographic location of Halifax County and the city of Halifax, noting that the experience for blacks in Saint John or Charlottetown could not have been a mirror to that of the larger, *more diverse* metropolis. Harvey Whitfield, "Review Essays: Reviewing Blackness in Atlantic Canada and the African Atlantic Canadian Diaspora," *Acadiensis* 37 (2008): 130-139. Suzanne Morton as well comments on these numbers, indicating the misrepresentation of the population in the statistical record. Suzan Morton, "Separate Spheres in a Separate World: African-Nova Scotian Women in late-19th-Century Halifax County," *Acadiensis* 22 (1993): 63.

[64] Similar to Black populations in the Maritimes, Acadian populations are also marginalized in the English historical record for the decades studied. Despite a sizable population (51,746 in Nova Scotia, 98,611 in New Brunswick and 13,117 in PEI according to the 1911 census), they are rarely mentioned in the English press.

editors of Chatham's *The World* saw this discussion as being far more urgent than the town council appeared to be making of it. According to the editors, instead of ordering that the exits be corrected under threat of fine or license revocation, the council said that if the changes were not made, the licence might be suspended at some point in the future. "This reminds us of the indulgent father's warning to his boisterous children—'if you don't stop your noise in an hour, papa will tell you that you'll be spanked if you don't keep still.'"[65] Perhaps the community of Chatham did not take the discussion of proper exits as seriously as some other North American communities where audiences were more suspicious and "other" because in Chatham, the audience—though composed of modern moviegoers, including immature young men—were also members of the white community, conforming to the contemporary racist assumptions regarding white and non-white audiences.

Similarly, in Charlottetown, where there was a history of motion picture fire dating back to the Falconwood incident, very little apprehension surfaced regarding motion pictures at this time, even though the theatre fires in St. Catharines and Boyertown both made headlines on the Island. In fact, the St. Catharines fire was dismissed by one Charlottetown newspaper, *The Daily Patriot*, as an event unlikely to happen in Charlottetown.[66] According to the article, this was because the projector involved in the Ontario fire was operated by a combustible gasoline engine, not electricity, the latter of which powered the projectors in the Charlottetown theatres. Discussions about the safety of motion picture theatres in the community did not reach the Charlottetown papers until a full year later. Even then, there was no mention of the dangerous effect that uncivilized and immature audiences could have. Instead, as can be seen by the *Eastern Chronicle*'s conclusion that education of the audience was the best solution for

[65] "A Town Council Joke," *The World* (Chatham), April 7, 1909, 1.
[66] Moore, 45-47. "Another Panic in Theatre," *The Daily Patriot*, January 16, 1908, 1.

McNeil Hall, there was continued emphasis on the education of Charlottetown motion picture audiences to ensure the safety of the community.

For instance, when Charlottetown's Fairyland Theatre opened its doors as a dedicated motion picture theatre within the Opera House on September 13, 1907, the audience was not only asked to take note of the improved exits, but was also given instructions on the proper way to exit the theatre. Furthermore, in the theatre's opening announcement published in the city's *Examiner*, the rules governing the theatre were clearly outlined for the citizens of Charlottetown—namely, that all those entering or exiting the building were to do so on the right hand side to "avoid crowding."[67]

As evidenced by *The Daily Patriot*'s assertion that the Boyertown disaster could never be replicated in Charlottetown, it seemed that many citizens believed that passively educating the audience was all that was needed to prevent the disasters that fell upon theatres in other communities farther afield. Government legislation appeared to be unnecessary, as many Maritimes businesses and communities were willing, with some prodding, to make the necessary changes to their venues on their own and to educate their audiences about safety. What's more, in addition to educating their audiences, some motion picture theatre operators in the Maritimes were beginning to fight back against the widespread perception that motion picture audiences needed to be controlled in the first place. In part due to the increased education of modern Maritimes audiences about how to properly behave in public spaces such as motion picture theatres, along with the racist assumptions regarding the perception that Maritimes motion picture audiences were generally longstanding Maritimers and not "immigrants," the commentary directed against motion picture theatres in the Maritimes was

[67] "Fairyland," *The Daily Examiner* (Charlottetown), September 13, 1907, 1.

relatively moderate as compared to New York, Chicago or Toronto. The perception about the dangers of motion picture theatres (and their audiences) was tempered even further in the Maritimes as theatre owners increasingly began to speak out on behalf of the relative safety of these popular modern venues—especially when their own level-headed citizens were the patrons.

In January 1909, Charlottetown's Market Hall Theatre came under scrutiny following the annual Scotch Concert. The Market Hall Theatre occupied the third floor of the Market Building, a predominantly stone structure that had been built in 1904 to replace the previous Market Hall which had been lost to fire in 1902 (Figure 3-5).[68] The upper floor of the Market Building was devoted to the opera house, called Market Hall Theatre, which was a multi-purpose theatre that could seat over 1,300 people. The hall also operated as a motion picture theatre under the name New Wonderland Theatre. Not surprisingly, when it came under scrutiny in 1909, it was the safety of the entrances—particularly if there were to be a panic—that came under fire.

Figure 3-4: Market Building theatre entrance. In this undated photo The Strand sign over the doorway illustrates the placement of the theatre entrance on the ground floor while the theatre was on the upper floor of the building. Vintage Charlottetown Facebook page, November, 2012.

In 1909, the Market Hall Theatre's annual Scotch Concert included a presentation of moving pictures for the first time, with the films showing the Scottish Highlands and the

[68] The architect W.C. Harris, whose design was selected for the hall, was the designer of many of the churches on the Island. "At the Market Last Evening", *The Daily Examiner* (Charlottetown), September 15, 1904, 1, 5.

Caledonian Canal. The concert had been expected to draw a large crowd, and that expectation was met. The review of the concert in the following day's *Daily Examiner* opened with an illustration of just how crowded the venue had become: "Such an intelligent, good humored, determined-to-get-there crowd as filled, pushed, and squeezed along the broad hallway last evening, delivered tickets to Mr. McDonald at the narrow doorway, and finally emerged, one by one into our grand and brilliantly lighted Market Hall, is rarely seen in Charlottetown."[69] Particularly, the narrow stairway and hall which led to the entrance of the theatre was the issue that caused a few concerned citizens to complain that the Market Hall was unfit for large gatherings.

However, not unlike the editors of New Glasgow's *Eastern Chronicle*, the editors of the *Daily Examiner* tempered this opinion by stating that they believed that an audience from Charlottetown contained "sufficient intelligence" not to fall into a panicked state and rush the doors without regard for life or limb.[70] However, they went on to advocate for an additional stairway to be built to prevent the "undignified and unpleasant crush" that ensued as the audience entered and exited a show. While it was implied that such a "crush" would be disastrous in a panic, the readers were reminded that the Market Building was a stone structure, not prone to fires. It also stated that an audience with "level heads" could safely exit in the unlikely event of a fire, so that people needed not be panicked about the safety of "our" Market Hall—a word choice that highlights how this audience was familiar and homegrown.[71] While this commentary shares a lot in common with the discussions taking place in New Glasgow in

[69] "Burn's Anniversary B Grand Entertainment," *Ibid*., January 26, 1909, 1.
[70] *Ibid*., "The Stairway Question," January 27, 1909, 2.
[71] Ibid.

1904, the response of the theatre's owner to fight back against the perceived threat of motion picture audiences sets it apart.

The following day in the *Daily Examiner*, New Wonderland Theatre's manager, a Mrs. Hogg, reiterated that the hall was "as fire-proof inasmuch as any building can be made so," and also mentioned that the venue's projector was placed in an airtight box, closed off completely from the audience and suspended above the hall. Hogg compares the safety of the theatre with that of the churches, schools, rinks, and other public sites in Charlottetown, arguing that any place where large numbers of people congregated could "prove a veritable fire trap" should a panic ensue.[72] Should the New Wonderland be under suspicion for its safety, so too should all public buildings in the city. She further noted that the concert's audience was unlike the typical audience at her motion picture shows, where people "come and go all the time"—not in a *crush*—and where the theatre could be emptied in less than five minutes.

USING EDUCATION TO REVERSE MOTION PICTURE–RELATED ANXIETIES IN THE MARITIMES

Mrs. Hogg was not the only theatre manager who was active in attempting to prove that her theatre was safe from the dangers of projector fires. Other theatre managers also spoke out on behalf of the safety of projectors when they were properly used. Most often this was done through a written description of the projector, or through being transparent about the kind of projector being used and the name of the manufacturer.[73] Maritimes theatre managers also commonly advertised the advantages of the devices, including the flickerless quality of the images, the modernity of the machine, and the safety features it offered.

---

[72] "The Market Hall," *The Daily Examiner* (Charlottetown), January 28, 1909, 1.
[73] This was the common practice when a new theatre was opened or a new projector installed in a theatre. For examples, see "New Picture Machine at Fairyland," *Journal* (Summerside), February 19, 1908, 1; "Truro's New Picture House," *Daily News* (Truro), August 2, 1910, 1.

The Empress Theatre in Amherst decided to take the introduction of new projectors to its dedicated motion picture theatre a step further, both to allay fears and to encourage curiosity about motion pictures among the audience. When the new projectors were installed in February, 1912, the event coincided with the introduction of the "Our Weekly Dramatic Supplement" feature in the *Daily News* (Figure 3-6). This new advertising feature was thereafter used by the two allied theatres in town, the Empress and the Gem theatres, both owned by F.G. Spencer, to promote the films being offered and to inform the public about the educational and moral importance of motion pictures.[74]

Among the items placed in this premiere edition of the "Our Weekly Dramatic Supplement" was a piece entitled "An Antidote to Panics in the Theatre," quoted from New York's *The Moving Picture World*. The article argued that audiences could avoid the chaos of a theatre fire with through education about electrical matters, which it was believed the theatre management could supply. The editors of the supplement concluded the article by stating that "Amerstonians" would now comprehend why the manager of the Empress had long taken to the stage prior to showings to educate audiences on this topic. In fact, the next article in the series informed readers that that weekend's shows would include the opportunity for the audience to view the machines in person, as well as the opportunity for the projectionist to explain the operation of the machines and, in particular, to illustrate their safety features. The hope was that the audience would "understand the machine *and* the film" as they appeared on stage simultaneously.[75]

---

[74] Although both theatres in Amherst were owned by Spencer, it must be noted that they appear to have been the only theatres in this chain that published a theatre guide such as this. Halifax, Yarmouth, Saint John, Moncton, Amherst, Truro, Chatham, and Sackville (NB) all had theatres owned by Spencer, though all these communities had separate advertising campaigns.

[75] "An Interesting Feature," *Daily News* (Amherst), February 17, 1912, 5. Emphasis added.

AMHERST DAILY NEWS: SATURDAY FEBRUARY 17 1912 PAGE FIVE

:-: OUR WEEKLY DRAMATIC SUPPLEMENT :-:

THE MANY POSSIBILITES OF THE PHOTOPLAY

A Writer in the Ladies Home Journal Says the Wholesale Condemnation of Motion Pictures is Absolutely Wide of the Point.

The following article is from the Ladies' Home Journal and should prove interesting reading to all interested in the possibilities of the moving picture.

"It is amazing how the heterodoxy of man offers us some marvellous invention charged to the brim with possibilities for our good, and then how immediately we pervert its use, abuse its purpose, create an unbearable condition, and then raise two voices about it in condemnation. Condemnation, mind you, for things itself gloriously full of possibilities which, by its wrong use, we ourselves have perverted.

Hundreds of parents, for example, are willing to this magazine (The Ladies' Home Journal) endorsing the motion-picture shows that have sprung up like mushrooms all over the country. And why? Because, they say, the films shown are either trivial or border on the vulgar. Therefore the motion-picture show is all more 'to remove to our young,' and it must be stopped." But, what these good folks overlook is the very important fact that no other educational factor so fraught with tremendous possibilities has ever appeared in the world's history as the motion picture. The real trouble is not with the motion picture, for we do not object to it when it is rightly used in lectures and traditions, but with its abuse. If, for example, the school and the church were as alert as the theater both would long ago have adopted the motion picture as an accepted adjunct to their work. That the motion-picture film is destined to play a tremendous part in all educational, religious and social uplift work admits of no discussion. The trouble is that the agencies that should use the tremendous value in the motion picture are lagging behind, while the alert partner in the public amusement line ago saw its value for his purpose, and is reaping the harvest of his discernment.

WHERE THE TROUBLE LIES.

Meantime, while Church and school are making up their minds the motion-picture show around the corner is busy every night, and, I believe, as not to condemn the motion picture itself, but to see that the right kind of films are made part of the program that are seen by thousands of our young people. There are good pictures, excellent films that are educative and uplifting in their character, and if the people of every town will insist to the managers of the local motion-picture show that one or two good films shall be given each night, along with those of lighter vein, they will be given. The business of a manager of a motion-picture show or any other kind of show is not to offend the people of his town; he is there to get their patronage, and if he is shown a demand for the educational picture in his program he can be depended upon to respond to that demand.

But wholesale condemnation of the Motion Picture is absolutely wide of the point.

We must make up our minds that it has come to stay, and if we cannot reform the local church to give the thousands of young people who attend them the right kind of pictures, then the church, school or club must wake up and use the motion-picture film and put up an opposition show, as has already been done in some towns with excellent results.

No. 4 is with many of the things that we are so quick to condemn. Magnificently full of the most potent possibilities are they of tomorrow. They are at our door. Shall the motion-picture stand, and they are in our homes like the "talking machine" and the piano attachment, begging us to use their rightful uses, perishing to overflowing with the richest possibilities for ourselves and our children. Let us cultivate this rightful understanding, and there will be no occasion for condemnation. For what we condemn is of our own making, of our own misuse and abuse.

"Beverley" and the Beverly hat and veil will be the attraction at the Empress when Miss Eleanor Woodruff, leading lady with Nat Goodwin and Cyril Scott in the "Prince Chap" will be seen in the title role of Beverly Calhoun.

It is a fine cream hat of heavy white beaver with a broad flat brim. Around the edge about an inch and a quarter wide is a band of pale blue velvet, and cleverly draped over the crown so that it falls over the sides is a beautiful silk veil in pale blue, the whole forming a creation, that, though simple is more than beautiful.

AN ANTIDOTE TO PANICS IN THEATRES

An Interesting Article From a Recent Edition of "The Western Electrician" Worthy of Careful Perusal.

An article in a recent issue of "The Western Electrician" is well worth reprinting. It enters to the cause of nuisance of the general public in most things electrical. We believe it ought to be circulated by the exhibitors among their patrons, for little aid is to be expected in enlightening the people in such matters, as far as the daily press is concerned. Here is the article in full:

"While reason can hardly be said to hold sway in time of a panic, and though the record undoubtedly rushes out of a theater at a cry of "Fire" following the kindling out of a fuse, it does seem that a little wider and surer knowledge of electrical matters would decrease the loss of life from such causes. A recent and notable instance is that of the fire scare which occurred last Saturday at Canonsburg, Pa.

"In that case the cause of the panic was the blowing out of a fuse in the moving picture booth.

"Had a fair proportion of those present been personally informed by reading or experience as to the nature of such an occurrence, the frequent booth construction required by the National Board of Fire Underwriters and the absence of any danger, the panic would no doubt have been averted.

"There seems to be a rather general lack of knowledge about electrical matters by those not directly connected with some branch of the industry.

"There is no way absolutely to prevent the frenzied rush of people that follows a flash, but to acquaint them gently thoroughly with the cause would at least lessen danger. As the number of those familiar with the harmlessness of such a flash and with electricity in general increase, there will be more faith in the safety of modern appliances."

The moral to be drawn from the fire at Canonsburg is the necessity of making the public acquainted with the electric devices and appliances commonly used in connection with running a moving picture entertainment. Ignorance is the parent of fear. You cannot expect the public to enlighten itself, but give them a few plain facts that they can easily understand and digest and one of the most fruitful of all causes of panic will have been effectually removed.

The above is from the Moving Picture World. With this in mind Amusementdom will understand why the manager of the Empress has in the past, and will occasionally in the future take up a few minutes periodically on the subject.—Editor.

Dante's Inferno is Truly Great

The Boston Times referring to Pathe's Inferno has the following:—

"It was one of the greatest minds of all ages that conceived and gave to posterity Dante's Inferno; and it is a conception of genius that staged and photographed that Divine tragedy. All who were at the Grand last evening were amazed, awed, and powered by the boldness of conception, fidelity to the ideals of the author, and the marvellous accuracy and beautiful treatment of the pictures as many times magnified and thrown upon the screen. The listener must feel that this reproduction of the Inferno marked the supreme triumph of picture photography.

"It is impossible to describe the Inferno to those who have never read Dante, and to those familiar with the grandest work of that great genius to see the films is an anticlimax. At the Grand was to view all the wilderness, all the wanderers, all the beauties, as well as the horrors of that marvellous conception of the heart.

"The Grand held a fair sized audience but many persons were debarred from attending by the fear that something distasteful or offensive would be depicted; but far from that every feature of the film production was in absolute good taste, and could not offend the susceptibilities of the most fastidious. All the films have passed the most rigorous censure, and in Montreal, Quebec and other cities the clergy attend the presentation of Dante's Inferno for their educational value, as well as for their special benefit, entertainment. The pictures as thrown upon the screen are explained by a lecturer, who is thoroughly acquainted with his subject, evidently a Dante scholar, and this contributes greatly to the interest and pleasure. As one sees these wonderful scenes unfold, he cannot but marvel at the great genius, the infinite labor and the practical expense taken to prepare for the photographers in the best place, and then to the perfection and beauty which motion photography has here brought."

Dante's Inferno will be at the Empress Monday afternoon and night only. Matinee prices 15 and 25 cts. Evening prices 25, 35 and 50 cents.

A PROPHECY

(From the New York Times)

According to an English actor this happened in a small theatre in a small town in provincial England, where a troupe of barnstormers were playing to meagre audiences.

The villain dragged the shrieking heroine down stage to the footlights and in her ear he hissed:

"Anyone else?"

"No, go'on!" interrupted the fair occupant of the gallery—"we'll manage all right; but you will be waitin' a night!"

You see the Czar upon his throne,
The peasant girl shed
Castles, lives, dens and diver
Upon the screen revealed.
The mighty battles of the world,
The wars, and foe 'gainst foe,
The Kaiser's hand, the lone brigand,
All in the picture show.

We see by the New York Clipper that the Nestle Sisters, the trio of girls, who were such a hit at the Empress, are now appearing at one of the theatres in Rockland, Maine.

"Valley Farm"

The following is the cast of characters for "Valley Farm":—

Harold Belridge, A young New Yorker—Elton Hamilton.

Perry Deane, a son of the soil—Dan Sartenia.

David Holbrook, a New York Lawyer—Robert McKim.

Silas Holbrook, owner of Valley Farm—Robert Berry.

Aaaron Keep, a clock taker—M. Rochal.

Jennings, a servant of the Belridge Mansion—Hedley Holroyd.

Betty Holbrook, daughter of Silas Holbrook—Grace Hazard.

Isabel Carter, niece to David Holbrook—Dorothea Berkman.

Mrs. Belridge, Harold's mother—Elvia Smith.

Alvira Holbrook, sister of Silas—Mabel Seel.

Lize Ann Tucker, who borrows but never gives—Ora Harkal.

Victoria Tucker, local girl on the Farm—Annie Blagsworth.

How Would This Work For Amherst

"Nagasan in Motion Pictures" is the caption suggested for an interesting series of views which will be seen in Nagasan within a short time and will emphasize in a most realistic manner the greatness of Nagasan as an industrial center and as a city of fine homes and splendid public buildings. Motion pictures will be taken of every phase of Nagasan life.

CHAUTAUQUA ASSEMBLY TO BUY MACHINE

Directors of the Palos Chautauqua Assembly, one of the oldest institutions of the kind in the United States will purchase a moving picture machine and the best films possible will be shown each afternoon and evening. Stories and educational subjects will be featured. The grounds are located on the Mississippi River, near Rhall, Ill., and the place is a favorite resort for 30 days.

The world's great hidden mysteries,
The wonders of the deep,
The sad, the glad, the good, the bad,
The ended and the cheap,
How marvellous the picture scenes,
How wonderful to know
And see the things just as they are
Shown in the picture show.

CAUGHT BETWEEN THE SEATS.

The audience in a Dorchester, Mass., moving picture theatre was recently given an entertainment aside from that on the screen, when one lady of generous proportions attempted to get in an inside seat, and neither of equal size stood up to allow her to pass. They stuck as a dead centre and it required five minutes' work on the part of the proprietor and others to pry them apart.

When the frost is on the window,
And the ice forms on the pail,
When the frigid breezes blowing
Carry forth a storm of hail,
Sisters old grandad's pantaloons are tire
Pull 'em over father's head,
Never mind what the weather,
Visit both the picture shows.

Sarah Bernhardt in Moving Pictures

It was good news that recently came from Paris—Sarah Bernhardt has consented to appear in Motion Pictures. The news is important for more than one reason. Not only shall we all have an opportunity to see this great actress, and not only will it be possible for our children's children to see her, but we are recording and perpetuating the dramatic art. Long after the voices of Caruso, Melba, Sembrich, Homer, and of Bernhardt, have been hushed, we shall continue hearing the phonograph records of them, and future teachers and artists will long remain under the influence of their methods for phrasing, interpretation and tone production. The only regret is that we have no records of the makers of Demosthenes, Shakespeare, Burke, Pitt, Webster, Kendall Phillips, Clay, Lincoln and others. And, if we were also fortunate enough to possess Motion Pictures of all the great historic characters as well as records of their voices, history would not only be more realistic and accurate, but we would be able to understand it better. Possibly the entrance of Bernhardt into the Motion Picture field will mark the beginning of a new era. Perhaps the public persons will soon realize that it is their duty not only to make history, but to record it in permanent form."

The Young-Adair Company, as well and favorably known in Amherst is now playing at the Grand Theatre, Worcester. The company is undoubtedly stronger this season that it has ever been before and they have a big line-up of specialties. They are booked for a return visit to Amherst for three days, commencing March 25th.

They will open a week's engagement at the St. Tony Opera House, Gardner, Monday the 19th, with their great Russian drama "Under the Rose's Paw."

Jinks—"So you're colored nearly picture the best?"

Blinks—"No, I like the ones best with the white folks and Indians."

An Interesting Feature

On Thursday, Friday and Saturday of next week, a short talk on the moving picture machine and its accessories will be given at the Empress. A new machine, which has just been purchased at the Empress Theatre, (or future use as he may be used) will be set upon the stage and to one side will be arranged a certain number so, but smaller, than the one regularly used. The film will be placed in the machine and shown upon the curtain in the ordinary way. The patrons of the house have an opportunity to see the machine and operator in action. While the film is being shown, a full explanation of the machine will be given. In this way the moving picture patrons will have an opportunity to understand the machine and its use.

The idea of this talk is that the Empress patrons may learn how it decides it is to believe that moving picture machines and films "EXPLODE." People are apt to tend to fires in theatres but generally talk each other because of their ignorance of the moving picture machine and the film. Don't fail to hear this interesting talk.

COMING NEXT WEEK

A. G. Delamater and William Norris Inc. will present their original Stockbridge Theatre Chicago production of George Barr McCutcheon's "Beverly" a dramatization of Mr. McCutcheon's most successful and popular novel, a "Beverley of Graustark" by Robert M. Baker at the Empress Theatre on Wed. Feb. 21st. As cast of the characters introduced in the novel appear in the play, a large and expensive cast as well as an exceptionally heavy scenic production is required for its proper presentation, and as the company appearing here have been engaged for the express purpose of playing an extended engagement at a leading Broadway Theatre, no expense has been spared either as to cast or scenic equipment. Tickets for the matinee performance 25 and 50 cents. Evening 25, 50, 75 and 1 00

A Suggestion to Mothers

To any fond mother who has acted as a photoplay, who chances to read this and if she is in doubt as to the moral influence of moving pictures upon her children, let us make this suggestion:—Don't believe all you read in the newspapers or all you hear from jackdaw gossips, but just ask your preacher or the teacher, or the Sunday School Superintendent or Mr. John Bradford to take your children to the Gem or the Empress just once and tell you their opinions. The management of these theatres is trying to keep in touch with the above mentioned people. Every picture is carefully selected. The theatre theatres are as clean as it is possible to keep them and the management is always ready to accept criticisms or suggestions.

With all this "educational talk we insist not forget that the photoplay theatre is a place of amusement and entertainment and when this amusement or entertainment can be procured in the form of pictures, which are educational, so much the better. The Empress and Gem are presenting all of the educational, industrial and travel films which it is possible to secure.

Go to School First.

The West Highlands school is now open and there is no reason why any boy in Amherst should not be at school, unless he is ill. The matinees at the Empress starts at 3.15 o'clock and the first half of the matinee is shown a second time. Therefore any boy or girl has plenty of time to get to the theatre and see the entire performance after school hours. It would please the management of the Empress much better to see the children come to the matinees after school than during school hours and if they cannot get to both, we would prefer that their education be not neglected. Send the children "to school."

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

Under this heading questions about theatricals or the people appearing in motion pictures will be answered each Saturday on this page. Address all questions to the Dramatic Editor of the Daily News, Box G, Amherst, N. S.

Here are answers to a few stock questions which are often asked:—

Yes, Miss Turner of the Vitagraph Company is married.

No, Mr. Costello is not Miss Taylor's husband. Nevertheless he is very real and has a large family. Sorry!

Figure 3-5: "Our Weekly Dramatic Supplement," *Daily News* (Amherst), February 17, 1912, p.5. This was the first edition of the short lived supplement to the *Daily News* and offered the "Antidote to Panics in Theatres."

The purpose of these expository shows was to educate the audience on the reality of the projector, as a way to instill knowledge of the device's general safety. Indeed, the theatre managers wanted Amherst audiences to know that "People are not killed by fires in theatre but generally kill each other because of their ignorance of the moving picture machine and the film."[76] By alleviating the audience's ignorance through removing the device from its fireproof box, where it was hidden, and placing it on the stage, the audience could both become familiar with the machine and, hopefully, mitigate their fear of the unknown. This particular event could even be viewed as a reversion to the very early novelty era of motion pictures, when projectors were toured as scientific marvels, and where it was the apparatus as much as the film that attracted audiences. Notably, by removing the veil of mystery and fear that surrounded these devices, the theatre management also likely hoped to create a larger and sustainable audience for their industry.

Indeed, audience education was already being viewed as the best means to prevent panics in Maritimes motion picture theatres. Therefore, it was no stretch that the Empress's management believed that if the educational approach was taken one step further, to educating audiences about how projectors operated safely when handled properly, they could dispel the panic that sometimes occurred among motion picture audiences. Overall, by transferring the responsibility for the disasters from the theatre over to the audience by way of various forms of education, theatre owners and communities alike were fighting back to not only mitigate the

[76] Ibid. It is also interesting that the two entertainments advertised in the bottom corners of the advertising page can be viewed as morally uplifting and educational productions. Both the Italian film *Dante's Inferno* (or *L'Inferno*, 1910) and the stage play, *Beverly of Graustark* are recognizable as productions that offer to the reading public a higher quality entertainment. For *L'Inferno*, see Rob King, "The Discourses of Art in Early Film, or, Why Not Rancière?" in *A Companion to Early Cinema*, ed. André Gaudreault, Nicolas Dulac, and, Santiago Hidalgo (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 141-162. For *Beverly of Graustark* see Amy Kaplan, "Romancing the Empire: The Embodiment of American Masculinity in the Popular Historical Novel of the 1890s," *American Literary History*, 2, 1990, 659-690.

dangers posed by modern motion picture theatres and modern audiences, but also to stake an ownership in the new social order of modernized communities.

Conclusion

As industrialization caused widespread urbanization, changes in class mobility, and alterations to traditional class-based social structures in the Maritimes, the entertainment landscape of Maritimes communities changed drastically. Suddenly, masses of women, children, and young males were flocking to motion picture theatres to participate in this form of entertainment that was suddenly available to them in modern Maritimes communities. As with all drastic changes affecting the Maritimes, this sudden popularity of motion picture theatres caused anxiety among many citizens, as particularly illustrated on the pages of community newspapers. These anxieties were primarily driven by the threat of fire and panic that these entertainments could incite, as exacerbated by news of international theatre disasters. This continent-wide displeasure towards theatres, felt mainly by the ruling classes, was also driven in part by the "socially combustible" nature of the modern theatre audiences, which represented a slice of the new social order of modern cities. It was, after all, the audience that was the danger, not the combustible projector or the flammable films. Importantly, there is no indication that any of these concerns had to do with the content of the motion pictures or any otherwise moral concerns. For Maritimes communities where this new social order included many "immature" young males but comparatively few "uncivilized" immigrants, the solution to mitigating theatre disaster was thought to lie in the education of the homegrown theatre audiences rather than in the stricter regulation and legislation of motion picture theatres.

CHAPTER 4 DISEASE TRANSMISSION AND THEATRES: CREATING REPECTABLE SPACES

> Truro's new moving picture house, "The Royal," will open on Friday night . . . A special ventilator has been installed in the roof and this in addition to the height of the ceiling, insures *pure air*.[1]

INTRODUCTION

Maintaining a clean theatre was one of the most important activities for a theatre manager during the transitional eras.[2] In this modern era of increased awareness in medical science of disease transmission, this responsibility included more than just sweeping the aisle and wiping the seats. In fact, managers were looking to assure potential audiences that they would not only be entertained by modern pictures, but that these entertainments would be enjoyed in a movie house that was free from possible contagions. Using awareness of modern medical science, theatre managers worked to create respectable places of business that could attract the most profitable audiences of middle-class men, women, and children.

In this chapter, the investigation into the dangers that motion picture theatres posed to audiences in the Maritimes will be expanded beyond concerns over fire safety and theatre exits, as illustrated in the previous chapter, to include disease transmission and public health. This expansion of the inquiry into the history of film exhibition in the Maritimes will further illustrate the growing comfort that Maritime citizens felt with elements of modernity as represented by motion picture theatres. Specifically, this chapter will examine how theatre

---

[1] "Truro's New Picture House," *Daily News* (Truro), August 2, 1910, 7. Emphasis added.

[2] The transitional eras in Canada have been defined as spanning from 1880 and 1920, and has been closely linked to the combined influences of urbanization and increased industrial manufacturing (E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, ed., *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto and Fredericton: University of Toronto Press and Acadiensis Press, 1993), 82-233. This period in history can also be termed as the 'modernist' era. In terms of motion pictures, the transitional eras of motion picture exhibition takes place within this wider epoch, although it begins in the Maritimes in 1907 with the establishment of nickelodeon theatres and transitions to the creation of respectable exhibition halls.

managers and owners responded to public concerns that unclean theatres could potentially transmit diseases, as well as how theatres offered a venue to raise awareness about syphilis, one of the leading public health concerns of the day, through the screening of the film *Damaged Goods* (American Film Company, 1915, lost). The chapter will conclude with an examination of how government and public health officials dealt with motion picture theatres during the health emergency of the influenza pandemic of 1918.

PUBLIC HEALTH IN THE MODERN AGE

During the transitional eras of motion picture exhibition, the scientific community and the general public alike were both gaining awareness about the spread and dangers of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, diphtheria, the flu, and small pox. This emerging knowledge not only challenged community health professionals and political leaders to protect populations and assist those who were ill, but also held the potential to adversely affect industries that relied on the convergence of the mass public in enclosed spaces.[3] Motion picture theatres were especially vulnerable to these dangers because of the need for crowds to enter the hall to obtain a profit.

As discussed in previous chapters, cinema and modernity have been strongly linked, both in metropolises and in less urban locations, through numerous academic investigations.[4]

---

[3] Included in these other industries is the "legitimate theatres," or those that maintained a stage and used motion pictures only rarely and department stores. Churches and some sports venues (the rare indoor ice rink or the curling rinks for instance) could also be included in this list, though these are not viewed as businesses.

[4] For example, film historians Ben Singer, Miriam Bratu Hansen, Tom Gunning, Michael Aronson and Kathryn H. Fuller-Seely have all placed significant focus on the connections between modernity and cinema in the context of early film exhibition. In these works, a direct correlation between the development of a conception of modernity in a community and the rise of public amusements, highlighted by the establishment of motion picture theatres, can be recognized. Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernism: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz, ed., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1995), Michael Aronson, *Nickelodeon City: Pittsburgh at the Movies, 195-1929* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008) and Kathryn H. Seeley, *At*

As motion pictures became a significant source of mass public amusement in North America, debates regarding the betterment of public health—along with concerns over communicable disease transmission—could be observed in most regions. As cinema has been directly linked to the emergence of "modern life," and as "modern life" has been linked with enhanced discussions of public health, an investigation into the connections between cinema and public health is important.

While discussions about the public health movement can sometimes be perceived on the periphery of film history discussions, only rarely has the movement been linked directly with the emergence of motion picture exhibition.[5] For instance, although he does not mention public health specifically, film historian Ben Singer does offer an opening for such a discussion. In his itemized listing of the "series of concomitant social phenomena" that converged to create modernity in the metropolis, it can be surmised that a concern with public health could be included in both the "broader implementation of efficient systems of . . . public surveillance" and in "rapid urbanisation and population growth."[6] Indeed, public health campaigns were a direct response to the conditions found in modern cities and towns that were experiencing increased population growth due to the effects of mature capitalism, which Singer highlights as a "central element of modernization."[7] Although Singer deals specifically with urban locations in the north-eastern United States, the effects that he lists can also be found in the less urban environments of Canada's Maritime Provinces.

---

the Picture Show: Small Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1996)

[5] Two studies in particular can be highlighted for their arguments in relation to the debates regarding the moral and physical health of cinema audiences: Charney and Schwartz and Kathryn H. Fuller-Seeley, ed. *Hollywood in the Neighborhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

[6] Singer, 21.

[7] *Ibid*.; and Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903) in *The Blackwell City Reader*, ed. Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (Oxford and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), p.12.

In Maritimes communities, like in other communities in North America, social reform movements (for example those inspired by the social gospel movement, which was a direct response to the social changes that were being experienced due to the modernization of the local economy: See Chapter 2 and 5) were primary drivers in the promotion of health reform. Public health can certainly be found among the concerns of social reform movements across North America, most famously in the work of Jane Addams and her battles over the conditions of the working classes living in the industrial slums of the United States.[8] Although Addams operated out of Chicago, her influence was felt throughout North America during the early Twentieth Century. References to Addams' influence on Canada's social reform and public health are as numerous as they are for the United States, a fact that demonstrates the near-homogeneous nature of the public health movement across North America during the transitional eras.[9]

In the history of Canadian social and moral reformation movements of the transitional eras, public health was considered to be a major pillar in the efforts to reform society. The reforms that were sought appear to be relatively uniform, with hopes of increasing the health, wellness, and happiness of those classes perceived as being underprivileged or uncivilized. For instance, in Mariana Valverde's *The Age of Light, Soap and Water*, it is offered that social and moral reform movements were greatly bolstered by the influence of the increasingly powerful

---

[8] For an autobiographical look at Addams' work specifically in public health movement, see Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1912) and The Residents of Hull House, *Hull House Maps and Papers: a presentation of nationalities and wages in a congested district of Chicago, together with comments and essays on problems growing out of the social conditions* (Boston: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1895).

[9] For illustrations of the influence of Addams on Canadian public health movements, see, Cathy James, "Reforming Reform: Toronto's Settlement House Movement, 1900-20," *Canadian Historical Review* 8 (2001): 55-90, Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 203-4, and Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

medical professions.[10] As the transitional eras progressed, newly professionalized medical doctors began to take the lead on social and moral restructuring—a role that had been previously held by religious leaders.

As medical professionals took to heading social and moral reform movements, they lent scientific legitimacy to discussions about urban change. This differed from the perspectives offered by previous (that is, religious) groups seeking to improve society, in that instead of basing their arguments within a Christian dialectic of good versus evil, these men (and occasionally women) spoke with a level of authority based in rational science, although their arguments still remained within a religious framework (in terms of linking the evils of unclean minds, or sinful thoughts, with the prevention of upward mobility). Arguments for social betterment were now based in "scientific evidence," yet there remained a dialectic of good versus evil.[11] It is no surprise that similar influences were at play in the Maritimes, for, as Cathy James has indicated, there was a measure of homogeneity among these social and moral reform movements throughout Canada and the United States.[12] In the Maritimes, a similar process could be observed as medical doctors gradually took the vanguard position in terms of public health and social reform.[13]

KEEPING MOTION PICTURE THEATRES "CLEAN"

The public health movement was born of the modern era, and its influence on how the public viewed shared spaces—including motion picture theatres—cannot be denied. In an

[10] Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).
[11] Jane Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (New York: Macmillan, 1909), 28. See also Valverde, 47.
[12] James, 3.
[13] Ian McKay, in Forbes and Muise, 194.

article regarding the perceived dangers that existed in motion picture theatres, printed in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1909, Dr. H. King argued that spitting was one major source of illness; moreover, this danger was heightened in theatres due to their apparently poor sanitary conditions, which he had witnessed firsthand in the nickel theatres he was familiar with in New Orleans. Yet sputum appears to be only one of a legion of issues that King took issue with in terms of the public health risks posed by motion picture theatres. According to the doctor, these "amusement resorts" were dens for filth and disease.[14]

King cited several other several health issues which he perceived as being the fault of the "cheap motion picture," including everything from eye strain to tuberculosis. Similar to the social and moral reformers of the day who were speaking out against motion picture theatres throughout the United States, King traced the cause of these public health concerns back to lower class audiences.[15] For King, these lower class audiences—attracted by the cheap ticket prices offered by the nickel theatres—took poor care of their health as compared to more respectable members of society.[16]

Fortunately, according to King, there were several tactics that theatre managers could employ in order to keep a clean theatre, including cleaning the hall every six hours, vacuuming the floors (a state-of-the-art technology at the time), posting signs explicitly prohibiting spitting, and employing proper ventilation systems—particularly leading-edge electric fans, which "dry the sputum with greater dispatch."[17] King also argued that regular government inspection was essential for keeping a handle on public health, as motion picture theatres (at

---

[14] Howard D. King, "Moving Picture Show: New Factor in Health Conditions," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, August 14, (1909): 519-520.
[15] For example, see: *n.*3 and *n.*4.
[16] King, 519.
[17] Ibid.

least in his view) could not be trusted to maintain an acceptable level of cleanliness without official supervision.

Although King was writing from New Orleans in the highly specialized *Journal of the American Medical Association*, his commentary (and others like it) had resonance in the non-medical communities of the Maritimes in the transitional eras. Maritimes theatre managers were well aware of the fact that their businesses relied on their positive reputation to survive, and a large part of this reputation was created through maintaining a "clean" movie house. Theatres needed to maintain a high level of engagement with their community in order to garner repeatedly high numbers of respectable customers (i.e., namely, women and children; see Chapter 2). Offering details to the public about the pains that theatres took to protect their audiences from germs and bacteria was generally viewed as one way in which these respectable audiences could be attracted to a theatre.

However, theatre managers often had a difficult time conveying the message that they operated "clean" movie houses that were disease free. In fact, the belief that motion picture theatres held the potential to spread disease was a widespread fear that had to be managed regularly by exhibitors, including those in the Maritimes. For instance, S.W. Dimlock's Opera House in Campbellton, New Brunswick, had been open for less than a month when he was applauded in the local newspaper for his quick action in expelling a patron who spat on the floor of his new movie establishment.[18] Dimlock took such firm action not just because this patron had soiled his theatre, but also because of the belief that spitting was one sure means of spreading disease in public spaces. The applause offered by the local newspaper for Dimlock's

[18] *The Events* (Campbellton), October 17, 1908, 1.

response shows that theatres that took overt steps towards keeping their public spaces "clean" were often rewarded by sought-after perceptions of respectability.

The public nature of these commercial enterprises appears to have heightened the responsibility placed on theatre owners and operators to create and maintain (at least the appearance of) a clean place of amusement. In Newcastle, when the Opera House was renovated in 1915 to present "a very clean appearance," the management made it clear to potential patrons through a newspaper advertisement that they would like to maintain this state.[19] The newly stated policy of the management was to fully enforce the by-law of the municipality—also a reflection of the public health movement during this era—which stated:

> No person shall spit or expectorate, or commit any nuisance on any of the walks or sidewalks of the town, or upon the floors of public buildings, or other public places within the town.
>
> . . . Any person who shall violate any of the provisions of this by-law, shall, on conviction thereof, be liable to a penalty not exceeding forty dollars, to be collected with cost of prosecution, in any court of competent jurisdiction, or such penalty in the case of particular offences as is, or shall hereafter be provided for, by statutory authority.[20]

The Opera House placed the full text of this by-law as part of its advertisement for its grand re-opening, and by so doing, it was clearly positioning itself as a respectable "public place" of amusement—and not simply a private place of business. By taking strides to maintain this designation, the Opera House was afforded the complete backing of the Town of Newcastle for the enforcement of what was, prior to this, an unpunishable offence in the

---

[19] "Opera House Given New Coat of Paint," *The Union Advocate* (Newcastle), February 24, 1915, 4
[20] *Ibid*.

theatre.[21]

Motion picture theatres were private businesses that required a public audience. They were private in that they were not owned or directly controlled by the government. Theatres—even those built by local governments—were independent of official interference or influence in their daily operation. Although managers and owners were still beholden to the regulations and laws that governed their industry, they were not required to operate in a certain way (e.g., in a "clean" way) by law. However, they could still be ordered closed by public officials.

Still, the public nature of film exhibition required that theatres attract and retain a public audience for the perpetuation of the business. Therefore, for the most part, theatres were self-regulating, and their success (or failure) was determined by the court of public perception. The Opera House voluntarily aligned itself with Newcastle's public health by-law in order to advertise to potential audiences that they were serious about maintaining a clean and orderly house, just as Dimock had evidently displayed when he threw out the expectorating patron in Campbellton. These occurrences were published and highlighted because of the theatres' desire to promote the cleanliness (and respectability) of their businesses.

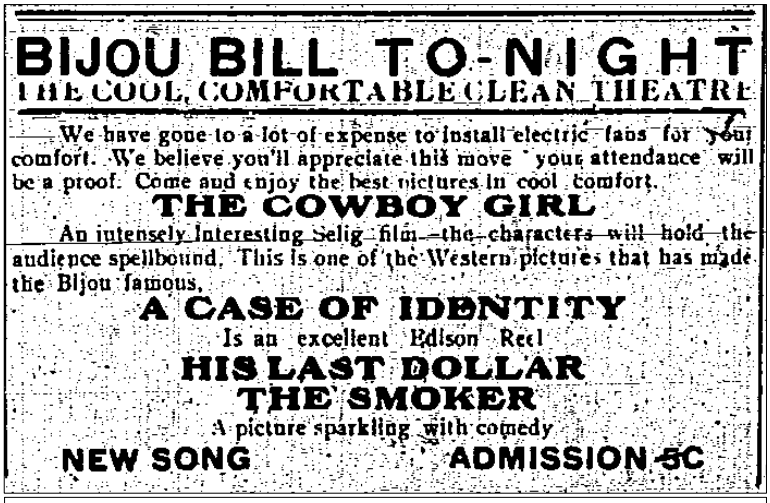

BIJOU BILL TO-NIGHT
THE COOL, COMFORTABLE CLEAN THEATRE
We have gone to a lot of expense to install electric fans for your comfort. We believe you'll appreciate this move your attendance will be a proof. Come and enjoy the best pictures in cool comfort.
THE COWBOY GIRL
An intensely interesting Selig film—the characters will hold the audience spellbound. This is one of the Western pictures that has made the Bijou famous.
A CASE OF IDENTITY
Is an excellent Edison Reel
HIS LAST DOLLAR
THE SMOKER
A picture sparkling with comedy
NEW SONG
ADMISSION 5C

Figure 4-1: In this advertisement for the Bijou theatre in Charlottetown, the comfort and cleanliness of the theatre is highlighted right below the theatre's name. Advertisement, *Daily Examiner* (Charlottetown), July 13, 1910, p.1.

[21] *Ibid*. This change in policy for the theatre coincides with an application by the aldermen of Newcastle that the town be incorporated and the Aldermen be elected representatives.

There was a direct connection between the respectability that theatre owners and managers desired and the message of comfort and cleanliness that they offered. This can be seen in theatre advertising, where statements of cleanliness can be found right alongside the name of the theatre, thereby highlighting the healthfulness of the theatre (even more so than the films shown on screen) as the venue's main draw (see Figure 4-1). This positioning is not surprising, as the main difficulty that motion picture exhibitors contended with was not the actual cleanliness of their businesses, but the public *perception* of cleanliness.

During the modern era, diseases were believed to spread easily in the closed confines of nickel theatres, where hundreds of bodies would be crammed together in a single hall. To make matters worse, the audiences in these theatres were viewed with suspicion by many in the public health movement for the same reasons as they were seen as being "socially combustible" by those concerned with public safety.[22] As seen above (Figure 4-1) in the case of the Bijou in Charlottetown, theatre managers and owners often used their advertising in an attempt to assure their potential audiences that their businesses were clean (and therefore respectable) places. Despite the care which theatre managers took in offering such assurances, this was a message that had to be consistently redressed.

EXPERT ADVICE ON MAINTAINING A "CLEAN" THEATRE: THE IMPORTANCE OF VENTILATION

To assist theatre owners in gaining the advantage of a "clean" movie house, the various publications of the motion picture trade press offered advice on how a theatre could best be maintained (as well as constructed) with public health in mind. One of the first books to offer

[22] For my arguments regarding common perceptions of the class of audiences in the Maritimes, see Chapter 3. See also Paul Moore, *Now Playing: Early Moviegoing and the Regulation of Fun* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 49.

both practical and technical advice to those who wished to run a motion picture theatre was F.H. Richardson's 1910 guide for theatre managers and operators, entitled *Motion Picture Handbook*.[23] Richardson, who was perhaps best known for his technical advice column published in the journal *Moving Picture World* (MPW) beginning in 1910, placed particular emphasis on the physical and mechanical aspects of theatre management—as opposed to his contemporaries Epes Winthrop Sargent and Samuel L. "Roxy" Rothapfel, who offered advice mainly on advertising and the more ephemeral aspects of theatre promotion in the MPW journal.[24]

Richardson's MPW column and 1910 book both focused on practical advice for theatre operators, offering commentary on the mechanical and technical aspects of the industry. For instance, his expert advice outlined the most profitable ways that a motion picture theatre could be established, either from the ground up or through the conversion of an existing building. He also offered advice on the a motion picture theatre, with whole chapters detailing topics such as the electrical requirements for a theatre, the various makes of projectors, and the proper care of films. For Richardson, a financially successful theatre was achievable through attention to such details—particularly the technical aspects of projecting films and maintaining a clean movie house.

---

[23] David Hulfish, who wrote for *The Nickelodeon*, a Chicago-based trade journal, published the first known book in America to offer a technical guide to operating a motion picture theatre one year before Richardson's. See David Hulfish, *The Motion Picture: Its Making and Its Theatre* (Chicago: Chicago Electricity Magazine Corporation, 1909); and F.H. Richardson, *Motion Picture Handbook* (New York: Chalmer Publishing, 1910).
[24] Although Samuel "Roxy" Rothafpel does not continue long as a columnist in *Moving Picture World*, his first column in 1910 coincides with Richardson's and offers advice on the order of films in a programme and the place of music in a theatre, which contrasts with Richardson's technical advice to projectionists and exhibitors on the general operation of a theatre. See Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema: 1907-1915* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1990), 131. Sargent was better known for his advice on advertising theatres than for the minute technical aspects which Richardson details. See Richard L. Stromgren, "The Moving Picture World of W. Stephen Bush," *Film History* 2 (1988): 13-22.

In terms of maintaining a "clean" theatre, Richardson—in tune with the public health movement of the time—focused his advice on keeping the space well ventilated in order to prevent airborne diseases. This appears to have been an important topic for him, as he offered detailed advice about theatre ventilation in both his MPW columns and his book. In Richardson's view, it was the audience that was the source of many of the airborne impurities that were the cause of concern for theatre owners and the medical community. According to Richardson, "The average person, so say the medical fraternity, breathes about 25 inches of air per breath and breathes an average of 18 times per minute. This would indicate an hourly consumption of about 15 cubic feet of air per person. But the human body gives off gases aside from this which help render the air impure."[25] Such assertions that the human body was the cause of many of the impurities in movie theatres were not challenged by theatre owners or the medical establishment. In fact, it was a commonly held belief that purified air—the result of proper ventilation—could negate such human impurities and prevent communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, diphtheria, the flu, and small pox.[26]

In response to such concerns, Richardson argued that "cheap [electric] fans" were inappropriate for moving air within a modern theatre, and that any manager would be wise to think of proper ventilation as an investment, stating that those purchasing a system should not "look at the price so much as the quality."[27] In fact, to maintain a "clean" movie house, theatre owners were advised by Richardson that it was essential to have a ventilation system that was powerful enough to exchange all of the air in the hall within five to six minutes—even when the auditorium was at full capacity. An additional challenge was that this air exchange had to

[25] Richardson, 150.
[26] King.
[27] Richardson, 151.

happen quietly, so as not to disturb the audience.[28]

Richardson takes pains to differentiate between ventilation and the cooling action of rapidly moving air. When arguing that "cheap fans" were not adequate, his purpose was to illustrate that fans only move the air while ventilation purifies the air "by removing it, substituting out of doors air instead."[29] Despite the pains which Richardson took to argue for proper ventilation, he also discussed the importance of cooling fans and the proper maintenance of these electric devices. The health and safety of the audience was a paramount concern, yet providing comfort for audiences could not be ignored. Cooling fans and quiet ventilation were central to the effort of maintaining both a healthy theatre and a comfortable experience. However, the main focus in Richardson's advice to theatre owners and managers is still on the importance of proper ventilation. As a result of widespread concerns about airborne diseases, proper ventilation of the theatre space was a major concern for theatre managers during the transitional eras, and the purchase of a proper air exchange system could be as much of an expenditure as the projector.

ADVERTISING THE CLEANLINESS OF THEATRES: "MAKING A BRAG OF IT"

As theatre owners and managers often spent large amounts of money on fans and ventilators for proper air circulation and audience comfort, they were (not surprisingly) anxious to try to use these machines as selling points for their businesses. Even though air exchange systems (much like projectors) were hidden from the audience—with their effects not heard or seen by anyone in the auditorium—these additions were still a potential attraction to audiences

[28] Altman, 194-5. The argument for silent fans lends even more credence to Altman's assertion that silent films were in fact silent in many instances.
[29] Richardson, 148.

concerned with public health. A clean theatre was a direct tool for advertising—something that could create an advantage over the competition while also reassuring any wary potential audiences.

For theatre managers, maintaining a movie house that was hygienic enough for its cleanliness to be advertised as a selling point required an attention to detail akin to the care shown for planning the programme on the screen. In Epes Winthrop Sargent's 1915 instructional book, *Picture Theatre Advertising*, he described the importance of maintaining—and advertising—a clean movie house in as much detail as that given to the topic of advertising the films.[30] Simply sweeping out the hall in the morning prior to opening was not enough to "[m]ake your house the one they want to visit."[31] He argued that cleanliness was paramount for creating a successful theatre, and that a manager had to be methodical and systematic in both the cleaning and maintenance of the auditorium. Although he was quick to support the view that ventilation was essential, he also noted that any advantage brought on by proper (and expensive) air exchange would be immediately mitigated by "a dirty house."[32]

Much like the specific advice offered by Richardson, Sargent gives highly detailed directions on how to clean a theatre effectively, by using all of the most modern systems such as ozone machines and vacuum cleaners. Being thorough, according to Sargent, was key to creating the level of cleanliness needed to achieve the healthy atmosphere that would promote the theatre to potential audiences. The pains to keep a theatre sufficiently clean were well worth the effort, according to Sargent, as a theatre's cleanliness could be included in its advertising. "Make a brag about the excellence of your system," he stated, believing that

---

[30] See Chapter 2.
[31] Epes Winthrop Sargent, *Picture Theatre Advertising* (1915), 21.
[32] *Ibid*.

highlighting thorough sanitation would create an advantage for a theatre over any potential competition by raising the respectability of that theatre within the community.[33]

Appearing to echo the advice of Sargent and Richardson, the cleanliness of the hall was a consistent factor in motion picture theatre advertising in the Maritimes between 1907 and 1919. Maritimes theatre operators often used newspaper advertising as an opportunity to "brag" about their cleanliness. (We have already seen this above, with the case of the Bijou in Charlottetown; see Figure 4-1.) Although these sorts of ads were most often used when a theatre was in a rather vulnerable state (e.g., opening its doors for the first time, undergoing major renovations, or changing management), they were nonetheless not uncommon in Maritimes newspapers. In particular, the installation of a modern ventilation system was considered a worthy renovation to advertise, namely for the perceived increased health benefits such a system offered its patrons. As a result, a modern ventilation system was often advertised as a main selling feature whenever these machines were installed.

When the Royal Theatre opened in Truro in the summer of 1910 in a former church building, the advertisements highlighted the particular advantages of the new movie house, among which was a special ventilator installed on the roof. In combination with the architecture of the former chapel, this ventilator could, according to the advertisement, both cool the audience and provide "pure air."[34] Truro's Orpheum theatre, which opened only four days later and offered both a new exit and a new stage, likewise advertised a "large patent ventilator thru the roof, which is five feet square and large enough to ventilate three times the

---

[33] *Ibid*.

[34] Advertisement, *Daily News* (Truro), August 2, 1910, 1. The Royal was a short lived theatre in Truro, only surviving the 1910 season.

space of the auditorium."[35] These motion picture theatres were looking to improve their share of the available desirable audience through advertising the respectable quality of a clean theatre. Against Richardson's advice, the most popular ventilation items installed in Fredericton's theatres in the summer of 1910 were electric fans. Both of that town's motion picture theatres, the Gem and the Bijou, bought newspaper space to advertise that new fans had been installed in their halls—presumably with the expectation that Fredericton audiences would be sufficiently pleased with these lesser devices as with the larger ventilators in terms of the health benefits they offered. Beside and below these notices was an advertisement for W.

New Westminster, B. C., July 15.—To run over several sticks of dynamite in a big touring car, crushing three of the sticks, and to escape without an explosion, was the experience of H. A. Eastman, of New Westminster, and H. Witt, of North Vancouver, while being driven through Surrey by Chauffeur J. Hunter.

The car had just rounded a sharp turn in the road, going at a good clip, when a man who had been standing at the side of the road and had apparently not noticed it coming, ran towards the machine waving it back and frantically calling upon the occupants to stop. At the same time the chauffeur noticed several sticks of dynamite on the road. The machine was right on top of the dynamite, the road was narrow, and the chauffeur saw that the only chance he had was to keep on, run over the explosive as quickly as possible and trust to luck. He put on full force and waited for the explosion. None came, however, but when the machine was stopped farther down the road and the party went back to investigate it was found that three sticks had been broken and crushed.

The man whose warning came too late suffered the worst case of nerves. As the car passed over the dynamite he sank to the ground and buried his face in his hands, utterly unnerved. Some of the dynamite had become congealed and the man sought to thaw it by placing it on the warm road. There was little travel at this point and he had become absorbed in his work, not noticing the approach of the motor car until too late.

Chicago, Ill., July 19—Prospects of another battle for power in Zion City are seen with the arrival in Chicago of "King" Dowie, professed brother of the late John Alexander Dowie, "Elijah End", and claimant to the throne of a South Sea Island. It is said to be the intention of "King" Dowie to overthrow overseer Wilbur Glenn Voliva. Overseer Voliva said last night that he would ignore the self styled regent.

"I know of him only what I have heard" said Voliva "As far as I am aware, John Alexander Dowie had no brother."

"King" Dowie is supposed to be located at present on the South side having arrived from Minneapolis during yesterday. With him is "Pope" Schraeder, who is in charge of a church in San Francisco Dowie it is said, claims the rule of Zion city by the right of succession.

Algeria and the Argentine are the only countries in the world where the horses outnumber the human beings.

City as an industrial community and his estate consisted chiefly of stock in a manufacturing concern and real estate here and in St. Louis. His will directed that a trust company be formed to manage the estate. The four sons were named as directors of the company was ordered to pay Mrs. Neidringhaus $20,000 a year from the income of the estate. The death of Mrs. Neidringhaus ends the trust.

FIG PILLS

Cure Backache, Bladder and Kidney Trouble

A few doses of FIG PILLS will convince you that a few more will cure you. Every box of FIG PILLS is guaranteed. If they do not cure all Bladder, Kidney, Rheumatism and Liver Trouble, your money will be refunded.

25c a box at all leading drug stores. A. J. Ryan, Central Pharmacy.

Liverpool, July 19—The cotton exchange here will be closed Saturday July 30 and Monday August 1.

Mrs. Edwin H. Clarke is spending the week in St. John, the guest of her sister, Mrs. Robt. Rankine.

Mr. Ottie Shields of St. Marys left this morning for Houlton to try his examinations in telegraphy.

at the offices of E. T. P. Shewen, Esq., District Engineer, St. John, N. B.; Geoffrey Stead, Esq., District Engineer, Chatham, N. B., and on application to the Postmaster at Richibucto, N. B.

Persons tendering are notified that tenders will not be considered unless made on the printed forms supplied and signed with their actual signatures, stating their occupations and places of residence. In the case of firms, the actual signature, the nature of the occupation and place of residence of each member of the firm must be given.

Each tender must be accompanied by an accepted cheque on a chartered bank, payable to the order of the Honourable the Minister of Public Works for the sum of two thousand three hundred ($2,300.00) dollars, which will be forfeited if the person tendering decline to enter into a contract when called upon to do so, or fail to complete the work contracted for. If the tender be not accepted the cheque will be returned.

The Department does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any tender.

By order,
R. C. DESROCHERS,
Asst. Secretary.
Department of Public Works,
Ottawa, July 16, 1910.

Newspapers will not be paid for this advertisement if they insert it without authority from the Department.

AMUSEMENTS

Bijou
COOL AND BREEZY

Program
"PERCY, THE COWBOY"
"IN THE DARK VALLEY"
"CAPTURING CUB BEARS"
and others
ILLUSTRATED SONGS
Daily Matinee 3 p. m.
Evenings at 7.45 p. m.
ELECTRIC FANS

BEFORE BUYING ELECTRIC FANS

CONSULT

W. ALLAN STAPLES

Canadian Westinghouse, Canadian General Elecric, Hawthorne, Holtzercabott, Tuerk and Robbins-Myers Standard.

ELECTRICAL ENGINEER AND CONTRACTOR
QUEEN STREET

AT THE
GEM
TO-NIGHT

IN THE SEASON OF BUDS
(Biograph)
FORTUNE'S FOOL
(Edison)
ALL ON ACCOUNT OF LAUUDRY BILL
(Comic)
THE SHERIFF'S SACRIFICE
A Western picture with lots of life in it.
Don't fail to hear the Quartette.
Cool and Breezy with Electric Fans just installed.

Figure 4-2: *Fredericton Daily Mail*, July 20, 1910, p.2. This detail from the *Daily Mail* illustrates the visual layout of the ads and the relationship between electrical engineer W. Allan Staples and the theatres. Note that both theatre ads highlight the electric fans as being "cool and breezy."

[35] *Ibid*., August 5, 1910, 8. This marked the beginning of the pitched advertising battle between the three theatres in Truro, which ended in both the giving away of a baby by the Orpheum and the closing of the Lyric theatre. See above, Chapter 2.

Allan Staples, electrical engineer and contractor, who asked readers to consult with him prior to the purchase of their own electric fan (see Figure 4-2).[36]

The health of the audience (or, at least, the *perceived* health of the spaces) appears to be the chief concern when new theatres were under construction as well. During the construction of the Empire Theatre in Bridgewater in late 1917, the design of the building was applauded in the local newspaper, the *Bridgewater Bulletin*, as being "one of the best in the province from all view-points" according to Mr. Wall, the provincial inspector and censor. In particular, he cited not only the Empire's modern electrical installation and four exits (so as to empty the house in less than five minutes), but also its ample ventilation.[37] The Brayley Theatre in Yarmouth, when it was renovated in 1912, also highlighted the venue's new "luxurious" construction, advertising that it offered not only an "airy" interior, but also "seats . . . of the most modern type [and] hygienic."[38] What's more, when a modern ventilation system was added to the Opera House in Wolfville (guaranteed to remove 12,000 cubic feet of air per minute), the theatre also "installed an electrical plant on the premises" as a back-up power source to prevent any interruption of clean air should the town plant fail.[39]

---

[36] Advertisements, *Daily Mail* (Fredericton), July 20, 1910, 2.

[37] "Town and Country News," *Bridgewater Bulletin*, November 27, 1917, 5. The theatre was delayed in opening due to the explosion in Halifax (December 6, 1917), which caused the box car carrying the seats and light fixtures for the theatre to be temporarily lost. The car was located on December 18, and arrived shortly after Christmas. *Ibid*., December 18, 1917. For more on Mr. Wall, see Chapter 5.

[38] "Brayley's Theatre," *Yarmouth Times*, November 8, 1912, 3. The Brayley Theatre was an independent theatre in Yarmouth and was competing with the Opera House—a theatre leased by F.G. Spencer of Saint John. The note in the paper in 1912 is for the reopening of the theatre as a picture house, where the cleanliness is highlighted along with the importance of local ownership. When the theatre was opened, the mayor of Yarmouth offered congratulations to the theatre owner and manager on stage and offered hope for the future success of the theatre in pleasing the public with "good, clean pictures." "Brayley's Theatre," *Yarmouth Times*, November 12, 1912, 3.

[39] "Opera House," *The Acadian*, July 25, 1913, 3.

ART IMITATING LIFE: FILM TAKES ON A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE

Promoting through advertising the cleanliness of their movie houses was not the only means through which theatre owners promoted respectability and public health in motion picture theatres. After working to establish that these venues were "clean" and respectable public places (and thereby to secure perpetual patrons), theatres were in a position to educate the public about living "cleaner" and more respectable lives—and, of course, increase revenues while doing so.

In the spring of 1918, the film *Damaged Goods* was exhibited in theatres around the Maritimes as a means of promoting a public discussion (and better practices) about public health—specifically, sexual health. *Damaged Goods* was a sexual hygiene film that had been adapted from the 1901 French play, "Les Avariés" by Eugéne Brieux, which dealt with the effects of syphilis on a middle-class family.[40] Written under the auspices of the *Société française de prophylaxie sanitaire et morale*, a leading voice in the campaign to initiate public education for the control of venereal diseases, the play was created to warn and educate the masses about one of the most prevalent venereal diseases of the era: syphilis.[41] Although the play was banned from production in Paris until 1905, it was successfully shown elsewhere in Europe and in the United States from 1901 through to 1914, when the film adaptation was put into production using the Broadway cast. There is no evidence of the play being performed in Canada.[42]

---

[40]The play was novelized by Upton Sinclair in 1913 with the permission of Brieux. It is this version of the story from which I have garnered the summary. Although there were differences between the novel, play and film, these will be accounted for using reviews of the film published at the time of its initial release in 1915. Upton Sinclair, *Damaged Goods: The Great Play "Les Avariés of Brieux* (The John C. Winston Co., 1913).

[41] Jay Cassel, *The Secret Plague: Venereal Disease in Canada, 1838-1939* (University of Toronto Press, 1987), 107.

[42]*Ibid*.

The play (and its subsequent novelization by Upton Sinclair in 1913) centres on the life of George Dupont, a young upper-middle-class professional who is recently engaged to marry Henriette, his social equal. The crux of the play is initiated when Dupont has a lapse in moral judgment and has an affair with a girl named Thérèse, whom he meets at a dinner party held by some law school friends and who infects him with syphilis. Brieux and Sinclair both go to great pains detailing the life of Dupont in order to illustrate that he was an average, middle-class man without any ties to a seedy past or connections with a "fast" lifestyle. Their ultimate goal, it seems, is to show that Dupont was a victim of ignorance and misinformation—a condition, it seems, that the play and subsequent novel are both trying to address.

The story goes on to educate the reader/audience—via Dupont's own education—about the facts surrounding syphilis. In particular, the doctor in the story (who is the rational voice of science and conscience in the narrative) pleads with Dupont to delay his impending marriage for at least three years to be effectively cured and therefore to protect Henrietta—something that the hero protests vociferously. It is in this doctor's office where Dupont is portrayed both as a "victim" of the disease and as a "prisoner" of fate.[43] Through the description of the hero as equally "victim" and "prisoner," the story illustrates to audiences that Dupont (the "every man") is culpable for his actions (he is shown to be at fault for his lapse in chastity as well), yet he does not see himself as responsible for their effect, despite his knowledge to the contrary.

The story's conclusion attempts to educate audiences on the fact that there was no easy or instantaneous cure for the disease; Dupont's endeavours to return to his life without following the esteemed doctor's advice and sufficiently delaying his marriage end in disaster.

---

[43] *Sinclair*, 44.

Specifically, the daughter born to Dupont and Henrietta in the months following their marriage exhibits the illness and infects her wet nurse, and Dupont is shamed when his past transgressions become known to his wife and her esteemed family. While the story comes to a mostly satisfactory and agreeable conclusion, the reader/audience is left not knowing if the wet nurse will seek sufficient treatment or follow in Dupont's ignorant footsteps.

While the core of the story remains in the play's 1915 filmed version, *Damaged Goods*, the film apparently differs in some of the details and in the conclusion of the narrative (as evident in a review of the film plot published in the *Moving Picture News*[44]). One major alteration to the story—changed for the benefit of American audiences and censors—is that Dupont, upon realizing the shame that his carelessness and degenerate behavior has brought upon his family, "does the only thing possible under the circumstances—commits suicide."[45] This significant change reflects the difficulty in feeling sympathy that American audiences were perceived to have in terms of venereal disease and their victims.

Damaged Goods was released to American audiences in the fall of 1915. According to an article in *Motion Picture News*, it was greatly anticipated by both the staff at Mutual Film Corporation, which was distributing the film, and the "large gathering from the lay press, physicians, ministers, sociologists and city and state officials" who were present at the special showing offered at the Forty-first and Broadway theatre in New York City.[46] The belief of Samuel S. Huthchinson, the president of the company that filmed the stage play, was that although the stage version of *Damaged Goods* may have been able to reach thousands with its

[44] "Mutual Special Feature." *MPW*, 26 (October 2, 1915), 148.
[45] Ibid.
[46] "'Damaged Goods' Shown to New York Audience," *Motion Picture News* 12 (October 9, 1915), 60.

lessons on the dangers of syphilis, the filmed version had the potential to reach *millions*.

According to Mutual Film, the demand for the film was high, with both the medical community and "local organizations" arguing that they could fill "entire blocks of seats" in theatres.[47] Regardless of these projections, the *Moving Picture World* review of the film was slightly sceptical that the goal of "moral uplift" could be achieved in an English-speaking county where "open discussion (in whatever form) of sexual questions has always been frowned upon."[48] Despite the concern published in the MPW, *Damaged Goods* is reported to have had a successful run in the United States throughout the fall and winter of 1915. In fact, the MPW reported that wherever the film was shown, capacity crowds were recorded; it further indicated that the film played for extended runs, such as in Detroit where the Grand Circus theatre offered to show the film for at least four weeks.[49]

The film did not immediately play in Canada, and when it did come north in 1916, it appears to have been shown first to segregated audiences in Manitoba. The reason for the delay in a Canadian showing was likely due to the controversy that the film's subject matter instigated. For instance, allowing the exhibition of this film in Manitoba apparently caused a split between the joint censorship boards of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, as the Saskatchewan Board of Censors rejected the film.[50] *Damaged Goods* was not shown in Maritimes theatres until another two years passed—just as stories about increasing numbers of soldiers suffering from venereal disease (VD) in Europe were on the rise in the Canadian media.[51]

---

[47] *Ibid*.
[48] W. Stephen Bush, "Damaged Goods," *MPW* 26 (October 2, 1915), 90.
[49] "'Damaged Goods' Suit," *MPW* 26 (October 30a, 1915), 1002.
[50] Robert M. Seiler and Tamara P. Seiler, *Reel Time: Movie Exhibitors and Movie Audiences in Prairie Canada, 1896 to 1986* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2013), 133.
[51] Cassel, 122.

ADVERTISING *DAMAGED GOODS* TO MARITIMES AUDIENCES

It was the New Brunswick theatre mogul, F.G. Spencer, who brought *Damaged Goods* into the Maritimes to tour communities in the spring of 1918.[52] The timing of the exhibition of this film, with its message of syphilis awareness and the dangers of a "loose" life, was not coincidental. Indeed, the film was offered not because it was considered a great work of art or even an entertaining film for audiences. Rather, the emergency of the war created a desire among many moral reformers in the Maritimes and beyond to take more drastic actions to create a better society through improved physical and mental health.

With goals of reducing disease and deformity and improving the lives of citizens, these reform groups pressured governments to enact legislation to better protect the health of the population. This tactic did bring forward legislation regarding such social evils as gambling and alcohol consumption; as well, it improved industrial standards and forced some improvements on the inequities of capitalism; but, by the mid-1910s, there was little that was enacted to reduce the spread of venereal disease among Canadians.[53] By the time the war began, most Canadians and Canadian communities were *not* having conversations about VD, and the silence was becoming increasingly evident as the war continued—especially as a multitude of Canadian soldiers stationed overseas were becoming infected with the disease at an alarming rate—far more frequently than their fellow Allied soldiers from Western Europe.[54]

---

[52] The film did not appear in this region prior to 1918. There is no explanation recorded for this delay.
[53] Cassel, p.146. See also Suzanne Morton, *At Odds: Gambling and Canadians, 1919-1969* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), Craig Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History* (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2003) and Forbes and D.A Muise.
[54] Cassel, 122. One possible reason for this increased level of infection among Canadian soldiers overseas could have been due to the distance which the soldiers were from home (and their wives/girlfriends), as well as the lack of an official regulation concerning VD in the Imperial Army, which held command over the soldiers from all over the former and present British colonies. Similar levels of venereal disease were found in soldiers from Australia and New Zealand.

As news of the VD epidemic raging amid the Imperial Army filtered back to Canada, there was a growing concern among Canadian society not just for the soldiers infected overseas, but also for the population on the home front. Canadians, much like those of other nations based on a Protestant-dominated tradition, were hesitant to have open discussions on VD, and this silence often forced victims to hide their illnesses. It was not until February 1916, when the British Royal Commission released its seminal publication on venereal disease that the slow process for holding a public discussion about the dangers of VD began in Canada. Furthermore, it was not until early 1917 that official government action towards combating VD was publicly voiced, though much of the attention was directed at the issue of military conscription.[55]

It was as the public discussion of VD was starting to warm up—along with concerns regarding the eventual return of soldiers from Europe—that Spencer obtained the rights to show *Damaged Goods* in the Maritime Provinces in the spring of 1918. The conditions were ideal for the showing of this film, as the public appeared to have been ready to move into a more open public discussion about syphilis and its impending effects on post-war Canadian society.

Spencer took great pains to illustrate to potential Maritimes audiences that *Damaged Goods* was a film that could educate the masses on this most important public health issue of the day, and he worked hard to show that it was a respectable and morally "safe" film. Through raising ticket prices, offering private advanced screenings, and soliciting letters from many of the most prominent citizens of the Maritimes, Spencer moved to assure potential audiences

[55] *Ibid*., 145-175. Cassel offers in fine detail the official responses to the crisis of venereal disease during the war on the home front and the actions of the medical profession, moral reform groups, and government, though his focus is entirely on the Ontario situation with only slight glances at other provinces.

(and potential critics) that *Damaged Goods* was not only a great film, but also an essential mechanism for both the moral and public health education of the population.

The advertising for this film was heavy in Maritimes communities. Most communities that had a Spencer theatre published special advertisements in advance of the film's showings, and these ads were unlike any others seen in the Maritimes. In many newspapers, the sheer size (and garishness) of the ads was striking (see Figure 4-4). These ads were akin to those seen for circuses, far exceeding the normal advertising for motion pictures. For instance, in the Saint John *Globe*, the advertising was compared to that of P.T. Barnum, founder of the famous Barnum & Bailey Circus, with full-page advertisements consisting of letters of endorsement and praise for the film—all while offering little information on the actual narrative.[56]

Spencer took great care to create a unique, morally grounded advertising campaign for *Damaged Goods* for every one of his theatres, often incorporating letters of endorsement from local religious leaders, politicians, and moral reformers into his ads. These letters often praised the film for its message and argued that its subject was an essential topic for discussion among adults that was, up until then, being entirely ignored in schools, churches, and homes. For instance, in Truro's *Daily News*, the advertising campaign for the *Damaged Goods* showing at the Princess theatre began on March 23, 1918—two full days before the film opened (a practice that was not unique to this film, though one that was only used for prestigious or important films).[57] In the first advertisement, in what appeared to be an editorial review of the film, the author offered an opinion of its moral importance (along with a warning that the film

---

[56] "Commended for Live Publicity," *MPW* 35 (March 19, 1918), 1396. For an example, see Figure 5-7. Barnum is famous still for his advertising techniques that offered all style and little substance.

[57] A similar advertising campaign was used in this era for such films as *The Birth of a Nation (David W. Griffith Corp., 1915)* and *The Battle of the Somme* (1916). For a discussion of these films in Maritime theatres see Chapter 5, below.

SAINT JOHN GLOBE, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1918

6 Days 6 ONLY! LYRIC STARTING TO-DAY, Feb. 7

THE SENSATION OF THE HOUR

"DAMAGED GOODS"

A Stirring Plea for a Pure Life Before Marriage

In Seven Electrifying Acts and Beautiful Scenes

Just a Few of the Many Endorsements Received for "Damaged Goods"

Dear Mr. Spencer:

It has been my privilege to see the Motion Picture film called "DAMAGED GOODS," and I hold little doubt but that its public performances will have great uplifting power, and accomplish the good for which it was created; namely, educating the people to the danger which surrounds them. If I could preach from my pulpit a sermon so convincing, I would consider that I had achieved a triumph.

I have no hesitation in recommending "DAMAGED GOODS," but believe it would be indelicate and unwise to have men and women see it at the same time, or permit the attendance of children under fifteen years of age, unless accompanied by their parents.

My best wishes are for the successful exploitation of "DAMAGED GOODS," as it will mean much to those who remain in ignorance of the great truths told so forcibly therein.

Yours truly,
(Sgd.) J. A. MACKEIGAN,
Pastor St. David's Presbyterian Church.

Dear Mr Spencer:

I was much interested to learn a day or two ago that the people of St. John are to have the opportunity of viewing the picture "DAMAGED GOODS," and I venture to convey my impressions of that picture when, as a member of the New Brunswick Board of Censors, a years or so ago, I had the privilege of viewing it. It is not a pleasant picture, it is not the intention to make it pleasant, but it does present in unforgettable fashion a story which, if we are to believe the statements of medical men and social workers, is but too often enacted in the life of the present day.

I have no hesitation in saying that those who witness "DAMAGED GOODS" will remember it. They may gasp at its frankness, but they must be benefited by it's lesson. To my mind it is a wonderful educator in a subject concerning which there is a woeful lack of knowledge.

Yours very sincerely,
(Sgd.) ALFRED E. McGINLEY,
Editor "The Standard."

Dear Mr. Spencer:

I greatly appreciated the opportunity of seeing the motion picture "DAMAGED GOODS," and it affords me pleasure and satisfaction to endorse its public showing, as I fully realize the importance and necessity for the lesson so forcefully portrayed therein.

The possibilities of this picture I believe to be far reaching, and I am in hope to hear of good results during coming months and years, having in mind the thought that more forcibly probably than any other medium it will impress upon the people and, through them, the government, the necessity for pre-marriage certificates.

Yours truly,
T. E. BISHOP, M. D.

Dear Mr. Spencer:

The Motion Picture film called "DAMAGED GOODS" has, I consider, great educational value, as it deals with a subject of social and material importance about which there is much ignorance and apathy. Exceptional methods of enlightenment are needed, and I believe that "DAMAGED GOODS" will arrest the attention and thought of many who have hitherto been indifferent. I would not favor the admittance of children under fifteen years, and think that separate exhibitions should be given to men and women.

Sincerely,
J. CHAS. H. APPEL,
Pastor Christian Church, Douglas Ave.

Dear Mr. Spencer:

I read with interest that the motion picture "DAMAGED GOODS" is to be shown locally.

I saw this film about a year ago, and greatly regretted at the time that the public was denied the opportunity.

I am convinced but the presentation of this subject will prove a revelation, and cannot but be a means of instruction to many.

Yours very truly,
G. A. B. ADDY, M. D.

Dear Mr. Spencer:

When asked for an opinion of the picture called "DAMAGED GOODS," I do not hesitate to endorse same, as I believe it to be a subject that cannot receive too much attention.

If I could preach a sermon so convincing as this picture, I would feel that I had accomplished something.

Yours truly,
HAMMOND JOHNSON,
Pastor Queen Square Methodist Church.

IS THIS NOT CONVINCING?

We, the undersigned, greatly appreciate the privilege of seeing the picture called "Damaged Goods" last Saturday, and very freely and gladly do we permit the use of our names endorsing same, believing it to be a subject that every man and woman of a thinking age should see.

While the idea of segregated audiences is probably wise, at the same time there is not the slightest reason why the most fastidious of other sex should refrain from seeing the picture, and so very many reasons why they should do so.

We commend your enterprise in giving to St. John the much needed opportunity of seeing "Damaged Goods," and we hope that many will avail themselves of it.

Mrs. E. A. Smith,	Mrs. J. V. Anglin.
Mrs. H. A. Powell,	Mrs. H. A. McKeown.
Mrs. W. E. Raymond,	Mrs. C. J. Coster.
Mrs. R. J. Hooper,	Mrs. J. A. McAvity.
Rev. W. R. Robinson,	Mrs. J. H. Frink.
Mrs. A. C. D. Wilson,	A. O. Skinner.
Mrs. N. C. Scott,	Horace A. Porter.
Judge Ritchie.	

Mr F G Spencer, City

Dear Sir,—Pursuant to your request that I attend a private exhibition of the picture "DAMAGED GOODS" and submit a personal opinion as to it being a contravention of the Criminal Code and thereby cause its suppression by the Police Department, permit me to state, viz.:

That I have seen the picture and am fully in accord with the opinions of Clergymen, Doctors and others who have seen the picture, that it is educational and should be shown to segregated audiences, a limit being placed on the ages of those who are permitted to see it.

I also wish to recommend the judgment of the Censors in passing the picture, as it may be possible that the exhibition of such pictures may ultimately tend to the prosecution of such a violation as will enforce the production of Health Certificates before marriage may be consummated.

Personally, I cannot see where there is any contravention of the Code, and believe that the picture should be shown to its visitors in order that the full amount of educational value should accrue to its patrons.

Respectfully yours,
(Sgd.) H. H. McLELLAN,
Commissioner of Public Safety.

Mr F G Spencer, City:

Dear Sir,—I am glad to hear you are going to exhibit the picture entitled "DAMAGED GOODS." I saw a private exhibition of this at your picture house, Charlotte street, about one year ago, and my only regret was that this picture had not been exhibited broadcast through Canada, United States and Europe during the past ten years, as I believe, had it been properly placed before the public, the moral tone would have had a great and beneficial influence upon the masses generally, and many to-day who are ill, their only regret will be that the ideas had not been given them a few years earlier.

From reports, this is the history of many who have returned to Canada from Europe in the last year or two.

Respectfully yours,
(Sgd.) F. L. PUTTS,
Member Provincial Parliament.

Mr F G Spencer:

Dear Sir,—I have seen the film "DAMAGED GOODS," and believe it possesses much educational value at a time when all reforming agencies are laying particular stress upon the subject with which it deals. In my view, however, it should not be shown to mixed audiences of men and women, and not at all to children. To an audience of men or of women it should convey a lasting impression such as, in the interests of public health and morals, is perhaps more desirable to-day than ever before.

Yours faithfully,
A. M. BELDING,
Editor "Times."

Dear Mr. Spencer:

Relative to "DAMAGED GOODS": A strong and vivid picture, showing the folly of ignorance and vice, and the possibilities of education in the prevention of disease and social depravity. Throughout the entire picture the emphasis is placed on the positive and constructive elements.

I commend it to the young men and boys of our community.

Cordially yours,
FRANK L. SMITH,
General Secretary Y. M. C. A.

Dear Mr. Spencer:

I have seen the motion picture film called "DAMAGED GOODS," and feel its public performance will have great enlightening power, and accomplish much good. I have no hesitation in recommending it, but feel it would be wise to segregate the audiences.

Yours truly,
G. F. DAWSON,
Exmouth Street Methodist Church.

Mr. F. G. Spencer, City:

Dear Sir,—It gives me much satisfaction to endorse the public showing of "DAMAGED GOODS," and I strongly recommend all to see it, as the subject has had too little attention paid to it, in my opinion.

(Sgd.) J. V. RUSSELL,
Commissioner of Harbor and Ferries.

Dear Mr. Spencer:

I am very much pleased that "DAMAGED GOODS" passed the censors. This picture should show the public the need of more education in health matters, the need of pre-marriage certificates, and more strict control of quack medicines.

Yours sincerely,
H. A. PARRIS, M. D.,
Superintendent St. John County Hospital.

The Censors Permit the Showing of "DAMAGED GOODS" --- To Segregated Audiences Only ---

This Strong Drama Pictures the Terrible Consequences of Vice and Physical Ruin That Follow the Abuse of the Moral Law.

Endorsed by Censors, Clergy, Doctors, Editors and Many Other Prominent Citizens

MATINEES 3 P. M.
EVENINGS 6.55 AND 8.40

NOTE Thurs., Fri., Sat., Feb. 7, 8, 9, Afternoon and Evening, MEN ONLY
Mon., Tues., Wed., Feb. 11, 12, 13, Afternoon and Evg., Women Only
Children under 15 not admitted, save under guardianship of parents

Price 25c to All
Both Matinees and Evenings

Figure 4-3: Advertisement, *Saint John Globe*, February 7, 1918, p.4. This full-page ad was common for all theatres controlled by F.G. Spencer showing *Damaged Goods*. The centre column includes the names of influential citizens who endorsed the film, while the two side columns contain excerpts from the letters of endorsement that were solicited by Spencer.

had a slightly dated feeling as it was "several years old now").[58] The next issue of the paper ran another advertisement for *Damaged Goods*, this time featuring a letter from Dr. A.H. McKay, the superintendent of education for Nova Scotia. It indicated that McKay was a man of unquestionable judgement and "should command attention" with his favourable review.[59] On March 25, the day the film opened for the men of Truro, the ad also included a letter from Robert Irving, the Speaker of the Nova Scotia Legislature, praising the film—and also highlighting that it was Spencer who had provided the exhibition.[60]

Similarly, in Sackville, New Brunswick, a letter from Reverend H.E. Thomas, a Methodist pastor, was included in the second advertisement for the film.[61] In Thomas's letter, he is quoted as having a high opinion of the film, believing that it would be a "much needed lesson" for audiences, and even going so far as to say that *Damaged Goods* should also be introduced into the curriculum of the higher grades of the public schools.[62] This letter is the only one quoted in the advertisement, illustrating the importance that Spencer placed on Thomas's voice of support for the exhibition of the film.

In those communities without a theatre owned by Spencer, the advertising for *Damaged Goods* was decidedly less spectacular, with no letters of glowing endorsement or reviews authored by prominent citizens. Not surprisingly, Spencer was rarely mentioned in these ads placed by competing theatres, with his name being replaced with the name of whoever was

---

[58] "'Damaged Goods' at the Princess," *Daily News* (Truro), March 22, 1918, 7. This view of the film being "dated" was echoed in other reviews and was due to the film being created over three years old. As well, the producers of the film were less interested in creating a work of "art" than offering a motion picture to educate the masses.
[59] "'Damaged Goods' Opens Monday," *Ibid.*, March 23, 1918, 8.
[60] "Speaker of N.S. Legislature comments on 'Damaged Goods.'", *Ibid.*, March 25, 1918, 1.
[61] D.W. Johnson, *History of Methodism in Eastern British America, Including Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Bermuda* (Sackville, NB, 1924), 198.
[62] Advertisement, *Sackville Tribune*, March 4, 1918, 1.

managing the theatre. The Star Theatre in Hartland, New Brunswick, offered the "most remarkable human story" of *Damaged Goods* on April 29 and 30, 1918. After that, C.A. Nelson, the owner and operator of the Star, took the film on a short three-evening tour to three surrounding communities, where 7:00 p.m. shows were reserved for men and 9:00 p.m. shows were reserved for women.[63] Similarly, In Campbellton, New Brunswick, *Damaged Goods* played to full houses on both evenings at the Dimlock-owned theatre. The film was split into two separate showings, with the first evening reserved for the men of the community and the second for the women.

As illustrated in these advertisements (e.g., Figure 4-4), there was a censorship rule put in place for *Damaged Goods* as it toured the Maritimes. Although the censors in all three provinces approved the film in its entirety, they stipulated that audiences needed to be segregated by sex just as they had been in Manitoba in 1916, as it was deemed too salacious for mixed audiences.[64] In only one Maritimes paper was there a question regarding the censor's ruling on segregating the audiences. Specifically, the *Amherst Daily News* posited, at the end of a glowing review, an open question as to why the censors saw it necessary to separate men and women, as this could have led to the assumption among the population that there was something "immoral or smutty" in the film. The editor saw no reason for the segregation and believed that the film offered nothing aside from a very powerful lesson that should be taken by all.[65] Furthermore, the censor also ruled that children under 15 were to be barred from attending showings of *Damaged Goods* unless they were accompanied by a parent.

---

[63] Advertisement, *Observer* (Hartland), April, 25 and May 9, 1918, 5. See: Figure 5-8.
[64] Seiler and Seiler, 133
[65] "'Damaged Goods' sheds light on serious subject," *Daily News* (Amherst), March 21, 1918, 3.

Notably, during the first evening show at the Dimlock-owned theatre in Campbellton, the Military Service police took the opportunity to ensure all men in attendance were in compliance with the Military Services Act. In checking the identification papers at the door of any they perceived to be of military age, they found very few men who were not in compliance with the Act; there is no mention of what happened to those men who were singled out for non-compliance. The presence of the military police was not replicated in any other community in the Maritimes.[66] These censorship rules and other restrictions in no way curbed Maritimes audiences from attending the film. Newspapers reported record crowds for all showings across the Maritime Provinces. *Damaged Goods* toured the region for only three months in 1918, playing in nearly every community with a theatre.


"Damaged Goods"

The world-famous picture that has created so much interest wherever shown. Treats of a delicate subject but one which people of both sexes need to know. Recommended by Doctors, Ministers, Reformers everywhere. This picture is shown only to separated audiences and not to children at all.

Centreville Opera House, Wed., May 15
At Bath, - - - Thursday, May 16
At East Florenceville, Saturday, May 18

First Show, for Men Only, at 7 sharp
Second Show, for Women Only, at 9.30

Children under 15 not admitted unless accompanied by parents or guardian

ADMISSION TO ALL ---- ---- 50 CENTS

Figure 4-4: Advertisement, *The Observer* (Hartland), May 9, 1918, p.5. Note that in these communities, the film plays only one night and is advertised with minimal fanfare.

In addition to advertising, setting an elevated price for *Damaged Goods* was another major approach used by Spencer and other theatre operators to offer the perception of respectability for this film in the Maritimes. In most Spencer-owned theatres, the price ranged between twenty-five and fifty cents, while at those theatres not part of the Spencer theatre chain, the price varied between ten and fifty

[66] "Damaged Goods," *The Campbellton Graphic*, May 2, 1918, 5.

cents.[67] This was on all counts more expensive than the regular shows offered at the same theatres, which again illustrates that Spencer (and his competitors) were attempting to create the public perception of respectabilty for the film. Raising the price above that of a regular feature, which was between ten and fifteen cents per seat at the time, offered the belief that the show would be of elevated quality. The price was also not too high to prevent admission for the target audience: the middle-class. Twenty-five cents was in line with the price for other prestigious films that toured the region, including *L'Inferno* (*Dante's Inferno*, Milano Films, 1911), *Birth of a Nation* (David W. Griffith Corp., 1915), *Cabria* (Latin Films, 1914), and *The Battle of the Somme* (1916). In all of these instances, elevated price was used to advance the belief that the film was more prestigious than the regular fare.

A Film to Benefit the Health of Preferred Theatre Audiences

The elevated price, combined with the letters of support written by local moral leaders, worked together to show the Maritimes public that *Damaged Goods* was a film targeted at the middle class—theatres' most sought-after audience. After all, this film was perhaps the best, most democratic way to illustrate the dangers of syphilis to working-class society, and to open the conversation with the population in general, which was primed for such a discussion on this public health topic. That *Damaged Goods* was a film (as opposed to a play or a novel) made it accessible to a large segment of the population—a fact recognized by those who wrote letters of support to Spencer. And, unlike many other of the social problem films that were being produced at this time, *Damaged Goods* was able to educate in an inoffensive manner.[68] Indeed,

---

[67] Advertisement, *Carlton Observer* (Hartland, NB) April 25, 5; "Damaged Goods," *Weekly Courier* (Digby, NS) April 19, 1918, 2; and Advertisement, *Sackville Tribune* (Sackville, NB), March 4, 1918, 1.

[68] Films dealing with the white slave trade are perhaps the most famous of the social problem films to be released in the transitional eras. Titles such as *Traffic in Souls* (Universal, 1913) and *Inside of the White Slave Traffic*

this film was a companion to the progressive uplift programmes that were sweeping North America at the time; as such, it was designed to attract a middle-class audience through a decidedly non-sensational discussion of VD, offering instead a melodramatic treatment of the topic.[69] As his advertising demonstrates, Spencer was well aware of the sensitivity and social importance of this film's message, which is why he used letters of endorsement by moral guardians and political officials to assure potential middle-class audiences of the value of the film.

The fact that the stage play version was not toured to a wide audience in Canada and the Maritimes is significant, as it shows how the filmed version was, at this time, thought to be more democratic. Films in general were able to reach a wider population than stage plays, due in large part to the sheer abundance of motion picture theatres and the accessibility of film via its affordable ticket prices. The lower cost of distributing a film versus touring a play—especially in relatively small Maritimes communities—also made the case for touring the filmed play more palatable. Spencer was well aware of these economics when he chose to tour the film *Damaged Goods* to targeted middle-class audiences in the Maritimes.

The importance of this class distinction cannot be understated in terms of the widespread advertising campaign for *Damaged Goods* in the Maritimes. Spencer's advertisements made clear that this film was of benefit to educated, middle-class audiences in particular. No images from the production were used in these newspaper advertisements;

(Moral Feature Film Company, 1913) were controversial and popular in American cities. See: Grieveson, *Policing Cinema*, 151-191.

[69] The contrast to this film would be the white slave traffic films that had caused a censorship battle in the United States. See: Grieveson and Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature, 1915-1928*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 187. As well, the filmed interpretation of the *Evangeline* poem is an example of the uplifting and inspirational style of motion picture that social reformation groups preferred. See Chapter 1, above.

instead, the ads were based entirely on (often effusive) text—namely, on the letters written by upper-class authorities expounding on the virtues of the film and its social importance.[70] As the middle-classes were the demographic best suited to respond to this text-heavy style of advertising, and because they were most likely to be influenced by those prominent citizens who wrote in praise of *Damaged Goods*, middle-class audiences were clearly the target for these ads—and for this film. This is not to argue that those from other class designations were not welcome or desired at the Maritimes showings of this film, only that they were not the target of the advertising campaigns mounted by the Spencer theatre chain.

Importantly, the film *Damaged Goods* and its advertising campaign carefully positioned Maritimes theatres (particularly Spencer-owned theatres) as public spaces of both public health education and moral health import—a distinction that was aimed at securing a respectable and "clean" role for theatres within Maritimes communities. Through presenting *Damaged Goods*, with its lack of salacious, torrid scenes and its plot focusing on the upper-middle class, Spencer and his supporters were able to demonstrate the societal benefits of motion pictures to the preferred audience of middle-class viewers. The newspaper advertising for Spencer-owned theatres illustrates that this motion picture was not seen merely as entertainment; it was offered as a redemptive, educative experience that clearly aligned the movie-going pastime with the promotion of public health.[71] A key to the success of this film in the Maritimes was that the advertising focused on its educative facet through the testimonials of the official moral guardians of the community. Through offering such pronouncements of support through the film's advertising campaign, Spencer was ensuring both that the film

[70] For an example of the advertising copy, see Figure 4-6.
[71] The educational aspect of motion pictures was also theme that was earlier seen in the cooperation between the YMCA and the Spencer owned Empress Theatre in Amherst in 1912 when they organized a children's theatre. See Chapter 2.

would be profitable and that audiences would be disposed to thinking about the theatre in a more reverent light in the future.

MARITIMES THEATRES AND THE 1918 FLU PANDEMIC

Despite the role of health promotion that theatres took on in 1918, and regardless of the steps taken by theatres to create healthy spaces during the transitional eras, these businesses were still viewed with general suspicion by those concerned with public health. However, there are very few instances of theatres being ordered to close their doors for health-related reasons in the Maritime Provinces prior to the fall of 1918.[72] Although theatre operators consistently advertised assurances that motion picture theatres were clean spaces that posed no health risks to the audience, there are no recorded instances of these same concerns being expressed by the public.

Whether these advertised declarations of a theatre's cleanliness were for the benefit of Maritimes audiences or to appease those adamant reformers who were concerned with the betterment of public health is a worthwhile question. There certainly did not appear to be any concerns raised about stale air in churches or schools at that time (or in opera houses prior to the nickelodeon era). Indoor rinks, both for curling and for ice hockey, were also free from this apparent scrutiny. Theatres appear to be the only public places that were overtly challenged on their level of cleanliness for the apparent benefit of their potential patrons.

The reason why this evident double standard had to be endured by motion picture

[72] A smallpox outbreak in Moncton and Amherst caused theatres and rinks to close in these towns for short periods in February of 1908 and December of 1908. However, there was no apparent lingering mistrust of theatres in either community due to these closures, and there appears to be no protests by the managers or owners of the theatres to contest these closures. "Board of Health," *Daily News* (Amherst), January 4, 1908, 4; *Ibid*., March 5, 1908, 4; and *Ibid.,* December 29, 1908, 3.

theatres could be that continuous motion picture shows were often placed in re-purposed buildings (i.e., churches, halls, etc.) that had undergone renovations, which had made the potential addition of an air exchange system an easier proposition—especially since theatres were for-profit businesses. Alternatively, the installation (and subsequent advertising) of ventilation systems could have been wholly for the benefit of those outspoken social and moral reformers concerned about public health and sanitary reform. This latter reasoning points to apparent lingering and widespread anxieties about theatres and even the motion picture medium itself (i.e. anxiety over the physical safety or the audience composition in theatres. See Chapters 2 and 3), despite the prolonged efforts of exhibitors across North America to enhance the respectability and cleanliness of their theatres.

It was the Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918 that proved to be the stumbling block with which theatres, no matter what their level of cleanliness, could not contend. The Spanish Influenza was unlike any epidemic ever seen in modern human history up to that point. It was monumental not just for the scale of the devastation it caused, but also for its timing, coming on the heels of a war that was more costly and more devastating than any conflict ever experienced up until then. Although the flu pandemic of 1918 killed a smaller portion of the population than the Bubonic Plague of the 1300s had, it is still known even to this day as the global pandemic with the highest mortality rate, with a worldwide death toll estimated at twenty-one million.[73] In The Maritimes between 5 and 6 persons per one thousand died due to the pandemic flu of 1918, a statistic that is in keeping with the rest of North America and much

[73] John Barry, *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Plague in History* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p.4. This estimate is in the middle of those that have been registered, some place the total over 50 million and even as high as 100 million. David K. Patterson and Gerald Pyle, "The Geography and Mortality of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 65 (1991): 4.

of Western Europe.[74]

The effect of the devastating 1918 flu pandemic on North America's motion picture industry has been calculated by Richard Koszarski in a 2005 article illuminating the *Motion Picture World*'s reporting on the topic—a vein of research that had, up until that point, been widely ignored by those who investigate film history.[75] Koszarski argues that this oversight should not come as a surprise, since research on the flu pandemic has been focused on in the realms of public health, immunology, and civil rights; its effects on the economies and culture of the United States and Canada have been largely ignored.[76]

One small addition to the scant reporting of the 1918 flu pandemic on film history is in Paul Moore's *Now Playing*, where the Spanish Influenza is mentioned briefly in his conclusion. Here, Moore notes that theatres in Toronto were forced, due to their closure, to take the exhibition of films onto the streets to allow audiences a chance to "continue taking part in the performance of being at war," namely through the viewing of patriotic films and filmed speeches advocating for the purchase of war bonds and the need to save money.[77]

In the Maritime Provinces, the official government and medical response to the Spanish

---

[74] Patterson and Pyle, 17. The individual provinces varied in mortality rates, though 5 per thousand is a conservative average. The Spanish influenza reached pandemic proportions in the Maritimes in early October, 1918. The height of the disease was in mid to late October, depending on location, and the pandemic conditions appeared to end in mid-November (again, this date cannot be specific due to local conditions). Ibid., 10-11.

[75] Because the timing of the flu pandemic in motion picture history conflicts with the 'battle of the theatres' in which The First National Exhibitors Circuit was challenged by the newly-acquired exhibition wing of Adolph Zukor's Famous Players-Lasky production company, it has been a topic widely ignored by those who investigate film history. This event marked the beginning of a massive restructuring of the film industry in North America, and overshadowed the study of the month-long shutdown of the industry. See Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 72-75.

[76]Notably, however, in recent years there has been a surge of publications on the 1918 influenza pandemic, due in part to a growing fear that another deadly pandemic is on the horizon. See Richard Koszarski, "Flu Season: *Moving Picture World* reports on pandemic influenza, 1918-19," *Film History* (17:2005), pp.466-7; Jane Jenkins, "Baptism of Fire: New Brunswick's Public Health Movement and the 1918 Influenza Epidemic," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History*, 24 (2007): 318.

[77]Moore, 220-1.

Influenza pandemic in New Brunswick has recently been looked at in detail by Jane Jenkins in an article published in the *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History*. This paper illustrates that New Brunswick was in a uniquely strong situation in Canada (and in most of the world) in terms of combating the pandemic, largely because of the installation of a Ministry of Health in the New Brunswick provincial government just prior to the outbreak. It was due to the leadership of this office under the newly appointed Minister of Health, Dr. William Roberts, that there was a quick and unified response to the outbreak in New Brunswick.[78] This centralized health administration with its "autocratic powers" ensured that the effects of the flu were less severe in New Brunswick than reported in other provinces.[79] Specifically, the death rate from the Spanish Influenza averaged 6.1 per 1,000 people across all the provinces of Canada, while New Brunswick's fatality rate was significantly lower, at 4 per 1,000 people (the lowest rate in the country after Ontario, which had a rate of 3.6 per 1,000).[80]

The medical communities of New Brunswick, along with the rest of the Maritimes, had been closely following the public health crusades in Britain and the United States in terms of combating the Spanish Influenza, and were heavily influenced by the progressive public health ideologies that underpinned these movements.[81] And while the Maritimes in general were as well prepared as any region had been for the onslaught of the Spanish Influenza, there was no

---

[78] Jenkins,.326. Jenkins dramatically details the fights which Roberts was force to contend with to create the Department of Health in the New Brunswick government, while Colin Howell also illustrates the difficulties which doctors throughout the Maritime region encountered to gain influence in public policy and reform. Colin Howell, "Reform and the Monopolistic Impulse: The Professionalization of Medicine in the Maritimes," *Acadiensis*, 11 (1981).

[79] Jenkins, 330.

[80] *Ibid*., 318-19.

[81] Since 1887 New Brunswick had, through the Provincial Board of Health under the chairmanship of Dr. William Bayard, been guided by the theories of bacteriology and the germ origin of disease which were being taught by the most prestigious medical colleges in Europe and America. Similar health officers were in place throughout the Maritimes, though it was in New Brunswick that was a leader in both public health and an understanding of the needs and resources of the province. Fixed with this knowledge the health boards throughout the region were working toward better sanitation and public health of the population. See Jenkins, 322.

preparation that was truly capable of dealing with this pandemic. As the emergency of the pandemic deepened and the morbidity and mortality rates increased, closing down the public places where citizens gathered appeared to make the most sense in terms of slowing the spread of disease. Not surprisingly, theatres were among the very first public places to close.

The closing of movie theatres by health departments and municipal governments due to the Spanish Influenza was a devastating event for the nearly one hundred theatres in operation across the Maritimes at that time. Despite the care and attention most managers had given to ventilation and creating clean and modern theatres, there was nothing that could have prevented their being closed by the unprecedented disaster that was the flu pandemic. In an article published in Amherst's *Daily News* in late October, 1918, at the height of the outbreak in Nova Scotia, a detailed description of the effect that the flu was having on those in the amusement industry was published:

> Probably few people quite comprehend the peculiarly unfortunate position in which the influenza epidemic places those engaged in all branches of the amusement business throughout the eastern portions of Canada and the United States.
>
> In the Maritime Provinces alone, probably twelve hundred people are involved, all of whom, save in rare instances, will be without incomes while the theatres are closed, which gives some idea of the loss [being endured by] so many thousands in the more populous States and cities where the epidemic has a greater hold.
>
> The losses referred to are in addition to those sustained by theatre proprietors and film exchanges, who are meeting conditions unprecedented in this country, and which even the furthest sighted could hardly have anticipated. There are ten film exchanges represented in this territory and their incomes have declined 10 per cent. Theatres affected in the Maritime Provinces number about 90, and the unfortunate feature is that the present time represents the most profitable time of the year [for them]. Theatre men have just passed through a very poor summer, and things were brightening up for the fall business.
>
> Five theatrical companies, including "Chin Chin," were forced to close and some fifteen vaudeville acts in the territory were seriously inconvenienced through the enforced layoff.
>
> In the light of these conditions it is not surprising that theatre proprietors

> with their employees together with those engaged in the selling of film and other allied amusements will look forward to the abatement of the epidemic.[82]

This article illustrates that the flu pandemic—by every account a human tragedy on an unimaginable scale—also caused huge economic losses across the public amusement sector, both in the Maritimes and beyond. Indeed, theatres were in a uniquely vulnerable position in terms of feeling the full weight of the preventative public closures—more so than other businesses in the region. These were the privately owned businesses that felt the greatest economic effect of the Spanish Influenza caused mainly by the loss of income due to their being forced to close their doors to the public. The *Daily News* may have been oversimplifying the issue when it published this notice, however—at least as far as motion picture exhibitors were concerned. That is because, on October 18, the National Association of the Motion Picture Industry had announced that there would be a four-week shutdown of production (aside from serials and newsreels), making the showing of new films difficult even for those theatres that were not forced to close their doors.[83]

Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia lacked the legislative power to proclaim the province-wide closure of public spaces as imposed by the Ministry of Health in New Brunswick, and it was left to the individual community health boards to react to the Spanish Influenza. In Halifax, the City Board of Health held an emergency meeting on the morning of October 4, when the influenza pandemic was still in its initial stages in that city, to discuss precautions against the further spread of the disease. The meeting was held after reports of high mortality and morbidity rates arrived from Boston. The Halifax City Council Chambers housed the assembly, which was ironically "filled to capacity" by representatives of the medical

---

[82] *Daily News* (Amherst), October 22, 1918, 3.
[83] Koszarski, "Flu Season," 486. This is also noted in the *Acadian Recorder* (Halifax), October 16, 1918, 3.

profession, churches, schools, and theatres, along with "practically all public organizations" in the city.[84]

The meeting was a contentious one, with all sides having opinions on what needed to be done to prevent the further spread of the disease. After considerable debate, it was agreed that theatres were to be the first public spaces closed. A plea by theatre owners and their solicitors to reconsider was turned down by the Board, though city officials were willing to consider compensation for the theatre staff who were forecasted to face heavy financial losses due to the closures. During the discussions, theatres were singled out by the Chairman of the Health Board, Dr. MacKay, as the greatest avenue of contamination,[85] and it was therefore decided that they should be closed "without delay."[86] Clearly, despite the efforts that theatres had made in improving ventilation and sanitary conditions in the decade preceding the pandemic, there remained lingering concerns about the cleanliness of theatres among those who were interested in public health.

On the contrary, churches and schools were not indicated as being immediate threats to the Halifax community at the October 4 City Board of Health meeting, though it was agreed by the officials present that these spaces, too, should be closed without delay. It was countered by church officials that their sites should be regarded as "different from the buildings of amusement" (i.e., theatres), arguing that churches were fulfilling services on behalf of the "moral welfare of the people."[87] As such, church officials believed that their buildings ought to

---

[84] "All the Churches, Theatres, Schools and Colleges in Halifax City to be Closed by Order of the Health Board: Preventative Measures Against Spread of Influenza," *The Evening Mail* (Halifax), October 4, 1918, 1.
[85] This appears to echo the concerns registered by Dr. King of New Orleans in 1909. See above, n.14.
[86] "All the Churches, Theatres, Schools and Colleges in Halifax City to be Closed by Order of the Health Board: Preventative Measures Against Spread of Influenza," *The Evening Mail* (Halifax), October 4, 1918, 1.
[87] Ibid. Churches were approved to hold open air services after a request by church officials. "Open Air Services Will Be Allowed," *The Evening Mail* (Halifax), October 5, 1918, 1.

remain open so that they could offer church services to those dealing with the dual tragedies of disease and war. This was also denied by the Board. School Board representatives offered no resistance to the order to close. At the end of the meeting it was decided that the Board of Health was to be the sole arbiter in this matter for the city of Halifax, and that every measure ought to be taken to prevent the spread of the disease on a scale that was taking place in Boston, where the flu was causing unprecedented devastation.

Communities throughout Nova Scotia held similar meetings to consult on the public response to the pandemic. In New Glasgow, one Mr. Mason, the owner of the local theatre and the representative for all of the amusement spaces in the town, spoke about the potential financial loss that he and his employees faced due to the closure. However, he also stated that he was willing to accept this financial loss for the common good and was not interested in seeking any sympathy. He stated that he was only asking one favour: that the theatre be allowed to remain open for one extra night due to the "Chin Chin" play that was in town. This travelling show, which consisted of sixty-five cast and crew, had already been affected by pandemic-related closures in Halifax and "needed all the money they could get." As well, there were a large number of advanced tickets sold, though Mason did say that he would return all the money to ticket holders if the show was forced to cancel.[88] It is unclear whether or not his request was granted.

For most communities in Nova Scotia there was unified praise for the speed at which the local health boards moved to put restrictions on the assembly of large numbers of people. These decisions were largely based on the recommendations of Nova Scotia's provincial Board

[88] "Board of Health Acts Promptly", *The Eastern Chronicle* (New Glasgow), October 11, 1918, 1. Due to the fact that the *Eastern Chronicle* was a weekly paper, there is no way to ascertain whether the show was cancelled.

of Health.[89] There is no published evidence of complaints from theatre managers regarding the closures, and any recorded opinions voiced by theatre managers during the pandemic (like those of Mason in New Glasgow) were not looking for sympathy, only for recognition of the plight of their industry. For instance, when one Mr. Acker, manager of the Acker Theatre in Halifax, stated in an editorial published in the *Eastern Chronical* that there was not a single theatre operating in Canada on October 25, he was not seeking compensation for the losses his business was incurring, nor was it written expressly to illicit sympathy from the readers.[90] Rather, the stated goal of his editorial was to contextualize the situation of the theatre and motion picture industry for the readers.

The government in Prince Edward Island also moved to close sites where the public collected in the face of the Spanish Influenza. On October 12 the Public Health Officer of PEI ordered that all "public meetings and gatherings" be prohibited. Schools and churches are named specifically, and merchants were asked to avoid all crowding.[91] Motion picture theatres were not named specifically in the official public notice that was printed for a full week in all newspapers, nor were they discussed by the local health board in Charlottetown. Theatres were specified in an itemized list of regulations detailed by the public health office that were copied from those issued by the Nova Scotian government.[92]

As the pandemic continued in the Maritimes, theatres remained closed throughout the month of October. They commonly re-opened in November, only after the local boards of

[89] During the first weeks of October, 1918, the Department of Public Health in Nova Scotia published in every community newspaper an article on the prevention of the flu, which urged citizens to avoid crowds and keep out of doors. "Prevention of Influenza," *The Digby Weekly Courier*, October 11, 1918, 1.
[90] "Personal and Local," *The Eastern Chronicle* (New Glasgow), October 25, 1918, 1.
[91] "Public Notice," *Charlottetown Guardian*, October 14, 1918, 1.
[92] "Sanitary Regulations," *Charlottetown Guardian*, October 14, 1918, 5.

Figure 4-5: Advertisement, *Tribune* (Sackville, N.B.), November 14, 1918, p.8. Note that special focus has been placed on how the theatre has been "thoroughly disinfected and cleaned."

health offered assurances that the emergency was over and that the theatres in their communities were safe for the public to frequent.[93] Even in New Brunswick, the pattern appears to be that theatres were only opened after they had been cleared by local health officials (and not by the provincial health minister).

Once they received official notice that their theatres could be reopened, managers once again had to reassure audiences of the cleanliness of their sites. The influenza pandemic not only damaged the income of theatres, but it also resurrected the enduring perception that these sites were somehow unclean and therefore unsafe—something that theatre managers in the Maritimes and beyond had spent considerable energies denying in the past.

In order to reassure frightened Maritimes communities that their buildings were once again safe and "clean" places of amusement, theatre managers tended to advertise that their newly re-opened theatres had been thoroughly cleansed, as shown in an advertisement placed in Sackville, New Brunswick's *Tribune* newspaper (see Figure 4-6). While germ theory contends that cleaning and disinfecting a theatre that had been empty of crowds for over a

[93] In Charlottetown the theatres reopen on November 4th, three days after the ban was lifted. Advertisement, *The Charlottetown Guardian*, November 4, 1918, 6.

month was simple window dressing, it was nevertheless essential to creating the impression that these were once again respectable and comfortable sites for amusement.

Figure 4-6: Advertisement, *The Charlottetown Guardian*, November 4, 1918, p.6

Despite the massive devastation that the flu pandemic of 1918 caused, the Spanish Influenza brought no direct and lasting changes to theatres in the Maritimes. All theatres in the Maritimes were allowed to reopen following the month of forced closures in the autumn of 1918. Perhaps coincidentally, there were signs of restructuring in the Spencer chain of theatres immediately following the pandemic, and the Campbellton Opera House received new management in early November of 1918.[94] However, for the most part, business picked up where it had left off. By all accounts it seems that, following the emergency of the pandemic flu and the ending of the Great War, theatres' only desire was to return entertaining the region with the increasingly popular Hollywood films.

CONCLUSION

Just as theatres were decidedly becoming the most popular form of entertainment for a large portion of the North American population, communities were beginning to view communicable diseases and public health through an increasingly scientific lens. It comes as

[94] With the coming of the new management also came the hopes of improved film service for the community. See "S.C. Hurley Has Taken Charge for F.G. Spencer: Improvements to be Made", *Campbellton Graphic* (November 7, 1918), 1.

no surprise, then, that the issues of mass entertainment and public health converged as modernity took full hold on Maritime communities. Encouraged by rational thought and the adoption of scientific reasoning (based in the contemporary racist conceptions of society and culture), social reformation groups and public health advocates alike fostered a new conception of disease—one that was based in science and on the observance of facts.[95] Motion picture theatres, with their perceived mixture of immature audiences and lower-class patronage, gained a reputation in America's metropolises as being dens for disease. In the Maritimes there appear to be similar concerns, though these opinions were rarely expressed publicly.

There were nevertheless measured responses taken by Maritimes theatre owners to create the impression of "clean" theatres through such approaches as the purchasing of ventilation systems and fans to provide the perception of "pure air." The desire to create a clean (and therefore respectable) theatre was driven not so much by direct audience pressure, but rather through an aspiration of theatre owners and managers to increase business. Indeed, the addition of a ventilator or fan likely had more to do with creating comfort for audiences in newly renovated spaces than with stemming disease transmission. When communicable disease actually threatened Maritimes theatre audiences (as was the case with the Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918),[96] no ventilation system or cleaning regimen could save a theatre from forced closure. However, while motion picture houses were among the first public spaces ordered closed, likely due to residual perceptions of uncleanliness, so too were rinks, churches, and schools—all sites that were not festooned with expensive air exchanges and fans for "pure air."

---

[95] Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903), in ed. Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson, *The Blackwell City Reader* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 11; see also Habermas and Habib, 8.
[96] Ventilation was also not enough to keep the Amherst theatre open during the diphtheria scare in Amherst.

In addition to wooing desirable audiences through assurances of cleanliness, "clean air," and comfort, theatres also attempted to gain respectful middle-class audiences through the exhibition of *Damaged Goods* in the spring of 1918. F.G. Spencer's exhibition of this film, designed to warn middle-class audiences of the indiscriminate and devastating effects of syphilis on an ignorant population, coincided with a rising public discussion on venereal disease following the First World War. By all accounts, Spencer's supporters in the moral reform and public health movements hoped that audiences would receive the message of this film and take action against the domestic spread of syphilis. However, the commercial aspect of the exhibition cannot be avoided, and neither can the moral aspects of this production, which appears as the other motive for the exhibiting this film. Indeed, just like the additions of fans and ventilators during the 1910s or the "thorough cleaning" of theatres following the 1918 flu pandemic, the exhibition of *Damaged Goods* can be seen as another instance of motion picture exhibitors attempting to create a perception of respectability—and, consequently, a stable middle-class audience that would sustain their businesses well into the future.

CHAPTER 5 "GOOD" FILMS: REFLECTING THE MORALITY, THE REALITY, AND THE POLITICAL WILL IN MARITIMES THEATRES

> Why are the Nickels in the large cities so popular? The Nickel in St. John has over 3,000 elderly ladies, young people and children in attendance daily. The one in Montreal has over one million admissions annually; again why is this so? The reasons are simple but very important, it is always a GOOD SHOW in a GOOD HOUSE to a GOOD AUDIENCE. We in Lunenburg have the same here every Saturday night; the pictures are the best historical events, great dramas, famous places, amusing incidents are shown at the Opera House as in real life.[1]

INTRODUCTION

The epigraph quoted above—the sole theatre ad found in newspapers from the town of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia—is illustrative of the desired image that the nickelodeon theatres in the Maritimes wanted to project to their potential audiences during the transitional eras.[2] The advertisement emphasizes that theatres were respectable, educative commercial entertainment sites that attracted only "good" audiences from within a community by showing "good" films. As this chapter will show, to the exhibitors and audiences of the Maritimes during the transitional eras of film exhibition, "good" films meant films that echoed local interests, morals, and regional realities—and, in some instances, the priorities of politicians.

Creating a profitable motion picture theatre in any region meant offering not only a safe and clean modern space, as discussed in previous chapters, but also acceptable and

---

[1] Advertisement, *The Daily News* (Lunenburg), April 2, 1909, 3.

[2] The transitional era in Canada has been defined as spanning from 1880 and 1920, and has been closely linked to the combined influences of urbanization and increased industrial manufacturing. E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, ed., *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto and Fredericton: University of Toronto Press and Acadiensis Press, 1993), 82-233. This era can also be termed as the 'modernist' era. In terms of motion pictures, the transitional eras of motion picture exhibition take place within this wider era, although it includes in the Maritimes the establishment of nickelodeon theatres in 1907 and the creation of respectable exhibition halls and the exhibition of feature films, beginning in 1912.

appropriate films for viewing. Therefore, filmmakers, exhibitors, and those interested in the success of the industry looked to the content of their products to not only ensure their financial success, but also to minimize their potential conflicts with the dominant morals and interests of the day. For theatre owners and operators in the Maritimes provinces, who had only minimal control over the selection of films they could offer, there was little that they could actively do to control the content of the films they showed. Yet, by offering the *perception* that they were in control of the films they exhibited, theatre managers could still create an image of a respectable place of business that could attract the most profitable (and desirable) audiences of middle class men, women, and children.

The moral implications of early motion pictures has been a topic of much discussion in film history. Research into the early history of nickelodeon theatres in the large American metropolises such as New York and Chicago has produced volumes of works that investigate the "harmful" effects that were believed, at the time, to be the result of motion picture viewing.[3] Much like the fears regarding the physical safety of theatres, concerns over the content of films were propagated by those progressive forces (i.e., moral and social "uplift" groups) that were working in communities to "protect" the underprivileged from the social and moral pitfalls of modernity.[4]

---

[3] See: Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early Twentieth Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) for an essential investigation into the early censorship battles over early cinema in the United States. Also, see, Ian Christie, ed., *Audiences: Defining and Researching Screen Entertainment Reception* (OAPEN Library, www.oapen.org, Amsterdam University Press, 2012), Kathryn H. Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1996), Michael Aronson, *Nickelodeon City: Pittsburgh at the Movies, 1905-1929* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), and Dan Streible, *Fight Pictures: A History of Boxing and Early Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). For a Canadian perspective on this topic see: Paul Moore, *Now Playing: Early Moviegoing and the Regulation of Fun* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 113-152.

[4] See: Chapters 3 and 4 below. See also, Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985). Cook's work is pioneering in the field of social

This chapter will focus on how the Maritimes dealt with the complex balancing act of supporting the motion picture industry while remaining in tune with the moral and social values of the majority of Maritime audiences. This not only entailed offering so-called "moral" films, but also reflecting Maritime realities on screen, installing provincial censors, offering space for civic activities, informing audiences of relevant information, and giving the perception that the films that were being exhibited films particularly resonated with Maritimers. This chapter will also investigate how it was actually various political—not moral—priorities that strongly influenced the kinds of films that exhibitors could show in Maritimes theatres.

Specifically, this chapter will begin by considering the film *Evangeline* (Canadian Bioscope Company, 1914, lost), which particularly resonated with Maritimes audiences due to its depiction of regional history. It will also examine how the production of *Evangeline* served to support various political and economic interests in the region. Next, an investigation into the showing of moral films in the Maritimes will position Maritimes theatres as apparent self-censors in terms of the moral content of the films they showed. Then, with a discussion of various provincial censorship regimes, the focus will shift to the political attempts to control (and ultimately support) the motion picture industry in the Maritime Provinces. In conclusion, this final chapter will look at how Maritimes theatres responded to the emergency of the First World War and how these businesses used this world-altering event to further cement their position as an essential service within their communities.

---

gospel history of Canada. Although his work does not discuss the Maritimes specifically, he does reference the region and indicates a general uniformity in the social gospel movement's inspirations and overall goals across English Canada and even North America.

EVANGELINE AND THE REFLECTION OF LOCAL MARITIMES REALITIES AND VALUES

In 1912, Canada's first film production company was formed in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Called the Canadian Bioscope Company, the company was formed by Captain H. H. B. Holland, a British-born film veteran, and H. T. Oliver, an American who had worked previously with Edison and who was hired to be the company's vice-president and principal cinematographer.[5] Oliver also served as the public face of the company and was the feature of all interviews published in the trades press.[6] The impetus of the company was to raise capital from local investors in order to break into the expanding American motion picture market.[7] The Canadian Bioscope Company's first film, produced in Nova Scotia and released to much fanfare in late 1913, was an adaptation of Henry W. Longfellow's 1847 poem, "Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie."[8]

The poem, which is based on the Acadian expulsion of 1755, was a natural story selection for the premier production of the Canadian Bioscope Company. In fact, it was a predictable project due to the importance of this story to the tourism marketing campaigns that had been drawing Americans by train to the Annapolis Valley since the 1880s and, specifically, to the village of Grand-Pré, the picturesque setting of the poem and the Acadians' supposed "lost homeland." In truth, Longfellow never actually visited Nova Scotia, which is

---

[5] "Canadian Bioscope Enters Field," *Motion Picture News* (*MPN*), 9, February 7, 1914: 22.
[6] Ibid, "Longfellow's 'Evangeline' in Pictures," *MPW*, 19, January 3, 1914: 555, and "Have You Seen Evangeline?" *New York Dramatic Mirror*, January 28, 1914, 5. Oliver also took over the company after Holland's departure in 1913, prior to the release of *Evangeline*.
[7] Peter Morris, *Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema, 1895-1939* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 49-50. Investors included leading Halifax politicians, Amherst industrialists and perhaps the Canadian Pacific Railroad. Ern Dick and Chuck Labb, Personal Correspondence, October 31, 2014.
[8] "The Story of Evangeline, in Film," *The Amherst Daily News*, November 21, 1913, 4.

perhaps why his version of Grand-Pré appears more akin to a Normandy peasant's hamlet than an early North American settlement in the wilderness.[9]

Like their surroundings, the poem's heroine Evangeline and her love interest Gabriel are described as strong, vital, and beautiful.[10] Soon, however, Longfellow moves the story away from the fabled wilderness to the expulsion and dispersal of these "relatively peaceful, prosperous, and happy" people.[11] It is at this point that the conflict arises, with the forced separation of Evangeline and Gabriel. The second half of the poem is spent following Evangeline for decades as she searches the United States for Gabriel, only to reunite with him on his deathbed in Philadelphia.[12] This tragic love story, based on the real-life expulsion of the Acadian people, attracted Victorian-era readers from around the world and was translated into several languages.

The story of Evangeline, set in Grand Pré, was strategically a "good" choice for the fledgling Canadian Bioscope Company's first film, as it immediately aligned the company with some of the leading political and economic interests of the region. The railroad had been advertising to and attracting American tourists to the Annapolis Valley and also through New Brunswick from the establishment of the rail lines in the 1880s. In fact, the Evangeline poem had been a particularly favorite marketing tool of the rail companies and governments of Nova Scotia for many years, as it had coincided with the newfound ability and desire of modernized

---

[9] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Evangeline*, (Lanham: Start Publishing, 2013 e-book), 6.
[10] Ibid., 10.
[11] A.J.B. Johnson, "Imagining Paradise: The Visual Depiction of Pre-Deportation Acadia, 1850-200," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 38 (2002): 106. The key word, according to Johnson, is "relatively." He argues that the reality was far harsher, with numerous attacks, battles and difficult harvests.
[12] Ibid., 74, and Longfellow.

American middle classes to travel.[13] Rail travel was best suited to this emerging class of tourists, as it was both affordable and allowed for relatively quick trips. The Maritimes provinces were well situated to service this emerging market due to their proximity and their abundance of natural scenery—scenery that was romanticized in the poem "Evangeline."[14]

Among the first Maritimes businesses to take advantage of the touching idyll of Longfellow's imagination was the Windsor and Annapolis Railway Company (W&ARC; reorganized in 1894 as the Dominion Atlantic Railway Company). This company saw rail *tourism* as the best way to recoup costs and increase ridership in a region that lacked a sizable domestic population for a self-sustaining rail line. The pamphlets and books created by this railway and various tour companies all indicate the reality of finding the "land of Evangeline" [15] through the windows of the train. In fact, the W&ARC had even been using a logo of the heroine since at least 1882.[16]

The myth created through the Evangeline poem was also a valuable commodity to the provincial government of Nova Scotia and those whose task it was to promote tourism in the region. Historian Ian McKay argues that this work of fiction was a pillar of the region's tourism campaigns.[17] It was the blending of European civilization with a "premodern

---

[13] Ian McKay uses this concept to illuminate the tourist gaze and the antimodernist impulse of the exported culture of Nova Scotia. See Ian McKay, *Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).
[14] MacDonald, 159. For more on the historical connections between the Maritimes of Canada and the Northeastern United States, see McKay, MacDonald and Forbes and Muise.
[15] The reality of pre-deportation Acadia, as uncovered by historians, has proven this image of a peaceful, prosperous and happy rural paradise was relative, and that disruptions to the goodly and ordered society were frequent, coming from either the climate, hostile neighbours or questions of loyalty. See Phillip Buckner and John Reid, editors, *The Atlantic Region to Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 107-124; see also A.J.B Johnston, "The Call of the Archetype and the Challenge of Acadian History", *French Colonial History* 5, (2004): 63-92.
[16] MacDonald, 159. In this article MacDonald illustrates that the marketing campaigns of the Windsor and Annapolis Railway Company (W&AR) and its later reinvented enterprise, the DAR was the most active agent in promoting the visual aspects of *Evangeline*.
[17] McKay, *Quest of the Folk*.

innocence" that was the attraction for many of the touring Americans who were searching for the landscapes so vividly detailed by Longfellow.[18] Clearly, a local motion picture production of the Evangeline myth offered huge potential to further enhance the economic benefits to the Maritimes through tourism, which is probably why many of the "richest men in the Dominion" were interested in backing the motion picture—and in collecting their return on investment.[19] Furthermore, the finished product's popularity in the newspapers throughout the Maritimes provinces was most likely due to the "capitalists from Halifax and one or two other Nova Scotian towns" who funded the project, as these were probably among the individuals who stood the most to gain from the prolonged recognition of the Evangeline myth.[20]

In addition to aligning the new film company with local economic interests, the choice of *Evangeline* as the premier production for the Canadian Bioscope Company was also designed to align the new film company with the emerging *filme d'art* movement, which had been influencing motion picture production worldwide since 1908.[21] The movement, started in 1908 by a French film company named Film d'Art, was an attempt to raise the calibre of motion pictures by employing well-known stage actors and by producing film adaptions from canonized literature—all in an attempt to garner a greater share of the lucrative middle-class audience.[22] Thus, the story of Evangeline was a strategic choice for the Canadian Bioscope

---

[18] *Ibid*.
[19] "Longfellow's "Evangeline" in Pictures," *MPW*, 19 (1914): 555. There is no mention in the articles published at the time of *Evangeline*'s release that detail who these investors were. Research by Ern Dick and Chuck Labb has established that among the "richest men of the Dominion" were many well placed political men in Halifax and Amherst, including Adam Brown Crosby, a former mayor of Halifax and outgoing Conservative Member of Parliament for Halifax (1908-1911). Personal communication, October 31, 2014.
[20] Ibid. See also *MPN*, 9 (1914): 22.
[21] For more discussion of the film d'art movement and attempts to create a better class of patrons, see Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema: 1907-1915* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 42 and Rob King, "The Discourses of Art in Early Film, or, Why Not Rancière?" in *A Companion to Early Cinema*, ed. André Gaudreault, Nicolas Dulac, and, Santiago Hidalgo (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 141-162.
[22] Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema, 1896-1914* (Berkeley, University of California Press: 1994), 39-40. See also; Richard Abel, ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema* (Routledge: New York, 2005), 337-9.

Company, for it had the potential of being both a commercial and critical success for the new company while lending more respectability to the theatres in which it was shown.

In fact, many early filmmakers were quick to seize upon the Evangeline myth. This was because the themes of Christian virtue and paradise lost could easily be extrapolated from the story, and there was also a mass familiarity with the poem. The Kalem Company was the first to adapt the Evangeline poem to film in 1908—at a time when many producers in the fledgling film industry were attempting to offer culturally and morally uplifting programs to counter complaints (mostly coming from the reformation movements that were active in metropolises around North America) about the quality of motion picture shows.[23] The trade press reviews of the Kalem production of *Evangeline* (1908, lost) were positive. The *Moving Picture World* (MPW) printed that it was enthusiastic about the prospects of this film, for the story "is suitable for Sunday exhibitions, and with the lecturette should make a hit."[24] Despite the positive reviews and its apparent natural relation to audiences in the Maritimes provinces, there remains no evidence of it being shown in the region.

Another motion picture production of the poem, this one in 1911 by the Selig Polyscope Company, was similarly lauded by the trade press, stating that the film was very "acceptable . . . as an educational film."[25] This version of *Evangeline* was also praised for the scenery and how it closely resembled the land that Longfellow described.[26] Again, this film appeared to be missing from theatres in the Maritimes.

---

[23] Bowser, 42.
[24] "Our Visits," *The Moving Picture World* (*MPW*), February 1, 1908, 2: 92.
[25] "Comments on the Films," *MPW*, December 30, 1911, 10: 1071.
[26] Ibid. The review states that the village of Arcadia in Nova Scotia was glimpsed in the film, though no evidence exists of the filmmakers visiting the province. This film is also lost.

The announcement that the Canadian Bioscope Company was going to use the Evangeline myth as the basis of the first feature film produced in the Maritimes was greeted with enthusiasm in 1912.[27] This, despite the fact that few locals were involved in the production of the film, with only a handful of extras listed as being from Nova Scotia.[28]

Figure 5-1: Advertisement, *The Moving Picture World*, Vol.19, No. 5, January 31, 1914.

Holland assembled a cast of film veterans with mixed experience, mostly imported from the United States, including Americans Laura Lyman, who played Evangeline, and E.P. Sullivan, who played Father Felician.[29]

This lack of local participation in the production of *Evangeline* did not appear to diminish the importance that some Nova Scotian newspapers placed on the film, however—nor did it affect the popularity of the film with these newspapers when it was released. In November 1913, when the company announced that *Evangeline*

[27] See: *Acadian Recorder*, 10 December 1912 and *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 18 December, 1913. See also, Ernest Dick, "In Search of The Canadian Evangeline," *River Review*, 3 (1997): 149-154.
[28] Dick, 150.
[29] *MPN*, 9: 22.

would be released in the course of a few weeks, the newspapers in Halifax and Amherst carried the story with enthusiasm. *The Amherst Daily News* published at least three articles promoting the film, describing the production details and reprinting a large review from *The Moving Picture World*.[30] This heavy attention, which was reproduced nowhere else in the Maritimes, was likely because many of the shareholders of the company were from Amherst.[31]

Upon receiving the scenario (or viewing a print) of the Canadian Bioscope Company's film *Evangeline*, the trade press in New York offered enthusiastic encouragement for the film.[32] For instance, the MPW review of *Evangeline*, written by George Blaisdell and printed in January 1914, praised the faithfulness of the scenery and the skills of the cast.[33] The importance of the "natural scenery" to the film's reviews is pronounced by the fact that it is highlighted in many of the film's advertisements (see Figure 5-1). Indeed, according to this review, the film opens as the poem does, with the camera focusing on images of "the forest primeval," which sits at the edge of the small habitation of Acadia. The scene then switches to bucolic visions of harvesting corn and preparing the fields for the coming winter, with the priest as the centre of the scene. According to Blaisdell, Father Felician appears as a focus of the community—as the "true father of his flock, the friend and counselor."[34]

---

[30] "The Story of Evangeline, in Film," *The Amherst Daily News*, November 21, 1913, 4; "Canadian Bioscope Co. Will Produce Evangeline," *The Amherst Daily News*, December 4, 1913, 1; and "'Evangeline' will be at the Empress," *The Amherst Daily News,* February 5, 1914, 4.
[31] "Advertising Amherst," *The Amherst Daily News*, August 16, 1913, 1. The Canadian Bioscope Company is mentioned as the filmmaker of choice for the production of promotional films for the town because most of the shareholders are from Amherst.
[32] There is no evidence that Oliver did not take a print of the film to New York to show potential investors or distributors. Given the detail of the reviews in the New York press, there is suspicion that this may have been what happened.
[33] "Evangeline," *MPW*, 19, January 3, 1914, 662.
[34] Ibid.

Through placing the focus on the religious leader right from the opening scene, the Maritimes filmmakers appear to pre-emptively placating the influential reform groups that were active across North America at the time—many of which, as mentioned above, looked upon motion pictures with suspicion or hostility.[35] In fact, for the reviewers of the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, this film was a "breath of fresh air" coming just after a spate of films that were "verging on the indecent."[36] The *Mirror* also interviewed Oliver, who indicated that the choice of *Evangeline* as the Canadian Bioscope Company's first film was because of the story's purity and its accompanying value in "the American market."[37]

Against this backdrop of wholesome village life, it was the character of Evangeline that stood out for reviewers. The actress was singled out for praise by Blaisdell, who cited her "wholesome, intensely human" appearance, as well as her ability to "satisfy the eye."[38] Placing emphasis on the innocence and conventional beauty of the heroine—and on the wholesomeness of the Acadian village in general—maintained Longfellow's theme of these people as blameless victims of an oppressive regime that was forcing their removal from their Eden-like homeland. In addition to this meritorious aspect of the film, however, it seems that what Maritimers were most attracted to in terms of *Evangeline* was the opportunity to see local scenery (and, by extension, local realities) reflected on the screen for all the world to see.

Notably, in terms of Canadian showings of the film, the Canadian Bioscope Company decided that it would tour *Evangeline* through a booking system as opposed to licensing

---

[35] This is also the apparent motivation behind the praise in the trade press of the 1908 and 1911 versions of *Evangeline*.
[36] *New York Dramatic Mirror*, January 28, 1914, 5.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Evangeline," *MPW*, 19, January 3, 1914, 622.

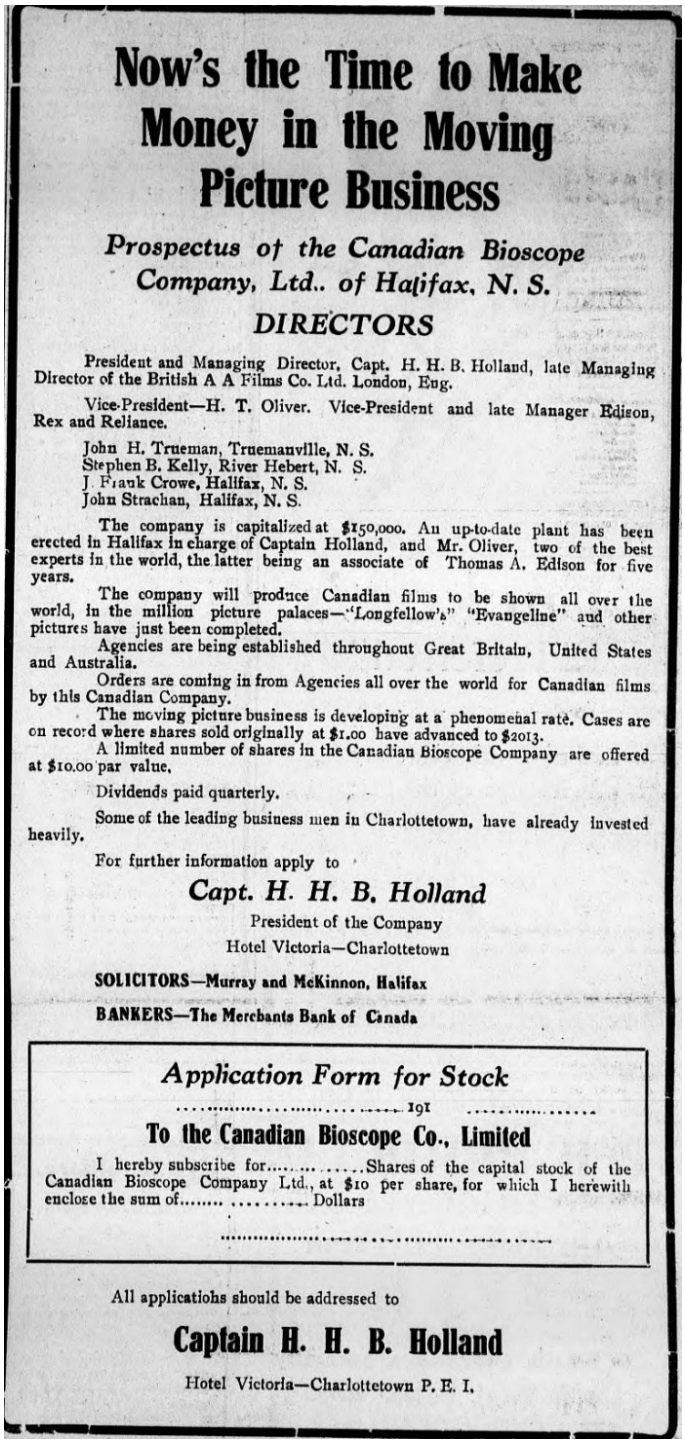
viewings and distributing the film through local distributors.[39] This meant that the film toured the Maritimes in much the same way as itinerant exhibitors had toured in previous years: with a single print of *Evangeline* travelling around the provinces.[40] In terms of Maritimes stops, the film toured Nova Scotia almost exclusively, making only one stop in New Brunswick (in Moncton) and one rather curious exhibition in Prince Edward Island (in Charlottetown).

In fact, the Charlottetown screening of *Evangeline* was the film's first public exhibition in the Maritimes, taking place on January 6, 1914—three weeks before the Halifax premier. This exhibition was curious in that the exhibitors had a purpose other than simply creating momentum for the distribution of their film, as most film premieres strived to do. Rather, the Canadian Bioscope Company arrived at Charlottetown's People's Theatre with two additional films to screen—presumably in hopes of attracting further investment, which was clearly on the company's mind at the time (see Figure 5-2: Advertisement, *Charlottetown Guardian*, January 9, 1914, p.5.

). Regardless, not only was *Evangeline* shown that night (to a full house), but so too were reels showing the fox industry on the Island.

[39] There was a multiplicity of distribution strategies used in the film industry by producers during the transitional era (between 1908 and 1917). See Ben Brewster, "Periodization of Early Cinema," in ed. Charlie Keil and Shelly Stamp, *American Cinema's Transitional Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 66-75.

[40] A similar exhibition strategy was used with resounding success for *The Birth of a Nation*, which is discussed later on in this chapter. See Melvyn Stokes, *D.W. Griffith's* The Birth of a Nation*: A History of the "Most Controversial Motion Picture of All Time"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).



Now's the Time to Make Money in the Moving Picture Business

Prospectus of the Canadian Bioscope Company, Ltd.. of Halifax, N. S.

DIRECTORS

President and Managing Director, Capt. H. H. B. Holland, late Managing Director of the British A A Films Co. Ltd. London, Eng.

Vice-President—H. T. Oliver. Vice-President and late Manager Edison, Rex and Reliance.

John H. Trueman, Truemanville, N. S.
Stephen B. Kelly, River Hebert, N. S.
J. Frank Crowe, Halifax, N. S.
John Strachan, Halifax, N. S.

The company is capitalized at $150,000. An up-to-date plant has been erected in Halifax in charge of Captain Holland, and Mr. Oliver, two of the best experts in the world, the latter being an associate of Thomas A. Edison for five years.

The company will produce Canadian films to be shown all over the world, in the million picture palaces—"Longfellow's" "Evangeline" and other pictures have just been completed.

Agencies are being established throughout Great Britain, United States and Australia.

Orders are coming in from Agencies all over the world for Canadian films by this Canadian Company.

The moving picture business is developing at a phenomenal rate. Cases are on record where shares sold originally at $1.00 have advanced to $2013.

A limited number of shares in the Canadian Bioscope Company are offered at $10.00 par value.

Dividends paid quarterly.

Some of the leading business men in Charlottetown, have already invested heavily.

For further information apply to

Capt. H. H. B. Holland

President of the Company
Hotel Victoria—Charlottetown

SOLICITORS—Murray and McKinnon, Halifax

BANKERS—The Merchants Bank of Canada

Application Form for Stock

.....191 .....

To the Canadian Bioscope Co., Limited

I hereby subscribe for.....Shares of the capital stock of the Canadian Bioscope Company Ltd., at $10 per share, for which I herewith enclose the sum of..... ..... Dollars

.....

All applications should be addressed to

Captain H. H. B. Holland

Hotel Victoria—Charlottetown P. E. I.

Figure 5-2: Advertisement, *Charlottetown Guardian*, January 9, 1914, p.5.

It was the film of the black foxes playing in the snow on Mr. Frank Bovyer's farm in Bunbury, PEI that the *Charlottetown Guardian* saw as the truly valuable component of the evening. It was thought that this was a "splendid advertisement" for the black fox industry on the Island and a film that was expected to be seen in picture houses across the continent.[41] There is no evidence, however, that the film of the black fox farm was ever exported beyond the Island. What is more likely is that this film was created as merely an example of the possibilities for the motion picture industry beyond entertainment.[42] Importantly, however, these Maritimers were most impressed by seeing their own rural realities and daily lives reflected on the silver screen through the images of the black foxes

[41] "The Land of Evangeline," *Charlottetown Guardian*, January 7, 1914, 9.
[42] This aspect of the use of motion pictures for commercial promotion is an area of research that can be further developed in the region. Amherst, the Annapolis Valley and the provincial government of Nova Scotia all have evidence of either interest in creating or having commissioned motion pictures for tourist or industrial promotion.

and also taken by the potential opportunities for growth that such reflections could bring. Their positive response is indicated by the fact that Prince Edward Island investors were listed as Canadian Bioscope Company investors when the company collapsed.[43]

The touring of *Evangeline* began in earnest on February 2, 1914 in Halifax, where the film was reportedly met with capacity audiences for continuous showings daily from 2:00 in the afternoon until 11:00 at night, permitting up to seven performances a day for six days. Of the four newspapers from Halifax, only two (the *Halifax Herald* and the *Acadian Recorder*) offered reviews of the show. Both of these reviews were glowing, urging readers to attend the performance not only because it was a meritorious one, but also because it was filmed locally. In fact, the *Halifax Herald* suggested that audiences see the film in order to watch the several locals who appeared on screen, along with scenery from close to home (as some of the scenes were taken in the suburbs of Halifax and Dartmouth).[44] Much like the enthusiasm published in the Charlottetown *Guardian*, Haligonians appeared impressed by seeing their own local realities reflected in film.

Following the successful showing in Halifax, the film traveled to Amherst, where it played for three days at the Empress theatre, again to positive reviews. Similar to the Halifax papers, *The Daily News* in Amherst highlighted the local qualities of *Evangeline* and the historical accuracy of the production. It also warned audiences to expect "a packed house."[45]

Evangeline was popular in nearly every Nova Scotian town it toured, with near universal praise coming from the reviews in local newspapers. Notably, one consistent

---

[43] "Canadian Bioscope Company is Nominally in Business," *Journal of Commerce* (Montreal), November 9, 1914, 6.
[44] "Evangeline at the Empire Theatre" *Halifax Herald*, February 3, 1914, 4.
[45] *The Amherst Daily News*, February 9, 1914, 4.

comment in all of the reviews and advertising for the film was the importance of the local scenery in the motion picture (see Figure 5-1). Because the scenes were filmed in the Annapolis Valley, with genuine dykes and fields as a background, the production was said to have been given a note of realism. In Pictou, for instance, the preview—most likely supplied by the advance agent for the company—praised the film's realistic portrayal of the "immortal poem" because the scenes "of the photoplay are taken upon the very ground on which the characters in the poem are said to have stood."[46] And while this element of geographic accuracy was certainly a positive aspect for Maritimes audiences, it seems clear that a related factor that made Maritimes audiences consider this to be a "good" film was the fact that it reflected scenes from their own region (and, by extension, their own realities) on the screen.

It was no surprise that Maritimes audiences were primed to want to see the film for its local and historical nature, and positive reviews were nearly universal in the region and beyond. The only negative review of the film in the Maritimes was printed in the *Pictou Advocate*, which states not only that the photography was poor, but also that it was "not worthy of a company styling itself Canadian."[47] However, there was a belief elsewhere in the Maritimes that the film marked the beginning of international success for the new Canadian film production company, and that it perhaps even marked the beginning of a new industry in the region.[48]

Unfortunately, the Canadian Bioscope Company could not build on the success of *Evangeline*. Following the touring of this film across North America, the company released at

---

[46] "Special Local Advts – Entertainment", *Pictou Advocate*, February 21, 1914, 1.
[47] Personal, *Pictou Advocate*, February 28, 1914, 1.
[48] "The Story of Evangeline, in Film," *The Amherst Daily News*, November 21, 1913, 1, "Longfellow's Evangeline in Moving Pictures," *The Charlottetown Guardian*, December, 22, 1913, 1 and Longfellow's "Evangeline" in Pictures," *MPW*, 19 January 3, 1914, 555.

least three other short, multi-reel films in quick succession. These films, which were based on more contemporary themes, used the Nova Scotia scenery to represent other landscapes, from Mexico to British Columbia.[49] Nova Scotia, it seems, became simply a versatile backdrop for a story.

Although these films were offered for general release, only one appeared in Maritimes theatres. After the release of *Evangeline* and before the demise of the Canadian Bioscope Company, the Empress theatre in Amherst ran just one advertisement saying that a Canadian film was to be offered.[50] From all appearances, these films were designed (much as *Evangeline* was) for the American market. According to Peter Morris, before the company folded, the Canadian Bioscope Company also made single-reel comedy shorts using local talent, which he assumes were made for local consumption; however, none of these titles appeared in any Maritimes advertising.[51] By November 1914, the Canadian Bioscope Company collapsed and the films, including *Evangeline*, were auctioned off along with all of the company's assets.[52]

Thus, although *Evangeline* was a local picture, and although the Canadian Bioscope Company represented local investors and economic interests, in the end it seems that the Canadian Bioscope Company used the Annapolis Valley and the Longfellow poem in the same way that the rail companies and the provincial government made use of the story: to

---

[49] This is a familiar position for Nova Scotia in film. Recent Hollywood productions in the province conform to this model, including *K19: The Widow Maker* (Kathryn Bigelow, 2002) where Halifax stands in for a Russian port city and *The Scarlet Letter* (Roland Joffé, 1995) where Shelburne represents a 1666 Massachusetts Bay colony. The Nova Scotia Government website, film.ns.ca, still touts the pre-modern qualities of the landscape as an attraction to international film productions.
[50] Advertisement, *The Amherst Daily News* May 9, 1914, 4. This ad is for the film *In the Enemy's Power*.
[51] Morris, 50-51.
[52] "Canadian Bioscope Company Is Nominally in Business," *The Journal of Commerce* (Montreal). November 9, 1914, 6.

perpetuate the image of a pre-modern Eden surviving at an easy distance from the modern world.

MORAL FILMS IN THE MARITIMES

According to *The Moving Picture World*, the 1914 version of *Evangeline* held a distinctive position among films of its era; it was not only a valuable title for the general exhibitor, but could also prove interesting for "churches and schools."[53] There was no evidence of any special screenings of *Evangeline* outside of motion picture theatres in Nova Scotia, however, although clergy and educators were willing to offer letters of support for the film. For instance, when the Casino theatre in Sydney exhibited the film in March (see Figure 5-3), the theatre published the following letter, offered by G. R. Matell of The Christ Church Rectory in Windsor and the Archdeacon of Nova Scotia:

> My Dear Sir.– On behalf of the children, and also the men and women of Windsor, I wish to thank you for the splendid interpretation of "Evangeline," given to us this afternoon and evening in the Nickel Theatre.
>
> The education value of this picture is certainly great, but beyond that, the pure and uplifting scenes, in the great poem, that stirred the heart and dimmed the eye, as they passed before us in the very living reality, truly a lasting gain, I feel sure, to all who were privileged to be there.
>
> It is a real pride to us, as well, to know that a Canadian Company conceived and carried out to admirable result, the making and staging of the splendid picture, that interprets so vividly, and with so much historic accuracy, Longfellow's immortal poem.[54]

This praise of the film was also reprinted in Yarmouth.[55] The "uplifting" nature of the production is also mentioned in a variety of other local advertisements, though it is most often overshadowed by the importance of the local production and realistic representation of the

[53] "Evangeline", *MPW*, 19, January 3, 1914, 662.
[54] Advertisement, *Sydney Post*, March 7, 1914, 7.
[55] Advertisement, *Yarmouth Times*, February 27, 1914, 3.

story. The *Truro Daily News* even went so far as to argue that it is the patriotic duty for Nova Scotians to see this piece of "Nova Scotia *history*"[56], and The Women's Council of Truro also offered support for the film in this edition of the *Daily News*, urging all adults and children to see the "Evangelistic [sic] pictures."[57] In Windsor and Middleton, the film is offered as an example of what was hoped to be the future of films to be offered by the local theatres. This despite the slightly increased admission costs for *Evangeline*.[58]


CASINO

LONGFELLOW'S IMMORTAL POEM

IN TWO EPOCHS AND FIVE REELS

EVANGELINE

PRODUCED BY THE CANADIAN BIOSCOPE CO. IN THE ANNAPOLIS VALLEY AT A COST OF MORE THAN $30,000.

100 PEOPLE IN THE CAST || OVER 200 SCENES SHOWN

5,000 FEET OF FILM USED

Evangeline, Gabriel, Father Felician, Basil, Benedict and their Acadian friends reincarnated on the screen.

FOUR EXHIBITIONS EACH DAY 2.30, 4.30, 7.30, 8.45

Coming Wednesday and Thursday.—AN EXCITING HONEYMOON,—Pathe Two-Reel Comedy.

Figure 5-3: Advertisement, *Sydney Daily Post*, March 10, 1914, p.5.

In this way, *Evangeline* was akin to the genre of so-called "moral films" that were being produced in North America during the transitional era marked by the creation and promotion of feature films. These moral films were, in effect, a response to the arguably "depraved" content of many of the popular films that were being shown across the continent. Indeed, there were many instances in the transitional age when the exhibition of certain films was challenged for their injurious effects on the morality of the viewing population. However, certain other motion pictures (i.e., moral films) were also occasionally employed by exhibitors

[56] "'Evangeline' at the Princess", *Daily News* (Truro), February 19, 1914, 8. Italics added.
[57] "'Evangeline' in Pictures, *Ibid*., 4.
[58] Prices across Nova Scotia for *Evangeline* ranged between 15 and 35 cents per adult admission, which was higher than the average theatre admission of 10 cents.

to aid in the work of moral reform in communities, and to enhance the respectability of the business.

Complaints about the moral implications of motion picture theatres first entered public forums in the Maritimes beginning in 1907, during the transition from itinerant exhibitors to the permanent exhibition sites commonly referred to as nickelodeons. In Halifax, in July of 1907, there was a call from the city's chief of police to rein in the licensing of nickel theatres. This call came amidst a flourishing of nickel theatres in Halifax over the late spring and early summer of 1907, with four having opened and at least two more reportedly applying for licencing. Police Chief Nicholas Power, citing evidence from New York and Chicago (see Chapter 2 above, for further discussion of these moral concerns), argued that these theatres—and the shows that they offered—were dangerous. The dangers were mainly because these businesses supposedly tempted youth into criminal activity for the price of a nickel.[59] Indeed, the moral degradation of Halifax's impressionable youth was one of Power's main concerns—although his worry didn't necessarily stem from the 'immoral' content of the films, but rather from the tempting presence of popular commercialized entertainment. In fact, his main complaint was with the theatres themselves—namely, their overall level of safety and cleanliness (see the discussion in previous chapters).[60] Despite the warnings offered by the chief of police, however, the politicians of the city of Halifax apparently saw no danger in the nickel theatres as there was no reaction to Power's advice.

In Amherst, as nickelodeon theatres began to proliferate throughout the town in the summer and fall of 1907, concerns were also raised but not acted upon. In particular, in

[59] See "Against the Nickel," *Daily Echo* (Halifax), July 12, 1907, 1.
[60] Power's concerns were part of the general conversation around nickel theatres in the Maritimes. See Chapter 3.

November of 1907, when there were three motion picture theatres operating in the town, one concerned citizen wrote to the *Amherst Daily News* to complain about the depraved moral quality of the films shown in the theatres and their lack of local content. The editors of the newspaper—who claimed to be neither patrons nor fans of motion pictures, having apparently never been to any of the nickel theatres operating in the community—nevertheless offered a strong defence of these businesses in an editorial. They were quick to support these businesses, writing that there had been a perceptible decrease in the number of "drunks" in the streets of Amherst since the establishment of these nickel theatres.[61] They further argued that this positive effect was sufficient to counteract what they claimed to be the weekly loss of $2,000 to $3,000 of income from the town on account of these businesses.[62] While there is no evidence to suggest that public drunkenness was a major problem in Amherst, the "drunks" that the editors were referring to were probably the scores of young men, sometime inebriated, who had moved to the community from the surrounding rural areas on account of Amherst's growing number of modernized factories and workshops.[63]

It seems that the *Amherst Daily News* reader was reflecting the rather negative view of motion picture theatres stemming from reformers in urban regions such as Toronto, Chicago

---

[61] However, there was an active temperance society in the community. See C. Mark Davis, "Small Town Reformism: The Temperance Issue in Amherst, Nova Scotia," in ed. Larry McCann, *People and Place: Studies of Small Town Life in the Maritimes* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1987), 125-136.

[62] It is unknown what was meant by the loss of income from the town, since the theatres in Amherst at this time were advertised as being locally owned. Only the films were imported.

[63] See "The Moving Pictures," *The Amherst Daily News*, November 21, 1907, 3. The town of Amherst was undergoing an industrial bourgeoning in the period between 1900 and 1907, with its population more than doubling from slightly more than 4,000 to just fewer than 10,000. Despite this growth, the town still appeared to self-identify as a small community. Indeed, 'Busy Amherst' had earned the distinction of being "one of the region's most important and rapidly growing manufacturing centres" in these years, and as such had attracted a large population of industrial workers who were "compelled to walk the streets and pass their time away in saloons." A similar conclusion regarding the benefits of motion picture theatres was made in Saint John, though the article in Saint John's *The Sun* was most likely obtained from a wire service, as it names no proprietors of theatres or the liquor dealers. See "Moving Picture Shows a Great Temperance Help," *The Sun* [Saint John], September 30, 1907, 1.

or New York—although seemingly stopping short of registering explicit concern about the moral content of the films shown in the Maritimes. However, according to the *Amherst Daily News* editors, the greatest benefit of the theatres in the Maritimes was a moral one: they accessed a segment of the population that had not yet been "reached" by the churches, and who could therefore be excused for going "beyond the strict line of demarcation that [the] Reader desires to see maintained."[64] Clearly, the *Amherst Daily News* viewed nickel theatres as a lesser evil for the leisure time of young men in modern society—at least until they saw their way into a church. Reflecting the more nuanced ideals that the progressive reformation movement espoused in the Maritimes in this era, the Amherst newspaper was proposing that motion pictures and the theatres that offered them could be beneficial to a modern community as a distraction from the other temptations, such as the saloons.[65] It was this same belief that would lead moral reformers to see an opportunity in the exhibition of moral films in theatres in the coming years.

To some sceptical citizens, the goal of screening morally uplifting films may have been simply to bolster the position of movie houses in the eyes of those who purported to protect the morality of the community; these moral films may also have been selected by exhibitors as a way to stem potential protests against filmed entertainment. However, less-sceptical citizens might have regarded the showing of these moral films as evidence of the positive role that motion pictures (and, by extension, motion picture theatres) could offer the community when they were properly guided. Regardless of theatre operators' true motivations, it seems clear

[64] "Reader's Views," *The Amherst Daily News*, November 22, 1907, 2.
[65] Forbes and Muise, 195. For a more general central Canadian perspective on the social gospel movement that acted as the inspiration and background of the progressive era in the Maritimes, see: Cook.

that screening these moral films was proof that exhibitors had a grasp on the "moral temperature" of their audience.

Indeed, the inclusion of films that advanced a didactic tone, either through religion or social uplift, shows that exhibitors were willing to offer their theatres to assist in the moral crusades that were raging in the transitional eras in the Maritimes. However, this was not simply an altruistic move by Maritimes theatre managers; rather, it was primarily a calculated decision made to create the perception of respectability so that these commercial entities could build and maintain a profitable business and attract a greater portion of the middle-class audience.

Films such as *Evangeline*, as well as *Damaged Goods* (American Film Company, 1915, lost), *Ten Nights in a Bar Room* (Thanhouser Film Corp., 1910), *L'Inferno* (or *Dante's Inferno*, Milano Film, 1911), and *The Little Cripple* (Kalem Company, 1911), were used to create a measure of moral education for Maritimes audiences while also providing some entertainment.[66] For similar reasons, numerous religious film productions also toured the region, including several filmed versions of *The Passion Play*, which depicted the events surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[67] Yet, despite the ostensible altruism of showing such productions, none of these moral-uplift films were offered free of charge by the

[66] *Damaged Goods* is detailed in Chapter 4. *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* played at the Liverpool Opera House on December 20, 1911, and in Chatham in 1915 (see Advertisement, *Liverpool Advance*, December 20, 1911, 2; and Town Topics, *Gazette* [Chatham], October 29, 1915, 4). *Dante's Inferno* played in Campbellton in April 1912 (see Advertisement, *Campbellton Graphic*, April 12, 1912, 5). *The Little Cripple* played at the Orpheum in Truro in December 1911 (see Advertisement, *The Daily News* [Truro], December 18, 1911, 1). All of these films were lauded as offering moral education to audiences through melodramatic stories.

[67] *The Passion Play* toured the region extensively between 1899 and 1910, showing multiple films (see e.g., Advertisement, *Acadian Recorder* [Halifax], July 24, 1899, 3; "Passion Play," *The Amherst Daily News*, November 22, 1907, 2; and Advertisement, *Bridgewater Bulletin*, April 21, 1908, 5).

theatres.[68] In fact, moral films were often more costly for audiences to view than the regular 'immoral' fare.[69]

Despite the potential for them to increase their profit margins on a film-by-film basis, exhibitors had to be mindful of the course they took when offering films that contained a message of moral-uplift for the audience. Although moral films were popular with reformers and with those who wished to improve the level of popular entertainment, there were not enough of these titles to exclusively sustain a motion picture theatre financially. This scarcity of morally uplifting films was alleviated in part during the early nickelodeon period, between 1907 and 1909, as producers were attempting to gain a more inclusive audience.[70] Yet these measures were not necessarily enough to sway the mass-market pressures felt by the film industry, as well as the desire of motion picture producers to consistently make a profit.[71] Indeed, the films that were popular with moral reformers were not necessarily popular with a diverse mass market. Hence, since movie making was primarily a commercial enterprise, only a limited number of moral films were made. And although exhibitors were interested in showing morally uplifting titles for the perception that such exhibitions evoked, they

---

[68] There is only one recorded instance of a moral film being offered for free, and it was a religious film. Specifically, the International Bible Students Association (IBSA) of Pennsylvania toured theatres around Nova Scotia during the summer of 1914, offering a week-long programme of the *Creation* photo-drama free of charge and without even a request for donation. The use of religious films in Maritimes theatres is an area of research that needs to be more fully developed. The touring of *The Passion Play* and *Creation* marks only the surface of what can only be a very rich field of inquiry.

[69] For instance, as noted above *Evangeline* was offered at a premium at most theatres. As well *Damaged Goods* often played for fifty cents or one dollar, as compared to the average admission cost of between ten and fifteen cents for 'regular' films. See Chapter 4. This is further indication that it was the middle-class that was the target of these films, as it was these citizens who could better afford the increased costs.

[70] Grieveson, 119.

[71] See Grieveson. 151-191.

understood that these morally uplifting titles alone were not able to maintain a sustainable business.[72]

As will be shown in the next section, this *perception* of morally upright film exhibition in the Maritimes was not only advanced by the theatres. The instillation of provincial censors also assisted in advancing the notion that the films offered in Maritime theatres were vetted locally for their moral content.

CENSORSHIP IN THE MARITIMES PROVINCES

Although the *Amherst Daily News* reader complained about the questionable morality of the films shown in Amherst theatres, there are no other recorded instances in the Maritimes of concerns being voiced about the moral content of the motion pictures shown during the first years of the transitional eras of motion pictures, between 1907 and 1917. In fact, after nickel theatres were established in many Maritimes communities beginning in 1907, there was no apparent alarm or protest regarding the morality of the films shown—at least, none that was registered in newspapers or other public documents (other than the rather vague unease expressed by the *Amherst Daily News* reader).

Perhaps due to this lack of moral alarm, the censorship of films was not viewed as an essential issue in the Maritimes. Indeed, the moral panics in and around 1907, of New York, Pittsburgh, Chicago, and Toronto were not found here, although these concerns were

[72] Hull House in Chicago, run by Jane Addams, offered perhaps the most well-known attempt to offer an exclusively 'moral' motion picture theatre to combat the 'pedestrian' programmes offered at the neighbourhood nickel theatres. This experiment ended in 1907, after a single summer of moral film exhibition. This moral movie house closed down without comment from Hull House administrators. See J.A. Lindstrom, "'Almost Worse than the Restrictive Measures': Chicago Reformers and the Nickelodeons, *Cinema Journal*, 39 (1999): 95. For examples of Maritime theatres that attempted to follow Addam's example of morally upright entertainment, see Chapters 2 and 3 below.

acknowledged to exist.[73] However, this seemingly blasé response to the moral quality of the motion pictures shown was not due to a lack of concern. Rather, it was due to the simple fact that the films, when they arrived in the Maritimes, had already been through censors in other regions. At least, this was the argument put forward by local exhibitors.

For instance, in Amherst in 1912, the theatres argued that there was no need for a censor in their community. According to a notice put out by the management of the Empress and the Gem theatres, policing films was best done through the direct cooperation of the theatres and the community members themselves. The notice, published in the "Our Weekly Dramatic Supplement" section of the *Amherst Daily News*, stated that "every man, woman and child in Amherst" was offered a position on the Board of Censors.[74] Specifically, audience members were asked to speak directly to the theatre management to register complaints or concerns about the moral quality of any motion picture, and to create a conversation about the moral quality of the films that were to be shown in the community. According to the Amherst theatres, any official censorship was simply not necessary, as the films that were screened by these theatres had already been vetted by the censors in New York and Boston.[75] Clearly, these theatres were working hard to advance the perception that they and their audiences collectively vetted films according to Maritimes sensibilities.

As a transitional eras of motion pictures began with the foundation of nickel theatres in 1907, the debate over motion picture censorship was not a topic of great importance in the

---

[73] Chief Power references New York and Chicago in his claim against the motion picture theatres in Halifax (see Chapter One, above). See also "Women's Council Vote Against Theatrical Censor," *The Amherst Daily News*, July 5, 1910, 6. For Toronto, see Moore, *Now Playing*, 113-152; for Pittsburgh, see Aronson, 154-207; for a general overview of the moral panics and the censorship regimes in the United States, see: Grieveson. For Toronto, see: Moore, *Now Playing*.

[74] "Important Announcement!" *The Amherst Daily News*, April 6, 1912, 5. This advertising segment in the most popular newspaper in Amherst is detailed more in Chapter 2 below.

[75] Ibid.

Maritimes. Of far more significance was the subject of theatre safety, as discussed at length in the previous chapters.[76] By the time the debates about nickel theatres gained the attention of the politicians in the Maritimes provincial governments in the later years of this transitional era, the resulting discussions appear to be less focused on the actual entertainment offered, and more concerned with the safety and composition of the audiences.[77] It was as nickel theatres were being replaced (at least in name) by more respectable institutions that a further transitional era was initiated, and this coincided also with a change in political concerns.

When motion picture theatres were first mentioned in the Provincial Legislature of Nova Scotia in March 1911, the content of the films was never even touched on. Rather, the debate centred on the ingress and egress of motion picture theatres, as there was a government bill being prepared on the subject. The belief that these sites posed a fire danger to the community was not discounted, but it was argued that this perceived risk could be tolerated due to the overall social benefit that theatres brought to their communities. Mr. James MacGregor, the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, argued that motion picture theatres were positioned to "displace patrons from saloons," and thus ought not be blocked from opening (but still made safer in operating through improved "ingress and egress").

MacGregor's perception of the social benefit of theatres was notably similar to that of the *Amherst Daily News* editors four years prior. Indeed, this form of entertainment was widely considered a welcomed distraction that could offer an alternative for those who patronized saloons and bars. Just as Roy Rosenzweig first noted in his ground-breaking labour

[76] See Chapters 3 and 4.
[77] See Police Chief Power's concerns, above.

study *Eight Hours for What We Will*, nickel theatres across North America were often cited as having a net benefit to the community due to the distraction that they offered.[78]

The government of Nova Scotia's response in terms of regulating theatres was to legislate "means of egress from theatres, moving picture shows and other places of amusement" in a bill that was introduced to the House of Assembly on March 23, 1911.[79] This act was not designed to respond to any sort of moral concerns over the content of the films shown (e.g., through censorship), but rather responded to the most common complaint against these sites: the lack of updated exits.[80] The legislation did, however, lay the foundation for the establishment of a measure of government oversight for motion picture theatres—as well as for the films offered inside.

In New Brunswick, the provincial legislature appeared to be slightly more concerned over the content of the motion pictures being shown in theatres, as this province actually adopted a censorship provision in 1912. In this case, the legislature took issue with the fact that children under the age of fifteen were being allowed into the shows—although, like in Nova Scotia, the chief concern was not about the morality of the films so much as the safety of the theatres.[81] Thus, in 1912, the New Brunswick Provincial Legislature adopted a bill to regulate theatres. The bill, introduced by Mr. W. C. H. Grimmer, the Attorney General of the province, was written to mirror those laws already in place in Ontario and Quebec; notably, it was meant to legislate both the moral and physical protection of children.[82]

---

[78] Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 191-221.
[79] Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly, March 23, 1911, 180.
[80] For a detailed description of the safety concerns regarding Maritime theatres, see Chapter 3.
[81] New Brunswick Legislative Assembly, 1912, 261.
[82] Ibid.

Through this legislation, a four-man panel was selected to censor the films playing in New Brunswick. The members of the panel were chosen from the influential ruling class of the urban centre of Saint John.[83] The first censors were Dr. H. S. Bridges, the superintendent of Saint John's public schools; Mr. Michael Coll, a retired merchant; Mr. Charles Nevins, a broker and commission merchant; and Mr. Alfred E. McGinley, editor of the *St John Standard*.[84] These leading citizens were selected by the Conservative government of New Brunswick to assist in lending respectability to the motion picture industry, and to establish local control over the importation of this mass-market product. There is no surviving description of the specific roles which the motion picture censor board played in New Brunswick. If the legislative record is accurate, and these positions were based on the censor boards in Quebec and Ontario, then the censorship panel in New Brunswick was proposed to be an active and vocal one.[85] Yet this does not appear to be the case, since there remains no public record of debates or major censorship battles in the transitional eras in New Brunswick. The conclusion that can be drawn from this apparent silence in public moral debates is that the New Brunswick film exhibitors and censors worked in concert to maintain a respectable industry in the province.

Local control and respectability were not the only purposes of the new law regulating films in New Brunswick, though. Another major provision in the legislation related to safety. Specifically, it legislated the licensing of motion picture operators, whom—if not regulated, it was feared—could cause a loss of life through the improper operation of their machines, as

---

[83] Saint John, New Brunswick was also where most motion picture producers established branch offices in the early feature film transitional era. The General Film Company was among the first to establish an office in Saint John in 1913. "New England and Canada," *MPW* 18, November 29, 1913, 1032.
[84] "Changes in New Brunswick Board of Censors" *MPW*, 32, April 7, 1917, 134.
[85] Moore, 150-1

discussed in Chapter 3.[86] Thus, although the morality of the films exhibited was of some interest to the New Brunswick government, it was the physical safety of the audience that was the paramount concern of legislators. When the censorship of films and the regulation of the motion picture industry were redressed in 1917 following a change in the New Brunswick government, the only alteration made to the law related to personnel; namely, two of the four censors were replaced with the change in government.[87]

There is no evidence of any government debate or discussion surrounding the censoring motion pictures in Prince Edward Island during the transitional eras. Indeed, as film historian Paul Moore has concluded, there was no official film censorship law on the Island during the time studied.[88] This was perhaps due to PEI's relative distance from the larger markets, or to the fact that the films exhibited there would have already been shown—and vetted—in either Nova Scotia or New Brunswick. In fact, unlike in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, the theatres on the Island were significantly restricted (practically speaking) from importing films directly from either the United States or Upper Canada. Despite this natural barrier to the importation of immoral or offensive films, there was nonetheless a movement on the Island to censor films. This modest movement occurred in two waves, in 1913 and in 1916.

A three-member panel representing Charlottetown's combined moral and social reform groups first met in October 1913, at a meeting to discuss the moral health of the island

[86] New Brunswick Legislative Assembly, 1912, 261.
[87] Forbes and Muise, 517. This close election of a Liberal government in 1917 replaced a large Conservative majority, which had led the province since the 1912 election. See also, "Changes in New Brunswick Board of Censors" *MPW*, 32, April 7, 1917, 134.
[88] Moore, 129.

province's capital city.[89] This meeting was attended by the leaders of the city's churches and reform groups, and was led by Rev. Dr. Fullerton, pastor of the St. James Presbyterian Church in Charlottetown and a veteran of the Anglo-Boer War.[90] In the programme for the meeting, printed in the October 2, 1913 edition of *The Charlottetown Guardian*, "Commercialised Amusements" and the need for a "board of censors" are listed as the second item on the agenda, under the topical heading of the temperance act.[91] Near the end of that meeting, according to the subsequent edition of *The Charlottetown Guardian*, the censorship of films was addressed. Specifically, the moral leaders believed that since Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia were the only jurisdictions in the Dominion of Canada without a censorship board, the Island's provincial government should be petitioned immediately to install such a board.[92] However, there is no indication of a response to this call from any level of government in 1913.

In 1916, the moral and reform group headed by Fullerton once again appears in the newspaper—this time in relation to a meeting with the Charlottetown City Council. At this meeting, Fullerton, flanked by two other local religious leaders, described to Council the thousands of children they dealt with in the city in the course of their work towards moral reformation.[93] Although these men admitted that the social problems they were seeing among the children of Charlottetown were minor in comparison to other cities, their hope was to act *preventatively*, in order to stop any potential moral calamities from materializing.

---

[89] "Moral Reform," *The Charlottetown Guardian*, October 4, 1913, 1, 6 and 8.
[90] Thomas Fraser Fullerton, PGM, The Grand Lodge of the Prince Edward Island Free Masons. http://peifreemasonry.com/thomas-fraser-fullerton-pgm
[91] "Important Conferences," *The Charlottetown Guardian*, October 2, 1914, 1.
[92] "Moral Reform," *The Charlottetown Guardian*, October 4, 1913, 8.
[93] "Regular Meeting of City Council," *The Charlottetown Guardian*, December 12, 1916, 1.

In particular, it was Fullerton's belief that there were three "glaring defects" that could quickly be remedied by the City Council. Primary among these concerns was that young children should be prevented from attending the "picture theatre" if they were unaccompanied by a parent or guardian. As well, they argued that young girls should be prevented from "roaming" the city at late hours, and that young boys should be kept from smoking cigarettes. The council was receptive to these suggestions, as reported by the *Charlottetown Guardian*, and agreed that smoking and roaming the streets were problems amongst Charlottetown's youth. However, there is no mention of a reaction to the group's desire to prevent children from attending motion pictures if unaccompanied by adults.

In Nova Scotia, the 1911 law remained in place until 1915, when new legislation entitled The Theatres and Cinematographs Act was enacted. Unlike the 1911 law, which chiefly regulated theatres' means of entry and exit, this new law offered the government far more wide-reaching powers in terms theatres—including the censorship of films, although not to the full extent first proposed.[94] Even with its censorship provision, however, the new law remained largely focused on safety. For instance, it mandated the physical inspection of all of the province's theatres and the approval of all newly constructed film exhibition buildings. It also ushered in the provision that all projector operators pass a technical exam administered by the Technical School of Halifax. This comprehensive test consisted of questions that required an understanding not only of the mechanical workings of a projector, but also of the electrical

[94] The censorship law in Nova Scotia was intended to have more powers. For instance, it was proposed that all film companies were to open branch offices in Halifax for the convenience of the censor (and to pay business taxes and censor fees). However, a "timely" plea from leading Canadian representatives of the film industry convinced the Nova Scotia Provincial Legislature to amend the bill. According to these industry representatives, the Nova Scotia market was not significant enough to warrant a duplication of what already existed in Saint John, New Brunswick, where all major film companies had already established branch offices. See "No Nova Scotia Censors," *MPW* 27, March 4, 1916, 1505.

system required to power the machine.[95] Supervision of all these safety-related tasks was entrusted to a single individual. The first such appointee was Mr. A. E. Wall, who was also appointed as the first head of the Nova Scotia Board of Censors.[96]

As the motion picture industry continued in an era of transition, New Brunswick's censorship board and the Nova Scotia Board of Censors appear to have developed a comfortable and close working relationship with the managers and owners of theatres in the Maritimes.[97] When Maritimes motion picture exhibitors collectively welcomed F. H. Richardson, an influential writer from the *Moving Picture World* (MPW), to their first convention in Saint John in 1916, all of the censors in the Maritimes were also invited to hear the speeches and to participate in the boat tour of the Saint John River with the esteemed visitor.[98] Richardson makes no mention of the four New Brunswick censors in his reporting of the convention, and they appear not to have taken an active role at the event. However, A. E. Wall, as head of the Nova Scotia Board of Censors, is mentioned as an amicable public servant operating in support of the film industry in Richardson's summary of the event, although briefly. He is also the only government official listed in the informal guest list of the boat tour published in the MPW shortly after.[99]

Following Richardson's first official visit to the Maritimes in 1916, the exhibitors, managers, and operators of Maritimes theatres formally organized the Motion Picture

---

[95] "Nova Scotia Operators to be Examined," *MPW* 29, September 30, 1916, 2108. Questions included "What is a kilowatt hour?" and "If we take 40 amps from 110 volts and have an arc voltage of 50, how much resistance must be used in rheostat?" See "Moving Picture Test," MG 100 (Vol.58), Nova Scotia Archives.
[96] It is unfortunate that there are no papers surviving aside from the test in either the Nova Scotia Archives or the Nova Scotia Legislative Library from this office from this period.
[97] No evidence exists for a censorship office in Prince Edward Island in this period. The evidence instead indicates that they followed the rulings of the Nova Scotia office.
[98] Richardson was initially motivated to tour the region because his wife was born in Digby. "Richardson Tours the Maritime Provinces," *MPW* 29, September 9, 1916, 1668-9.
[99] Ibid.

Exhibitors' League of the Maritime Provinces of Canada.[100] This league, officially created in Halifax in September 1916, was instituted to provide protection both from restrictive legislation and from the film exchanges and studios.[101] Patterned after the Motion Picture Exhibitors' League of America, this Maritimes organization gathered its members annually in order to elect an executive committee along with various sub-committees, as well as to discuss issues of concern for the industry in the Maritimes.

Indicative of the level of acceptance that Nova Scotia censor A. E. Wall maintained within the film community in the Maritimes was the fact that he was listed among the advisers for this new organization. Although Wall was not given any official position in the league, he was featured prominently in the pictures taken of the group and was given the opportunity to speak to the organization's general assembly in both 1916 and 1917.[102] Furthermore, when Richardson returned to the Maritimes in his automobile in October 1917, he was met by Wall and a carload of operators and exhibitors on the road entering Halifax. It was from this meeting that Richardson wrote further praise of Wall in the MPW.[103]

According to Richardson, Wall was an exemplary public official who was never too harsh and who was principally concerned with the betterment of the industry. What's more, in Richardson's view, Wall's interest was not only in preventing morally objectionable films and conducting safety inspections of the seventy theatres in operation in Nova Scotia, but also in regulating a minimum quality of film prints that the theatres were obligated to offer their

---

[100] "Maritime Provinces Organize," *MPW*, 30, October 14, 1916, 248. This group is present in the pages of *The Moving Picture World* in 1916 and 1917 (though absent in 1918 and 1919), but does not appear in any of the local newspapers that have been surveyed. Although from an industry standpoint this was an important development in the Maritimes' film industry, the public appear to have been generally unaware of its existence.
[101] More information on this organization is needed to create a better understanding of the conditions that exhibitors found themselves dealing with in terms of the increasingly powerful distributors.
[102] Ibid. See also "Nova Scotia Operators," *MPW* 30, December 9, 1916, 1494.
[103] "Richardson Visits Maritime Provinces," *MPW* 34, October 6, 1917, 75.

patrons. In fact, Richardson reports on an edict originating from Wall's office that banned films from the exchanges not because of their moral qualities, but because of the physical deterioration of the prints. Furthermore, Wall proposed that damaged films be prevented from entering or exiting the province; reels were to be physically inspected by the operators for their presentation quality, and failing to do so could result in the licence of the offending operators being revoked.[104] Wall was clearly interested not only in the moral interests of Nova Scotians, but also in ensuring the quality and success of the industry.

Wall's popularity within the industry not only as the chairman of Nova Scotia's Board of Censors, but also as the chief inspector of theatres, stemmed from his rather hands-off dealings with theatre operators when it came to the censoring of motion pictures, as well as from his stated concern over the health and viability of the industry.[105] In an interview with the local correspondent for the *Moving Picture World*, Wall offered that the toughest films for him to censor were comedies (perhaps because these films often elicit laughs by poking fun at moral issues), though he rarely had to cut scenes. After all, to be shown on the screens in Nova Scotia during the transitional eras, a motion picture must first have passed at least two censorship boards in the United States and not have been condemned by any other censor in Canada.[106]

This lack of direct censorship appears to confirm the accusations made in 1916 by the editor of *The Casket*, a Catholic weekly newspaper in Antigonish that had not printed advertisements for motion picture theatres since 1907, although there were at least two in the

---

[104] Ibid. This is a topic that the Motion Picture Exhibitors' League of the Maritime Provinces of Canada adopted in its 1917 meeting as well, again demonstrating the unity of the Nova Scotia censor with the industry.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid. See also "Province Gets Tax That Once Was Halifax's," *MPW* 33, August 11, 1917, 972.

town. Following a complaint about a billboard advertisement for an unnamed motion picture, the editor complained that Wall simply "rubber stamp[ed]" films from other districts.[107] This accusation was not echoed anywhere else in Nova Scotia, however. In fact, there were no recorded complaints about the censorship board in New Brunswick either, or about the lack of a censor in Prince Edward Island (aside from those mentioned above). Thus, it appears that the majority of citizens in the Maritimes were not concerned about the general morality of films (or, at the very least, not concerned enough to voice their complaints in print). Rather, it seems apparent that Maritimers' chief concerns in regards to motion pictures remained the health and safety of the theatres, as discussed in previous chapters.

POLITICAL PRIORITIES AND CENSORSHIP IN THE MARITIMES

Although A. E. Wall was known for only laxly using his censorship powers, there was one significant film that was missing from Nova Scotian and Prince Edward Island theatres while Wall was the head of the of the Nova Scotia Board of Censors. This film was *The Birth of a Nation* (David W. Griffith Corp., 1915), the popular and controversial American-made film that was first shown throughout the rest of Canada in 1915 and 1916. *The Birth of a Nation*, an adaptation of the 1905 novel *The Clansman* by Thomas Dixon, was based on the relationship between two families, the Stonemans from the north and the Camerons from the south—each of which fell on a differing side of the American Civil War. This film, which is remembered as D. W. Griffith's magnum opus, further established the director as one of the preeminent artists of the screen. Notably, it also helped in elevating the medium of motion pictures to an art form.[108]

---

[107] *The Casket*, July 20, 1916, 1.
[108] For a detailed investigation into the production, reception, and impact of *The Birth of a Nation*, see Stokes.

The film version was an unqualified success upon release. Part of the interest generated by this film was due to the fact that it was advertised as being among the most expensive motion pictures ever made at the time, reportedly costing over half a million dollars to make because of its large cast of men and horses. Further augmenting the perception that the film was above the average American product was that it was not distributed by the regular means of regional exchanges. Rather, like for *Evangeline*, Griffith and his company personally arranged for the tour of this film across North America, offering it first to the largest and most prestigious theatres in communities.[109] Furthermore, much like for *Evangeline* and *Damaged Goods* (discussed in Chapter 4), the ticket prices for *The Birth of a Nation* were above those of regular filmed entertainment.[110] The higher ticket prices were used to support the film producer's arguments that this film was a more important film than the average nickelodeon fare.[111] This promotion and exhibition and pattern, which purposefully avoided the small nickelodeons and store-front theatres in the major metropolises, attempted to create the impression that *The Birth of a Nation* was more valuable than the average movie—and that it therefore required a more refined audience.

Due to in part its success, the film also generated significant protest across North America due to the racial messaging that it portrayed. Indeed, controversy followed *The Birth*

---

[109] Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 2. See also Arthur Lennig, "Myth and Fact: The Reception of Birth of a Nation," *Film History*, 12 (2004): 117-141.

[110] Prices were mostly at least $2.00 for premier showings in the metropolises, while in lesser populated areas, such as New Brunswick, the prices—though still high—were not as inflated. For instance, in Woodstock, New Brunswick, the Hayden-Gibson Theatre offered the film for between $0.50 and $1.50 for evening performances and $0.25 to $1.00 for the matinee. Advertisement, *Carlton Sentinel*, March 24, 1916, 4.

[111] In an editorial following a report on the controversy regarding *The Birth of a Nation*, *The Amherst Daily News* argues that since New York audiences were paying as much as two dollars per admission, then "Amherstonians" should expect to pay at least 15 cents for such a "staunch and sturdy educative film, possessing splendid educational values." "The Birth of a Nation Arouses Much Criticism," *The Amherst Daily News*, September 28, 1915, 3.

of a Nation in part due to the racially prejudiced depiction of reconstruction-era American society and the roles of black characters (which, notably, were all acted by whites in black-face). Specifically, lawlessness is portrayed as ruling the South following the assassination of President Lincoln, with Northern concerns taking advantage of the defeated Southern states. Amid this lawlessness, Griffith depicts Silas Lynch, a mulatto and former political protégé of the elder Stoneman, as a leader of the Northern opportunists. Controversially, to illustrate the imagined depths of the depravity that was afflicting the South (as authored by a racist imagination), and to create dramatic tension in the story, Griffith depicts Southern white women becoming the targets of sexual lust by the newly emancipated black citizens.

Perhaps what sparked the most controversy was that the film depicted these supposed crimes as being the inspiration for the founding of the Ku Klux Klan, which rather heroically rises from the ashes of the Civil War to restore racial order to the South. Griffith displays these story elements in a spectacular example of parallel editing, building tension for the climatic entrance of the valiant "white" knights. The film ends with the Klan suppressing the black vote and reinstating white rule over the South.[112]

The Birth of a Nation was a widely praised film among some community leaders in the United States. Among these included Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Edward White; banker and philanthropist George Foster Peabody; and moral crusader and reverend, Dr. Charles Parkhurst. Also among those impressed by the film was President Woodrow Wilson, who was alleged to have said after viewing the film at the White House, "It is like writing

[112] *Birth of a Nation*, D. W. Griffith, Dir., 1915.

history with lightning. And my only regret is that it is all so terribly true."[113] The film also received glowing reviews from all of the major newspapers in New York, which helped to cement the desire of theatre-goers to witness this cinematic tour-de-force.[114]

Similar to the marketing strategy employed for *Damaged Goods* several years later (see Chapter 4) and *Evangeline*, Griffith and his financiers were quick to use such praise from critics and prominent community leaders alike in order to carefully build a respectable, middle-class audience for *The Birth of a Nation*. In fact, this film was a clear attempt to create a film that was in line with the *filme d'art* movement. One advertisement in Chatham's *Gazette* even referred to the film as "The Greatest Art conquest since the beginning of civilization" (see Figure 5-5).

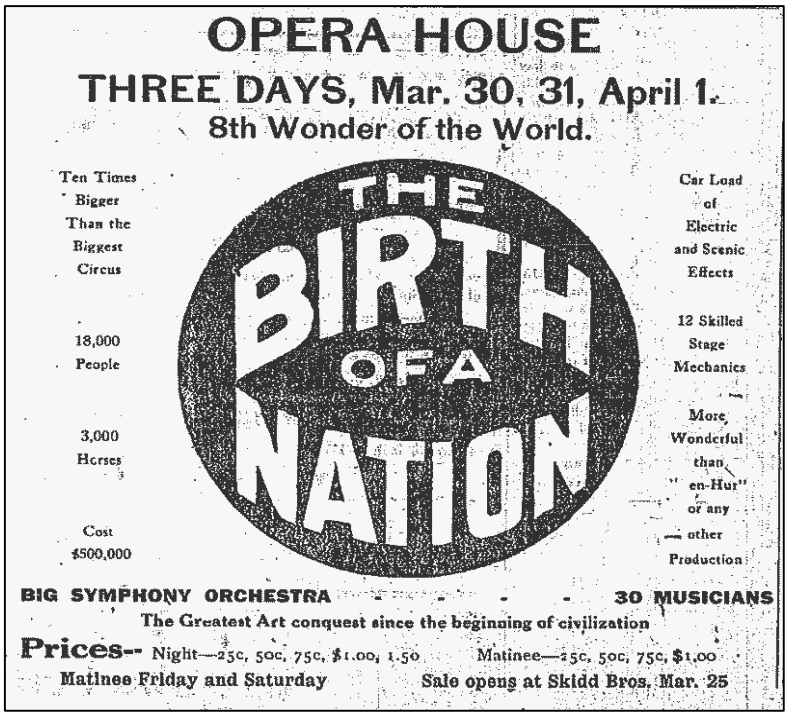


Figure 5-4: Advertisement for *The Birth of a Nation* at the Opera House, Chatham. *Gazette*, March 24, 1916, p.3.

Amid this well-publicized praise was also vocal opposition to the film. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) led the charge in opposing *The Birth of a Nation* in the United States. They argued that the film glorified the Ku Klux Klan

[113] Grieveson, 194. This was a statement which President Wilson never confirmed through it has been widely repeated. Stokes, 149. See also, Mark Benbow, "Birth of a Quotation: Woodrow Wilson and 'Like Writing History with Lightning,'" *Journal of the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era* 9 (2010): 509-533.
[114] Ibid., 118. Griffith and Thomas Dixon, Jr., the author of the original text, had arranged a special screening in New York for "the drama critics of all New York newspapers."

and misrepresented the history of black people in America.[115] The film, according to the NAACP, was both "historically inaccurate and, with subtle genius, designed to palliate and excuse the lynching and other deeds of violence committed against the Negro."[116] Protests against the film were organized around the United States. Amid such controversy, the film was banned in many American cities, including: Cleveland, Ohio; Wilmington, Delaware; St. Louis, Missouri; Topeka, Kansas; Louisville, Kentucky; and San Antonio, Texas.[117] Although many people opposed the racist and biased message behind *The Birth of a Nation*, one of the primary motives for governments banning the exhibition of the film was to prevent any potential racial tensions in local black populations.[118]

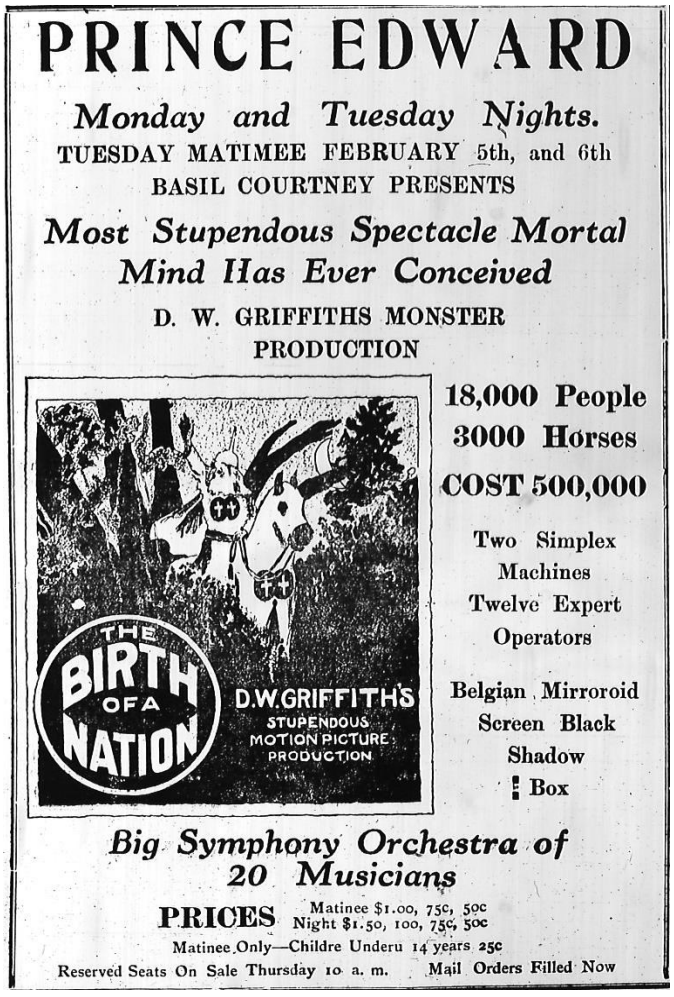


Figure 5-5: Advertisement, *Daily Examiner* (Charlottetown), January 29, 1917, p.1. *The Birth of a Nation* plays in Charlottetown nearly a year after it first showed in New Brunswick.

There appears to have been less controversy surrounding the exhibition of *The Birth of a Nation* in Canada. Paul Moore shows that not only did the film do excellent business for the three weeks it played in Toronto in

[115] Stokes, 130.
[116] *Ibid*.
[117] Grieveson, 194.
[118] Ibid., 193. See also Stokes.

1915, but that it was also successful during repeated returns over the following year.[119] Robert Seiler and Tamara Seiler, in their detailed history of film exhibition in the Prairie region of Canada also offer that *The Birth of a Nation* was successfully shown in Manitoba and Saskatchewan with only minimal censorship (scenes of distress over the horrors of war were removed).[120] Greg Marquis offers a far more detailed investigation into the Canadian reactions to *The Birth of a Nation*. In his 2014 article, Marquis offers evidence for limited moral debates across Canada regarding this film, coming specifically from the African Canadian populations. Framing the debates around the conscription crisis and the nationality of the film, he illustrates that although the film did show in theatres throughout Canada, it was protested by some minority populations, though with little effect.[121] Arguably then, the film did not contravene the moral sensibilities of the white-majority of Canadians. The general acceptance of this film in Canada does indicate that there was widespread acceptance of racist notions portrayed in the film, or to the general ignorance of the audience, or both. In the Maritimes specifically, when the film toured in New Brunswick extensively beginning in 1916, it was also met with glowing reviews[122] and very little evidence of controversy published in the major newspapers of the region. However, the film was missing from most of the theatres of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island during this same time, and remained so until January 1917.

---

[119] Moore, 202.
[120] Robert M. Seiler and Tamara P. Seiler, *Reel Time: Movie Exhibitors and Movie Audiences in Prairie Canada, 1896 to 1986* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2013), 130-1.
[121] Greg Marquis, "A War Within a War: Canadian Reactions to D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*," *Historie Social/Social History* 47 (2014): 431-36.
[122] For example, see Advertisement, *Carlton Sentinel*, March 24, 1916, 4; Advertisement, *The Gazette*, March 29, 1916, 4; Advertisement, *The Graphic* (Campbellton), March 30, 1916, 1, 5; and Advertisement, *The Sackville Tribune*, February 8, 1917, 8 (this is for a return engagement for the film, which was missing from the historical record for 1916). The controversy that *The Birth of a Nation* encountered came from Saint John, where some protests were recorded in the newspapers. See, *Saint John Globe*, 1916, April 3, 6, 9. Marquis also describe these meetings and the organized protests, though these were localized in New Brunswick only in Saint John, where the majority of New Brunswick African-Canadian population lived. Marquis, 437.

Figure 5-6: Advertisement, *Pictou Advocate*, April 8, 1916. Note the special train offered for audiences to attend the show from surrounding villages.

The delay in exhibiting *The Birth of a Nation* in most of Nova Scotia (and, by extension, in Prince Edward Island, as film tours of PEI were, by geographic convenience, an extension of Nova Scotia tours) was not because A. E. Wall decided to censor the film on account of its morally controversial content.[123] Rather, it seems that this delay was because the Afro–Nova Scotian population opposed the showing of this film—and was able to leverage this opposition during an election year.[124] Indeed, the provincial election of 1916 provided the indigenous Black communities of Nova Scotia the opportunity to pressure both the Nova

[123] Wall apparently travelled to Moncton to preview the film along with the New Brunswick censors. Marquis, 437.

[124] There was a small population of blacks throughout the Maritimes, though Nova Scotia held the largest population of the region. According to the 1911 census, 6,541 men, women and children self-identifying as black lived in Nova Scotia, while only 1,079 resided in New Brunswick and 81 in Prince Edward Island. *The Canada Year Book, 1929: The Official Statistical Annual of the Resources, History, Institutions and Social and Economic Conditions of the Dominion* (Minister of Trade and Commerce, Ottawa, 1929), 109-114.

Scotia governing party as well as the opposition party to ban this film in exchange for the support of their combined 5,000 votes.[125]

It is curious that there are two instances of *The Birth of a Nation* being offered to Nova Scotian audiences despite the ban of the film by the provincial government. First in New Glasgow, the film was shown for four days, commencing on April 7th, 1916 at the Academy of Music.[126] From there, the film, and 30 member crew and orchestra, travelled to the neighbouring town of Pictou for a two day engagement. The film was not only lauded for its artistry in *The Eastern Chronicle*, but also for the collection of $75 that the orchestra raised in a Sunday recruiting meeting.[127] The Pictou show of *The Birth of a Nation* offers more detail of both the importance of this film to the exhibitors and the level of acceptance that the film had with the dominant population (Figure 5-6). The theatre began advertising for the film on April 1, eleven days before the show. This is not only because of the apparent importance that the exhibitors put on the artistic value of this film, but also because of the wide audience that they were attempting to garner. A special train was arranged to take potential audiences from as far away as River John (over 30 kilometers by road).[128] Following the Pictou show, a review of *The Birth of a Nation* was offered, stating that this "moving-picture sensation" was "equally strong as an educative feature."[129]

---

[125] "Election Now Safe, 'Nation' Film Can Show," *MPW*, 31, January 20, 1917, 397. The Liberals, under Premier George H. Murray, returned to power following the election in 1916. They held power between 1896 and 1923. See Forbes and Muise, 519-520.
[126] Advertisement, *Eastern Chronicle* (New Glasgow), April 4, 1916, 4.
[127] Local and General, *Eastern Chronicle* (New Glasgow), April 11, 1916, 1.
[128] Advertisement, *Pictou Advocate*, April 8, 1916, 5. This was a common technique used by theatres in this era to widen the audience for special shows. For instance, a similar special train was arranged for the Scotch Concert at the Market Hall Theatre in Charlottetown, 1909. See Chapter 3.
[129] Review, *Pictou Advocate*, April 15, 1916, 4. The originality of the review is similar to that provided by this editor for *Evangeline* in 1914. See above n.47.

There was no mention in the advertisements or reviews in Pictou or New Glasgow for the reasons that the residents of these two towns were alone in seeing the film in Nova Scotia in 1916; however there is an indication of the controversy that accompanied *The Birth of a Nation*. In a preview for the film published in the *Pictou Advocate* on April 8, 1916, it was noted that the managers of the two theatres, N.W. Mason and B. Gravestock, were responsible for the importation and exhibition of this "most talked about" film. Following the usual praise for the artistry and extraordinary nature of the film, the author of the preview goes on to comment on the more controversial aspects, specifically the depiction of African-Americans in this film. Rupert Hughes, a novelist and playwright, is quoted at length in defense of the racism on the screen and for the further exhibition of the controversial film.[130] Yet there are no further recorded exhibitions of *The Birth of a Nation* in Nova Scotia in 1916.

The political nature of this primary instance of film censorship in Nova Scotia is laid bare in a *Moving Picture World* article demonstrably titled "Election Now Safe, 'Nation' Film Can Show." In this article, Maritimes reporter Fredrick F. Sully further noted that the film had been approved without incident across the nation, and that Nova Scotians were the last to witness this "great American war picture"; Sully ended his article editorializing that "The colored population of Nova Scotia is almost super-sensitive. Through the Halifax papers and other publications they are continually voicing a protest against the issuing of literature or other material that may in any way reflect on the race."[131]

---

[130] Advertisement, *Pictou Advocate*, April 8, 1915, 12.

[131] "Election Now Safe, 'Nation' Film Can Show," *MPW*, 31, January 20, 1917, 397. It is unfortunate that none of the Maritimes newspapers that survive at the Nova Scotia Public Archives commented on the banning of the film—what must have been a controversial move by Murray's Liberal government. This lack of commentary leaves no indication of the import or tone of the debate in Nova Scotia, nor the reaction from Prince Edward Island, which appears as an innocent bystander in this story.

Sully's article, published after the ban was lifted, was the only source that offered an explanation behind the banning of *The Birth of a Nation* in Nova Scotia. There is scant evidence of newspaper editorials complaining of the missing film in Nova Scotia (or in Prince Edward Island).[132] Indeed, there is also no evidence of any theatre owners publicly protesting this censorship to the provincial government. It seems, therefore, that Nova Scotia's most significant instance of censorship passed without any complaint.

The banning of *The Birth of a Nation* from Nova Scotia (and, by extension, PEI) theatres in 1916 illustrates how the values (and voting power) of Maritimers were linked to the censorship of films in the early years of the transitional era.[133] When *The Birth of a Nation* finally appeared in the theatres of Nova Scotia in early 1917 (and, by extension, in PEI; see Figure 5-5), there was no explanation offered for the delay, and audiences effectively appeared not to notice. Admission prices were still high, as per Griffith's strategy, and the film was presented with an orchestra and "accessories."[134] Furthermore, despite the apparent concerns that had influenced the Nova Scotia government to delay showing *The Birth of a Nation* in 1916, there were no reported protests accompanying the screening of the racially controversial film in Nova Scotia in 1917.

WORLD WAR ONE AND THE MOTION PICTURE HOUSES OF THE MARITIMES

Exhibiting morally uplifting films and maintaining at least some semblance of censorship were important for creating a Maritimes motion picture exhibition industry that

---

[132] The *Pictou Advocate* does allude (April 8, 1918, 12) to the fact that the film was banned in the rest of the province, though there is no specific complaint leveled against either the ban or the motives for it.
[133] Importantly, it also illustrates that despite the lack of representation in the general historical record, the black population of Nova Scotia was both politically active and a significant enough threat to impact the outcome of a provincial election.
[134] Advertisement, *The Advertiser* (Kentville), February 18, 1917, 8.

adhered to local values and realities—and, hence, for maintaining an industry that could be successful. Yet in order for theatres to maintain a position of respectability (and, thus, it was hoped, financial success) within a community, they also had to become more than mere houses of entertainment. Indeed, exhibitors were aware that creating sites that had the ability both to entertain and inform was essential for creating a respectable (and therefore profitable) business in the Maritimes. Specifically, these sites had to apply the new medium of motion pictures for the greater benefit of the public by informing them of faraway news and events that were near and dear to their hearts.

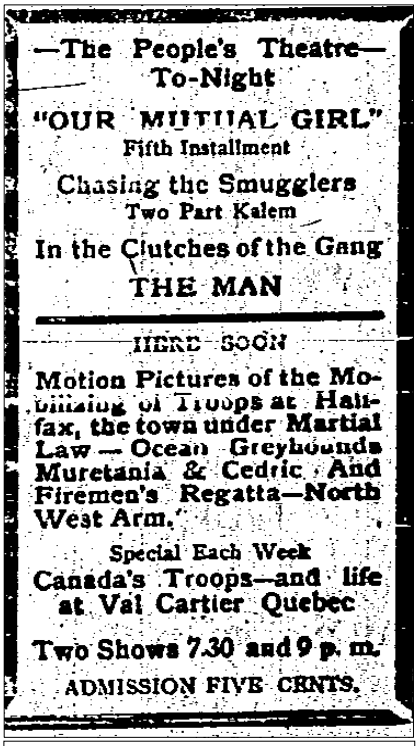


Figure 5-7: Advertisement for the People's Theatre, Charlottetown, in August, 1914, offering a coming attraction of views of Canadian troops at Val Cartier, Quebec. *Daily Examiner* (Charlottetown), August 3, 1914, p.1.

Upon Canada's declaration of war in August 1914, Canadian theatres responded by offering programmes that illustrated both military preparedness and patriotic pride—and the Maritimes' theatres were no different. There was also a push for theatres to strengthen their position as centres for the exhibition of the latest war news. Indeed, most theatres in the Maritimes used the outbreak of the war to become further established as valued sites in the community for their ability to share both entertainment and news—though this was in no way a product of the First World War. In fact, in the years leading up to 1914, there had been consistent attempts to create the

impression that theatres were respectable places of exhibition for both local and international news.[135]

For instance, during the Anglo-Boer War in 1899, motion picture theatres were instrumental in both relating war propaganda back to the home front and allowing some sense of patriotism to be created amongst Canadians[136]; the war also offered exhibitors the opportunity to increase market awareness of new motion picture technology. In the years before World War One, the big screens in the Maritimes had also been used to offer up-to-date hockey scores for home-town teams during away games[137], as well as live election results[138]—all information that mattered deeply to the average Maritimer. Similarly, in Summerside, the Happyland Theatre reported boat and train arrival and departure times each evening.[139] All of these instances, which spoke directly to local realities and to what locals valued the most, were offered to keep audiences informed (and ultimately to keep them returning to the theatres).

The onset of the First World War presented a new opportunity for Maritimes theatres to further project what locals cared about most—this time in the form of screening war news

---

[135] Although Pathé had been producing newsreels regularly since 1911, there is very little evidence of the regular presentation of newsreels in Maritimes theatres. Only when there were major events, such as the *Titanic* sinking in 1912, the Boston Red Sox playing in the World Series in 1912 (though that was not presented until 1913), or the Mexican war in early 1914, were newsreels featured on the theatre programmes. For an investigation into this "forgotten" portion of the cinema programme, see Raymond Fielding, *The American Newsreel: A Complete History, 1911-1967* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972); Richard Abel, *Americanizing the Movies and Movie-mad Audiences, 1910-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006),171-182; Ben Singer, "Feature Films, Variety Programs, and the Crisis of the Small Exhibitor," in ed. Charlie Keil and Shelley Stamp, *American Cinema's Transitional Era: Audiences, Institutions, Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 76-100.

[136] The Anglo-Boer War was the first war in which Canadians participated as a national army and not part of the British forces. As such, there was a desire among those at home to have a unique view of the conflict. Carman Miller, "Loyalty, Patriotism and Resistance: Canada's Response to the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902," *South African Historical Journal* 41 (1999), 312-323. See also, Chapter 1.

[137] "All returns from the hockey game are given here as soon as the telephone will bring them." "Palace Theatre," *The Amherst Daily News*, January 13, 1909, 4. See also "People's Theatre," *Daily Examiner* (Charlottetown), February 14, 1914, 1. See Figure 5-7.

[138] "Waragraph," *The Amherst Daily News*, November 7, 1900, 1.

[139] "Happyland," *Summerside Journal*, April 29, 1908, 5.

and information. For instance, in Pictou, the Fairyland theatre offered the "latest war news every evening by special wire"; these messages were projected onto the screen by slides in conjunction with the regular entertainment.[140] The Gem theatre in Yarmouth took its potential role as a news distributor one step further by offering an entire programme of "timely" movies, exhibiting nearly 3,000 feet of film showing the leaders and armies of the major European powers.[141] The People's Theatre in Charlottetown made use of local films that reflected local war-era realities, offering views of soldiers departing PEI for staging zones in Nova Scotia (see Figure 5-7).[142] Such news and information would have been of great interest to Maritimers during the war years, as the majority of people in the region had at least one loved one fighting in the armed forces, not to mention the fact that everyday realities were irrevocably changed due to the conflict.[143]

While audiences in the Maritimes (like those across Canada) had an appetite for newsreels and war footage, theatre operators were not always able to deliver what their audiences wanted to see. This was due in large part to the American position of neutrality in the conflict until 1917. Up until then, American producers were hesitant to take an official side in the conflict, and relatively few newsreels were coming from the firms of European allied countries. Canada could simply not produce the reels that would meet the demands of Canadian audiences. As a result, the films that were shown in Canadian theatres from 1914 to 1917 were usually American-made newsreels and feature films that did not reflect the same patriotism that Canadians felt towards the British Empire and its allied forces. For instance, in October 1915, the recently renamed Imperial Theatre in Windsor was complaining about the

---

[140] "Entertainments," *Pictou Advance*, August 8, 1914, 1.
[141] "War Pictures at the Gem," *Yarmouth Times*, August 4, 1914, 3.
[142] Advertisement, *The Daily Examiner* (Charlottetown), August 8, 1914, 4.
[143] Forbes and Muise, 205.

Figure 5-8: Advertisement, *The Observer* (Hartland), August 18, 1915, p.1.

perspective presented in the American-made Hearst newsreels: "When the Hearst film does dabble in war views it generally shows us the power of the enemy's guns or armies and at this particular time we are not in a mood to look upon any of the Kaiser's implements, whether they belong to the animal or mineral kingdom."[144]

Complicating matters more was the official response of the Dominion Militia department regarding the exhibition of war films in Canada. In late 1914 and early 1915, this federal war office instructed provincial censors across the nation to ban war films *en masse*, due to the fear that any representation of combat could have a negative effect on voluntary recruitment.[145] The result of the federal government ban on the exhibition of any film related to the First World War was that newsreels were, officially, not available for public consumption. It is clear, however, that audiences across Canada valued news of the war (and of their soldiers) enough that the ban was effectively short-lived.

Indeed, as Peter Morris illustrates, although the ban was put in place in Ontario in November 1914 (and in the other provinces three months later), it was apparently being

[144] *Hants Journal* (Windsor), October 15, 1915, 5. Mr. John Bustin, manager and owner of the Imperial, is quoted in the paper as having suspended all showings of Hearst-Selig newsreels.
[145] "Cut Out War Films," *MPW* 23, February 13, 1915, 1012. This article is reprinted in the *Union Advocate* (Newcastle), February 10, 1915, 5. See also Peter Morris, *Embattled Shadows* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 58.

ignored in Ontario by August 1915.[146] In the Maritimes, it appears that this ban was never fully enforced in some towns. For instance, advertisements in Saint Andrews' *The Beacon* show no indication that the newsreels were suspended at any of the community's theatres throughout 1915 (See Figure 5-8).[147] In Amherst, the Empress Theatre offered the Belgian feature *War is Hell* (*Maudite soit la Guerre,* AKA *Damn the War*, 1914, Alfred Machin), "showing war in all its horrors" and giving an "idea of the present day warfare," in March, 1915.[148] It seems clear that political authorities were not interested in enforcing this ban in the Maritimes.

Despite the Militia Department's concerns that realistic images of war could have a negative impact on recruitment, motion picture theatres proved to be extremely valuable to Canada's war effort. Perhaps due to their growing respectability within communities, as well as to the link they had forged with the war effort through the showing of newsreels, theatres became community gathering places for war-related activities. For instance, theatres were used for recruitment drives (Figure 5-8), Government Bonds appeals, and fundraising events for relief efforts and the Red Cross.[149] Clearly, Maritimes theatres were supporting what Maritimers' held nearest and dearest in real life. And while many theatre owners and operators certainly had loved ones fighting overseas and other personal connections with the war effort, they must also have been eager to grasp the opportunity to become an even greater part of respectable everyday life in their communities.

---

[146] Morris, 58-59.
[147] Advertisements, *The Beacon* (Saint Andrews), January 14, 1915, p.2, February 11, 1915, 2.
[148] "News of the Theatres," *The Amherst Daily News*, March 13, 1915, 3. For information on this hand-stencilled coloured film, see: Evan Calder Williams, "Damn the War: Rediscovered Cinema in Bologna" *Film Quarterly*, 68 (2014): 81-2.
[149] For example, see; Local and General, *Eastern Chronicle* (New Glasgow), April 11, 1916, 1; Advertisement, *Campbellton Graphic*, March 11, 1915, 1; Advertisement, *The Gazette* (Chatham), March 29, 1916, 4; Advertisement, *The Observer* (Hartland), August 18, 1915, 2.

Still, the primary function of theatres in the Maritimes remained the exhibition of films. Although the majority of films exhibited during the war period were considered entertainment—with the newsreels providing most of true war-related content—a few films stood out as being directly related to the war. These films were both non-fiction (e.g., documenting the departure or combat of troops) and fiction (i.e., feature films depicting fictional war stories). One of the best-known wartime films shown in the Maritimes was *The Battle of the Somme* (1916), which was purportedly a non-fiction account of the battle, captured by Britain's Imperial War Office and said to have been "actually taken under fire." [150]

The Battle of the Somme, which was offered to Imperial audiences as an official view of the war, was exhibited throughout the Maritimes in 1917 to unanimous fanfare and acclaim. In reviews printed for the film, the Imperial War Office was praised for offering authentic images that provided an emotional impact (see: Figure 5-9: Advertisement, *Union* A*dvocate* (Newcastle), January 18, 1917, p.7. Previously, the only entertainments that had been given full-page attention in newspapers in the Maritimes were circus shows. This full-page ad graphically illustrates the importance that was given to this film by theatres). Although the advertising for *The Battle of the Somme* indicated that it depicted actual, real-life scenes of soldiers fighting on the front, it is now obvious that at least one powerful portion of the film was staged for the camera. This sequence, where men climb out of the trench to march over No Man's Land, has been conclusively shown to have been staged.[151]

---

[150] *The Battle of the Somme* advertisement, *The Amherst Daily News*, November 22, 1916, 5. See also, Figure 5-9.
[151] Roger Smither, "'A wonderful idea of the fighting': The question of fakes in 'The Battle of the Somme'," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television*, 13 (1993): 150, and Nicholas Reeves, "Cinema, Spectatorship and Propaganda: 'Battle of the Somme' (1916) and its contemporary audience," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 17 (1997): 5-28.


THE
BATTLE OF THE SOMME
"The Greatest Moving Picture in the World"
THE ONLY ORIGINAL, AUTHENTIC WAR PICTURES TAKEN ON THE BATTLEFIELD
HAPPY HOUR
ONE DAY ONLY :: TUESD'Y, JANUARY 23
SCALE OF PRICES
Matinee: Children 15c.
Adults 25c.
Evening: All Seats 25c.
SCHEDULE OF SHOWS
Matinee at 3.30 Sharp
Evening, 1st Show at 7 Sharp
2nd " 8.30 "
Premier Lloyd-George
Sir Douglas Haig
COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE BRITISH FORCES AT THE FRONT.
Everything Just as it Occurred at the Beginning of the "Big Push"
What Publishers Say About the "Battle of the Somme" Films
Please Notice:---Three Complete Shows---Matinee at 3.30; Evening at 7 and 8.30 Sharp---Please Notice
Doors Open at 6.30. Come Early and Secure a Seat

Figure 5-9: Advertisement, *Union Advocate* (Newcastle), January 18, 1917, p.7. Previously, the only entertainments that had been given full-page attention in newspapers in the Maritimes were circus shows. This full-page ad graphically illustrates the importance that was given to this film by theatres.

However, it seems that Maritimers (like other Imperialists) embraced this film for the value of its message rather than for its authenticity. There appears to have been no challenges to the authenticity of the images in the Maritimes; these scenes were also widely accepted across the Empire as illustrations of the real event.[152] It can also be argued that, due to the technical limitations of filming on the battlefields, along with the official restrictions on media access to the front, any authentic images of the war were not possible.[153] Regardless, the goal of this film was not necessarily to capture "authentic" frontline events, but rather to glorify the exploits of the Empire's soldiers. In fact, as an Imperial War Office film, its aim was not to offer the "truth" about the front. Rather, it

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid. See also Laurent Véray, "1914-1918, the first media war of the twentieth century: The examples of French newsreels," *Film History*, 22 (2010): 408-425. This article describes in detail the difficulties of filming on the front during this conflict, and reveals that genuine images of combat were restricted until 1916 and the Somme offensive. Even then, infantry clashes and artillery duels were impossible to record due to the danger inherent in filming on the front. A similar condition existed during the Anglo-Boer War.

was to promote the war effort—and to valorize the exploits of the common soldier in order to further the enlistment of men and perpetuate domestic support for the conflict.

This message behind *The Battle of the Somme* seems to have successfully resonated with Maritimers' own closely held beliefs about the war, as the film was met with resoundingly positive public response in every Maritimes community it played in during 1917. Despite the war weariness that was beginning to settle in the Maritimes in the later years of the conflict, this region – more than any other part of Canada – was experiencing the war directly. This was not due to the impressive numbers of young men enlisting in the war effort (the Maritimes enlistment was 16.8 per cent of the population, compared with 23.8 percent in Ontario and 23.1 percent in the Western provinces)[154], but because of the direct importance of the shipping ports of the region and the economic benefits of the "trouble in Europe."[155]

Despite the low number of voluntary recruits in the Maritimes, there remained enthusiasm in the general population for the war effort. The Somme film, and the others that the theatres offered, gave not only a visual representation of the conflict, but also an opportunity for citizens to participate in the war effort. Through viewing *The Battle of the Somme*, a film that was expressly endorsed by the commander-in-chief of the British Forces (Figure 5-9), audiences were encouraged to believe that this was an accurate depiction of the conditions of the front and that their viewing would enable a re-enforcement of the belief that this war was a good and noble cause.

Other films that offered similar scenes of the war were met with success in Maritime theatres. One such film was *Canada's Fighting Forces* (1916), an official film from the Canadian government that was offered to audiences

[154] Forbes and Muise, 208.
[155] This rather flippant comment about the horrific battles happening in Europe, made in the local journal *Busy East*, appeared in a 1915 article illustrating the profit that was to be made because of the shortages of food and materials across the Atlantic. Ibid, 204.

across the country along with a touring lecturer in order to describe to Canadians what life on the front was like (see Figure 5-10: Advertisement, *Union Advocate* (Newcastle), February 2, 1916, p.5.

), further re-enforcing the nobility and morality of the war.[156] *Battle Cry of Peace* (Vitagraph Film Corporation, 1915), a cautionary film produced in the US as a warning against the dangers of blind pacifism, was another such film that was successfully presented to Maritimes moviegoers.[157] These were all films that exhibited a sanitised and enthusiastic perspective on participating in the war. Theatres offered these patriotic films not only for the goals of stirring the population, but also for the simple motive of filling the theatres. These films all appear to have been popular and profitable for theatres.

The war effort in the Maritime region was a topic that crossed class lines and found near universal support among the majority population. Labour unions, industrialists, progressive reformers and government were all united for the majority of the war years, although all of these groups held their own opinions on the value of the conflict.[158] These films also all shared some key commonalities: they were aligned with the government's goals of ensuring public support of the war effort and of furthering recruitment for the war; and they

---

[156] *Canada's Fighting Forces* toured the Maritimes in 1916 with Corporal White, D.C.M., hero of Ypres. See figure 5-10. This was the first official Canadian government effort at filmed propaganda. It is believed that no copies of this film remain. Morris, 59.

[157] *The Battle Cry of Peace* was a film directed by J. Stuart Blackton and Wilfred North as a warning to the American public about maintaining neutrality in the European conflict. See Koszarski, 186. It is believed that no complete copies of this film remain, either.

[158] Forbes and Muise, 206-7. Not all groups supported the war effort, Andrew Theobald has offered evidence of a lack of support in the Acadian community. Andrew Theobald, "Une Loi Extraordinaire: New Brunswick Acadians and the Conscription Crisis of the First World War", *Acadiensis*, 34 (2004): 80-95.

reflected Maritimers' closely held belief that the soldiers on the front were valorous and deserving of their country's support.

Figure 5-10: Advertisement, *Union Advocate* (Newcastle), February 2, 1916, p.5.

From the time when war was first declared by the Canadian government, theatres around the Maritimes quickly responded by showing whatever films and news they could obtain in order to connect their audiences to the events of the war. Demonstrating the apparent patriotism they shared with their communities, theatre owners and operators opened their exhibition sites as venues for fundraising and recruiting as the war continued. And while patriotism surely played at least some role in theatres' actions during wartime, motion picture exhibitors in the Maritimes successfully made use of the war—just as they made use of the moral crusades—to ensure that respectable audiences would continue to patronize their venues.

CONCLUSION

Creating a safe motion picture theatre did not only mean ensuring the physical safety of audiences. Managers and operators of motion picture theatres in the Maritimes also had to be concerned with the moral safety of their patrons, or at least appear to offer that concern. Yet during the transitional eras of film exhibition in the Maritimes between 1907 and 1919,

local theatres did not have much choice in terms of which films they showed, making the creation of a morally upright theatre in concert with local concerns a complicated prospect. For the most part, whatever films were being circulated from America also appeared on the screens in the Maritimes provinces. However, among the movies that achieved the greatest success in Maritimes theatres were films that reflected local moral values and realities.

In 1912, the fledgling Canadian Bioscope Company produced *Evangeline*, a locally produced version of the poem by American, H. W. Longfellow. The film was a regional success, as Maritimers were enthusiastic on how the film depicted local realities and reflected Maritimes values—not to mention how it featured copious shots of beautiful Nova Scotia scenery. This was no coincidence, as the film was created and marketed to perpetuate the myth of a forest primeval—one that was a reasonable train ride from the metropolises of New England. Indeed, the true aim of this film (and of Maritimes backers, governments, and tourism promoters) was to capture the imaginations of a foreign market and to bring primarily American tourists through New Brunswick and to the Annapolis Valley by train.

Evangeline was among the films that assisted in the creating on a morally safe theatre in the Maritimes. This locally produced film was widely regarded as a quality film that provided a "wholesome" message of moral uplift in the same vein as the moral films of the early feature film era. These moral films were largely the result of demands from social and moral reform groups, which were working to improve society across North America following industrialization. These films were a response to the "depraved" films which, in the opinion of some reformers, were corrupting audiences *en masse*. When showing a lot of this popular fare, however, theatres in the Maritimes did not experience significant opposition from moral reformers or those who wished to censor motion pictures. Rather, it was widely believed that

the refuge which theatres offered to young men who would otherwise be frequenting the taverns was a positive moral trade-off that made up for any questionable material that might appear in the films. In fact, of the few protests that took place opposing films in the region, only *The Birth of a Nation* actually created enough public pressure to affect any changes to the exhibition of films. Overall, Maritimes exhibitors had a close working relationship with the region's censors. For the most part, Maritimes theatre operators were careful to demonstrate that they could be trusted to offer safe, respectable entertainment in tune with their audiences' tastes; this image was only enhanced by the occasional presentation of morally uplifting films.

Although New Brunswick and Nova Scotia did implement provincial censorship boards in the early 1910s, it was not the content of the films that propelled the censorship legislation, but rather the physical safety of the buildings (as discussed in earlier chapters). The provincial governments were not interested in actively policing the morality of the films shown in the Maritimes. In fact, the Maritimes' best-known censor from the time, A. E. Wall, was known for virtually "rubber-stamping" whatever films had been approved by other censors in Canada and New England. His concern was not primarily with the morality of films, but with the overall success of the motion picture industry in Nova Scotia.

One notable exception was the film *The Birth of a Nation*. Although this film was morally opposed by social groups such as the NAACP in the US and the influential Afro–Nova Scotian community in Canada, it was ultimately banned from Nova Scotia (and, by extension, PEI) theatres for a year. Its initial banning illustrates the power of the Black community in Nova Scotia to sway public opinion; while the eventual exhibition of the film shows the lack of respect that the white population held for the concerns of the Blacks. The curious aspect of this banning was not only in that it was the first major film to be prevented

from viewing, but also that two communities, Pictou and New Glasgow, both offered *The Birth of a Nation* and did so without public protest. This was not a controversial film for the dominant white population of the Maritimes, who appeared to have not been offended by the racist notions portrayed in the film. The banning of *The Birth of a Nation* was a political action, and was repealed in 1917, following the Nova Scotia election.

Political priorities overruled theatres' exhibition choices in one other rare instance as well—this time through a federally sanctioned prohibition of the showing of war films during the early years of World War One. In this instance, the Canadian federal government seemed to think that showing war films would discourage young men from joining the fight and would erode support for the war on the home front. However, Maritimers had an appetite for viewing footage of wartime events—so long as the films' messages reflected Maritimes viewpoints on the war and the valour of the Imperial soldiers. Therefore, when these local values were met with the federal political stance of banning war films from theatres, it seems that local Maritimes values (and, likely, local political interests) were enough to eventually override the will of the nation's federal war office.

The First World War offered a fresh opportunity for theatres to serve their communities in a respectable way that was attuned to Maritimers' values—namely, through the provision of space in which to conduct fundraising events and recruitment drives. While this no doubt reflected the genuine patriotism of theatre owners and operators, it also further assisted in the creation of profitable, long-lasting business ventures in the region by further securing respectable, middle-class audiences of women and children. What's more, for theatres in the Maritimes, the Great War provided a commercial opportunity to become the leading source of news about the war, expanding on the role that had been pioneered during

the Anglo-Boer War. Using newsreels and officially sponsored feature films, exhibitors offered in-demand semblances of the war to audiences at home, organized and sanitized for peak domestic consumption.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

In Canada's Maritime provinces, modernity was greeted with a mixture of apprehension and promise during the transitional eras (several can be identified between 1896 and 1919). While there were concerns expressed about the dangers that modernity brought to the region (e.g., increased urbanization, shifting social norms, and changing economic conditions), there was also widespread optimism about the promise on the modern horizon. The motion picture industry was successful in the region during the transitional era both because and in spite of the mixed perceptions of modernity. This thesis has explored how the Maritimes negotiated these changes in terms of its cinematic culture and its acceptance of motion pictures.

Urbanization could be connected to increased economic growth, and the train and automobile promised to connect the region with the markets in central Canada as well as in the United States. In terms of social shifts, modernity offered the belief that society could, if properly managed, progress towards a more enlightened and "healthier" future. Motion picture exhibition was one leading aspect of modernity that proved symbolic of both the economic and social changes occurring in the region, representing both the concerns and promise brought about by modernity to communities in the Maritime provinces.[1]

By 1907, permanent motion picture houses began to be either purposefully built or converted from existing buildings in cities, towns, and villages throughout the Maritime

[1] Modernity and motion pictures is a theme in many histories of early cinema. For example, see: Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press: 2001); Michael Aronson, *Nickelodeon City: Pittsburgh at the Movies, 1905-1929* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008); Paul Moore, *Now Playing: Early Moviegoing and the Regulation of Fun* (Albany: State University of New York and Press, 2008); Jan Olsson, *Los Angeles Before Hollywood: Journalism and American Film Culture, 1905to 1915* (Stockholm, Sweden: National Library of Sweden, 2008) and, François Albera, "First Discourses on Film and the Construction of a 'Cinematic Episteme,'" *A Companion to Early Cinema*, André Gaudreault, Nicolas Dulac, Santiago Hidalgo, eds. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012) 121-140.

provinces without notable protest. Just as itinerant exhibitors with the first generation of projectors had toured the region's music theatres, community halls, and other public spaces to mostly enthusiastic audiences during the novelty/itinerant era beginning in the late 1890s, permanent motion picture theatres, or nickelodeons—which began opening in various Maritimes communities in the spring and summer of 1907—were greeted in the region with widespread acceptance. In fact, motion picture theatres came to be recognized as significant community spaces and leading businesses during the transitional eras—so much so that they were perceived as being essential to the growth and health of a community. In fact, in many communities, these privately operated sites of amusement were viewed not only as profitable businesses, but as important public institutions.

Through placing a focus on theatres that offered films as their dominant entertainment programmes, this thesis has traced the history of motion picture exhibition in the Maritimes from the premier of motion pictures in Halifax in 1896 to the flourishing of permanent motion picture theatres, or nickelodeons, in communities across the region beginning in 1907. As motion picture exhibition transitioned between the years 1896 and 1919, the populations in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island were also transitioning through massive societal changes marked by the shocks and fissures brought about by modernity. Thus, the goal of this thesis has been to investigate the history of motion picture exhibition in the Maritimes while paying particular attention to the moral, social, and practical concerns that this industry created in Maritimes communities during the transitional eras of motion picture exhibition.

Notably, the inspiration for this investigation into early Maritimes film exhibition was the generally "gothamcentric" (metropolis-focused) tradition of film history, which reiterates

the "modernity thesis" and has been a dominate narrative in the field until only recently.[2] Motion picture exhibition, as one of the proclaimed hallmarks of modernity, has been most frequently linked to large metropolises by researchers looking at the history of transitional-era film exhibition in North America. These works have placed metropolises such as New York and Chicago as the centre of film history not only in terms of film production, but also in terms of exhibition practices. Although my research does not necessarily contradict the notion that these major urban centres were central to the history of film in North America, what I have discovered indicates a more complex and nuanced relationship between film producers, exhibitors, and audiences (including non-metropolitan ones) in the modern era.

The so-called modernity thesis has been used in the service of studies that have looked to interpret the viewing practices of the mass audiences of early cinema. Generally this thesis involves the study of large metropolitan marked by the sudden rush of modern life.[3] Ben Singer offers that there were two essential characteristics of modernity that were necessary in order for motion pictures exhibition to thrive. The first of these was the influx of a large mass of people to an urban setting; the example that Singer highlights is the immigrant populations that flooded cities such as New York as industries modernized and grew during the second wave of industrialization in the late nineteenth century. The second characteristic of modernity that Singer highlights was the bombardment of visual and aural stimuli within the modern

---

[2] For examples of the "gothamcentric" history of motion picture exhibition, see: Singer, Aronson, Moore, and Olsson. For examples of small-town or rural film exhibition, see: Kathryn H. Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1996); Fuller-Seeley, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood*; Gregory A. Waller, ed. *Moviegoing in America: A Sourcebook in the History of Film Exhibition* (London and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002); and Paul S. Moore, "Early Picture Shows at the Fulcrum of Modern and Parochial St. John's, Newfoundland," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 22, (2007): 447-471.

[3] Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz, ed., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1995), 3.

urban environment.[4] These specific markers of modernity were not part of the town or small city experience in the Maritime provinces, yet motion pictures (one of the key markers of Singer's conception of modernity) flourished there nonetheless, along with newspapers, wire news networks, train travel and the money economy. Thus, there seems to be a need for a wider conception of modernity—one that goes beyond the modernity thesis to consider the ways in which massive social and economic changes affected smaller communities such as those in the Maritimes.

As a main symbol of the arrival of modernity, the acceptance of motion pictures could be seen as a sort of "litmus test" for how the region was embracing modernity. Notably, there is no indication of any mass protests against film exhibition or attacks on exhibitors during the era studied. Indeed, motion pictures appear to have been embraced without any major resistance in communities around the Maritimes during the transitional eras. This apparent acceptance was due, at least in part, to the efforts of the motion picture production industry to create a product that would be accepted by a local audience. On the exhibition side of the industry, local exhibitors worked tirelessly not only to encourage audiences to enter their theatres, but also to persuade them that cinematic culture was something that they could connect with. Whether it be through advertising the local ties to film productions or through making connections between local film showings and those screenings in the larger metropolis, the film exhibition industry in the Maritime provinces worked hard to create (and maintain) an ideal audience for motion pictures.

This thesis has illustrated that advertising in newspapers was a prevalent means for

[4] Singer, 21.

motion picture exhibitors to be promoted in the Maritimes during the transitional eras, between 1896 and 1919. The advertising for—and reporting on—these theatres in the region's newspapers has been the major source of documentation for this history of film exhibition in the Maritimes; as the main source, it has proven to be a fruitful site for ascertaining both the nature of the target audiences desired by exhibitors, as well as the significance of these theatres to communities. It was the reading public that touring film exhibitors desired as audience members during the novelty era (1896-1898). Indeed, standard advertising practices for itinerant shows were heavily dependent on print media, including advertisements published in the local newspapers, handbills, and posters.[5] As itinerant exhibitors gave way to permanent sites of film exhibition, advertising techniques barely changed, and newspapers, handbills, and posters were among the leading strategies that continued to be used to attract audiences. Due to the "throw-away" nature of these advertisements and the marginal cultural space within which motion pictures were perceived to be operating, relatively few of these handbills and posters have been preserved. However, for the most part, newspapers (which have been archived due to their value as "the nervous system of the modern world") remain.[6]

Because Maritimes communities generally lacked dense centralized populations, exhibitors had to spread news of that week's billings beyond the theatre's front playbill.[7] For most communities, the newspaper proved to be the primary advertising tool of choice for local film exhibitors because of its wide circulation. The newspapers in communities such as Campbellton, Charlottetown, and Pictou did not just get into the hands of those who lived

---

[5] See Julius Cahn, *Cahn's Official Theatrical Guide, 1897* (New York: Jno. B. Jeffery, 1897). This guidebook acts as an example of a how-to guide that theatres could use to advertise visiting shows.
[6] Olsson, 15.
[7] Though playbills, advertising criers, and other on-site forms of advertisement were present in some instances, as illustrated through the newspaper writer's complaints in both Amherst and Antigonish. For Antigonish, *The Casket*, July 20, 1916, 1; for Amherst, see, "Editorial Comment" *Amherst Daily News*, November 9, 1907, 2.

within town limits; rather, their readership included those who lived in the wider surrounding region and who participated in the services and amenities of the town. This widespread readership was of critical importance for exhibitors, as a theatre in a small town in the Maritimes could not rely solely on those who lived in close proximity to the theatre to make up an audience (unlike exhibitors in Toronto, New York, or Pittsburgh, who could rely solely on neighbourhood inhabitants to keep a theatre afloat). Indeed, in the Maritimes, early exhibitors needed to cast a wide net to expose as much of the population as possible to their advertisements—and newspapers enabled them to do just that.[8]

Because there was no direction from the film studios in terms of how exhibitors should advertise the motion pictures that played in their theatres, exhibitors were effectively on their own in terms of promoting both the films and their theatres during the transitional eras. Although significant guidance was provided by the trade press, as captured in *Moving Picture World* magazine, this advice was general and offered to exhibitors across North America. Exhibitors were therefore challenged to create original and specific advertising for their communities. Offering giveaways was one means for attracting an audience, and it can be deduced what demographic the exhibitors were attempting to attract by examining the items on offer. As such, exhibitors—including Maritimes exhibitors—were able to seize the opportunity to tailor their advertising messages specifically to local audiences. Through examining the unique advertising associated with giveaways, special events, and targeted pricing, this thesis has unveiled the target audience that transitional-era motion picture exhibitors in the Maritimes desired to attract to their theatres.

[8] For examples of the use of newspapers to broaden the audience for a theatre outside the town proper, see the discussion of *The Birth of a Nation* being shown in Pictou in Chapter 4. See also Chapter 3 and Chapter 1 for other examples.

As exhibitors maintained permanent movie houses beginning in 1907 in the Maritimes, it became incredibly important to theatres' bottom lines that exhibitors secure respectable and repeat audiences. Conforming to the advice of commentators like Epes Winthrop Sargent, as well as to the advertising techniques of adjacent industries such as circuses and department stores, theatre managers used any and all means at their disposal to bring crowds to their theatres and to normalize the act of regular theatre attendance.[9] The goal of theatre advertising and promotion during the transitional eras, then, was not simply to promote the films; rather, it was also to advertise the theatre itself and to create (and propel) the image of a respectable form of social entertainment.

The giveaways and special events used by Maritimes exhibitors during the transitional eras do not seem to have been specifically related to the films that were playing at the time of the promotions. Rather, the goal of the giveaways and promotions was to gain a target audience for the theatre, and it is clear that—whether the offer was for flour, dolls, candy, or babies—this target audience was the respectable middle class, specifically the women and children of the community. Indeed, women were viewed as an ideal audience because they helped to assure the normalization of film attendance, and they were also fundamental in the establishment of a hetero-social space for entertainment. Commercially, women were also important due to the position that they commanded as the "agents of respectability and control."[10]

Attracting children was more complicated due to the protection that was placed on this segment of the population by those who were attempting to guard the morals of the

---

[9] Epes Withrop Sargent, *Picture Theatre Advertising* (New York: Chalmers Publishing Company, 1915).
[10] Colin D. Howell, *Northern Sandlots: A Social History of Maritime Baseball* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 78.

community. For instance, when the Empress Theatre in Amherst advertised their children's theatre, the management took great pains to illustrate that the participants would be well cared for by upstanding and well-placed community members; these assurances were an attempt to remove any apprehensions that parents might have had over allowing their children to attend the entertainment.[11] Similarly, following its promotional children's picnic at Victoria Park in the summer of 1910, the Lyric Theatre in Truro made assurances that all children had been well cared for and escorted home by the eight ladies also in attendance.[12]

The relatively high cost of these child-friendly promotional events prevented Maritimes theatres from maintaining them over extended periods, and hence these special offers were often short lived. A more consistent means of attracting children to Maritimes theatres was through offering matinees, setting lower ticket prices for children, and assuring parents that the youth would be "looked after" at the theatre.[13] Many additional complications arose when placing a theatre's advertising focus on youth, however. This was experienced first hand by the operators of the Fairyland Theatre in Pictou, when the local head of the Women's Temperance Union voiced common concerns about the negative effects of nickel theatres on youth, including a disregard for curfews and a general decline in morals.[14] Perhaps what this branch of the Women's Temperance Union was really voicing, however, were some of the common anxieties circulating regarding the changes associated with "modern" life.

Despite attempts to gain youth audiences, women remained the most desired audience

---

[11] See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the Children's Theatre in Amherst.
[12] "Two Hundred and Five Children Attend Lyric Picnic," *Daily News* (Truro), August 18, 1910, 4. See also Chapter 2.
[13] "Great Fun at the Wonderland," *The Daily Examiner* (Charlottetown), October 25, 1907, 1.
[14] Nova Scotia Women's Temperance Union Proceedings of Annual Conventions 1896-1902, 1904-1910, 1910, p. 47. These same concerns were earlier highlighted in 1907 by Halifax's Chief of Police, though there were no actions taken either by the city council or the provincial government. "Against the Nickel," *Daily Echo* (Halifax), July 12, 1907, 3.

members as determined by exhibitors in the region. The reason for this was because women were required before theatres could be considered truly modern and hetero-social spaces. The creation of a hetero-social space within theatres has been offered as one identifiable condition of modernity—at least according to those adherents of the modernity thesis.[15] The important role of women in the marketing and acceptance of motion pictures is an essential component to the concept of modernity. In fact, the inclusion of women in the public sphere in a more inclusive and meaningful way (e.g., through motion picture attendance) is one of Ben Singer's "concomitant social phenomena" of modernity in the metropolis—and is consistent with other concepts of modernity found in many works that look at social environments.[16] Finding these "modern" hetero-social shifts in the sparsely populated Maritimes proves that modernity (or at least some variation of it) was indeed witnessed in this region. Indeed, the targeting of women by theatres demonstrates that this segment of the population was essential for reflecting modern social shifts not only in the metropolis, but also in less populated areas such as the Maritimes.

In addition to their ability to indicate that theatres were "modern" spaces, women were essential for the perpetuation of the motion picture exhibition industry in the Maritimes due to their ability to secure large repeat audiences for the theatres' financial survival. Exhibitors were not necessarily interested in promoting the hetero-social aspect of modern culture; rather, they were only interested in maintaining profitability through capturing audiences that would assist in normalizing regular theatregoing as a respectable past time. And while the giveaways,

---

[15] Tom Gunning, "The Whole Town's Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity", *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 7 (1994); and Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1991). See also Kathy Piess, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).
[16] Singer, 21. See also Piess, Hansen, and Erika Rappaport in Charney and Schwartz.

promotions, and special events may not have been a mainstay of many theatres' advertising campaigns, these strategies *do* demonstrate the type of audience that exhibitors were primarily trying to capture: women.

Despite the gains made through advertising in terms of securing a stable, respectable, and desirable (female) audience, there remained a number of lingering and persistent concerns about these businesses in the transitional eras of motion picture exhibition. Theatres that offered motion pictures as their main attraction were conceived by some Maritimes community members (as influenced by social reformers in the metropolis) as being a threat to the physical and moral safety of audiences. Physically, it was argued that theatres posed potential dangers to their audiences due primarily to concerns about fires and inadequate means of evacuating a theatre in event of an emergency. These concerns were informed through events that took place in faraway metropolises, such as the 1903 disaster in Chicago's Iroquois Theatre and the infamous 1908 tragedy at the Rhoads Opera House in Boyertown, Pennsylvania.

Partly due to these tragedies, campaigns against motion picture theatres were waged across North America during the transitional eras—and some resonance of these campaigns could be sensed in some Maritimes communities as well. These fears mixed with domestic campaigns for social improvement as pattered on the progressive reforms of the late-Victorian age, creating a collective movement for safer (and thereby more respectable) public spaces. Exhibitors responded to these perceived physical dangers through both modifications to their theatres and public reassurances as to the safety of their buildings.

The assurances offered by exhibitors did not prevent the provincial legislatures of both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia from enacting specific laws regulating the motion picture industry, however. Initially, the 1911 Nova Scotian law was created only to impose greater

safety standards on theatres (specifically regarding the movement into and out of these often crowded spaces).[17] In New Brunswick, the moral content of the films was seemingly of more importance, though they also used a provincial law to force regulatory restrictions on the operation and construction of motion picture theatres.[18] These laws, however, were not overly restrictive—and in many respects appeared to assist the Maritimes film exhibition industry in gaining audience trust.

The perception that motion picture theatres posed dangers to audiences in the Maritimes expanded beyond fire safety and emergency exit concerns to include disease transmission and public health. Indeed, the transitional eras witnessed not only the rise of motion pictures but also an increase in the scientific knowledge of disease transmission. The public health concerns related not only to the safety of hetero-social groups of individuals spending non-chaperoned time together in darkened halls, but also (and more often) to theatres' ventilation systems, which were frequently perceived as being suspect. These concerns created a desire in (and pressure on) exhibitors to offer "clean" entertainment—and not just in terms of the content of the films, but also the theatre buildings. Exhibitors themselves took the lead in ensuring that their theatres were perceived as being beacons of healthy entertainment, with advertising being the main avenue for getting this message across. Despite the forethought of exhibitors in terms of maintaining the perception of a clean theatre, however, there remained a concerned public discourse (as played out in the pages of local newspapers) regarding the safety of these sites of modern entertainment.

[17] Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly, March 23, 1911, 180.
[18] New Brunswick Legislative Assembly, 1912, 261.

Concerns that theatres were potentially dangerous sites for disease transmission reached a fever pitch during the flu pandemic of 1918. This devastating event, coming at the conclusion of the First World War, forced the closure of all theatres (along with schools and churches) not just in the Maritime provinces but across North America. The effect of the pandemic on the motion picture exhibition industry in the Maritimes was disruptive beyond lost revenue. Indeed, following the pandemic there arose an acute need to restore public confidence in the cleanliness of the theatres. Interestingly, this mistrust in theatres was less about the actual safety of the sites and more about the perceived need for one class of society to offer controls over the lower classes—perhaps indicating a persistent wrinkle in the transition towards fully accepting a "modern" Maritimes society.

During the transitional eras, both exhibitors and motion picture producers used films to project the conception that motion picture viewing was a respectable activity. One clear means of offering this perception was by creating and selling films that reflected the notion of respectability. To this end, the Canadian Bioscope Company released *Evangeline* (Canadian Bioscope Company, 1914, lost), a filmed interpretation of the Longfellow poem of the same name. This film, which was produced in Nova Scotia, was created with funds raised in the Maritimes—though it featured a cast and crew made up primarily of Americans. Still, the local connections were highlighted in the advertising of the film in Nova Scotia. And while the Maritimes scenery was one of the film's main selling points, there was also an emphasis on the moral qualities of the film. This was no surprise, since *Evangeline* was connected to an overall attempt by American film producers to create morally correct films that reflected the interests of social and moral reformation movements, which argued that motion pictures were detrimental to the morals of audiences. Indeed, films that were conceived of (or advertised) as

being morally uplifting—*Evangeline* among them—were used by exhibitors during the transitional era defined by the rise of feature films to promote the conception that their theatres were not only entertaining, but also edifying and morally sound.

In an attempt to establish public trust in motion picture theatres (and in so doing attract a wider audience), exhibitors in the Maritime provinces also used their venues to raise awareness about public health. Specifically, through the screening of the film *Damaged Goods* (American Film Company, 1915, lost), the dangers of syphilis were illustrated in a distinctly melodramatic manner. This film was presented in theatres throughout Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (Prince Edward Island was excluded from the tour) through the assistance of the local theatre mogul, F.G. Spencer, who used this film to both educate audiences and further improve the moral tone of his theatres. The advertising for *Damaged Goods* emphasized the importance placed on the film by the region's recognized moral guardians and health professionals. The fact that there were gender and age restrictions imposed on the audience illustrates the care that theatres (and censors) took with the presentation of films promoting sexual health education—what was still a sensitive topic in Maritimes society. *Damaged Goods* was not only offered as a means to educate the masses about the dangers of a sexually transmitted disease, but was also used to illustrate that theatres were places of respectable, upright, and morally safe entertainment.

Despite appearances of altruistic and self-aggrandizing motives, profitability was the paramount concern of motion picture theatres. Keeping a clean, safe, and respectable theatre was done with the goal of creating a profitable commercial venture. Filmmakers, exhibitors, and industry promoters all saw the benefit of promoting films that could successfully perpetuate the industry. Through a careful balancing act between the various stakeholders in

the film business, the industry created and promoted films that could both attract wide audiences while also avoiding the direct scorn of moral guardians. So while filmmakers did not exclusively make films that promoted local moral standards, exhibitors worked hard to create the *perception* that this was the fact.

Indeed, the advertising offered by exhibitors offered the idea that the theatres were in charge of deciding what films were shown on the screen—that films were selected and presented with theatres' particular communities in mind. For instance, the people of Amherst, Truro, Moncton, and Campbellton were all offered the belief that their motion picture exhibitor was in control of the selection of films shown in their theatres. And although this was true (at least, to a very limited extent), it was only the *perception* of control that was needed to attract and maintain an audience.

The year 1919 marks the end of the post-industrialized era of transition in the Maritime provinces. With the military demobilization that followed the end of the First World War, a long period of economic recession (or depression) took hold in the region. The year 1919 also marked the end of the transitional era of motion picture exhibition in the region. As film advertising became increasingly standardized, and as theatre ownership consolidated, theatres in the region became less unique to their individual communities. Still, audiences continued to show up—and continued to pay. Thus, theatres were not losing their position in the community, but rather their ability to mould such positioning. This loss of autonomy was not mourned by Maritimes audiences; likely it was not even noticed. Rather, they continued to enjoy Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, and Mary Pickford just as much as everyone else in North America.

Theatres continued to operate in most communities in the Maritimes even as the calendar rolled over into the next decade and the region (like the rest of North America) slowly descended into a state of economic depression. The prevailing economics of the film exhibition industry have become polarized by a monopoly situation, and most towns and cities in the Maritimes have long since lost their historic theatre structures. Fortunately, however, due to a combination of low population density and fortuitous theatre construction, one transitional-era motion picture theatre remains in the Maritimes. This venue—the Astor Theatre (formally the Opera House) of Liverpool, Nova Scotia, which opened in 1902 and is connected to the former town hall—still operates as a motion picture theatre today, offering a mix of films and live performances to Maritimes audiences who are willing to pay the admission.

Figure 6-1: Liverpool Town Hall and Astor Theatre, 2004, Heritage Division, Nova Scotia Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage, 2004.

APPENDIX 1 ARCHIVES VISITED

Library and Archives Canada

Nova Scotia Provincial Archives

Public Archives and Records Office of Prince Edward Island

Provincial Archives of New Brunswick

Admiral Digby Museum

Alberton Museum and Genealogy Centre

Annapolis Valley Macdonald Museum

Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University

Bear River Historical Society

Colchester Historical Society Archives

Cumberland County Museum and Archives

Dalhousie University Archives and Special Collections

DesBrisay Museum

Halifax Regional Municipality Archives

The Nova Scotia Legislative Library

The Thomas Raddall Research Centre

Yarmouth County Museum and Archives

BIBILIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCE BIBLIOGRAPHY

NEWSPAPERS

New Brunswick:

Campbellton Events

Campbellton Graphic

Chatham Commercial

Chatham Gazette

The World (Chatham)

Fredericton Daily Mail

The Observer (Heartland)

Daily News (Moncton)

Daily Times (Moncton)

Union Advocate (Newcastle)

Sackville Tribute

Semi-Weekly Post (Sackville)

Sackville Post

The Beacon (Saint Andrews)

Evening Times and Star (Saint John)

The Daily Telegraph (Saint John)

The Sun Journal (Saint John)

The Globe (Saint John)

Carleton Sentinel (Woodstock)

Woodstock Press

Nova Scotia:

The Daily News (Amherst)

The Spectator (Annapolis Royal)

The Casket (Antigonish)

The Telephone (Bear River)

The Weekly Monitor (Bridgetown)

Bridgewater Bulletin

Digby Weekly Courier

Acadian Recorder (Halifax)

Daily Echo (Halifax)

Evening Mail (Halifax)

Halifax Herald

Morning Chronicle (Halifax)

The Advertiser (Kentville)

Liverpool Advance

The Daily News (Lunenburg)

Middleton Outlook

The Eastern Chronicle (New Glasgow)

Pictou Advance

Sydney Post

The Daily News (Truro)

The Hants Journal (Windsor)

The Acadian (Wolfville)

Yarmouth Herald

Yarmouth Light

Yarmouth Times

Prince Edward Island:

The Daily Examiner (Charlottetown)

The Daily Patriot (Charlottetown)

The Evening Patriot (Charlottetown)

The Guardian (Charlottetown)

The Summerside Journal

ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS

Debates and Proceedings of the Senate of Canada, 1897: Second Session, Eighth Parliament, p.430-446

The Directory of Canadian Newspapers, 1899, A. McKim & Co.

Nova Scotia Women's Temperance Union Proceedings of Annual Conventions 1896-1902, 1904-1910, MG 20 Vol 356 #1-10; Vol 357 #4-5; Vol 506 #1

West Hants Historical Society Files: Windsor's Imperial Theatre

SECONDARY SOURCES BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abel, Richard, and Rick Altman. *The Sounds of Early Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001

Abel, Richard, editor. *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Abel, Richard. *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema, 1896-1914*. Berkeley, University of California Press: 1994.

---. *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900-1910*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1999.

---. *Americanizing the Movies and "Movie-Mad" Audiences, 1910-1914*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2006.

---. "Fan Discourse in the Heartland: The Early 1910s," *Film History* 18 (2006):140-153.

Acheson, T.W. *Saint John: The Making of a Colonial Urban Community*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985.

Addams, Jane. *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*. Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1909.

---. *Twenty Years at Hull-House* Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1912.

Adorno, Theodor W. *The Culture Industry Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, edited by J.M. Bernstein. Routledge classics. London: Routledge, 2001.

Allen, Robert C. *Vaudeville and Film, 1895-1915: A Study in Media Interaction*. New York: Arno Press, 1980.

---. "Motion Picture Exhibition in Manhattan: Beyond the Nickelodeon." *Cinema Journal* 18 (1979): 2-15.

---. *Vaudeville and Film, 1895-1915: A Study of Media Interaction*. New York: Arno Press, 1980.

Allen, Richard and Murray Smith, eds. *Film Theory and Philosophy*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Altman, Rick. *Silent Film Sound*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, translated by Ben Brewster. London: New Left Books, 1971.

Alvarez, Max. "The Origins of the Film Exchange." *Film History* 17 (2005): 431-465.

Anderson, Benedict R. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991.

Aronson, Michael. "The Wrong Kind of Nickel Madness: Pricing Problems for Pittsburgh Nickelodeons." *Cinema Journal* 42 (2002): 71- 96.

---. *Nickelodeon City: Pittsburgh at the Movies, 1905-1929*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008.

Attridge, Steve. *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity in Late Victorian Culture: Civil and Military Worlds*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003

Atwell, David. *Cathedrals of the Movies: A History of British Cinemas and Their Audiences*. London: Architectural Press, 1980.

Auerbach, Jonathan. *Body Shots: Early Cinema's Incarnations*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2007.

---. "McKinley at Home: How Early American Cinema Made News," *American Quarterly* 51 (1999): 797-832.

Bachman, Gregg. "Still in the Dark - Silent Film Audiences." *Film History* 9 (1997): 23-48.

Bachman, Gregg and Thomas Slater, editors. *American Silent Film: Discovering Marginalized Voices*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003.

Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination*, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Bailie, Douglas. "Cinemas in the City: Edmonton from the Nickelodeon to the Multiplex." *Prairie Forum* Fall (1996): 239-262.

Barbas, Samantha, "The Political Spectator: Censorship, Protest and the Moviegoing Experience, 1912-1922." *Film History* 11 (1999): 217-229.

Beach, Christopher S. "Electrification and Underdevelopment in New Brunswick: The Grand Falls Project, 1896-1930." *Acadiensis* 23 (1993): 60-85.

Benjamin, Andrew. "Benjamin's Modernity," in, *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, edited by David Ferris. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2004. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521793297

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Benson, Susan Porter. *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

Barnes, James. *Filming the Boar War*. London: Bishopgate, 1990.

Berman, Marshall. *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.

Bernstein, Matthew, editor. *Controlling Hollywood: Censorship and Regulation in the Studio Era*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999.

Belisle, Donica. *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011.

Bottomore, Stephen. "The Panicking Audience?: Early Cinema and the 'Train Effect.'" *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 19 (1999):177-216.

Bordwell, David, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson. *Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.

Bowser, Eileen. *The Transformation of Cinema, 1907-1915*. Toronto: Collier Macmillan Canada, 1990.

Braudy, Leo, and Marshall Cohen editors. *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings, 6th Edition*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Brown, Donald E. "Human Nature and History." *History and Theory* 38 (2002):138-157.

Brown, Paul. "Come East, Young Man!" The Politics of Rural Depopulation in Nova Scotia, 1900-1925." *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 1 (1998): 47-78.

Brown, Stephen, Elizabeth C. Hirschman and Pauline Maclaran. "Always Historicize!: Researching Marketing History in a Post-Historical Epoch." *Marketing Theory* 1 (2001): 49-89.

Bruno, Giuliana. "Streetwalking Around Plato's Cave." *October* 60 (1992):110-129.

Buck-Morss, Susan. "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered." *October* 62 (1992): 3-41.

Buckner, Phillip and John Reid, eds., *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994

Bullock, Marcus. "The Rose of Babylon: Walter Benjamin, Film Theory, and the Technology of Memory." *MLN* 103 (1988): 1098-1120.

Bundell, Vanda, Ian Taylor, John Shepard, eds. *Relocating Cultural Studies: Developments in Theory and Research*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Butsh, Richard. "American Movie Audiences of the 1930s." *International Labor and Working-Class History* 59 (2001):106-120.

---. “Bowery B'Hoys and Matinee Ladies: The Re-Gendering of Nineteenth-Century American Theater Audiences.” *American Quarterly* 46 (1994): 374-405.

---. “A History of Research on Movies, Radio, and Television.” *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 29 (2001):112-120.

Cassel, Jay, *The Secret Plague: Venereal Disease in Canada, 1838-1939*: Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987.

Cahn, Julius. *Cahn’s Official Theatrical Guide, 1897*. New York: Publications Office, Julius Cahn, 1897.

---. *Cahn’s Official Theatrical Guide, 1903-4*. New York: Publications Office, Julius Cahn, 1904.

---. *Cahn’s Official Theatrical Guide, 1905*. New York: Publications Office, Julius Cahn, 1905.

---. *Cahn’s Official Theatrical Guide, 1912-13*. New York: Publications Office, Julius Cahn, 1913.

Chalmers, J.P., editor. *The Moving Picture World*. Volume 1, Number 1 – Volume 40, Number 10, Chalmers Publishing Company: New York, 1907-1919.

Charney, Leo and Vanessa R. Schwartz, editors. *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995.

Clark, S.D. “Economic Expansion and the Moral Order.” *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 6 (1940): 203-225.

Cohen, Paula Marantz. *Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Constantinides, Zoë. “The Myth of *Evangeline* and the Origin of Canadian National Cinema.” *Film History* 26 (2014): 50–79.

Conrad, Margaret. “Regionalism in a Flat World.” *Acadiensis* 35 (2006): 138-143.

Conwell, Russell H. *History of the Great Fire in Saint John, June 20 and 21, 1877*. Boston: Russell, 1877.

Cook, Ramsay. *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985.

Cook, Sharon A. *Through Sunshine and Shadow: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874-1930*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995.

Cooper, Mark Garrett. *Love Rules: Silent Hollywood and the Rise of the Managerial Class*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Couvares, Francis G. *Movie Censorship and American Culture*, 2nd Edition. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2006.

Craig, Beatrice. *Backwoods Consumers and Homespun Capitalist: The Rise of a Market Culture in Eastern Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.

Culver, Stuart. "Growing up in Oz." *American Literary History* 4 (1992): 607-628.

---. "What Manikins Want: *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *The Art of Decorating Dry Goods Windows*." *Representations* 21 (1988): 97-116.

Daly, Nicholas. "Blood on the Tracks: Sensation Drama, the Railway, and the Dark Face of Modernity." *Victorian Studies* 42 (1998): 47-76.

Davies, Richard O. *Main Street Blues: The Decline of Small-Town America*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998.

Dick, Ernest. "From Temperance to Prohibition in 19th Century Nova Scotia." *Dalhousie Review* 60 (1981): 530-552.

---. "In Search of The Canadian Evangeline," *River Review* 3 (1997):149-154.

Dorland, Michael, *So Close to the State/s: The Emergence of Canadian Feature Film Policy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.

Duffy, John. *The Sanitarians A History of American Public Health*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Eksteins, Modris. "Rag-Picker: Siegfried Kracauer and the Mass Ornament." *International Journal of Politics, Culture & Society* 10 (1997): 609.

Elsaesser, Thomas. "Cinema -- the Irresponsible Signifier or "the Gamble with History": Film Theory Or Cinema Theory." *New German Critique* 40 (1987): 65-89.

Fell, John L., ed. *Film Before Griffith*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983.

Ferro, Marc. "Film as an Agent, Product and Source of History." *Journal of Contemporary History* 18 (1983): 357-364.

Fielding, Raymond. *The American Newsreel: A Complete History, 1911-1967*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972.

Fingard, Judith. *The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax*. Halifax: Pottersfield Press, 1989.

Fischer, Claude S. *America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone to 1940*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

---. "Changes in Leisure Activities, 1890-1940." *Journal of Social History* 27 (1994): 453-75.

---. "Gender and the Residential Telephone, 1890–1940: Technologies of Sociability". *Sociological Forum* 3 (1988): 211-233.

---. “The Revolution in Rural Telephony, 1900-1920.” *Journal of Social History* 21 (1987): 5-26.

---. “Technology and Community: Historical Complexities.” *Sociological Inquiry* 67 (1997): 113-8.

Forbes, E.R. *Challenging the Regional Stereotype: Essays on the 20th Century Maritimes*. Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1989.

---. “Prohibition and the Social Gospel in Nova Scotia,” *Acadiensis* 1 (1971): 11-36

---. *Maritime Rights Movement, 1919 - 1927: A Study in Canadian Regionalism*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1979.

Forbes, E.R., and D.A. Muise, eds. *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Frank, David, and Nolan Reilly. “The Emergence of the Socialist Movement in the Maritimes, 1899-1916.” *Labour/La Travail* 4 (1979): 85-113

Friedberg, Anne. *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993.

Frisby, David, editor. *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1986.

---, “Georg Simmel: First Sociologist of Modernity.” *Theory, Culture and Society* 2 (1985): 49-67

Fuller-Seeley, Kathryn, editor. *Hollywood in the Neighborhood: Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Fullerton, John. “Creating an Audience for the Cinématographe: Two Lumière Agents in Mexico, 1896.” *Film History* 20 (2008): 95.

Fullerton, John, and Jan Olsson, editors. *Nordic Explorations: Film Before 1930*. London: J. Libbey, 1999.

Gaines, Jane. “From Elephants to Lux Soap: The Programming and ‘Flow’ of Early Motion Picture Exploitation.” *Velvet Light Trap* 25 (1990): 29-43.

Garcia, Desirée. “Subversive Sounds: Ethnic Spectatorship and Boston’s Nickelodeon Theatres, 1907-1914.” *Film History* 19 (2007): 213-227.

Gaudreault, A., and G. Lacasse. “The Introduction of the Lumiere Cinematograph in Canada.” *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 5 (1996): 113-123.

Gaudreault, André, Nicolas Dulac, Santiago Hidalgo, eds. *A Companion to Early Cinema*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Gaudreault, André. *Film and Attraction: From Kinematography to Cinema*. Translation by Timothy Barnard. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2011.

Giddens, Anthony. "Modernism and Post-Modernism." *New German Critique* 22 (1981):15-18

Gledhill, Christine and Linda Williams, editors. *Reinventing Film Studies*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Globerman, Steven. "Foreign Ownership of Feature Film Distribution and the Canadian Film Industry." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 16 (1991), accessed August 28, 2015, www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/601/507.

Gomery, Douglas. *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1992.

Gordon, Ian. *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture, 1890-1945*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998.

Grace, Sherrill. *Canada and the Idea of the North*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002.

Grieveson, Lee, and Peter Kramer, editors. *The Silent Cinema Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Grieveson, Lee. "Fighting Films: Race, Morality, and the Governing of Cinema, 1912-1915." *Cinema Journal* 38 (1998): 40-72.

---. *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early-Twentieth-Century America*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004.

Gunning, Tom. "The Whole Town's Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity." *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7 (1994): 189-201.

---. "The World as Object Lesson: Cinema Audiences, Visual Culture and the St. Louis World's Fair, 1904." *Film History* 6 (1994): 422-44.

---. *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film : The Early Years at Biograph*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991.

Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Translated by Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989.

Habermas, Jürgen and Seyla Ben-Habib. "Moderity versus Postmodernity." *New German Critique* 22 (1981): 3-14.

Hall, Steward, et al. *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*. London: Hutchinson, 1980.

Hallman, Dianne. "Rights, Justice, Power: Gendered Perspectives on Prohibition in Late Nineteenth-Century Canada." *History of Intellectual Culture* 2 (2002): 1-14.

Hansen, Miriam. *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991.

---. "Benjamin and Cinema: Not a One-Way Street." *Critical Inquiry* 25 (1999): 306-343.

---. "Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: 'The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology'." *New German Critique* 40 (1987): 179-224.

---. "Early Silent Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?" *New German Critique* 29 (1983): 147-84.

---. "Of Mice and Ducks: Benjamin and Adorno on Disney." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 92 (1993): 27-61.

---. "Room-for-Play: Benjamin's Gamble with Cinema." *October* 109 (2004): 3-46.

Hanson, Peter, H. "Dancing Lamas of Everest: Cinema, Orientalism and Anglo-Tibetan Relations in the 1920s." *American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 712-747.

Heron, Craig. *Booze: A Distilled History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.

Holman, Andrew. "Playing in the neutral zone: meanings and uses of ice hockey in Canada-U.S. borderlands, 1895-1915." *American Review of Canadian Studies* 34 (2004): 33-57.

Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor Adorno. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, ed. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Stanford CA: Leland Stanford Junior University, 2002

Hornsby, Stephen J., and John G. Reid, editors. *New England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill - Queen's University Press, 2005.

Hutchinson, Ron. "The Vitaphone Project. Answering Harry Warner's Question: 'Who the Hell Wants to Hear Actors Talk?'" *Film History* 14 (2002): 40-46.

Inwood, Kris E. "Maritime Industrialization from 1870 to 1910: A Review of the Evidence and its Interpretation." *Acadiensis* 21 (1991): 132-55.

Iversen, Gunnar. "Cutting Bordello Scenes and Dances: Local Regulation and Film Censorship in Norway before 1913." *Film History* 17 (2005): 106-112.

James, Cathy. "Reforming Reform: Toronto's Settlement House Movement, 1900-20." *Canadian Historical Review*. 8 (2001): 55-90

Jancovich, Mark, and Lucy Faire with Sarah Stubbings. *The Place of the Audience: Cultural Geographies of Film Consumption*. London: British Film Institute, 2003.

Jeffery, John B., Editor. *Jeffery's Guide and Directory to the Opera Houses, Theatres, Public Halls, Bill Posters, etc. of the Cities and Towns of America*, Chicago: John. B. Jeffery, 1889.

Jenkins, Jane. "Baptism of Fire: New Brunswick's Public Health Movement and the 1918 Influenza Epidemic." *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 24 (2007): 317-242.

Jernudd, Åsa. “Reform and Entertainment: Film Exhibition in a Small Town in Sweden at the End of the Nineteenth Century.” *Film History* 17 (2005): 88-105.

Johnson, D.W. *History of Methodism in Eastern British America, Including Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Bermuda*. Sackville, New Brunswick: The Tribune Printing Company, 1924.

Johnson, A.J.B. “Imagining Paradise: The Visual Depiction of Pre-Deportation Acadia, 1850-200.” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 38 (2002): 105-130.

---. “The Call of the Archetype and the Challenge of Acadian History.” *French Colonial History* 5 (2004): 63-92.

Johnston, Russell. *Selling Themselves: The Emergence of Canadian Advertising*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

Johnston, William, editor. *Motion Picture News*. Volumes 6-11. New York: Motion Picture News Inc., 1912-1914.

Kaesn, Anton, and David J. Levin. “The Debate about Cinema: Charting a Controversy (1909-1929).” *New German Critique*. 40 (1987): 7-33.

Kasson, John. *Rudeness and Civility in Nineteenth Century Urban America*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1991.

Keil, Charlie and Shelly Stamp, editors. *American Cinema’s Transitional Era*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

King, Rob. “‘Made for the Masses with an Appeal to the Classes’: The Triangle Film Corporation and the Failure of Highbrow Film Culture.” *Cinema Journal* 44 (2005): 3-33.

Kinsila, Edward Bernard. *Modern Theatre Construction*. New York: Chalmers Publishing, 1917.

Kirby, Lynne. *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997.

Kitz, Janet F. *Shattered City: The Halifax Explosion and the Road to Recovery*. Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1989

Knox, Zoe. “Writing Witness History: The Historiography of the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania.” *Journal of Religious History*. 35 (2011): 157-180.

Koszarski, Richard. “Flu Season: *Motion Picture World* Reports on Pandemic Influenza, 1918-19.” *Film History* 17 (2005): 466-485.

---. *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

Kracauer, Siegfried. *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essay*. Translated and edited by Thomas Y. Levin. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Kracauer, Siegfried, Barbara Correll, and Jack Zipes. "The Mass Ornament." *New German Critique* 5 (1975): 67-76.

Krebs, Paula M. "'The Last of the Gentlemen's Wars': Women in the Boer War Concentration Camp Controversy." *History Workshop* 33 (1992): 38-56

Labosier, James. "From the Kinetoscope to the Nickelodeon: Motion Picture Presentation and Production in Portland, Oregon from 1894 to 1906." *Film History* 16 (2004): 286-323.

Lacasse, Germaine. "American Film in Quebec Theatre." *Cinema Journal* 38 (1999): 98-110.

---. "Cultural Amnesia and the Birth of Film in Canada." *Cinema Canada* 108 (1984): 6-7.

Lafferty, Renee. *The Guardianship of Best Interests: Institutional Care for the Children of the Poor in Halifax, 1850-1960*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012.

Lagos, Taso G. "Film Exhibition in Seattle, 1897 - 1912: Leisure Activity in a Scraggly, Smelly Frontier Town." *Historical Journal of Film Radio and Television* 23 (2003): 101 - 115.

Lawrence, Amy. "Counterfeit Motion: The Animated Films of Eadweard Muybridge." *Film Quarterly* 57 (2004): 15-25.

Lears, T. Jackson. *Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*. New York: Pantheon, 1981.

Leitch, Vincent, et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2001.

Lennig, Arthur. "Myth and Fact: The Reception of *The Birth of a Nation*." *Film History* 16 (2004): 117-141.

Lindstrom, J.A. "'Almost Worse than the Restrictive Measures': Chicago Reformers and the Nickelodeons, *Cinema Journal* 39 (1999): 90-112.

Levine, Lawrence. *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie*. Boston: William D. Ticknor & Company, 1847.

Lyotard, Jean François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

MacKay, A. H. "Moral Instruction in the Public Schools of Canada", in Michael E. Sadler, ed. *Moral Instruction and Training in Schools: Report of an International Inquir*y (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908).

McAlpines Prince Edward Island Directory, 1900. Saint John, NB: The McAlpine Publishing Company, 1900.

McCann, Larry, ed. *People and Place: Studies of Small Town Life in the Maritimes*.

Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1987.

---. "The Mercantile-Industrial Transition in the Metals Towns of Pictou County, 1857-1931," *Acadiensis*. 10 (1981): 29-64.

MacDonald, Monica. "Railway Tourism in the 'Land of Evangeline,' 1882-1946." *Acadiensis* 35 (2005): 158-180.

McGettigan, Joan. "Facing the Depression: Movie Exhibition in the Philadelphia Area, 1931," *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures* 24 (2001): 15-25.

McKay, Ian. *Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.

---. "A Note on 'Region' in Writing the History of Atlantic Canada." *Acadiensis* 29 (2000): 89-101.

Miller, Carman. "Loyalty, Patriotism and Resistance: Canada's Response to the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902," *South African Historical Journal* 41 (1999): 312-323.

---. *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War, 1899-1902*. Ottawa: Canadian War Museum, 1993.

Monod, David. *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996.

Montgomery, Lucy Maud. Wendy E. Barry, Margaret Anne Doody, Mary E. Doody Jones, eds. *The Annotated Anne of Green Gables*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Moore, Paul S. "Early Picture Shows at the Fulcrum of Modern and Parochial St. John's, Newfoundland." *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*. 22 (2007): 447-471.

---. "Everybody's Going: City Newspapers and the Early Mass Market for Movies." *City and Community* 4 (2005): 339-357.

---. "Movie Palaces on Canadian Downtown Main Streets: Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver." *Urban History Review* 32 (2004): 3-20.

---. *Now Playing: Early Moviegoing and the Regulation of Fun*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008.

Morey, Anne. "Early Film Exhibition in Wilmington, North Carolina 1897-1915." *Spectator: The University of Southern California Journal of Film & Television* 17 (1996): 8-27.

Morris, Peter. *Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema, 1895-1939*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill - Queen's University Press, 1978, reprint 1992.

Morton, Suzanne. *Ideal Surroundings: Domestic Life in a Working-Class Suburb in the 1920s*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995.

---. *At Odds: Gambling and Canadians, 1919-1969*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.

Muise, D.A. "Organizing Historical Memory in the Maritimes: A Reconnaissance," *Acadiensis*

30 (2000): 50-60.

Mullins, Patrick. “Ethnic Cinema in the Nickelodeon Era in New York City: Commerce, Assimilation and Cultural Identity.” *Film History*, 12 (2000):115-124.

Musser, Charles. *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990.

---. *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

---. “Rethinking Early Cinema: Cinema of Attractions and Narrativity.” *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 7 (1994): 203-231.

Musser, Charles and Carol Nelson. *High Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Travelling Exhibition, 1880 - 1920*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991.

New, William H. *Borderlands: How We Talk About Canada*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998.

Nichols, John. “Countering Censorship: Edgar Dale and the Film Appreciation Movement.” *Cinema Journal* 46 (2006): 3-22.

Novak, William. *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Oberdeck, Kathryn. *The Evangelist and the Impresario: Religion, Entertainment and Cultural Politics in America, 1884-1914*. Baltimore, Md: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999.

Olsson, Jan. *Los Angeles Before Hollywood: Journalism and American Film Culture, 1905 to 1915*. Stockholm, Sweden: National Library of Sweden, 2008.

Orgeron, Marsha. “Making *It* in Hollywood: Clara Bow, Fandom, and Consumer Culture.” *Cinema Journal* 42 (2003): 76-97.

Peiss, Kathy. *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1986.

Pelletier, Louis. “An Experiment in ‘Historically Correct’ Canadian Photoplays: Montreal’s British American Film Manufacturing Co.” *Film History* 19 (2007): 34-48.

Penton, M.J. *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 2nd ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.

Pomerance, Murray. *Cinema and Modernity*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2006.

Potamianos, George. “Hollywood in the Hinterlands: Mass Culture in Two California Communities, 1896-1936.” PhD Diss., University of South California, 1998.

Quinn, Michael. “Distribution, the Transient Audience, and the Transition to the Feature Film.” *Cinema Journal* 40 (2001): 35-56.

Ramsaye, Terry. *A Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1923.

Regester, Charlene. "From the Buzzard's Roost: Black Movie-going in Durham and Other North Carolina Cities during the Early Period of American Cinema." *Film History: An International Journal* 17 (2005):113-124.

Reid, John. *Six Crucial Decades: Times of Change in the History of the Maritimes*. Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1987.

Residents of Hull House, The. *Hull House Maps and Papers: a presentation of nationalities and wages in a congested district of Chicago, together with comments and essays on problems growing out of the social conditions*. Boston: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1895.

Rhodes, Gary D. "The Origin and Development of the American Moving Picture Poster." *Film History* 19 (2007): 228-246.

Richards, Helen. "Cinema as an Attraction: Representations of Bridgend's Cinema Exhibition History on the *Glamergan Gazette*, Wales, 1900-1939." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*. 25:3 (August, 2005): 427-453.

Richardson, F.H. *The Motion Picture Handbook* . New York: World Photographic Publishing, 1910.

Roberts, Charles G.D. *The Heart That Knows*. Boston: L.C. Page & Company, 1906.

Rodowick, D.N. "Dr. Strange Media; Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Film Theory." *PMLA* 116 (2001): 1396-1404.

Rogin, Michael. "'The Sword Became a Flashing Vision': D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*." *Representations* 9 (1985):150-195.

Rose, Clifford. *Four Years with Demon Rum: The Autobiography and Diary of Temperance Inspector Clifford Rose*. Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1980.

Rosenzweig, Roy. *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers & Leisure in an American Industrial City, 1870-1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Ross, Stephen Joseph. *Working-Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998.

Sadler, Michael E., editor. *Moral Instruction and Training in Schools: Report of an International Inquiry*, Volume II. London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1908.

Samson, Daniel, editor. *Contested Countryside: Rural Workers and Modern Society in Atlantic Canada, 1800-1950*. Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994.

Santo, Ava. "Film Chronicles in Montréal's *La Presse*, 1906 - 1908." *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, 12 (2003): 69-92.

Sargent, Epes Withrop. *Picture Theatre Advertising*. New York: Chalmers Publishing Company, 1915.

Saylor, Richard C., "Dr. Ellis Paxton Oberholtzer and the Early Years of the Pennsylvania State Board of Censors." *Film History* 16 (2004): 142-162.

Schwartz, Vanessa R. "Walter Benjamin for Historians." *The American Historical Review* 106 (2001): 1721-43.

Seeley, Kathryn. *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture*. Charlottesville, NC: University Press of Virginia, 1996.

Seiler, Robert M., and Tamara P. Seiler, *Reel Time: Movie Exhibitors and Movie Audiences in Prairie Canada, 1896 to 1986*. Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2013.

Sheeran, George and Yanina Sheeran. "Discourses in Local History." *Rethinking History* 2 (1998): 65-85.

Sheehan, Nancy M. "National Pressure Groups and Provincial Curriculum Policy: Temperance in Nova Scotia Schools 1880-1930." *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue canadienne de l'éducation* 9 (1984): 73-88.

Simmel, George. "The Metropolis and Mental Life." (1903) in *The Blackwell City Reader*, edited by Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson. Oxford and Malden, Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002.

Sinclair, Upton. *Damaged Goods: The Great Play "Les Avariés of Brieux."* New York: The John C. Winston Company, 1913.

Singer, B. *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Contexts*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Singer, Ben. "Manhattan Nickelodeons: New Data on Audiences and Exhibitors." *Cinema Journal* 35 (1995): 5-35.

Sirois-Trahan, Jean Pierre, F. Le Gac, and W. Schubring. "The Reception of Talking Pictures' in the Context of Québec Exhibition (1894-1915)." *Film History* 11 (1999): 433-43.

Smith, Allan C. *Nation?: Essays on Continentalism, Identity, and the Canadian Frame of Mind*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill - Queen's University Press, 1994.

Smith, Andrew Brodie. *Shooting Cowboys and Indians: Silent Western Films, American Culture, and the Birth of Hollywood*. Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2003.

Smith, Mary Elizabeth. "People, Place, and Performance: Early Years of the Halifax Academy of Music." *Dalhousie Review* 75 (1996): 409-439.

Smither, Roger, editor. *This Film is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. London: FIAF, 2002.

---. "'A Wonderful Idea of the Fighting': The Question of Fakes in 'The Battle of the

Somme,'" *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 13 (1993): 149-168.

Staiger, Janet. "Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking about the History and Theory of Film Advertising." *Cinema Journal* 29 (1990): 3-31.

Steven, Peter. "Pleasing Canadians: A National Flavour for Early Cinema, 1896-1914." *The Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 12 (2003): 5-21.

---. *Media Reception Studies*. New York: New York University Press, 2005.

Stewart, Ian. "More than Just a Line on the Map: The Political Culture of the Nova Scotia-New Brunswick Boundary." *Publius* 20 (1990): 99-111.

Stokes, Melvyn. *D.W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation: A History of the Most Controversial Motion Picture of All Time*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Stokes, Melvyn, and Richard Maltby. *American Movie Audiences: From the Turn of the Century to the Sound Era*. London: British Film Institute, 1999.

Streible, Dan. *Fight Pictures: A History of Boxing and Early Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Strople, Margaret. "Prohibition and Movements of Social Reform in Nova Scotia 1894 – 1920." Masters Thesis, Dalhousie University, 1975.

Theron, Bridget. "Remembering the Anglo-Boer War: it's Place, 100 Years Later on, in our Historical Consciousness," *African Historical Review* 33 (2001): 114-143.

Toulmin, Vanessa, and Martin Loiperdinger. "Is it You? Recognition, Representation and Response in Relation to the Local Film." *Film History* 17 (2005): 7-18.

Valverde, Mariana. *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.

van Oort, Thunnis. "'That Pleasant Feeling of Peaceful Coziness': Cinema Exhibition in a Dutch Mining District during the Inter-War Period." *Film History* 17 (2005): 148-159.

Varga, Darrell, editor. *Rain/Drizzle/Fog: Film and Television in Atlantic Canada*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2009.

Véray, Laurent. "1914-1918, the First Media War of the Twentieth Century: The Examples of French Newsreels," *Film History* 22 (2010): 408-425.

Walden, Keith. *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.

Waller, Gregory, editor. *Moviegoing in America: A Sourcebook in the History of Film Exhibition*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002.

---. "Imagining and Promoting the Small-Town Theatre." *Cinema Journal*, 44 (2005): 3-19.

---. *Main Street Amusements: Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City 1896-1930*. London: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1995.

Wetherell, Donald G., and Irene R.A. Kmet. *Town Life: Main Street and the Evolution of Small Town Alberta, 1880-1947*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995.

Linda Williams, editor. *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*. New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1995.

Williams, Raymond. *The Sociology of Culture*. New York: Schocken Books, 1982.

Wylie, Peter J. "When Markets Fail: Electrification and Maritime Industrial Decline," *Acadiensis* 17 (1987): 74-96.

.