



PRINCE WILLIAM STREET

St. John, New Brunswick, was the site of most of the banks and shipping offices of the city.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND DECLINE
OF AN EARLY BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY:
SAINT JOHN, NEW BRUNSWICK,
CANADA, 1910-1925*

by Will. C. van den Hoonaard

The Bahá'í Community of Canada is today gradually emerging from obscurity with virtually no published records of its beginnings and early development.¹ This paper attempts to make a beginning at rectifying this situation by exploring the origins, rise, and decline of an early Bahá'í group in Saint John, New Brunswick, from 1910 to 1925. The Saint John group was, during its peak years (1917-19), one of the largest Bahá'í communities in Canada, comprising almost 39% of all Bahá'ís in Canada at that time.² A study of this group adds to our stock of knowledge about early Canadian Bahá'ís and sheds light on the social dynamics which underlie their rise, development and, in some instances, decline.

The first Bahá'ís settled in Saint John in 1910. Considerable Bahá'í work took place through the use of itinerant teachers in the late 1910s, in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. However, this work lapsed until 1937,

* Based on a paper presented to the 23rd Annual Meeting of the Atlantic Association of Sociologists and Anthropologists, St. Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, March 10-13, 1988.

when the Bahá'ís again became organized in this area. They expanded very gradually, concentrating themselves first in Moncton, Halifax, and Charlottetown. It was only in the early 1970s that Bahá'ís could be found in all of the major centers in the Atlantic Provinces. In 1991, there were 1,100 Bahá'ís to be found in nearly 90 localities.³ Therefore, the Saint John group represents, from a Bahá'í perspective, a significant first beach-head in the area, established in 1910. But one which met with little success.

Origins of the Saint John Bahá'í Group. While a number of important figures in the early development of the Bahá'í Faith in North America originally came from Saint John, they played no role in introducing the Bahá'í Faith to the city. Miss Marion Jack (1866-1954), born in Saint John,⁴ distinguished herself as a Canadian Bahá'í settler in Bulgaria from 1931 to 1954. She became a Bahá'í in Paris during the early 1900s. She is known to have visited Prince Edward Island in 1917, and that seems to have been connected with a brief stay in Saint John.⁵

Another prominent Bahá'í from Saint John was Paul K. Dealy (1848-1937).⁶ He was one of the first people to have become a Bahá'í in North America while the Bahá'í teacher, Ibrahim Kheiralla, was in Chicago in 1897. Born in Saint John, Dealy left in 1865, and became a railroad engineer and inventor. He eventually moved to Fairhope, Alabama.⁷ There is, however, no evidence that he played any role in establishing a Bahá'í group in Saint John.

The earliest known reference to a Bahá'í living in Saint John is to Mrs. Henry S. (Mary) Culver, in April 1913.⁸ Her husband was the American consul to Saint John. The Culvers were already Bahá'ís when they moved to Saint John on September 12, 1910.⁹ Henry had been a prosecuting attorney in Delaware County, where he was a mayor for four years. In

October 1897, he joined the State Department and became consul at London, Ontario, in that same month. The Culvers had become Bahá'ís as a result of their contact with the Magees, Canada's earliest Bahá'ís.¹⁰ Henry's term as U.S. consul in London was followed by appointments in Cork, Ireland, in 1906, and in Saint John in June 1910, at the age of 56.¹¹

There were many sides to Mr. Culver. He was an inveterate photographer and world traveller, having circled the globe four times, even visiting 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Haifa, Palestine. He composed poems and songs, some of which he sent to Edith Magee, Canada's first Bahá'í, for her comment.¹² He took a particular interest in the plight of destitute German and Austrian families in a Canadian war camp in Minto, New Brunswick, during the first World War.¹³ Culver retired from his consular post in Saint John on July 1, 1924¹⁴ and joined the Eliot, Maine, Bahá'í community in 1925.¹⁵ He died in 1936, and Mary died the following year. They had seven children, but only the two daughters, (Mary) Louise and Dorothy, became Bahá'ís.

The arrival of the Culvers did not immediately lead to the growth of the Saint John Bahá'í group. It was not until well after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to Canada in 1912 that the small group of Bahá'ís consisting of the Culver family began to become more active, particularly through the efforts of Louise Culver who had returned from Paris in early 1911.¹⁶

Louise Culver operated the Sign o' the Lantern Tea Rooms in Saint John as early as 1914,¹⁷ along with Miss Mary Robinson Warner (also a Bahá'í)¹⁸ and Mrs. A. Macdonnell. After 1924, Louise Culver and Mary Warner lived together and raised two boys, nicknamed "Buzzy" and "Fluffy." In the course of the following decades, after her parents' departure from Saint John, Louise eventually ceased to regard herself as a Bahá'í.¹⁹

Louise's sister, Dorothy (1890-1983), joined her sister in Paris in 1907, after following her parents to Ireland in 1906. She arrived in Saint John in 1912 and, except for 1916-17, lived in that city until 1920.²⁰

By 1917, four more persons joined the Bahá'í group in Saint John. Very little is known about the depth of their Bahá'í commitment, but a great deal has been uncovered about their general standing in Saint John society. All of them retained their Anglican church membership until death, a fact which was noted in their obituaries. Their Bahá'í affiliations were either not known or not publicly recognized.

Mary Robinson Warner (1876-1957) ran the tearoom with Louise, and the two were inseparable. She was the daughter of General D. B. Warner, who had been United States consul to Saint John for twenty-one years. This might explain her acquaintance with the Culvers.²¹ It seems, however, that others became acquainted with the small group of Bahá'ís through the coffee and tea business.

Tentatively, we suggest that Roy Wilhelm (1875-1951),²² an importer of coffee, may have been responsible for developing the Saint John Bahá'í group after its introduction by the Culver family in 1910. Wilhelm was one of the most prominent early Bahá'ís in the United States, setting much of his coffee fortune aside to promote the interests of the Bahá'í Cause. One couple, William H. and Sophia Humphrey, were probably his contacts in Saint John.

The Humphreys appear on Bahá'í lists from 1917 to 1919. William (1852-1935) was a coffee and tea merchant who operated a retail coffee store at the foot of King Street.²³ He was a member of one of Saint John's oldest families.²⁴ His wife, Sophia (d. 1953) had come to Saint John from England in 1883, to visit her brother. While there, she had married William.²⁵ Both Humphreys were, however, well known through their affiliation with Christian churches.²⁶

Arthur B. M. Hatheway, another Bahá'í in the port city, undertook in 1915, a pilgrimage to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Haifa.²⁷ Hatheway passed away in late 1920, on which occasion his wife received a Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá dated November 22, 1920.²⁸

It seems reasonable to assume that the early founders of the Saint John Bahá'í community included the Culvers, the Humphreys, and Mr. Arthur Hatheway. But apparently membership in the Bahá'í group of Saint John rose quickly during the summer of 1917. There were, in all, seventeen Bahá'ís in Saint John between the summer of 1917 and 1921: though never more than twelve at any one time, and sometimes as few as seven.

Development (1917-22). The second phase in the development of a Bahá'í group in Saint John is of considerable importance in the context of the Canadian Bahá'í community as a whole. By April 1917, Saint John had an organized group which, however weak, was the second in Canada after Montreal. Two principal ingredients led to the development of this group. On one hand, the North American Bahá'ís launched a systematic campaign of traveling teachers, many of whom made their way through Saint John. On the other hand, social conditions in Saint John, especially the influence of the social gospel movement, made a number of its citizens receptive to the broad ideals of the Bahá'í teachings.

The formal existence of a Bahá'í group in Saint John, termed an "Assembly" in those days, was noted by the presence of its delegates to the ninth annual Convention of the Bahai Temple Unity at the Hotel Brunswick in Boston, between April 29 and May 2, 1917.²⁹ The existence of a Saint John Assembly can also be verified through an exchange of correspondence in September and October 1917, between its secretary, Miss Jean E. Nixon, and Mrs. Corinne True, the

Financial Secretary of the Bahai Temple Unity, then the national body of the Bahá'ís of Canada and the United States.³⁰

The increase of membership was particularly strong in the summer of 1917. May Maxwell, a prominent Bahá'í from Montreal, had already visited Saint John as early as 1916.³¹ She returned for a more extensive stay in 1917.³² She addressed the Rotary Club on June 25, 1917, and said that she felt privileged to have met "such an intelligent, broad-minded and altruistic body of men." Maxwell stayed for a few more days to visit other groups, and then traveled on to Fredericton and Moncton. She was not a stranger to this part of New Brunswick. Her husband, William Sutherland, had a "dark and heavy" summer home in St. Andrews.³³

The Bahá'í group in Saint John seems to have reached its peak in 1919. In that year the Bahá'ís of Saint John, along with many other American believers, were signatories to an appeal addressed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá asking him to return to North America for another tour of the continent.³⁴ This petition carried the names of twelve Saint John Bahá'ís, including the Nixons.³⁵

The Nixons were, next to the Culvers and Humphreys, the third major family associated with the Bahá'í group in Saint John.³⁶ George Nixon (d. 1940) was a member of the International Order of Odd Fellows and, with his wife Agnes (1864-1940), was a member of the Anglican Church.³⁷ He was the owner of a well-known wallpaper store on King Street. Of the four children, a son, Murray (d. 1979),³⁸ and the daughter, Jean (d. 1972), became Bahá'ís.

From the Bahá'í view, the most important member of the Nixon family, at that time, was Jean, who was secretary of the Bahá'í Assembly from 1917 to 1923.³⁹ She was taught the Bahá'í Faith by May Maxwell and participated in a number of notable Bahá'í events. She was present at the eleventh annual national Convention in New York City where 'Abdu'l-

Bahá's *Tablets of the Divine Plan* were unveiled.⁴⁰ In April 1922, she visited Chicago, the principal Bahá'í center in North America, and attended the annual Convention there.⁴¹ Nixon almost single-handedly kept the Bahá'í group of Saint John together by correspondence with Bahá'í communities elsewhere, and distribution of vital Bahá'í documents and general news to other Bahá'ís in the city. On August 14, 1928, however, she was admitted to the Provincial Hospital,⁴² an institution for mental patients. She died there forty-four years later, in November 1972.⁴³ No reasons for her admission were ever given: though some have claimed that her active Bahá'í affiliation had upset members of her family. It should be clearly stated that there is no evidence to support such an assertion.

If Maxwell's visits had brought forth some results, so did the visits of other well-known Bahá'í teachers. The 1,500-strong Bahá'í community of North America picked up on the interest created by Maxwell and organized other visits to Saint John: "Mother" Ellen Beecher in 1919, and Martha Root and Jináb-i Faql (Mírzá Asadu'lláh Mazandarání) in October 1920. Bahá'í visitors to Saint John spent time at the "Culver Camp" up the Saint John River.⁴⁴

Ellen Beecher's visit, in November and December 1919, proved to be an impressive occasion. On Sunday, November 30, she delivered an address in the Art Club Room⁴⁵ on the topic of "The Great Day of God." She had turned seventy-nine in the summer of the year of her visit. She was told by one of thousands attending meetings "that you are having a perfect whirlwind campaign here."⁴⁶ Beecher's report to the 1920 national Convention described her visit in glowing terms. She also speaks of her visit to several "little towns." In two of these she was not to be accepted, "unless I [Beecher] was thoroughly orthodox." Neither the YWCA nor the churches allowed her to speak in these places.⁴⁷ Even the "church of

the colored people" refused her request to speak to them.⁴⁸ Her visit was ignored by the local papers.

Saint John was also visited by Faḍl-i Mazandarání,⁴⁹ known in America as Jináb-i Faḍl, in October 1920.⁵⁰ His interpreter Ahmad Sohrab, had forsaken his honeymoon to be with one of the most prominent Bahá'í teachers and scholars. They were accompanied by Mr. W. H. Randall, a Boston lawyer and Bahá'í, and both Jináb-i Faḍl and Randall spoke at the Canadian Club on Tuesday, October 12, 1920.⁵¹ On the same day, they made a presentation at the Art Club, after which the newspaper reported that they "will be glad to meet friends interested in all vital movements for the brotherhood of man, unity in religion, universal peace and a universal language."⁵² *The Standard*⁵³ of Saint John carried a full report of the presentation to the Canadian Club, mentioning both Bahá'u'lláh and his son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The two traveled with Marion Jack on the riverboat up the Saint John River to Gagetown, thirty miles from Saint John.⁵⁴ Jináb-i Faḍl also traveled to Woodstock, New Brunswick, some 120 miles from Saint John.⁵⁵

Numerous other Bahá'ís visited Saint John, including Kate Ives in the fall of 1922.⁵⁶ She was one of the first women to accept the Bahá'í Faith in North America; her parents were Newfoundlanders. After 1923, however, the visits of such teachers became less common, and they eventually dwindled.

To what extent did the external society influence the development of the Bahá'í group in Saint John?

Social Conditions in Saint John. The late 1910s constitute a significant stage in the development of what Richard Allen calls the "social passion."⁵⁷ Canadian society was swept by an enthusiasm for reform which saw Christianity as a social religion, a phenomenon which hoped to "embed ultimate human goals in the social, economic, and political order."⁵⁸ This

"passion" for social reform expressed itself in such social movements as unions, prohibition, strikes, the "open pulpit," and women's and agricultural organizations. Saint John, as a city facing the ravaging consequences of industrial development, was no exception. For example, the Workmen's Compensation Board was formed in 1918 in Saint John.⁵⁹ A climate to succor the destitute and the disenfranchised through social programs prevailed. It was in this context that three leading women in the city felt impelled to accept the reformist nature of the Bahá'í movement as well.

These women, Helen Climo, Kate Sutherland, and Mary Smith, (along with Mary Culver) belonged to the Women's Enfranchisement Association of Saint John⁶⁰ which was founded in 1894, as a women's response to social conditions brought on by modernization and industrialization. The group focused⁶¹ on advances in education, new occupational opportunities, and the spread of democratic ideas, in addition to the improvement of women's status. The association, which had a membership of 112 during its life, dissolved after April 1919, when women gained the franchise in New Brunswick. It might be said that after its dissolution, some of its members found the social teachings of the Bahá'í Faith in line with their thoughts on the general spread of education and the position of women in society. Who were these leading women?

Miss Kate Sutherland (1854-1932) was one of the first stenographers in the city. She was born into an outstanding New Brunswick family. She used to live on Wellington Row, where a Miss Hanson lived (who later married an American, Stenner Phillips), and whose aunt, Miss Phillips, lived in New York. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave a talk at Phillips's studio on April 12, 1912.⁶² Kate Sutherland's obituary states that she "was especially interested in aiding young people who desired to take up stenography. She was keenly interested in

the welfare of the community, particularly in educational endeavors."⁶³ Widely known as a Presbyterian, the press ignored her Bahá'í affiliation.

Mrs. Mary Colby Smith (d. 1936), a noted Saint John citizen, was a Bahá'í in 1921. Her husband, Harry, was a merchant.⁶⁴ Her son, Albert Colby Smith, became a member of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick. Smith's activities extended over so many areas of public life that the city's newspaper ran an editorial after her death. She presided over the YMCA Ladies' Auxiliary,⁶⁵ was elected third vice-president of the Children's Aid Society,⁶⁶ commissioner of the Saint John Free Public Library, and member of the King's Daughters, the Women's Canadian Club, the Seamen's Institute, the Red Cross, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the Protestant Orphanage—a total of at least seventeen societies.

Smith's acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith was probably due to personal contact with Kate Sutherland, for in 1922, the Smiths moved to Wellington Row, where Sutherland lived. Smith's Bahá'í affiliation was virtually unknown outside of Bahá'í circles. Publicly, she was a member of St. David's United Church when she lived on the east side of the harbor, and the Charlotte Street Baptist Church when on the west side.

Another prominent adherent in those later years was Mrs. Helen Travis Climo (d. 1940), also of a prominent New Brunswick family, whose husband, Harold, was a photographer.⁶⁷ She was active in the Saint John Art Club, the Women's Canadian Club, and the Natural History Society.⁶⁸ Like Sutherland she was an active Presbyterian.

Decline (1921-1925). By 1921, the social reformist movement began to wane and the Bahá'ís were experiencing difficulties organizing their affairs. By January 1921, the Bahá'ís re-

ported to Alfred E. Lunt, a member of the national board of the Bahá'ís in the United States and Canada, that it was impossible to organize a House of Spirituality in the city.⁶⁹ Some Bahá'ís had become inactive or, as in the case of Mary and Dorothy Culver who moved to Boston, had left the city.⁷⁰ Fewer than eight believers⁷¹ were then active.

After the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in November 1921, the Bahá'í Assembly of Saint John confirmed the receipt, in March 1922, of the Will and Testament "of the Centre of the Covenant, His Holiness Abdul Baha and [t]his has been read to the firm believers and shall be safely guarded."⁷² The Bahá'ís, in March 1922, also acknowledged receipt of pictures of the building of the House of Worship in Wilmette, designed by Louis Bourgeois, an architect who was Acadian through his mother's side of the family.⁷³

Star of the West listed Saint John, along with Montreal, as having a Spiritual Assembly in 1922,⁷⁴ but within five months its membership had declined from eight to four. The group was represented by Jean E. Nixon and Henry S. Culver at the annual convention.⁷⁵ In that year, only four names appear on the membership list: Henry Culver, Louise Culver, George Nixon, and Jean Nixon.⁷⁶

The last official reference in Bahá'í publications to the Saint John group was made in 1923. The Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi, made a reference to the Saint John Assembly in his letter of January 8, 1923.⁷⁷ In March 1923, Dorothy Culver,⁷⁸ Louise Culver's sister, forwarded papers related to the Saint John Assembly to her mother, Mary. In 1923, Saint John's delegates to the fifteenth annual Convention in Chicago were Culver and Miss Wilkinson, Roy Wilhelm's secretary in the coffee business.⁷⁹ That was the last Convention to which Saint John sent delegates. The Saint John Assembly continued until 1923, six years after its inception in 1917.

In 1923, the group was not considered large enough to finance a second visit by Jináb-i Faḍl, who had planned a teaching trip in Canada for the fall of that year.⁸⁰ There was also the matter of Bahá'í administrative reorganization. New requirements in 1923, constrained Bahá'í communities everywhere to organize their local Assemblies on stricter criteria. Local governing councils were to consist of nine adult adherents over twenty-one years of age. The Saint John Bahá'í community was too small to form its Assembly that year. Thus, the Saint John Bahá'ís were in no position to exercise administrative responsibilities. In any event, Henry Culver retired in 1924. He must have been very happy to leave Saint John, for he had hoped for a transfer from his post in New Brunswick within a year of his arrival.⁸¹

As late as 1925, the Saint John Bahá'í group answered a questionnaire on its activities and returned it to the National Teaching Committee.⁸² The last known activity was the placement of an article, or articles, in a local newspaper regarding the renewed persecution of the Bahá'ís of Iran. The fact that there were still Bahá'ís in Saint John, although no longer organized as an Assembly, is reflected in the February 9, 1925 minutes of the Montreal Assembly.⁸³

It was during the 1925 Convention that May Maxwell reported that “. . . St. John could [not] send delegates as they must concentrate all their resources upon sending representatives to the National Convention at Green Acre . . .”⁸⁴ By April 1925, Saint John was listed as a “group,” indicating that there were fewer than nine believers there.⁸⁵ The name “Saint John” no longer appeared on a list of participating local Spiritual Assemblies in the forthcoming National Convention of April 1926.⁸⁶

After this date, the group virtually ceased to exist, except for the few remaining (possibly two) individuals, one of whom was confined in the provincial mental institution in 1928. In

May 1937, it was reported that New Brunswick had only two Bahá'ís, living in Rothesay.⁸⁷ In 1940, Doris McKay, one of the earliest Bahá'í settlers in Prince Edward Island, tried to visit five Bahá'ís whose names she had—all contacts of Roy Wilhelm—to no avail.

Analysis. In retrospect, one finds several factors led to the decline of the Saint John Bahá'í group: personal factors, overwhelming traditional religious orthodoxy in the wider society, lack of deep commitment on the part of the believers, location on the geographic Bahá'í periphery, and lack of administrative experience which could have provided for continuation of the group. A number of other sociological factors played a significant role in determining the decline of the group.

First, some personal factors. By the mid-1920s, two of the key people were no longer active in the community. The departure of Henry Culver in July 1924, upon his retirement from office, had a profound impact. Culver stayed for the remainder of the summer at Crystal Beach,⁸⁸ an attractive summer-home area south of Saint John, while his wife had already left Saint John by 1923. Moreover, Nixon's confinement to a mental institution in 1928 simply left another vacuum in the already much-weakened Bahá'í group.

A second factor contributing to the further decline of the group was the climate of non-acceptance by the community at large, which led to difficulties in finding new converts. In a series of letters to the Bahá'í community of Kenosha, Jean Nixon spoke increasingly, after 1922, of the reluctant response of Saint Johners to the Bahá'í Faith. She speaks of the progress of the Bahá'í work as being "very slow," generating "criticism and a great deal of opposition." She states, "the people in this part of the country are conservative and adhere closely to the teachings of the different denominations

. . . In many cases fear keeps an individual from studying the literature that we offer." She explains that, "people here rather pride themselves in clinging to orthodoxy."⁸⁹

One auspicious moment during these difficult days stood out, however. A new pastor of the black church, Rev. C. Stewart, had in the winter of 1923, "gladly consented" to Bahá'ís speaking to his congregation. Dr. Edna McKinney of Philadelphia spoke five times and Miss Jack gave an exhibition of her paintings. This was the first church ever to open its doors to the Bahá'í Faith on Canada's East coast.⁹⁰

Nevertheless, the religious traditionalism and conservatism of the Atlantic region has been commented upon by such observers as Stark and Bainbridge and Bibby.⁹¹ Our observations confirm the view of Nock and Stark and Bainbridge⁹² that new religious movements (i.e., "cults") develop with the greatest difficulty in areas where sects and churches thrive. The climate of resistance, according to one Bahá'í informant, persisted well into the 1950s:

For instance, Unitarians were very hesitant to assemble or admit their allegiance at that time. We knew one Theosophist there [Saint John] who was quite isolated and frustrated. Also a Technocrat and an Anglican Priest contacted me (through a P.O. Box number appearing in a Bahá'í ad or radio program) and arranged via the mails and then by phone (no name given) to meet me at our apartment on a given evening, where they enquired about the Faith. They were concerned that I would be both alone and discreet.⁹³

It was only years later that a Spiritual Assembly was reconstituted in Saint John, in 1961.

A subsidiary element accounts for the decline of the Saint John Bahá'í group, namely the apparent lack of deep commitment to the new religious movement. The Bahá'í Faith seems to have occupied a peripheral territory in the minds of its members. More importantly, without a deep commitment

the community could not establish boundaries or even common goals. In the early days of the Bahá'í Faith in North America, it was not uncommon for Bahá'ís to be simultaneously associated with established churches. Membership in the Bahá'í group was informal, requiring no registration, and the boundaries between the Bahá'í community and the larger community were not clearly demarcated. Present-day descendants of those early members of the Bahá'í group often express surprise in hearing that their ancestors were associated with the Bahá'í movement. Certainly, the obituaries of the early adherents do not indicate any affiliation with the Bahá'í Faith—on the contrary, a deep commitment to their conventional denominations is stressed. Members of the Bahá'í group were overwhelmingly of Anglican background, followed by Presbyterian and United Church affiliation.

Yet a fourth element enters into our explanation of why the early Saint John Bahá'í group declined and, for all purposes, ceased to exist. This group was not only perceived as peripheral in terms of the conservative religious tradition of the city and region, it became geographically peripheral to the extent that Bahá'í communities were developing in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal. We can observe this peripheral interest in the early Bahá'í history of Canada. Within the context of North America as a whole, Canada occupied a peripheral concern in the Bahá'í community. Virtually all of the recorded Bahá'í centers (or places where Bahá'ís reside) refer to United States locales. For example, the official Bahá'í organ, *Star of the West*, did not carry any news of the celebrated visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Montreal in 1912, until an incidental reference to the event four and one-half years later.⁹⁴ Yet, this visit received extensive non-Bahá'í publicity. The news of this publicity in Canada did not find its way into *Star of the West*, however, until 1923, more than ten years later.⁹⁵

Within Canada, the rising communities of Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal attracted much of the Bahá'í attention. These cities were relatively easy to reach and, as cultural centers, had people who were not just marginally interested in new religious movements: they maintained an active involvement. If there was any opposition, it was not as sharp as that experienced by the Saint John Bahá'í group. The favorable response to the Bahá'í teachings elicited considerable interest from those Bahá'ís who were either itinerant teachers or administrators of this young religious movement.

Finally, the Bahá'ís in Saint John lacked the necessary administrative experience to marshal its resources or organize its affairs. The Bahá'í Faith was seen as a spiritual movement, in which administrative organization was of secondary importance. The Culvers, the founders of the Saint John group, became Bahá'ís in London, a community that predates any formal Bahá'í organization.⁹⁵ Thus, they had no conception of any Bahá'í administrative structure. To them, the Faith was a loose association of likeminded people interested in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

A number of sociological factors highlight the following historical sketch of this Bahá'í group. The Bahá'í group was entirely comprised of members of the merchant class whose ideas of social reform grew out of the changing attitudes about women, education, and prison reform. Some of the early Bahá'ís were associated with the families of at least two of the American consuls in Saint John. The Bahá'í group involved women, usually unmarried, who were influenced by the social gospel and suffragette movements and who saw the Bahá'í movement as a complement to their reformist interests.

Given these parameters the informal Bahá'í group was perceived merely as a personal set of ideas, and not one gathered around a collective goal.

NOTES

1. There is a pronounced absence of historical writing on the Canadian Bahá'í community. Robert Stockman's *The Bahá'í Faith in America: Origins, 1892-1900* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1985) has no substantive references to early Canadian history. Memoirs have either not been written or are just now being put on paper. Doris McKay, one of the earliest Bahá'í settlers on Prince Edward Island, completed her account ("Fires in the Heart") in 1991. Rowland Estall's account ("Melodies of the Kingdom") covering the years 1926 to 1977, is yet unfinished.

There are a few other unpublished accounts: Paula C. Williams, "Candles of Guidance: The History of the Early Halifax Bahá'í Community" (Unpublished ms., 1985) 37 pp.; Linda O'Neil, "A Short History of the Bahá'í Faith in Canada, 1898-1975" (Unpublished ms., 1975) 44 pp.; Andrew Pemberton-Pigott, "The Formation of the First Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly in Edmonton, April 1943" (Honors Thesis in History, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1988).

There have been few references to Canadian Bahá'í history in Canadian Bahá'í journals. In fact, one hardly finds any articles delving into the past. Exceptions are: "1893: The First Canadian Bahá'í," *Canadian Bahá'í News* (Sept. 1966) no. 200 (and reprinted in *Bahá'í Canada* [June 1979] p. 12); and Ritchie Rolfe, "They Built Better than They Knew: A Brief History of the Bahá'í Faith on P.E.I.," *Bahá'í Canada* (June 1987) pp. 5-6. An article on early British Columbia Bahá'í history was published outside the Bahá'í community: Roland and Ann McGee, "The Bahá'í Faith and its Development in British Columbia," in Charles P. Anderson, et. al., eds., *Circle of Voices* (Lantzville: Oolichan Books, 1983) pp. 19-26.

In addition, references to the early history of the Faith in Canada tend to focus on Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver—even though Bahá'í communities have existed in about half a dozen localities in Canada since before 1921.

2. This figure has been calculated from a list of early Canadian believers (1893-1944) compiled by the author.

3. The 1981 Canadian census (as reported by David Nock, "Cult, Sect, and Church in Canada: A Re-examination of Stark and Bainbridge," *Rev. Can. Soc. and Anthr.*, vol. 24 [1987] no. 4, pp. 514-25) gives a figure of 546 Bahá'ís for that year.

4. *Marion Jack: Immortal Heroine*, (Toronto: National Spiritual

Assembly, 1985). Born and raised in Saint John, she left for Europe in her twenties to take up painting and art. After her enrollment in the Parisian Bahá'í community, which May Maxwell had founded in 1899, Marion Jack went on pilgrimage in 1908 and met 'Abdu'l-Bahá. She returned to North America in the Summer of 1914, spent time at the Bahá'í School of Green Acre, Eliot, Maine, and lived in Montreal and in Vancouver.

5. Jean E. Nixon, Saint John, to Alfred E. Lunt, Boston, August 26, 1918 (Alfred E. Lunt Papers. National Bahá'í Archives. Wilmette, Illinois.).

6. Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America*, pp. 86-8; "In Memoriam," *Bahá'í News* (March 1937) no. 106, p. 3.

7. Letter from Robert S. Stockman to the author June 16, 1987, enclosing copies of exchanges of correspondence between Mrs. Kitty Dealy and Mr. Robert Stockman (38 pp.). Dr. Stockman gave the author a copy of Mr. Dealy's diary to be passed on to the Bahá'í National Archives in Canada.

8. Membership List, dated April 14, 1913, Lunt Papers. National Bahá'í Archives.

9. Consular Papers. National Archives of the United States. Washington, D.C. Microfilm 123.C 89/33.

10. Taped interview by Rosanne Buzell of Eliot, Maine, with Dorothy Cress (nee Culver), August 19, 1982. Eliot Bahá'í Archives, Eliot, Maine.

11. *Prominent People of the Maritime Provinces*, (Saint John, N.B.: J. & A. McMillan, 1922) p. 46.

12. Henry S. Culver, Queenstown, Ireland, to Edith Magee, March 25, 1908. Copy of letter in possession of author.

13. Consular Papers. National Archives of the United States, Washington, D.C. Microfilm 342.62/6110.

14. *The Telegraph Journal*, July 3, 1924, p.7.

15. Bahá'í Historical Record Cards. National Bahá'í Archives.

16. Lawrence Culver, "Culver-Sprague Genealogical Summary." Mimeographed, 15 pp. In possession of the author.

17. *The Telegraph Journal*, July 4, 1924, p. 3.

18. *St. John City Directory for 1916-17*, (Saint John: McAlpine Directory Co., 1916) p. 664.

19. Notes by Ken and Celia Bolton, Dartmouth, N.S., February 7, 1987. In possession of the author.

In the early 1950s, Louise was acting as chauffeur and companion to Lady Hazen who lived in an estate in the vicinity of the Catholic Hospital in central Saint John, and whose husband, Sir Douglas, was the Chief Justice of New Brunswick. Louise passed away in Saint John in December 1952.

20. Dorothy later married Adelbert F. Cress in Eliot, Maine. Julia Culver (1861-1950), who had become a Bahá'í in 1903, does not seem, however, to have been related to the family.

21. *The Evening Times-Globe*, December 30, 1957: 18.

22. "In Memoriam," *Bahá'í World*, vol. 12 (1950-54) pp. 662-64; O. Z. Whitehead, *Some Early Bahá'ís of the West*, (Oxford: George Ronald, 1976) pp. 87-99.

23. There seems to be some confusion about the identity of W. H. Humphrey in the minds of some of the later Bahá'ís. Humphrey died in 1935, but the Bahá'ís still talk about having seen a Humphrey in the 1950s. For example, they say, "he would, in the 1950s, reminisce about Roy Wilhelm, the prominent United States Bahá'í" (and coffee merchant himself). (Notes by Ken and Celia Bolton, February 7, 1987.)

24. "Information on Lot Ownership, Fernhill Cemetery, Saint John," supplied to the author

25. *The Evening Times-Globe*, June 10, 1953; and "Information on Lot Ownership, Fernhill Cemetery, Saint John," supplied to the author.

26. *The Evening Times-Globe*, January 19331, 5, p. 7.

27. *Star of the West*, July 13, 1915.

28. *Star of the West*, March 2, 1922, p. 313. A search through newspaper accounts, cemetery listings, and biographical reference works did not reveal an "Arthur" Hatheway, although the Hatheways were a very prominent New Brunswick family. There has been, however, an occasional reference to Arthur Hatheway living in Boston.

29. *Star of the West*, September 8, 1917, p. 130.

30. Jean E. Nixon to Corinne True, September 23, 1917. Lunt Papers. National Bahá'í Archives. It concerns a request for a receipt for a six dollar donation to the Bahá'í House of Worship Fund in Wilmette.

31. Cable from Mrs. May Maxwell, Saint John, to Miss Edna McKinney, Boston, December 15, 1916. Lunt Papers. National Bahá'í Archives. Wilmette, Illinois.

32. "In Memoriam," *Bahá'í World* (1938-40) p. 639; May Max-

well, Saint John, to "Beloved Sister" [presumably Corinne True], June 27, 1917. Albert Windust Papers. National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois.

33. Interview with Mrs. Willow Walker of St. Andrews, N.B., with Erica Ritter on "Day Shift," CBC, March 30, 1987.

34. *Star of the West*, August 1, 1919, p. 156.

35. Henry S. Culver; Mary R. Warner; Louise Culver; Sophia Humphrey; William H. Humphrey; A. B. M. Hatheway; Kate M. Sutherland; Mary D. Culver; Agnes B. Nixon; George H. Nixon; Murray E. Nixon; and Jean E. Nixon. This list also appears on a membership list, dated between 1917-19. (House of Spirituality Records, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois, Box 8, Folder 1).

36. *Prominent People of the Maritime Provinces*, p. 151.

37. *The Evening Times-Globe* (Saint John), November 23, 1940, p. 3.

38. "Information on Lot Owners, Fernhill Cemetery, Saint John" supplied to the author.

39. It was a chance discovery of a letter from Jean Nixon to Corinne True, dated September 23, 1917 in the National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois, (Lunt Papers) which led the author to the research embodied in this paper.

40. This series of letters from 'Abdu'l-Bahá outlined the areas around the world where Bahá'ís were to undertake Bahá'í teaching activity. *Star of the West*, vol. 10 (May 17, 1919) no. 4, p. 63.

41. Postcard to L. J. Voelz, Kenosha, from Jean E. Nixon, Saint John, postmarked April 2, 1922. Kenosha Records. National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois.

42. Letter from Centracare Saint John Inc., Saint John, N.B., to author, July 9, 1987.

43. "Information on Lot Owners, Fernhill Cemetery, Saint John," supplied to the author; and "Obituary" in *The Evening-Times-Globe*, November 3, 1972, p. 2.

44. Dr. Ellis Cole to Alfred E. Lunt. August 27, 1917. Lunt Papers. National Bahá'í Archives. Wilmette, Illinois.

45. *Saint John Globe*, November 29, 1919, p. 12.

46. *Star of the West*, September 27, 1920, pp. 172-3.

47. The YMCA, in 1920, also excluded Jews from membership (Mortimer Lazar and Sheva Medjuck, "In the Beginning: A Brief History of the Jews in Atlantic Canada" [mimeographed] p. 5. In author's possession.)

48. Jean E. Nixon, Saint John, to Kenosha Bahá'í Assembly, April 7, 1924. Kenosha Records. National Bahá'í Archives. Wilmette, Illinois.

49. See "In Memoriam," *Bahá'í World*, vol. 14 (1963-68) pp. 334-36.

50. A good photograph of Jináb-i Faql can be found in *Star of the West* (April 1923) p. 2.

51. *Saint John Globe*, October 11, 1920, p. 10; October 14, 1920, p. 5.

52. *Saint John Globe*, October 12, 1920, p. 10.

53. *The Standard*, October 14, 1920, p. 12.

54. Ferne Allaby and Gaby Pelletier interviewed some relatives of Marion Jack in Saint John who remembered Marion Jack going to Gagetown "with two gentlemen dressed in Eastern clothes." (Letter from Ferne Allaby, dated July 27, 1986 to the author.)

55. Interview with Anne Chisholm, Saint John, by the author, Sept. 16, 1986.

56. Jean E. Nixon, Saint John, to Kenosha Bahá'í Assembly. March 16, 1923. Kenosha Records. National Bahá'í Archives.

57. Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

58. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

59. See William Y. Smith, "Axis of Administration: Saint John Reformers and Bureaucratic Centralization in New Brunswick, 1911-1925," (M.A. thesis, Department of History, University of New Brunswick, 1984.)

60. Mary E. Clarke "The Saint John Women's Enfranchisement Association, 1894-1919." (M.A. thesis, Department of History, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, 1979) pp. 155, 158-9.

61. *Ibid.*

62. See notes regarding interview with Anne Chisholm conducted by the author on September 16, 1986.

63. *The Evening-Times Globe*, March 17, 1932, p. 5.

64. Obituary information is found in *The Evening Times-Globe*, September 24, 1936, pp. 4, 11 and September 25, 1936, p. 9. There is a discrepancy in the date of death. *The Evening Times-Globe* indicates September 23, 1936, the Cedar Hill-Greenwood Cemetery records show September 24, 1936 (Cedar Hill-Greenwood Cemetery Co. to the author, April 13, 1987).

65. *Saint John Globe*, November 26, 1919, p. 2.
66. *The Standard*, Nov. 28, 1919.
67. Interview with Anne Chisholm conducted by the author September 16, 1986.
68. "Funerals," *Evening Telegram Globe*, February 9, 1940, p. 16. (Picture should be available from Pridham Studio).
69. It was possible to have an Assembly (i.e., a Bahá'í community) without being able to organize a House of Spirituality. Jean E. Nixon to Alfred E. Lunt, January 14, 1921. Lunt Papers. National Bahá'í Archives. Wilmette, Illinois.
70. Lawrence Culver, "Culver-Sprague Geneological Summary," (1969) 15 pp.
71. Jean E. Nixon, Saint John, to Alfred E. Lunt. Chicago, Ill., January 14, 1921. Lunt Papers. National Bahá'í Archives. Wilmette, Illinois.
72. Jean E. Nixon to Alfred E. Lunt, March 19, 1922. Lunt Papers. National Bahá'í Archives. Wilmette, Illinois. This historic document allowed the Bahá'í group to pass into the stage of administrative development, while ensuring its continuing unity.
73. Jean E. Nixon to Alfred E. Lunt, March 29, 1922. Lunt Papers. National Bahá'í Archives. Wilmette, Illinois.
74. *Star of the West* May 17, 1922, p. 94.
75. "Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of Bahai Temple Unity, Chicago, Ill. April 24-26, 1922", p. 84. National Bahá'í Archives. Wilmette, Illinois.
76. "List of Bahá'ís in U.S. and Canada," March 1922. Alfred E. Lunt Papers. National Bahá'í Archives. Wilmette, Illinois.
77. *Star of the West* (May 1923) p. 48.
78. Dorothy Culver, Boston, to Ernest V. Harrison, Montreal, March 18, 1923. Montreal Minutes. National Bahá'í Archives. Thornhill, Ontario.
79. "Fifteenth Annual Convention of the Bahai Temple Unity, Chicago, Ill. 30 April-2 May 1923," p. 61. National Bahá'í Archives. Wilmette, Illinois.
80. Dorothy Culver, Boston, to Ernest V. Harrison, Secretary of the Montreal Assembly, March 18, 1923; Minutes of the Montreal Assembly, 1922-1940. National Bahá'í Archives. Thornhill, Ontario.
81. As early as 1911, he had wanted to be posted back to Europe. Consular Papers, National Archives of the United States. Washington, D.C. Microfilm 125.7933/9.

82. *Bahá'í News* (February 1926) p. 5. This document is currently being researched.

83. Minutes of the Montreal Assembly, 1922-1940. National Bahá'í Archives. Thornhill, Ontario.

84. *Bahá'í News* (May/June 1925) p. 7.

85. *Bahá'í World*, vol. 1 (1925-6).

86. *Bahá'í News* (February 1926) p. 4.

87. National Teaching Committee, "Annual Report: First Seven Year Plan, May 1, 1937 to April 30, 1938"; Minutes of the Montreal Assembly, 1922-1940. National Bahá'í Archives. Thornhill, Ontario.

In 1934-35, Louise was apparently the sole Bahá'í in the province. (*Bahá'í World*, vol. 6 [1934-1936] p. 578.)

88. *The Telegraph Journal*, July 3, 1924, p. 7.

89. Jean E. Nixon, Saint John, to Kenosha Bahá'í Assembly, August 1, 1922; March 16, 1923; and May 2, 1923; Kenosha Records. National Bahá'í Archives. Wilmette, Illinois.

90. Jean E. Nixon, Saint John, to Kenosha Bahá'í Assembly, April 7, 1924. Kenosha Records. National Bahá'í Archives. Wilmette, Illinois.

C. Stewart organized the first soup kitchen in Saint John. K. Henry, in *Black Politics in Toronto since World War I* (Toronto: The Multicultural Society of Ontario, 1981), speaks of the Jamaican Rev. Cecil A. Stewart who lived in Nova Scotia, advocating better social conditions for blacks; his church was critical of the more conservative churches and congregations. Cecil's brother, Rev. Claude Stewart, was apparently less active. It is not known which of the two lived in Saint John.

91. Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) pp. 234-262. These authors rely also on research by Porter, Chea, and Lipset. Reginald W. Bibby, *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Irwin, 1987) p. 87

92. Nock, "Cult, Sect, and Church in Canada." Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*.

93. "Notes by Ken and Celia Bolton, February 7, 1987."

94. *Star of the West*, vol. 7 (January 19, 1917) no. 17, pp. 171-2.

95. *Star of the West*, vol. 13 (February 1923) no. 13, pp. 291-3.

96. Bahá'í Historical Record Cards. National Bahá'í Archives. Wilmette, Illinois..