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JAMES M. WHALEN

## Social Welfare in New Brunswick, 1784-1900

The nineteenth century system of poor relief in New Brunswick owed its origin mainly to British precedents adopted by the settlers in the New England colonies.<sup>1</sup> Since New England refugees to New Brunswick brought with them many traditional attitudes and practices, it was logical that they should adopt poor laws similar to those to which they were accustomed in the Thirteen Colonies. The New Brunswick Poor Law of 1786<sup>2</sup> closely resembled the New England legislation based on the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 and contained provision for compulsory assessment on the residents of each parish for relief of their own poor. This provision applied to all parishes until 1837 when legislation was passed exempting, at the discretion of the justices of the peace, Acadians in the counties of Westmorland, Kent, Northumberland and Gloucester from the payment of taxes for poor relief until 1841.<sup>3</sup> Carleton County was added in that year and successive acts extended the exemption period in these counties to 1850. Only gradually were acts providing for the appointment of overseers and the assessment of poor rates on Acadians enacted. The first legislation of this nature, passed in 1861, applied to the Acadians in the Parish of Dorchester and similar acts relating to Acadians in the Parishes of Moncton and Shediac were passed in 1863 and 1868 respectively.<sup>4</sup> Acadians in other places, as they had prior to 1837, came under the jurisdiction of legislation for regulating and providing for the support of the poor of the province.

The Poor Law of 1786 was administered by overseers of the poor who were appointed on an annual basis. The justices of the peace were required to select three suitable persons to be overseers for each of the parishes, towns and cities of the province. Service was compulsory and overseers were subject to fines

1 Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness* (New York, 1960), pp. 78-79.

2 26 George III, C. 43 (1786). Statutes quoted are New Brunswick Statutes unless otherwise stated.

3 These exemptions were probably made because the Acadians cared for their own poor through the benevolence of the Roman Catholic Church.

4 7 William IV, C. 22 (1837); 4 Victoria, C. 5 (1841); 8 Victoria, C. 11 (1845); 24 Victoria, C. 22 (1861); 26 Victoria, C. 45 (1863); and 31 Victoria, C. 64 (1868).

of forty shillings if they refused to hold office or were neglectful in the performance of their duties. The money from such fines, when enforced, was allocated toward poor relief.<sup>5</sup> Under the Poor Law, the responsibilities given to the overseers were extensive and their powers discretionary. At the General Sessions, held annually, the overseers had to present to the justices "the state and condition of the Poor in their several districts, which statement the said justices . . . are hereby authorized and required to supervise, examine and allow . . ." The justices were then compelled to authorize the overseers' accounts and issue warrants to assessors for the collection of the amount needed for poor relief in the ensuing year.<sup>6</sup> In 1793 an act authorized the justices to issue warrants of assessment more than once a year.<sup>7</sup> This enabled overseers to give the poor immediate attention, especially in years when an unusually large number of paupers became chargeable to a particular area.

In order to curtail idleness on the part of the able-bodied, two or more overseers, with the approval of the same number of justices, could compel on the threat of imprisonment "any idle, or disorderly person or persons, . . . who have no visible means of support, and who are likely to become chargeable to the Town or Parish where they reside, . . . to labor for any substantial person, who may be willing to employ him or them."<sup>8</sup> If such persons refused employment, they could be confined to hard labor at the gaol or house of correction for a period not exceeding one month.<sup>9</sup> When it was necessary, the overseers were entitled to bind the children of such destitute persons as apprentices, apparently without parental consent. Females could be apprenticed until they were eighteen and males until they were twenty-one,<sup>10</sup> and overseers were permitted to make agreements with suitable persons in their respective areas

to take into their house at yearly allowance, and employ such Poor, in any labour they are able to do, . . . and that Public charities may not be abused, the said Overseers are hereby directed to act with impartiality, and to put the said Poor in the hands of a person, who shall offer to keep them for the least expense, having at the same time a regard to the character of the person who offers, so the Poor may not be inhumanely treated, nor the public abused . . ."

This system of letting the support of the poor out to the lowest bidder on an annual basis was common in Massachusetts and other parts of New England

5 26 George III, C. 28 (1786).  
6 26 George III, C. 43 (1786).  
7 33 George III, C. 6 (1793).  
8 26 George III, C. 43 (1786).  
9 26 George III, C. 27 (1786).  
10 26 George III, C. 43 (1786).  
11 *Ibid.*

in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially before the erection of almshouses became widespread<sup>12</sup> and was prevalent in New Brunswick during the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

By the same provision which gave rise to the contract system, a few parishes of New Brunswick annually offered paupers for sale by public auction. The first recorded evidence concerning pauper auctions is found in the *Saint John Daily Sun*, which described a forthcoming pauper sale held in the Parish of Sussex, Kings County, on December 31, 1884.<sup>14</sup> Mr. White, an overseer of the poor, declared on that occasion that

. . . disposing of the poor in this way is a hard and unpleasant duty for the overseers of the poor to perform. It is a stigma which has already rested too long on the people of Kings County and should be removed as soon as possible.<sup>15</sup>

Although it is impossible to determine the year in which these sales began, they were abandoned sometime before the Kings County Almshouse became operational in 1899.<sup>16</sup> It is not known if other parishes of the province employed this method of pauper disposal, but the lack of information on this subject would lead one to believe that the practice was not widespread.

Under both the contract system and public pauper auctions, the poor suffered from abuse. Paupers disposed of in this way were subject to maltreatment because it was impossible for overseers to keep constant vigil over persons to whom they were discharged.<sup>17</sup> For example, an inquest into the death of a pauper in Kings County concluded that death was due to "wilful neglect on the part of those who had him in charge last and neglect on the part of the Overseers of the Poor."<sup>18</sup> Another inquest revealed that a deceased pauper had been kept in an unheated room and had incurred a bruise on his hip and a broken rib sustained as the result of a fall or beating.<sup>19</sup> A further incident involved a discontented pauper in Sussex who left the people he stayed with and drowned while attempting to reach the home of a friend.<sup>20</sup>

12 Robert Kelso, *The History of Public Poor Relief in Massachusetts* (Boston, 1922), pp. 107-111 and Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness*, pp. 232-238.

13 Record Book of the Overseers of the Poor for the Parish of Caldwell, Kings County, 1875-1904, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John.

14 *Saint John Daily Sun*, 30 December 1884.

15 *Saint John Daily Telegraph*, 3 January 1885.

16 Report of the Board of Almshouse Commissioners, 1 January 1900, Manuscript Minutes, Kings County Municipal Council, Kings County Museum, Hampton.

17 *Saint John Daily Telegraph*, 12 January 1885.

18 Inquest into death of Robert Wilcox, 28 March 1874, Kings County Museum, Hampton.

19 Inquest into death of Bernard McCormack, 28 December 1881, *ibid.*

20 Manuscript Minutes, Kings County Municipal Council, 21 January 1896, Kings County Museum.

Gradually the system of boarding paupers in private homes at public expense was replaced, especially in the more heavily populated areas of New Brunswick, by the adoption of institutional care for the poor. In areas of New Brunswick where the almshouse system was adopted, it was found that institutional care was not only a more humane way to provide for paupers but was also more economical. A comparative study of the almshouse system with the contract system, for example, led the Municipal Council of Kings County to endorse the almshouse system in 1896.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, due to the fear of increased taxation, the residents of smaller parishes in the County were not easily convinced of the merits of the almshouse system and succeeded in retarding its development.<sup>22</sup> In Saint John County, there was strong opposition exhibited by the Parishes of Lancaster, Portland and Saint Martin's to an act providing for an almshouse for the City and County in 1838.<sup>23</sup> Against such opposition, institutional care was slow in coming to many parts of New Brunswick.

The first almshouse in the province was established in the City of Saint John in 1801.<sup>24</sup> Several years later other pauper institutions were erected to serve various county, city and parish units of New Brunswick. Four county almshouses and workhouses were established in the province during the nineteenth century: the York County Almshouse and Workhouse built in Fredericton in 1823;<sup>25</sup> the Saint John City and County Almshouse and Workhouse built in the Parish of Simonds in 1843;<sup>26</sup> the Northumberland County Almshouse and Workhouse erected in the Parish of Chatham in 1869;<sup>27</sup> and the Kings County Almshouse and Poor Farm established in the Parish of Norton in 1899.<sup>28</sup> Only one of New Brunswick's three cities felt compelled to erect a pauper asylum in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The poor of the cities of Fredericton and Saint John were housed in their respective county poorhouses founded before 1850, but since Westmorland County did not have such an institution for its poor, the City of Moncton built a poorhouse in 1885.<sup>29</sup> Provision was also made for the establishment of almshouses in several individual parishes of the province. Between 1824 and 1869 legislation was passed authorizing the

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Saint John Daily Telegraph*, 12 January 1885.

23 *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick*, 1838, pp. 79 and 103.

24 Joseph W. Lawrence, "The Medical Men of St. John In Its First Half Century," *Collections of the New Brunswick Historical Society*, 1, No. 3 (1897), p. 289.

25 Fredericton *Royal Gazette*, 17 September 1822 and 13 January 1824.

26 Record Book of the Saint John City and County Almshouse and Workhouse, 1843-1849, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John.

27 *Sussex Weekly Record*, 26 November 1897.

28 Report of the Board of Almshouse Commissioners, 1 January 1900, Manuscript Minutes, Kings County Municipal Council, Kings County Museum.

29 *Saint John Daily Telegraph*, 5 January 1885.

establishment of almshouses and workhouses in four separate parishes of Charlotte County: St. Andrews in 1824;<sup>30</sup> St. Stephen in 1858;<sup>31</sup> St. George in 1864;<sup>32</sup> and St. David in 1869.<sup>33</sup> In addition, acts were passed granting individual parishes in three other counties the right to erect institutions in the nineteenth century: Woodstock, Carleton County, in 1860;<sup>34</sup> Bathurst, Gloucester County, in 1878;<sup>35</sup> and Shediac, Westmorland County, in 1900.<sup>36</sup>

Before 1897, provincial legislation was needed to authorize local areas to establish and maintain almshouses and workhouses in New Brunswick. By virtue of these acts, almshouse establishments were placed under the management of boards of commissioners appointed by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council. These commissioners were given basically the same powers as the overseers of the poor whom they usually replaced. However, in some counties, such as Kings and Northumberland, overseers of the poor were not entirely replaced by almshouse commissioners. In these areas, overseers continued to provide a limited amount of food, clothing, fuel and other forms of outdoor relief to the poor either in their own home or in the homes of friends or relatives.<sup>37</sup> The commissioners, like the overseers, had to present an annual account of the cost of maintaining the poor to the General Sessions and County Councils for the purpose of determining the annual assessment for poor relief. They had the power to force the idle to work and to punish those who refused employment. Also they could bind the children of paupers as apprentices. As opposed to the overseers, who were primarily involved with non-institutional care of the poor, the commissioners were mainly concerned with the maintenance of the poor within the almshouse establishment and were authorized to make rules and regulations for its operation subject to the approval of the General Sessions or the County Councils.<sup>38</sup>

30 5 George IV, C. 10 (1824). An almshouse was established in St. Andrews in 1822 (see Fredericton *Royal Gazette*, 7 May 1822). The act, therefore, provided for the management of this institution only.

31 21 Victoria, C. 56 (1858). In 1871 there were thirteen inmates in the almshouse establishment in the Parish of St. Stephen (Census of Canada, 1871, Record Group 31, Vol. 1136, District 175i, Schedule No. 3, Public Archives of Canada).

32 27 Victoria, C. 23 (1864). In 1871 there were nine inmates in the almshouse establishment in the Parish of St. George (Census of Canada, 1871, Record Group 31, Vol. 1135, District 175d, Schedule No. 3, Public Archives of Canada).

33 32 Victoria, C. 68 (1869). The Almshouse Commissioners were authorized to sell the almshouse establishment in the Parish of St. David in 1890. Refer to 53 Victoria, C. 37 (1890).

34 23 Victoria, C. 12 (1860). In 1871 there were six inmates in the almshouse establishment in the Parish of Woodstock and a family of four in the custody of the Keeper (Census of Canada, 1871, Record Group 31, Vol. 1153, District 180a, Schedule No. 3, Public Archives of Canada).

35 41 Victoria, C. 102 (1878).

36 63 Victoria, C. 62 (1900).

37 30 Victoria, C. 53 (1867); 59 Victoria, C. 75 (1896).

38 1 Victoria, C. 17 (1838); 59 Victoria, C. 75 (1896).

During the greater part of the nineteenth century, legislation regarding specific residence requirements was needed before an individual parish could be made responsible for destitute persons, for without such legislation there would have been constant disputes, involving overseers or almshouse commissioners, to determine the liability of one parish over another. It was not until 1876 that an act was passed requiring indigents to live one year in a particular parish in order to qualify for relief from that parish. Limited reciprocity existed under the act because temporary relief was given to some paupers, who did not meet residence requirements, until they could be removed to their place of legal settlement.<sup>39</sup> In 1897 an act was passed permitting County Councils to erect almshouses in areas where there were none previously. The act enabled Councils to divide counties into a maximum of three districts which "may consist of a separate parish . . . or include two or more parishes" and establish an almshouse in each district if necessary. Under the act, the Councils, rather than the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council, were authorized to appoint almshouse commissioners.<sup>40</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century all the more densely populated counties of the province, with the exception of Kent, had provided either partial or complete institutional care for the paupers of their area. In the counties of Restigouche, Kent, Albert, Queens, Sunbury, Victoria and Madawaska, however, the almshouse system was not adopted. In these counties and in some of the parishes of other counties, where institutional care was non-existent, the poor continued to be farmed out under the contract system. As late as 1913, the Union of Municipalities urged that the almshouse system be established throughout the province and condemned "any method where, in effect, the poor are maintained at the lowest cash tenders."<sup>41</sup> But, despite continual condemnations, this antiquated and often abusive system continued at least into the late 1920's in several counties of the province.<sup>42</sup>

Basically, the almshouse provided food, shelter and protection to dependent persons, while the workhouse afforded accommodation for indolents who needed some form of correction or detention. The main aim of the almshouse commissioners was to enable able-bodied paupers to contribute to their own support through employment in and about the poorhouse. Disorderly or idle persons, it was thought, could be educated to support themselves through supervised daily work in the institution. In spite of the fact that healthy paupers were engaged in work about the almshouse farm, burying their dead, household chores and cloth-making, it was difficult to keep the inmates busy,

39 39 Victoria, C. 11 (1876).

40 60 Victoria, C. 41 (1897).

41 Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Convention of the Union of Municipalities, City Hall, Moncton, October 15-16, 1913.

42 Canadian Council on Child Welfare, *Report of the New Brunswick Child Welfare Survey* (Saint John, 1929), p. 148.

particularly during the winter months.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the almshouses of the nineteenth century provided little separation of the inmates except by the broad classification of sex, and the unclassified nature of these establishments must have had a demoralizing influence on many inmates and in particular the children. Since no public hospitals existed in the province prior to 1865, most almshouses served as both hospitals for the sick and shelters for the destitute at the same time. The danger of this situation, especially during epidemics, hardly needs to be explained.<sup>44</sup> The almshouses of the province continued to be 'catch-alls' for all classes of destitute well into our present century. A provincial welfare survey revealed that the general mixed almshouse was still very much in evidence in many parts of New Brunswick as late as 1949.<sup>45</sup>

In New Brunswick no central supervision was provided for the administration of poor relief in the nineteenth century. The care of the poor, for the most part, was administered and financed by small local units. The individual parishes, towns and cities each looked after their own poor except in the counties of Saint John, York, Kings and Northumberland where the respective local areas united to build county almshouses. Under this decentralized system the varying resources of the local units were not considered and a wide divergence in the treatment of the poor took place because this was left to the whim of local authorities. Nonetheless, the burden of providing for paupers by various parishes, towns and cities under the Poor Law was relieved to a noticeable extent by a number of public and private welfare schemes. Several welfare organizations and institutions were founded, especially in the Saint John area because, as the largest commercial and industrial centre of the province and the major port of entry for immigrants, its residents had to provide for a larger number of transients, pauper immigrants and parish paupers, than any other area of the province.

In order to assist local authorities in coping with the heavy influx of immigrants, the province established the Provincial Emigrant [sic] Fund in 1832. From this fund, the province reimbursed overseers of the poor, health officers and other local authorities for assistance given to destitute and diseased immigrants, who were eligible for government relief up to one year after their arrival in the province. During the years 1840-1859, the expenditures ranged from a high of £ 18,960 in 1847 to a low of £ 44 in 1859.<sup>46</sup> In addition, the province employed immigration agents at major New Brunswick ports to enforce immigrant regulations.

43 James M. Whalen, "The Nineteenth-Century Almshouse System in Saint John County," *Histoire sociale/Social History* (April, 1971), pp. 10-13.

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 13-18.

45 Canadian Welfare Council, *Public Welfare Services in New Brunswick* (Fredericton, 1949), p. 61.

46 *Papers Relative to Emigration to the British Provinces in North America*, Head to Grey, 19 June 1848, Enclosure 14, House of Parliament, Great Britain, 1848; Annual Report of the Auditor on Saint John County Accounts, 1859.



The government also granted relief in times of local disasters. In order to relieve the distress caused by crop failures in the years 1817, 1837, 1846, 1848 and 1855 the government allocated funds to enable farmers to purchase seed grain and potatoes.<sup>47</sup> The community of Negroes living at Loch Lomond, Saint John County, received regular provincial aid from 1838 to 1848. Relief was not only offered to the sick and indigent of that area but grants were given toward the education of Negro children.<sup>48</sup> The province also granted aid to the sufferers of various fires which occurred in the province. For example, financial assistance was offered to the victims of major fires which occurred in the City of Saint John in the years 1837, 1849<sup>49</sup> and 1877.<sup>50</sup>

The involvement of the provincial government in the field of public welfare was not limited to assistance to meet emergency situations because the province did assume administrative and financial control of some welfare institutions in New Brunswick. For example, the province accepted financial responsibility for the Temporary Lunatic Asylum, established in Saint John in 1836,<sup>51</sup> and assumed administrative control of that institution in 1843.<sup>52</sup> It financed the erection of a new Provincial Lunatic Asylum in 1848, which was operated almost exclusively by provincial funds until 1893,<sup>53</sup> when municipalities were required to pay a per capita rate of \$65.00 for harmless pauper lunatics accepted into the Asylum from their respective areas.<sup>54</sup> Besides the Lunatic Asylum, the government acquired control of the newly established House of Correction in Saint John County in 1841 and converted it into a provincial penitentiary.<sup>55</sup> This building continued to be operated by the province until 1867 when the federal government took over its financial control and management under the terms of the British North America Act. Besides operating a limited number of welfare institutions, the government offered assistance to other charitable establishments. Annual grants were made to the General

47 57 George III, C. 7 (1817); 7 William IV, C. 3 (1837); 9 Victoria, C. 52 (1846); 11 Victoria, C. 3 (1848); 18 Victoria, C. 20 (1855).

48 Appropriations, New Brunswick Legislature, 1838-1848.

49 Under 7 William IV, C. 3 (1837), £1,000 was granted to assist fire victims and under the 12 Victoria, C. 33 (1849), £500 was granted.

50 *Report of the Saint John Relief and Aid Society*, 1879. In order to assist the sufferers of the Great Fire in Saint John, 20 June 1877, the Provincial Government contributed \$25,000 to the City and the Federal Government gave \$20,000.

51 Dr. George P. Peters to the Commissioners of the Temporary Lunatic Asylum, Saint John, 28 November 1836, Appendix to the *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick*, 1837; 7 William IV, C. 3 (1837).

52 Manuscript Minutes, Quarter Sessions, Saint John County, Book G, 23 January 1843, New Brunswick Provincial Archives, Fredericton.

53 10 Victoria, C. 55 (1847); Annual Reports of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum, 1848-1900, Appendix to the *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick*, 1849-1901.

54 52 Victoria, C. 4 (1893).

55 4 Victoria, C. 44 (1841); 5 Victoria, C. 25 (1842).

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Public Hospital established in Saint John in 1865<sup>56</sup> and to the Boys' Industrial Home opened in Saint John County in 1893,<sup>57</sup> and some assistance was given for the education of the blind<sup>58</sup> and deaf-mutes<sup>59</sup> of the province.

Private citizens also showed great interest in helping the poorer classes of society. Most of the orphanages and homes for the aged were operated by private groups and supported by private means. The first institutions of this nature were the Saint John Protestant Orphan Asylum<sup>60</sup> and St. Vincent's Roman Catholic Orphanage.<sup>61</sup> These shelters, founded in 1854 because a group of citizens in Saint John felt obliged to provide for over 100 children whose parents were victims of the cholera epidemic of that year, were the first permanent asylums, founded by private means, exclusively for the shelter and care of children. Further advancement in child protection came later with the erection of two male orphanages in Saint John. In 1876, Wiggins Male Orphan Asylum was completed to serve the needs of a number of homeless children in Saint John City and County;<sup>62</sup> and four years later St. Patrick's Industrial School and Farm was opened at Silver Falls, Saint John County, for Roman Catholic boys of the province.<sup>63</sup> Interested citizens of Saint John also responded to the need to provide specialized care for a limited number of the aged and infirm. For example, in 1871 the Home for Aged Females was established in Saint John to provide a place for women who could not afford to maintain their own residence.<sup>64</sup> A similar institution for the aged and infirm, the Mater Misericordiae Home, was opened in Saint John in 1888. This shelter provided care to elderly men and women who were required to contribute according to their means but a large number of inmates were maintained in the institution free of charge.<sup>65</sup> Besides the establishment of institutions to provide specialized care to orphans and aged persons, a place for the reformation of juvenile offenders was badly needed, but not until 1893

56 William Bayard, M.D., *History of the General Public Hospital in the City of Saint John* (Saint John, 1896); Annual Reports of the General Public Hospital, 1865-1900, Appendix to the *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick*, 1866-1901.

57 Annual Reports of the Boys' Industrial Home, 1893-1900, Appendix to the *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick*, 1894-1901.

58 Annual Report of the School for the Blind, Halifax, 1900, Appendix to the *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick*, 1901; 55 *Victoria*, C. 18 (1892).

59 55 *Victoria*, C. 9 (1892).

60 *Annual Reports of the Saint John Protestant Orphan Asylum*, 1881-1901; *Saint John Daily Sun*, 3 September 1880; 18 *Victoria*, C. 70 (1855).

61 Sisters of Charity, ed., *Laus Deo* (Saint John, 1954), pp. 18-19; *Saint John Freeman*, 5 January 1901.

62 30 *Victoria*, C. 9 (1867); *Saint John Globe*, 14 December 1901.

63 *Saint John Globe*, 26 March 1901; *Saint John Freeman*, 5 January 1901.

64 33 *Victoria*, C. 84 (1870); *Saint John Globe*, 14 December 1901.

65 *Saint John Globe*, 14 December 1901; *Saint John Freeman*, 12 January 1901.

was the Boys' Industrial Home, operated by public support, established in Saint John County. The provision of a similar institution for girls came about at the same time with the founding of the Good Shepherd Reformatory and Industrial Refuge, which was solely the work of private charity.<sup>66</sup>

A number of benevolent societies also emerged in the Saint John area and offered aid to immigrants. The national societies of St. Andrews, St. Patrick's and St. George's, founded in 1798, 1815 and 1819 respectively, as well as helping to perpetuate customs which existed in the settlers' homeland, offered relief to natives of the British Isles and their descendents.<sup>67</sup> Other organizations which offered relief to the poor of the Saint John area included the Ladies' Benevolent Society, which was active during the 1840's,<sup>68</sup> and the St. Vincent de Paul Society founded in 1857.<sup>69</sup> Many individual acts of kindness, which are impossible to trace, must have aided unfortunates to a certain extent over the years.

Despite the assistance of the provincial government and private charities in the development and support of welfare institutions, the burden of providing for the poor was borne most heavily by the municipalities of the province during the nineteenth century. Parishes, towns and cities of New Brunswick not only administered relief to paupers in accordance with the Poor Law of 1786 but offered assistance to the poorer elements of society in many other ways. For example, the residents of the City and County of Saint John helped to maintain the General Public Hospital, established in 1865, through annual assessments imposed on the taxpayers for its support.<sup>70</sup> The citizens were also annually assessed for the entire support and maintenance of the City and County Gaol.<sup>71</sup> Beginning in 1892, the residents were required to pay per capita grants for the education of the County's deaf-mutes and the blind.<sup>72</sup> The next year, per capita grants were levied to assist in the support of juvenile delinquents committed to the Boys' Industrial Home<sup>73</sup> and harmless pauper lunatics sent to the Provincial Asylum from Saint John City and County.<sup>74</sup> Many pauper immigrants became a burden on the County's residents after the province discontinued its relief to them from the Emigrant Fund,<sup>75</sup> and

66 *Saint John Globe*, 14 August 1893; 59 *Victoria*, C. 83 (1896); *Saint John Freeman*, 15 December 1900.

67 *Saint John Globe*, 14 December 1901.

68 *Saint John Morning News*, 10 April 1843.

69 *Saint John Globe*, 6 December 1888.

70 23 *Victoria*, C. 61 (1860).

71 *Report of the Royal Commission to Investigate the Penal System of Canada* (Ottawa, 1938), pp. 16-18.

72 55 *Victoria*, C. 8 (1892) and 55 *Victoria*, C. 9 (1892).

73 56 *Victoria*, C. 16 (1893).

74 52 *Victoria*, C. 4 (1893).

75 Manuscript Minutes, Quarter Sessions, Saint John County, Book J, 28 May 1850, New Brunswick Provincial Archives, Fredericton.

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transients from other areas of the province often became chargeable to the City and County of Saint John,<sup>76</sup> particularly before the Act of Settlement was passed in 1876.

By the close of the century, it was becoming apparent that the Poor Law needed reform not only to reduce disparities in the way in which paupers were maintained but to decrease the cost of poor relief to some areas. In order to achieve this, it was necessary for the provincial government to accept a more positive role in the administrative and financial arrangements for poor relief. However, no significant changes were made until the Great Depression of the 1930's when municipalities were forced to introduce programmes of unemployment relief with financial assistance from the provincial and federal government. After this time, the development of other welfare schemes by senior governments relieved municipalities of many financial responsibilities which they had tried to administer previously under the Poor Law. For example, old age pensions, family allowances, blind pensions, disability payments and workmen's compensation guaranteed assistance to many who were never provided for adequately under the Poor Law. But several did not qualify for such assistance or did not receive adequate welfare benefits to support themselves or their families, and most indigents had to be supported under the decentralized Poor Law system which remained in effect until the 1960's when important changes were made in it.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>76</sup> *Annual Report of the Auditor on Saint John County Accounts*, 1859.

<sup>77</sup> Under the Social Assistance Act, which came into effect on 1 July 1960, the province assumed a large share of the financial responsibility for poor relief but the administration and distribution of funds remained with various county units. In 1965 county government was abolished and the responsibility for welfare was, in effect, transferred to the provincial government.