

**Rooted in the Soil:  
Farm Family Persistence in Burton Parish, Sunbury County,  
New Brunswick, 1851-1901**

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TIMOTHY D. LEWIS

## Rooted in the Soil: Farm Family Persistence in Burton Parish, Sunbury County, New Brunswick, 1851-1901

AT THE MIDDLE OF THE 19TH CENTURY, 35-year-old John Payne worked as a ship carpenter in Burton Parish, Sunbury County, New Brunswick. At home, 28-year-old Anne, who like her husband was an Irish Protestant immigrant, cared for the couple's three young children: Mary 7, William 5 and Anne 2. A decade later there were seven Payne children in all. However, the local shipyards that gave employment to men such as John Payne had not fared so well, a situation which forced large numbers of men to leave the parish. But John Payne stayed, found work as a sawyer, and he continued to support a large family. All were still at home in 1871 (except the eldest daughter Mary), and the oldest son William's earnings as a carpenter must have helped augment the family's income. By 1881, however, John was dead and only Anne, John Jr. and daughter Ellen remained in Burton. Ten years later, only the widowed Anne remained to remind long-time neighbours of the once full and active Payne household.<sup>1</sup>

In a number of ways, the experiences of the Payne family encapsulate much of what scholars have learned to date regarding the demographic history of the Maritime Provinces in the second half of the 19th century. Rural depopulation was a concern throughout much of North America and Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>2</sup> But, as the dispersal of the Payne family suggests, the Maritime region was

1 All of the information contained in the opening paragraph was obtained from the Manuscript Censuses of Burton Parish, Sunbury County, New Brunswick conducted between 1851 and 1901, available at the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (PANB). As marriage records for Burton Parish are limited, it is possible that one or more of the five Payne daughters may also have been in the Burton area under their married names, but if so Anne apparently chose to live alone. Much thanks are due to Dr. Gail Campbell for providing invaluable data and thoughtful advice. My journey into the realm of demographic history would not have been possible without her assistance. I also wish to acknowledge the financial support received during the preparation of this article provided by the doctoral fellowships granted by the University of New Brunswick.

2 See, for instance, John MacDougall, *Rural life in Canada: Its Trend and Tasks* ([1913] Toronto, 1973), W.R. Young, "Conscription, Rural Depopulation, and the Farmers of Ontario, 1917-19", *Canadian Historical Review*, 53, 3 (September 1972), pp. 289-318, Bruno Ramirez, *On the Move: French Canadian and Italian Migrants in the North Atlantic Economy, 1860-1940* (Toronto, 1991), Wilbur Zelinsky, "Changes in the Geographic Patterns of Rural Population in the United States, 1790-1960", *Geographical Review*, 52 (1962), pp. 492-524, Calvin L. Beale, "Rural Depopulation in the United States: Some Demographic Consequences of Agricultural Adjustments", *Demography*, 1 (1964), pp. 264-72, Cynthia Sturgis, "'How're You Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm?': Rural Women and the Urban Model in Utah", *Agricultural History*, 60, 2 (Spring 1986), pp. 182-99,

Timothy D. Lewis, "Rooted in the Soil: Farm Family Persistence in Burton Parish, Sunbury County, New Brunswick, 1851-1901", *Acadiensis*, XXXI, 1 (Autumn 2001), pp. 35-54.

particularly hard hit, losing several hundred thousand residents from a population of less than one million.<sup>3</sup> First apparent in long-settled rural areas such as Burton Parish whose economies relied heavily on agriculture or shipbuilding, out-migration became a common feature of late 19th-century Maritime life.<sup>4</sup> Of particular concern, the majority of migrants, like the Payne children, were young men and young women.<sup>5</sup>

Given the magnitude of the exodus from the Maritimes, it is not surprising that historians of the eastern provinces have focused considerable attention on the way in which out-migration affected Maritime development. From this work, we have acquired a better idea of the number of individuals who left the region in the late 19th century, learned much about the economic factors that contributed to the migration and identified the destinations of many of the migrants.<sup>6</sup> Yet repeated emphasis on the regional migration has, as Phyllis Wagg recently noted, unwittingly obscured the experiences of those who did not participate in the emigration.<sup>7</sup> Drawing on evidence from a study of the geographic persistence and mobility of the population of Burton Parish between 1851 and 1901, this study identifies some of the characteristics that typified those who remained the area's long-term residents.<sup>8</sup> Although this parish

William L. Bowers, *The Country Life Movement in America, 1900-1920* (Port Washington, N.Y., 1974). Rural depopulation was also a concern in Europe at this time: see Leslie Page Moch, *Paths to the City: Regional Migration in Nineteenth-Century France* (Beverly Hills, 1983) and John Saville, *Rural Depopulation in England and Wales, 1851-1951* (London, 1957).

- 3 Alan A. Brookes, "Out-Migration from the Maritime Provinces, 1860-1900: Some Preliminary Considerations", *Acadiensis*, V, 2 (Spring 1976), p. 29.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 31; T.W. Acheson, "A Study in the Historical Demography of a Loyalist County", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 1 (April 1968), pp. 62-63; Patricia A. Thornton, "The Problem of Out-Migration from Atlantic Canada, 1871-1921: A New Look", *Acadiensis*, XV, 1 (Autumn 1985), p. 23; Alan A. Brookes, "The Golden Age and the Exodus: The Case of Canning, Kings County", *Acadiensis*, XI, 1 (Autumn 1981), p. 57. Bruno Ramirez in *On the Move*, p. 38 notes that early settlement was also a factor in Berthier County, Quebec becoming one of the first regions in that province to experience large-scale out-migration.
- 5 Acheson, "Historical Demography of a Loyalist County", p. 63; Thornton, "Out-Migration: A New Look", p. 18; Brookes, "Out-Migration from the Maritime Provinces", pp. 36-37; Brookes, "The Golden Age and the Exodus", pp. 57, 64; Betsy Beattie, "'Going Up to Lynn': Single, Maritime-Born Women in Lynn, Massachusetts, 1879-1930", *Acadiensis*, XXII, 1 (Autumn 1992), pp. 65-86.
- 6 See especially Thornton, "The Problem of Out-Migration", pp. 3-33. For discussion of the economic problems in the Maritimes that contributed to the 19th-century exodus from the region, see also Brookes, "Out-Migration From the Maritime Provinces", p. 28 and Acheson, "Historical Demography of a Loyalist County", p. 63. As these and other studies indicate, the majority of 19th-century Maritime migrants relocated to the New England States, which remained a common destination for Maritime migrants in the 20th century as well. See Yves Otis et Bruno Ramirez, "Nouvelles perspectives sur le mouvement d'émigration des Maritimes vers les États-Unis, 1906-1930", *Acadiensis*, XXVIII, 1 (automne 1998), p. 35.
- 7 See Phyllis Wagg, "Families in Transition: Richmond County, Nova Scotia, 1871-1901", Ph.D. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1997, p. 228.
- 8 Wagg's study of Richmond County, Nova Scotia and my M.A. thesis are to my knowledge the only significant works that use the techniques of historical demography to study those who remained in the late 19th-century Maritimes, rather than those who left. See Wagg, "Families in Transition" and Timothy D. Lewis, "Oronocto, New Brunswick, From Village to Model Town: Rural Community Transformed", M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1996. For similar studies focusing on those who persisted in communities elsewhere in late 19th-century northeastern North America, see Hal S. Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind: Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century New England* (New York, 1984) and J.I. Little, *Crofters and Habitants: Settler Society, Economy and Culture in a Quebec Township, 1848-81* (Montreal and Kingston, 1991).

experienced a significant population loss, local households continued to exhibit considerable geographic stability. For at the same time Burton was experiencing unprecedented levels of out-migration, the geographic stability rates of parish families remained as high as, or higher than, those recorded elsewhere in North America during this period. By the dawn of the 20th century, individuals from the parish's most geographically stable families comprised an even larger proportion of Burton's population, a situation produced by a combination of family strategies, limited immigration and selective out-migration from the parish. Far from creating social instability, the experience of Burton Parish suggests that the late 19th-century migration from the Maritimes left the region with an increasingly stable population.

The core of this enduring population in Burton, as elsewhere in rural North America, were farm owners and their families.<sup>9</sup> Ownership of farm land, of course, substantially improved the likelihood of a family maintaining its presence in a rural community such as Burton. It is a reminder of the extent to which farm families formed the economic, social and political backbone of the late 19th-century Maritimes. In according much of their attention to the end of the age of sail and/or the Maritimes' industrial development, scholars have tended to overlook the fact that the region remained overwhelmingly rural. This work, then, aims to take up Daniel Samson's recent challenge to put the "countryside and its people . . . at the centre of any history of economics and society in Atlantic Canada".<sup>10</sup>

Before the 1870s, Burton Parish and its surrounding environs was a place migrants flocked to rather than fled from. Located in the fertile valley of the navigable St. John River, where it joins the Oromocto River, Sunbury is the smallest county in New Brunswick. Long occupied by members of both the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet First Nations, Burton's first permanent non-Native settlers arrived from Massachusetts in the 1760s. Shortly after, in the wake of the American Revolution, much of the parish was set aside for incoming Loyalists, and, by the mid-1800s, the area was also home to large numbers of Catholic and Protestant Irish immigrants.<sup>11</sup> Attracted by the fertile land and thick forests found along the banks of the parish's two main rivers, settlers relied heavily on agriculture, lumbering and shipbuilding for their livelihood. It is not surprising that the ups and downs of the parish's primary industries proved pivotal in determining which of Burton's families would remain in the parish over the long term.

For several decades, shipbuilding was the most vibrant sector of the local economy. Despite its inland location, the parish possessed a number of natural advantages for the building of wooden ships. Both the Oromocto and St. John were rivers sufficiently broad and deep to make them accessible to ships of a considerable size. The forests contained large stands of tamarack, a wood ship carpenters prized for its durability, and as a result local timber was used for ship construction as early as the 18th century. In the middle decades of the 19th century, builders in the villages of

9 Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind*, p. 79.

10 Daniel Samson, "Afterword: Capitalism and Modernization in the Atlantic Canadian Countryside", in Samson, ed., *Contested Countryside: Rural Workers and Modern Society in Atlantic Canada, 1800-1950* (Fredericton, 1994), p. 202.

11 For more details on the activities of the early occupants of Burton Parish, see William Darrell Moore, "Sunbury County, 1760-1830", M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1977, pp. 9-70.

Table One

## Burton Parish Total Population

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Year	Total Population
1851	1480
1861	1540
1871	1830
1881	1677
1891	1455
1901	1424

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Oromocto and Burton produced at least 45 vessels of various sizes and descriptions.<sup>12</sup> Shipbuilding's contribution to the local economy is evident from the Industrial Schedule of the 1871 census. In that year, the 28 shipyard employees in Burton earned a total of \$9,500, while the other 26 industrial workers in the parish combined to earn only \$1,950.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, these figures come from a time when the area's shipbuilding industry was already showing signs of decline. Vessel construction in Burton ceased altogether in the mid-1850s when the capital normally provided by Saint John-based merchants was diverted to the United States following the ratification of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854.<sup>14</sup> The local shipyards sprang to life again later in the decade, but given that the number of ship carpenters in the parish fell from 61 to 8 between 1851 and 1861, they obviously operated on a much smaller scale. By 1876 the local era of wood, wind and sail was more or less over.<sup>15</sup>

The demise of local shipbuilding contributed to a dramatic drop in Burton's population from 1,830 people in 1871 to 1,455 in 1891 (see Table One). Indeed, several families, such as those headed by ship carpenters Thomas Hicks and William Scoullar, left the area even earlier. These men had been very active in local shipbuilding in the 1830s and 1840s, but neither they nor any member of their families

12 For a detailed examination of shipbuilding in the Burton area, see Brent Hancox, "Five Decades of Wood and Sail: The Shipbuilding Industry of Oromocto", unpublished monograph, Archives and Special Collections, Harriet Irving Library, University of New Brunswick. See also Harold G. Kimball, *History of Oromocto* (Fredericton, 1966), pp. 8-12 and Gordon R. Hansford, "The Shipbuilding Industry of Nova Scotia During the Nineteenth Century", M.A. thesis, Acadia University, 1953, Appendix III.

13 With one exception, all the other industrial workers were part-time employees.

14 Rex Grady, "From Oromocto to North Lake: Rural Decline and Migration in Nineteenth Century New Brunswick", M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1993, p. 77.

15 Manuscript Censuses, Burton Parish, Sunbury County, 1851 and 1861. Hancox, "Five Decades of Wood and Sail", p. 53, indicates that the last vessel of significant size was built in the parish in 1876.

were resident in Burton Parish by 1861.<sup>16</sup> Other, less prominent, ship carpenters tried to keep their families in the area somewhat longer. For example, 59-year-old Joseph Hoyt turned to work as a labourer in the hopes of maintaining his 41-year-old wife Elizabeth and their seven children in the Burton home where, as of 1861, they had lived for more than ten years. Hoyt succeeded only temporarily. Most of the family was still resident in Burton a decade later, but by then the four remaining children were working to help support their now widowed mother (23-year-old George was a carpenter, while daughters Jane and Sarah were employed as servants, as was 12-year-old David).<sup>17</sup> Apparently none of the Hoyt children were able to find suitable long-term employment in Burton, as they all eventually left the parish. Nor was this an isolated case. Rex Grady documents the migration of more than a dozen inter-related Burton Parish families who, in the late 1860s, set out for the North Lake district of Charlotte County along the New Brunswick-Maine border, where jobs were more numerous thanks to the expansion of a local tannery.<sup>18</sup>

Census figures suggest that the jobs lost in the decline of the shipbuilding economy were partially replaced by the growth of local logging and sawmilling operations, as between 1871 and 1881 the number of resident lumber or mill workers rose from 5 to 32.<sup>19</sup> The late 19th century also saw many Burton residents relocate, either permanently or seasonally, to work at the Mitchell log boom in neighbouring Lincoln Parish.<sup>20</sup> At its peak, the Mitchell boom employed as many as 180 men, and it was one

16 Ibid., Appendix III. Records show that Scoullar built at least ten vessels in Burton Parish between 1834 and 1847, while Hicks oversaw the construction of two locally-built ships in the early 1850s. Manuscript Censuses, Burton Parish, 1851, 1861. In 1851 the Nova Scotia-born Hicks was only 25 and lived with his wife Mary and his father John. At the same time, the 53-year-old Scottish-born Scoullar was living with his second wife Mary and his ten children.

17 Manuscript Censuses, Burton Parish, 1851-1901.

18 Grady, "From Oromocto to North Lake", pp. 134-40. Family connections played a crucial role in this migration, nor was this unique to Burton Parish. As the following works illustrate, relatives and neighbours routinely facilitated and/or participated in the migration process in this period in North America and Europe: Tamara Hareven, "The Laborers of Manchester, New Hampshire, 1912-1922: The Role of Family and Ethnicity in Adjustment to Industrial Life", *Labor History*, 18 (Autumn 1975), pp. 249-65; Gérard Bouchard, "Family Structures and Geographic Mobility at Laterrrière, 1851-1935", *Journal of Family History*, II (Winter 1977), pp. 350-69; Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1977); Robert C. Ostergren, "Kinship Networks and Migrations: A Nineteenth Century Swedish Example", *Social Science History*, 13 (Summer 1982), pp. 49-82; Jon Gjerde, *From Peasants to Farmers: The Migration from Balestrand, Norway to the Upper Middle West* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985); Béatrice Craig, "Immigrants in a Frontier Community: Madawaska, 1785-1850", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XIX, no. 38 (November 1986), pp. 277-97; Marc St. Hilaire, "Origines et destins des familles pionnières d'une paroisse saguenayenne au XIXe siècle", *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, 32 (avril 1988), pp. 5-26; Bruce S. Elliott, *Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach* (Montreal and Kingston, 1988); Danielle Gauvreau et Mario Bourque, "Les migrations interrégionales au Saguenay avant 1911", dans Gérard Bouchard et Marc De Braekeleer, dirs., *Histoire d'un génome: Population et génétique dans l'est du Québec* (Québec, 1991); Royden K. Loewen, "New Themes in an Old Story: Mennonites as Transplanted Group Settlers in North America", *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 11, 2 (1992), pp. 3-26.

19 Manuscript Censuses, Burton Parish, 1871, 1881.

20 One such individual was George Kimball, who served as the Mitchell boom's timekeeper for many years before being appointed its foreman in the early 20th century. Kimball was born in Oromocto, lived in Lincoln during his years at the boom and then returned to Oromocto in 1912. See Harold G.

Table Two  
Persistence of Individuals with Recorded Occupations,  
Burton Parish, 1851-1901

	1851-1861		1861-1871		1871-1881		1881-1891		1891-1901	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
All Occupations	396	42.9	488	58.2	526	50.2	583	52.8	502	58.4
Farmers	170	61.8	183	66.7	335	57.6	333	60.1	269	68.4
Labourers	35	45.7	228	57.5	38	34.2	58	43.1	145	49.7
Other Occupations	191	25.6	77	40.3	153	37.9	192	43.2	88	38.6

A = number of individuals present at time of initial census

B = percentage of individuals still present at time of next census

Source: All tables were compiled using data obtained from the Manuscript Censuses, Burton Parish, Sunbury County, 1851-1901. In order to make possible the calculations upon which this table and others concerning persistence were based, every individual in Burton Parish at the time of one census has been linked to the next. Once this process was completed, new variables were added to the database in order to determine persistence rates among groups of individuals sharing specific demographic characteristics.

of several such operations that swung into action each spring after the break-up of the winter's ice in the St. John River. The boom's function was to collect and sort logs cut along the river valley the previous fall and winter, many of which were American in either origin or destination. The Canadian and American governments had an agreement at this time whereby logs cut in the State of Maine and New Brunswick's Upper St. John River Valley could be floated down-river, rafted and sorted at a boom and then towed to Saint John. Once in the Port City, the logs were either processed at a mill or shipped whole to the United States in order to avoid the American tariff on finished lumber products.<sup>21</sup> Yet, despite the good number of former and continuing Burton residents who gained seasonal employment at the Mitchell boom, it was not until the winter of 1907-08, when the River Valley Lumber Company established a sawmill in the village of Oromocto, that the parish began to reap significant long-term employment benefits from the forest industry.

The one relatively stable sector of Burton's economy in the second half of the 19th

Kimball, "An Almost Forgotten Era: Some Reflections of the Log Rafting and Towing Operations on the Saint John River", unpublished paper presented to the York-Sunbury Historical Society, November 1950, p. 1, MC 300 MS 2/54, PANB; Kimball, *History of Oromocto*, pp. 14-15.

21 L.D. McCann, "The 1890s: Fragmentation and the New Social Order", in E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muisé, eds., *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Fredericton and Toronto, 1993), p. 137.

century was agriculture. Farmers formed the largest occupational group in the parish throughout the latter half of the 19th century, and following the collapse of local shipbuilding they accounted for considerably more than half of all the listed occupations in Burton (see Table Two). The vast majority of local farmers owned their own land (the 1871 census records 226 farm owners in the parish and only 14 farm tenants); there were, however, some dramatic differences in the scale of operation of area farms. Approximately ten per cent of Burton's agricultural holdings consisted of less than 50 acres, while the parish's largest farm was 40 times that size.<sup>22</sup> Farm properties of between 100 and 200 acres were the norm, however.<sup>23</sup>

Whatever their holdings, most families operated mixed farms that produced a variety of grains, vegetables, livestock and dairy products.<sup>24</sup> For the most part, these goods were consumed locally, but regular steamship service allowed farmers operating above the subsistence level access to markets in the cities of Saint John and Fredericton.<sup>25</sup> Significant surpluses were apparently not the norm in Burton, as the agricultural data collected for the 1871 census suggests that only nine per cent of the parish's farms operated on a large scale.<sup>26</sup> As most of Burton's best farm land had been occupied since the late 18th and early 19th centuries, late-comers who hoped to carve out an agricultural livelihood faced a difficult challenge. Though it perhaps offered more stability than other occupations, agriculture did little to stimulate significant demographic or economic growth in Burton Parish.<sup>27</sup>

In many ways Burton Parish was typical of the late 19th-century Maritimes. A long-settled rural area, economically reliant on shipbuilding and agriculture, it experienced a significant population decline and large-scale out-migration.<sup>28</sup> But the story was much more complex. Personal data gathered on every individual listed in each of the decadal censuses of Burton Parish between 1851 and 1901 reveals that

22 Manuscript Census, Burton Parish, 1871, Schedule 4, Cultivated Lands, Field Products, Plants and Fruits. Unfortunately the 1871 agricultural census is the only one extant for late 19th-century Burton Parish.

23 Ibid. Almost 60 per cent of Burton's farms fell into this category. On average, approximately 25 to 30 per cent of the land on each parish farm was improved.

24 Manuscript Census, Burton Parish, 1871, Schedule 4: Cultivated Lands, Field Products, Plants and Fruits, and Schedule 5: Live Stock, Animal Products, Home-Made Fabrics and Furs; "W. W. Hubbard: His Memoirs", Part 2, *Fredericton Daily Gleaner* [December 1955], MC 300, PANB.

25 The excellent steamboat service available along the St. John River was somewhat of a mixed blessing. It hindered the development of parish villages such as Oromocto, as there was no need for them to become significant agricultural service centres as long as the steamboats could provide farmers with easy access to the Saint John and Fredericton markets. For more details on the steamboat era, see George MacBeath and Donald F. Taylor, *Steamboat Days: On the St. John 1816-1946* (St. Stephen, 1982).

26 Farmers in this category met all or most of the following criteria: owned 200+ acres of land, produced 100+ bushels of grain products, harvested 400+ pounds of potatoes and/or 20+ tons of hay, raised 20+ head of livestock, made 300+ pounds of butter, owned 4+ pieces of farm machinery and/or 3+ barns or stables. See Manuscript Census, Burton Parish, 1871, Schedule 4: Cultivated Lands, Field Products, Plants and Fruits, and Schedule 5: Live Stock, Animal Products, Home-Made Fabrics and Furs.

27 The steadily falling population figures for Burton Parish between 1881 and 1901 indicate that aside from farming there was little other economic activity in the area at this time.

28 Net migration figures for Sunbury County between 1871 and 1881 were -1023.2 and -1338.5 the following decade. See Thornton, "The Problem of Out-Migration from Atlantic Canada", p. 32.



Table Three  
Persistence of Burton Parish Households and Household Heads,  
1851-1901

	1851-1861		1861-1871		1871-1881		1881-1891		1891-1901	
Households in Initial Census Year	207	100%	259	100%	292	100%	299	100%	287	100%
Households Persisting Ten Years Later	152	73.4%	201	77.6%	219	75%	209	69.9%	233	81.2%
Household Heads Persisting Ten Years Later	109	52.7%	166	64.1%	170	58.2%	171	57.2%	196	68.3%

Persistence of households = at least one household member present ten years after initial census year.

although large numbers of people did leave the area, the region's inhabitants simultaneously exhibited high levels of geographic persistence equal to or surpassing those found in most other late 19th-century communities.<sup>29</sup>

Persistence measures the number of families or individuals in a population or cohort (often expressed in percentages) who remain in a given geographical area within a specific time-frame.<sup>30</sup> The standard means of establishing persistence rates has been to determine the number of household heads in an initial census year who remain resident in the same area at the time of the next census.<sup>31</sup> This practice poses

29 For the purposes of analysis, the data concerning every Burton resident listed in each census was transcribed into a computerized database, creating separate files for each census year (1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901). The information was then sorted into categories to determine not only individual persistence, but also to analyze, among other factors, the occupational status and religious affiliation of every person in Burton Parish at the time of each census.

30 In ascertaining persistence rates, scholars have used a variety of sources, including government censuses, city directories, church parish records and genealogical collections. Unfortunately, these sources are not without fault, a fact which regularly casts doubt on the reliability of persistence studies. Particular concern has been expressed about the many works which rely almost exclusively on census materials collected at ten-year intervals. For a more detailed discussion of some of the problems associated with accurately determining persistence levels, see David W. Galenson and Daniel S. Levy, "A Note on Biases in the Measurement of Geographic Persistence Rates", *Historical Methods*, 19 (Fall 1986), pp. 171-77. As a result, some researchers advocate the use of genealogies in order to obtain more accurate information. See Randy William Widdis, "Generations, Mobility and Persistence: A View from Genealogies", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XXV, 49 (May 1992), pp. 125-50 and Béatrice Craig, "L'étude des mouvements migratoires en Amérique du Nord: sources et méthodes", in Yves Landry et al., dirs., *Les chemins de la migration en Belgique et au Québec: XVIIe-XXe siècles* (Beauport, Que., 1995), pp. 21-31.

31 For example, if Village A contained 140 heads of households in the 1861 census and if 105 of these people remained to be enumerated in 1871, then the persistence rate for Village A would be 75 per cent.

several problems, however. The implicit assumption underlying this method is that whole families relocated whenever the absence of a household head is recorded. This is misleading. Many heads of households, several of whom were elderly, may well have died in the ten-year interval between census years, while others may have regularly left home for extended periods to pursue employment opportunities – or they may simply have been missed by the census taker. At the same time, some or even most other members of the household might well remain in the census area for generations to come.

Therefore, although the persistence rates of Burton's household heads are noted in Table Three, a more precise measure of the persistence of the area's population is obtained by identifying the number of parish households in which at least one member remained to be counted from one census year to the next.<sup>32</sup> Weaknesses exist with this approach as well – for a household is considered persistent even if only one member of what was once a large household remained in the parish – but specialists in the field of demographic history generally agree that results are more reliable when families or couples are linked from one census to the next rather than only individuals or household heads.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the vast majority of Burton's persistent households had more than one member persisting between censuses.<sup>34</sup> In fact, given the lack of available marriage records for Burton, and the resultant difficulty in tracking women once they married and changed their surnames, the number of long-term persistent households may well be underestimated in this study.

As it charts every listed inhabitant of Burton Parish for six consecutive censuses, this study also limits errors arising from omissions in individual censuses or from a sampling method, and this methodology also makes it easier to properly identify individuals whose names may have been incorrectly or illegibly transcribed by census takers. Nor is Burton Parish a large geographic region, a factor which reduces the inflated persistence figures inevitably produced whenever a study area is so large that individuals or families may move long distances and still be considered persistent.<sup>35</sup> By restricting itself to the relatively small confines of Burton Parish, this study underestimates the actual number of individuals or families who remained in the

32 Similar methods of determining persistence are used in the following studies: Herbert J. Mays, "A Place to Stand": Families, Land and Permanence in Toronto Gore Township, 1820-1890", *Historical Papers/Communications historiques* (1980), pp. 185-211, Little, *Crofters and Habitants*, Wagg, "Families in Transition".

33 Mays, "A Place to Stand", p. 186; Raymond Roy, Christian Pouyez et François Martin, "Le jumelage des données nominatives dans les recensements: problèmes et méthodes", *Histoire sociale/Social History* XIII, no. 25 (mai 1980), pp. 173-93; Christian Pouyez, Raymond Roy et Gérard Bouchard, "La mobilité géographique en milieu rural: le Saguenay, 1852-1861", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XIV, no. 27 (mai 1981), pp. 123-55; David Paul Davenport, "Tracing Rural New York's Out-Migrants, 1855-1860", *Historical Methods*, 17 (Spring 1984), pp. 59-66; Richard Steckel, "Census Matching and Migration: A Research Strategy", *Historical Methods*, 21 (Spring 1988), pp. 52-60.

34 The percentage of Burton's persistent households in which two or more members remained from one census year to the next ranged between 92.7 and 85.6 per cent between 1871 and 1891.

35 See W.R. Prest, "Stability and Change in Old and New England: Clayworth and Dedham", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, VI (Winter 1976), pp. 359-74 and Danielle Gauvreau, René Jetté and Mario Bourque, "Migration in the Saguenay Region: Evidence from Reconstituted Families, 1838-1911", *Historical Methods*, 20 (Fall 1987), pp. 143-54.

general vicinity, since even those who moved only a few miles to one of the adjoining parishes of Sunbury, or who relocated just a little further to the neighbouring counties of Queens or York, are classified as migrants.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, this limited geographic scope, combined with the 50-year period of analysis, allows for a reasonably accurate look at the number and nature of families who persisted in one small section of the late 19th-century Maritime countryside.

Although the population of Burton Parish fell steadily throughout the latter half of the 19th century, the area's families maintained an impressive level of geographic stability. On average, three out of every four households enumerated each census year between 1851 and 1901 were represented by at least one member in the subsequent census (see Table Three). Persistence figures for heads of households in Burton ranged from 52.7 to 68.3 per cent. Compared with rates from studies published in the 1960s and 1970s which found that the persistence rates of household heads in many late 19th-century North American centres were between 25 and 45 per cent, the Burton rates are high.<sup>37</sup> Most of these works focused on either rapidly expanding cities or emerging frontier regions – areas prone to large-scale population turnover – so it is somewhat misleading to compare their findings to those from a long-settled rural region such as Burton Parish.<sup>38</sup> The level of geographic stability maintained by Burton households during the second half of the 19th century is comparable to that found in more recent studies of family persistence, which examine other long-settled rural areas in northeastern North America. Although hundreds of thousands of migrants left that section of the continent in the late 19th century, many communities retained a large and stable population base.<sup>39</sup>

How could Burton's population maintain or even increase its rate of persistence at the same time it was experiencing unprecedented levels of out-migration? One explanation for this phenomenon lies in the area of family limitation. Whether it was a deliberate response to the trying economic conditions the region experienced is difficult to ascertain, but census data suggests that persistence levels in Burton Parish were maintained, at least in part, due to a falling birth rate. For example, in 1851 57.7

36 Studies covering more extensive geographic areas have often found that migrants frequently moved relatively short distances. See Davenport, "Tracing Rural New York's Out-Migrants", pp. 62-6 and Pouyez, Roy and Bouchard, "La mobilité géographique en milieu rural," pp. 138-45.

37 Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964); Peter R. Knights, *The Plain People of Boston, 1830-1860: A Study in City Growth* (New York, 1971); Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975); Howard P. Chudacoff, *Mobile Americans: Residential and Social Mobility in Omaha, 1880-1920* (New York, 1972); Bouchard, "Family Structure and Geographic Mobility", pp. 350-69; Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-70* (Urbana, 1978); Darrell A. Norris, "Household and Transiency in a Loyalist Township: The People of Adolphustown, 1784-1822", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XIII, 26 (November 1980), pp. 399-415; Richard S. Alcorn, "Leadership and Stability in Mid-Nineteenth Century America: A Case Study of an Illinois Town", *Journal of American History*, 61, 3 (1974), pp. 685-702.

38 No doubt persistence figures for Burton would also be considerably lower were one to examine the era shortly after the arrival of the Loyalists to the area, since a good many of them stayed only a short time.

39 See Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind*, pp. 78-90, Davenport, "Tracing Rural New York's Out-Migrants," pp. 62-66 and Little, *Crofters and Habitants*, pp. 94-95.

per cent of mothers in Burton Parish between the ages of 30 and 45 had five or more children living under their roof. By 1901, however, only 34.3 per cent of mothers in this age category reported a similar number of children in their households. Moreover, the average size of farm households in Burton fell from 7.2 members in 1851 to 4.9 members in 1901.<sup>40</sup> This smaller family size presumably would have placed less strain on the parish's limited economic resources, thereby reducing population pressure, and, in turn, limiting out-migration and boosting persistence levels.<sup>41</sup>

But perhaps the best explanation of how a region such as Burton could experience both large-scale out-migration and significant levels of persistence is provided by Hal Barron's study of 19th-century Chelsea, Vermont. Chelsea, like Burton, was a long-settled rural community which experienced considerable out-migration following an extended economic downturn, but here too Barron found significant levels of household persistence. This situation was a product of the selective nature of out-migration from Chelsea over time. For example, Barron found that young people left the Vermont community in large numbers, a factor which left the remaining population not only older but more sedentary.<sup>42</sup> The same pattern emerged in Burton. Young people left the area in large numbers. Other than the most elderly, those aged 10 to 25 were consistently the least persistent members of Burton's population.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, the late 19th century witnessed a significant ageing of Burton's population (see Figure One). Moreover, as in Chelsea, the older Burton's populace became, the more geographic stability it exhibited. The highest overall persistence rate recorded in the parish during the second half of the 19th century coincided with the period – 1891 to 1901 – when the proportion of Burton's population over the age of 40 was at an all-time high (see Table Three and Figure One).

Barron found that those who had an economic stake in the Chelsea area were much more likely to remain in the community over the long term. In particular, farm owners formed a significant part of the township's substantial persistent population.<sup>44</sup> The same was true in Burton Parish. The primary factor which allowed large numbers of area families, even those as apparently divergent as the pre-Loyalist, New England Protestant descendants of Richard Kimball<sup>45</sup> and the Irish-Catholic immigrant progeny of Thomas McCafferty,<sup>46</sup> to remain in Burton decade after decade was their

40 Manuscript Censuses, Burton Parish, 1851-1901.

41 For evidence that families in older-settled areas of the northern United States also adjusted the size of their families in response to the limited economic opportunities caused by land scarcity, see Richard A. Easterlin, "Population Change and Farm Settlement in the Northern United States", *Journal of Economic History*, 36 (1976), pp. 45-75.

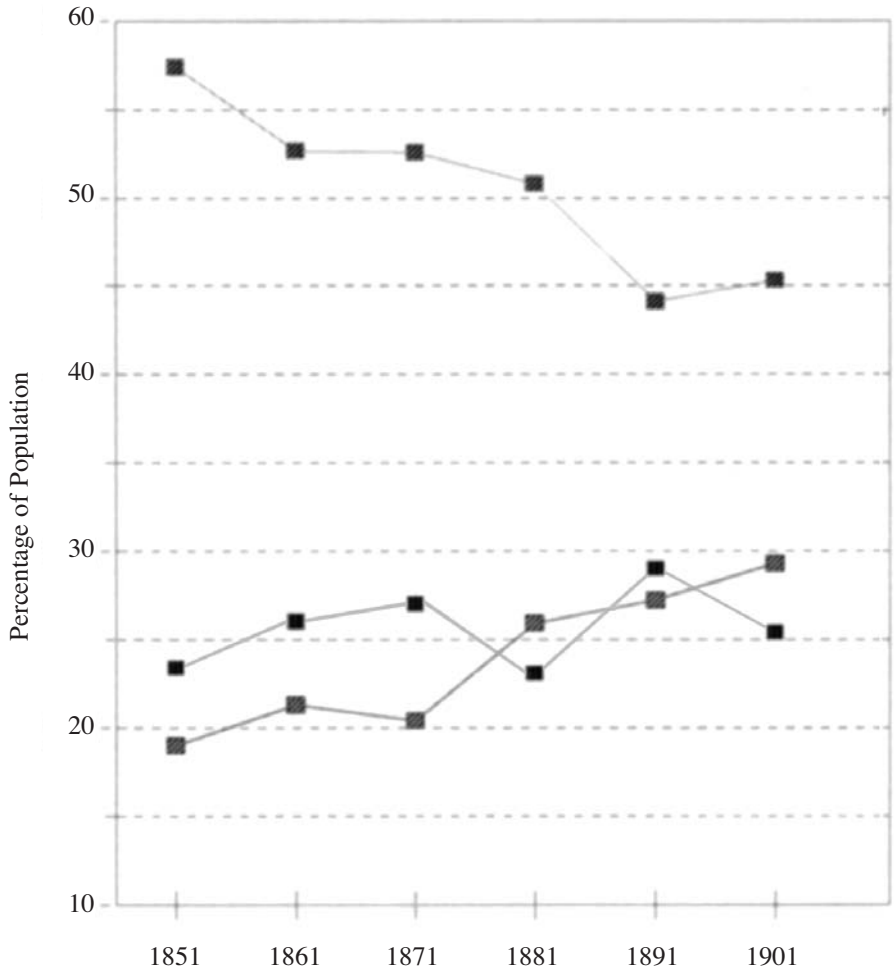
42 Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind*, p. 81.

43 The average persistence rate for Burton Parish residents aged 10 to 25 between 1851 and 1901 was 41.1 per cent, whereas the rates for those aged 26 to 39 and 40 to 59 were 58.6 per cent and 63.0 per cent respectively.

44 Almost 50 per cent of male farm owners between the ages of 20 and 49 remained in Chelsea between 1860 and 1880, while non-farm-owning males of the same age persisted at a rate of 31 per cent over the same time. See Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind*, p. 81.

45 E.W. Bell, *Israel Kenny and His Descendants* (Fredericton, 1944), p. 78. Richard Kimball moved to Oromocto in the 1770s, and although many family members moved elsewhere, manuscript censuses and other sources reveal that the Kimballs maintained a significant presence in the area into the 1980s.

46 Manuscript Census, Burton Parish, 1851. Thomas McCafferty arrived from Ireland in 1824, and by 1851 he was working a local farm with the help of his wife Mary and their five children. No more than six McCaffertys were recorded in any census between 1851 and 1901, but the family persisted and some of their descendants remain in the parish today.



Key

- Top Line = Percentage of Burton's Population Aged 0 to 20
- Middle Line = Percentage of Burton's Population Aged 21 to 39
- Bottom Line = Percentage of Burton's Population Aged 40 Plus

Figure One  
Age of Population in Burton Parish

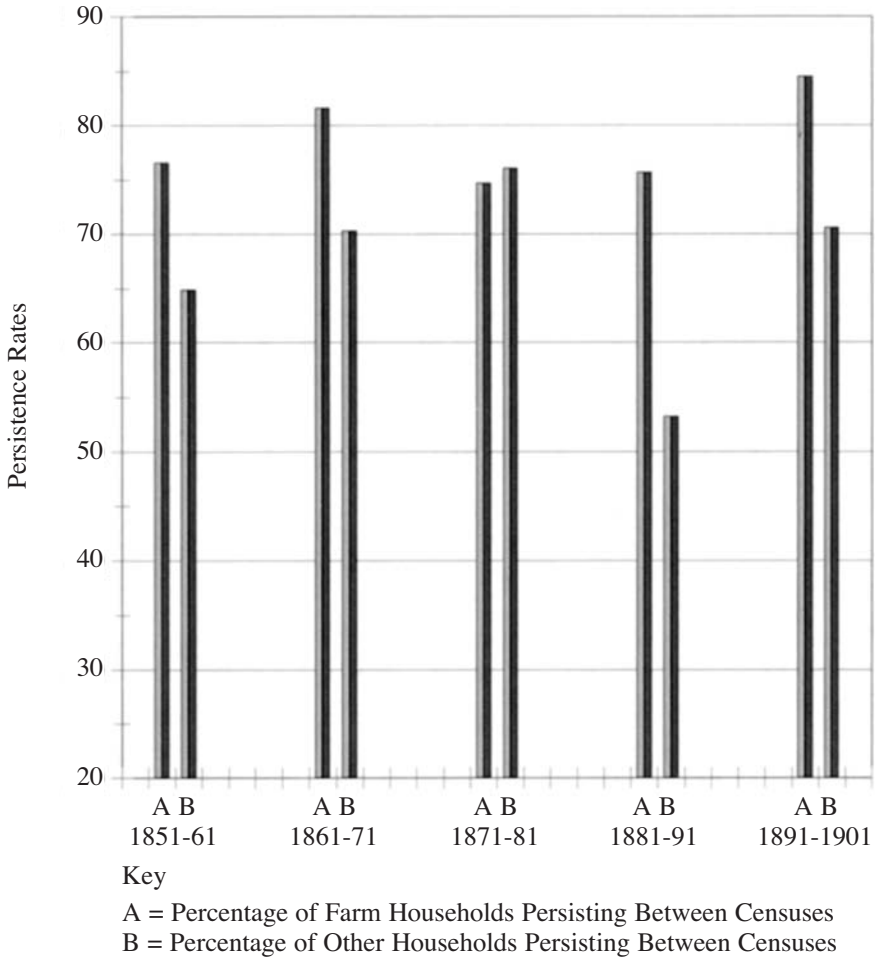


Figure Two  
Persistence Rates of Households in Burton Parish

ownership of farmland. Farmers made up the largest occupational grouping in Burton Parish, and were consistently more persistent than the members of other occupations (see Table Two).<sup>47</sup> The occupational figures from the 1891 census reveal that although 25 fewer people lived in the parish than in 1851 (Table One), there were almost 100 more farmers than had been the case 40 years earlier (see Table Two).<sup>48</sup> It should come as no surprise, then, that farm families made up the majority of the parish's long-term residents and were considerably more likely to be persistent than their non-farm counterparts (see Figure Two). A strong correlation existed between the ownership of farmland and household persistence. Other factors, such as religion and place of birth, appear to have had comparatively little impact on whether or not a family or individual remained in Burton Parish over the long term.<sup>49</sup>

That land ownership was a key factor in promoting persistence is clearly illustrated by the census figures from 1851 and 1861 which divide farmers into proprietor and tenant categories. In that decade, persistence levels for farm owners were twice as high as those for all other occupational groups combined: 65.6 per cent vs. 32.8 per cent.<sup>50</sup> The connection between ownership of farm land and household persistence was even more evident between 1871 and 1881: 77 per cent of farm families who owned property in 1871 were still in Burton in 1881. Moreover, families who owned large amounts of farm land were particularly apt to be persistent. Fully 85.7 per cent of those who owned 200 or more acres of farm property in 1871 were still in the parish ten years later. On the other hand, those who owned less than 50 acres of agricultural land, although they fared much better than non-farmers, persisted at a rate of only 62.5 per cent, and even fewer – 57 per cent – of the parish's 1871 farm tenant families maintained a presence in Burton in 1881.<sup>51</sup> Farm families who possessed fewer economic resources were significantly more likely to join the regional out-migration than were those who held more extensive holdings in Burton.<sup>52</sup>

47 At first glance, the persistence of farmers in Burton appears to have declined substantially between 1871 and 1881. However, this is largely the result of how farmers and labourers were classified in the 1861 versus the 1871 census. A comparison of the two manuscript censuses suggests that many of the 228 individuals listed as labourers in 1861 were identified as farmers in 1871, as only 38 labourers were listed in the 1871 census, while the number of farmers identified rose to 335 from the 183 enumerated in 1861. Much of this discrepancy is explained by the fact that the vast majority of farmers' sons were identified as labourers in the 1861 census, whereas these same individuals were listed as farmers in 1871. Phyllis Wagg's study of Richmond County, Nova Scotia also identifies farmers and those who combined farming with fishing as the most persistent residents of that area. See Wagg, "Families in Transition", p. 236.

48 An increase in the number of farmers also occurred in Nova Scotia in the latter half of the 19th century. See Kris Inwood and Phyllis Wagg, "Wealth and Prosperity in Nova Scotian Agriculture, 1851-71", *Canadian Historical Review*, 75, 2 (June 1994), p. 242.

49 Although almost half of Burton's population identified themselves as Baptist, average persistence rates for the parish's four major denominations were quite comparable between 1851 and 1901: Anglicans 49.6 per cent, Baptists 54.9 per cent, Methodists 55.5 per cent and Roman Catholics 54.9 per cent. Likewise, average persistence figures between 1851 and 1901 were only slightly higher for native-born New Brunswickers, 52.5 per cent, than were those for Irish-born, 48.9 per cent and all others, 48.2 per cent.

50 The persistence rate of tenant farmers was 52.1 per cent.

51 Unfortunately, the 1851 and 1871 censuses are the only ones that identify individual farmers as either owners or tenants.

52 For other findings that link farm wealth to increased levels of persistence, see Ramirez, *On the Move*, pp. 38-47 and Gregson, "Population Dynamics in Rural Missouri", pp. 85-110. Similarly, Phyllis

Table Four  
 Persistence of Farmers' Sons and Other Male Offspring,  
 Burton Parish, 1851-1901

	Farmers' Sons			Others' Sons		
	A	B	C	A	B	C
1851-1861	389	216	55.5 %	125	44	35.2 %
1861-1871	315	205	65.1 %	161	93	57.8 %
1871-1881	451	269	59.6 %	158	72	45.6 %
1881-1891	436	273	62.6 %	116	45	38.8 %
1891-1901	369	244	66.1 %	65	37	56.9 %

A = number of individuals present in initial census year  
 B = number of individuals persisting at time of subsequent census  
 C = persistence rate expressed in percentage

Although it was hardly a guarantee of prosperity, farm ownership significantly increased the likelihood of a family's children remaining in Burton Parish. Between 1851 and 1901 farmers' sons were much more likely to remain in Burton than were their non-farm counterparts (see Table Four). Particularly striking are the persistence rates for those aged 10 to 25, the least persistent segment of Burton's population in the latter half of the 19th century (see Table Five). Although the low rates in this age category stem, at least in part, from the difficulty of tracking young women who married between census years and took their husband's name, it also suggests the extent to which Burton's male youth were utilizing out-migration as a strategy for combating the limited economic opportunities available in the parish.<sup>53</sup> The average persistence rate for all those aged 10 to 25 between 1851 and 1901 was 40.7 per cent and only 36.8 per cent for sons of non-farmers (see Table Five). In contrast, farmers' sons in this age bracket persisted at an average rate of 55.2 per cent. Clearly, farmers' sons were significantly more likely to be able to make a permanent home for themselves in Burton than were their non-farming friends and neighbours, although the gap in persistence rates between the two groups was apparently narrowing by the end of the century.

Wagg, "Families in Transition", p. 268, notes that persistence was closely linked to the perception that one's economic and social expectations could be met at home.

53 Significant numbers of young men and young women left Burton in this period but unlike in Richmond County, and other areas of Nova Scotia, the male/female ratios for Burton residents between the ages of 20 and 30 do not suggest that out-migration was a particularly female phenomenon there. Moreover, Otis and Ramirez note that, in the early 20th century at least, New Brunswick produced significantly more male migrants than did either Nova Scotia or Prince Edward Island. See Wagg, "Families in Transition", pp. 265-6 and Otis and Ramirez, "Nouvelles perspectives sur le mouvement d'émigration", p. 38.



Table Five  
Persistence of Farmers' Sons and Other Males Aged 10-25,  
Burton Parish, 1851-1901

	Farmers' Sons Aged 10-25			Other Males Aged 10-25		
	A	B	C	A	B	C
1851-1861	142	75	52.8 %	98	30	30.6 %
1861-1871	168	99	58.9 %	117	43	36.7 %
1871-1881	223	120	53.8 %	90	34	37.8 %
1881-1891	252	142	56.3 %	78	30	38.5 %
1891-1901	184	100	54.3 %	69	28	40.6 %

A= number of individuals present in initial census year

B= number of individuals persisting at time of subsequent census

C= persistence rate expressed in percentage

The numerical dominance of farm families in Burton Parish was apparent in the evidence of local participation in the structures of political authority. Municipal-level politics in rural New Brunswick allowed significant numbers of residents an opportunity to assume positions of responsibility, either as elected county councillors or, more commonly, as appointed parish officers.<sup>54</sup> Close to 20 per cent of Burton's white adult male population served in one or the other of these capacities each year over the last four decades of the 19th century.<sup>55</sup> In terms of religious preferences, Burton's parish officers and county councillors were representative of the region's population,<sup>56</sup> but in the area of occupation an obvious bias existed. Farmers were consistently over-represented when it came to the appointment of parish officers (see Table Six). In part, this can be explained by the fact that almost 70 per cent of the elected councillors, who made the parish appointments, were farmers themselves;<sup>57</sup>

54 Among other things, parish officers served as Overseers of the Poor, Constables, Fence Viewers, Hog Reeves, Surveyors of Lumber, Inspectors of Weights and Measures, Bye-Roads Commissioners and Timber Drivers. For a complete listing of offices in 19th-century Burton Parish, see Sunbury County Municipal Council Minutes, 1861-1902, RS 157, PANB. Political participation was limited to those who possessed at least £25 freehold or £100 personal or combined personal and real property. See *Acts of the General Assembly of Her Majesty's Province of New Brunswick (1854-55)*, pp. 3-4.

55 This figure was calculated based on information obtained from Kimball, *History of Oromocto*, pp. 42-49, Manuscript Censuses, Burton Parish, 1861 - 1901 and the Sunbury County Municipal Council Minutes 1861-1902.

56 Between 1861 and 1901 there was a relatively close correlation between the percentage of the population belonging to each of Burton's four major denominations and their respective representation by county councillors and parish officers. For specific details, see Lewis, "Oromocto, New Brunswick", pp. 55-62.

57 Twelve of the 18 men who served as councillors in Burton Parish between 1857 and 1903 listed their occupation as farmer. See Manuscript Censuses, Burton Parish, 1861-1901, cross-referenced with the Sunbury County Municipal Council Minutes, 1861-1902.

Table Six  
 Farmers Serving as Burton Parish Officers,  
 1861-1901

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	Burton Parish farmers as % of all occupations	Burton Parish farmers as % of all parish officers
1861	37.5	55.2
1871	63.7	70.8
1881	57.1	80.0
1891	53.6	85.6
1901	42.6	75.6

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presumably, it also reflects the fact that many of Burton's farmers headed long-standing parish families and thus were more likely to have acquired the knowledge of local affairs required to fulfil such duties. Although they could not vote or hold office, some farm women also played an active role in the political affairs of Burton Parish. Many signed their names to legislative petitions and/or were keen supporters of the temperance movement.<sup>58</sup>

In contrast to the political dominance of farm families, labourers, despite their significant numbers, rarely received appointments to parish offices. In 1901, for example, labourers accounted for 29.1 per cent of all listed occupations in Burton Parish, yet only four of these 137 individuals served as parish officers. Most labourers owned little if any land, and thus they were unlikely to be considered for positions of leadership in a society dominated by those who owned property. Clearly, the persistent farm families of Burton Parish dominated local offices and were thus in the best position to shape the conduct of community affairs.<sup>59</sup>

As contradictory as it may at first appear, late 19th-century Burton Parish experienced both significant levels of out-migration and, thanks to the impressive level of geographic stability exhibited by the region's farm families, a heightened level of persistence. Although a great many families left Burton, others became increasingly prominent. For instance, in 1851 there were only seven members of the Kimball family living in Burton Parish: the widowed Isabella, daughters Elizabeth and Martha and sons John, Samuel, Richard and James. Richard left the parish before 1871, but each of his three brothers and at least some of their children remained. Accordingly, by 1901 there were 21 Kimballs in the parish, each of whom was

58 See Gail G. Campbell, "Disfranchised but not Quiescent: Women Petitioners in New Brunswick in the Mid-19th Century", *Acadiensis*, XVIII, 2 (Spring 1989), pp. 22-54.

59 The agricultural preoccupations of local government leaders are evident when one examines the Sunbury County by-laws of 1880, almost 40 per cent of which deal with the pasturing or fencing of cattle: Sunbury County Municipal Council Minutes, 1880. The fact that community leaders tended to be drawn from the persistent population is noted in Alcorn, "Leadership and Stability in Mid-Nineteenth Century America", pp. 685-702.

descended from the original family of seven.<sup>60</sup> While such long-resident families were experiencing growth, the parish's economic difficulties had forced other families to relocate and kept most newcomers away.

The increasing predominance of long-standing families in Burton Parish is evident when one examines the level of precedence (the length of time an individual or cohort has been resident in a given location) exhibited by households listed in the 1901 census.<sup>61</sup> Using this measure, one finds that almost 60 per cent of Burton's 1901 households included at least one member who either had lived in the parish for 50 years or more or was descended from such individuals. Moreover, almost 80 per cent of Burton's 1901 households had at least a 30-year history in the parish (see Figure Three). Once again, it was Burton's farm families who were primarily responsible for this phenomenon. Eighty per cent of Burton's 1901 farm families had roots in the parish that extended back at least 40 years, whereas only 48 per cent of Burton's non-farm families could make a similar claim.

Just how long Burton's population continued to exhibit this level of geographic stability is uncertain, but there is some evidence to suggest that it may have continued for several more decades. In their analysis of New Brunswick residents who migrated to the United States between 1906 and 1930, Yves Otis and Bruno Ramirez found only three individuals from all of Sunbury County in their extensive database.<sup>62</sup> However, a cautionary note must be appended to these figures, as they exclude the perhaps good number of Sunbury residents who may first have moved elsewhere in the province before either they or their descendants relocated to the United States.<sup>63</sup> It is also important to note that geographic stability should in no way be equated with prosperity. For a good many residents of communities such as Burton, New Brunswick and Chelsea, Vermont, persistence may well have been more a consequence of lacking the required resources to move rather than a product of accumulated local wealth and prosperity.

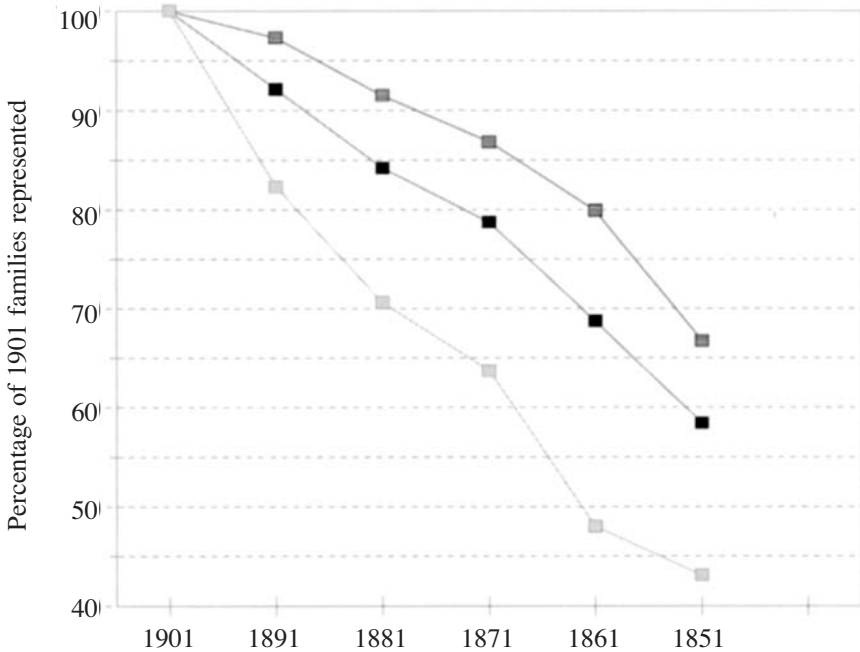
Still, the fact remains that despite a prolonged period of out-migration, late 19th-century Burton Parish remained populated by large numbers of persistent families, the majority of whom, since they were headed by land-owning farmers, were literally rooted in the parish's soil. The persistence of farm people in late 19th-century Burton was in large part a creation of the selective nature of the out-migration process in the parish. As the work of Betsy Beattie and others has highlighted, persistence and mobility were often complementary strategies, especially in cases where household members relied on migration, temporary and otherwise, to generate the employment

60 Manuscript Censuses, Burton Parish, 1851-1901. It is possible that Elizabeth and Martha persisted as well but as their married names are not known, this cannot be verified.

61 For a detailed discussion of the use and measurement of precedence rates, see Mary Eschelbach Gregson, "Population Dynamics in Rural Missouri: 1860-1880", *Social Science History*, 21, 1 (Spring 1997), p. 88.

62 Otis et Ramirez, "Nouvelles perspectives sur le mouvement d'émigration", *Tableau Deux*, p. 36.

63 A number of Maritime scholars have found evidence of considerable rural to urban migration within the region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. See Acheson, "Demography of a Loyalist County", p. 64, Thornton, "The Problem of Out-Migration", p. 16 and Brookes, "Out-Migration from the Maritime Provinces", p. 33.



Key

Top Line = Precedence Rate of 1901 Farm Families

Middle Line = Precedence Rate of 1901 Families

Bottom Line = Precedence Rate of 1901 Non-Farming Families

Figure Three  
Precedence Rate of Families in Burton Parish

income necessary to sustain the family farm.<sup>64</sup> Was the situation in Burton an anomaly? Perhaps the persistence of the parish’s farmers, particularly those with property along the fertile Oromocto or St. John River valleys, was merely a product of the better quality of soil and accessibility to markets that their geographic location provided. No doubt there is some truth in this; but only a minority of Burton’s farmers owned property along one of the major rivers. In addition, provincial agricultural leaders frequently noted that the area’s over-reliance on the production of hay, a crop which required only limited seasonal labour, actually encouraged young men to

64 Beattie, ““Going Up to Lynn””, pp. 65-86; Brookes, “The Golden Age and the Exodus”, p. 61; Ramirez, *On the Move*, pp. 41-47. Presumably, this was also the case in Burton, although there is little flagrant evidence of large numbers of family members coming and going from one census year to the next.

abandon the farms.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, Phyllis Wagg's findings in Richmond County, Nova Scotia make it clear that Burton Parish was not the only region of the Maritimes where farm families persisted in large numbers.<sup>66</sup>

The highly persistent nature of farm families in Burton Parish can be taken as an important reminder that community life did not disintegrate in rural northeastern North America even in the midst of the large-scale out-migration of the late 19th century. Indeed Barron suggests that modern scholars, influenced by the concerns expressed by 19th-century urban intellectuals, have overestimated the social impact of rural depopulation on many long-settled communities. Far from being unstable, socially deprived shadows of their former selves, such communities became increasingly close-knit locales that, Barron suggests, "facilitated the retention and adaptation of older values".<sup>67</sup> Despite the poor performance of the overall economies, life in such communities marched on. While it is undeniably true that widespread out-migration did much to alter life in the region, any analysis of Maritime history in this era must also carefully consider those who persisted in their home provinces over the long term. In particular, as the example of Burton Parish suggests, more attention must be given to the region's long-resident farm families.

Although farming was the largest occupation in the Maritimes into the 1950s, we know little about the values and aspirations that shaped agricultural society in the region over the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Little scholarly attention has been directed to the role of rural communities and their leaders in shaping the Maritime Provinces' response to the economic and social problems of the era. Local participation in farmer-dominated political organizations such as the Patrons of Industry and the United Farmers, for example, has largely been either dismissed or ignored.<sup>68</sup> An analysis of the social and political evolution of the region's rural communities, and those who claimed to represent their interests over the course of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, may also go a long way towards determining if there was any validity to the perception promulgated by earlier generations of Canadian historians that Maritimers of this era were essentially conservative in their social, political and economic outlook. In recent years, E.R. Forbes and other prominent scholars of the region have produced works that question this assumption.<sup>69</sup> But if such an attitude was at all prevalent one would expect to find evidence of it among the region's rural communities, populated as they were by long-resident farm families.

65 *The Co-operative Farmer and Maritime Dairyman* (Sussex), 5 January 1897 and 5 July 1898. While this may explain the low level of persistence attained by parish labourers, it does little to explain why farmers' sons stayed in Burton in such significant numbers.

66 Wagg, "Families in Transition", p. 236. Wagg found the persistence rate of farm families in Richmond County between 1871 and 1901 was 71 per cent.

67 Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind*, pp. 31-2, xi.

68 The most extensive work ever done on the farmers' movement in Canada devotes only 8 of more than 360 pages to the agricultural organizations of the Maritime region. See L. A. Wood, *A History of Farmers' Movements in Canada* (Toronto, 1924).

69 For an analysis of how and why this perception emerged in Canadian historical circles, see E. R. Forbes, "In Search of a Post-Confederation Maritime Historiography, 1900-1967", *Acadiensis*, VIII, 1 (Autumn 1978), pp. 3-21.