

# Cricket, the Retired Feather Merchant, and Settler Colonialism The Troubled Halifax Sojourn of A.H. Leighton, 1912

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Article abstract

*In Canadian sport historiography, cricket is frequently characterized as uniformly elitist. Yet in Nova Scotia the sport was socially complex, as shown in 1912 by the Halifax career of A.H. Leighton. A professional player with an elite club, the Wanderers, Leighton's condescending behaviour stirred up dissension with players elsewhere who resented his and the club's social pretensions. Leighton's brief and troubled sojourn provides a revealing window on a sport that reflected settler colonial aspirations but in which class-related social tensions ran deep. It also illustrates the nature of the unregulated global market for professional cricketers.*

# Cricket, the Retired Feather Merchant, and Settler Colonialism: The Troubled Halifax Sojourn of A.H. Leighton, 1912

JOHN G. REID

*Dans l'historiographie du sport au Canada, le cricket est souvent décrit comme étant uniformément élitiste. Pourtant, en Nouvelle-Écosse, ce sport était socialement complexe, comme en témoigne la carrière à Halifax d'A.H. Leighton en 1912. Le comportement condescendant de Leighton, un joueur professionnel membre des Wanderers, un club d'élite, sema la discorde avec les joueurs d'autres endroits, qui s'offusquaient des prétentions sociales du joueur et de son club. Le séjour bref et tumultueux de Leighton ouvre une fenêtre révélatrice sur un sport qui reflétait des aspirations coloniales, mais dans lequel les tensions liées aux classes sociales étaient profondément enracinées. Il illustre également la nature du marché mondial non réglementé des joueurs de cricket professionnels.*

*In Canadian sport historiography, cricket is frequently characterized as uniformly elitist. Yet in Nova Scotia the sport was socially complex, as shown in 1912 by the Halifax career of A.H. Leighton. A professional player with an elite club, the Wanderers, Leighton's condescending behaviour stirred up dissension with players elsewhere who resented his and the club's social pretensions. Leighton's brief and troubled sojourn provides a revealing window on a sport that reflected settler colonial aspirations but in which class-related social tensions ran deep. It also illustrates the nature of the unregulated global market for professional cricketers.*

ON 8 JUNE 1912, ARTHUR H. LEIGHTON disembarked at Halifax from the SS *Carthaginian* as the vessel completed its passage from Liverpool. The passenger list noted that he was a 28-year-old married man who had never before visited Canada. His occupation was listed as “Professional Cricketer,” and it was in that capacity that he was about to begin the 1912 season with the Halifax Wanderers as player-coach.<sup>1</sup> Leighton's arrival had been awaited with anticipation. The *Halifax Herald's* report on the organizational meeting of the Nova Scotia Cricket League, held in mid-April, had noted

1 Passenger List, SS *Carthaginian*, Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935, Ancestry.com. For valuable comments on earlier versions of this essay, I thank my colleagues Colin Howell and John Munro, and the three anonymous readers for *Acadiensis*. I am also grateful to my co-author on a previous essay on a related theme, Robert Reid. For assistance in uncovering Arthur Leighton's connections in Devon, I thank Lucy Browne as researcher, Aidan Hamilton for advice on sports in Devon and further afield, and Paul Farley for kindly making available the records of the Exeter City Football Club.

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**Figure 1: Arthur H. Leighton.**

Source: *Spalding's Official Cricket Guide, with which is incorporated The American Cricket Annual for 1913* (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1913), 98.

that “in view of the fact that the Wanderers will likely engage the services of a professional coach for the season, there will no doubt be an increased interest in the good old English game of cricket.”<sup>2</sup> Within three days of Leighton’s arrival, the same

<sup>2</sup> *Halifax Herald*, 15 April 1912.

newspaper devoted an extended article to portraying him as a cricketer of international stature. Already active in his coaching duties, he reportedly enjoyed “a splendid reputation as a daring hurrican[e] batsman and a bowler par excellence, with a couple of world’s records tacked onto his career.” Leighton, according to the article’s sub-headline, had arrived with “a record as a pro. that would be a passport to any part of the world.”<sup>3</sup>

The *Herald*’s reporter went on to provide further details. Not only, it seemed, was Leighton “a South African, having been born in Cape Colony” – and although one source gave his birthplace as England, he certainly did have close South African connections – but also “he was a member of the South African cricketers in tour during their last visit to the old country.”<sup>4</sup> Moreover, again according to the *Herald*, Leighton had a close though vaguely defined connection with the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), the pre-eminent London club that functioned from its base at Lord’s Cricket Ground as the global governing body of the sport. It had been “at the dictation of the M.C.C.,” the newspaper reported on what was no doubt the sole authority of Leighton himself, that he had “returned to England six weeks ago,” presumably from South Africa, en route to his ultimate destination in Halifax. Leighton also brought testimonials as to the success of his season in England in 1911, during which he claimed to have scored 2022 runs and as a bowler taken 181 wickets.<sup>5</sup> The most authoritative publication of record on North American cricket, *Spalding’s Official Cricket Guide*, later noted similarly that he had “scored more than 2,000 runs in Devonshire, in 1911.”<sup>6</sup> An unwary reader might have taken this to mean that Leighton had played for Devon in the Minor Counties Championship – which may indeed have been the impression gathered by the compilers of *Spalding’s Guide* – but his name was notably absent from listings of the Devon team.<sup>7</sup>

In reality, the impression of Leighton that was presented in the *Herald* was an elaborate confection of the true, the partly true, and the demonstrably false. Into the last category came the claim that he had been a member of the South African team that had toured England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales in 1907 – no trace of his name appears in sources documenting the tour.<sup>8</sup> A connection with the MCC is more

3 *Halifax Herald*, 11 June 1912.

4 *Halifax Herald*, 11 June 1912. The listing of Leighton’s birthplace as England was on the passenger list of the *Carthaginian*, but a United Kingdom census entry for 1911 defined him as a “Visitor from Cape Colony” while also listing him as a British subject in a column designated for those born outside of the United Kingdom. See Passenger List, SS *Carthaginian*, Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935, Ancestry.com; England and Wales Census, Chatham, Kent, Ancestry.com. The probability is that Leighton was South African by birth, but whatever his birthplace his South African linkages were strong and long established.

5 *Halifax Herald*, 11 June 1912.

6 *Spalding’s Official Cricket Guide, with which is incorporated The American Cricket Annual for 1913* (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1913), 7.

7 See Cricket Archives, [http://cricketarchive.com/Archive/Events/4/Minor\\_Counties\\_Championship\\_1911.html](http://cricketarchive.com/Archive/Events/4/Minor_Counties_Championship_1911.html).

8 See J.T. Henderson, ed., *South African Cricketers’ Annual: Season 1906-07* (Pietermaritzburg, SA: Times Printing and Publishing Company Ltd., 1907), 183-91; [http://www.cricketarchive.com/Archive/Events/1/South\\_Africa\\_in\\_British\\_Isles\\_1907.html](http://www.cricketarchive.com/Archive/Events/1/South_Africa_in_British_Isles_1907.html); Geoffrey Levett, “Constructing Imperial Identity: The 1907 South African Cricket Tour of England,” in *Empire and Cricket: The South African Experience, 1884-1914*, ed. Bruce Murray and Goolam Vahed (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2009), 241-57.

plausible. The precise circumstances of his recruitment for the Wanderers – as with other elements of the club’s history – are difficult to assess, because a disastrous pavilion fire consumed the club records in 1938.<sup>9</sup> Not only, however, did the *Herald* report that “Mr. Leighton was secured by the Wanderers thru the M.C.C., of Lords, London,” but also he had been reportedly “secured from Lords” by his employer in Devon the previous season.<sup>10</sup> Leighton left no trace in MCC records, but he may have been among the aspiring cricketers employed on the ground staff at Lord’s, as had been his slightly older and considerably more successful South African contemporary Bert Vogler in 1905 and 1906.<sup>11</sup>

Leighton’s connection with Devon was real enough, but complex. Although he was quoted at one point as hoping to qualify eventually for the county team,<sup>12</sup> he had spent the 1911 season as the personal employee of Frederick Coleman Hunter, a wealthy younger son of a family that had made its money through owning mines on the Durham coalfield who was still active as a director in Charlaw and Sacriston Collieries Co. Ltd. (the successor company to the family firm).<sup>13</sup> Hunter, in 1905, had bought a large house and estate – Bystock Court – on the fringes of the Devon town of Exmouth.<sup>14</sup> A keen and competent amateur cricketer, he had his own cricket ground on the estate, and each year he assembled a team of fellow-amateurs and hired a professional. In 1911, playing for the Bystock team and presumably also coaching Hunter and his gentlemanly friends, the professional was Arthur Leighton. Moreover, Hunter was also a prominent member of (and player with) the neighbouring Exmouth Cricket Club and he donated Leighton’s services to the club

9 Nancy Kimber MacDonald, “The Wanderers Amateur Athletic Club of Halifax, 1882-1925: Its Contribution to Amateur Sport” (MSc thesis, Dalhousie University, 1974), 11.

10 *Halifax Herald*, 11 June 1912; *Exmouth Journal*, 10 June 1911.

11 The minutes and reports of MCC’s “Main Committee” recorded each year the names of senior teaching professionals, but not of those on the ground staff; see Minutes of Main Committee, January 1910-December 1911, MCC Archives, Lord’s Cricket Ground, London. Vogler had gained acceptance as a county player, and went on to represent South Africa in 15 Test matches; see [www.espnricinfo.com/canada/content/player/47739.html](http://www.espnricinfo.com/canada/content/player/47739.html).

12 *Exmouth Journal*, 1 September 1911.

13 See John Venn and John Archibald Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses; A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, from the Earliest Times to 1900, Volume 2, from 1752-1900, Part 3, Gabb-Justamond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011; first published 1947), 493; Death Notice, *The Times* (London), 17 February 1942; Kimblesworth Colliery, <http://www.dmm.org.uk/colliery/k004.htm>, Durham Mining Museum (DMM); Nettlesworth Colliery, <http://www.dmm.org.uk/colliery/n026.htm>, DMM; Elliott and Hunter, <http://www.dmm.org.uk/company/e021.htm>, DMM; and Charlaw and Scariston Collieries Co. Ltd., <http://www.dmm.org.uk/company/c006.htm>, DMM.

14 On F.C. Hunter and Bystock Court, see Venn and Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses . . . Volume 2, from 1752-1900, Part 3, Gabb-Justamond*, 493; British Listed Buildings: Bystock Court, Exmouth, <http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-1408535-bystock-court-exmouth-devon#.VnMFiPkrKuk>; Devon Heritage Centre, Sale Prospectus, Bystock and Marley, Devonshire, 1905, Rippon and Boswell Collection, 547B/P, 264; Devon Heritage Centre, Sale Prospectus, Outlying Portions of the Bystock Estate, Exmouth, 1906, Rippon and Boswell Collection, 547B/P, 430; Exmouth Local History Group, *A History of Bystock and Marley, Devonshire: The Elusive Bryce Family, with Snapshots of Late Victorian and Edwardian Life*, 2nd ed. (Exeter: Exmouth Local History Group, 2014).

at such times as he was not occupied at Bystock.<sup>15</sup> Thus, Leighton played a great deal of cricket during that season, and the *Exmouth Journal* gave a reasonable approximation of his claimed batting and bowling numbers, attributing to him 2013 runs with the bat and 161 wickets as a bowler.<sup>16</sup>

Yet the idea that he was a world-class player was a fiction. He proved in a Nova Scotia context to be a player and coach of some ability, but in Devon – playing in friendly matches among predominantly amateur teams, even though Exmouth did boast two county cricketers among their batsmen<sup>17</sup> – his form had been sufficiently patchy as to cause debate in the local press. According to one critic in mid-season, “he has not met with a great amount of success”: as a bowler, he depended on wet conditions to be effective, while “as a batsman, he is all over a hitter, but needs to use a little more judgement in keeping the ball down.”<sup>18</sup> It was true that a visiting spectator from Exeter disagreed. Describing himself as “one of the many admirers of the Bystock professional, A.H. Leighton (the South African),” G.C. Wilkins pointed to Leighton’s rapid scoring and noted that opposing players reported that he was “very dangerous indeed” as a bowler. “I do not think,” Wilkins concluded, “that Mr Hunter will regret his capture.”<sup>19</sup> Yet the season’s performances by Leighton were characterized most of all by inconsistency. His bowling figures for the Exmouth club, despite occasional successes, were in the middle range of the club’s bowlers and below those of his employer, Hunter.<sup>20</sup> With the bat, he was capable on a good day of scoring runs fluently and at great speed, but all too often lost his wicket early as a result of taking – as in one match in July 1911 – “a fierce swipe” at the ball.<sup>21</sup> Why he was not retained by Hunter for another season is unknown, but it was telling that among the testimonials he brought to Nova Scotia was a newspaper quotation reporting how during one Bystock match “the pro. gave an exhibition of the hurricane scoring which *at all times* characterizes his play.”<sup>22</sup> It would have been an impressive tribute had not the original from the *Exmouth Journal* – unknown to Halifax readers – referred rather to “the hurricane scoring which *at times* characterises his play.”<sup>23</sup> All

15 See the report of the Annual Meeting of the Exmouth Cricket Club, at which “a vote of thanks was passed to Mr. F.C. Hunter for allowing the club the services of Leighton, his professional, during the season”; *Exmouth Journal*, 28 October 1911.

16 *Exmouth Journal*, 1 September 1911.

17 See *Exmouth Journal*, 15 July 1911.

18 *Exmouth Journal*, 10 June 1911.

19 *Exmouth Journal*, 17 June 1911. With regard to Leighton’s bowling the *Halifax Herald* would note on 11 June 1912 that “Leighton bowls the googly, or what is termed the ‘wrong un’,” a point on which even the critical writer in the *Exmouth Journal*, 10 June 1911, was in agreement. By close followers of the international dimensions of the sport, this would have been taken as a further indication of South African connections. While the googly – a ball bowled in such a way as to disguise the direction of its spin through a distinctive wrist action – had not been invented by South Africans, it had come to be closely associated with South African cricket and had attracted condemnation in some quarters on the ground that it was deceitful and dishonest. See Richard Parry and Dale Slater, “The Googly, Gold and the Empire: The Role of South African Cricket in the Imperial Project, 1904-1912,” in Murray and Vahed, *Empire and Cricket*, 219-40.

20 *Exmouth Journal*, 5 August 1911.

21 *Exmouth Journal*, 8 July 1911.

22 *Halifax Herald*, 11 June 1912 (emphasis added).

23 *Exmouth Journal*, 5 August 1911 (emphasis added).



in all, the *Halifax Herald* was undoubtedly premature in declaring that “the securing of such a man must stand out as a mile-stone in the history of maritime cricket.”<sup>24</sup>

So should Arthur Leighton simply be dismissed from history as a plausible rogue, a confidence artist who was never quite what he seemed? Not, perhaps, too hastily. Self-promotion was central to his search for patronage and employment as a professional cricketer in the lower reaches of that occupation. Not for Leighton the prestige and rewards of the internationally renowned professionals such as Vogler or his English contemporary Jack Hobbs, or even of the established teaching professionals at Lord’s. Yet Leighton’s life and career, insofar as the evidence allows, offer to the historian revealing insights on the connections among sports, societies, and mobility within the British Empire. The travails of his 1912 season in Nova Scotia also reflected the social complexities of cricket within the province.

Cricket in Nova Scotia was a long-established sport that was played during the “long” 19th century (to 1914) in three principal social contexts.<sup>25</sup> Outside of Halifax, a multiplicity of clubs in such sub-regions as Digby and Yarmouth counties ranged from the town clubs in Digby, Weymouth, and Yarmouth to village teams in smaller communities such as Tusket and Hebron. Working-class cricket was played on the coalfields and, with 19th-century industrialization, by iron, steel, and textile workers. Halifax, meanwhile, was a centre of elite and military cricket, and the Wanderers Club, from the time of its founding in 1882, was in social terms the pre-eminent elite club of the province. Windsor too, notably through the influence of King’s College, was a centre of cricket for the social elite, although the Windsor club did on occasion play matches with the team from the town’s cotton mill. League play in the province commenced in 1906, with the inauguration of the Nova Scotia Cricket League.<sup>26</sup> Prior to that time, the Wanderers had made frequent tours within Nova Scotia and beyond, and – with players of international repute such as William Alexander Henry, who as a gentleman amateur had toured England in 1887 with a strong Canadian team and had headed the batting average – they were often treated with some deference.<sup>27</sup> The *Digby Courier*, for example, previewed a match in 1892 between the town club and “the celebrated Wanderers,” and commented “It can hardly be expected that Digby can defeat a team with such a record.”<sup>28</sup> League cricket, however, posed new challenges to the Wanderers of subsequent years. The first season of the league brought success, as the Wanderers prevailed in close competition with Windsor and two other Halifax teams, but in 1907 the quality of the sport in industrial Pictou County was shown when a newly entered team from Westville carried all before it.<sup>29</sup> As Leighton noted on his arrival in 1912, years had passed since the Wanderers had won a championship, and he declared that it was his

24 *Halifax Herald*, 11 June 1912.

25 The periodization of the “long” 19th century is customarily attributed to the historian Eric Hobsbawm; see E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 8.

26 See “Cricket in Nova Scotia,” *The American Cricketer* (Philadelphia) 30, no. 628 (1 June 1907): 112.

27 On the 1887 tour, see John E. Hall and R.O. McCulloch, eds., *Sixty Years of Canadian Cricket* (Toronto: Bryant, 1895), 448, 478.

28 *Digby Weekly Courier*, 9 September 1892.

29 *Hants Journal*: 22 August 1906, 14 August 1907.

duty to end the drought.<sup>30</sup> This essay will show, however, that the diversity of the sport in Nova Scotia was sufficient to ensure that any attempt to reassert the primacy of the Wanderers involved negotiating underlying social tensions of which Leighton had little or no understanding.<sup>31</sup>

The essay will also argue that Nova Scotian cricket, in a broader sense, must be understood as one variant of a global sport that, on the one hand, developed distinct characteristics in every society within which it was played, but, on the other hand, carried imperial overtones and could serve also as a normalizing force for settler colonialism in the expanding dominions. Just as Nova Scotia cricket must be understood in terms of its vintage – documented in Halifax as early as in 1786<sup>32</sup> – its complexities associated with rural-urban tensions and the era of 19th-century industrialization, and the association with the United States that brought cross-border tours in either direction but also competition from baseball, so the sport developed its own dynamics in other and widely diverse societal contexts. Thus the breadth and sophistication of the global literature on the social and cultural history of cricket: the socio-political approach of Ramachandra Guha's broad treatment of caste and cricket in India, the discussion of social class and early cricket in England by David Underdown, the linkage of race and empire in South African cricket as interpreted in the collection edited by Bruce Murray and Goolam Vahed, the work of Aviston Downes on social and racial tensions in West Indian cricket, and the studies by Richard Cashman of the relationship between cricket, social class, and empire in Australia and elsewhere.<sup>33</sup>

Conversely, however, broader historiographies of the British World and of settler colonialism offer opportunities to situate Nova Scotia cricket within global patterns. The world of Britishness and empire created by 19th-century migration from the British Isles resulted in the creation of localized identities that were compatible with an imperial sensibility. As noted by Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, "The cultural glue which held together this British world consisted not only of sentiment and

30 *Halifax Herald*, 11 June 1912.

31 On the social and discursive complexities of Nova Scotia cricket, see John G. Reid and Robert Reid, "Diffusion and Discursive Stabilization: Sports Historiography and the Contrasting Fortunes of Cricket and Ice Hockey in Canada's Maritime Provinces, 1869-1914," *Journal of Sport History* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 401-25.

32 *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle*, 17 October 1786. The item consisted of a challenge by players from "the Dock Yard and Town" to play against "the Gentlemen of the Navy and Army" for a stake of "25 or 50 Pounds."

33 Ramachandra Guha, *A Corner of a Foreign Field: The Indian History of a British Sport*, 2nd ed. (Gurgaon, IN: Allen Lane, 2014); David Underdown, *Start of Play: Cricket and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Allen Lane, 2000); Murray and Vahed, eds., *Empire and Cricket*; Aviston D. Downes, "'Flannelled Fools'?: Cricket and the Political Economy of the West Indies, c. 1895-1906," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 17, no. 4 (December 2000): 59-80; Richard Cashman, *Paradise of Sport: The Rise of Organised Sport in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009; first published 1995); Cashman, "Cricket and Colonialism: Colonial Hegemony and Indigenous Subversion," in *Pleasure, Profit, Proselytism: British Culture and Sport at Home and Abroad*, ed. J.A. Mangan (London: Frank Cass, 1988), 258-72.



shared institutional values but also of a plethora of networks.”<sup>34</sup> The role of sport, and notably of cricket as a widely diffused sport, was both cultural and network-based. Accordingly, the travels of an Arthur Leighton, along with those of many other mobile cricketers, exemplified the multiple trajectories through which imperial values and their association with the gendered virtues of manly prowess could be spread.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, the emergence of settler colonialism – the process by which settler societies legitimized their seizures of territory and the critical damage to Indigenous populations that resulted – demanded the normalizing of settler occupancy. While legal and institutional developments were important to this process, in examples such as the formation of the British North American colonies and the creation of Canada or through the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, cultural and performance-based activities also served to impose settler norms and none more so than cricket as a sport that accompanied so faithfully the spread of British settlement.<sup>36</sup> As Arthur Leighton attempted to negotiate a path through these crosscurrents, his experience provides for the historian a window both on the internal complexities and the external contexts of Nova Scotia cricket.

Leighton and his family formed one small part of the intricate and often tortuous pattern of migrations during the early 20th century. For them, the Canadian venture would not turn out as they had hoped. Within the more general context of imperial networks, the reasons hinged on two distinct though inter-related factors: the social and cultural character of Nova Scotian cricket of the era, and the world of the travelling professional in a globalizing sport. Leighton’s soon-proven ability to stir up controversy among Nova Scotia cricketers who differed socially from the elite members of the Wanderers provides a revealing insight regarding the fault lines within the sport that were normally kept beneath the surface. Leighton’s Nova Scotia sojourn

34 Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, “Mapping the British World,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 31, no. 2 (2003): 6.

35 On the interactive and multidirectional character of imperial networks, see Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis, “Introduction,” in *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity*, ed. Buckner and Francis (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 7-8, and Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, “Empires and the Reach of the Global,” in *A World Connecting, 1870-1945*, ed. Emily S. Rosenberg (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), esp. 337-42. For analysis of cultural exchange and sport, see Colin D. Howell and Daryl Leeworthy, “Playing on the Border: Sport, Borderlands, and the North Atlantic, 1850-1950,” *Sport in Society*, 17 August 2016, DOI: 10.1080/17430437.2016.1221209. On masculinity and empire, see John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), esp. 174-8; J.A. Mangan, “Manufactured” Masculinity: Making Imperial Manliness, Morality, and Militarism (New York: Routledge, 2012); and, among others on cricket and masculinity, Aviston Downes, “From Boys to Men: Colonial Education, Cricket, and Masculinity in the Caribbean, 1870-c.1920,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 22, no. 1 (January 2005): 3-21, and Timothy Lockley, ““The Manly Game”: Cricket and Masculinity in Savannah, Georgia in 1859,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 20, no. 3 (September 2003): 77-98.

36 On settler colonialism in general, see Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Settler Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2017); for a recent application of this framework to sport history, see Craig Fortier, “Stealing Home: Decolonizing Baseball’s Origin Stories and their Relations to Settler Colonialism,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 6, no. 1 (2016): 1-22.

also graphically illustrates the nature of the unregulated global marketplace for professional cricketers in the early 20th century. As W.E. Mandle demonstrated many years ago, professionals in this era should be understood as artisans whose skills had begun in the late 19th century to be internationally marketable.<sup>37</sup> Leighton's attempt at self-promotion in Halifax, while ultimately unsuccessful, showed that cricketing ability was only one of the necessary attributes of the travelling professional. Others included possessing the interpersonal skills to move at least superficially into localized social circles, a good measure of outright showmanship, and sufficient attunement to broader sensibilities to avoid unnecessary antagonism of those who were opponents on the field but nevertheless formed part of the overall cricketing configuration of any given league or locality. Leighton certainly passed muster on the first two of those requirements, but he found the third much more troublesome.

Arthur Leighton's early life is obscure, but with his South African wife Florence M. Leighton and their three-year-old daughter Edna he had landed at Southampton in early 1911 after travelling from Port Elizabeth.<sup>38</sup> Captured soon afterwards by the England and Wales census of 1911 and giving his age as 30, he was living in Chatham, Kent, with Florence and Edna, along with a 28-year-old brother and a young niece. Each was described as a "visitor from Cape Colony, B. [British] subject." By occupation, Arthur was a "Retired Feather Merchant," while his brother John was a "Retired Wine Merchant."<sup>39</sup> The details of how Arthur and John Leighton had retired at the respective ages of 30 and 28 are unclear, but having participated in two of the most volatile trades of the Cape Colony at that time, there are only two answers that are generally plausible. Either they had retired voluntarily, their fortunes made, or they had retired involuntarily as a result of business failure. Arthur's subsequent efforts to make a living through professional cricket strongly suggest the latter, and in the principal ostrich-farming areas of the Cape there was no shortage of risk. Although the general collapse of the feather trade would not take place until 1914, in the preceding years it was already highly competitive and riddled with speculative deals.<sup>40</sup> The wine trade, meanwhile, was threatened by over-production, and had also been destabilized in ostrich-raising areas by the conversion of vineyards to ostrich farms.<sup>41</sup> Although it is unclear on what level or scale the Leighton brothers had pursued commercial activities, both the feather and the wine trades could be insecure sources of livelihood.

There are also more basic ambiguities in Arthur Leighton's biographical records. On the departure documentation for the *Carthaginian*, as it carried him to Halifax in 1912, he was listed as a 24-year-old labourer, yet another variant not only in occupation but also in age.<sup>42</sup> By the time he reached Halifax he was four years older

37 W.E. Mandle, "The Professional Cricketer in England in the Nineteenth Century," *Labour History* 23 (November 1972): esp. 9.

38 Passenger List, SS *Edinburgh Castle*, United Kingdom Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878-1960, Ancestry.com.

39 England and Wales Census, Chatham, Kent, Ancestry.com.

40 See Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Plumes: Ostrich Feathers, Jews, and a Lost World of Commerce* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 28-53.

41 Tim James, *Wines of the New South Africa: Tradition and Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 37-9, 302.

42 Passenger List, SS *Carthaginian*, United Kingdom Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960, Ancestry.com.

and a “Professional Cricketer,” but still had not attained the 30 years attributed to him by the England and Wales census a year earlier. The discrepancies in age remain inexplicable, unless they reflect shifting efforts by Leighton to represent himself to be as youthful as his appearance would convincingly allow. But they do not reflect mistaken identity. The departing Leighton on 25 May 1912 and the arriving Leighton on 8 June 1912 held the same ticket number – 444. And any doubt as to whether the Wanderers’ professional was also the retired feather merchant is removed by the appearance of Florence and Edna on the passenger list for a subsequent passage on the *Carthaginian*. They disembarked in Halifax on 18 July 1912, declaring – as had Arthur before them – that Canada was their intended place of permanent residence.<sup>43</sup>

Initially all went well. On the field, defeat by the Garrison club in the first league game of the season was for Leighton only a temporary setback and illustrated the *Morning Chronicle*’s observation that “the Halifax teams are considered this year to be strong, and the Wanderers, under the direction of their new coach, Leighton, are out for the championship.”<sup>44</sup> Large crowds were reported to be in attendance, and when the reigning provincial champions from Stellarton visited Halifax in early July they were decisively dispatched by the Wanderers. Leighton, according to the *Chronicle*, “gave the best hitting display . . . that has been seen around Halifax for years,” 48 of his 51 runs coming from boundaries, and took no fewer than eight wickets. “For the losers,” the report added of the Stellarton captain, who later in the month would engage Leighton in newspaper warfare, “R. Ferguson played a nice game for his 38 runs.”<sup>45</sup> The *Evening Mail*’s reporter clearly took pleasure in the result, commenting that “at last Stellarton cricketers have met a Waterloo.”<sup>46</sup>

Off the field too, Leighton was credited with being “ever on the look-out to popularize cricket.”<sup>47</sup> A noteworthy achievement was his success in proposing that a new Halifax city championship be inaugurated, with five teams – three military teams from within the garrison, a team from the HMCS *Niobe*, and the Wanderers – competing for the “Halifax Merchants Cup.” Not only did the *Evening Mail*

43 Passenger List, SS *Carthaginian*, Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935, Ancestry.com. Also regarding identity, there were other athletic Leightons from whom the Wanderers’ A.H. Leighton can be conclusively distinguished. An E.H. Leighton was a successful batsman with the Toronto Cricket Club, and in one place in *Spalding’s Guide* was confused with A.H. Leighton. But the two were evidently distinct, as indicated by their different club affiliations; see *Spalding’s Official Cricket Guide*, . . . for 1913, 7. Nor was the Halifax player the same as the Arthur Leighton who moved from Minnedosa, Manitoba, to Nanaimo in 1912 to open a law practice and became a celebrated amateur cricketer in British Columbia; see [http://www.nanaimoarchives.ca/index.php?p=1\\_49\\_Arthur-Alice-Leighton-fonds](http://www.nanaimoarchives.ca/index.php?p=1_49_Arthur-Alice-Leighton-fonds). And neither should be confused with their slightly younger contemporary, Arthur Leighton, who attained distinction as a gold medallist with the British field hockey team at the Olympic Games of 1920; see [http://hockeygods.com/images/12720-Arthur\\_Leighton\\_Great\\_Britain\\_Field\\_Hockey\\_History](http://hockeygods.com/images/12720-Arthur_Leighton_Great_Britain_Field_Hockey_History).

44 *Morning Chronicle*, 28 June 1912.

45 *Morning Chronicle*, 5 July 1912. The *Evening Mail*, 5 July 1912, reported “Leighton’s runs were all boundaries,” which for a score of 51 was mathematically impossible. The *Morning Chronicle*, however, specified that he had hit “twelve fours.”

46 *Evening Mail*, 5 July 1912.

47 *Morning Chronicle*, 9 July 1912.

comment that “the cricket cup is an admirable idea” and commend Leighton’s appeal for donations to the cost of the trophy, but also the list of subscribers quickly came to include not only local businesses but also individual names that figured prominently both in the city elite and in the history of Halifax sport. The most significant was W.A. Henry who, as well as being Nova Scotia’s outstanding cricketer of the late 19th century, was the son of a successful politician and Supreme Court justice and a prominent Halifax lawyer in his own right.<sup>48</sup> No doubt Henry’s contribution of \$5.00 was welcome, but his imprimatur was even more valuable in its symbolic conferral of elite approval on Leighton’s efforts.<sup>49</sup> When the schedule for the knock-out competition was announced shortly afterwards, the *Evening Mail* went out of its way to praise “Mr. Leighton, the M.C.C. cricket pro, whose efforts for the booming of the good old English game have been untiring.”<sup>50</sup>

It was true that even at this early stage Leighton had given some indications of promising more than he could deliver. He had lost no time on his arrival in Halifax in proclaiming that “I have found the members of the Wanderers club and the people of Halifax good sports – they deserve the Canadian championship this summer.”<sup>51</sup> That there was no competition in existence for a national championship was apparently no impediment to expressing the ambition. A few weeks later Leighton initiated the idea of inviting the formidable Australian touring team to visit Halifax on their journey home from some four months spent in Great Britain during which they played Test matches against both England and the other touring team that summer, South Africa. As the invitation was telegraphed in the names of the Wanderers, the garrison, and HMCS *Niobe*, the Halifax press reported that it was all but certain that the Australians would accept.<sup>52</sup> Disappointingly, however, a terse cabled response indicated three days later that the Australians’ plans were as yet undefined and that any further correspondence should go through their New York agents, the Spalding Company.<sup>53</sup> They did eventually travel through North America during the fall, but made Canadian stops only in Winnipeg and Victoria.<sup>54</sup> Leighton’s plan had prompted a strident headline in the *Chronicle*: “Anticipated visit of the crack Australian team sends cricket stock flying to top notch: interest in king of English games at fever heat in Halifax this summer.”<sup>55</sup> Yet all had come to naught.

For all that, as the Wanderers set off in mid-July to play league matches in Truro, Stellarton, and Sydney, Leighton’s personal stock continued to stand high. For the *Truro Daily News*, he was “the famous South African” and the newspaper heaped praise on the Truro player who (though in a losing cause) had bowled Leighton out for an unusually low score of 27.<sup>56</sup> His wicket broken, Leighton could hardly object to his dismissal, but two days later in Stellarton it was a very different story. Not

48 B.M. Greene, ed., *Who’s Who in Canada . . . 1922: An Illustrated Biographical Record of the Men and Women of the Time: Sixteenth Year of Issue* (Toronto: International Press Limited, 1922), 1136.

49 *Halifax Herald*, 28 June 1912; *Evening Mail*, 28 June 1912.

50 *Evening Mail*, 12 July 1912.

51 *Halifax Herald*, 11 June 1912.

52 *Halifax Herald*, 9 July 1912; *Evening Mail*, 9 July 1912; *Morning Chronicle*, 9 July 1912.

53 *Evening Mail*, 12 July 1912.

54 *Evening Mail*, 1 October 1912.

55 *Morning Chronicle*, 17 July 1912.

56 *Truro Daily News*, 18 July 1912.

only did the Wanderers ultimately lose the match, but Leighton had scored just a single run when an attempt to hit for six – in a way reminiscent of similar episodes in Devon in which he surrendered his wicket cheaply through impetuous hitting – was caught by the Stellarton veteran Harry Saunders at or near the boundary. Given out by the umpire, Leighton protested loud and long that Saunders had been outside the boundary line when he made the catch and therefore according to the laws of cricket the decision should have been “not out.” The argument, by all accounts, became intense, and the first hint of it to reach into print was carried in a short item in the *Halifax Acadian Recorder*: “This is something new in cricket hereabouts, where it has been the custom to accept the umpire’s decision.”<sup>57</sup> Even so, there it might have rested. The *New Glasgow Eastern Chronicle*’s report (the local newspaper of the Stellarton-New Glasgow area) was critical of Leighton’s lack of “gentlemanly and sportsmanlike demeanor,” but observed mildly enough that “only a handful of spectators viewed the proceedings which were of a truth tamer than a contest of two nines in the three base game.”<sup>58</sup> Leighton, however, had decided to write angrily – and perhaps hastily, as the letter was dated on the day of the game itself from New Glasgow, prior to the Wanderers’ departure for their next engagement in Sydney – to the *Halifax Herald*. His comments were inflammatory. The umpires, he complained, were “Stellarton men, who admitted they knew nothing of cricket,” while Saunders was “very ignorant regarding the laws of cricket, he said cricket was the same as baseball, if caught, no matter where, you are out.” A postscript added, “I appeal to the cricket community of Halifax, was I out after being caught the other side of the boundary[?]”<sup>59</sup>

Leighton’s letter appeared on 20 July, and it was answered by the Stellarton captain, Robert Ferguson, three days later. The *Herald* gave Ferguson’s letter its own prominent headline: “Pro. Leighton roasted by Stellarton: Captain Ferguson pours some hot shot into the Wanderers’ coach about that cricket match,” and the letter itself did not disappoint. Leighton’s version of events, according to Ferguson, was “a gross mis-statement of facts, contains several glaring inaccuracies as regards truth, and as a type of whining egotism and cheap braggadocio is in a class by itself.” Ridiculing Leighton’s “unblushing egotism,” the Stellarton captain observed sarcastically, “touch Leighton, and the Wanderers are as shorn Samsons.” Although the Wanderers of the past had enjoyed a high reputation and had been welcome visitors to Stellarton, “Leighton, the professional and experienced cricketer . . . , has still a great deal to learn from the lesson-book of cricket . . . . He may possibly be master of the purely mechanical batting and bowling, but there are other qualities equally desirable before a man can be known as a good cricketer, and receive the cricket school parchment.”<sup>60</sup> Even Ferguson’s rejoinder was mild, however, compared to the comment of the *Eastern Chronicle*, appended to a reprint of Leighton’s original letter. That “the space in this paper is too valuable to be wasted over a criticism of such a bounder as this Leighton has proved himself to be” did not

57 *Acadian Recorder*, 19 July 1912.

58 *Eastern Chronicle*, 20 July 1912.

59 Leighton to Editor, *Halifax Herald*, 20 July 1912. This incident is also discussed, in a different context, in Reid and Reid, “Diffusion and Discursive Stabilization,” 410-11.

60 Ferguson to Editor, *Halifax Herald*, 23 July 1912.



prevent the *Chronicle* from delivering some satisfying observations. Leighton's letter was "a childish exhibition of pique," and it was "studded with untruths." Leighton himself was an egotist and "an arrant squealer" as well as "a trifler with the truth." He was, furthermore, "the kind of individual that hurts the sport and we cannot congratulate the team associated with him, on procuring his services. If a more striking example of self-opinionated cockney pinhead ever arrived in this county, we'd like to see him."<sup>61</sup>

The controversy reverberated for a few days. The *Halifax Morning Chronicle* claimed to have received an anonymous report that Saunders had privately admitted that he was not inside the boundary when he made the catch, while a correspondent of the *Acadian Recorder* – identified only by the pseudonym "Outsider," and claiming to have watched Leighton play but never to have met him – argued that Leighton had every right to argue a point of cricketing law without being subjected to the epithets that Ferguson had deployed. The *Eastern Chronicle*, meanwhile, rounded off its coverage by noting with satisfaction that "Leighton has seen fit to remain quiet . . . since Captain Ferguson's scathing letter appeared in the 'Herald'."<sup>62</sup> The incident itself, in reality, was less significant than the passions it had aroused. Leighton had either misjudged, or did not care about, the stature of both Saunders and Ferguson within the sport. Saunders had been an outstanding cricketer in Pictou County since his recruitment from his native Massachusetts by the Westville club in 1901. He had long excelled with both bat and ball, and although he also played baseball and tennis, cricket had remained his principal sport. For Leighton to describe Saunders as "very ignorant" regarding cricket, and to impute that he either did not know the difference between cricket and baseball or chose to conflate the two, was an insult to a far broader community than just to Saunders himself.<sup>63</sup>

Ferguson, meanwhile, represented Pictou County cricket in another important sense. Although the Stellarton club, like others in the area, had some social admixture – including in the team that played the Wanderers, for example, a Dr. Miller – it and other Pictou teams had a strong representation of working-class players. Ferguson himself, though a printer by trade, was the son and the brother of coal miners.<sup>64</sup> Leighton, though his own social origins were murky at best – and of course, ironically, in his relationship with F.C. Hunter he had very recently been the employee of a mine-owner – had asserted in effect the superiority and purity not only of Halifax cricket but also of cricket of the elite variety represented by the Wanderers. As Nancy Kimber MacDonald has shown through an analysis of the occupational backgrounds of club executive members, "the executives were usually wealthy" and "the lower-socio-economic classes were virtually excluded from the

61 *Eastern Chronicle*, 23 July 1912.

62 *Morning Chronicle*, 25 July 1912; "Outsider" to Editor, *Acadian Recorder*, 25 July 1912; *Eastern Chronicle*, 27 July 1912.

63 On Saunders's career, see the newspaper clipping in James W. Power Scrapbook, pp. 200-2, MG9, vol. 122A, Nova Scotia Archives (NSA). Saunders had also been a formidable opponent of the Wanderers during the ascendancy of Pictou County cricket, as in one match in 1909 when he scored 125 runs and took five wickets as a bowler in a one-sided victory for Westville; see *Evening Mail*, 11 September 1909.

64 Canada, Census, 1901, Ancestry.com; obituary, <http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/NOVA-SCOTIA/2005-02/1107738532>.



Wanderers.”<sup>65</sup> Other clubs had greater complexities. The Garrison club could be viewed in some ways as comparable to the Wanderers, the two clubs occupying grounds across the street from one another, but included non-commissioned officers and other ranks along with players who held officer rank.<sup>66</sup> The Sydney Cricket Club was also socially mixed, and already played friendly matches with the African-descended West Indian steelworkers of Whitney Pier, whose team would join the Nova Scotia Cricket League in 1914 – comparably, it must be said, with Leighton and the Wanderers playing a friendly match in late August 1912 with the Fenwicks, a Halifax team described in the *Morning Chronicle* as “composed of colored players.”<sup>67</sup> While evidence is sparser regarding the Truro club, the urging of the *Truro Daily News* to potential spectators to “cheer your Truro friends on to victory,” and to potential players to “drop your work occasionally and let us see an exhibition of cricket you can give,” also suggests a non-elite configuration.<sup>68</sup> It was no accident that Ferguson and the *Eastern Chronicle* threw accusations at Leighton of ungentlemanly conduct, for a discourse emphasizing the gentlemanly values and the English traditions of cricket had emerged as a binding element of what was in reality a socially heterogeneous sport.<sup>69</sup> Leighton’s attack on the Stellarton players and the two umpires had carried a threat to upset this delicate balance, along with a strong redolence of metropolitan condescension, and the reaction of Ferguson and others – while their language was scathing – was essentially an exercise in damage control and an effort to regain stability.

Leighton and the Wanderers, however, proceeded on to Sydney to continue their quest for the championship that Leighton had promised at the beginning of the season. It seemed for a time that the Stellarton controversy would be left behind as an isolated incident. In Sydney, the Wanderers won a rain-shortened game, and the *Sydney Record* credited Leighton with “one of the best exhibitions of batting ever seen in Sydney” as he scored 91 before being bowled. The game itself was, likewise, “one of the best exhibition[s] of cricket ever witnessed here.”<sup>70</sup> Then, in August came the Wanderers’ greatest success of the season. After defeating the Royal

65 MacDonald, “Wanderers Amateur Athletic Club of Halifax, 1882-1925,” 13-16 (quotations from 16).

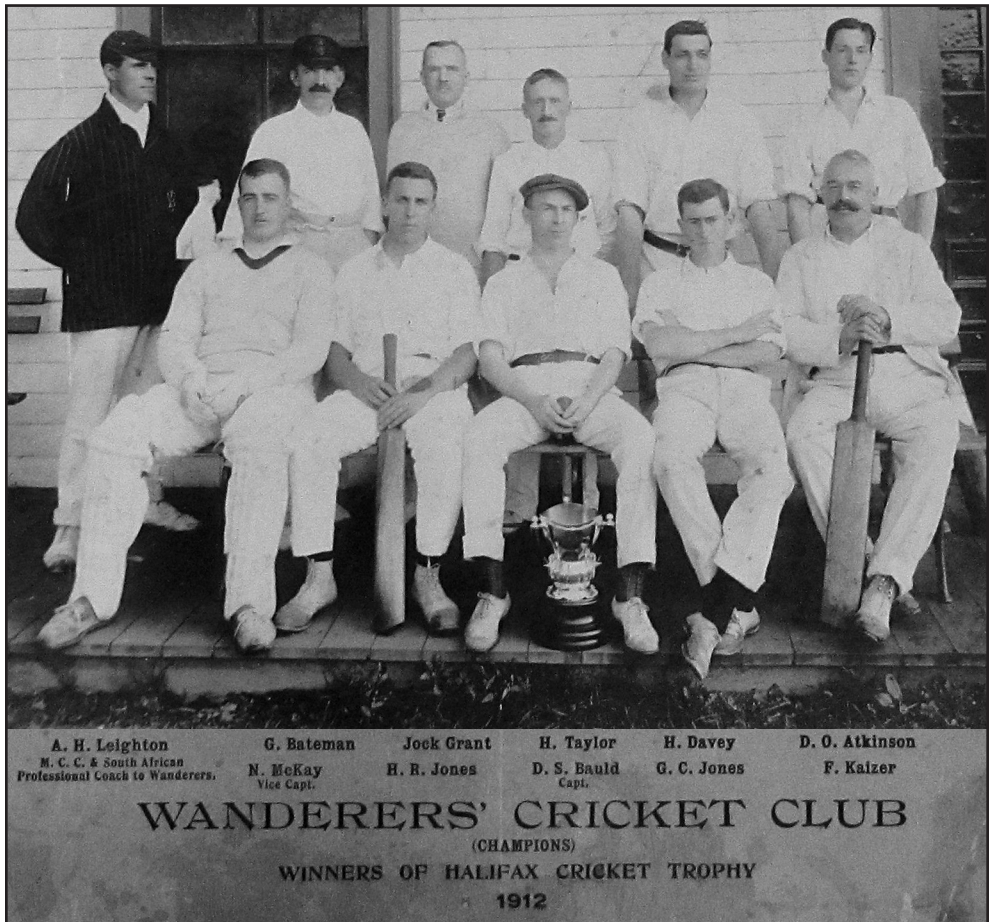
66 For example, the Garrison team that played Sydney on 12 September 1912 consisted of a major, two lieutenants, two sergeants, two corporals, a bombardier, and three gunners. See *Morning Chronicle*, 13 September 1912. See also Hall and McCulloch, eds., *Sixty Years of Canadian Cricket*, 193-4.

67 On Sydney, see *Sydney Daily Post*, 5 July 1912, and Reid and Reid, “Diffusion and Discursive Stabilization,” 411. On the match between the Wanderers and the Fenwicks, see *Halifax Herald*, 27 August 1912. The description of the Fenwicks was in the *Morning Chronicle* of 17 July 1912; the item noted that this was a new team, but implied (though it did not state explicitly) that the players were of West Indian origin by indicating that the Fenwicks club “takes the place of the Carribeans [*sic*] of former years.” As early as in 1902, the Wanderers had played a match “against a West Indian team, composed entirely of colored men,” and in earlier seasons their opponents had included individual African-descended players who were members of army or navy teams; see *Halifax Herald*, 15 October 1902. For the latter reference, and for sharing research findings as to its context, I am very grateful to Patricia Townsend.

68 *Truro Daily News*, 2, 15 July 1912.

69 See Reid and Reid, “Diffusion and Discursive Stabilization,” esp. 411-12.

70 *Sydney Record*, 20 July 1912.



**Figure 2: Wanderers Cricket Club, 1912.**

Source: Collection of, and by courtesy of, the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame.

Canadian Regiment in the first round of the Halifax Cup, with Leighton scoring a rapid 50 by “knocking boundary after boundary to the delight of the spectators,”<sup>71</sup> the Wanderers came up eventually against HMCS *Niobe*. The *Halifax Herald*'s reporter showed a clear preference for the Wanderers, and praised Leighton in terms that must have aroused some scepticism in readers outside of Halifax:

The club has shown more class this year than ever before. This has been due in no small degree to their training by Coach Leighton, the M.C.C. professional, who has gathered his men together, keeping them in fine condition right along. Their style has been much reformed and their work has reflected much credit on Leighton,

71 *Morning Chronicle*, 1 August 1912.

who has devoted all his efforts in furthering their chances for the championship. He himself sees the cup already resting in the club house. If his predictions are borne out on Saturday the Wanderers will be indisputable champions of Nova Scotia for the first time in twelve years.<sup>72</sup>

The Halifax Cup, of course, did not represent a provincial championship, although the distinction may well have been blurred during the celebrations that followed the Wanderers' decisive defeat of the *Niobe* by 195 to 76. Of the Wanderers' runs, 110 were scored by Leighton himself, and the crowd of 1,000 saw the trophy presented by the Mayor of Halifax, F.P. Bligh, who was himself a former wicket-keeper with the Wanderers and was the current club president. The *Herald* insisted upon proclaiming again that the win had established the Wanderers as "virtual champions of Nova Scotia, a fact they have demonstrated in their successful tour of the province a short time ago."<sup>73</sup> In Halifax, at least, Leighton's reputation had reached a new height, seemingly unscathed by the Stellarton controversy. Although troubled temporarily by an injury to his hand, he continued to play in a succession of friendly matches arranged for the Wanderers with local teams after the Sydney club had been forced to postpone its planned league visit to Halifax when players had trouble getting time off work.<sup>74</sup> Always quotable, Leighton commented expansively when the Wanderers were short of players for one of the friendly games, and had to borrow players from the Halifax Standards baseball team, that "the three gentlemen referred to would with some coaching make fair cricketers."<sup>75</sup>

He also soon turned his attention to another sport altogether, association football. When Leighton had first arrived, the *Herald* had described him as "a splendid footballer," among other sports,<sup>76</sup> and when a committee met in Halifax in early September 1912 to organize "a soccer association for Halifax," his name was prominent in press coverage of the proceedings. Named to head the list of referees, Leighton also undertook to request the use of the Wanderers' ground for the planned cup final. He had apparently persuaded the local hardware firm Morton & Cragg – already one of the donors to the cricket trophy – to be the sole donor of the soccer trophy, or at least he spoke for the firm at the meeting and also proposed successfully

72 *Halifax Herald*, 13 August 1912.

73 *Halifax Herald*, 19 August 1912; *Evening Mail*, 19 August 1912; *Spalding's Official Cricket Guide*, . . . for 1913, 107. *Spalding's Guide* for 1913 took note that Leighton's 110 runs had purportedly been scored in 46 minutes, "which is claimed as a Canadian record for fast scoring," but declined to confirm the claim in the absence of adequate information on the match. See *Spalding's Official Cricket Guide*, . . . for 1913, 137.

74 *Sydney Daily Post*, 2 August 1912; *Evening Mail*, 26 August 1912. On Leighton's injury, see *Evening Mail*, 30 August 1912.

75 *Halifax Herald*, 27 August 1912.

76 *Halifax Herald*, 11 June 1912. At the close of the 1911 cricket season, Leighton had reportedly announced that he would "probably join the Exeter City Football Club," but club records show that he never made an appearance for Exeter City. See "The History of Exeter City, 1908-9 – 1969-70" (typescript), Archives of Exeter City Football Club, Exeter, UK; Maurice Golesworthy, Garth Dykes, and Alex Wilson, eds., *Exeter City: A Complete Record, 1904-1990* (Derby, UK: Breedon Books, 1990). For a listing of the club's reserve team, which also made no mention of Leighton, see *Express & Echo* (Exeter), 6 October 1911.

that Morton & Cragg be thanked “for the cup, in furthering the interest of association football.”<sup>77</sup> Whether Leighton had anything personally to gain from the soccer association is not clear, but the meeting was apparently something of a triumph of a kind that would further enhance his standing within sporting circles in the city.

Just days later came the beginning of the postponed Sydney Cricket Club visit to Halifax. Sydney, challenging the Wanderers for the championship with games in hand, was to play three matches in Halifax – with the Garrison, with the Wanderers, and then the Garrison again – followed by a final league game in Stellarton on the way home to Cape Breton. In the first Halifax match, Sydney’s defeat of the Garrison club was front-page news in both of the major Sydney newspapers and was also lengthily reported in Halifax.<sup>78</sup> Sydney faced the Wanderers the following day, and batted first in what the *Sydney Daily Post*’s reporter described as “in all probability the most exciting sporting event ever played at the garrison city.” The *Post* claimed that Sydney had scored 282 all out, although it admitted that problems in the telegraph office had made its coverage difficult and it is likely that the 231 reported by the *Halifax Morning Chronicle* was an accurate score.<sup>79</sup> Even that was an impressive total. It was evidently sufficient to persuade the Wanderers to play out time for a drawn match, rather than take the risk of batting aggressively and perhaps going down to defeat against their principal rivals and so jeopardize their championship aspirations.

Here the controversy began. Playing for a draw was a legitimate tactical choice, even though undoubtedly not to the taste of those who believed that cricket should be an adventurous sport in which a clear result should be pursued at all times. The real problem lay in how the Wanderers went about it. According to press reports they delayed coming out to bat to begin their innings, instead doing their best to prolong the lunch break. As each player was dismissed, the succeeding batsman seemed invariably to be unprepared and to need time to assemble batting equipment and strap on pads. Leighton was dismissed for 42, but his batting partner H. Davey went on to make a methodical 101 not out, and when the clock ran out the draw was secured as the team’s total stood at 203 for eight wickets. The *Morning Chronicle* deemed it to have been “a good game, well fought on both sides, and greatly enjoyed by the large crowd present.”<sup>80</sup> The Sydney press, however, had a different perspective, and its view turned out to have powerful support in Halifax also. The *Sydney Record* quoted “an old Halifax cricket enthusiast” as commenting that the “Wanderers sacrificed dignity for [an] ignominious draw,” and then a day later the newspaper observed that “this year the Halifax Wanderers made a determined effort to win . . . [the league championship] and even resorted to questionable methods to effect their purpose. Their professional coach, who appeared to dominate the whole team, showed in the field and off, and in the press, that he was as devoid of knowledge of the etiquette of the game as he was of gentlemanly manners.”<sup>81</sup>

77 *Evening Mail*, 11 September 1912.

78 *Sydney Daily Post*, 13 September 1912; *Sydney Record*, 13 September 1912; *Morning Chronicle*, 13 September 1912.

79 *Sydney Daily Post*, 14 September 1912; *Morning Chronicle*, 14 September 1912.

80 *Sydney Daily Post*, 14 September 1912; *Morning Chronicle*, 14 September 1912.

81 *Sydney Record*, 16, 17 September 1912.

Meanwhile, so disgusted was the Garrison club at the behaviour of the Wanderers that it promptly announced that it would default on the following day's game, thus gifting points to the Sydney team that would ensure winning the championship if it were to defeat Stellarton.<sup>82</sup> Duly winning that game and then receiving the trophy from the Stellarton club, the Sydney players returned home to a triumphant civic reception.<sup>83</sup>

The *Morning Chronicle* was not yet ready to give up on the Wanderers' league campaign, and an item hearkened back to the July match in Stellarton and the possibility that its result might be overturned in the light of Leighton's protest.<sup>84</sup> In reality, however, the season was over, save for yet another public dispute over an umpiring decision that involved the Wanderers and, by extension, Leighton. The *Morning Chronicle*'s report of the Wanderers-Sydney match had singled out D.A. Hearn, an umpire from Sydney, for questionably deeming a Wanderers batsman to have been run out. The decision, the *Chronicle* reporter maintained, was not only "received very unfavorably by the crowd" but also was "the worst decision on the part of an umpire ever given in Halifax."<sup>85</sup> Hearn, a crown prosecutor in Sydney, was publicly defended at the civic reception for the Sydney team against this "ungraceful attack by one of the Halifax papers."<sup>86</sup> He also, however, proved well able to defend himself, in a caustically worded letter to the *Chronicle*. The Wanderers player, Hearn noted, had been "at least a foot from the crease [when run out] and his bat in the air, when the wickets were struck by the ball." Hearn considered that his reputation for impartiality had been unjustly impugned, despite his long career as an umpire, and it was abundantly clear to whom he referred when contrasting "the players who are known to be gentlemen" with those who were "disappointed and disgruntled soreheads."<sup>87</sup>

Hearn's was the last word on the Wanderers' 1912 season. Despite winning the Halifax Cup, A.H. Leighton's team had failed to win the championship that mattered and yet again had stirred up allegations of boorish behaviour. Even in the realm of association football, Leighton's role seems henceforth to have diminished markedly. By late September he was still mentioned as a "special advisor" to the sport's Halifax governing committee, but at least in the published reports his name disappeared thereafter.<sup>88</sup> Whether the decreased visibility was connected with the Wanderers' cricketing notoriety is impossible to determine, but there was no evidence of ceremony when Leighton boarded the SS *Mongolian* for Greenock in late November. He travelled in steerage and by occupation, according to the passenger list, he was a labourer.<sup>89</sup> For whatever reason, Florence and Edna

82 *Sydney Record*, 16 September 1912.

83 *Sydney Daily Post*, 18 September 1912; *Sydney Record*, 18 September 1912.

84 *Morning Chronicle*, 19 September 1912.

85 *Morning Chronicle*, 14 September 1912.

86 *Sydney Daily Post*, 18 September 1912.

87 Hearn to the Editor, *Morning Chronicle*, reprinted in *Sydney Record*, 19 September 1912.

88 *Morning Chronicle*, 27 September 1912.

89 Passenger List, SS *Mongolian*, United Kingdom Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878-1960, Ancestry.com.



remained in Halifax for a time, finally sailing for Liverpool and arriving on 23 March 1913. By now, their country of intended permanent residence was England.<sup>90</sup>

Not that A.H. Leighton was entirely forgotten in Halifax, as became evident during the 1913 cricket season. The opening league match was also the first in Halifax since the draw between the Wanderers and Sydney, not counting of course the Garrison club's default. In the 1913 match, the Garrison opened the batting against the Wanderers and scored 170. The Wanderers replied with 171 for two wickets, and so won the game. The postscript to a press report was revealing: "The match should under ordinary circumstances have been a draw, but the Garrison club agreed to extend the time for drawing stumps to seven o'clock and the Wanderers thus won."<sup>91</sup> A message was clearly being conveyed. Then, later in the season, the *Halifax Herald* ran a short but pointed item:

How about the cricket championship of Halifax in this year of our Lord 1913? The Wanderers won the Merchants' Cup last year, but they are not permanent possessors of the trophy and the other teams are looking for the opportunity of having another try at the coveted piece of silverware. There is a persistent rumor that late Coach Leighton, of by no means regretted memory, is in possession of the trophy. If this is so there should be no difficulty in regaining the cup, as all that is necessary is to write to Mr. Lacey, the secretary of the Marylebone Cricket Club, of which Leighton is or claims to be a member, and the cup will be restored or Mr. Leighton will be read out of organized cricket, which is a rather serious proposition for a professional to face.<sup>92</sup>

In reality, there was no greater chance that Leighton had ever attained the high social status that distinguished members of the MCC than there was that he was among the teaching professionals employed at Lord's, who enjoyed unique prestige in the world of professional cricket.<sup>93</sup> For all that, he had evidently continued while in Halifax to claim the association, and local press reports not only repeated it faithfully but also at times used terms such as "Pro. Leighton M.C.C.," employing the acronym as if it were a military or civil decoration.<sup>94</sup>

Arthur Leighton's Halifax interlude had shed only limited additional light on his personal origins and career. No doubt insights could have been gained from the records of the Wanderers, including evidence of how and by whom he had been recruited for the club, had it not been for the pavilion fire of 1938. Slim evidence can be found regarding his speech patterns, as when Robert Ferguson, in his letter on the Stellarton dispute, illustrated his portrayal of a self-centred Leighton on the Wanderers team by commenting sarcastically that "when he's out, why, blawst it, the

90 Passenger List, SS *Victoria*, United Kingdom Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878-1960, Ancestry.com.

91 James W. Power Scrapbook, p. 135, MG9, vol. 122, NSA.

92 *Halifax Herald*, 9 August 1913.

93 See Neil Carter, "Introduction: Coaching Cultures," *Sport in History* 30, no. 1 (2010): 12-13.

94 *Evening Mail*, 13 September 1912.



rest of the bally rotters might as well go 'ome.”<sup>95</sup> When the *Eastern Chronicle* described Leighton as a “self-opinionated cockney pinhead,” the first and the third words are easy enough to gloss, but what the newspaper meant by “cockney” is open to question. It is unlikely that the idea was that Leighton had actually been born within earshot of Bow Bells, but did the term signify that he had a generally London intonation, or simply that his accent sounded vaguely English – or, indeed, South African? What became of the Leighton family after they had departed from Nova Scotia is also only partly revealed by subsequent evidence. In early 1921 Florence and the now-teenaged Edna sailed from the Port of London on the SS *Gascon* for Cape Town, intending permanent residence in South Africa. Of Arthur there was no mention, but they were accompanied by a one-year-old son and brother, identified only by his initial, “A.”<sup>96</sup> Was A.H. Leighton now deceased, and did his young son perhaps carry on his name? Or had he, again, gone on ahead of his family to embark on some new enterprise?

Such questions, however, lead only into the realm of speculation. More tangibly, Leighton’s rapid rise and fall as player-coach and as promoter of Halifax cricket had been intensely revealing of the early 20th-century nature of Nova Scotia’s oldest codified sport, played in Halifax by the late 18th century, and spreading widely during the 19th. Although sporadically and then steadily overhauled in popularity by baseball, well past the turn of the 20th century cricket retained its place as a vibrant and socially diverse sport in many areas.<sup>97</sup> The Nova Scotia Cricket League was the pre-eminent, though not the only, cricket league, and the social heterogeneity of the clubs and their players – though it did not extend to gender, as cricket was for all practical purposes an exclusively male sport and, among other things, a performance of manliness – necessitated the maintenance of a delicate balance sustained by a discourse that emphasized English traditions and gentlemanly values. The abrasiveness and the sharp-edged tactics of an Arthur Leighton, representing the other side of the coin from his promotional abilities, threatened the stability of the sport. Thus, for the historian, consideration of the controversies he provoked can contribute to throwing into accurate relief the tensions that were inherent within Nova Scotian cricket.

Leighton’s Nova Scotia sojourn is also revealing, more broadly, of the nature of professionalism within the global configuration of cricket in the early 20th century. Some of those whom Leighton encountered in Halifax and elsewhere found it easy to vilify him, and for reasons that were understandable in the context of Nova Scotian cricket. Yet Arthur Leighton, despite whatever ups and downs he may have experienced in the feather trade, now had the pressure of having to earn his living as

95 *Halifax Herald*, 23 July 1912.

96 Passenger List, SS *Gascon*, United Kingdom Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960, Ancestry.com.

97 On the 18th-century presence of cricket, see Robert Moss, “Cricket in Nova Scotia during the Nineteenth Century,” *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education* 9, no. 2 (December 1978): 61; the social history of baseball in the Maritime Provinces is authoritatively discussed in Colin D. Howell, *Northern Sandlots: A Social History of Maritime Baseball* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), which includes astute analyses of the role of cricket, esp. at 28-36. For further discussion of the varying contexts of cricket and the related historiography, see Reid and Reid, “Diffusion and Discursive Stabilization,” 406-12.

a skilled artisan. He was relatively youthful regardless of whichever of his stated ages was closest to the truth, and – especially as Florence had defined her occupation when arriving in Halifax as “Housewife” – he was no doubt an important provider for the family.<sup>98</sup> He, Florence, and young Edna foresaw a future in Canada, but all would predictably depend on his success in Halifax. Leighton had been left in no doubt that the Wanderers club wanted trophies, and that it was his job to provide them. Accordingly, he deployed both his athletic and his social skills to that end as best he could. Although the campaign was only partly successful, Leighton’s statistics as supplied by the Wanderers to *Spalding’s Guide* were impressive. Taking all matches into consideration, he headed both the batting and the bowling averages of the club. His batting average of 65.1 was only narrowly ahead of that of Davey – whose 101 not out in the controversial encounter with Sydney must greatly have enhanced his numbers – but far beyond those of the other leading batsmen. Leighton’s remarkably economical bowling average of 4.1 runs per wicket was well in advance of the other Wanderers bowlers.<sup>99</sup> All in all, it was enough to prompt *Spalding’s Guide* to list Leighton as a member of a notional “All-Canada” team.<sup>100</sup> On the field, even though the Wanderers had met their match in the Sydney and, on occasion, the Stellarton clubs, a strong case could be made that Leighton had done as much as could reasonably be expected.

The life of a travelling professional, however, demanded more than just this. Cricket in England had a history of professionalism reaching far back into the 18th century. In Canada, its most visible manifestation consisted of the recruitment by elite clubs of professionals who – as in the case of Leighton – were brought from overseas to coach and often also to play.<sup>101</sup> Fragmentary but intriguing evidence suggests that cricket in the Maritime provinces also developed by the late 19th century an unobtrusive level of part-time professionalism in small-town clubs, but its extent is difficult to define.<sup>102</sup> By the turn of the 20th century, however, a new and more globalized form of professionalism had emerged. Cricket was played in many parts of the British-influenced world, and coaching opportunities increasingly took professionals long distances from England or from wherever their personal origins happened to be.<sup>103</sup> English cricket, by this time, was riddled with complexities that tended to blur the distinction between amateur and professional, with league cricket opening opportunities for working-class players to find well-paid employment in rising to county or international level, or to high echelons of coaching at prestigious schools or at Lord’s.<sup>104</sup> Professional cricket was also entrepreneurial, with English professionals organizing lucrative overseas tours during the mid-to-late decades of

98 Passenger List, SS *Carthaginian*, Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935, Ancestry.com.

99 *Spalding’s Official Cricket Guide*, . . . for 1913, 107.

100 F.F. Kelly, “All-North America Elevens,” *Spalding’s Official Cricket Guide*, . . . for 1913, 7.

101 Alan Metcalfe, *Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport, 1807-1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), 18-19, 82-4.

102 See Reid and Reid, “Diffusion and Discursive Stabilization,” 409.

103 Mandle, “Professional Cricketer in England in the 19th Century,” 9; John Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 173-5.

104 See Keith A.P. Sandiford, “England,” in Brian Stoddart and Keith A.P. Sandiford, eds., *The Imperial Game: Cricket, Culture and Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 24-6.

the 19th century. Although these activities tended to be overshadowed in England itself by the idealization of the gentleman amateur, colonial cricket was less tightly bound by this class-based context and even in England the effectiveness of leading professionals in international play led, by the early 20th century, to enhanced recognition and remuneration for those at the leading edge.<sup>105</sup>

For the likes of Arthur Leighton, however, life was much more precarious than for cricketers established at the higher professional levels. Despite the *Halifax Herald's* breathless pronouncements on his arrival in Halifax, there is no evidence whatever that he enjoyed high international prestige. Not that the *Herald* was entirely to blame, as self-promotion and performance abilities on a theatrical plane were intrinsic to the way in which Leighton earned his living. Professional cricket at his level was highly entrepreneurial. But this was not the entrepreneurialism of taking an elaborate show on the road, as with the English tours of Australia organized by county professionals, but rather the entrepreneurialism of a small and potentially fragile one-person business. Whether or not the Halifax Merchants Cup found its way into Leighton's luggage on his departure from Halifax – and the idea that it did so was only an anonymously conveyed rumour – it is inconceivable that he attained any great wealth from his employment with the Wanderers. In his line of work there were no benefits, working conditions were entirely unregulated, and injury was a constant threat. Although it seems that Leighton got off relatively lightly from what was described in the Halifax press as ligament damage to a finger, nevertheless for a time he had to wear the arm in a sling and for at least one match he was listed at number eleven in the batting order, indicating that he would bat only if strictly necessary. The consequence of a more serious injury, for a player in his situation, would not have been a comfortable period of medical treatment at the expense of a club or patron, but rather the temporary or permanent loss of his livelihood.<sup>106</sup>

Thus Arthur H. Leighton's stay in Nova Scotia was short and troubled, and it did not end well. Some of his difficulties were self-inflicted, while others came out of a complex cricketing culture that he could be excused for failing fully to comprehend within the few weeks of the playing season. For the historian, however, his sojourn is significant. Examination of his successes and failures sheds light both on the social and cultural character of cricket in this time and place, and on the experience of the journeyman travelling professional in a globalizing sport that could impose harsh demands. It also exemplifies the extent to which Leighton and his family were minor and yet paradigmatic participants in the British migratory currents of their era, as well as having been dependent in Devon on the proceeds of industrial capital as represented by Leighton's employment by F.C. Hunter. As Eric Richards has pointed out, "Some migrants . . . migrated with an extraordinary degree of facility within the

105 Derek Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory: Sport and British Society, 1887-1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 17-19; Mandle, "Professional Cricketer in England in the 19th Century," 16. That in Nova Scotia Leighton was frequently identified by his initials, "A.H.," was one small indication of the varying representation of social class; in England, initials were normally reserved for amateurs while professionals were identified by surname alone.

106 *Evening Mail*, 30 August 1912; see also Mandle, "Professional Cricketer in England in the 19th Century," 15.

imperial system and back again.”<sup>107</sup> The enormous social diversity of the “Greater Britons” who, as shown by James Belich, moved to, from, and among the settler dominions included skilled labourers of many kinds.<sup>108</sup> As cricket and, as yet to a lesser extent, other sports became globalized within the British-influenced world, so professional players took their place within this much larger stream. British migrations, and the settler colonialism that arose from them, had diverse results. While settler colonialism is frequently and justifiably defined in geopolitical terms, as representing the assertion of sovereignty by settler jurisdictions, nevertheless the formation of the dominions also had profound cultural consequences among which the development of distinctive sporting traditions was one. Playing cricket was, among other things, a performance and a normalization of settler colonialist values.

Social complexity was also a global characteristic of the sport. The negotiation of race, for example – or, increasingly, the replacement of negotiation by the assertion of the primacy of whiteness – was intimately associated with cricket in South Africa, while in the West Indies the famous memoir of the historian and social theorist C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, documented the subtle inter- and intra-racial distinctions that were best exemplified by the Trinidadian cricket clubs of the early decades of the 20th century.<sup>109</sup> The accommodation of racial diversity in Nova Scotia cricket was increasingly significant during the years leading up to the First World War, in both Halifax and industrial Cape Breton, although Leighton’s sole experience of sharing the field with African-descended players came as far as we know in the one match against the Fenwicks. Social class, however, was a pervasive theme as the Wanderers repeatedly played teams that were socially diverse in the contexts of the smaller towns from which they originated – or, of the military garrison of Halifax. Comparably with Australia and New Zealand, where the primacy of elite clubs in such respective centres as Melbourne and Canterbury was contested with varying degrees of success by teams of mixed social class origins in those cities and elsewhere, in Nova Scotia the Wanderers by 1912 had to resort to professional coaching and forceful tactics in order to be competitive.<sup>110</sup>

That a discourse based on gentlemanly values was essential to keeping the necessary balances involved in Nova Scotia cricket brought the sport into a broader context of imperial – and gendered – values. It was not only in the area of working-class movements that, as Jonathan Hyslop has argued, potent compounds made up of constructions of race, class, and gender could generate configurations that were

107 Eric Richards, *Britannia’s Children: Emigration from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland since 1600* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), 215.

108 James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), esp. 456-78. The phrase “Greater Britain” was coined by Sir Charles Dilke, as noted in Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 204.

109 Richard Perry, “Black Cricketers, White Politicians and the Origins of Segregation at the Cape to 1894,” in Murray and Vahed, *Empire and Cricket*, 19-42; Goolam Vahed and Vishnu Padayachee, “Empire, Race and Indian Cricket in Natal, 1880-1914,” in Murray and Vahed, *Empire and Cricket*, 81-99; C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993; first published 1963), esp. 49-65. See also Brian Stoddart, “West Indies,” in Stoddart and Sandiford, *Imperial Game*, 79-92.

110 See Richard Cashman, “Australia,” in Stoddart and Sandiford, *Imperial Game*, 37-8; and Greg Ryan, “New Zealand,” in Stoddart and Sandiford, *Imperial Game*, 95-100.

fully comparable across the settler dominions but at the same time carried distinct characteristics.<sup>111</sup> Sport, which stood as Geoffrey Levett has observed, “at the core of British imperial culture,” also had the ability to do so.<sup>112</sup> Thus, cricket in Nova Scotia had social and cultural characteristics that gave it affinities with the sport in other global areas of settler colonialism, and yet variations that meant that it was not as easily legible or commensurable as an unwary sojourner might have assumed. For a travelling artisan such as A.H. Leighton, the necessary adjustment proved not to be easy, and so he and his family were drawn into the experience of the many migrants for whom removals within the empire that were initially intended to be permanent could result in failure and in return or serial migration. Leighton’s troubled Halifax sojourn provided an illustration that, while the main cost of settler colonialism in the imperial context of this era was borne by Indigenous inhabitants, nevertheless for non-Indigenous migrants who had to depend on skills and commodities for which supply and demand created a fickle economy – cultural and social, as well as material – the settler dominions could also collectively represent an inhospitable world.

111 Among other works, Jonathan Hyslop, “The Imperial Working Class Makes Itself ‘White’: White Labourism in Britain, Australia, and South Africa Before the First World War,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 12, no. 4 (December 1999): 398-421; see also John Tosh, “Masculinities in an Industrializing Society: Britain, 1800-1914,” *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 2 (April 2005), 330-42.

112 Levett, “Constructing Imperial Identity,” 244.