

# “We Speak for Those who Cannot Speak for Themselves” The Toronto Humane Society, 1887-1891

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Article abstract

This article examines the history of the Toronto Humane Society [THS] from 1887 to 1891. It argues that the THS drew on the discourses of earlier Humane Societies and SPCAs in Britain and the United States and concludes that, like other animal welfare organizations, the THS saw the moral reform of the working classes as one of its primary duties. To do this, the Humane Society is linked to the larger moral and social reform movement that permeated the city in the late-nineteenth century. Dominated by members of Toronto's middle class, the THS inordinately targeted workers in its efforts to spread humane sentiments throughout the city.

# "We Speak for Those who Cannot Speak for Themselves"

## THE TORONTO HUMANE SOCIETY, 1887-1891

by Kevin Woodger

The nineteenth century witnessed an explosion of popular outrage against cruelty to animals and children. By the end of the century Britain, the United States, and Canada all boasted well-entrenched anti-cruelty organizations. These organizations typically took the form of either societies of the prevention of cruelty to animals (SPCAs), which worked for the protection of animals alone, or humane societies, which sought to protect both children and animals. Many of Toronto's leading citizens saw a need for the latter and founded the Toronto Humane Society (THS) in 1887. The THS worked to protect children and animals until the Toronto Children's Aid Society assumed responsibility for the protection of the city's children in 1891.

The Toronto Humane Society was a product of the widespread, middle-class dominated, urban reform and social purity movements that gripped the city in the late nineteenth-century. Sentiments of moral uplift and the urge to recreate the working classes in the reformers' own image under girded much of the work of the THS. Between 1887 and 1891,

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*This article examines the history of the Toronto Humane Society [THS] from 1887 to 1891. It argues that the THS drew on the discourses of earlier Humane Societies and SPCAs in Britain and the United States and concludes that, like other animal welfare organizations, the THS saw the moral reform of the working classes as one of its primary duties. To do this, the Humane Society is linked to the larger moral and social reform movement that permeated the city in the late-nineteenth century. Dominated by members of Toronto's middle class, the THS inordinately targeted workers in its efforts to spread humane sentiments throughout the city.*

**Résumé:** *Cet article examine l'histoire de la Toronto Humane Society (THS -- société pour la protection des animaux) de 1887 à 1892. Cette société s'est inspirée des discours d'autres sociétés protectrices des animaux fondées en Grande-Bretagne et aux États-Unis. Comme ces autres organisations, la THS considérait que la réforme morale de la classe ouvrière était un de ses principaux devoirs. Pour arriver à cette conclusion, nous étudions la THS dans le contexte plus large des idées de réforme morale et sociale qui étaient si largement répandues à Toronto vers la fin du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle. Dominée par la bourgeoisie torontoise, la THS s'adressait surtout aux ouvriers dans ses tentatives pour répandre des sentiments humains dans la ville.*

the Society drew on a wide range of discourses and tactics in order to pursue a program of social regulation and moral reform, which primarily targeted the working classes and those thought to be behaving outside the bounds of middle-class respectability. In doing so, the THS reflected and reinforced the accepted norms of the city's middle class respecting religious affiliation, class relations, and gender. As will be examined in this article, the link between the THS and the broader goals of projects that regulated morals is illuminated by an examination of the organizational structure and actual work of the THS in its earliest years.

The citizens of Toronto in the late-nineteenth century had a very well developed reservoir of organizational forms, tactical precedents and didactic materials to tap for their own anti-cruelty work. According to an official history published by the American Humane Association in 1924, the "humane movement" can trace its origins as far back as 1822. In this year, the British Parliament passed its first piece of legislation aimed at preventing cruelty to animals, officially named "An Act to Prevent the Cruel and Improper Treatment of Cattle." Violators could expect to face either a fine of or not more than ten shillings or imprisonment of up to three months. Two years later, in June 1824, the first Society for the Prevention

of Cruelty to Animals was formed in Great Britain.<sup>1</sup>

The newly formed SPCA quickly laid down a set of goals that would be echoed by subsequent anti-cruelty organizations in the United States and Canada. Historian Harold Guither argues that the SPCA framed their work in the context of dominant social and religious ideologies.<sup>2</sup> Their activities included publishing and distributing "suitable tracts... particularly among persons intrusted [sic] with cattle." They also sought to educate school children in humane treatment, raise public awareness of cruelty using both the press and the "pulpit," and prosecute "persons guilty of flagrant acts of cruelty, with publicity to the proceedings, and announcements of [the] results."<sup>3</sup> The SPCA attracted the patronage of Queen Victoria in 1840, transforming it into the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). With royal patronage in hand, the work of the RSPCA spread across Great Britain and eventually to North America.<sup>4</sup>

The first anti-cruelty association formed in the United States was the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), in New York State. The New York legislature, lobbied by Henry Bergh, the wealthy son of shipbuilder Christian Bergh, granted a statewide charter for the SPCA in April

<sup>1</sup> Sydney H. Coleman, *Humane Leaders in America with a Sketch of the Early History of the Humane Movement in England* (Albany: American Humane Association, 1924), 13-28

<sup>2</sup> Harold D. Guither, *Animal Rights: History and Scope of a Radical Social Movement* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Coleman, *Humane Leaders in America*, 28.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31.



Figure 1: John Joseph Kelso ca. 1910. Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.

of 1866, the ASPCA boasted sixty-six convictions from a total of 119 prosecutions.<sup>6</sup>

Anti-cruelty and humane societies quickly spread throughout the northeastern United States (and San Francisco) and into Canada during the last half of the nineteenth century. In 1877 the American Humane Association was founded as a national umbrella organization for anti-cruelty societies in the United States and Canada. One of its key concerns was in “extending humane propaganda” and introducing “humane literature into... schools.”<sup>7</sup> Among the first Canadian anti-cruelty organizations were

the Montreal based Canadian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (CSPCA), founded in 1868, and Ottawa’s Metropolitan Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, founded in 1866.<sup>5</sup> As historian Diane L. Beers notes in her book *For the Prevention of Cruelty*, soon after the charter was granted Bergh was commissioned as New York’s first anti-cruelty agent. However, he faced a good deal of public indifference. Beers argues that public opinion during the movement’s early years was typically apathetic and derisive and only occasionally supportive. However, the ASPCA did experience some early successes that raised the profile of its work and cemented its position in New York. By the end

the Montreal based Canadian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (CSPCA), founded in 1868, and Ottawa’s Metropolitan Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, founded in 1872.<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately for Toronto’s animal residents, the city’s first attempt to found an anti-cruelty organization failed. In July 1873, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) was founded. According to the OSPCA’s first Annual Report, its mission was the

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-38.

<sup>6</sup> Diane L. Beers, *For the Prevention of Cruelty: The History and Legacy of Animal Rights Activism in the United States* (Athens: Swallow Press/ Ohio University Press, 2006), 61.

<sup>7</sup> Coleman, *Humane Society Leaders in America*, 247-48.

<sup>8</sup> *The Canadian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Annual Report for 1897* (Montreal: Witness Printing House 1898); *The Metropolitan Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Annual Report for 1872* (Ottawa: 1872)

“protection of helpless animals from the cruelty of man, and men themselves from the brutalizing effects which such cruelty begets.”<sup>9</sup> The OSPCA, following the lead of its American, British and Canadian counterparts, investigated cases of cruelty to animals alone, looking into a total of 213 cases during its lifespan. The OSPCA, however, did not last long and folded after only a few years. In the early 1890s, the publicists for the THS rather smugly noted that “after a very few years this society [the OSPCA] ceased to exist, chiefly for want of funds—the result of a lack of interest in its work.”<sup>10</sup> It would not be until the late 1880s that another attempt would be made to prevent cruelty to animals in Toronto.

Reflecting on the early years of the Toronto Humane Society, John Joseph Kelso (more commonly referred to as J.J. Kelso), one of its founding members and first Honourary-Secretary, published a brief history of the humane and children’s aid movements in Ontario, in 1911. In this little book, Kelso retells what he considers to be the spark that led to the founding of the THS. According to Kelso, in November of 1886, the *Toronto World* received a letter from John K. Macdonald, son of the well-known dry goods merchant John Macdonald. The younger Macdonald was lamenting

the cruel treatment of an old white horse that was being overworked in the city’s streets. Macdonald concluded his letter with a lament that there was no organization for the prevention of cruelty in Toronto. John Maclean, the *World’s* city editor, allowed Kelso (who was a *World* reporter at the time) to publish the letter, sardonically telling him, “here is something for you to advocate.” Shortly after the letter was published, the *World* began receiving donations for the formation of an anti-cruelty society. The donations eventually totaled seventy-four dollars, all from anonymous donors.<sup>11</sup> The *World* continued to publish appeals for an anti-cruelty society throughout the fall of 1886. One letter from a correspondent named “Rounder” wrote, “Toronto is noted for its muddy streets and heavy ruts, and I venture to say there are a few of our observant citizens who have not time and again noticed the inhumane manner in which horses are whipped by their drivers when the wagons get ‘stuck.’”<sup>12</sup>

Following this incident, the Canadian Institute invited Kelso to speak about the need for an anti-cruelty society in the city. Speaking at the fourteenth annual meeting of the Institute on 19 February 1887, Kelso presented a paper entitled, “The Necessity of a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty in Toronto.” Rather than try

<sup>9</sup> *First Annual Report of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for the Year Ending June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1874* (Toronto: 1874), 5.

<sup>10</sup> J. George Hodgins ed. *What has been Accomplished During Five Years by the Toronto Humane Society including the Annual Report of the Society for the Year 1891-92* (Toronto: The Massey Press, 1892), 17.

<sup>11</sup> J.J. Kelso, *Early History of the Humane and Children’s Aid Movement in Ontario, 1886-1893* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1911), 14.

<sup>12</sup> “The Horse Finds a Friend,” *Toronto World*, 19 November 1886.



to resuscitate the defunct OSPCA, Kelso proposed the “establishment of... a general humane association.” This organization, according to Kelso, would attempt to prevent cruelty to children, stop the beating of animals, and prevent the overloading of horse-drawn streetcars and wagons. The proposed society would also agitate for better laws, better treatment of horses and more drinking fountains. It would also seek the introduction of humane literature into schools and homes with the aim of teaching children to be more humane. Kelso’s vision for the proposed society was for it to be a “humanizing, educating and refining influence.” In a stroke of egalitarian genius, Kelso rather loftily proclaimed that “all could unite in the unselfish and ennobling work of alleviating and removing human and animal suffering.” He proposed that his new society would be religious but non-denominational. It would welcome both the rich and the poor, Protestants and non-Protestants. At the end of his paper, the members of the Canadian Institute resolved that, “the formation in this city of a society for the prevention of cruelty would be conducive to the interests of public morality.”<sup>13</sup> As proposed by Kelso, the Toronto Humane Society was to be a project in social reform and moral regulation.

As noted in the *Toronto Globe*, the new Society adopted the title “Humane” in order to signify its concern for “the teaching of kindness and mercy, and the protection where necessary of children, as well as the investigation and punishment of cases of cruelty to animals.”<sup>14</sup> Part of the decision to form a Humane Society rather than an SPCA may be attributed to J.J. Kelso himself. As Andrew Jones and Leonard Rutman note, Kelso was “deeply affected” by a series of encounters with homeless children on Yonge Street in late 1886. They argue that Kelso most closely identified with those who felt that child saving should be the first priority of the Toronto Humane Society.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Kelso’s 1911 history of the humane movement in Ontario pays more attention to the suffering of children and the Humane Society’s work with these “unfortunate waifs of the street,” than with the animals who were supposed to have the Society’s equal attention.<sup>16</sup> When Kelso resigned as secretary of the THS in 1891, it was to devote more of his attention to the new Toronto Children’s Aid Society.<sup>17</sup>

According to historian Susan J. Pearson in her recent work *The Rights of the Defenseless*, most organizations formed for the protection of children and animals called themselves humane societies.

<sup>13</sup> “Fourteenth Meeting, 19 Feb 1887, Society for the Prevention of Cruelty” *Proceedings of the Canadian Institute* 5/1 (October 1887), 142-43.

<sup>14</sup> “Toronto Humane Society,” *Toronto Globe*, 11 February 1893.

<sup>15</sup> Jones and Rutman, *In the Children’s Aid*, 21, 52.

<sup>16</sup> Kelso, *Early History of the Humane and Children’s Aid Movement*, 11.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Jones and Leonard Rutman, *In the Children’s Aid: J.J. Kelso and Child Welfare in Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 52-55. Even though he resigned as secretary, Kelso remained on the Society’s board of directors and served as treasurer from 1918-1935. Kelso was also a founding member of the Toronto Children’s Aid Society.

She argues that members of these humane societies rarely felt the need to discuss or justify their decision to combine child and animal protection. Those who did reflect on this pairing typically claimed that it was the most pragmatic choice. It was believed that societies modeled after SPCAs would be better equipped to intervene in cases of child cruelty and neglect than most traditional charities. Some activists saw child protection as just a matter of applying the same methods to different objects. Pearson argues that when humane societies represented their chief purpose as the prevention of cruelty to children and animals, they were suggesting that the problems facing both were the same.<sup>18</sup> As Xiaobei Chen notes in her study *Tending the Gardens of Citizenship*, the THS justified their dual focus by arguing that the victims were essentially the same. Both were characterized as weak, lowly and innocent.<sup>19</sup>

However, this combination was often highly impractical, as the protection of children and animals involved different sets of problems and priorities. Pearson notes that many anti-cruelty societies found it difficult to divide their time and attention between children and animals. Some members of these organizations began to fear that children would take

priority over animals.<sup>20</sup> Andrew Jones and Leonard Rutman, in their biography of J.J. Kelso, note that this was the case within the Toronto Humane Society where many of the animal welfarists had little sympathy for the child-savers. Kelso particularly resented “the ‘constant interference’ in the affairs of the society by other members, particularly those ladies who were chiefly interested in rescuing animals.”<sup>21</sup>

Unlike Pearson however, Chen calls upon historians to understand anti-cruelty work in the context of urban reform movements and moral regeneration projects.<sup>22</sup> According to historian Mariana Valverde, the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries saw a great deal of moral and social reform work, especially in Toronto. She argues that social reform movements, dominated primarily by members of the middle-class, sought to regulate class, gender, sexual and race relations, and organize social relations and individual consciousness in such a way as to legitimize dominant institutions and discourses. Valverde notes that while moral regulation projects helped shape the consciousness of the regulators themselves, specific projects were, more often than not, aimed at the working-classes.<sup>23</sup> As will be demonstrated below,

<sup>18</sup> Susan J. Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless: Protecting Animals and Children in Gilded Age America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 24-27.

<sup>19</sup> Xiaobei Chen, *Tending the Gardens of Citizenship: Child Saving in Toronto, 1880s-1920s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 33.

<sup>20</sup> Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless*, 27.

<sup>21</sup> Jones and Rutman, *In the Children's Aid*, 52-53.

<sup>22</sup> Chen, *Tending the Gardens of Citizenship* 34.

<sup>23</sup> Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 15, 166-67.

while primarily targeting the working classes, the Toronto Humane Society's organizational structure reinforced the dominant gender, class and religious relations in the city.

However, Pearson rejects the notion that anti-cruelty societies were engaged in moral regulation and social control projects. She argues that some historians, such as Harold Guither, have viewed anti-cruelty organizations as being less concerned with preventing suffering than with condemning and controlling working-class and immigrant behaviour. Instead, she argues that anti-cruelty activists saw cruelty as a moral concept and, as such, they joined private suffering with social harm. According to Pearson, protectionists believed that cruelty injured the victims, the perpetrators and the social body as a whole.<sup>24</sup> Craig Buettinger, in his article, "Women and Antivivisection in Late Nineteenth-Century America," agrees with Pearson's assessment. He argues that antivivisectionists saw vivisection (experimentation on live animals) as degrading to the moral health of school children and medical students. He argues that, the antivivisectionists believed, "the young, especially males, would descend into callousness and cruelty unless carefully guided to kindness and mercy."<sup>25</sup>

As Buettinger points out, humane discourses did make the connection be-

tween cruelty and morality. However, Pearson ignores the fact that much of the policing work undertaken by anti-cruelty reformers was primarily aimed at the working classes. In his article "Gelded Age Boston," Clay McShane argues that owners of large herds supported SPCAs as a way to prevent their horses from being damaged by teamsters. The result of this cooperation was that teamsters, not owners, faced the majority of charges for mistreating horses. McShane notes that anti-cruelty prosecutors specifically targeted teamsters and intentionally ignored owners.<sup>26</sup> McShane, in *The Horse in the City*, co-written with Joel A. Tarr, argues that drivers working for firms that demanded exact on-time deliveries often had no other choice but to resort to heavy whipping or other acts of cruelty. The authors note that arrested teamsters argued that the owners should be arrested for giving them underfed and lame horses to do the same work as healthy animals.<sup>27</sup>

The work of the Toronto Humane Society between 1887 and 1891 can be understood as a series of projects involving moral regulation and social reform. In keeping with other moral regulation projects, much of the Society's work was in an effort to inculcate the reformers' own values into the rest of the city's residents. This can be seen through the Society's organizational structure, which

<sup>24</sup> Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless*, 58-59.

<sup>25</sup> Craig Buettinger, "Women and Antivivisection in Late Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of Social History* 30:4 (Summer 1997), 864.

<sup>26</sup> Clay McShane, "Gelded Age Boston," *The New England Quarterly*, 74:2 (June 2001), 294-95.

<sup>27</sup> Clay McShane and Joel A. Tarr, *The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 50-51.



reinforced Toronto's dominant middle class views, as well as: its campaigns to secure police support, the actual work of the constables assigned to the THS, its didactic materials and educational work, and its efforts to alleviate the suffering Toronto's street railway horses.

The Toronto Humane Society was officially organized in early March 1887. The new Society quickly set about electing officers and establishing the various committees that would set the priorities and oversee the work.<sup>28</sup> From its very beginnings, men and women from the middle and upper classes dominated the leadership of the Society. Mirroring the patronage of Britain's RSPCA, the THS named the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario as its patron. Along similar lines, the mayor of Toronto, who in 1887 was William H. Howland, was named honorary-president. For his role in founding the Society, J.J. Kelso was named honorary-secretary.<sup>29</sup> On 13 April, Dr. J. George Hodgins, Ontario's Deputy Minister of Education, was elected vice-president of the Society and on 25 March, successful dry goods wholesaler W.R. Brock accepted the presidency. The other vice-presidents included the high profile lawyer (and low church Anglican)

Samuel Hume Blake, the widely known (and very outspoken) Professor Goldwin Smith, and the staunch opponent of fun on Sundays, Reverend D.J. Macdonell.<sup>30</sup>

The "Advisory Directors" of the Society had a similar makeup as the executive staff, although women were allowed to sit as directors. The twenty-five person directing staff included a mix of aldermen, protestant ministers, doctors, merchants, and the wives and daughters of the elite, such as Mrs. John Harvie, the wife of Alderman John Harvie. By 1891, THS officers included industrialist H.A. Massey, Staff-Inspector David Archibald of the Toronto Police, and Dr. Andrew Smith, the principal of the Ontario Veterinary College. Significantly, despite the Society's claim to be undenominational, no non-Protestant clergy appear in the lists of officers between 1887 and 1892.<sup>31</sup>

Not only did the Society's officers reflect the city's dominant religious and class cohort, the membership of the major subcommittees served to reinforce popular gender roles. In 1887 and 1888, women and Protestant ministers primarily staffed the Humane Education Committee. Men were a majority on both the Membership and Finance, and Cruelty Committees. Women represented a token

<sup>28</sup> "The Humane Society," *Toronto Globe* 6 March 1887, 8; "The Humane Society Organized" *Toronto World*, 16 March 1887; "Toronto Humane Society" *Toronto World*, 23 March 1887.

<sup>29</sup> The Toronto Humane Society, *Officers, Constitution, By-Laws and Articles of Faith*, (Toronto, 1887); "The Humane Society," *Toronto Globe*, 6 March 1887, 8; "Society Without A President," *Toronto World*, 19 March 1887.

<sup>30</sup> *Toronto Globe*, 13 April 1887; "Local Briefs" *Toronto Globe*, 25 March 1887; "Nature's Dumb Nobility," *Toronto Globe*, 20 January 1887; Toronto Humane Society, *Officers*; Christopher Armstrong and H.V. Nelles, *The Revenge of the Methodist Bicycle Company: Sunday Streetcars and Municipal Reform in Toronto, 1888-1897, 2nd Edition* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9, 40, 111.

<sup>31</sup> Toronto Humane Society, *Officers*; Hodgins, ed. *What has been Accomplished*, ii.

presence on the Prosecution and Legislation Committee, which was dominated by lawyers, aldermen and the mayor. By 1891, women had been squeezed out of the Prosecution and Legislation Committee, and they represented a majority on the new Literature and Publication Committee, as well as the Humane Education and Bands of Mercy Committee.<sup>32</sup> Clearly, women were placed in positions that reinforced dominant domestic ideologies and given responsibilities that reflected their role as mothers and educators of future generations.

Soon after its founding, the Society sought to establish links with anti-cruelty societies in the United States. To this end, THS delegates convinced the American Humane Association to hold its 1888 annual convention in Toronto.<sup>33</sup> As well, in their official publications, such as the *Aims and Objects of the Toronto Humane Society* (published in 1888), the THS relied on American definitions of cruelty as well as stories and poems borrowed from the Americans. The *Aims and Objects* even included a brief biography of Henry Bergh, the founder of the ASPCA.<sup>34</sup>

One of the earliest campaigns undertaken by the Toronto Humane Society

was to secure a police constable to investigate complaints of cruelty. From its very beginnings the THS sought to establish a close relationship with the Toronto Police Department; the police largely reciprocated this attitude. At the founding meeting of the Society on 6 March 1887, Staff-Inspector David Archibald told the *Globe*:

The Chief of Police had expressed an interest in the Society and had promised that if necessary he would add an additional man to the staff department of the force in order to carry out the wishes of the society.<sup>35</sup>

On 13 March, the THS appointed a committee to lobby the city council and Board of Police Commissioners to have a constable assigned to the Society.<sup>36</sup>

As a result of the Society's lobbying, the Police Department designated Police Constable Whitesides the Humane Society Officer. The City coffers also benefited from this appointment. An early concern of both the City and the Society was who would pay for PC Whitesides to investigate cases of cruelty. In late October 1887, the Humane Society sent a deputation to the Board of Police Commissioners to discuss the issue of pay.<sup>37</sup> The problem was settled

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. As will be discussed below, a band of mercy was a type of "junior" humane society.

<sup>33</sup> Toronto *Globe*, 13 October 1887; Toronto Humane Society Annual Convention-request for use of theatre in normal school, Archives of Ontario, Department of Education Select Subject Files RG 242-0-1747.

<sup>34</sup> J. George Hodgins, ed., *Aims and Objects of the Toronto Humane Society* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1888), 12-13.

<sup>35</sup> "The Humane Society" Toronto *Globe*, 6 March 1887, 8. The staff department, popularly known as the morality department, will be discussed in greater detail below.

<sup>36</sup> Toronto *Globe*, 13 April 1887.

<sup>37</sup> City of Toronto Archives, F 15 Series 180 File 2, Board of Police Commissioners minutes, 28 October 1887.

by the city council in early December. It was decided that any fines imposed by the humane officer would go to the City treasury as they were “almost sufficient to pay the constable’s salary.”<sup>38</sup> In 1889, the chief constable reported that the humane officer had imposed \$800 in fines, “a sum more than sufficient to pay the constables [sic] salary.”<sup>39</sup>

The THS took immediate advantage of PC Whitesides’ assistance; by the end of 1887 he had laid 203 cruelty charges.<sup>40</sup> In the Society’s 1888 publication *Aims and Objects*, editor J. George Hodgins provides an example of what Whitesides did for the THS. He reports that on 15 March 1888, J.J. Kelso, Whitesides and a reporter from the *Globe* visited the Toronto Cattle Market. As the story goes, “in a waiting-room a number of the drovers were having an exciting time over a dog fight,” however “they hastily dispersed when the constable put his head in at the window.” Continuing on inside the market, the trio discover that the “pens of the cattle and pigs were only half-covered and... many of the animals are often left in them for two or three days.” While the story cautions merchants and dealers not to neglect their stock, the caretaker and drovers were the primary targets of the actual investiga-

tion. The anecdote ends with the note that thanks to the frequent visits of the humane officer, “no drover ever attempts now to use the spiked pole that formerly was in common use.”<sup>41</sup>

Soon after this incident, the chief constable withdrew Whitesides from the Humane Society “owing to the limited number of cases of cruelty to animals that have recently come within the knowledge of the Police.”<sup>42</sup> This was not the end of the Society’s partnership with the police however. Staff-Inspector Archibald’s



*Illustration showing the use of spiked poles, a practice targeted by the THS.*

staff department was quickly given the authority to investigate cruelty cases and Constable John Willis was assigned to the department to work with the Humane Society in July 1888. For its part,

<sup>38</sup> Hodgins, ed. *What has been Accomplished*, 19.

<sup>39</sup> *Toronto City Council Minutes 1890* Appendix, 45, Annual Report of the Chief Constable for 1889. By 1889, the Humane officer was PC Willis, attached to the morality department. See below.

<sup>40</sup> City of Toronto Archives, *Toronto City Council Minutes 1888* Appendix, 417-20, Annual Report of the Chief Constable for 1887. Of the 203 cruelty charges laid, 202 were against men and one was against a woman.

<sup>41</sup> Hodgins, ed., *Aims and Objects*, 38.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from the Chief Constable to J.J. Kelso, 27 March 1888 F 38 Series 90 File 8, City of Toronto Archives.

the THS wholeheartedly embraced the staff department and referred to its officers as the Society's "Prosecuting Agents" in its 1891-92 annual report.<sup>43</sup> The Society's minutes for July 1888 noted that "the change is a good one as Mr[.] Willis seems to be more in sympathy with the work than his predecessor."<sup>44</sup>

The involvement of staff department, popularly known as the "morality department" is significant as this unit was tasked with investigating crimes against public morality. Archibald and his men also handled cases involving illegal liquor sales, gambling dens, desecration of the sabbath, indecent exposure and general "decency and morality." They also looked after newsboys and bootblacks, children who were of great interest to the THS.<sup>45</sup> The embrace of the morality department of the Toronto Police by the Toronto Humane Society clearly demonstrates that the THS viewed its legal work in moral terms and believed crimes of cruelty to be offences against public morality.

However, the Toronto Humane Society was not solely concerned with policing and dedicated a great deal of effort to education and literature. Humane education in North America received much of its impetus from George T. Angell who founded the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

(MSPCA) in March 1868. Angell was among the first anti-cruelty activists in the United States who saw the need for both a prosecuting agency and an educational program that would remove cruelty at its source. To that end, the MSPCA began publishing the monthly magazine *Our Dumb Animals*, in June 1868. However, American Humane Association boosters saw Angell's greatest achievement as the founding of the American Humane Education Society in 1889. The Association's most successful publication was an American edition of Anna Sewall's *Black Beauty*. When Angell and the American Humane Education Society published their edition of the book (twelve years after its 1876 publication in Britain), Angell added an introductory chapter entitled "The Uncle Tom's Cabin of the Horse."<sup>46</sup>

In its published list of goals, the Toronto Humane Society placed a great deal of emphasis on changing popular attitudes. According to the *Globe*, from its very beginnings, the Society "fully realized the need and value of education work, recognizing that cruelty is often the result of thoughtlessness as well as heartlessness."<sup>47</sup> They sought to induce children to be humane, called for teachers to teach kindness to animals, attempted to introduce humane literature

<sup>43</sup> H.J. Grasset *Rules and Regulations for the Toronto Police Force as Revised and Amended by Lieut. -Colonel H.J. Grasset Chief Constable 1890*, 69; Hodgins, ed. *What has been Accomplished*, ii, 19.

<sup>44</sup> City of Toronto Archives, F 1409 Box 1, minutes of the Toronto Humane Society, July 1888.

<sup>45</sup> Grasset, *Rules and Regulations* 69. In 1889, the THS lobbied to Board of Police Commissioners to press for a by-law regulating newsboys, bootblacks and other street vendors, City of Toronto Archives, F 15 Series 180 File 2, Board of Police Commissioners minutes, 15 October 1889.

<sup>46</sup> Coleman, *American Humane Society Leaders in America*, 96-106.

<sup>47</sup> "Toronto Humane Society" *Toronto Globe*, 11 February 1893.





Figure 3: Title Page to *Work Accomplished by the Toronto Humane Society During 1887-1891*.

into the schools and sought to convince clergy, authors and editors keep humane sentiments “before the people.”<sup>48</sup> In the education campaigns of the Toronto Humane Society, as with other anti-cruelty organizations, children and the working classes were especially singled out as needing to be taught humane sentiments.

Diane L. Beers notes that anti-cruelty activists believed that by teaching adults and children to be humane, they would cultivate a more compassionate society. Beers argues that some activists believed that humane education could even cure social ills. It was believed that children, if taught to be humane early in life, would

mature into adults who “treated all beings with benevolence.”<sup>49</sup> Susan J. Pearson argues that anti-cruelty activists in post-Civil War America saw pet keeping as both domestic and didactic. They believed that pet keeping could teach children to become adults who could exercise self-control in their dealings with equals and subordinates. Pet keeping discourses were gendered. It was believed that pet keeping would teach mothering skills to young girls who were believed to be naturally sympathetic and good. Boys on the other hand, were assumed to be in need of a greater deal of refinement. It was argued that boys were more likely to occupy positions of power and thus “their unchecked passions” could do greater damage if a humane sentiment was not inculcated early in life.<sup>50</sup>

The literature published by the Toronto Humane Society reflects this focus on children and the moral uplift of “the people” in general. In the publication *Work Accomplished by the Toronto Humane Society During 1887-1891*, the THS states, “one of the chief objects of the Society was the preparation and diffusion of a variety of humane literature among the people.”<sup>51</sup> According to the *Globe*, this particular book was not only intended to be “an account of the good work of the society, but also furnishes for the use of teachers and parents.”<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Toronto Humane Society *Officers*.

<sup>49</sup> Beers, *For the Prevention of Cruelty*, 86-87.

<sup>50</sup> Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless*, 34-36.

<sup>51</sup> Hodgins, ed. *What has been Accomplished*, 61



Among the wide variety of literature put out by the Society was a pamphlet “on the evils of the check-rein,” a “card of warning” to prevent drivers from leaving their horses uncovered in the cold, and a “fly-leaf of warning to boys against shooting at birds with catapults.” The THS also distributed a number of books written by American and British anti-cruelty activists. Among these were *Voices of the Speechless* Selections for Schools and Private Readings and *A Mother’s Lesson on Kindness to Animals*. The Society also distributed copies of leading humane magazines such as *Dumb Animals*, *Our Animal Friends* and *The Humane Journal*. Finally, the THS distributed a large selection of lantern slides “with a view to provide entertainment, and to interest... children generally in humane subjects.” The slides included, “Girl Carrying a Lamb Across a Streetcar,” “The Kind Newsboy,” and “Match Seller Boy Carrying a Stray Dog.” In 1890, the Society offered prizes to children for essays on “the duty of kindness to animals” and “why birds and their nests should be protected.” The THS offered eighty prizes worth a total of \$100 “in suitable books.”<sup>53</sup>

As the above titles suggest, the publications of the THS were aimed at children and those workers in closest contact with labouring animals. However, they also contained subtle critiques of the elite. For example, in the Society’s *Aims and Objects*, the section on the checkrein

is primarily aimed at “ambitious drivers or coachmen.” However, it also calls on “any lady of fashion, instead of laying back against her carriage cushion unconscious of the distress she is permitting,” to put herself in her horse’s position.<sup>54</sup>

Elite ambivalence characterized much of the work of anti-cruelty societies. As Beers notes, these organizations dedicated a great deal of attention to stamping out blood sports. Specifically targeted were dogfights, cockfights, animal baiting, rabbit coursing, gander pulling, pigeon shoots and fox hunting. She argues that there was a great deal of support to eliminate those sports most closely identified as rough, working-class entertainments, such as dog and cock fights. However, reformers faced resistance when they agitated against elite sports such as fox hunting and pigeon shooting. Beers argues that, in the face of elite intransigence, anti-cruelty activists largely backed-down.<sup>55</sup>

To reach and influence children, the Toronto Humane Society also had recourse to a more direct tool. The THS actively sponsored the formation of Bands of Mercy throughout the city. The bands were considered “indispensible for [the] purpose,” of “enlisting the young in the work of mercy and kindness.” These organizations, pioneered in Boston in 1882, were a type of humane society aimed specifically at recruiting children and teaching them humane values. Ac-

<sup>52</sup> “Toronto Humane Society” *Toronto Globe*, 11 February 1893.

<sup>53</sup> Hodgins, ed. *What has been Accomplished*, 61-63.

<sup>54</sup> Hodgins, ed., *Aims and Objects*, 16.

<sup>55</sup> Beers, *For the Prevention of Cruelty*, 76-78.

cording to Hodgins, “a Band of Mercy might be justly termed a preparatory class for a humane society.” Hodgins eloquently states that, “in our public schools of to-day [sic] are the... children of the present building the future of our land, its moral and political government.” He concludes with a reflection on the “importance of sowing the seeds of mercy and justice... in early youth” as these lessons “often... govern our actions with an indefinable influence.”<sup>56</sup>

The Toronto Humane Society argued that children should be made to join a band of mercy because “children who acquire kindly dispositions in Bands of Mercy are not likely to be cruel to any sensitive being when they become men and women, and thereby will be made better citizens.” This is reflected in the band of mercy pledge, “I will try to be kind to all living creatures, and will try to protect them, as far as I can, from cruel usage,” which was to be recited by members at each meeting.<sup>57</sup> To organize these groups, the THS partnered with Toronto’s inspectors of schools, the board of school trustees and local teachers and published information on how to establish a branch.<sup>58</sup> Through bands of mercy, the Toronto Humane Society sought to inculcate humane sentiments in children in the hopes that they would one day become respectable members of society.

In one band, THS workers convinced

its female members to “give up the cruel fashion of wearing birds and birds wings in ornaments in hats.” In the early 1890s, Mrs. S.G. Wood, “one of the active members of the Society,” reported that the bands were “progressing bravely” and in each case “where [an] organization has been introduced, it has been warmly taken up by the children themselves.” By way of example, Mrs. Wood cited a “flourishing Band” that boasted eighty-five members. This particular group was run by “one of [the Society’s] energetic workers, whose love and gentleness has wrought a wonderful change in the children belonging to that particular school.”<sup>59</sup> Interestingly, the THS continually pointed to one particular band, the Golden Rule Band of Mercy, located in the Elizabeth Street school, as a model for other bands to emulate. Founded in 1890 by Miss W.A. Wills, a teacher at the school, with sixty-eight children, the band had ninety-four members by 1892.<sup>60</sup> Significantly, Elizabeth Street was in the heart of Saint John’s Ward, which in the late-nineteenth century was more commonly referred to as “The Ward,” a dense working class and immigrant slum bordered by College, Queen, and Yonge streets, as well as University Avenue. Clearly the Society’s efforts to reform the working classes extended to working class children as well.

One of the most important focuses of late nineteenth-century anti-cruelty

<sup>56</sup> Hodgins, ed. *What has been Accomplished*, 27.

<sup>57</sup> Hodgins, ed., *Aims and Objects*, 201

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Hodgins, ed. *What has been Accomplished*, 24.

organizations, including the Toronto Humane Society, was the horse. Horses were indispensable to the nineteenth-century city. According to Clay McShane, by 1880, the city of Boston had an average of one horse for every twenty-six people. He argues that by the last decades of the century, a city's "entire internal circulatory system depended upon horses for transportation-related services." Central to this urban transportation network were horse-drawn streetcar lines. As McShane notes, street railways helped redefine the urban geography of modern cities, "whereby the poorest people lived in the most densely populated neighborhoods and the middle, then upper, classes moved outwards in progressive bands."<sup>61</sup>

In Toronto, the first horse cars began operating in late 1861. The city's street railway was originally a privately owned enterprise under the guise of the Toronto Street Railway Company. It was an extremely lucrative business. According to historians Christopher Armstrong and H.V. Nelles, in 1890 alone the Street Railway Company made \$165,562 in profits from a total income of \$730,000.<sup>62</sup> However, as this private franchise was set to expire in 1891, the City formed the Street Railway Committee in 1889 to determine its future. Interestingly, when the Street Railway Commission began accepting tenders for the purchase of the franchise, one of the first syndicates to place a bid was headed by real-estate inves-

tor J.K. Kerr and Humane Society President W.R. Brock.<sup>63</sup> While Armstrong and Nelles miss Brock's connection to the THS, a key feature of the Kerr-Brock syndicate's bid was the electrification of the street railway lines. Electrification would end the need for horses to pull the cars and thus stop the overworking of horses by the street railway. In the end however, the commission rejected the Kerr-Brock syndicate's tender.

W.R. Brock's attempt to purchase the street railway franchise did not directly involve the Humane Society. However, between 1890 and 1891 the THS was actively lobbying the Street Railway Committee to restrict the number of passengers a horse car could legally carry. The Society had made prior attempts to convince the Street Railway Company to restrict over-crowding. However, the company rebuffed the Society, arguing that "the public, and not the company, was responsible for over-crowding." In this instance, the police sided with the company; the chief constable noted that, in his opinion "the public... are quite as much to blame as the company, for if, when a car is full, people would abstain from making it fuller, all would be well."<sup>64</sup> To appeal to the public, the Humane Society secured the support of the Ministerial Association. The Society sought to have the city's Protestant ministers "draw the attention of their congregations... to the over-loading of the street cars." The Humane Society

<sup>61</sup> McShane, "Gilded Age Boston," 278-280.

<sup>62</sup> Armstrong and Nelles, *The Revenge of the Methodist Bicycle Company*, 29.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41.

<sup>64</sup> Hodgins, ed. *What has been Accomplished*, 47-48.

asked that ministers tell their flocks that, while a normal horse car weighed 3,000 pounds, when it was loaded with fifty or more people (weighing an average of 150 pounds each), the car became approximately 11,000 pounds. The THS wanted the public to know that “pulling such a load as this up the Yonge Street grade of six inches in 300 feet was altogether too much for a team of horses.”<sup>65</sup>

When the Street Railway Committee was created, the Humane Society saw its opportunity to again lobby against the over-crowding of the streetcars. In November 1890, J.J. Kelso sent a letter to C.R.W. Biggar, the city solicitor stating, “our Society is very anxious to see that in the new street railway charter [steps] should be taken to prohibit overcrowding.”<sup>66</sup> The following month, the Society proposed that “no passengers should be taken on for whom there are not seats.” Echoing American anti-cruelty activists, the Society also argued that, if a car was over-crowded, the conductor should be “held personally liable and subject to a penalty.”<sup>67</sup> The Humane Society also appealed directly to city council. In a letter dated 6 April 1891, they requested the City license each horse car to carry only

a certain number of passengers, based on the size of the car. They suggested that “the driver and conductor be empowered to refuse any more than the regulated number of passengers whether ladies or gentlemen.”<sup>68</sup>

The street railway franchise was sold to a private syndicate headed by George Kiely and William Mackenzie in the spring of 1891.<sup>69</sup> The Toronto Humane Society appealed to the new owners on behalf of the city’s overworked street railway horses. Once again putting the burden of responsibility on the street railway workers, the THS proposed that “conductors... when their cars are full... place a notice in a conspicuous place outside to that effect and... allow no more passengers to get on.” Although the Society’s deputation was “very courteously received,” the new owners were just as intransigent as the previous. The THS was told that “civic legislation might be required before the company could act as suggested.”<sup>70</sup> However, in August 1892, the first electric trolleys began operating in the city, leading to the eventual elimination of horse drawn streetcars and ending the Society’s need to fight for the rights of the streetcar horses.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>66</sup> City of Toronto Archives, F 200 Series 920, File 1, letter from J.J. Kelso to Mr. C.R.W. Biggar City Solicitor 27 November 1890, Toronto Street Railway Committee Communications.

<sup>67</sup> City of Toronto Archives, F 200 Series 920, File 1, letter from J.J. Kelso to the Mayor, 10 December 1890, Toronto Street Railway Committee Communications. For American context, see McShane and Tarr’s arguments above.

<sup>68</sup> City of Toronto Archives, F 200 Series 920, File 1, letter from J.J. Kelso to the Mayor, 6 April 1891, Toronto Street Railway Committee Communications.

<sup>69</sup> Armstrong and Nelles, *The Revenge of the Methodist Bicycle Company*, 56, 121.

<sup>70</sup> Hodgins, ed. *What has been Accomplished*, 47

<sup>71</sup> Armstrong and Nelles, *The Revenge of the Methodist Bicycle Company*, 122.



*Figure 4: Cruelty to a streetcar horse, from Work Accomplished by the Toronto Humane Society During 1887-1891.*

In its streetcar campaign, the THS used a variety of tactics on both practical and moral grounds. Although they failed and the campaign became redundant after electrification, their attempt clearly demonstrates that the relief of streetcar horses was to come at the expense of the working class drivers and conductors. No thought was given to taking legal action against the wealthy owners of the Toronto Street Railway Company.

The Toronto Humane Society was a product of the widespread popularity of moral and social reform projects in the late nineteenth-century. It was an organization that reflected Toronto's dominant

class, religious and gender ideologies. Its leadership was comprised primarily of the city's business, political and religious elites, with men and women being assigned predetermined roles based on gender and power. As such, its members sought to inculcate values that reflected popular but middle-class notions of respectability, humanity and citizenship. Using tactics that ranged from policing, to education and government and corporate lobbying, the THS pursued a program of social regulation and moral reform that targeted the working classes and those thought to be behaving outside the bounds of middle-class respectability.