

About Home Children

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Introduction

The British Isles have had a long history of child migration to former colonies. Some children certainly arrived in Canada before Confederation in 1867, but it is the estimated 100,000 or more who were brought and settled there between 1869 and 1948 under the assisted juvenile emigration movement whom Canadians now call “home children.” These young people, under the age of 18 years and perhaps as young as 6 months (but most were probably at least 7 years old and less than 14), were brought mainly to Ontario by British juvenile emigration agencies. It is often said that they were brought over as cheap labour, but that is open to question, given that most of the immigrant children were of school age and were required by law to attend school.

Many young children were said to be “adopted,” but Ontario did not have a formal adoption law until 1920. If children were past school leaving age when they arrived, they had to receive wages while they learned a useful skill from which they could make a living. This could be done with annual renewable contracts or most often in Ontario by indenture, based on Ontario’s 1851 *Act Respecting Apprentices and Minors* and its subsequent amendments. Most boys learned skills related to farming and girls learned skills related to home management. In this way, by adulthood, boys would have learned practical farming skills or the basics of a useful trade, and the girls would have learned the arts and science of practical home management and other skills needed by all women.

The settlement families of some children paid their secondary school fees (it was not free in those days) or even part of post-secondary training, for which these young men and women may have won scholarships and contributed from their own savings to become teachers, nurses, secretaries, and ministers of the church. Others apprenticed themselves for training in such trades as carpentry, dressmaking, millinery, machinery repair and telegraphy or, with post-secondary training, went into business for themselves.

Canada was anxious to increase its population and welcomed this assisted juvenile emigration movement as a nation-building exercise. The children would grow up as Canadians knowing Canadian culture and would require less training than adult immigrants when they reached adulthood. It was also seen in part as an altruistic movement for those Canadian families whose children had left home—empty-nesters who missed the sound of children in their homes—or for families who wanted children but had none of their own. The movement was often

described as saving the British public purse by reducing the cost of operating workhouses, but this is controversial, as once parties of children had left for Canada there were always more poor neglected children to fill the vacant spaces.

“Home children” is a Canadian term, probably in everyday use since the early 1900s. However, it was rarely, if ever, used in newspapers where juvenile immigrants were commonly referred to by the name of their sponsoring agency, perhaps as “British youth,” or often carelessly as a “Barnardo boy/girl” (most often not the case). As far as is known, the term was first used in print in *The Children’s Home-Finder: The Story of Annie Macpherson and Louisa Birt*, 1913, by Lillian M. Birt, pages 145 and 186. The term also appears in the 1924 Bondfield Report, commissioned by the British government to investigate the condition of the British juvenile emigrants settled in Canada. The report noted that home child was regularly used in Canada, although some settlement families disliked it, and commented:

“We did not find it was used in any derogatory sense, and so far as we could ascertain, there was no prejudice against these children.”

By comparison, they found discrimination against the Children’s Aid Society’s children, who were commonly called “shelter children.” Unlike most families who took juvenile immigrants, families who took Children’s Aid Society children were paid to do so. Dr. Barnardo’s agency was an exception. In the 1890s, Barnardo’s paid families who took young children, but the payments stopped when the child turned 10 or 11; often the child was returned to the agency for resettlement.

BIFHSGO and Its Home Children Emphasis

BIFHSGO has chosen to place a special emphasis on Canada's home children because of the society's accessibility to the ship, military and federal government records at Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and to the records of the Family History Center of Ottawa (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). No other place in Canada has such ready access to these essential research tools, particularly important when considering that about 70 per cent of the home children were settled in Ontario.

BIFHSGO's role in Canada's home children story is to establish databases or indexes on its own website or that of LAC, to encourage its volunteers to give public lectures, to publish articles about home children in its quarterly journal *Anglo-Celtic Roots* and other suitable publications, and so ensure that the information compiled and analyzed is freely available to all who are interested.

BIFHSGO is proud to be associated with LAC in two major home children projects, both undertaken by teams of volunteers:

- the extraction of home children’s names from the passenger lists of ships arriving in Canada from Britain between 1869 and 1935—the index to those names is now hosted on the LAC website; and
- the extraction of the names of children from the records of J. T. Middlemore’s Children’s Emigration Homes. These children arrived in Canada between 1873 and 1932. The resulting index is hosted on the BIFHSGO website.

BIFHSGO volunteers began extracting information from LAC's collections in 1998. That information was then used for producing indexes, the first of which became the base of the LAC's home children's records and was the spur to BIFHSGO to distribute information on home children on its own website and as articles in *Anglo-Celtic Roots*. When BIFHSGO began using its own information distribution systems, queries from people wanting information about their home children forebears began to pour in, followed by invitations to members to attend or give presentations at historical and genealogical society meetings. Responding to these queries and requests became an essential part of BIFHSGO's operations.

BIFHSGO volunteers have also extracted names of other groups of home children for indexing. These include children brought to Canada by Charlotte Alexander and James W. C. Fegan. In addition, starting in 2017, the volunteers extracted names of juvenile immigrants from federal government immigration files for inclusion in the LAC website.

BIFHSGO acknowledges the influence and encouragement of Dave and Kay Lorente in initiating the society's indexation projects, arising from the couple's outstanding advocacy role on behalf of home children and their families in Canada. As the 1991 founders of Home Children Canada, a former subcommittee of Heritage Renfrew, the Lorentes have helped countless home children's families and/or their descendants to access their personal records. They have also been active in raising national and international awareness through lectures, reunions, the placement of plaques, and the compiling of family histories of home children. In June 2003, the Lorentes signed a memorandum of understanding agreeing that BIFHSGO would take over their work of responding to requests to find the history of home children's ancestors—a move made possible by BIFHSGO's five-year experience in the field.

Explanation of Terms

Home children: In the strict sense, home children were under the age of 18 years when admitted to and trained by a juvenile emigration agency in its home in Britain and brought by the agency to its distributing home in Canada. From this home they were settled with families and they could return there if necessary. By common usage, but inaccurately, the term is sometimes expanded to include any child or young person who came to Canada unaccompanied by his/her parents.

Some agencies' emigration parties included over-aged young persons (i.e., over the age of 18), most of whom were not given settlement assistance. These young persons were not home children and the agencies who brought them were ineligible for the federal bonus or other support for juvenile immigrants.

Age classification of children and young persons: Young people were generally classified into three groups by the British and Canadian federal governments. The provinces sometimes used the same classification system but were more likely to have used their own specific age group names:

- a *child* was under 14 years of age
- a *youth* was 14 years of age and under the age of 18
- a *[young] adult* was 18 years of age and under the age of 21, but without the rights and responsibilities of an adult

- an *adult* was 21 years old, having reached the “age of majority” or become “of age” on their 21st birthday with the full legal rights and responsibilities of an adult of the time. (In 1970, Canada reduced the age of majority from 21 to 18.)

There is sometimes confusion when interpreting what is meant by an age range used for classification purposes. A group of youths might be described as “aged 14 to 18”—does this mean that the oldest was 17 or 18 years old? Juvenile emigration agencies could only receive the Canadian government bonus for children under the age of 18. Thus, in this context, “aged 14 to 18” means from the child’s fourteenth to eighteenth birthdays.

Pauper, waifs and strays, street arab, and gutter child: In Britain, these terms were used for two distinctly different groups. “Pauper” applied only to poor adults and children who had been or were currently in a workhouse. It was a technical term and not a term of disparagement. “Waifs and strays,” “street arab” and “gutter child” were disparaging terms for children who had never been in a workhouse; they were often described as “running the streets” and being out of parental control. In Canada, no distinction was made—all were terms of disparagement.

Education (British): In Britain, from 1870 the law required all children to attend primary school full time between the ages of 5 and 13. At first, primary education at state schools was not free, but it became so in 1891. Various changes were made to the school leaving age—it went down to age 10 then upwards again. At the end of the First World War it was legally confirmed as being at age 14. This did not mean that children had to stop going to school on the day they reached the prescribed leaving age; they could continue at primary school if they wished. Most slum children stopped going to school as soon as they reached the prescribed leaving age, however, to find work and help support the family.

Education (Canadian): In Canada, education laws varied from province to province, with most not requiring full-time school attendance until 1900 or even later. Ontario, for example, in 1871 became the first to institute a compulsory four months of primary school education for children from their seventh to thirteenth birthdays. In 1891 Ontario implemented full-time attendance for all children between their eighth and fourteenth birthdays. There were various provisions to excuse non-attendance: e.g., lack of a school or schoolteacher, or the distance from the home to the school being greater than that prescribed by law. If the settlement family kept their home child in school full time past the prescribed age and provided food, clothing, laundry and pocket money, the child did not receive wages until after she/he had left school.

Canadian travel subsidies, capitation fees, bonuses, and age restrictions for immigrants: After Confederation, Canada was anxious to increase its population as quickly as possible to develop its resources and protect it from possible takeover by the United States, so the federal government used subsidies and other inducements to attract immigrants. It subsidized both shipping costs from Britain to Canada and train travel from the port of entry to localities in Québec and Ontario, as well as sometimes reimbursing the capitation fee of \$2 charged to each immigrant. If the immigrants were travelling in a group sponsored by an emigration society, the party leader paid the capitation fees to the captain of the ship, who, on arrival at the Canadian port of entry, handed the money to an immigration official before the party was allowed to disembark. After checking that the passengers were all bona fide immigrants, the government later returned the capitation fee to the sponsoring agency.

After some parliamentary wrangling on immigration policy in 1888, the federal government cancelled the assisted passage policy for immigrants, even though Canada was still vigorously competing with Australia and the USA (and their inducements) for British immigrants. It did, however, begin providing juvenile emigration agencies with a \$2 bonus for each child under 18 years of age brought to Canada, except for workhouse children. The actual cost of travel and clothing for an immigrant child coming to Canada until 1916 was about £16, equivalent then to about \$64 Canadian, a cost paid by the agency bringing the child.

Travel costs after the First World War were about 3.5 times higher than before the war. In response to the agencies' higher costs and with the hope of increasing the numbers of juvenile immigrants, Canada in 1920 abolished the \$2 bonus, replacing it with an annual \$1,000 grant for any agency settling at least 100 children each year in the hope that the numbers of juvenile immigrants would increase. This changed again under the *Empire Settlement Act* of 1922, when the British and Canadian governments, in a bilateral agreement, agreed to share the travel costs of all assisted juvenile emigrants.

In 1925, following the publication of the 1924 Bondfield Report examining the success of British juvenile immigrants in Canada, British law specified that only children who had completed their education in the British Isles and were at least 14 years old and under 18 years of age could receive the British and Canadian support for travel under the *Empire Settlement Act* bilateral agreement. Nevertheless, when one province in 1927 asked for younger children, Canada granted permission, provided the agency paid all expenses associated with such emigration. In 1929 there was another change: Canadian officials in Britain denied emigration to Canada of juvenile emigrant boys aged 14 who were less than five feet tall.

Passports: Canadian passports were not introduced until after the Second World War; before that time Canadians were "British subjects resident in Canada" (as all home children became after their requisite domicile in Canada) and they used British passports. Early home children who wanted to go to the USA with their settlement families (or on their own when they were beyond care) carried not a passport but an officially stamped letter or form, usually signed by the Governor General. In 1915, this document was replaced by the booklet-type British passport stating country of residence.

Canadian citizenship: In 1910 Canadian immigration law defined a Canadian citizen in three ways: as a person born in Canada, a British subject domiciled in Canada, or a British subject naturalized under Canadian law. Domicile was defined as the number of years resident in Canada. Under the 1910 law, domicile in Canada was three years, but the 1919 amendment extended domicile to five years and included a list of prohibitions for granting citizenship.

When did the assisted juvenile emigration movement end?: All Canadian support for juvenile emigrants stopped in mid-1932, because of the Great Depression. After the Second World War and again anxious to increase its population, Canada reintroduced support for immigrants. As far as can be determined, the Fairbridge Society brought the last party of assisted juvenile emigrants to Canada in 1948 for its Prince of Wales Farm School in British Columbia.

Responsibilities of juvenile emigration agencies: The agencies were responsible for the children they settled in Canada until they reached their 21st birthday unless the age was

changed by provincial law. However, if young people married before that age, they were considered to have come of age and were no longer the responsibility of the agency. If the young person was female, she became the responsibility of her husband. In 1897 Ontario made the agencies legally responsible for their children until their eighteenth birthday.

Visiting: Each emigration agency was legally responsible for the children they settled, normally until they reached the age of majority. This usually meant the agency's representative made annual visits to the home of each child until the child was reached his/her eighteenth birthday. If there were problems, some agencies visited for a longer period. In Ontario, however, agencies were not required to visit their children after the age of 16.

Starting in 1883 Canadian federal inspectors were required to make annual visits and report on the progress of all workhouse children settled by juvenile emigration agencies. These reports were sent on to the boards of guardians of the workhouses from which the children had come. The agencies who settled workhouse children also visited them and sent their reports to the respective boards of guardians. Sometimes the two reports did not agree. In such cases, the board of guardians contacted the agency's headquarters in Britain to request an explanation of the difference. The request was passed on to the agency's superintendent in Canada for an explanation, with instructions to take any necessary action and report back on results for the information of the board of guardians.

In 1920, Canada extended the duties of the federal inspectors to visiting all assisted juvenile immigrants until their eighteenth birthday. If the federal inspector found difficulties with an emigration agency child, discussions were held with the agency's Canadian superintendent to resolve the difficulty. The superintendent reported the resolution to the agency's headquarters in Britain.

Adoption: Adoption laws in Canada varied among provinces. Ontario did not have a formal adoption law until 1921. Agencies settling children in Ontario had two options, the same as for Ontario-born children:

- informal familial adoption with special protection or inheritance provisions
- adoption based on the 1851 provincial *Act Respecting Apprentices and Minors* and its 1877 and 1887 revisions; it set out the rules for indenture and legal protection. There were no inheritance provisions.

New Brunswick passed its first law on adoption in 1873 and on April 1, 2018, opened adoption records to adoptees and natural parents. Nova Scotia passed its first adoption law in 1896 and Prince Edward Island in 1916.

Backgrounds of Home Children Brought to Canada

British children destined for Canada were inevitably poor, undernourished, and hungry, and had often been neglected or cruelly treated when they were admitted to an emigration agency's home in Britain. By the time they were ready to leave the home for Canada they had received medical and dental attention, good food, new clothes, and social training, so that when they boarded the ship most groups looked very much like any well-groomed group of British school

children of the period. In Canada most people thought these children were orphans, but this was because in Britain at the time, children whose father had died or deserted them were often called orphans. Probably less than five per cent of home children were true orphans.

Most home children came from the poorest working-class families who lived in the worst slums of the great industrial cities. Their families were living in or had fallen into abject poverty because of job loss, illness and incapacity or death of the breadwinner. Many youths were on their own, having been deserted by one or both parents. The lack of money and public social service supports often drove a deserted or widowed mother lacking support from family or friends to the workhouse or to prostitution. Many deserted and widowed fathers, with young children and no close relatives who could help with their care, as a last resort took their children to one of the emigration homes for settlement in Canada, often agreeing to pay for their support until they were settled in new homes.

Beginning in the 1770s, British churches often provided working children with free schooling on Sundays and a free meal to attract them. By the early 1800s, people noticed that there were more poor and hungry children “running the streets.” Social activists, church and civic officials viewed them as being in danger of adopting delinquent behaviours just to feed themselves and thus becoming criminals. By 1831 it was reported that children's attendance at the Sunday schools for free schooling had grown to 1.2 million.

Attendance at these schools in 1860s Birmingham was recorded as sporadic and, for most working-class children, education was over by the age of 10. Records for other industrial towns and cities were probably similar. Although most Anglican churches had some means of providing small amounts of money and/or food (usually bread) to destitute families born in the parish, those born in another parish were not assisted. Some of the Nonconformist churches, however, had mission rooms where, whatever their beliefs, children found on the street late at night were taken to eat and sleep. At first, the only available government support was the workhouse, which most people tried to avoid at all costs because of their deliberately sanctioned draconian rules.

Economic depression developed in Britain during the 1870s and lasted through the 1880s. Compulsory primary schooling for all children from their fifth to their fourteenth birthdays was introduced in 1870. Parents were legally responsible to see that their children attended, but state schools did not become free until 1891. Hungry and starving children were still on the streets when they should have been in school and were therefore legally truants. They spent their school money on food or, without it, did as all hungry working-class children had always done—supported themselves by begging, petty theft of handkerchiefs and other small items, or stealing foodstuffs from market stalls. Sometimes they earned a few pennies by holding a horse or doing some other small service. The parents or guardians of these children, and even the children themselves, were liable for prosecution for truancy.

In 1889, the British law against child cruelty authorized the newly founded National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children to bring cases of cruelty and neglect to the notice of the police for prosecution of the parents or guardians. When a magistrate found the parents or guardians guilty and sentenced them to imprisonment, and he believed the children were in physical and moral danger, he could order them to a “place of safety” (municipally certified

homes of various types) or make other arrangement for the children while their parents or guardians served their sentences. Newspaper reports about these cases described the children as dressed in rags, dirty, hungry, or starving, and covered in vermin.

Descriptions of the poorest slum family homes, sometimes just a single room and rarely more than two rooms and an attic with one room per floor, reveal that they were often awful beyond belief. They were terraced and usually surrounded or partly surrounded a central court. They did not have bathrooms; toilets were separate buildings outside the house in the court and were used by multiple families. All water had to be carried inside from an outdoor standpipe attached to a well or water supply. People trying to help the children would often be driven away from such homes by the filth and stench.

The housing architecture for the working-class started to change late in the 1800s. New houses were terraced but opened both to the street and the court, allowing for much better ventilation. There were usually two rooms to a floor instead of one, with larger windows for increased air circulation; a bathroom was included, and water was piped in. Many old houses were updated with the insertion of bay windows and piped water to the kitchen sink. Construction and updating programs were slow and interrupted by two world wars and the Great Depression; the effort was not completed until well after the Second World War.

Juvenile Emigration Homes

In 1869, Maria Rye was the first person to bring a party of children—known as assisted juvenile emigrants—to settle in Ontario; next to arrive with a party for Ontario was Annie Macpherson in 1870. They were soon followed by newly founded juvenile emigration agencies that would also bring children not only for settlement in Ontario, but also by 1872 for settlement in Québec and Nova Scotia. It was not until 1885 that a party was settled in New Brunswick. In 1886 Emma Stirling opened a home in Nova Scotia while in 1888 Dr. Barnardo opened one in Manitoba. Each juvenile emigration agency's home in Britain was privately owned by an individual or a philanthropic society.

Children were brought by the agency from its British home to its distributing home in Canada, from which they were settled and to which they could return if the settlement was unsatisfactory. These homes in Britain and Canada were supported primarily by private subscriptions, donations, or legacies from British sources. Many were affiliated with specific churches (e.g., the Waifs and Strays Society was a Church of England agency); others had no specific church affiliations but nevertheless were supported by a variety of churches and religious organizations. The homes in Britain were not subsidized by the British government, but the municipal councils where they were located often assisted in various ways. In Canada the distributing homes sometimes received support from the province and/or from the municipality in which they were situated.

Many of the agencies often included union workhouse children, children from industrial schools and reformatories, or privately sponsored children in their parties. These young people, particularly those from large workhouses, may have spent several years in the workhouse before joining an emigration agency's party, unlike the emigration agency's children, who

generally spent a relatively short time in the agency home. Consequently, the children from workhouses may have had a more challenging time adapting to Canadian conditions.

The sponsor of children not trained in the juvenile emigration agency's British home, whether an individual or organization, had to cover the costs of travel, clothing and inspection visits, and usually provided the name of a contact person in Canada.

On admission to an agency's home, children usually had flea bites on their bodies, many had scabies itch, boils or sores, their hair was usually full of lice and their heads often had ringworm. For these reasons children were immediately given a bath on admission, their heads shaved, and their clothes burned and replaced with clean ones. Many were sick (e.g., measles, chickenpox, fevers, tuberculosis), requiring hospitalization or isolation in the home to recover before being allowed to mix with the other residents.

While in an emigration home, children were prepared for their emigration and the life they were likely to live in Canada. Most emigration agencies tried to prevent children from becoming "institutionalized" by keeping them for less than about 11 months before emigration, and many children were there for only a few weeks or days before emigration. Besides going to school and church, whether those facilities were in-house or outside the home, their basic training was mostly social. It focused on how to look after themselves: the development of self-respect, good manners, cleanliness, and honesty, what service meant, the importance of obedience and personal responsibility, and perhaps some basic understanding of care for animals, gardens, and homes. Street smarts learned in urban slums were not appreciated and of little use in Canadian rural districts.

Juvenile emigration homes were in urban areas with little access to large open spaces, but visits to a farm or an agricultural exhibition were possible. Further, most agency homes had gardens and perhaps pets, both of which gave children the opportunity to learn lessons of responsibility in meeting the needs of other living things. Some homes even had specialists bring in animals, perhaps a cow, to explain how it was milked and looked after. More detailed agricultural training would not necessarily have been of much help because of the ages of the children and the difference between Canadian and British weather and farming adaptations.

With the social skills learned in the homes and a knowledge of what responsibility meant, when children aged 14 or older arrived in Canada, they were presumed ready to learn and practice the skills to be taught by the settlement family. Most settlement families signed a document that clearly stated they were responsible to teach their immigrant child or have them taught a trade or skills necessary for becoming a productive and self-sustaining adult.

The settlement farmer (usually called "Master" or "Mr." by older boys) would teach a boy the skills needed to farm, look after animals and crops, and repair broken equipment, while the girls would learn the skills of home management, cooking and sewing from the farmer's wife (usually called "Mistress" or "Mrs." by older girls). Many girls were also taught to play the piano or organ. The skills for living were not taught at school—reading, writing and arithmetic were the main subjects. Younger children usually called their foster parents "mama" and "papa" or "uncle" and "aunt."

Union Workhouses

As mentioned earlier, in Britain, “pauper” was a technical term used for all union workhouse residents or receivers of Poor Law relief. Street people, although poor, were not in the British sense “paupers.” This distinction was not recognized in Canada.

The workhouse was a long-standing British institution, set up by a local parish to care for the poor. The British *Poor Law Amendment Act* of 1834, in response to the fact that most parish workhouses were too small to accommodate the steadily increasing numbers of indigent poor, called for the grouping of adjacent parishes into a union, the building of single large workhouses to serve the union parishes, and the closure of all the small parish workhouses. Although officially these large workhouses were called “union workhouses,” the terms “union” or “workhouse” were, and still are, used as synonyms. Each union workhouse was tax supported, was governed by a board of guardians elected by members of the involved parishes, and was overseen by the Poor Law Commission. All workhouses after 1834 had to employ a schoolmaster or schoolmistress to provide their children with three hours of education daily.

By the mid-1800s, union workhouses were overcrowded with poor and orphaned children, and partly to solve the problem the 1850 *Emigration of Children Act* included a section on the emigration of pauper (i.e., workhouse) children, as union workhouses, as state-supported institutions, could not emigrate their own children. The Act permitted the assisted emigration of workhouse children to the colonies, but the lack of any intermediary bodies—agencies or organizations established to transport and settle emigrant children—meant that few workhouse children were emigrated for nearly 20 years. The first agency to meet the criteria was that of Maria Rye, who included some workhouse children in her 1869 party of children, and the second one was Annie Macpherson, who included workhouse children in her 1870 party. Not all juvenile emigration agencies agreed to take and settle workhouse children in Canada.

The *British Elementary Education Act* of 1870 required all children to attend school full-time from their fifth to thirteenth birthdays. Most workhouses had their own schools; few workhouse children attended state schools. The settlement of workhouse children in Canada started in 1869 but was stopped in 1875 following the publication of the Doyle Report. Andrew Doyle had been commissioned by the British government in 1874 to inspect the treatment of workhouse children settled in Canada. Doyle’s report was highly critical of the way the Misses Macpherson and Rye organizations monitored the children they settled in Ontario and Québec.

In 1883, after an agreement was reached between the Canada Department of Agriculture (then responsible for immigration) and the British Local Government Board (responsible for the administration of the Poor Laws and later replaced by the Poor Law Commission), juvenile emigration agencies resumed the emigration of workhouse children under the agreed conditions. Among these conditions was the previously mentioned annual visit by Canadian federal government inspectors to settled workhouse children to report on their progress. These reports were sent to the boards of guardians and passed on to the Local Government Board. Copies were kept in Canada.

Although it was not universal, most boys from workhouses were usually between the ages of 14 and 17, while girls, who were supposed to be under 10 years of age, were most often older.

When taken into a workhouse, families were separated by sex and age from the age of 2, although a child under 7 could, if it was deemed “expedient,” be accommodated in his/her mother’s section and usually shared her bed. Limited daily appointments could be set up for parents to visit their children. The main advantage of workhouses was that inmates received three meals a day (even if of a very poor quality by today’s standards), a place to sleep, and access to medical facilities. All able-bodied people were put to work—often stone-breaking for men; women picked apart old rope to produce oakum, used for caulking ships. Children started work when they reached the age of 14.

Workhouses had their own chapels and schools, so children rarely, if ever, left the grounds and only mixed with others like themselves. Some union workhouses set up “villages” of “cottage homes” quite separate from the main union building, where groups of 15 to 25 children lived in separate cottages (two-storied houses) each with a resident married couple as “parents.” The school and chapel were also part of the village, and usually there were workshops for teaching the children various skills. The Marston Green Cottage Homes in Birmingham were an early example. The Quarrier Home at Bridge of Weir in Scotland, although a private juvenile emigration home, was organized in a similar way.

At least a few of the juvenile emigration agencies sent their children to the state schools and to the local churches and Sunday schools. They also provided opportunities for the children to attend such events as concerts, fairs, and picnics, where they met outside people and practised the social skills they were being taught. The perception of some was that children with such experience outside the walls of their agency would adapt more quickly to life in Canada than those children from workhouses and orphanages who did not have such experiences.

Reformatories and Industrial Schools

These were training institutions for children who had been in trouble with the authorities: reformatories for children who had been in jail and industrial schools for children who had not been in jail. The children in both institutions usually received training in trades such as agriculture, woodworking, shoe repair or metalworking, so that on release at the age of 16 or 18 they would have some way of making a living.

By today's standards their transgressions were minor: stealing a handkerchief, stealing from the market, begging in the street, being homeless and without any means of support, or being in the company of reputed thieves. A first or second court appearance without a jail sentence could land a child in an industrial school, especially if under 14 years of age. Several court appearances could result in a jail sentence of about a week and then transfer to a reformatory until their eighteenth birthday. The number of these children brought to Canada and settled by the juvenile emigration agencies was small. As far as can be determined, no reformatory children were brought to Canada after 1893.