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Happy
Valentine's
Day!

British Home Child Group International

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Newsboys by Sandra Joyce

Not all British Home Children were welcome on the farms and the domestic situations they were placed in. Some of the children, in fact, found that they had no other option than to run away from those situations. Some returned to the Receiving Homes of the institutions who had placed them in hope of receiving a better placement. Others took to the streets of big cities and tried to survive in various street trades like boot blacking or selling newspapers.

Newsboys were on every corner of a city like Toronto as early as the 1880s. The golden age of the newspaper had begun because of the use of the steam press. Newspapers could be printed quickly and inexpensively and cheap labour was required to distribute their daily penny paper editions.

The life of a newsboy was tough. These boys (and some girls) needed to sell papers in order to pay for food and shelter. Most were not regularly employed by a newspaper; they bought the morning and evening edition newspapers at wholesale prices and hawked them to people on the streets and in restaurants, taverns, and streetcars in bitter cold and stifling heat. Many of them had to sell papers from early morning until late evening in order to earn enough even to just eat, so most newsboys did not attend school. Many of them lived on the street. Sometimes boys as young as eight were paid to sit on the piles of newspapers as paper weights so that the papers wouldn't blow about in the wind.

The plight of living on the street was tough and many of the boys and girls were exploited. It was a well-known fact, that when older, many of the boys resorted to criminal activities and the girls were exposed to prostitution.

John Joseph Kelso, an Irish immigrant and himself a newsboy at one point, had seen the dangers of the street first-hand. Kelso, who eventually founded the Children's Aid Society in Canada, wanted the children who were street-trading to be licenced with the end of abolishing it altogether. As a speaker in various Canadian and US cities, he repeated his dismay at the plight of children working on the street and encouraged newspapers to sell their dailies in stores.



Photo - Lewis Hines Collection

Newboys continued



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1257, F1257_s1057_1r1951

Photo courtesy City of Toronto Archives

Former Mayor of Toronto and later Senator, George Allan, also saw the need to get the young boys off the streets. He founded The Newsboys' Home with the help of donations by philanthropists like millionaire William Cawthra. It was meant to provide a safe haven for homeless youth.

However, The Newsboys Home did not attract the hardened cases who preferred to live in less regulated circumstances. Kelso felt that he had to pursue the licensing of the boys for their own protection.

Kelso spoke with Premier Mowat about the problem and also Toronto City Council. The result was the insertion of a clause in the Ontario Municipal Act giving Boards of Police Commissioners power to regulate street trading. Kelso had further success in 1889 when Toronto City Council passed a by-law that no boy under sixteen could be a newsboy or boot black

without obtaining a license. Boys under 8 or girls of any age were not allowed to work as a news vendor. Every licensed child was required to wear a badge. If caught in illegal activities, the child would be required to pay a fine of two dollars. If unable to pay the fine, the child could be put in the Industrial School. There, they would be trained in trades.

The newspapers condemned the by-law as the boys were their main distribution force and were cheap. They ridiculed Kelso by comparing him to a dog-catcher because he wanted to identify the boys. Kelso was dubbed 'Kelso the Tagger.'

Toronto also hired a 'cruelty constable' to prosecute cruelty to animals and children. Yet the protection of children proved more difficult than protecting animals. Over a period of five years, he reported three hundred complaints of cruelty to animals, of which 80 percent were successfully prosecuted. Of the 1900 cases of cruelty to children reported over the same period of time, only 250 children were removed from the unsafe situations they were in.

It is unclear as to the exact date when boys no longer hawked papers on the street. This practice continued at least to the 1930s when the selling of subscriptions to individuals changed the job of the newsboys to paper boys, who were employed to deliver newspapers to homes.

Newsboys and other street trades in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century certainly provided some of the runaway Home Children with an alternative way of living, especially if they had been in abusive situations. However, it was also far from ideal. Fortunately, the potential exploitation was recognized by individuals like J.J. Kelso and became more carefully monitored.

The Cawthra's, Newsboys and Barnardo's by Sandra Joyce



Cawthra Mulock

In 1922, the Barnardo organization bought a beautiful historic mansion at 538 Jarvis Street in Toronto to become their headquarters in Canada from the estate of Cawthra Mulock, a member of the Cawthra family, one of the richest philanthropists in Canada. It remained Barnardo headquarters until 1948 when it was dismantled and files returned to the UK. As the Home Child migrant scheme was long over, the organization felt it was no longer necessary to keep records in Canada.

More about the history of the building can be found by following this link: [Barnardo headquarters](#).

The Cawthra family's history of philanthropy started with William Cawthra who was an extremely wealthy businessman and reformist civic leader in Toronto. While amassing his great fortune, though, he did not forget the poor. Along with co-founding the first infectious disease centre with James Gooderham Worts at Toronto General Hospital, he helped create the Toronto House of Industry and the Newsboy Home as well as assisting abandoned

children and orphans and distributing coal to those needing to survive the frigid Torontonians winters. Some of these children were runaway Home Children who felt they had to leave their abusive placements to take their chances on the streets.

Cawthra arrived in Canada with his father Joseph and his mother Mary Turnpenny in 1803 at the age of two from Yorkshire in England. His father, Joseph, was granted land in Port Credit but soon moved to York (Toronto) and opened Toronto's first apothecary. During the war of 1812, Joseph sold medical supplies to the British army and accumulated a considerable fortune, which he invested in acquiring properties in York. Joseph's son, William, inherited the business and the bulk of the real estate when his father died in 1842.

William Cawthra closed his father's shop and concentrated on developing the plots of land in downtown Toronto that had been part of his inheritance. He lived in a brick cottage near Bloor and Jarvis Streets, which at the time was outside the city, in the village of Yorkville. One of the many buildings Cawthra provided a mortgage for was to become Toronto's first city hall (now the St. Lawrence Market). When the Jarvis Family lacked the funds to finish Jarvis Street, they turned to Cawthra for assistance. He gave them the money in return for a northwest portion of their property in what is now the North Jarvis and Church and Wellesley neighbourhoods.



Toronto House of Industry

The Cawthra's, Newsboys and Barnardo's *continued*

In 1853 William Cawthra and his wife, Sarah Crowther left Yorkville Village for King and Bay to live in one of the finest houses ever built in Canada. The Bank of Nova Scotia tower now stands on the spot although extensive efforts were made to preserve the Cawthra House.

After the death of her husband, Sarah Crowther Cawthra moved to a larger, more luxurious home at 538 Jarvis Street across from Cawthra Park, named after their family. She then remarried wealthy businessman William Murray.



Cawthra Home Jarvis St - Photo Toronto Public Library

Upon her death in 1895, she left the bulk of her fortune to her very young great-nephew, Cawthra Mulock. At that time, the boy millionaire, as he was dubbed, inherited almost three million dollars.

Cawthra's life, was short. He died from the Spanish flu in 1918 at the age of thirty-six. The bulk of his fortune was left to his children and a pre-nuptial amount was left to his wife.

Four years after his death, the Jarvis Street mansion was sold to Barnardo's in 1948. After that, the Salvation Army used it as their headquarters.

The Cawthra mansion no longer exists. A remnant of the Cawthra family's vast influence until a few years ago was Cawthra Park. A few years ago it was renamed the Barbara Hall Park after former Toronto Mayor Barbara Hall – in recognition of her support of the LGBTQ community. A small adjacent square still bears the Cawthra name.

Dust seems to now have covered the importance of the Cawthra family's influence on the shaping of Toronto and Canada. Some of their most important works included supporting the Toronto General Hospital, the Hospital for Sick Children and the Royal Alex.

As Canada's city boundaries shift and expand quickly, we should not forget the legacy of the people who were the foundation of our country – in this case, the Home Children and the wealthy philanthropists who helped them.



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