Feathering Her Nest in Nineteenth-Century Montreal

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By exploring the life spaces of a nineteenth-century Montreal neighbourhood, we discover the social uses of their furnishings. Even the most ephemeral possessions provide evidence of social networks, ideals, risks, and family strategies.

*Explorer les espaces vitaux d'un quartier de Montréal au XIX*e *siècle nous amène à découvrir les finalités sociales du mobilier domestique. Même les possessions les plus éphémères témoignent du réseau social, des aspirations ou du pari stratégique d'une famille.*

WHO HASN'T watched a bird make a nest — that decisive sign of spring when she searches for the best location, within range of food resources, but hidden from the hawk, in a tradeoff between access and protection? In the Saint Lawrence valley the nest is designed to withstand all kinds of weather, and a delicate lining for insulation is reinforced by the very fit and feathering of the mother bird herself. To provide warmth through her own metabolism, energy has to be brought into the space, and wastes dispersed. Among sociable birds like our urban sparrows, the nest, confined and crowded, is not the place of all socializing, and young birds, as they come of age, find other places to roost (like the television cables), to sing and to court.

Do we know more about the nesting habits of sparrows than about human nesting habits in the nineteenth century? The sparrow rebuilds the same model year after year and generation after generation, but human beings are continually learning, testing, making new interpretations, and adapting to new social and cultural contexts. Year-round use of human dwellings, their exchange, re-use, and long service imply maintenance and renovation. Mon-

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trealers are notorious for their annual moves and for the frantic collective agitation provoked each year by the renewal of tens of thousands of leases on May Day. To explore such human behaviours, we need to develop methods for tracing people over whole lifetimes and over successive surges of city-building. To describe an urban population or a housing stock, historians as well as planners have depended upon snapshot sources such as a census or survey, and we explore here the potential of local notarial sources for deeper soundings into micro-history.[1]

In another sense each of us is engaged lifelong in making a nest in the world. Our human habitations and all their fittings are cultural artefacts, and occupancy invites constant re-evaluation of the past — keeping and clearing out, rearranging, replacing, fixing, painting, mending. Some gestures are unconsciously learned, and some are consciously taught.[2] Since the home, even a wagon or a campsite, is a centre of socialization for the oncoming generation, nesting involves planning, imagining, day-dreaming, thinking and rethinking the future. The accumulating weight of the past, together with the continuing anticipation of alternative futures, gives a psychological density to the dwelling and its furnishings, with the depth of a lifetime. From one generation to the next, over what the lawyer calls "three lives" or four, we make our nests in the thickets of our most intense relationships.

In terms of research strategy, study of the nesting process invites us to try to create a "moving picture" from a succession of stills. We are impelled to scramble for suites of notarial acts, which will retrace the lives of individuals in their successive haunts and the turnover of denizens of a building or a street. An array of possessions expands and contracts over a lifetime, like the household itself. Several remarkable projects are currently devoted to massive collection, quantification, and comparative analysis of inventories after death, in particular the work of Gloria Main, Lorena Walsh, and Lois Carr in colonial North America, and the work of Micheline Baulant and

1 A thorough and well-known survey of the snapshot type is H. B. Ames, *The City Below the Hill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1902, 1972). A rare example of an alternative source with true historical perspective is the diary employed by Annmarie Adams and Peter Gossage, "Chez Fadette: Girlhood, Family, and Private Space in Late-Nineteenth-Century Saint-Hyacinthe", *Urban History Review*, vol. 26, no. 2 (March 1998), pp. 56–68.

2 For the teaching of cultural rules in a family living room, see Denis Wood and Robert J. Beck, *Home Rules* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984). While our material is drawn entirely from nineteenth-century Montreal and the literature cited is largely from "Western" sources, the principles can be more widely applied. For symbolisms built into dwellings with respect to gender, intergenerational relations, and relations of people to natural and spiritual forces, see Jean-Paul Bourdier and Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Drawn from African Dwellings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), with an excellent bibliography; Heidi J. Nast, "Space, History and Power: Stories of Spatial and Social Change in the Palace of Kano, Northern Nigeria" (PhD dissertation, Department of Geography, McGill University, 1992); Badr-Eddin Arodaky *et al.*, *Sanaa : Parcours d'une cité d'Arabie* (Paris: Institut du Monde arabe, 1987); or Ronald G. Knapp, *Chinese Landscapes: The Village as Place* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992) and smaller vignettes in Peter Menzel, *Material World: A Global Family Portrait* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1994).

Françoise Waro in France of the Old Régime, with the objective of revealing great watersheds of material culture. Rural studies, notably in the Vexin, have been able to relate the furnishings to the house and to treat the emergence of "intimacy". Exceptional in exploring urban living standards is the team associated with A. Pardailhé-Galabrun in Paris, attentive to social class and occupational *genres de vie*.[3]

I cannot attempt a comparative operation on that scale, and we have for nineteenth-century Montreal simple space measures from which to appraise the distribution of wealth and rates of social mobility.[4] Instead, I probe the time-depth and assay the weight of the past and the future. From a corpus of 200 inventories I have selected 41 cases for which we have both a description of the *dwelling*, based on a lease, construction specification, or court case, and a description of the *furnishings*, such as an inventory after death, marriage contract, bankruptcy, seizure, or lease-back of goods.[5] In most cases we also have parish records of vital events and at least one

3 Micheline Baulant, "Niveaux de vie paysans autour de Meaux, en 1700 et 1750", *Annales ESC*, vol. 30, no. 203 (March-June 1975), pp. 505–518; Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "Inventories and the Analysis of Wealth and Consumption Patterns in St. Mary's County, Maryland, 1658–1777", *Historical Methods*, vol. 13, no. 2 (Spring 1980), pp. 81–104, and "The Standard of Living in the Colonial Chesapeake", *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 45, no. 1 (January 1988), pp. 135–166; Lorena S. Walsh, "Urban Amenities and Rural Sufficiency: Living Standards and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1643–1777", *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 43, no. 1 (March 1983), pp. 109–117; Gloria L. Main, "The Standard of Living in Southern New England, 1640–1773", *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 45, no. 1 (1988), pp. 124–133; A. Pardailhé-Galabrun, *La naissance de l'intime, 3 000 foyers parisiens, XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1988); Roland Vasseur and Françoise Waro, *Villages du Vexin : Genainville* (Mémoires de la Société historique et archéologique de Pontoise, du Val-d'Oise et du Vexin, n° 76, 1991); Françoise Waro, *La vie quotidienne dans le Vexin au XVIIIe siècle. Dans l'intimité d'une société rurale* (Éditions du Valhermeil et Société historique de Pontoise, 1992). For the associated comparative effort for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rural Quebec, see Christian Dessureault, "Niveau de vie dans le Richelieu-Yamaska, 1800–1840. Étude préliminaire pour une comparaison France-Québec", in Gérard Bouchard and Joseph Goy, eds., *Famille, économie et société rural en contexte d'urbanisation (17e–20e siècle)*, Actes du Colloque comparée Québec-France, tenue à Montréal en février 1990 (Chicoutimi and Paris: Centre interuniversitaire SOREP et EHESSC, 1990), pp. 185–198. For Montreal, the potential of inventory after death was demonstrated by Gilles Paquette and Jean-Pierre Wallot, "Les inventaires après décès à Montréal au tournant du XIXe siècle : préliminaires à une analyse", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol. 30 (1977), pp. 163–221. See also David Gagan and Rosemary Gagan, "Working-Class Standards of Living in Late Victorian Urban Ontario", *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, new series 1 (1990), pp. 171–194. A model for sequential interpretation of notarial documents is Claire Dolan, *Le notaire, la famille et la Ville (Aix-en-Provence à la fin du XVIe siècle* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 1998).

4 David Hanna and Sherry Olson, "Métiers, loyers et bouts de rues : l'armature de la société montréalaise, 1881 à 1901", *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, vol. 27, no. 71 (1983), pp. 255–275; Jason Gilliland and Sherry Olson, "Claims on Housing Space in Nineteenth-Century Montreal", *Urban History Review*, vol. 26, no. 2 (1998), pp. 3–16.

5 The surname sampling is reported in Sherry Olson, " « Pour se créer un avenir » : stratégies de couples montréalais au XIXe siècle", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol. 51, no. 3 (Winter 1998), pp. 357–389. The several sources are complementary and require caution in view of the number of acts which may not have been indexed, preserved, or even notarized.

observation of the composition of the household from a census or act of guardianship.

The documents were extracted from notarial archives by two distinct sampling schemes: one a city-wide, century-long sample of twelve surnames; the other a single street of distinctive habitat and social composition, in other words, with its own special nesting behaviour. The surname selection draws from census or taxroll a sample population that is representative of Montreal households at the end of the nineteenth century with respect to dwelling sizes, rent levels, age structure, cultural identities, and residential distribution. Earlier in the century (1842, 1861, 1871), each of the three subsamples (French Canadian, Anglo-Protestant, and Irish Catholic) adequately represents that cultural component, and they can be weighted to produce a reasonable overall representation.[6] In other words, the sample of people yields a good "miniature". The more localized St-Mary Street population, which grew from 50 households at mid-century to 150 in 1901, serves the purpose of revealing interactions among neighbours.[7]

In both samples, dependence upon notarial acts introduces a bias, as larger numbers of acts are recorded for the handful of wealthy property owners, such as Stanley Bagg's hundreds of timber contracts or his son's land sales. In a corpus of 7,000 acts (6,000 for the 12 surnames, 1,000 for St-Mary Street), we nevertheless find suites for modest families, and the subset of inventories still reflects the popular base in all three communities. So small a subset cannot be treated as a formal statistical representation over a half-century, but it covers the range of people who made up three-quarters of Montreal: half are households which paid annual rents of $50 or $60 for a three-room dwelling, concentrated in the densely populated east end of the city, among French Canadians.[8] We report none from the mountainside "Golden Square Mile" or distant suburbs, but close to the old centre we will meet a

6 The miniature population includes about 1,000 couples and has involved collection and matching of 2,500 marriages, 3,300 deaths, 4,600 baptisms, 1,200 household census records (1842–1901), census records for a comparable number of servants and lodgers, and 2,500 records from the taxroll. Tests and strategies for control are discussed in Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton, "Familles montréalaises du XIXe siècle : trois cultures, trois trajectoires", *Cahiers québécois de démographie*, vol. 21, no. 2 (Fall 1992), pp. 51–75; Gilliland and Olson, "Claims on Housing Space"; Patricia Thornton and Sherry Olson, "A Deadly Discrimination Among Montreal Infants, 1860–1900", forthcoming in *Continuity and Change* (December 2000).

7 Targeting the entire population of a strip of 10 block-faces, 1840–1900, we combed the repertories of "neighbourhood notaries", notably Busby, Damour, Montreuil, Gaudry-LaBourbonnière, Simard, Messier, and Lemire, as well as taxrolls at five-year intervals, decennial censuses, and four cartons of documents in the Archives nationales du Québec (hereafter ANQ) from expropriation case Superior Court 184, *Ville v. rue Notre-Dame*, 1892.

8 There is no bias toward the elderly, as is the case with the 10,000 inventories after death reported by Pierre Chaunu, *La mort à Paris, 16e, 17e, 18e siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 1978). Quebec repertories are most consistently accessible prior to 1875 (having been transferred from the judiciary to the ANQM), but the number of acts is adequate to the end of the century since the increasing size of the urban population compensates for a lower recovery rate.

sprinkle of modest Protestant households, artisans from the old Saint-Lawrence suburb, and Irish Catholic carters and millers from Griffintown, at the entrance to the Lachine Canal.

The richness of the sample lies not in the number of inventories treated, but in the array of acts and pieces of information that provide context. Thus our discussion of 41 inventories draws upon 150 notarial acts;[9] the ages, life stages, and circumstances of the families unfold in complementary sources of census and taxroll examined over a span of 60 years. While we report clues of rent and occupation, the case studies suggest a considerable fluidity of social status, and family biographies undermine any simple assumptions about social class.[10] We examine the furnishing of the dwelling in relation to the size and configuration of the household, as a niche in the urban resource base. I make some observations of anticipated ideals, the risks revealed by the turnover of movables, their employment as domestic venture capital, and the hints they offer of a psychological density.

Idealization and Anticipation

Several documents contain idealizations of the nest, along the lines Webster defines as "any snug, comfortable or cozy retreat". Despite rapid changes in the urban economy affecting the relation between home and workplace,[11] the Montreal ideal was influenced by cultural tradition, formalized and articulated by notaries. Tradition itself was devised and tested through experience of local climate and construction materials, and reworked to adjust social institutions of French and English origins. In the region of Montreal, rural marriage contracts of the mid-nineteenth century were framed much like those of the early eighteenth, and even those of Old-World Champagne and Vexin: the two sets of parents, with some inputs from the young couple, endowed the bride and groom with a start-up lump of domestic capital.[12] City-dwellers were less likely to give the newlyweds a cow, a sow, a ewe, and a hen, but a Montreal couple, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Kollmyer, in 1812 wrote into their wills a list of what they had given to their sons and daughters at marriage (Table 1). Their idealization is unusually thorough, in part because the Kollmyers were relatively comfortable. In addition to durable equipment like fire dogs and an axe, water barrels and a copper teakettle,

9 Of 21 cases in Table 2, 14 in Table 3, and 6 others discussed in the text, two-thirds come from the surname miniature, one-quarter from St-Mary Street, and the remainder by ramification of the Condlan case in the Simard repertory.

10 "Placing" women has always been ambiguous, and their class position was sometimes radically affected by marriage, widowhood, or abandonment. Many, if not most, traders in the sample, both big fish and small fry, became "insolvent" at least once, but it was untimely death that magnified the impact of such an episode on the family.

11 On the industrialization of Montreal, see Robert Lewis, *Manufacturing Montreal: The Making of an Industrial Landscape, 1850 to 1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

12 See, for example, acts of Coron February 23, 1754 in Lachenaie; in Montreal, Desautels May 5, 1811; and Aussem April 9, 1853.

Table 1: The Kollmyer Legacy

MARRIAGE BED
1 fourpost bedstead
1 red calico bed curtains
1 strawbed
1 featherbed
1 bolster
2 pillows
4 pillow cases
4 sheets
2 blankets
1 coverlid, white
2 carpets

1 cradle
1 child's chair
6 chairs
2 tables
1 bench
1 lg looking glass
1 pr curtains

2 smoothing irons
2 water buckets
1 wash tub
3 brushes & 3 baskets
1 chamberpot

SYMBOLIC GOODS
1 bird cage
1 Bible
6 glassed prints
1 Marriage gown
1 Gold Ring for
Remembrance

FIREPLACE
1 pr dog irons
1 pr shovel & tong
1 trippot
1 iron pot
1 tin kettle
1 brass kettle
1 iron teakettle
1 frying pan
1 grid iron
1 iron ladle
1 meat fork

LIGHT
1 tin lamp
1 tin lanthron
2 brass candlesticks
1 tin candlestick
2 tin lustres
1 tin candlebox
1 snuffer & stand

STORAGE
2 cupboards
1 trunk
1 smaller trunk
1 lg chest
1 lg wooden box
2 boxes
box for caps (woman)

TINWARE
1 sugar box
1 flour box
3 picklepots
1 tea canistre
1 cullender
1 grater
1 milkstrainer
1 funnel
1 cream skimmer
1 coffeepot
1 cup
1 turreen

MAN'S
1 wood saw
spade, hammer & tongs
1 chimney framer
1 fowling piece
1 fishing rod
1 powderhorn & 1 shotbag
razor base, 2 razors
shaving box
clothes brush
1 pr boot hooks
1 boot jack

TABLEWARE
1 table cloth
1 plate (p)
6 pr knives & forks
12 teaspoons (p)
6 soupspoons (p)
1 turreen & cover (Q)
3 dishes (Q)
1 sallad (Q)
12 lg plates (Q)
12 dessert plates (Q)
1 pepperbox (Q)
2 saltstands (Q)
1 teapot (Q, ch)
1 milkpot (Q, ch)
1 sugarbox (Q, ch)
1 sugar bowl (Q)
6 cups & saucers (Q, ch)
2 pitchers (Q)
1 coffeepot (Q)
2 waterpots (Q)
1 blue bowl (ch)
2 sugar tongs
(1 plate, 1 common)
2 decanters
6 wine glasses
6 tumblers
1 parcel crystal

CLOTHING (woman)
2 cambric gowns
1 muslin gown
9 calico gowns
7 short gowns
15 petticoats
24 shifts, sheetings, cotton
5 pr Morocco shoes
3 pr leather shoes
handkerchiefs, caps, ribbons
stockings & sundreas
1 muslin shawl
1 umbrella

CLOTHING (MAN)
2 coats & 1 overcoat
4 waistcoats
4 pantaloons & overalls
12 shirts
4 cravats
1 Beaver hat
1 pr new shoes
10 pr stockings
3 handkerchiefs
2 pr socks
1 pr boots
1 pr mittens

Source and notes: Act of Gray February 14, 1812. Q = Queensware, ch = china, p = pewter; items regrouped by author.

they included symbolic goods: cheerful red bed curtains, a family Bible, and a gold ring "for remembrance".[13]

In our array of families of modest origins, we find always the identical core of basic furnishings, more often tin than pewter or crystal and often described as "worn", "used", "cracked", "broken", or "méchant". Among the two dozen listed in Table 2 are the two successive households of Léon Beauchamp, at his first wife's death in 1859 and at his own death in 1878 (columns N and O).[14] In 20 years their standard of living had not changed. The strong similarity of household goods among people from various "stations in life" is best explained by the determination to invest in other kinds of income-producing equipment. Domestic goods of the four carters, for example, accounted for less than half of their movables: Joseph Beauchamp, 44 per cent (column B); Léon Beauchamp, 40 per cent (N); Étienne Beauchamp, 27 per cent (D); and François Désautels, the most successful and substantial, only 15 per cent (E). The bulk lay in the horses, carts, and sleighs in their yards and stables.

In those lists we discover the two warm spots in the Montreal dwelling. The first was the marriage bed with its straw mattress, feather comforter, pillows, and bolster. Complete with sheets, blanket, and quilt, it usually figured in the marriage contract as part of the *préciput* to remain with the surviving partner, and in the inventory after death it often amounted to one-third or one-half the value of all movables. Curtained for warmth and privacy within a drafty one-room dwelling, it was a virtual room, and wealthier households late in the century expanded on the notion by endowing the survivor with a complete roomful of furniture, including washstand, carpet, table and chairs, and framed prints.[15]

The other hot spot was of course the fireplace, associated with a well-defined array of tools and cooking gear. Introduction of a greater variety of stoves, already apparent in urban inventories of the 1810s and 1820s, not only increased fuel efficiency and comfort, but changed the lives of women from crouching or stooping to standing.[16] The stove was the second-highest-valued item in most of our urban inventories. When Montrealers moved house, they took stove and stovepipes with them; in summer the hardware

13 Wills of John Andrew Kollmyer and his wife Mary Elizabeth Joyale-Cardie, by acts of J. A. Gray February 14, 1812, contain declarations of "articles given".

14 Acts of Simard October 14, 1859 (inventory) and December 18, 1863 (purchase), and Leclerc March 21, 1878 (inventory). Insistence upon the smallness, badness, and age of items is associated with depreciation, perhaps exaggerated and advantageous to survivors. We possess also leases of Léon to tenants (April 17, 1865), rentals of horses and carts, and acts of his brothers and brother-in-law, who lived in adjoining houses and shared the business of carting water.

15 For example, holograph will of notary J. A. Labadie, deposited with notary Gaudry-LaBourbonnière, July 1, 1854.

16 Marcel Moussette, *Chauffage domestique au Canada des origines à l'industrialisation* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1983); Pardailhé-Galabrun, *Naissance de l'intime*.

Table 2: Domestic Interiors

Family	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V
Year (18—)	12	15	17	23	35	48	44	49	53	53	54	69	55	59	78	64	75	76	78	78	84	87
Furnishings ($)	.	812	.	40	56	68	13	68	96	112	.	.	.	33	100	.	137	75	268	31	47	.
Other movables ($)	.	1040	.	112	384	.	.	288	.	.	.	.	.	64	.	.	.	.	137	.	10	.
Rent ($ per month)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	8	8	2.50	5	2.50	.	5	.	.	.
BED COMPLETE																						
bedstead	1	.	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	ex	2	2	.	1	.	n
set bed curtains	1	.	.	1	1	1	.	.	1	2	1	.	.	1	1	ex	.	.	.	.	.	n
straw mattress	1	1	2	4	2	2	.	4	1	2	1	1	n	.	.	ex	2	.	.	.	.	n
featherbed	1	.	1	3	5	2	1	.	1	1	1	.	n	2	.	ex	.	.	.	.	.	n
bolster	1	.	1	2	2	2	1	.	2	.	1	.	n	.	.	ex	2	.	.	.	.	n
pillows	2	.	1	1	3	5	2	3	2	.	2	.	n	2	.	ex	2	.	.	.	.	n
pillow cases	4	.	1	.	3	3	.	.	2	.	5	.	n	.	.	ex	2	.	.	.	.	n
sheets	4	.	c	4	4	1	1	n	2	4	5	1	n	10	5	ex	4	.	.	.	.	n
blankets	2	.	c	2	c	8	2	n	1	2	1	1	n	2	1	ex	4	.	.	.	.	n
coverlid	1	.	c	2	2	4	1	n	3	.	7	.	.	1	1	ex	2	.	.	.	.	.
FIRE																						
pr dog irons	1	1	.	.	1	2	.	.	1	1	1	.	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
pr shovel & tongs	1	.	.	1	1	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	1	2	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
trippot	1	1	1	1	1	.	.	.	1	1	1	.	.	1	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
iron pot	1	.	1	3	1	1	.	.	.	.	2	lot	1	1	.	.	.	lot	.	.	.	1
kettles	3	2	1	1	2	.	1	1	1	.	1	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
frying pan	1	1	1	1	2	2	.	2	1	1	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
grid iron	1	.	.	1	2	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
iron ladle	1	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
meat fork	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
crane	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
stove & pipe	.	1	1	1	1	.	.	1	2	6	.	1	1	1	1	1	1	.	1	1	.	1
cookstove	.	.	.	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	1	1	1	.	.	.
boiler	.	2	2	2	2	1	.	2	2	2	1	.	1	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
pans / saucepans	.	.	1	.	.	4	.	4	.	.	2	.	2	.	4	.	6	.	.	.	.	.

Table 2: Domestic Interiors (cont'd.)

Family	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V
LIGHT																						
oil lamp	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	3	.	.	1	.	.	.	1	4	2	4	4	1	1	.
tin lanthron	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
candlesticks	5	1	2	1	1	4	.	3	4	.	1	.	6	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	.
tin candlebox	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
snuffer & stand	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
smoothing irons	2	1	2	2	2	3	1	2	3	3	2	.	.	3	1	.	3	4	.	.	.	.
water buckets	2	1	.	2	1	2	2	.	1	1	2	1	.	2	3	.	4	3	.	.	2	.
wash tub or basin	1	.	2	1	2	.	1	1	.	1	4	1	.	1	3	2	2	3	.	.	1	.
brushes & baskets	4	.	.	1	.	3	.	5	.	1	2	.	.	broom	.	.	2	.	.	n	.	.
chamberpot	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	set	1	.	.	2	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	.
ewer & bowl	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.
spittoon	.	1	.	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.
axe/ hatchet/ saw	1	1	.	2	.	1	.	1	1	1	.	.	.	2	2	.	1	1	.	.	.	1
tool box (plane)	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
STORAGE																						
cupboard / armoire	2	2	1	.	.	1	2	1	1	1	1	.	.	1	.	3	1	2	1	.	.	.
trunk	2	.	1	.	2	2	.	.	1	.	1	1	.	2	.	3	.	.	1	.	.	.
lg chest	1	.	.	.	.	2	.	1	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
boxes	5	1	.	5	.	1	.	3	3	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
chest of drawers	.	.	.	.	1	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	1	.	1	1	1	2	2	.	.	.
wardrobe mahog	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	.	.	.
sideboard	.	.	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.
buffet de cuisine	.	.	.	2	1	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
barrels	.	.	.	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.
cradle	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.
child's chair	1	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	1	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	2	3	.	.	.	.
child's bed	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	1	1	.	1	1	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.
rocking chair	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	1	.	.	.	1	.	1	1	2	1	3	.	.	.

Table 2: Domestic Interiors (cont'd.)

Family	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V
tables	2	2	1	1	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	.	1	1	2	3	3	3	1	.	1
chairs	6	1	2	10	10	6	5	11	9	3	9	6	18	8	8	6	12	11	4	4	.	.
bench, settee	1	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	1	.	.	1	1	.	1	.	.
washstand	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	2	2	2	.	.	.
looking glass lg	1	.	1	1	2	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	3	1	.	1	.	.	.
looking glass sm	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	1	1	.	1	.	.	2	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
window curtains pr	1	.	.	.	12	1	5	.	1	.	1	.	5	.	2	6	6	.	.	.	.	.
table cover	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	2	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	.
carpet	2	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	6	.	2	.	.	90yd	1	3	25yd	.	.	.
sofa, haircloth	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	1	1	1	.	.	1	.	.	1	1	.	2	.	.	.
chair stuffed	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.
chaise d'aisance	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
card table	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.
canapé, upholstered	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	.	1	.	.	.
screen, broidered	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.
suitcase	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	.
baby carriage	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.
sewing-machine	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	.	.	.
SYMBOLIC GOODS																						
bird cage	1	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
books	1	.	.	.	.	69	.	3	.	.	Bible	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	10v
glassed prints	6	.	.	.	2	lot	.	6	13	1	6	.	12	5	8	2	12	6	1	.	.	.
gold ring	1	.	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
piano, stool &c	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.
clock	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	1	1	1	.	.	1	1	.	.	1	1	.	.	.
silver watch	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
niches religieuses	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	7	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
ornaments	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.
bookcase	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Table 2: Domestic Interiors (cont'd.)

Family	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V
TABLEWARE																						
pewter plate	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	lot	.	.	.	.
pr knives & forks	6	6	6	n	.	6	lot	lot	lot	.	4	.	12	lot	7	.	lot	.	.	.	.	.
soupspoons	6	.	6	n	.	13	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	n	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
teaspoons	12	.	.	.	.	4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	7	.	.	.	.	.	.	6
pr cups & saucers	12	3	6	2	.	.	4	40	.	.	12	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
soup tureen & cover	1	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
dishes	4	15	lot	.	10	7	.	set	.	.	.	lot	.	.	.	2	lot	.	.	.	.	.
plates lg	12	5	lot	4	12	10	12	.	.	.	13	.	set	6	.	.	.	.	.	lot	.	6
plates sm	12	.	.	.	5	14	.	.	.	.	10	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
table cloth	1	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.
pepperbox	1	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
saltstands	2	.	1	.	1	.	.	1	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
teapot	2	1	1	.	1	1	2	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
coffeepot	2	.	.	1	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
pitchers	6	.	1	.	1	1	4	2	3	.	7	.	.	.	.	.	.	lot	.	.	.	.
bowl / plat	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	6	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
sugarbox / bowl	2	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
sugar tongs	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
egg cups	.	.	.	.	.	4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
bread basket	.	.	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
decanters	2	1	.	.	2	.	2	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	4	.	.	.	.	.
wine glasses	6	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
tumblers	6	.	lot	2	6	.	3	2	.	.	.	.	6	.	.	.	4	.	.	.	.	6
parcel chrystal	n	.	.	3	.	1	.	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
bottles	.	15	10	10	.	lot	2	n	9	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
cruet stand	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
tray / tea tray	.	.	3	1	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	4	.	.	.	.	.

Table 2: Domestic Interiors (cont'd.)

Family	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V
TINWARE																						
tin canisters	3	.	.	.	lot	.	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	6	.	.	9	lot	1	.	.	.
picklepots	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
cullender	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
grater	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
milkstrainer	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
funnel	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
cream skimmer	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
rollingpin	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
meat-grinder	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.
towels	.	.	.	.	.	13	.	.	.	.	24	.	.	.	6	.	1	.	.	.	.	.
umbrella	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Identifications and sources:

A Kollmyer legacy (Gray February 14, 1812)
B Js Beauchamp+ and Marie-Anne Maisonneuve, 3 minors and 6 of age (Cadieux September 2 and December 12, 1815)
C Pierre Beauchamp, mason, and M-Josephte Branconnier+, married 8 years, child 7; one room and attic (Trudeau September 12, 1817)
D Étienne Beauchamp, carter, and Victorine Mazuret-Lapierre, married 11 years, separation of property (Luken August 23, 1823)
E Josephte Beauchamp+ and François Désautels, carter, sister of Étienne (Terroux May 26, 1835)
F Mrs. Carrick dies, tenant of Mrs. Hogarth, St-Mary Street (Busby May 15, 1848; Montreuil July 7, 1848)
G Mary Steward, wife of James Smith, labourer, rents her furniture from landlord John Herold, 58 St-Mary Street (Busby June 12, 1844)
H John Leach+ and Elizabeth Sampson: front room, back sitting room, kitchen, bedroom, garret, with paint shop St-Mary Street (Busby July 24, 1849)
I Rosalie Beauchamp+ and Médard Perras, married 18 months, 1½-storey St-Nicolas-Tolentin: salle, 2 chambres, attic (Labadie March 14 and 15, 1853)
J Flavie Beauchamp+ and Jean-Baptiste Duclos, stone-cutter, children 6, 7, 8, and 10 years (Simard April 19, 1853)
K Elie Bréard-Laroche, shoemaker, and Rose Delima Laurin+, double duplex, 4 rooms each side: salle, chambre, front room, attic (Gaudry November 17, 1854)
L Jane Douglas and Thomas Boyd+, blacksmith, children 8, 7, and 2 (tutelle November 30, 1869; Isaacson June 20 and July 18, 1859)

Table 2: Domestic Interiors (cont'd.)

Identifications and sources (cont'd.):

M Thomas Burrowes, clerk, and Elizabeth Anglum at marriage, rent wood 2½ Panet Street: ground floor, 2 rooms upstairs, garret (Simard October 6, 1855)
N Leon Beauchamp and Mathilde Gauthier+, married 8 years, children 8 and 7, owns 1½ in Durham Street (Simard October 14, 1859)
O Leon Beauchamp+ and Scholastique Dubuc, married 20 years, owns brick-clad 1½, 26 Dufresne (Leclerc March 21, 1878)
P David Beauchamp, grocer, and Elisabeth Desmarais, fails, yields double duplex Craig and Wolfe (Simard March 18, 1864)
Q Onésime Beauchamp, cabinet-maker, fails, yields with lumber, unfinished pieces, horse etc. (Mainville November 24, 1873)
R Elie Lacroix, 1876, quarrier rents his own furniture, with spring wagon and sleighs (Rientord January 24, 1876)
S Napoleon, 1878, butcher, sells to his mother, with implements, wagon, sleigh, horse (Mainville July 2, 1878)
T Francis Ryan+ and Bridget Sheehan, married 26 years, 9 children living (Wright June 27 and July 2, 1878)
U Narcisse Beauchamp+ and Victorine Longpré, married 1 year, 6 children of his first marriage, 2-room house sold $1206 (Coderre February 19, 1884)
V Non-seizables (Royal Commission on Labor and Capital 1887)

Notes:
c = "complet"
£1 = $4
n = number uncertain
ex = excluded under marriage contract

was sometimes removed to the attic and cooking done in a rear building.[17] Seasonal adaptations notwithstanding, the relatively permanent location made fire central to the living-space. Associated with food and light as well as warmth — radiating calories in all forms — the hearth was a centre of sociability.

The winter's fuel requirement also determined the household's most pressing problem of storage, a vulnerable point in the municipal supply system and in the household budgets of the poor. To the end of the nineteenth century, exclusive control of a woodshed ranked higher in priority than exclusive access to spigot (in the 1840s) or privy. The army allowed just over one cord of firewood per week per room, the King's woodyard was as extensive as the barracks, and, for economy of wood and candles, common soldiers were housed twelve to a room.[18] There was also a trade-off between calories of food and fuel: weaverbirds keep warm by roosting three or four to a "room" in winter; the bumblebee queen incubates her brood through the night chill while sipping her day's accumulation of honey; and sheep-raisers economize one-third on turnips by providing their flock with the shelter of a hedge against a cold wind.[19] In the same way, the best of Montreal houses — terraced, stacked, brick-clad inside and out, plastered, and hung with double windows and doors — ensured economies of fuel and food. Landlords postponed repairs, however, and the leitmotiv of tenant protests over the entire span of the nineteenth century was the by-law that required an owner to keep the house "wind and water tight": "Through every part of the premises down through ceiling and all along the walls, the wind and rain beat through, and under all the sashes and doors. The flank wall of the house is moving out so that there is a vacancy between the brickwork and roof, through which you might see the stars."[20] A decade later, in a brand new and relatively costly house ($26 a month): "Snow and air penetrate freely. Water pipes have frozen, thus frost and air destroy goods in the shop. Doors have shrunk, panels split, none opens or shuts.... Plaster is giving way daily, destroying furniture and carpeting."[21] Ill-maintained dwellings and the high cost of firewood

17 See, for example, acts of Luken August 23, 1823, and Simard April 19, 1853, referred to in Table 2. In the churches as well, stoves and sheds were installed for the winter season. By mid-century the fireplace had disappeared from our inventories, and the candlesticks were supplemented with oil lamps.

18 National Archives of Canada, War Office 57, vol. 14, Commissariat In-Letters, William Henry Robinson to J. C. Herries (in London), January 8, 1812; Edward Bayne (Quebec City), November 16 and December 22, 1811. On classic firewood crises, see *Montreal Herald*, September 20, 1864; *Canadian Illustrated News*, January 24 and 25, 1872. On sales and prices earlier in the century, see Robert Sweeny, *Les rélations ville/ campagne. Le cas du bois de chauffage* (Montreal: Montreal Business History Project, 1988).

19 Elsie C. Collias and Nicholas F. Collias, *Nest Building and Bird Behavior* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Bernd Heinrich, *Bumblebee Economics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); W. Jenner, *New Zealand Country Journal*, 1883, pp. 435–440.

20 Act of Montreuil November 12, 1846.

21 Act of Montreuil March 2, 1854.

stimulated the demand for alcohol (as well as turnips) to warm the innards and ensured the attraction of shop and tavern as collective livingrooms.

The Kollmyers, we notice, included on their list a cradle. A marriage anticipated children, and the parents of bride and groom anticipated grandchildren. Wealthier urban couples, like the Désautels, gave the young marrieds a piece of property and built them a house.[22] The act of donation, signed by both couples, specified that the daughter or son would have lifelong use and enjoyment (usufruct) but full ownership would reside with the grandchildren yet unborn. The time horizon reflects a determined goal of sustainability, "establishing" a family and protecting the wife and children against risks arising from death of a breadwinner, from personal flaws like alcoholism or avarice, and, in the roller-coaster economy, from business creditors.

Where a parent couple subdivided their property to establish several offspring, they created a kin-based neighbourhood. In our laboratory of St-Mary Street (now known as Notre Dame East), the Désautels' daughter Geneviève made the same kind of arrangements for her daughter as her own parents had prepared for her, forwarding her property two generations ahead.[23] The ramifications of that family were such that after 60 years they held at least eight properties in St-Mary Street and several more within a stone's throw. One branch held a meeting of 18 offspring and their spouses, another branch rounded up 50 heirs, to give legal recognition to the one who would manage the estate.[24] Another owner in the street was Jean-Louis Beaudry, ten times mayor and one of the city's largest property owners. Since he had a legitimate and a "natural" family, to each *souche* (eight children in all) he made explicit legacies of particular houses, clustered in neighbourhoods defined by their maternal affiliation.[25]

Because property of minors could not be sold without court approval, such legacies erected legal fences against alienation of the properties of an extended family. These were perceived by city commissioners as an impediment to street widenings, and estates are still seen by developers and urban renewal agencies as trammeling the free market.[26] The practice is not sufficiently recognized in the urban literature, however, and the public discourse of home-ownership in North American cities has centred upon a child-rais-

22 Marriage of Geneviève Désautels to Charles Terroux, act of Desève June 2, 1833; and his will probated October 14, 1884.

23 Act of Joseph Belle May 3, 1863, referenced at Emma's death in Quebec City by act of Gosselin March 19, 1891.

24 Acts of Lapparé March 3, 1853; and Marin June 1, 1885.

25 Will can be found in Superior Court, *Ville v. rue Notre-Dame*, item 43.

26 For the hostility to "market imperfections", see Mason Gaffney, "Land Rent, Taxation and Public Policy", *Papers of the Regional Science Association*, vol. 23, pp. 141–153; for a fuller appreciation of use values, see John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes, the Political Economy of Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

ing function which ends in the "empty nest".[27] In the St-Mary Street habitat, the nest was not long empty, the extended nature of family was pervasive, and solidarity was practised in all social classes and in all three cultural communities. The popular expression is "Blood is thicker than water", and the Montreal sources compel us to broaden our conception of property as belonging to extended family and founding a dynasty — a destiny of several lifetimes. The intensity and the extent of kinship created a powerful framework for the urban economy.[28] As a system of circulation of goods and information, *family*, broadly conceived, was fundamental to motivations and decisions made with respect to development of urban land and housing. Ephemeral furnishings — old, worn, and cracked, auctioned and recovered by relatives — reflect an ideal of family which reached much deeper into the past than their manufacture, stretched much wider in everyday life than the present dwelling unit, and looked ahead to a distant horizon.

The Risks Involved

Death, human foibles, and catastrophic "acts of God", as well as periodic economic restructuring, again and again deflected the scenarios anticipated, forcing changes in the configuration of households, the match to dwellings, and their material contents. Three of the Kollmyer children married before the age of 21, and it was probably the donation of furniture that enabled the two boys to marry before they had completed their apprenticeships.[29] Others were not so lucky. Many apprenticeships were contracted in a spurt of business activity and terminated when demand slowed. Donations were often retroceded because the younger couple was incapable of paying the *pension viagère*, and others were sold to strangers who would assume the mortgage. Of course, death also interfered. When shoemaker Narcisse Beauchamp died soon after his second marriage, the whole of the meagre property was auctioned off; an uncle of the five children of the first marriage succeeded in buying the two-room wooden house in Nonancourt Lane (Table 2, col-

27 Empty-nesters were rare in our 1860s samples but in the 1890s appear as separate households in a network of extended kin in the same block. Geographers have tended to ignore kinship, only a modest number of anthropologists look at the city, and sociologists have often confined themselves to fragments or pathologies. Exceptions are Richard Sennett, *Families Against the City: Middle-Class Homes of Industrial Chicago* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970); Unni Wikan, "Sustainable Development in the Mega-City", *Current Anthropology*, vol. 36, no. 4 (August-October 1995), pp. 635–655.

28 At the wealthy end of the spectrum, see Alfred Dubuc, "Thomas Molson, entrepreneur canadien, 1791–1863" (thèse de doctorat [lettres], Université de Paris, 1969); Brian Young on Sir Hugh Allan, *Dictionary of Canadian Bibliography*, vol. 11, pp. 5–15; as well as the Viger, Larocque, and Forget families.

29 Acts of J. A. Gray June 30, 1801, with annexes of March 17, 1806 and January 12, 1807; July 30, 1802, with annex of September 15, 1807; and (daughter) January 30, 1807. The father imported dry goods, and the son apprenticed to Benaiah Gibb, the city's most successful merchant tailor, eventually becoming his partner. Steven Ozimie, unpublished paper on the Gibb family (submitted to Brian Young, Department of History, McGill University, 1993), based on the Gibb Papers, McCord Museum.

umn U).[30] Virtually all of the working-class homeowners in our samples bought their lots, their houses, and their furnishings at sheriff's sales under similar circumstances. When Bridget Sheehan was left a widow with seven young children, she possessed only a kernel of the Kollmyer ideal (column T), and the quantities of starch and clothespins in the inventory show that she had been taking in washing. She renounced her husband's estate, burdened by debts incurred to build the little house in Manufacturers Street. At the auction of the furniture, the married son bought the clock and over the next 14 years managed to recover title to the house.[31]

Even where there was no such backlog of debt, the cost of dying could "eat up" the furniture. Mrs. Carrick, abandoned by her husband, had seven young men boarders, then lost the house, and when she died was renting rooms from the blacksmith's widow, Mrs. Hogarth. Sale of her furniture yielded about £18: a third for the beds and bedding, which covered the four months' rent she owed; the other two-thirds — stove, pots, and pans — covered the costs of her burial, legal papers, services of the town crier, and refreshments for the sale (column F). The landlady bought her green gown, the doctor the clothesline, and the notary her books and bookcase, her two gold rings, smoothing irons, a flannel petticoat, and black satin bonnet.[32] All of them lived in the same two blocks of St-Mary Street.

It is here — in the grip of reality — that households came to differ from the idealized "standard family".[33] If we track a set of couples from one census to the next, from 1861 to 1871, only two-thirds remained intact at the end of a decade. Although three-quarters in 1871 seem on the surface to be nuclear families, only one-third were in fact made up solely of two parents and their joint progeny. In other words, households changed rapidly in their membership, although little in size, age structure, or gender. From beginning to end of the nineteenth century we rarely find a one-person household, few two-person households (8 per cent rising to 12 per cent), and only 2 per cent without both a man and a woman over 15. Households larger than 10 persons were also rare (4 per cent) and were nearly always boarding-houses that included slivers of several families. The structure of households underwent slow systemic change: comparison of samples from censuses from 1842 to 1901 shows a decrease of mean size in the 1860s and again in the 1890s.[34] Wealthy households were on average larger and contained more women;

30 Narcisse died on October 17, 1883. Acts of Marien November 2, 1880; *tutelle* of November 12, 1883; Coderre February 19, March 10 and 18, 1884.

31 Acts of Wright June 27 and July 2, 1878; McIntosh January 17, 1873 (the will); and *tutelle* of May 25, 1878.

32 Acts of Busby, May 15, 1848 (inventory) and Montreuil, July 7, 1848 (sale). Of the seven young men recorded in the census of 1842, two were probably her sons.

33 For the problematic stereotypes of "standard", "nuclear", and "typical" families, see Elizabeth Church, "Kinship and Stepfamilies", in Marion Lynn, ed., *Voices: Essays on Canadian Families* (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1995), pp. 80–105.

34 The interquartile range of 4–8 persons fell to 4–7, then 3–7.

carters, butchers, and builders tended also to head large households, but with more young men present, whether sons, apprentices, or servants.[35]

To accommodate that range of households and activities, owners and builders seem to have focused on the modal household (as is the case in the housing market today) and designed flexibility for reallocation of spaces. The trends among working families over the half-century were toward a slightly larger interior space (rising from 430 to 660 square feet, from three rooms to four or five), possession of a greater variety of consumer goods, and a smaller kit of producer goods.[36] Despite the trend, half of the families, as in-migrants from 90-arpent farms or quarter-acre village lots, must have felt compressed. Space was not shared equally, and while some elasticity could be achieved by moving house, income pressures were not conveniently synchronized with the annual lease and first-of-May move. A business slump affected many households at once, apparent in runs of insolvencies, renunciation of estates, crowding of houses to "make the rent", and, when that failed, seizures of furnishings.[37]

In such crises people who had moved across the line from a working-class to a bourgeois lifestyle slipped back again. Characteristic of a middle-class lifestyle were the goods which lined the warm nests of David, a grocer, and Napoléon, a butcher (Table 2, columns P and S): carpets, rugs for hall, stair, and hearth, a sofa upholstered in haircloth with tassels, worsted table covers, and curtains lined with "a very rich fringe". David's wife Elizabeth had an embroidered screen, Napoléon's wife Marie-Louise a chest for furs. Their tables and chairs were mahogany, or at least imitation mahogany. Napoléon's assets were fragile, however, and six years after his marriage, in order to hold onto the house, he distanced his goods from his creditors by selling everything, even the baby carriage, to his mother.[38] In 1864, when David's partnership in eggs became insolvent, he lost the two stone double-duplex houses he had built.[39] Protection of their household goods was the

35 Economic incentives to apprenticeship, reallocation of domestic labour, and moves into the city resulted in new family alliances, with numerous cases of "adoption" and quasi-kinship, analogous to herders in Africa, but somewhat less formalized and less acknowledged as part of the culture.

36 For the partitioning of dwellings and specialization of domestic spaces, see François Dufaux, "A New World from Two Old Ones: The Evolution of Montreal's Tenements, 1850–1892", *Urban Morphology*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 9–19.

37 Crowding was especially severe among couples in their thirties (Gilliland and Olson, "Claims on Housing Space"). Other ways of coping included substitution of lodgers for relations and of more distant relatives for children who had moved out, or even, as Bettina Bradbury has shown, placing children in an orphanage. Bettina Bradbury, "The Fragmented Family: Family Strategies in the Face of Death, Illness and Poverty, Montreal 1860–1885", in Joy Parr, ed., *Childhood and Family in Canadian History* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982), pp. 109–138.

38 Act of Mainville July 2, 1878. The mother, unable to read or write, sold fish in the St-Lawrence Market and acquired a triplex dwelling. Her husband had been a merchant of some standing, reduced to dependence by alcoholism.

39 Acts of Simard January 30, 1864. David built a house 40' x 30' at Craig and Wolfe Streets (acts of Simard September 23, December 2 and 26, 1859) and owned another in Amherst Street (act of Simard February 6, 1860).

logic behind his wife obtaining "separation of property",[40] and a decade later we find them living in a slightly smaller space — two rooms, two mansards, and attic.[41] The piano had become "domestic capital" enabling daughter Rosanna to give lessons. A fine musician, Rosanna played the organ at the most magnificent festival the city had yet known, the send-off ceremony for the first contingent of Canadian Zouaves to rescue the Pope.[42]

Under leases standard throughout the century, the landlord required the tenant to furnish the dwelling to at least the value of a month's rent. While customary law constrained what could be seized for back rent, providing some protection for the woman's dower and the craftsman's tools, landlords continually sought to evade the rules. Beds, blanket, shovel and tongs, and soup kettle were in principle protected from seizure. As described to the Royal Commission on Labour and Capital in 1887, legislation specified these "alimentary rights" (Table 2, column V and Table 4) and restricted garnishing wages to half the value of what was owing. But the grievance raised by Thomas Gratorex, who lived a few doors off St-Mary Street, reveals the abuses. The bailiff pushed his wife aside, sequestered their furniture in his own back yard, and obtained from Gratorex's employer, Canadian Rubber, half his week's wage. Because the wage and auction of the goods did not cover the charges of bailiff and sheriff, let alone the back rent, Gratorex ended up owing more than before, deprived week by week of half his wage and accruing a greater debt. His testimony is a rare expression of the sense of injustice which must have been felt by every family "set out".[43]

Another risk was fire, and Montreal's greatest fit of nest-building was provoked by the conflagration of July 8, 1852, when one-fifth of the city's families were set out, and a vast area, including most of St-Mary Street, was reduced to wilderness.[44] Within a matter of days tent camps were raised, the city resurveyed the street lines, and over the next four summers most owners reproduced the shop-front façades and diamond-shaped rooms by erecting new buildings on foundations of the 1820s and 1830s (Figure 1). In a hurry to meet demand and restore their own incomes, owners were pressing the limits of their access to capital (including fire insurance and municipal fire loans) and gave more latitude than usual to tenants, especially artisans and

40 Act of Simard March 19, 1864. In earlier business crises, too, couples asked the court to divide property which they held in common under a traditional marriage contract or in absence of any contract. This is the origin of the inventory in Table 2, column D (Luken August 23, 1823), as shown by other acts documenting the marriage and prior debts (Faribault February 1, 1812; Cadieux November 14, 1823).

41 Act of Rientord February 6, 1874.

42 The festival of February 18, 1868, was elaborately described in the newspapers and in retrospect by Edmond Moreau, *Nos Croisés* (Montreal: Fabre & Gravel, 1871).

43 Royal Commission on Labor and Capital, 1887, vol. 5, *Quebec Evidence*, testimony of Thomas Gratorex, p. 84; John S. Hall, p. 384; Charles J. Doherty, p. 210; James F. D. Black, p. 218.

44 Extent of the fire is mapped in *Pilot Extra*, July 26, 1852, as reproduced in Jean-Claude Robert, *Atlas historique de Montréal* (Art Global/ Libre Expression, 1994).

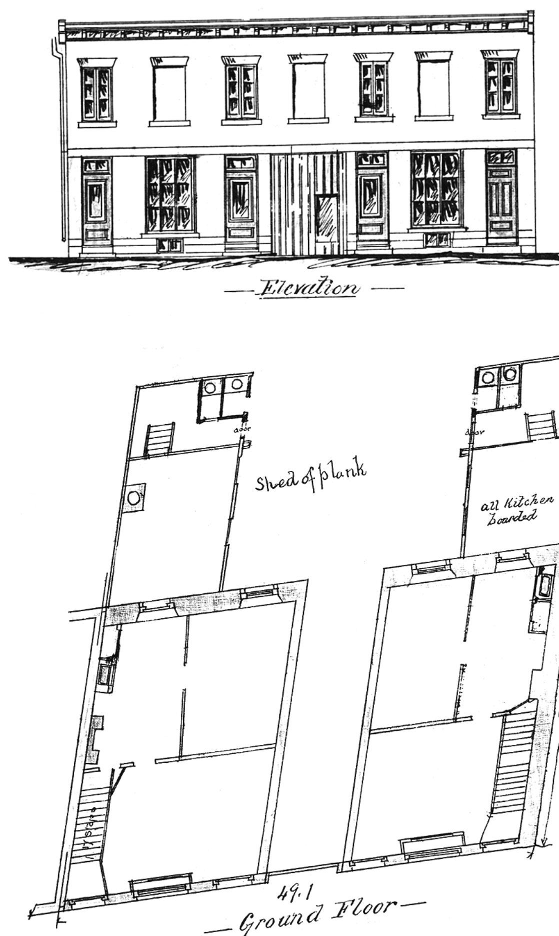

Figure 1 Behind the twin shop fronts, the ground floor plan shows a "back store" and a more private room on each side. Each side has a summer kitchen with shed and privies, and vestiges of internal access to basement and second floor. By 1890 the upper flat had been partitioned into seven rooms on each side. The diamond-shaped rooms, resulting from subdivision along eighteenth-century long lots, required that tenants cut their carpets on the bias. (Source: Redrawn from Superior Court expropriation case 184, 1892, item 23.)

shopkeepers, to finish and fit up the premises to suit themselves.[45] A painter, glazier, or plasterer was a prize tenant, invited to apply his skills, "improvements to remain" at the end of the lease.

From drawings of the rebuilt houses, as a cultural template, Dufaux notes

45 Act of Simard August 9, 1853, lease of a two-storey stone double shop and dwellings to carmakers Ritchot in St-Mary Street.

properties of continuity, interlocking, and adaptability.[46] These qualities characterize also the social configurations (in household formation and neighbouring) and are manifest in the furnishing of the spaces. The flexibility of extended family ensured a capacity for response to crisis. Not only did the kinship network absorb the widowed, the orphaned, and the unroofed, but kin were mobilized for financing, work sharing, and supply of materials, making possible repair and regeneration of the damaged physical fabric of the city. By exploring the sequels of fire and seizure at the scale of a neighbourhood, we discover a social webbing and the significance of nesting as social behaviour.

Responding to Risk

In the face of such risks, the problem was ever to create and recreate a working capital from wisps of nothing, like the sparrow's bits of yarn and straw. We have been able to demonstrate substantial, measurable upward social mobility among Irish Catholic immigrants to Montreal from one generation to the next and, to a comparable degree, among rural French Canadian migrants from the Plain into the city.[47] This kind of successful bootstrapping involved plugging into the urban network and siphoning a living from some minute circuit in the growth economy. St-Mary Street was from earliest times the road from the Longueuil ferry, and in winter the road across the ice, from the south shore of the St. Lawrence to downtown markets. Because of its situation in the network of traffic that is the city, the street had a distinctive economy, in particular a strong presence of what is today known as the hospitality industry. In 1838 and 1842, St-Mary Street had, along with its blacksmiths, saddlers, and grocers, one-tenth of the city's licensed taverns.[48] The hospitality industry was fueled with alcohol, and, despite the disastrous effects on some careers (among them Napoléon's father Michel, who died of cirrhosis of the liver), alcohol propelled other careers along an upward path.

Such business thoroughfares — one street segment in a dozen — accommodated a greater diversity of social status than most streets, and residents

46 François Dufaux, "Order, Structure and Scale: Notre-Dame Street Buildings, 1850–1892" (paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association, Sherbrooke, June 6, 1999) and "A New World". For related theory, see Bill Hillier, *Space is the Machine: A Configurational Theory of Architecture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Jean Cuisenier, *La maison rustique : logique sociale et composition architecturale* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1991); for Quebec evidence of the systemic nature of housing layout, see Paul-Louis Martin, *À la façon du temps présent. Trois siècles d'architecture populaire au Québec* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1999).

47 Olson, "« Pour se créer un avenir »".

48 ANQM, minutes of Montreal Justices of the Peace. For women's entrepreneurial roles and legal constraints in Quebec, see Bettina Bradbury *et al.*, "Property and Marriage: The Law and Practice in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal", *Histoire sociale/ Social History*, vol. 26, no. 51 (May 1993), pp. 9–39; Brian Young, "Getting Around Legal Incapacity: The Legal Status of Married Women in Trade in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Lower Canada", *Canadian Papers in Business History*, vol. 1 (1972), pp. 1–16.

occupied a wider range of sizes of dwellings.[49] St-Mary Street shows a larger array of occupations than most, a greater variety of economic activities, a considerable interaction between the component parts, and an intimate relation between home and workplace. Because activities of production, exchange, and reproduction were woven into the same buildings, this use affected the kinds of houses that were built. The shop-front buildings in St-Mary Street were therefore larger, more valuable, and more durable than those in surrounding streets, although they accommodated the full range of household sizes and living standards. Thus the configuration of economic opportunities produced an exceptional variety of household configurations with a capacity to host newcomers, to feed extra mouths, and to employ temporary hands, as well as stimulating ingenuity in snagging and weaving into the social economy those bits of yarn and ribbon.

If we look at a bundle of household possessions in relation to the space occupied, Hugh Allen's mansion might define one extreme; he owned the massive rubber company at Papineau Square, the east end of our stretch of St-Mary Street, and his 60-room mansion on the slope of Mount Royal employed seven servants to dust and polish. At the other extreme would be the raft which brought firewood from the Ottawa valley to the King's Woodyard and the smaller private woodyards at the downtown (west) end of St-Mary Street. Its fireplace, cooking, and camping gear were core items, essentials which we find in every human nest: a minimalist inventory lists 26 blankets, one pillow, a bucket, iron pot, and frying pan, a wooden ladle, a few tin kettles and lids, tin teapots and dishes, plus the raft colours and two new red sashes. The floating dwelling, itself a workplace, was by no means wind- and water-tight; its beams, rafters, flooring, and benches were sold off with the cargo of timber, and its hardware packed into a barrel.[50]

We are concerned here with a narrower range of modest dwellings which can be arrayed according to the rental tax (*taxe locative*) and the space into which goods could be stuffed. The smallest viable and stable unit described in the leases and inventories of St-Mary Street was a two-room unit: the shop and the room behind it, at $4 or $5 a month.[51] A notch above that (at twice the price) was the four-room unit: a ground-floor shop and back store with two rooms beneath or two rooms above. The connection between these spaces was sometimes severed later in the century. The same Mrs. Hogarth, the blacksmith's widow, in letting a shop on the ground floor of her stone house to a shoemaker, agreed to have a door "broken through the westerly window so that tenants in the lodgings above would have no communication

49 The distinctive character of "streets of bustle" was identified by Hanna and Olson, "Métiers, loyers", and can be observed on Charles Booth's map of London (1889) as well as in the *Historical Atlas of Canada*, vol. 3, plate 30.

50 McCord Museum, O'Brien Papers, letters to Bailey and McCarty, July 18 and August 25, 1843, and February 21, 1846. The anchor and chain were worth the rest, including sails, flag, and cables.

51 For example, Widow Cochrane's grocery in a brick, one-storey house next to the owner's paint shop (act of Simard May 1, 1860).

with the shoemaker" (Figure 1).[52] Thus, within a single building were drawn and redrawn the boundaries between working-class and middle-class lifestyles.[53] In a larger enterprise, such as the pharmacy of Théodore Chivé in the same street, the rooms were more specialized: the shop had built-in counters and shelving, a sink and drain on every floor, and specially made plate-glass mirrors to reflect an array of handsome bottles which the city's appraiser regarded as old-fashioned. As late as 1890 Chivé was still housing his two young licensed pharmacists in the third floor; each evening one of them brought the cash upstairs to Madame Chivé, who kept the books and whose nest on the second floor (with one nestling) was carpeted with "un beau tapis, bien épais".[54]

Contents of the yard and outbuildings like stables and haylofts were vital to household production, evident in the leases of the 1840s: the Lambs' bake oven, for example, and Martel's smithy, or Miss Ritchot's right to pass "to and fro to the cellar" with her tins of milk and butter. In the 1890s Widow Sénécal attached great value to the unusually large yard she rented, where she and her sister did laundry to support her eight children.[55] Interior furnishings, however, were also important as means of production in the domestic enterprises operated by women. While numerous, these enterprises were too small, too variable, and perhaps simply too feminine to be accurately defined by officious census-takers, but they were essential to family incomes. The combination of activities inside the household formed a nugget on which economic concepts shatter. What we call "consumer durables" like stoves and flat irons, and even the soft stuff like pillows, were converted — for a night, a summer season, or a decade of widowhood — into capital equipment as a woman transformed her dwelling into an eating-room, a drinking-place, boarding-house, or place of entertainment. At the corner of St-Adolphe, Mrs. Shea left an estate three times as large as Mrs. Carrick's: her goods brought £60, because her three-piece dining table, soup tureen, egg cups, preserving pan, and plenty of glasses equipped her to take boarders and support her four children (Table 3, column 3).[56] To attempt maximum legal protection for dowry and "alimentary" goods, virtually all capital in the hospitality industry was placed in the hands of women, and their entrepreneurial opportunities in this sector explain why urban households, in contrast with rural ones, report so few looms and spinning wheels.

52 Act of Montreuil April 11, 1854. At the back of the lot Mrs. Hogarth rented another one-storey stone house to another shoemaker. They all shared the yard and privy.

53 Bettina Bradbury points to the significance of an income differential as small as 25 cents a day, in her *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993).

54 Superior Court, expropriation case, *City v. Notre-Dame street*, 1891, dossier 184, item 59, testimony; lease by act of Fair May 7, 1890.

55 Superior Court, dossier 184, item 35, testimony of Marie Decelles.

56 Acts of Busby September 21, 1843 (lease) and March 18 and 19, 1844 (inventory and sale).

Table 3: Households of Hospitality

Inventory	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Movables ($)	.	.	316	348	400	>1500	360	560	342	.	.	1184	371	800	900	200	1200
Rent movables ($/mo)	.	.	.	.	.	600	.	(rent)	.	20	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
House rent ($/mo)	.	200	7	40	50	.	60	.	.	17	19	.	.	.	.	35	.
Year (18—)	12	45	70	54	70	92	54	55	54	54	55	78	79	1903	86	90	55
BEDROOM																	
bedstead	1	8	.	5	.	.	.	5	6	1	5	5	2	.	.	14	21
set bed curtains	1	8	1	1	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
mattress (straw)	1	8	.	5	.	.	.	4	6	3	10	.	.	.	.	.	21
featherbed	1	8	.	1	.	.	.	1	6	.	1	.	.	.	.	14	21
bolster	1	8	.	7	.	.	.	6	.	.	5	.	.	.	.	8	4
pillow	2	16	.	7	.	.	.	6	6	.	10	.	.	.	.	18	21
pillow case	4	24	lot	14	.	.	.	6	.	.	12	.	.	.	.	40	12
sheets pr	4	8	15	14	.	.	5	12	.	.	6	.	.	.	.	40	60
blanket	2	20	.	7	.	.	.	n	.	.	7	.	.	.	.	9	60
coverlet	1	16	9	7	.	.	.	6	6	.	8	.	.	.	.	17	24
carpet	2	8	.	7 yd	1	.	4	4	6	2	.	.	.	.	.	7	.
mirror	.	8	.	5	.	.	.	.	7	2	6	.	.	.	.	.	.
wash stand	.	6	.	4	1	.	1	6	6	2	5	.	.	.	.	.	20
ewer & bowl	1	8	.	3	.	.	.	5	6	2	5	4	.	.	.	8	20
chamberpot	1	8	.	4	.	.	.	.	6	2	5	4	.	.	.	8	24
spittoon	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	4	.	.	.	8	.
chaise d'aisance	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
FIRE & LIGHT																	
stove & pipe	.	2	.	.	1	1	.	.	2	.	2	1	.	.	1	1	10
cookstove	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	1	1	.	.	.	1	1
pr dog irons	1	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.		.	.	.	1	.
shovel & tongs	1	1	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Table 3: Households of Hospitality (cont'd.)

Inventory	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
FIRE & LIGHT (cont'd.)																	
lamp	1	3	.	1	4	.	1	1	1	.	2	3	.	.	.	8	.
candlesticks	3	28	6	8	.	.	.	7	10	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	4
snuffer & stand	1	4	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
STORAGE																	
cupboard/armoire	2	2	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	2	1	1	.	.	.	.	.
chest of drawers	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	2	5	.	.	.	.	5	2
wardrobe	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.
sideboard	.	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	1	.
buffet de cuisine	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
smoothing iron	2	2	6	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	.
water barrel, bucket	2	3	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.
wash tub / basin	1	7	2	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.
boot jack	1	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
churn	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
umbrella	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
sewing machine	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2
bath tub	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
BASICS																	
tables lg	2	5	2	4	.	14	.	3	2	1	3	1	3	.	.	.	4
chairs	6	61	3	12	12	85	.	18	18	4	6	12	6	.	.	.	72
bunk, settee	1	3	.	.	1	.	.	2	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.
looking glass lg	1	3	.	.	2	.	1	1	2	2	1	.	.	.	.	.	3
LININGS																	
pr window curtains	1	8	lot	5	red	.	.	7	.	.	.	1	2	.	.	2	2
pr damask curtains	.	2	.	.	.	.	2	6	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	3
carpet	.	3	.	4	.	.	30 yd	.	.	1	4	.	25yd	.	.	7	153yd
oil cloth / lino	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	5	.	.	.	.	.	.

Table 3: Households of Hospitality (cont'd.)

Inventory	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
LININGS (contd.)																	
sofa, haircloth	.	1	.	2	.	.	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	.	.	.	4
stuffed chair / canapé	.	2	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	6	10	.	.	.	.	.	8
rocking chair	.	2	.	.	.	.	1	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
foot stools	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.
screen, embroidered	.	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
hall rug	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
table cover	.	6	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	5	.	.	.	.	.	.
SYMBOLIC GOODS																	
books	1	>100	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
glassed prints	6	67	.	4	3	6	.	4	5	20	8	11	.	.	1	.	12
piano, stool, music	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
clock	.	2	1	1	1	1	.	1	.	.	2	2	1	.	1	.	2
ornaments	.	41	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	4	.	.	.	.	.	.
maps	.	5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	.
gaming tables	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	.
games	.	3	.	.	6	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	.
TABLEWARE																	
pr knives & forks	6	n	12	6	.	.	.	12	n	.	12	.	.	.	.	20	84
soupspoons	6	n	7	8	.	.	.	12	n	.	18	.	.	.	.	20	60
teaspoons	12	n	8s	6	.	.	.	12	n	.	.	.	.	.	.	20	60
soup tureen & cover	1	n	1	.	.	.	.	.	n	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
dishes	3	n	.	24	.	.	.	.	n	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
sallad	1	n	.	.	.	.	.	.	n	.	.	.	.	.	.	20	12
lg plates	12	n	42	.	.	.	.	.	n	.	100 pc	.	25	.	.	20	60
dessert plates	12	n	.	.	.	.	.	.	n	.	set	.	.	.	.	20	60
table cloth	1	n	5	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	4	.
pepper box	1	n	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	.
saltstands	2	n	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	8	n
teapot	2	4	set	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.

Table 3: Households of Hospitality (cont'd.)

Inventory	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
sugarbowl & milkpot	2	1	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	4	.
cups & saucers	12	n	lot	.	.	.	.	.	n	.	24	.	.	.	.	.	.
pitchers	6	1	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	4	.	.	.	.	.	.
coffeepot	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.
bowl / plat	1	.	5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	6	set
egg cups	.	.	7	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
napkins	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	24	.
dish covers	.	set	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	6	.	.	.	.	.	.
bread basket	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
cruets & stand	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3
jelly dish	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
butter cooler	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
bell	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
DRINK																	
trays	.	17	4	8	1	.	.	6	.	.	4	.	.	.	.	.	.
decanters	2	2	1	.	15	8	.	.	.	.	2	.	12	.	12	.	.
wine glasses	6	.	8	17	.	20	.	.	.	.	12	.	50	32	32	.	96
tumblers	6	.	4	12	17	30	.	12	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	96
bottles	.	.	lot	.	30	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	44	.	.
beer pump	.	.	.	.	2	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
cigar case	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
COOKWARE																	
pot, kettle	3	.	1	1	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3	.
tea kettle	.	6	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
frying pan	1	1	1	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	.
grid iron	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3	.
iron ladle	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
meat fork	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
boiler	.	3	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3	.
saucepan	.	5	2	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	.
roasting pan	.	2	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Table 3: Households of Hospitality (cont'd.)

Inventory	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
canisters	5	lot	lot	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	4	.	.	.	.	.	.
cullender	1	4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
grater	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
milkstrainer	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
funnel	1	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	5	.	.	.	.	.	.
cream skimmer	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
soup ladle	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
rollingpin	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
meat-grinder	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
meat saw	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
fish kettle	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
knife box	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.

Identifications and sources:

1 Kollmyer legacy (Gray February 14, 1812)
2 Bartholomew O'Brien and Eliza McDugald boardinghouse (O'Brien Papers, April 1845)
3 Ann Slack dies, widow of L. H. Shea, shipbuilder (Busby March 18, 1844)
4 Angèle Archambault lets furniture to Julia Murray (Simard July 18, 1854)
5 Onésime Beauchamp sells barbershop to Alphonse Quenneville (Chartrand April 9, 1870)
6 John H. Ryan rents from P. Murphy, restaurant 530 Craig Street (Kittson October 21, 1892)
7 James Condlan rents furniture to Léocadie Chaput (Simard March 20, 1854)
8 James Condlan rents furniture to Margaret Rose (Simard April 16, 1855)
9 Angèle Pillaire sells furniture to James Condlan (Simard April 5, 1854)
10 Mary Ann Skakle lets furniture to Julie Clément (Simard November 22, 1854)
11 Mary Ann Allen sells furniture to Joseph Brunelle (Simard November 23, 1855)
12 Kate Ryan, wife of James O'Dea, given tavern furnishings by her father-in-law (Lighthall January 19, 1878)
13 Ryan-O'Dea given house furnishings by her father (Lighthall October 8, 1879)
14 Ryan-O'Dea buys hotel fixtures (Leclerc October 5, 1903)
15 Mary Ellen Ryan, wife of D. Hayes, buys from her brother saloon fixtures, 749 Craig (Levy February 2, 1886)
16 Eulalie Blouin, widow Gosselin, buys 1270 Notre Dame (Lemire June 23, 1891)
17 Félicité Gareau, wife of F. Beauchamp, navigator, buys from her brother (Simard June 8 and July 20, 1955)

Note: £ = $4

Table 4 Goods Not Subject to Seizure

HOUSEHOLD GOODS
Bed, bedding and bedsteads in use by debtor and his family
1 stove and pipes
1 crane and appendages
1 pr andirons, tongs, shovel
1 set of cooking utensils
1 table
6 knives, forks, spoons, plates, teacups, saucers
1 teapot, sugar basin and milk jug
Spinning wheels and weaving looms in domestic use
1 sewing machine
1 washing machine and wringer
1 axe and saw
10 volumes of books
Ordinary and necessary wearing apparel of self and family
Fuel and food for < 30 days and < $20
Tools of his trade to < $30
FARM EQUIPMENT
2 draft horses or oxen, harness
1 cow, 2 pigs, 4 sheep, 15 hives bees
1 plow, 1 harrow, 1 working sleigh, tumbril, hay cart
Fodder for < 30 days
1 gun, 6 traps, common fishing nets
INCOME
Alimentary allowances granted by court
Pensions given as aliment
Wages and salaries not yet due
Wages due, one half*
Money or objects bequeathed conditional on exemption

* By amendment, 44 and 45 Victoria, ch. 18. Greater protection was given to wages of teachers, emoluments of clergy, salaries of public servants, and settlers on public lands for first 10 years (31 Victoria, ch. 20).

Source: Royal Commission on Labor and Capital, testimony of John S. Hall, pp. 384–388, from *Code of Civil Procedure*, articles 556, 557, and 558 (order rearranged).

Mrs. Shea's goods filled a space three times as large as Mrs. Carrick's. In addition to her ground-floor dining room, bedroom, shop, kitchen, and small back room, she had one guest room, occupied at the time of her death by the carpenter building a house nearby. The dozen innkeepers of Table 3 occupied larger spaces than the usual, since home and workplace formed an indivisible unit. The most comfortable were equipped like private homes, as shown in the first two columns, where the Kollmyer list can be compared with the stone boarding house run by Bartholomew O'Brien and Eliza McDugald in the 1840s at Hospital and St-John Streets. Their eight guest rooms were personalized by homey touches of colour: a ladies' work box, plaster ornaments "The Deer", "Prince Albert", and "Bonaparte", a collection of sea shells, a bedroom with crib and a framed "Holy Family".[57] From the overstuffed spaces we sense the intensity of activity and fraternization. Their establishment, with adjoining tavern, was eminently respectable; in winter, seminarians from the Collège de Montréal took their Sunday night suppers here, and Mrs. O'Brien's Protestant sisters and nieces from St. John's were frequent guests, signing for their beers and gin slings. In summer, numbers of Irish raftsmen stopped overnight, one of whom, to cover the bill, left in hock the barrel of rafting equipment described above.

Each of the dozen hotelkeepers catered to a well-defined market niche. In Saint-Jean-Baptiste Village, Onésime Beauchamp made his barbershop an entertainment centre. In addition to the barber chair, mirror, and dozens of little pots, he had a bar, sideboard, coal stove and red curtains, billiard table, *boules*, and dartboard (Table 3, column 5).[58] The largest in the series, Félicité Gareau's hotel with 20 guest rooms, reception hall, salon, dining room, and kitchen, had more specialized items like butter and soap dishes (column 17).[59] John Ryan's modern restaurant of the 1890s had steam heat, 17 gas brackets, and 23 electric lights, as well as a piano and automatic beer pumps (column 6).[60] Others remained seasonal, like the bar opposite Sohmer Park and the contract eating-place which fed the park employees. Of ten hotels we can document in St-Mary Street in 1890, all were operating on about the same scale as Eulalie Blouin's (column 16), $15 to $30 a month rent for a corner entrance with ground-floor bar room, six or eight guest rooms upstairs, rented furniture, and a very local working-class clientele.[61]

For the more stable, the development of assets was the work of more than one lifetime. When Kate Ryan married James O'Dea in 1878, her father-in-

57 O'Brien Papers, inventory dated April 1845; act of Luken March 9, 1832 (lease).

58 Act of Chartrand April 9, 1870.

59 Acts of Simard June 8 and July 20, 1855. Purchase of furnishings from her brother George and a contract for his services as clerk suggest a joint venture of longer history and perhaps his own evasion of creditors.

60 Act of Kittson October 21, 1892.

61 See leases by acts of Lemire November 21, 1888; June 23, 1891; May 13, 1893; Lighthall August 21 and October 16, 1890; Perrault February 18, April 30, and May 29, 1890; Pérodeau March 20, 1886; February 19, 1889; and testimony in Superior Court, dossier 184, items 15, 20, 24, 37, 45, 58, 59.

law gave her all the equipment of his stagecoach inn from the village of St-Colomban — horses, carts, express wagon, and sleighs, the fittings for four guest rooms, bar room fixtures, and pool table (column 12) — and her own father, a beer driver, gave her the furnishings of the family home in Lagauchetière Street, including a hair sofa and lace curtains (column 13). Twenty-five years later, Kate and her husband, with five teenaged children, a servant, and a lodger, were still keeping a hotel in the old Irish neighbourhood of Griffintown (at St-Maurice and O'Connell), and she sold it to buy a more centrally located saloon with grocery and refrigeration (column 14).[62]

All of these ventures were risky. By renting both the property and the furniture, the innkeeper could expand or retrench with alacrity. Some forms of hospitality, described in the courtrooms as "disorderly houses", involved yet greater risks and the occasional vanishing act. The repertory of notary Joseph Simard documents a neighbourhood network of such "pleasure gardens". In 1853 furniture dealer James Condlan was doing a nice business in the wake of the fire. He rented to Léocadie Chaput a rather elegant set of furniture, including three bedroom carpets and a parlour Brussels carpet, large mirror with gilt frame, sofa and six chairs of mahogany and horsehair, damask curtains, and white window hangings (column 7). "A spinster of legal age", Léocadie was paying house-rent at £2 a month (higher than average), but was hiring the furniture at £2.6 *a week*, suggesting an unusual cash flow through the household.[63] By following this hunch and sequencing the frames over four years, we uncover a web involving fifteen women, half a dozen men, and six dwellings. Of the three landlords, one was a police officer, one was a bailiff, and the third, who temporarily moved to the Ottawa valley beyond reach of Montreal authorities, was subsequently sworn as a bailiff to Superior Court.[64] A year earlier Condlan was renting the same furniture to a different woman at £3 every Monday. The furniture was in the same two-storey house at the corner of Wolfe and Lagauchetière, with an outdoor bowling alley,[65] and the landlord that year was doing business from a jail cell. The jail was conveniently located in St-Mary Street; if we examine its registers, we find both Condlan and Chaput had also been jailed about every three

62 Acts of Lighthall January 19, 1878; October 8, 1879; Leclerc, October 5, 1903.

63 Act of Simard May 20, 1854. For rents close to the average in the immediate neighbourhood, see leases by grocer Thomas O'Brien, April 9 and 28, September 9, 1859, or April 11, 1860 (four rooms over the grocery at $4 per month); lease of furniture by Joseph Léveillé, May 4, 1859, probably to secure recovery of back rent, at 5 shillings a week. Leases to the alleged brothel-keepers often specified no sublet to any family with children, and some were structured to extract rent at a much higher rate (triple) during the first half of the lease, the summer season.

64 For discussion of the "ambiguous" relation between prostitutes and policemen, complementary sources in police and court records, and an appraisal of the widespread nature of brothel-keeping in the city, see Mary Ann Poutanen, " 'To indulge their carnal appetites': Prostitution in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal" (doctoral dissertation, Department of History, McGill University, 1997), or her essay in Kathryn McPherson *et al.*, *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1999).

65 Act of Rientord December 11, 1846.

months for the last six years for operating disorderly houses, presumably brothels or illegal liquor outlets. Angèle Pillaire, the first owner of the furniture, was also jailed in a raid on a *maison de désordre*.[66]

In the tangle of transactions involving Condlan, the same landlord, and the same notary, another prominent figure was Margaret Rose, who had countersigned Léocadie's contract. Ms. Rose herself was renting three dwellings, including a one-storey wooden house on Wolfe at £5 a month and a flat in a two-storey wooden house at £2.10 weekly. In one of these nests a little girl was born, "a natural child", and at eight months old was given by her mother to Ms. Rose for adoption, under a contract written as an apprenticeship to the age of 21.[67] A couple of months later Ms. Rose rented an upstairs flat in the next block, where she agreed not to keep any *fille débordée*, unless of course one of them should become ill and require religious succor.[68] In November, to cover rent Ms. Rose owed, the landlord seized the furniture (from another woman), but by April Ms. Rose was again renting the furniture at £6 a week (column 8).[69]

In this type of establishment, operating in persistent defiance of the law, rent ran double or triple what was usual for the space, the value of furnishings often amounted to a year's rent, and the goods changed hands rapidly, circulating primarily among women. Each of three houses was the scene, within eighteen months, of six or seven transfers of furniture.[70] Mary Ann, who seems to have lived highest on the hog and was always freed on bail, was operating a larger establishment, with two parlours, horsehair mattresses, quilts red and white, the fittings of a servant's room, two silver teapots, and (the only instance I have discovered) a bathtub (column 11).[71] This was bourgeois furniture in a working-class space and location. In a first-class location on Craig street, another woman's list reached £1,200 to furnish two parlours and several bedrooms and included a matched set of a hundred pieces of china.[72]

The documentation is uncommon, but the phenomenon of employing domestic goods as venture capital was common enough. Given the higher

66 *La Minerve*, April 9, 1853; inventory by Simard April 5, 1854. In a lease by act of Simard January 30, 1860, she reappears, and a husband is referred to as absent for the past two years.

67 Act of Simard April 24, 1854.

68 Act of Simard July 10, 1854.

69 For other leases of dwellings to Margaret Rose, see acts of Simard November 23, 1852; February 10 and June 13, 1853; February 13 and August 9, 1854. For leases of furniture, see acts of Simard November 20, 1854; April 16 and August 7, 1855.

70 Six are shown in Table 3, all from the repertory of notary Joseph Simard: Pillaire April 5, 1854 (column 9); Chaput May 20, 1854 (column 7); Archambault July 18, 1854 (column 4); Skakle November 22, 1854 (column 10); Rose April 16, 1855 (column 8); and Allen November 23, 1855 (column 11). The other acts involve the same sets of furnishings.

71 Mary Ann Allen appears in acts of Simard May 24, June 11, and July 2, 1855; the bathtub is mentioned November 23, 1855. Other transactions on the same furniture or house: November 22, 1854; April 19 and 28, 1855.

72 Acts of Simard July 18 and 21, 1854.

risks, rented premises and rented props were preferable to ownership. In looking at this pattern of consumption, it is helpful to consider the argument of anthropologists Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood that the uses of goods are social. Consumer goods map how households were related to one another, and the objective of consumption is "to operate a coherent information system". In their interpretation, the distinguishing value of a good — whether it is the tea tray or the servant's straw mattress — is its capacity "to increase personal availability".[73]

At Home in the World

In the thicket of relationships of kin, client, and neighbour, the nest took on an emotional density. The spring move, with its demanding process of site selection, unpacking, and strenuous scrubbing, involved psychological appropriation of a space. Even the toddler appropriates a corner or hideyhole for small treasures, and Gaston Bachelard points us to the poetic power of the image of the house as framed in childhood, its attic and chimney, stairs and cellar.[74] In nineteenth-century Montreal, a rocking chair was mothering and grandmothering equipment in virtually every household. Onésime the cabinet maker made for his own family a cradle *à panneaux* and two little children's chairs.[75] Valued in pennies but recorded with exceptional precision were Victorine's "ber, avec sa petite paillasse, couverte d'étoffe du pays, drap et courtepointe d'Ardennes".[76] Shoemaker Élie Bréard, left a widower after a few months in the couple's new house, took pains to point out to the notary "un petit bonnet de nette, blanc, fleurie", "un petit couvrepied de soie bleu-ciel piqué", "une petite chaise empaillée avec son petit pot en fayence", and "un petit lot de butin d'enfant".[77] Thus the most perishable of possessions tell us something about what people cherished, and a few documents show the quirks of personality and the thickness of memory which were worked into a domestic interior. Scholastique Dubuc, Léon's widow, made her own list for the notary, itemizing "a bucket for the house and a bucket for the horse" and, in phonetic spelling, "un couvrepied piqué lila, un

73 Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods* (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

74 Gaston Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1972). For a wider cultural range of sources in the poetics and archetypal meanings of the lived-in, dreamed, or imagined house, see Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken, 1968); Andreï Makine, *Dreams of my Russian Summers* (New York: Scribner, 1995); Ben Okri, *The Famished Road* (London: J. Cape, 1991); Alan Pred, *Lost Words and Lost Worlds: Modernity and the Language of Everday Life in Late Nineteenth-Century Stockholm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). On the appropriation of personal spaces, see H. Raymond, N. Haumont *et al.*, *L'habitat pavillonnaire* (Paris: Centre de recherche d'urbanisme, 1966, 1971) and *Les pavillonnaires* (Paris: Centre de recherche d'urbanisme, 1966, 1975). For distinct concepts of privacy, see Isabel Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing: The Gypsies and Their Journey* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

75 Acts of Mainville February 27, 1875; November 24, 1893.

76 Act of Luken August 23, 1823.

77 Acts of Gaudry-LaBourbonnière November 16 and 17, 1854 (*tutelle* and inventory, Table 2, column K); Josephe Belle July 26, 1854 (construction contract); and Moreau July 10, 1854.

tuc que j'ai tricoté, une perre de mitaine et une perre de pognet que j'ai tin en rose".[78]

Since unmarried persons so rarely lived alone, their possessions tended to occupy at most a room. Over a lifetime, the goods might expand to a houseful and then diminish, as the widowed party was absorbed into another household. When Bridget married the widower next door, her son kept the clock. One of the wealthiest men in our sample, Stanley Bagg, could no longer see well enough to sign his name. He had donated his entire holdings to his son, with whom he was lodging when he died, leaving for inventory nothing but a box stove and a trunk with his braces, razor, flannel drawers and socks (eight pairs and seven assorted), and the souvenirs that warmed his memory: a diamond pin, five swords, and a pair of pistols.[79]

A generation later, in 1876, a traveling salesman who died a bachelor in his forties left the barest furnishings of a rented bedroom but a very large wardrobe, including rubber raincoat, five wool overcoats of various weights, 26 pairs of boots and shoes, satchels, trunk, and railroad map. Beyond that professional equipment, his belongings hint at the new leisure lifestyles: dress suit and three linen dusters, two pairs of snowshoes, dumbbells and "gymnasium", framed club picture, a piece of statuary, five missionary books and 22 paperback novels, a bird and two cages, tobacco cutter, syringe, inhaler, and 17 pipes.[80]

The curiously detailed list for another 31-year-old bachelor suggests that the painful practice of inventory may have been assimilated into the grieving process, since the family recorded minute personal details not necessary to the legal *partage*. His ten brothers and sisters and their spouses, as well as his mother and her second husband, gathered from 8:00 to 11:15 in the evening, in the room he had rented under the mansard roof of his mother's house in St-Urban Street. They listed of course the bed, rug, and chest of drawers, spittoon and chamber pot, suitcase, razor, toothbrush, and, of greatest value, a gold watch, watchchain, and ring (one-third). More evocative were his 40 collars and a silk tie, ivory cigarholder, four pairs of kid gloves, 17 pairs of slippers, a flute, a music box, and a pair of handcuffs.[81]

Conclusion

By exploring the private living-spaces of a neighbourhood, its guestrooms and taverns, we discover the social uses of the inhabitants' furnishings and, from the historian's point of view, their value as evidence of the social webbing. Wringing out of the richer documents every capricious detail, we

78 Acts of Leclerc March 21 and April 1, 1878.
79 Act of Terrault December 24, 1853.
80 Acts of Hunter January 26 and April 6, 1877.
81 Acts of Hétu February 5, 1875. The only substantial property was a share in a wooden double-duplex from his father's estate (act of Hétu September 14, 1863); he was one of 22 children by two marriages, but the half-brothers were not present at the inventory.

obtain some perspectives of individuals upon their own material worlds. Ephemeral possessions — old, worn and cracked, auctioned and recovered by relatives — reflected an ideal of family and, in the face of immense risks, its resilience. The evidence compels us to broaden our conception of property to take into account, even among the poorest, the depth of memory worked into a domestic interior, the breadth of the kinship network, and the long-range nature of their goals.

From 41 cases which allow both a forward and a backward look upon a lifetime's accumulation, we see contrasts between expectations and achievements, and in rare cases an inventory reveals the array of possessions as an assertion of personality and living memory. Sometimes imagined ideals were smashed like grandma's sugar bowl, and dreams went up in smoke along with the curtains and chimney ornaments of papier mâché. The more modest the bundle of goods, the more likely it was that they would eventually, like the possessions of Mrs. Carrick and Mrs. Shea, be dispersed among the neighbours, literally dissolved into the milieu. Instead of a gold ring for remembrance, the children of Narcisse and Osine were left with a bundle of old clothes, while the wisps of their parents' capital feathered other nests.

Other families, however, again and again, managed to transform a flimsy bundle of consumer goods, stitched or morticed and painted, into capital: a means of production, a social capital signifying status, or a set of tools for achieving status. The water barrel and washboard, the glass decanter or the sack of feathers, in addition to their obvious practical uses, functioned as security for a lease, as pledge for payments due, as an investment in a marriage or dowry for a nun, as life insurance, as working capital in the practice of a competitive "penny capitalism",[82] or as venture capital to be gambled to attain a new station in life. Scholastique's pink mittens, Mrs. Shea's soup tureen, and Mary Ann's bathtub were all instruments in a network of social relations.

82 See Sol Tax, *Penny Capitalism: A Guatemalan Indian Economy* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953). For an example of a mortgage to guarantee a daughter's entry into an order of teaching sisters, see act of Lapparé March 20, 1854.