

# “Due Attention Has Been Paid to All Rules”: Women, Tavern Licences, and Social Regulation in Montreal, 1840-1860

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*Taverns and inns were centres of neighbourhood life, places for travellers seeking meals, drink, and accommodation and commercial and domestic spaces where keepers and their families earned a living and that they called home. Women figured largely in public houses as patrons, servants, family members, and publicans in their own right. The article focuses on a sample of 90 female publicans who held tavern licences from 1840 to 1860, arguing that keeping these establishments afforded them distinct levels of economic independence and power. It considers broadly those characteristics that constituted ideal female keepers in mid-nineteenth-century Montreal and how they maintained a respectable status precisely at a moment when alcohol consumption and associated licensed and unlicensed commercial sites were coming increasing under scrutiny by temperance advocates, authorities of the criminal justice system, and elites. To retain their licences, female keepers had to negotiate the landmines of respectability by following licensing regulations, maintaining a reputable demeanour, and regulating the public house's culture and clientele.*

*Les tavernes et les auberges étaient des lieux où la vie de quartier battait son plein, des endroits où les voyageurs trouvaient à manger, à boire et à se loger, des aires commerciales et domestiques où les tenanciers et leur famille gagnaient leur vie et qu'ils considéraient comme leur chez eux. Les femmes étaient très présentes dans ces établissements, soit comme clientes, servantes, membres de la famille ou patronnes de plein droit. L'article porte sur un échantillon de 90 tenancières qui détenaient un permis de taverne de 1840 à 1860. Le fait qu'elles tenaient ces établissements leur procurait des niveaux d'indépendance et de pouvoir économiques appréciables, selon l'auteure. Celle-ci se penche en gros sur les*

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*caractéristiques qui en faisaient des tenancières idéales dans la Montréal du milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et sur la façon dont elles préservaient leur respectabilité, précisément à un moment où la consommation d'alcool et les établissements commerciaux – avec ou sans permis – où elle avait lieu étaient de plus en plus surveillés de près par les apôtres de la tempérance, les autorités du système de justice criminelle et les élites. Pour conserver leur permis et préserver leur respectabilité, les tenancières devaient donc observer la réglementation sur les permis, conserver leur bonne réputation et régir la culture et la clientèle de l'établissement.*

IN JANUARY 1841, the widow Anne Sutherland Sawyer applied for a renewal of her tavern licence. She reminded authorities that, for the past eight years since she had operated her nine-bedroom establishment on Capital Street, “due attention has been paid to all Rules and Regulations imposed.”<sup>71</sup> Requiring a continuation of a tavern licence to support her family following the death of John Sawyer in 1834, Sutherland Sawyer had good reason to be concerned. She had married him in 1832 after the death of his wife, Agnes Brown, a year earlier. In the ensuing two years since the nuptials, Sutherland Sawyer became stepmother to 11-year-old William, mother to Elizabeth who was born in 1833, and a widow at age 41. The tavern licence was critical to the family’s economic subsistence. Authorities granted her renewal request.

Taverns and inns served as centres of neighbourhood life, as places for travellers seeking meals, drink, and accommodation and as commercial and domestic spaces where keepers and their families earned a living and that they called home. Yet, by the early 1840s, intolerance of public drunkenness and of both licit and illicit drinking locales was on the rise. Sutherland Sawyer would have been aware that those who sold liquor or imbibed fell increasingly under the gaze of the police, courts, and elites. A reading of contemporary discourses about intemperance—as it related to class, gender, ethnicity, and “race”—reveals that prominent city residents were especially preoccupied with the drinking habits of popular-class men and women and that the licensed taverns and illegal establishments including brothels they frequented spawned social anxieties amongst elites. Thus plebeian and elite bodies became contested, discursive sites around questions about regulation, agency, and privilege; they were also representative of mutual unease. Labouring men and women were not only judged by this rhetoric and found lacking but were also subjected to local government regulations that they contested. Temperance advocates pressured authorities to close unlicensed businesses as well as to reduce the number of tavern licences and renewals they granted.

While the majority of tavern-keepers and innkeepers in Montreal were men, unmarried women, wives, and widows such as Sutherland Sawyer also held tavern licences. Women figured largely in these public houses as patrons and servants, as

1 Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec-Montréal [hereafter BANQ-M], Cote: P 1000, D880, Licences de Tavernes, January 19, 1841.

well as mothers, spouses, daughters, and sisters of the keepers, and as publicans in their own right. Historian Julia Roberts's study of taverns in Upper Canada shows that their operation was a female trade at least in small establishments and that women's work was critical to the effective functioning of taverns and inns generally.<sup>2</sup> These businesses were homes to the keepers' families, and the combination had important implications for wives, mothers, and daughters. In Australia, as the historian Clare Wright reminds us, success of a public house depended on the ability of the keeper to provide a "home away from home" to both travellers and patrons of the local neighbourhood. Women found this blurring of the establishment's social and spatial boundaries appealing. Therefore, rather than thinking of the tavern and inn as the antithesis of the home, Wright contends, "it is possible to begin to appreciate the pub as a place where, historically, women have lived, loved, worked and taken their leisure: a complex environment which could be hostile to women, but could also satisfy women's needs and aspirations."<sup>3</sup> In Montreal, married women managed these commercial ventures with their spouses, on their own, or while husbands pursued other types of work, providing domestic labour, watching over their offspring, supervising servants, and dealing directly with the clientele. Many of the women, including Sutherland Sawyer, continued operating these family businesses following their spouses' demise. Children grew up and worked in them and contributed to the household economy from an early age, learning skills useful in later life.

Women of all social classes frequented the city's public houses: from female travellers in search of sustenance and lodging to patrons from the neighbourhood wanting a drink. They included women deemed respectable and non-respectable. My study of prostitution in Montreal reveals that streetwalkers employed taverns to negotiate sex commerce over a drink or a meal, especially during inclement weather.<sup>4</sup> Some city keepers encouraged prostitutes to patronize their businesses as a way to attract male customers in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Publicans sought to diversify their establishments by offering a range of goods and services that included not only sex commerce but also entertainment and groceries. Women who visited particular taverns to purchase household sundries could use such moments of sociability to have a drink. They could also procure alcohol in small measure from grocers who were only permitted to sell it by the bottle. Such illicit acts attracted women to these stores, allowing them to pause over a drink before resuming their daily chores. Men could also drink in neighbourhood brothels, which were ubiquitous in the city.

As part of a larger study, "At the Bar: Gender, Work, and Regulation in Montreal's Hospitality Services, 1840-1880," which features female publicans, this article focuses on a sample of 90 women who held tavern licences in the period from 1840 to 1860. I have purposely shifted the analytical lens from male

2 Julia Roberts, *In Mixed Company: Taverns and Public Life in Upper Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009), p. 141.

3 Clare Wright, "Of Public Houses and Private Lives: Female Hotelkeepers as Domestic Entrepreneurs," *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 32, no. 116 (2001), pp. 59, 63.

4 Mary Anne Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions: Prostitution in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015).

keepers to women to highlight the diverse roles they played in taverns, inns, and to a lesser extent in the sale of groceries. This sample does not include women implicated in informal or makeshift economies who ran a variety of establishments such as brothels, boarding-houses, inns, and taverns where drinks were sold without a licence. Rather, I explore in some detail the demographic features of these 90 women and the types of licit businesses they operated. Nonetheless, unlicensed keepers and male publicans provide subjects for comparison as a means to bring the licensed women into sharper focus. Since authorities awarded licences to women who met the standards of respectability, I consider broadly those characteristics that constituted the ideal female keeper in mid-nineteenth-century Montreal. How did these women maintain a respectable status precisely at a moment when alcohol consumption and associated licensed and unlicensed commercial sites were coming increasingly under scrutiny by elites as well as authorities of the criminal justice system? In other words, in what ways did female keepers conform to specific gender-based standards of behaviour? How was respectability mediated and inscribed on their bodies, and how were women disciplined when their comportment bordered on non-respectability? I argue that the experiences of women as keepers of taverns and inns were varied and that the size of the enterprise—small, medium, or large—afforded them distinct levels of economic independence and power. Borrowing again from Clare Wright, taverns and inns were “domestic enterprises run for commercial gain.”<sup>5</sup> To keep the licences, publicans like Sutherland Sawyer had to negotiate the landmines of respectability by following the rules associated with licensing, submitting to annual inspections of their establishments, maintaining a reputable demeanour, and regulating the culture and the clientele who patronized their businesses.

While women’s roles in hospitality services have been given attention in other parts of the British Empire<sup>6</sup> and in several smaller British Canadian towns and villages,<sup>7</sup> the city of Montreal—a linchpin of trade in North America—has been

5 Wright, “Of Public Houses and Private Lives,” p. 62.

6 Some examples are the following: Susan Upton, *Wanted, A Beautiful Barmaid: Women Behind the Bar in New Zealand, 1830-1976* (Wellington, NZ: Victoria University Press, 2013); Clare Wright, *Beyond the Ladies Lounge: Australia’s Female Publicans* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003); Diane Kirkby, *Barmaids: A History of Women’s Work in Pubs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

7 Studies of taverns in Canada include the following: Roberts, *In Mixed Company*; Craig Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003); Kevin B. Wamsley and Robert S. Kossuth, “Fighting It Out in Nineteenth-Century Upper Canada/Canada West: Masculinities and Physical Challenges in the Tavern,” *Journal of Sports History*, vol. 27, no. 3 (Fall 2000), pp. 405-430; Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, ed., *Drink in Canada: Historical Essays* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993); Margaret McBurney and Mary Byers, *Tavern in the Town: Early Inns and Taverns of Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

neglected.<sup>8</sup> In considering the problem, I draw on the findings for other places,<sup>9</sup> on my analysis of prostitution,<sup>10</sup> and on the larger body of feminist revisionist history.

To create the sample of 90 women, I compiled all those found in the municipal tax rolls for the years 1848, 1849, 1850, 1855, and 1860, in tavern licences<sup>11</sup> awarded or refused by the Justices of the Peace between 1841 and 1851, and those identified in Lovell/ Mackay annual business directories (1842-1860) as a Miss, Mrs., Widow, or a feminine first name. Because each of those sources claimed to be comprehensive, we can treat the set as representative. Montreal is exceptional for North American cities in the high quality, conservation, and access to nominal and genealogical sources, and I have tapped these to crosscheck and verify the 90 women with respect to deaths, ages, marriages, births, and name changes.<sup>12</sup> One of the limitations is ambiguity about marital status; I can be sure of 71 per cent. I have also consulted local newspapers such as the *Montreal Gazette*, the *Montreal Witness*, and *La Minerve*, the municipality of Montreal's Minutes of Council, the Montreal Police Meeting Minutes, the O'Brien Papers at the archives of the McCord Museum, and criminal justice documents such as grand jury presentments. Little information could be found about the women's actual business practices, interiors of buildings, or clientele.<sup>13</sup>

### Montreal at Mid-Century

Although the span 1840 to 1860 is a dramatic phase in the city's industrial revolution, with the creation of hydraulic power along the Lachine Canal circa 1848 and rapid advance of steam power in the late 1850s, as well as the operation of the Grand Trunk Railway and its locomotive and car shops by 1860, what mattered to the hospitality sector was simply the sheer growth of the city (from 40,000 in 1842 to 90,000 in 1861) and with it rising numbers of strangers navigating its public spaces in proportion to familiar figures. Montreal outpaced Quebec City and began its climb to dominate the economy, trade, and finance of the country. The Union of the Canadas was proclaimed in 1840 about the same time that a

8 Studies pertaining to Montréal include: Sherry Olson, "Silver and Hotcakes and Beer: Irish Montreal in the 1840s," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 45, no. 1/2 (2013), pp. 179-201; Anouk Bélanger and Lisa Sumner, "De la taverne Joe Beef à l'hypertaverne Edgar. La Taverne comme expression populaire du Montréal industriel en transformation," *GLOBE: Revue internationale d'études québécoise*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2006), pp. 27-48; Peter de Lottinville, "Joe Beef of Montreal: Working-Class Culture and the Tavern, 1869-1889," *Labour/ Le Travailleur*, vol. 8/9 (Autumn/Spring 1981/1982), pp. 9-40.

9 For more on women tavern-keepers, see also Serena Zabin, "Women's Trading Networks and Dangerous Economies in Eighteenth-Century New York City," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2006), pp. 291-321; Sarah Meacham Hand, "Keeping the Trade: The Persistence of Tavernkeeping among Middling Women in Colonial Virginia," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Spring 2005), pp. 140-163; Ann Digan Lanning, "Women Tavern-Keepers in the Connecticut River Valley, 1750-1810," *Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Annual Proceedings*, vol. 25 (2000), pp. 202-214.

10 Mary Anne Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions: Prostitution in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015).

11 Women represented approximately 8 per cent of the total number of tavern licence applicants.

12 I have consulted the registers of Catholic and Protestant births, marriages, and deaths at the BANQ-M and on Ancestry.ca to create a database of reconstituted keepers' families.

13 In the larger study, data about these important subjects will be gleaned from a systematic examination of notarial documents and criminal and civil court records.

municipal corporation was created extending limited powers of self-government in the hands of a mayor and council made up entirely of merchants. Expansion of trade meant dramatic increases in clientele at all levels from neighbours, local merchants, and brokers to trans-Atlantic, cross-border travellers and immigrants (in particular the famine Irish), new arrivals from the countryside, raftsmen coming and going, farmers supplying the central markets, and provisioners of the military garrison. The hospitality sector drew on the entire urban geography catering to those newcomers who may have spent from hours, days, or years to a lifetime in Montreal. The tavern, inn, or boarding-house served as a “home away from home” where travellers and newcomers found substitutes for most of the services typically received “at home.”<sup>14</sup> Publicans engaged newly arrived Irish women as domestic servants to deal with the rapidly growing hospitality demands.

In servicing a port and a British garrison, public houses clustered along the main streets in the different neighbourhoods of the town and suburbs, in front of the wharves along the waterfront where soldiers, sailors, construction workers, immigrants, and travellers congregated. Montreal was the administrative centre of the region’s commercial, industrial, educational, civic, judicial, military, and religious life. By the 1850s, large hotel owners began to describe the services they offered in tourist guides to potential elite travellers to the city. In the throes of industrialization, the back-breaking labour of a substantial male workforce made up of the Irish and French Canadians reconfigured the built environment, transforming the city’s infrastructure to meet the needs of capitalist ventures: collecting and draining surface water; constructing water reservoirs; laying water pipes; upgrading the Lachine Canal as well as modernizing the port; building warehouses; and erecting streetlamps and telegraph poles and wires.<sup>15</sup> The workers required accommodation, meals, and drink at the numerous public houses, which were ubiquitous on the urban landscape.

These men embraced a life predicated on hard work, pleasure, alcohol consumption, and public entertainment that included residence in temporary homes such as the tavern, inn, or boarding-house and visits to licensed and unlicensed drinking establishments and brothels. This bachelor subculture, a consequence of migration and subsequent loosening of kinship ties, was normalized in fraternal work relations by a shared sense of masculinity, cultural practices, and camaraderie. Thus alcoholic beverages had a central place in both daily life and social activities. For example, Montreal residents consumed drinks in the city’s streets and green spaces and purchased alcohol in small measure from local grocers, at the racecourse from 30 makeshift taverns erected there every year

14 A more detailed discussion of hospitality is explored in Sherry Olson and Mary Anne Poutanen, “Hospitality in Montreal: Local Responses to Global Demand, 1836-1913” in Richard Dennis, Deryck Holdsworth, and Phillip MacIntosh, eds., *Architectures of Hurry: Mobilities and Modernity in Urban Environments* (London and New York: Routledge, in preparation).

15 See, for example, Stéphane Castonguay and Michèle Dagenais, eds., *Metropolitan Natures: Environmental Histories of Montreal* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011); Robert Gagnon, *Questions d’égouts : santé publique, infrastructures et urbanisation à Montréal au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 2006); Robert Lewis, *Manufacturing Montreal: The Making of an Industrial Landscape, 1850 to 1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).



on race days, and at a legion of licit and illicit taverns, inns, groceries, boarding-houses, and brothels that dotted the urban landscape and served a diverse ethnic, racialized, and gendered population divided by social class.<sup>16</sup> Notwithstanding efforts by temperance reformers and capitalists (often one and the same) to limit drinking, alcohol played both practical and cultural roles in work throughout the period. As labour historian Craig Heron points out, “booze was obviously intended to fortify the manual worker for heavy toil, or to sustain him in carrying it out, especially out of doors.... To varying degrees, artisans, labourers, soldiers, sailors, and farmers built this kind of drinking into their distinctive sense of a rugged plebeian masculinity.”<sup>17</sup> Keepers would have seen these men frequenting their establishments as a reliable source of revenue. Public houses catered to varied people and needs as “homes away from home”; they also served as extensions of popular-class households and were households themselves.

### Montreal’s Women Keepers

Anne Sutherland Sawyer shared key demographic features with fellow publicans. A middle-aged widow of a tavern-keeper when she first sought a licence, Sutherland Sawyer had been born in 1793 in Upper Canada, of a middling social status, the daughter of Scottish-born Walter Sutherland and Albany-born Nancy Anne Campbell. Her father had been a lieutenant in the King’s Royal Regiment of New York and fought with Sir John Johnson in the American War of Independence. Sutherland Sawyer’s Loyalist parents were married in Ohio in 1788. They moved to Upper Canada after the birth of the first of their ten children, where they took up farming. By 1829, Anne’s mother was living in Montreal, supported by a widow’s pension and supplemented after 1834 by her daughter’s earnings at the tavern; Campbell died there in 1848. At some point between her mother’s demise and 1851, Sutherland Sawyer returned to Canada West. She died in Fergus, Ontario, in 1878 at the age of 85 never having remarried. It is unknown how she supported herself and her children.<sup>18</sup>

Most of the women keepers like Widow Sawyer, among those whose ethnicity could be determined (in two-thirds of the sample), had roots or were born in the United Kingdom or Ireland. Slightly more than a third (38 per cent) were French-Canadian women; those born elsewhere account for only 1.6 per cent. Such a small number of French-Canadian keepers suggest that they may have

16 Both Bettina Bradbury and Julia Roberts have argued that groceries were reputed to sell beverages by the glass even though it was illegal to do so. Licensed grocers were only permitted to sell alcohol in large measure. See Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993), p. 162; Roberts, *In Mixed Company*, p. 2. See also Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions*; BANQ-M, TL19 S1 SS11, Grand Jury Presentment, February 1847.

17 Heron, *Booze*, pp. 34-35.

18 Census returns for 1851, 1861, and 1871 identify her only as a widow. Daughter Elizabeth married twice: in 1852 to John Colquhoun Platt; and in 1861 to Dr. John R. Graham. Her stepson William received art training in Montreal and become a portrait painter and photographer. He married Eliza Baxter in 1851, settled in Kingston, visited his stepmother and half sister in Durham, Canada West, and fathered 10 children. See Michael Bell, “Sawyer, William,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sawyer\\_william\\_11E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sawyer_william_11E.html) (accessed March 1, 2017).

used male kin to obtain tavern licences, not unlike the case in Australia, where men held the licences but women managed the public houses.<sup>19</sup> The vast majority of the 90 women were either married or widowed and, among those for whom the information is available, had spouses or fathers who were publicans. With respect to social class, the largest number came from a middling group of small shopkeepers (tavern-keepers, innkeepers, hotel-keepers, and grocers) representing 80 per cent; the popular classes made up only 7 per cent. The remaining 13 per cent consisted of a range of social classes that included the petite bourgeoisie (boarding school master), bourgeoisie (two merchants and two gentlemen), and farmers.

Tavern licences permitted these women to retail alcoholic beverages such as spirits, wine, and beer in small measure and to furnish lodging and meals for a fee. While the sale of alcohol could be quite profitable and tavern- and inn-keeping allowed female publicans to juggle their household responsibilities while serving customers, operating these public houses also meant that women worked long hours.<sup>20</sup> They welcomed travellers at all hours of the day and night, stabled horses, laundered linens, shopped, served drinks, put up with inebriated customers who may not have been able to pay their tab, and cooked meals. We know from Sherry Olson's examination of publican Bartholomew O'Brien's day journal that food preparation was time-consuming at the inn: "Mrs OB [Bartholomew O'Brien's wife Eliza McDougall] bought 1 barrel Bonckouick [*sic*] oysters ... bushel turnips & half bushel carrots," and she offered customers late-night suppers, drinks, and "sundries." She served fish and meat such as turkey, beef, and pork, as well as pancakes and apple pie.<sup>21</sup> Women keepers required a good head for business, American scholar Dorothy A. Mays contends, because they had to extend credit to customers.<sup>22</sup> Depending on the size of their establishments, female publicans, like their male counterparts, also needed access to capital and credit to supply the business with everything from furnishings and cooking equipment to food and alcohol in bulk. They purchased these goods and provisions locally and usually on credit.

It is no accident that women turned to the business of public houses to earn a living or to supplement family income. Brian Young's examination of married female traders in nineteenth-century Montreal shows that women had a history of operating small businesses that involved "foodstuffs, alcohol, lodging, or clothing."<sup>23</sup> Women who were married to keepers contributed enormously to these

19 Kirby, *Barmaids*.

20 Taverns, inns, and public houses provided alcoholic beverages, food, accommodation, and stabling. Julia Roberts has suggested that in colonial Ontario these terms were used interchangeably (*In Mixed Company*, pp. 2-3).

21 Olson, "Silver and Hotcakes and Beer," pp. 188-189.

22 Dorothy A. Mays, *Women in Early America: Struggle, Survival, and Freedom in a New World* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio Inc., 2004), p. 390.

23 Brian Young, "The Persistence of Customary Law: Married Women as Traders" in his book *The Politics of Codification: The Lower Canadian Civil Code of 1866* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), p. 153. Women's hands in local businesses were more extensive and varied than previously thought. Operating public houses not only incorporated women's historical experience in commerce, but the establishments also were extensions of women's work in the household economy,



establishments. As Bettina Bradbury has demonstrated for mid-to-late nineteenth-century Montreal, a married woman's labour involved both income-generating and income-saving strategies employing not only non-waged forms of subsistence such as animal husbandry, gardening, huckstering, and taking in boarders as well as turning wages into sustenance, but also sex commerce and selling liquor without a licence.<sup>24</sup> In the case of public houses, such family businesses depended on women's work to succeed, which gave them some degree of power.<sup>25</sup> Eliza Hamlet's four marriages over a 25-year period remind us of her critical contribution to the inns where she lived and worked. Three of her husbands were involved in the sale of alcohol: Peter Taylor, whom she wedded in 1836, was a brewer and trader; both Laurence Murphy and John Jones were innkeepers when she married them in 1843 and 1852 respectively. In February 1852, following Murphy's death two months earlier, Hamlet established a modest inn on the main floor and cellar of a two-storey wooden house on St-Mary Street she rented from Pierre Rottot.<sup>26</sup> When she wed her third husband, John Jones, two months later, Hamlet brought to this union capital consisting not only of movables, but also of credit, cash, knowledge, and experience. The marriage contract, which had protected her right to the inn's furnishings and a small amount of cash, ensured a livelihood. It also meant that Hamlet, with her knowhow, was well positioned to negotiate a marriage contract to her benefit.<sup>27</sup> Her fourth husband, Olivier Blain, was identified as a cabinet-maker in 1861.

Some of the married women operated taverns and inns independently of their husbands. Esther Lebeau *dite* Lalouette, married to Séraphin Éleuthère Lussier in 1834, had full legal powers to manage her own affairs, in this case an autonomous business, being "séparée de biens d'avec son dit époux." Lussier was an innkeeper and grocer with a business at the corner of St-Joseph and Mountain streets, while 32-year-old Lebeau operated an inn in a house she rented from Maria Kay on Bonaventure Street, with 15 rooms and stables that could accommodate 24 horses.<sup>28</sup> Approximately seven blocks or a 15-minute walk divided the two establishments.

It is difficult to determine the civil status for approximately a third of the cohort. Of the known licensees, slightly more than half (56 per cent) were widows. As Bettina Bradbury has shown, widows instituted diverse measures to ensure a living wage for themselves and their dependents. They used their knowledge,

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which refers broadly to the manner in which a family unit allocated its resources to maintain its members. Given that provisioning food and lodging was typically women's work, female keepers did not challenge contemporary views about femininity.

24 Bradbury, *Working Families*.

25 Elizabeth Jane Errington, *Wives and Mothers, School Mistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790-1840* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), pp. 192-193. Diana Kirkby's study of Australian public houses reveals that women were often the silent partners in these husband-wife businesses; men may have held the licences, but women ran the establishments (Kirkby, *Barmaids*).

26 BAnQ-M, 297, A. Montreuil, No. 3049, Bail, February 12, 1852.

27 BAnQ-M, 297, A. Montreuil, No. 3060, No. 3061, and No. 3108, February 20, 1852.

28 BAnQ-M, Cote: P 1000, D880, Licences de Tavernes, January 10, 1842 and January 7, 1845; Lovell's Directory, 1850-1851.

experience, and capital, as the following three examples make evident.<sup>29</sup> The first case concerns the Irish-born Catholic couple, Bridget McCrory and David Conway. When grocer Conway perished in July 1849 from consumption after eleven years of marriage, along with his one-year-old son from an “inflammation,” McCrory was 35 years old and responsible for three young children ranging in age from four to ten. In January 1850, she applied for a renewal of a tavern licence for the family business that furnished six guest rooms and stables for four horses.<sup>30</sup> McCrory died in May that year, leaving her surviving children without a parent. In the second case, when Rose McClintock’s husband Samuel Pillow died after only three years of marriage, she supported her son and daughter—two-year-old John Alexander and four-month-old Mary Ann—by taking over his business as a grocer with a tavern licence.<sup>31</sup> Her life followed a very different trajectory than that of Bridget McCrory. McClintock’s remarriage six years later to Thomas Dean Bigelow, widower of Sophia Roy and a successful Montreal nail manufacturer with a factory on the Lachine Canal, ended her occupation as a grocer. She took charge of a newly reconstituted household made up of 10-year-old John Theodore, 13-year-old Marie-Louise Sophie, and Theophilus aged 16, in addition to John Alexander and Mary Ann, and bore three more children, Elizabeth, Clara Jane, and Theodora before being widowed once again in 1863.

The third case involves the death of Marie-Louise Josephine Genant’s husband, Pierre Bernard Decousse, after nine years of marriage. She had wedded the master tailor in 1843. The daughter of a grocer, who presumably had a tavern licence to sell alcohol, Marie-Louise would have been well acquainted with the running of a business. Genant and Decousse established their first home together on Place d’Armes where he worked in the needle trades before moving to a house on the corner of Little St-James Street the following year and then in 1848 to Notre Dame Street. When Decousse succumbed (1852) to a lengthy illness, he was licensed for a tavern on Place Jacques Cartier.<sup>32</sup> Bettina Bradbury describes the square as a popular gathering place abuzz with activity, foot and hoof traffic, and noise emanating from the new market located in the square itself and from the taverns and prominent hotels that bordered it.<sup>33</sup> Men and women of different social classes as well as ethnicities, ages, marital status, and religious affiliations frequented this site, rubbing shoulders with one another, socializing, and seeking amenities according to their pocketbooks. It is likely that Decousse ended his participation in the tailoring trade owing to illness and opened the tavern so that Genant could combine domesticity with the business skills she had acquired as the daughter of a grocer. At Decousse’s demise, he left large amounts of linens and other items needed to operate a tavern and recorded in the inventory taken after his

29 Bettina Bradbury, *Wife to Widow: Lives, Laws, and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Montreal* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), p. 328.

30 BAnQ-M, Cote: P 1000, D880, Licences de Tavernes, January 29, 1850.

31 BAnQ-M, Cote: P 1000, D880, Licences de Tavernes, January 20, 1847, and January 18, 1848; Lovell’s Directory 1842-1843, 1845-1846; Archives de la Ville de Montréal [hereafter AVM], VM2, Rôle d’évaluation foncière, 1848.

32 BAnQ-M, Cote: P 1000, D880, Licences de Tavernes, April 19, 1851.

33 Bradbury, *Wife to Widow*, p. 93.

death.<sup>34</sup> A pregnant Marie-Louise Genant had sole responsibility for four children all under the age of nine. A daughter was born four months after Decousse's passing (she died in 1857). Genant continued operating the tavern at 36 Place Jacques Cartier another four years, and by 1861 moved to a two-storey wooden house on St-Lawrence Street, which she ran as a boarding-house accommodating nine boarders and two live-in servants. Her widowed mother, Luce Sophie Matté, kept a boarding-house between 1845 and 1864 at several addresses in the city before settling down at 203 Craig Street and would have been an important source of information and experience for Genant. According to Bettina Bradbury, the widow Genant relocated houses nearly every year.<sup>35</sup> Twenty years later, she was living with an unmarried daughter in a small apartment in Montreal, and she died in 1898 at the age of 73.

Only 3 per cent of the women were single when they obtained tavern licences. Establishing oneself as a keeper or grocer required capital and access to credit, which would have served as barriers for many unmarried women. Grocer Elizabeth Tiffin was unattached when she requested a renewal of a licence in 1846. She had already held one for a year in partnership with Pierre-Fabien Charpentier, who kept a tavern at 88 St-Mary Street; her business as a grocer was conducted in a building at the corner of Lagauchetière and Dorchester streets.<sup>36</sup> The capital she would have required to operate a grocery likely came from her kinship ties to the Tiffin family of successful grocers and property owners. By 1847, Elizabeth Tiffin appears to have given up the business after marrying the Irish-born Protestant John Elliott, a partner in a wholesale and retail grocery with Thomas Tiffin, possibly Elizabeth's brother.<sup>37</sup>

Where the occupations of husbands or fathers are known, it is hardly surprising that 80 per cent were publicans and a few grocers. Angélique Archambault, perhaps the most successful innkeeper of the 90 in terms of the size and value of her hotel, learned the trade from her father Jean-Baptiste Archambault and mother Thérèse Archambault, who kept an inn in Vaudreuil. Boot-maker Patrick McEnroe kept a shop and advertised it in Lovell's Directory at the same address where his wife Mary Laven operated a tavern; McEnroe and Laven provide an example of the craftsmen who left the management of public houses to their wives.<sup>38</sup> In other cases an artisan chose to keep a public house rather than pursue his craft: when Édouard Gariépy married Adélaïde Jamme *dite* Carrière in 1832, he identified

34 BnQ-M, CN 601-279 Inventory, Genant and Decousse, September 20, 1853.

35 Bradbury, *Wife to Widow*, pp. 341-342.

36 BAnQ-M, Cote: P 1000, D880, Licences de Tavernes, March 22, 1845, and January 13, 1846; Lovell's Directory 1845-1846.

37 Despite efforts to reconstitute Elizabeth's family of origin, no definite identification of her parents or siblings can be made. I am very grateful to Joanne Burgess, who shared her data regarding the extended Tiffin family with me. While Thomas Tiffin was present at Elizabeth and John's marriage and was a sponsor at the baptism of their second-born baby, John Henry, it is not possible to make a definitive kinship link. Over the next two decades, Elizabeth gave birth to eight children. John Elliott died in 1884.

38 Lovell's Directory, 1842-1850; BAnQ-M, Cote: P 1000, D880, Licences de Tavernes, October 20, 1846, and January 23, 1849; AVM, VM2, Rôle d'évaluation foncière, 1848, 1849.

himself as a blacksmith, but by 1847 he kept a tavern on St-Paul Street in a building with a considerable rental value of £160.<sup>39</sup>

Depending on the size of the business, the costs entailed in operating a public house could be challenging for some women. The annual fee for a tavern licence ranged over the period from £4/7s/6p to £7/5s. Rent was proportional to space, and the publican would have had to furnish servants' room and board as well as their remuneration and purchase an array of household wares and supplies. In 1839, the ordinance covering tavern licences set a minimum of "two good beds, at least, for the accommodation of Travellers, in addition to those used by the family ... a Stable attached to such house, convenient Stalls, for at least four horses with a sufficient quantity of hay and oats."<sup>40</sup> The Murphy inventory after death provides a window into the range of furnishings and wares that even a modest public house, operated by Eliza Hamlet and her third husband John Jones, required: furniture included tables of different sizes, a sofa, 18 chairs, two cupboards, three beds, bedsteads, and mattresses, two wash stands with basins and jugs, and stoves and pipes; decorative items included framed pictures, a glass case, and a clock; there were bed linens such as sheets, pillows, and blankets; and kitchen items comprised crockery, candlesticks, pots, cauldrons, frying pans, snuffers and tray, tumblers, coffee pot, cutlery, a water barrel, and buckets as well as six liquor casks valued at £24.4.11.<sup>41</sup> If a woman already had space, furniture, and other goods at her disposal, the outlay would not have been as great.

Rent valuations for more than half of the women at some point in their career were assessed at £80 or less, slightly more than a third paid between £100 and £250, and the most expensive of these public houses represented only 6 per cent of the total. In 1860, a general median for all city residents was \$48 or £12.<sup>42</sup> In 1855, for example, Mary Ann Lynch, the widow of John O'Grady, kept a modest inn on Rue St-Giles that she rented from the estate of innkeeper Ann Allgate consisting of five rooms and three stables with a rental value of £30.<sup>43</sup> Eliza Hamlet paid a slightly higher rent. The lease she negotiated with Pierre Rottot for a lower flat, cellar, six stable stalls, hayloft, and yard in a wood house on St-Mary Street, at a cost of £36 per annum, detailed the number of cords of wood Hamlet could stack in the yard, the height of the woodpile, and the manner in which she could keep a pigsty. Rottot was not responsible for repairs; yet any that Hamlet made contributed capital to the building for which he made no financial outlay. He also reserved the right to pass a stovepipe through the adjoining kitchen to the chimney.<sup>44</sup> At the high end, Widow Mathilde Barrette operated an inn on Place Jacques Cartier the same year in a building belonging to Serafino Giraldi with a

39 AVM, VM2, Rôle d'évaluation foncière, 1848.

40 2 Victoria Cap XIV, "An ordinance to amend a certain act therein mentioned, and to provide for the better regulation of taverns and tavern-keepers," 1839, p. 3.

41 BAnQ-M, 297, A. Montreuil, No. 3060, February 20, 1852.

42 The city's annual rental values, according to geographers Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton, applied to owners and occupants alike, were based on market rent and assessors' appraisals, and provide some indication of household purchasing power. See Olson and Thornton, *Peopling the North American City: Montreal, 1840-1900* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), pp. 68-69.

43 AVM, VM2, Rôle d'évaluation foncière, 1855.

44 BAnQ-M, 297, A. Montreuil, No. 3049, February 12, 1852.

rental value of £150, five times that of Lynch and Hamlet.<sup>45</sup> As we already know, Place Jacques Cartier was an upscale, high-traffic area, close to the port, and home to one of the city's most important markets; in a competitive marketplace that characterized inn-keeping, such a location offered many financial advantages.

Angélique Archambault paid the highest rent. At 23 years of age, Archambault married Antoine-Timothé St-Julien in 1835 at a ceremony officiated by her uncle, the Reverend Paul-Loup Archambault, one-time principal of the Séminaire de Nicolet, vicar general, and co-founder of the Sisters of Ste-Anne.<sup>46</sup> Twenty years later she was running the 50-room Donegana Hotel on Rue Notre-Dame that had a rental value of £600 in 1855.<sup>47</sup> By 1857, Archambault had added a new wing of rooms, refurbished the drawing and sitting rooms, and refitted all of the bedrooms, "with every luxury and convenience."<sup>48</sup> The establishment was operated separate from that of her husband. She reapplied annually to renew her tavern licence independent of St-Julien, and advertised her business in Lovell's Directory as either Mrs. St-Julien or Angélique St-Julien. The couple had no children. St-Julien died in 1863 at the age of 49; a year later, Archambault gave up the business of hotel-keeping after declaring bankruptcy.<sup>49</sup>

Her initiation into the city's hospitality trade had been modest but her rise spectacular. A renewal application in 1851 confirms that she had held a licence for eight years. In 1842, Archambault was keeping a boarding house on St-Gabriel Street. Three years later, she leased a building on the same street and opened it as an inn and house of public entertainment, advertising the 80-room Canada Hotel as "a large, commodious house, spacious yard, good stabling."<sup>50</sup> By 1852, she had shrewdly leased the Donegana Hotel located on the northwest corner of Notre-Dame, "the most fashionable street in the city,"<sup>51</sup> rebuilt after having been severely damaged from fire. The 1852 advertisement boasted a refurbished and remodelled hotel, with a view of Viger Square, the Champ-de-Mars where guests could promenade and be entertained by daily military bands, and Mount Royal. The hotel offered good ventilation and carriages available free of charge to convey guests to and from the steamboats and railroad cars.<sup>52</sup> Guests could also shop at nearby fashionable stores or attend the theatre on Notre-Dame Street, a five-minute stroll from the hotel. An 1858 bill of fare publicized the current play at the Theatre Royal in addition to the dining-room's extensive menu and wine list.<sup>53</sup> The hotel offered its guests fine dining: "The Table will be supplied with the best

45 AVM, VM2, Rôle d'évaluation foncière, 1855.

46 Louis Rousseau, "Paul-Loup Archambault," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. VIII (1851-1860) (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1985), [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/archambault\\_paul\\_loup\\_8E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/archambault_paul_loup_8E.html).

47 AVM, VM2, Rôle d'évaluation foncière, 1855.

48 *The Stranger's Guide through the City of Montreal*, 1857.

49 E.-Z. Massicotte, "Hôtellerie puis hôpital," *Le Bulletin des recherches historiques* [Lévis], vol. XLV, no. 12 (December 1939), p. 361.

50 BAnQ-M, Cote: P 1000, D880, Licences de Tavernes, April 17, 1851.

51 *The Stranger's Guide through the City of Montreal*, 1857.

52 Lovell's Directory, 1852-1853.

53 "The Donegana Hotel, Bill of Fare: Montréal, Sunday, August 29, 1858" (Montreal, J. Potts, Herald Office, 1858).

which the markets afford. The wines, liquors, etc. will be of the best quality and every attention will be paid so as to render the enjoyment and satisfaction of the guests as complete as possible.”<sup>54</sup>

In such a highly competitive market, keepers of luxurious establishments, who sought to offset expenditures by filling their rooms with visitors from Upper Canada, the United States, and England, began to publish tourist guides as a means to advertise their businesses. *The Stranger's Guide Through the City of Montreal*, appearing in 1857 and 1859, featured the Donegana Hotel on the cover.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps that was how British traveller Clara Fitzroy Kelly Bromley chose where to reside during a visit in 1860: “Having established ourselves in the best quarters we could find at Donegana’s Hotel, Montreal being at present very crowded.”<sup>56</sup> The hotel also welcomed Prince Jérôme Napoléon (nephew of Napoléon I) and Maurice Dudevant Sand, son of novelist Georges Sand, as guests in September 1861. Travelling together to Montreal, Prince Napoléon described his stay in little detail: “Le maire Charles-Séraphin Rodier me conduit à Donegada [sic] Hotel, fort bon, dans le genre anglais”; Maurice Dudevant Sand was more effusive: “Nous logeons à l’hôtel Donegada [sic] nom indien (reste), mais auberge toute française, qui ne fait pas regretter les caravan-sérails américains. Plus de becs de gaz, de la bougie, de la vrai bougie de la Etoile! Plus de fenêtres à guillotine, et vraie bougie de vraies servantes qui cirent les bottes et brossent les habits à tour de bras.”<sup>57</sup>

That many female licensees were able to pay the annual taxes assigned to tavern licences, disperse monies for rent, purchase goods, and employ staff suggests economic stability and success for some.<sup>58</sup> For others, the costs related to keeping public houses, no matter how modest, were burdensome. In February 1843, Margaret Brown, who kept a tavern at the corner of Craig and Chenneville streets, sought a remission of her tavern licence tariff. It being winter, she would have had the added expense of purchasing firewood to heat her business. The Finance Committee of the municipality agreed to reduce the tariff by half given her “large and helpless family.”<sup>59</sup> Brown’s anxiety about her inability to pay the tavern licence fee embodied the potential loss of both subsistence and place of residence.

These public houses were family homes and anchors for networks of kinship and enterprise. Married women gave birth, raised their children, and cared for sick and dying offspring and husbands while they operated their businesses. Sutherland Sawyer’s children grew up in their mother’s tavern. So did the children of Scottish-born Mary Forster, who had married innkeeper John Mack in 1837; over a 14-year period, she gave birth to eight children while furnishing the work required of a

54 Lovell’s Directory, 1852-1853.

55 Michèle Lefebvre, “Les guides touristiques d’hôtels montréalais, 1857-1917,” *Revue de bibliothèque et archives nationales du Québec*, no. 5 (2013).

56 Clara Fitzroy Kelly Bromley, *A Woman’s Wanderings in the Western World: A Series of Letters Addressed to Sir Fitzroy Kelly, M.P. by his daughter Mrs. Bromley* (London: Saunders, Otley, and Co., 1861), p. 58.

57 Massicotte, “Hôtellerie puis hôpital,” p. 359.

58 Roberts, *In Mixed Company*, pp. 154-155.

59 AVM, VMI S10 D14, Procès-verbaux, vol. 5, February 15, 1843.



wife of a publican. When Mack died in 1853, Mary Forster continued the family business as a means to support the seven surviving children under 12 years of age.

We know little about relations among keepers, but I suspect some were close. In one example, Agnes Wilson and Eliza McDougall, both married to innkeepers, were good friends. McDougall knew Wilson when she wedded her first husband Matthew Gentle (1827). Agnes remarried in 1841 to Andrew McHardy, a bachelor innkeeper who had been operating the Caledonia Hotel for six years. His death four years later (1845) left her with a three-year-old and an infant daughter to support. She took over the Caledonia Hotel, comprising 12 rooms and stables for 35 horses, well located on St-Paul Street across from the House of Assembly, the parliament building of the Province of Canada (a union of Upper and Lower Canada as of 1840).<sup>60</sup> Agnes Wilson was a frequent visitor and overnight guest at the inn kept by Eliza McDougall and Bartholomew O'Brien. Wilson consumed meals, drank "strong beer and gin slings," and even resided at the O'Brien inn during the peak of a cholera epidemic in 1847. McDougall and Wilson met regularly, socialized over drinks, went on outings by carriage and sleigh, and visited mutual friends together. The daybook notations of Bartholomew O'Brien reveal that servants and guests moved between the two establishments. He sent his clerk, John Innis, to the Caledonia Hotel, likely as an offer of help, a few months before Andrew McHardy died.<sup>61</sup> In 1850, Agnes Wilson married for the third time to Thomas O'Reilly and ended her commerce as an innkeeper.

### Regulating Public Houses

The tavern and the inn were in every sense public houses, which served as central meeting places in local neighbourhoods and as extensions of households. Historian Craig Heron has shown that men and women gathered there to socialize, gossip, celebrate, debate, negotiate, organize events, and watch and participate in a wide range of cultural activities.<sup>62</sup> In Halifax, as Judith Fingard has argued, the tavern was central to popular-class social intercourse: "The tavern was as important to them as the rich man's drawing room, well stocked with cut glass decanters, was to him."<sup>63</sup> Despite such diversity of services, those advocating temperance encouraged Montreal residents to take the pledge while seeking to decrease the number of tavern licences that authorities were furnishing, influence legislation to make them more difficult to obtain, and promote temperance hotels.<sup>64</sup> Temperance campaigners, it would seem, sought to deprive these taverns of their plebeian

60 BAnQ-M, Cote: P 1000, D880, Licences de Tavernes, January 12, 1847; AVM, VM2, Rôle d'évaluation foncière, 1848, 1849; Lovell's Directory, 1850-1851.

61 Archives of the McCord Museum, PO83, O'Brien Papers, 1839-1848.

62 Heron, *Booze*, pp. 27-28.

63 Judith Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax* (Porter's Lake: Pottersfield Press, 1989), p. 26.

64 Montreal elites had already formed temperance organizations in the late 1820s; they grew in popularity through the 1830s and into the 1850s. The Montreal Temperance Society, its executive made up of some of the city's leading merchants, was modelled after its American counterpart and the ideas propagated by Dr. Benjamin Rush that abstinence would eliminate many social ills. The city's jailor and police chief furnished the organization with statistics to support its claim that most crimes were linked to drinking. See Jan Noel, *Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades before Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 57-65.

conviviality. Elites were especially preoccupied with “low” licensed drinking establishments referred to as groggeries, often located near the waterfront and frequented by sailors, soldiers, immigrants, prostitutes, and labourers with close connections to waterfront culture. These licensed public houses were considered no better than brothels. Grand juries typically accused keepers of participating in a variety of illegal activities that included prostitution, pawn-broking, and receiving stolen goods: “Our opinion is that no tavern keepers, under a Severe penalty, should be allowed to receive in pledge any article of furniture or clothing and that the strictest supervision should be exercised over those persons who act as pawnbrokers, whose shops there is little doubt, in many cases, serve as places of resort for stolen goods.”<sup>65</sup>

Publicans were also accused of turning a blind eye to the illegal activities taking place in their establishments. Prison warden Thomas McGinn described these taverns in an 1849 report on intemperance: “Four-fifths of these houses have no accommodation for man or horse, and are little else than club-rooms, for criminals and gamblers of every grade. In these establishments, the unsuspecting habitant barter his money for adulterated drink, which may be properly called a poison, and not frequently he is cheated, and has his pockets picked into the bargain. The number of public houses should be greatly reduced, and none should be tolerated, that did not afford proper accommodation and security to the traveller.”<sup>66</sup> As my monograph on prostitution demonstrates, women marketed sex in public houses.

In particular, the public house’s association of popular-class patrons with alcohol consumption and immorality was what caught the attention of city notables. Notwithstanding an elite fondness for imbibing in favoured drinking and eating establishments, grand juries of the Court of Quarter Sessions of the Peace routinely commented on those negative effects of alcohol considered to be at odds with emerging capitalist values of respectability, which emphasized individual self-discipline, industry, and sobriety among others: “First of all the absence of a Sound moral and religious education among the lower classes must, in our opinion, occupy the foreground. The prevalent use of intoxicating liquors must also be regarded as their prolific Source. Then as secondary causes, the want of discipline.”<sup>67</sup> Temperance campaigners related drink to poverty, disease, and licentious sexual encounters. Alcohol, they argued, encouraged idleness, dissipation, and vice especially among the youth. They worried boys would be unduly influenced to frequent the city’s licit and illicit public houses. In 1855, the editor of the English-language temperance newspaper, the *Montreal Witness*, complained that tavern-keepers had resorted to offering “all kinds of delicacies for the palate and music and song for the ear” to attract young men to their businesses.<sup>68</sup> Elites and criminal justice authorities targeted women involved in sex commerce

65 BAnQ-M, TL19 S1 SS11, Grand Jury Presentment, October 30, 1840.

66 “Report of the select committee of the Legislative assembly appointed to inquire whether any, and what measures can be adopted to repress the evils growing out of intemperance” (Montreal, Lovell and Gibson, 1849).

67 BAnQ-M, TL19 S1 SS11, Grand Jury Presentment, October 30, 1840.

68 *Montreal Witness*, February 7, 1855.

and those who imbibed, arguing that women's alcohol consumption was a gateway to prostitution. Here again, Thomas McGinn offered his observation that some of the incarcerated women who marketed sex "have been addicted to drink, before they fell the victim to the destroyer of their peace and virtue."<sup>69</sup> Two years later, the Reverend William Taylor of Montreal's Secession Church recalled an account of one of his parishioners, Mr. S, who wanted to take the temperance pledge. Taylor drew attention to Mrs. S's refusal to do the same: "She says no because it would mean giving up parties and because she sometimes required a little wine to help her dancing. THE RESULT OF THIS WAS THAT SHE BECAME A SECRET DRUNKARD [*sic*]. Her husband found out, was heartbroken and died. She became a confirmed drunkard and sunk from degradation to degradation, until she came to the brothel."<sup>70</sup> By 1840, in a crackdown on public drunkenness, police apprehended increasing numbers of inebriated women, with no history of marketing sex, for impeding sidewalks, breaking windows, and disturbing the public peace, charging them with vagrancy or being loose, idle, and disorderly.<sup>71</sup>

Members of grand juries drew similar links, for the popular classes, between crime and alcohol consumption: "The jury would observe in view of the cases brought up before them that four fifths of those of larceny violence & the keeping of disorderly houses (and there were very few others before them) that the evidence adduced shewed [*sic*] a very close connection between these crimes and the use of intoxicating liquors."<sup>72</sup> From their perspective, the statistics applied equally to female prisoners. Moreover, any decrease in crime was attributed to the "spread of temperance among the lower classes."<sup>73</sup> It was with some irony that authorities decided to use the entertainment tax in 1850 to finance the construction of a new courthouse. Two years later, grand jurors supported a bill that would end the importation of alcoholic liquors for sale except for medical purposes.<sup>74</sup>

The French-Canadian Catholic majority population was also drawn into the anti-drinking campaign. The priest Charles Chiniquy, who had been influenced by British temperance literature, became the public face of Canada East's French-Catholic temperance movement in the 1840s and early 1850s.<sup>75</sup> Employing a preaching style with a flair for the dramatic and resorting to contemporary bourgeois tropes about the popular classes, Chiniquy equated drinking establishments with

69 "Report of the select committee of the Legislative assembly appointed to inquire whether any, and what measures can be adopted to repress the evils growing out of intemperance."

70 *Montreal Witness*, January 21, 1851.

71 Mary Anne Poutanen, "Bonds of Friendship, Kinship, and Community: Gender, Homelessness, and Mutual Aid in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal" in Bettina Bradbury and Tamara Myers, eds., *Negotiating Identities in 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Montreal* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), pp. 25-48; and "The Homeless, the Whore, the Drunkard, and the Disorderly: Contours of Female Vagrancy in the Montreal Courts, 1810-1842" in Kathryn McPherson, Cecilia Morgan, and Nancy M. Forestell, eds., *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 29-47.

72 BAnQ-M, TL19 S1 SS11, Grand Jury Presentment, October 8, 1852.

73 BAnQ-M, TL19 S1 SS11, Grand Jury Presentment, April 30, 1842.

74 BAnQ-M, TL19 S1 SS11, Grand Jury Presentment, October 8, 1852. Similarly, in January 1849, grand jurors complained that three-quarters of the 1,600 prisoners were addicted to alcohol and that it applied to both men and women (BAnQ-M, TL32 S1 SS11, Grand Jury Presentment, January 19, 1849).

75 Noel, *Canada Dry*, p. 161.

“les écoles de tous les vices”<sup>76</sup> and emphasized the tragic consequences of chronic drunkenness both for the individual and the family. He drew large crowds, and equally large numbers of people prepared to sign temperance pledges.<sup>77</sup> In 1849, Father Chiniquy appeared before a select committee of the Legislative Assembly to present the case for temperance. In classic fashion, he began with a series of narratives detailing alcoholism. One of them included a sordid description of the death of a tavern-keeper’s mother who, being addicted to alcohol, drank five glasses of whiskey in one afternoon, only to drop dead the next morning. It was not happenstance that Chiniquy chose this woman to underscore his pompous rant about intemperance; wives and mothers were expected to play a vigorous, although prescribed role in family life as its moral compass. Reflecting a national discourse about the future of French Canadians, the mother’s moral failure to meet this obligation was an important warning to women drinkers. From his perspective, taverns were at the heart of the problem: “Granting licences for the sale of ardent spirits, such as heretofore has been the practice, is getting paid to encourage crime of all descriptions; it smooths the road to every excess; it is a snare to catch the multitude; it is desiring the shame, the degradation, the ruin, the *extinction of our population* [my emphasis].”<sup>78</sup> In an obsequious way, by associating the keeper’s mother’s alcohol consumption with women’s sexuality and reproduction, Chiniquy reinforced the responsibility of French-Canadian women for preserving their families’ Catholicism and French language.

Not all shared Chiniquy’s views about restricting the number of tavern licences or stopping them altogether. In 1851, the editor of the *Montreal Gazette* blamed “this abortion of Father Chiniquy”<sup>79</sup> for proposed new regulations that would increase the rate of duties and penalties on tavern licences. From the newspaper’s perspective, not only would legitimate male keepers—there is a notable silence about women publicans—be impeded from operating public houses, but restricting licences would also encourage more unlicensed establishments: “The licensed tavern-keepers of this country are a respectable class of men; and do not deserve such contemptuous treatment as the bill we have commented on would subject them to. What they want is to attend to their business without unnecessary molestation and protected along with the rest of society against those pest houses, the unlicensed grogeries.”<sup>80</sup> Only two years earlier, members of a grand jury recognized the near impossibility of putting an end to selling liquor: “Many of the grand Jurors are of opinion, that no licenses for the sale of spirituous liquors should in any case be granted although they apprehend that so desirable an object cannot be carried into effect: that the greatest care should be taken in investigating all claims for licenses so that none but individuals of known good character may

76 “Des mélanges religieux,” *La Minerve*, May 15, 1851.

77 Yves Roby, “Charles Chiniquy,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. XII (1891 to 1900) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 189-193.

78 “Report of the select committee of the Legislative Assembly appointed to inquire whether any, and what measures can be adopted to prepress the evils of intemperance,” Rev. Mr. Chiniquy, February 12, 1849, pp. 30-31.

79 *Montreal Gazette*, May 27, 1851.

80 *Montreal Gazette*, June 13, 1851.

be entrusted with the sale of strong liquor, or be allowed to deal in so pernicious a trade.”<sup>81</sup> Tavern regulations required, then, a balance between restricting licences and issuing just enough so as not to encourage illegal locales. In reality, tavern licences were by all accounts easily obtained. Although one had to submit a petition with accompanying certificates verifying the petitioner’s good name, grand jurors complained that the system was flawed because reputable Montreal inhabitants signed these documents attesting to the good behaviour of dubious people: “It is surprising the respectable names which disreputable characters can obtain to their certificates—some for want of reflection or moral firmness, some for political influence, and others interested as landlords of houses or in supplying the applicant with liquor.”<sup>82</sup> Of the 1,010 requests for licences between 1841 and 1851, the majority being renewals, few (approximately 3 per cent) were rejected.

As early as 1842, licensed tavern-keepers, feeling the effects of verbal onslaughts on their businesses, implored the city council to reduce or abolish the tax on tavern licences “on account of the decrease in their business occasioned by the diffusion of Temperance principles.”<sup>83</sup> To compete in an increasingly cutthroat market, licensed tavern-keepers petitioned the municipal council in 1846 and 1848 to stop residents from selling liquor without a licence.<sup>84</sup> In 1847, Captain Wiley complained that, in pursuing these illicit businesses, “the expenditure has exceeded the appropriation by the sum of £11/0/7” and requested that the costs be covered.<sup>85</sup> Since it was a criminal matter, councillors decided to provide the police committee with an additional £25 to take legal action against unlicensed vendors.<sup>86</sup> Such a strategy indicates the local state’s inability to reduce the illegal sale of alcohol at precisely the moment when the city’s population was rapidly increasing owing to migration, suburbs were spreading east, west, and north of the town, and the number of police officers had been reduced from 67 in 1845 to 56 in 1848, making it more difficult to identify and pursue those operating unlicensed establishments.<sup>87</sup> The editors of the *Montreal Gazette* had a more jaundiced view of the efficacy of the laws and of the ability of the police to prosecute the illicit trade of tipling houses or even to “protect the respectable men, who enter the [tavern] business open and fairly, as a means of living.”<sup>88</sup> They likely knew that police authorities had too few constables to regulate both drunkenness and unlicensed businesses and that they had difficulty enforcing discipline amongst policemen who were discovered intoxicated on the job, frequenting illicit establishments,

81 BAnQ-M, TL19 S1 SS11, Grand Jury Presentment, April 28, 1849.

82 BAnQ-M, TL32 S1 SS11, Grand Jury Presentment, January 19, 1849.

83 The council was divided on the matter, but temperance discourse certainly provoked an unusual reaction amongst the councillors, who voted immediately on a motion to refer the petition to a special committee to which it would issue a report. The motion was defeated by a margin of nine to three (AVM, VMI S10 D12 Procès-verbaux, vol. 3, August 8, 1842).

84 AVM, VMI S10 D34, Procès-verbaux, vol. 25, September 15, 1846; and VMI S10 D47, Procès-verbaux, vol. 38, July 21, 1848.

85 AVM, VM 43-2, Montreal Police Meeting Minutes, September 23, 1847.

86 AVM, VMI S10 D47, Procès-verbaux, vol. 38, August 11, 1848.

87 Daniel Dicaire, “Police et société à Montréal au milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle” (Mémoire, Université du Québec à Montréal, 1999), p. 72.

88 “The License Law,” *Montreal Gazette*, January 31, 1851.

or drunk while patronizing brothels. Policeman Étienne Beauvais, for example, was dismissed after being found in a house of assignation and unlicensed tavern wearing his uniform while manning the door and receiving money on behalf of the keeper.<sup>89</sup>

Members of the January 1840 grand jury suggested that the number of tavern licences be “limited to such only as are absolutely necessary for the accommodation of the Public.”<sup>90</sup> We do not know the figure for illicit public houses that were operating during and after temperance campaigns and the on-going debates over who qualified for the coveted tavern licences. In the town, there were 21 licit taverns on St-Paul Street, 15 on St-Mary Street, six on Lafabrique Street, and three on Water Street in 1842.<sup>91</sup> At the end of the decade, an analysis of the tax rolls for the area reveals that 60 per cent of the licensed drinking establishments were located between St-Paul Street and the river.<sup>92</sup> In contrast to Julia Roberts’ observation that Upper Canadian tavern-keepers and tavern-goers regulated their own drinking behaviour,<sup>93</sup> Montreal policemen closely monitored specific taverns to arrest patrons who imbibed past closing time or were noisy and intoxicated, patrolled the streets for violations, denounced refractory owners in depositions, and passed information about suspicious establishments on to fellow officers. This surveillance by peace officers was the very stuff that made for a disreputable place and a non-respectable keeper. Constable Cocker, for example, reported that Stewart’s on Water Street was “a very irregular tavern it is a harbour for all vagrants and they are sanctioned by Stewart [*sic*].”<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Chief Constable Fitzpatrick accused tavern-keeper Thomas Hughes of allowing soldiers and common prostitutes to drink in his tavern located on Ste-Marie Street and to assemble outside his door and “shew [*sic*] the most disgraceful conduct on the public street.”<sup>95</sup> By contrast, if a female publican had encouraged or allowed prostitutes to frequent her establishment, she would have invited the accusation of being a brothel-keeper. Since policemen exercised a great deal of discretionary power, a strict enforcement of tavern regulations was not always effected, causing consternation among reputable tavern owners and privileged city residents. In elite discourses, taverns were considered dangerous owing to the moral turpitude that transpired when men and women worked and socialized together in sites that served alcohol.

### Regulating Women Keepers

Scholars generally agree that, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, women keepers of public houses enjoyed a reputable status. Indeed, historians have suggested that some men were awarded tavern licences because they had female

89 AVM, VM 43-2, Montreal Police Meeting Minutes, October 25, 1859.

90 BAnQ-M, TL19 S1 SS11, Grand Jury Presentment, January 18, 1840.

91 *Montréal l’avenir du passé*, Department of Geography, McGill University.

92 This information was received from Alan Stewart’s examination of taverns near the Quebec Gate Barracks (AVM, VM2, Rôle d’évaluation foncière, Cartier ouest Centre est, 1849).

93 Roberts, *In Mixed Company*, p. 88.

94 Library and Archives Canada [hereafter LAC], RG4 B 14, Police Registers, vol. 50, October 19, 1842.

95 LAC, RG4 B 14, Police Registers, vol. 50, December 8, 1842.



relations with a record of respectability and publican experience.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, in the process of obtaining and renewing a tavern licence, a woman's reputation came under scrutiny. Respectability was of great concern to Sutherland Sawyer, for example, even though she was by all accounts an upright publican. Much was riding on a licence renewal. Although no person convicted of a crime was eligible for a tavern licence, other factors are vague because the reason for rejection was not recorded. It is anyone's guess why Emilie Leduc's application was turned down in 1846.<sup>97</sup> Two years later her husband, the merchant Nazaire Ritchot, was dead. She eventually resorted to poorly remunerated needlework to support her four surviving children, advertising in the *Canada Directory* as a seamstress at 17 Montcalm Street in Montreal.<sup>98</sup> The same is true for Ann Craig's renewal application in 1848, which authorities refused even though she had been operating her licensed 14-room establishment on St-George Street for seven years.<sup>99</sup>

While applicants legally required certificates from upstanding city residents endorsing their respectability—"to be honest, sober and of good repute"<sup>100</sup>—it was their relationship to domesticity and its performance in licensed establishments that garnered value and went far in confirming their reputation. Therefore, as I have already explained, a female licensee had proven to the appropriate authorities that she was "fit and proper" with a house, stable, and suitable accommodation for travellers. In addition to yearly inspections, she was obliged to place a sign on the house "shewing [*sic*] that such person is so licenced as a Tavern Keeper." Keepers had to enter into a bond to ensure the payment of penalties for any offences they committed against the provisions of the ordinance. She could not sell alcoholic beverages during church services or on religious holidays (except to travellers), or after 7:00 p.m. in winter and 9:00 p.m. in summer. It was up to magistrates in the Court of Special Sessions to decide on the number of certificates they would grant; once they had determined who would be the recipients of the licences, a list of the names was attached to the church door for the public's perusal.<sup>101</sup> The Widow Sawyer reminded authorities about both the importance of the licence and her rigorous adherence to its regulations, "That since the decease of her late husband in 1833 your applicant has made a livelihood by keeping an Inn which provide beneficial—That she cannot realize any thing exclusive of this. That during the time she so kept an inn due attention has been paid to all Rules and Regulations imposed."<sup>102</sup>

Notwithstanding the role that class, ethnicity, and "race" played in determining a woman's social status, in the case of public houses, it was the work women did, the type of businesses they operated, and outward appearances that went a long

96 Meacham Hand, "Keeping the Trade."

97 BAnQ-M, Cote: P 1000, D880, Licences de Tavernes, January 26, 1846.

98 The *Canada Directory* for 1857-1858.

99 BAnQ-M, Cote: P 1000, D880, Licences de Tavernes, January 19, 1848.

100 "An Act to make better provision for granting Licenses to Keepers of Taverns, and Dealers in Spirituous Liquors in Lower Canada, and for the more effectual repression of Intemperance," *Provincial Statutes of Canada*, 1851, pp. 2078-2086.

101 2 Victoria Cap XIV, "An Ordinance to Amend a Certain Act Therein Mentioned, and to Provide for the Better Regulation of Taverns and Tavern-Keepers," 1839, pp. 1-8.

102 BAnQ-M, Cote: P 1000, D880, Licences de Tavernes, January 19, 1841.

way in determining respectability. To maintain order, keepers were expected to preserve the public peace, prohibit any form of gambling, and not supply alcohol on Sundays during church services or on religious holidays. The temptation to sell drinks illicitly as a means for ready cash or to avoid the cost of a licence would have been great for some women. Brothel-keepers retailed drinks as an integral part of the rituals associated with sex commerce and as a major source of revenue. Since tavern hours were regulated and keepers were fined if caught for staying open past closing or for selling liquor on Sundays, the offer of alcohol and sex at all hours of the day and night enticed men to local houses of prostitution.<sup>103</sup> When High Constable Benjamin Delisle accused reputed brothel-keeper Marie Solomon in February 1841 of selling liquor without a licence, she claimed she could not be charged given her status of *feme covert*.<sup>104</sup> Solomon had married cooper George Glass of Quebec City in 1808. Although the two seemingly lived separate lives and Solomon referred to herself as “Widow Glass,” the magistrates dismissed the case.<sup>105</sup> Never timid about her role in marketing sex, the following year Solomon audaciously advertised her “House of Reception” as a boarding-house on Lagauchetière Street in Lovell’s Directory.<sup>106</sup> In November that same year, she succumbed to “the effects of intemperance”; the coroner described her as a “woman of abandoned character and intemperate habits, [who] kept a house of ill fame in the city of Montreal.”<sup>107</sup>

City constables also denounced men and women not involved in the city’s sex trade whom they observed committing alcohol violations. Pastry cook Susannah Smith was charged with selling liquor without a licence, found guilty, and fined after Chief Constable Benjamin Delisle discovered her giving two glasses of wine to Arthur Gilmore, who paid three pence for each glass.<sup>108</sup> By way of contrast, confectioner Richard Williams requested and was awarded a tavern licence for his business on St-Joseph Street.<sup>109</sup> Even though court authorities summoned Julie Provandier Sicard to court for selling spirits on a Sunday, marriage to the gentleman John McLeish likely safeguarded her renewal of a tavern licence in subsequent years. Provandier’s long association with the merchant class also insulated her from any suggestion of disrepute; not only was she the widow of Louis Sicard, a merchant from New York, but in 1841 she had married Montreal merchant John McLeish, the son of a Scottish merchant.<sup>110</sup> Susan Upton found that widows in New Zealand fostered respectability by using their husbands’ names, and unmarried female barmaids favoured the designation “Miss.” Women, as the role models and overseers of family morality, provided a civilizing influence in their homes and by extension in public houses.<sup>111</sup> I have made the same observation

<sup>103</sup> Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions*, p. 107.

<sup>104</sup> In theory, married women as *feme covert*, were understood to be subservient to husbands, marriage having made them legally invisible (Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions*, p. 183).

<sup>105</sup> BAnQ-M, TL36 S1 SS1, Deposition of Benjamin Delisle, February 9, 1841.

<sup>106</sup> BAnQ-M, *Lovell’s Montreal Directory*, 1842-1843, p. 54.

<sup>107</sup> BAnQ-M, TL32, S26 SS1, Enquête du coroner, November 13, 1842.

<sup>108</sup> BAnQ-M, TL36 S1 SS1, Deposition of Benjamin Delisle, November 8, 1842.

<sup>109</sup> BAnQ-M, Cote: P 1000, D880, Licences de Tavernes, April 26, 1851.

<sup>110</sup> BAnQ-M, TL36, Court of Special Sessions, Summons, February 1, 1842.

<sup>111</sup> Upton, *Wanted, A Beautiful Barmaid*, p. 16.

for Montreal widows such as Sutherland Sawyer, who described herself as Widow Sawyer rather than as Anne Sutherland. Eliza Hamlet, by appearing in the municipal tax roll as Mrs. John Jones, and Agnes Wilson, who appeared as Mrs. McHardy, reinforced propriety by using their late husbands' names. Married women like Angélique Archambault self-identified as Mrs. St-Julien or Angélique St-Julien, and single woman Elizabeth Tiffin used the formal status of Miss E. Tiffin to advertise her grocery.<sup>112</sup>

Respectability was of course more than a name. The image of a "family inn" implied some degree of cleanliness, personal service, responsiveness, and respectability. Angélique Archambault advertised the handsome Donegana Hotel as a home away from home: "Has all the quietness and domestic comforts of a private house . . . visitors will feel themselves quite at home while residents in it and their comfort and convenience will be as much attended to and consulted, as if they were living in their own families."<sup>113</sup> The Donegana was considered the equal of the Astor Hotel in New York even before Archambault took over its operation.<sup>114</sup> Under Archambault's watch, veteran manager Joseph H. Daley and a large staff catered to the sundry needs of a well-heeled clientele in addition to those patrons attending balls, meetings, and charity events that the establishment hosted.<sup>115</sup> To attract guests, the Donegana Hotel offered small comforts, experienced management, prompt service, politeness as well as interpersonal skills, and advertisements aimed at a particular clientele. Archambault would have understood the importance of attending to the hotel's culture and the constraints embedded in the liquor-licensing process. Women clients, whether accompanied, alone, or with children, expected a certain level of decorum, that is to say, a hotel staff versed in discretion and social distance as well as separate sitting rooms, which allowed female patrons to socialize and imbibe respectably. Even in the modest inn of Eliza Hamlet and Laurence Murphy, women could assemble in two sitting rooms assigned specifically to them.

In the words of Julia Roberts, respectability was a visible performance played out by the keeper herself, an association of the public house as home-like, and a code of behaviour encompassed in clothing, manners, and comportment. Popular-class women, representing diverse ethnicities, employed their own versions of feminine respectability.<sup>116</sup> Historian Mariana Valverde has argued that the meaning attached to the type and display of certain clothing served not only to reinforce class divisions in the nineteenth century, but also to regulate the moral compass of popular-class women. Labouring women were expected to wear plain, honest, and practical clothing—even a soiled shawl—to signify their virtue and authenticity.

<sup>112</sup> *Lovell's Directory*, 1845-1846, p. 191.

<sup>113</sup> *The Stranger's Guide through the City of Montreal*, 1857; Charles Sangster, *The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay and Other Poems* (Kingston, CW: John Creighton & John Duff; New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1856), see Appendix 1.

<sup>114</sup> "Important from Canada," *Colonial Times*, January 11, 1850; Edgar Adrew Collard, "Donegana's and the Charity Ball," *Montreal Gazette*, January 15, 1972.

<sup>115</sup> *The Stranger's Guide through the City of Montreal*, 1857.

<sup>116</sup> Roberts, *In Mixed Company*, p. 138.

To do otherwise represented dishonesty, impersonation, and vice.<sup>117</sup> Juxtapose this expectation with those successful madams of the city's demi-monde whom grand jurors denounced for parading in the public streets of the city "in vehicles, and on horseback; dressed very expensively, and in the extreme of fashion."<sup>118</sup>

A keeper's performance of domesticity—in the front welcoming travellers and neighbours and serving at the public table, and behind the scene preparing food and overseeing other household chores related to cleaning and washing—buttressed her respectability. Wives were responsible for most of the domestic work in modest public houses, often with the assistance of daughters and the odd servant. That these household chores were added to her family's needs meant there was little time to socialize with patrons.<sup>119</sup> In larger establishments, proprietors hired domestic servants, chambermaids, cooks, washerwomen, and security men, leaving wives time to act as hostesses and managers. In 1842, for example, when the census-taker came to the 20-room King's Arms Inn on Jacques Cartier Square with stables for 20 horses,<sup>120</sup> proprietors John Mack and Mary Forster reported that 11 people lived in their inn. Two of them would have been daughters Mary, aged three, and two-year-old Jane, in addition to Mack and Forster; three were unmarried Irish women between the ages of 14 and 45, likely servants; and the remaining four were single men (one aged between 14 and 18, one between 18 and 21, and two between 30 and 60) who may have been kin or worked in the inn as well.<sup>121</sup>

It was incumbent upon these 90 women to maintain well-regulated businesses to safeguard their respectability so as not to jeopardize their tavern licences. Publicans were vulnerable to accusations of patrons disturbing the peace<sup>122</sup> and to gossip that they condoned illicit sexual behaviour, both well-established strategies that neighbours employed in an armamentarium of tactics to regulate and enforce community standards of behaviour. As Julia Roberts reminds us, a female publican's respectability was linked directly to her sexuality and to the domestic servants she employed: "When male patrons appraised female tavern workers, whether mildly or explicitly, at least part of their appraisal was based on the possibility of sexual availability."<sup>123</sup> For respectable keepers, especially

117 Mariana Valverde, "The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse," *Victorian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2 (Winter 1989), pp. 169, 172.

118 BAnQ-M, TL32 S1 SS11, Grand Jury Presentment, January 18, 1844.

119 As Jane Errington has noted for Upper Canada: "It was difficult enough to meet the demands of their own families, to serve meals and drink to customers, and maintain the standard of domestic order to receive guests" (Errington, *Wives and Mothers, School Mistresses and Scullery Maids*, p. 193).

120 BAnQ-M, Cote: P 1000, D880, Licences de Tavernes, January 19, 1847. This was the same inn on the same street where Mack and Forster lived and worked in 1842.

121 LAC, RG 31, Census Returns, Montreal, City of Montreal, 1842. There is no evidence that census-takers recorded guests as live-ins in 1842, but it is impossible to determine give that only the head of the household, not the names of the other inhabitants, is included.

122 Inhabitants of St-Joseph Street petitioned the Police Commission to complain about the disorder emanating from a number of taverns (AVM, VM 43-2, Montreal Police Meeting Minutes, September 4, 1856).

123 Roberts, *In Mixed Company*, p. 161. The same association between respectability and sexuality did not apply to male keepers, as the case of tavern-keeper William Waters illustrates. In 1817, a town sergeant and two tavern-keepers accused him of harbouring common prostitutes in his house and tavern (BAnQ-M, TL32 S1 SS1, Depositions of Bernard Kelly, William Ireson, and David Baird, May 30, 1817). Not only did he continue to operate his tavern, but in 1851 he was awarded a licence to operate the British American

those who were widowed, the regulation of their bodies then had less to do with intemperance than sexuality. Indeed, the editor of the *Montreal Witness* identified intemperance as masculine, “men are the drunkards and it is mothers and wives who do the praying and crying.”<sup>124</sup> Taverns and inns, as both homes and commercial enterprises that accommodated kin, servants, and guests, were also the locus of complicated relationships that ranged from intimacy to conflict. Keepers, for example, would have worried about their daughters who were in close proximity to male guests and servants. Scholars have made similar arguments about boarding-houses for men operated by married women with families. They were sites of sexual tension, pleasure, and danger.<sup>125</sup> For publicans not to pay close attention to the potential for sexual dissipation would have been foolhardy; they risked a charge of keeping a disorderly house, an offence usually reserved for brothels. Since sexual honour was treated as a woman’s concern, it gave her the authority to regulate the sexual behaviour of others so as not to sully her own reputation or that of the neighbourhood.<sup>126</sup> Keepers had to walk a fine line to maintain decorum and their reputation, all the while managing loud, aggressive, or intoxicated patrons without causing undue disturbances of the Queen’s peace. Such interventions required tact and diplomacy. They also had to maintain good relations with others operating inns and taverns because the marketplace of public houses was so competitive.

Keepers used the same skills in establishing and preserving contacts with neighbours who could and did lay complaints in front of a justice of the peace that particular houses were disorderly. As my study of prostitution has demonstrated, neighbours turned to the courts to discipline women who marketed sex for breaches in community-enforced codes of conduct. While some women in sex commerce achieved notoriety, most sought a low profile to ensure tolerance of their neighbours. They were concentrated in popular-class neighbourhoods with access to the military barracks, marketplaces, and the riverfront.<sup>127</sup> Geographer Sherry Olson has described a sort of “pleasure garden” of brothels, hotels, and bowling alleys in the 1850s popular-class ward of St-Jacques, where an array of elegant furnishings financed by the dealer circulated every few months within a network of women who were brothel-keepers. The transfers transpired when one or another went to jail.<sup>128</sup>

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Hotel “having in his petition 60 of the most respectable voters” (BAnQ-M, Cote: P 1000, D880, Licences de Tavernes, May 10, 1851).

<sup>124</sup> *Montreal Witness*, February 10, 1851.

<sup>125</sup> See, for example, Stacey Zembrzycki, “‘There Were Always Men in Our House’: Gender and the Childhood Memories of Working-Class Ukrainians in Depression-Era Canada,” *Labour/ Le Travail*, no. 60 (Fall 2007), pp. 94-98; Wendy Gamber, “Tarnished Labor: The Home, the Market, and the Boardinghouse in Antebellum America,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, vol. 22, no. 2 (Summer 2002), pp. 177-205.

<sup>126</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of the use of insult in early modern England, see Laura Gowing, “Language, Power and the Law: Women’s Slander Litigation in Early Modern London” in Jenny Kermode and Garthine Walker, eds., *Women, Crime, and the Courts in Early Modern England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 26-30.

<sup>127</sup> Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions*.

<sup>128</sup> Sherry Olson, “Feathering her Nest in Nineteenth-Century Montreal,” *Histoire sociale/ Social History*, vol. 33, no. 65 (May 2000), pp. 30-33.

Female publicans could also regulate their establishments with the assistance of male staff and by seeking a particular clientele, which likely made it easier to influence the establishments' culture. We saw how Angélique Archambault, keeper of the Donegana Hotel, employed manager Joseph Daley and a large staff as well as advertised to an elite patronage. Similarly, Mary Forster's husband, John Mack, publicized in the *Montreal Gazette* that he sought "the most respectable people" in the city and from the United States and Upper Canada as patrons: "Private Families, Boarders, and Travellers may be accommodated in any manner they please—Private Tables, Saloons, or Table d'Hote, may be had to suit the means and taste of applicants."<sup>129</sup> In more modest neighbourhood public houses, it likely fell upon the publican herself to regulate the establishment, suggesting that she would have had to intervene directly with transgressive patrons.

A number of agents disciplined refractory female keepers of public houses: husbands exercising their patriarchal privileges including the right to "correct" their wives' behaviour; neighbours sensitive to disorderly acts and noise who could turn to the justice of the peace to lay a complaint; competing inn- and tavern-keepers; and authorities such as the police and other local state officials. Municipal bureaucrats exercised a form of chastisement when they refused a woman's request for a reduction or exemption in her tavern licence fee. Clothilde Desmarais was 50 years old and the mother of five children who ranged in age from 13 to 25 when her husband Alexis Maufette died in 1844. Upon succeeding to her husband's tavern business, Desmarais asked for an exemption from the annual fee, arguing that she "is a widow in reduced circumstances with a family of small children to maintain and educate." The municipal authorities likely did not have the same impression of her offspring's vulnerabilities because they refused Desmarais' request. She disappears from the sources and may have given up the tavern or simply kept it without a licence.<sup>130</sup>

## Conclusion

Anne Sutherland Sawyer was, I suggest, representative of the majority of women who operated public houses in Montreal. She knew what was expected of her. As a widow, like married and single women in the same business, she had learned the trade as a wife. Temperance advocates targeting taverns as the source of crime and disease did not focus specifically on female keepers. In general, they viewed intemperance as a problem that afflicted men. Despite temperance discourses, alcohol consumption in local taverns and inns was integral to social life in the city. Public drinking was for most a social act and key to fashioning group and class membership.<sup>131</sup> That public houses were ubiquitous in the urban geography of Montreal speaks not only to their popularity but also to a trade that provided a source of income to those men and women who operated them.

<sup>129</sup> *Montreal Gazette*, May 27, 1851.

<sup>130</sup> VM1 S10 D27, Procès-verbaux, vol. 18, May 6, 1845; VM1 S10 D30, Procès-verbaux, vol. 21, September 8, 1845. Widow Ann Porter made a similar request not to pay the duty imposed on her as a tavern-keeper "in consequence of misfortunes experienced by her." The Finance Committee rejected her pleas as well but without recording its reasons for doing so (VM1 S10 D20, Procès-verbaux, vol. 11, April 3, 1844).

<sup>131</sup> Heron, *Booze*, p. 6.