

## ARTICLES

### Pigs, Cows, and Boarders:

#### Non-Wage Forms of Survival among Montreal Families, 1861-91

Bettina Bradbury

"DEATH TO THE PIGS" was the dramatic subheading of a disappointingly dry newspaper report on Montreal City Council proceedings in September 1874. Three readings of a bill to prohibit the keeping of pigs in the city were collapsed into one session and the bill quickly passed. One councillor objected that it was "hard if a poor man was to be debarred from keeping a pig or two." Most of the aldermen treated the legislation as an occasion to make "facetious . . . remarks on the species of animal that was to be excluded from living in the metropolis of Canada."<sup>1</sup> The more intelligent and reform-minded councillors no doubt believed that pigs were not simply a nuisance, but also a serious menace to public health. For some of Montreal's working-class families, in contrast, a pig represented a source of cash or of food that would be available in times of unemployment and need — a valuable supplement to a low, unsteady, and irregular wage income. The outlawing of pigs represents one of a complex of changes over the length of a generation that severely curtailed the proletariat's access to means of supplementing their wages. This paper begins an examination of some non-wage-based strategies used by Montreal families living in Ste. Anne and St. Jacques wards between 1861 and 1891.

Over these decades the growth of capitalist industry in Montreal transformed the city from a centre of commerce to the "Workshop of Can-

<sup>1</sup> *Montreal Daily Witness*, 22 September 1874; Montreal City Council Minutes (hereafter Montreal Minutes), 21 September 1874; Montreal City Bylaw #77.

Bettina Bradbury, "Pigs, Cows, and Boarders: Non-Wage Forms of Survival among Montreal Families, 1861-91," *Labour/Le Travail*, 14 (Fall 1984), 9-46.

ada.<sup>12</sup> Starting along the banks of the Lachine Canal, then later in the eastern parts of the city, a new breed of capitalist built workshops and factories. Some employed hundreds of workers by the 1870s and drew on large investments of capital to finance complex arrangements of steam- and water-driven machinery. The newly built railways, notably the Grand Trunk, not only drew trade and passengers into the city, but also provided jobs for hundreds of carpenters, carriage makers, blacksmiths, and labourers in their workshops and yards. These and other metal-working industries were one of the major sources of employment for both skilled and unskilled male workers. Montreal's other major industries — clothing, shoemaking, and cigar-making — drew on men, women, and children to work at the newer and less-skilled jobs that the reorganization of production and newly-introduced technology had created.<sup>3</sup>

While workers with specific skills were often in short supply, there was no shortage of unskilled labour for the factories, workshops, and construction projects of the industrializing city. Except in the best of boom periods there were always more people seeking work than jobs available. Tenant farmers from rural Ireland poured into the city both before and after the famine of 1847. Some moved on to establish themselves on the farms and in other cities of British North America. Large numbers stayed, forming the bulk of Montreal's early proletariat.<sup>4</sup>

From the 1840s on, whole families as well as non-inheriting sons and daughters had left the over-exploited, under-capitalized farms of rural Quebec seeking work in the cities of New England and Lower Canada. Between 1851 and 1861 more and more chose to migrate into Montreal. By 1865 the city,

<sup>2</sup> *Montreal Post*, 19 June 1882, cited in S.D. Cross, "The Irish in Montreal, 1867-1896," M.A. thesis, McGill, 1969, 239.

<sup>3</sup> On Montreal's industrial development during this period, see especially Joanne Burgess, "L'Industrie de la chaussure à Montréal, 1840-1870. Le Passage de l'artisanat à la fabrique," *Revue d'Histoire de l'Amérique Française* (hereafter *RHAF*), 31 (September 1977) 187-210; Paul-André Linteau, "Histoire de la Ville de Maisonneuve, 1883-1918," Ph.D. thesis, Université de Montréal, 1975; John McCallum, *Unequal Beginnings. Agriculture and Economic Development in Quebec and Ontario until 1870* (Toronto 1980); Jean-Claude Robert, "Montréal 1821-1871. Aspects de l'Urbanisation," thesis, 3e Cycle, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, 1977 (hereafter "Montréal 1821-1871"); Gerald J.J. Tulchinsky, *The River Barons. Montreal Businessmen and the Growth of Industry and Transportation 1837-1853* (Toronto 1977). On Ste. Anne and St. Jacques specifically, see Bettina Bradbury, "The Family Economy and Work in an Industrialising City, Montreal, 1871," *Historical Papers*, 1979 (hereafter "The Family Economy and Work").

<sup>4</sup> H.C. Pentland, "The Development of a Capitalistic Labour Market in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 25 (1959); Kenneth Duncan, "Irish Famine Immigration and the Social Structure of Canada West," in Michiel Horn and Ronald Sabourin, eds., *Studies in Canadian Social History* (Toronto 1974). Donald H. Akenson in "Ontario: Whatever Happened to the Irish?" *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, III, offers a very powerful critique of the established orthodoxy that all Irish Catholics became wage-labourers.

which had previously been predominantly anglophone, was in number, though not in economic power, predominantly French-Canadian.<sup>5</sup> From the plain of Montreal and surrounding counties they came seeking the survival that the land and rural life no longer seemed to offer. In the city they clustered in Ste. Marie and St. Jacques in the rows of housing that were rapidly thrown up by speculators with little regard for either city building codes or basic sanitary measures. They penetrated the once Irish-dominated area of Ste. Anne, forming pockets of French on certain streets in Pointe St. Charles and in the northern section of the ward.<sup>6</sup> In-migrants, immigrants, and natural increase boosted the city's population by 280 per cent between 1851 and 1891, from 57,715 to 219,616. The most dramatic increase — 56 per cent — occurred between 1851 and 1861. In the next decade the population grew by only 19 per cent, but in the two following decades, the decades of the Great Depression, growth never dropped below 40 per cent.

In the family economy of this expanding proletariat, wages constituted the major source of support — the "powerful organizing principle of family life."<sup>7</sup> Within the city, family economies were shaped and reshaped to fit the realities of survival on wages. Men whose fathers and grandfathers had worked the land or plied their crafts with the help of their families, now departed from home daily to seek work in the factories, workshops, and construction sites of the city. The wage they earned seemed to repay them for their labour alone. Yet all family members needed the incoming wage to survive. When it was insufficient their children, especially their sons, also sought work for wages. In Montreal, married women's contribution to the family economy lay not in their wage labour, which was infrequent, but in the transformation of the wage of others into sustenance and shelter. The family's standard of living varied both with the amount of wages that could be earned and with the ability of the wife to stretch that wage by careful shopping, cooking, and household management.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Claude Robert estimates that 83 per cent of the total growth of Montreal between 1852 and 1861 resulted from the increase in the numbers of French Canadians. "Urbanisation et population. Le Cas de Montréal en 1861," *RHAF*, 35, (March 1982), 527.

<sup>6</sup> Marcel Bellevance and Jean-Daniel Gronoff, "Les structures de l'espace Montréalais à l'époque de la Confédération," *Cahiers de Géographie du Québec*, 24, 63 (December 1980), Figure 2.

<sup>7</sup> Louise A. Tilly, "The Family Wage Economy of a French Textile City: Roubaix, 1872-1906," *Journal of Family History*, 4 (Winter 1979) 381.

<sup>8</sup> For an early analysis of the extent of married women's wage-labour in Montreal, see Bettina Bradbury, "The Family Economy and Work," 86-90. In these two wards the percentages and total numbers of wives reporting an occupation between 1861 and 1881 were as follows. In 1861 5.6 per cent of St. Jacques wives reported a job. A decade later only 2.4 per cent did, in 1881 3.3 per cent. In Ste. Anne, 2.2 per cent reported jobs in 1861, 2.4 per cent in 1871 and only 1 per cent in 1881.

## 12 LABOUR/LE TRAVAIL

It is a mistake, however, to conceive of urban survival solely in terms of waged labour and the management of that wage. Largely new to wage dependence, yet *only too aware of its implications, working-class families sought to retain some element of control over their means of subsistence — the one area of their life that could be kept autonomous to some extent from "the dictates of their relations with the ruling class in the sphere of production."*<sup>9</sup> Wives, aided at times by their children, sought ways to supplement wages and to avoid the purchase of foodstuffs and commodities with much-needed cash. In so doing, they not only helped to cushion the family against life cycle related poverty, *illness, and unemployment, but also ensured for themselves some measure of the importance that accompanied the contribution of cash or goods to the family economy.* In the early-nineteenth-century city, non-wage forms of survival were numerous and diverse, allowing workers to complement wages, or slip in and out of waged labour. Ragpickers, peddlers, prostitutes, and people who sieved through discarded cinders for lumps of coal were able to supplement wages. This paper examines other strategies by which families could and did complement waged labour between 1861 and 1881 — strategies that were largely the responsibility of the women at home. For to understand the family economy of the working class in this period of early industrial capitalism, it is necessary to go beyond a simple consideration of the sufficiency of wages, to put aside the equation of work with waged labour and to examine other ways in which survival could be ensured or enhanced. To do so is to raise further questions about what was being done within the home and to begin to identify other types of work done by the women of the working class. Inevitably this leads to a more careful, if less tidy picture of the role of the family and women in a period of transition — indeed to a more complex understanding of the nature of that transition itself.

Animal raising, gardening, domestic production, the taking in of boarders, and doubling up in living spaces with other families, all represented methods of retaining an element of self-sufficiency — of producing something that could either be used directly for food or exchanged for cash. All were not equally important, nor are they equally apparent to the researcher. The focus here is largely on the raising of animals, the sharing of space, and the taking in of boarders — all practices which can be ascertained to some extent from people's responses to the census takers. Data in the manuscript censuses of 1861 and 1871 enable the historian to begin to analyze the importance of these forms of survival in the years in which they were being undermined by the forces of industrial capitalist production, urban growth, and the beginnings of urban reform.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Wally Secombe, "Domestic Labour and the Working Class Household," in Bonnie Fox, ed., *Hidden in the Household. Women's Domestic Labour Under Capitalism* (Toronto 1980), 33.

<sup>10</sup> The major sources for this paper are the manuscript schedules of the 1861 and 1871 censuses for the Ste. Anne and St. Jacques wards of Montreal. Information on animal-

Over this period, with the exception of boarding and doubling up, such ways of complementing wages were largely eroded. City legislation in Montreal began to curb the keeping of animals, specifically of pigs. Denser housing patterns eliminated most gardens except in areas too far from jobs for workers to live. Home production of cloth, clothing, butter, bread, and wool was gradually and unevenly curtailed as more and more items of consumption were produced not within the household but by capitalist enterprises. Over the length of a generation the Montreal proletariat was largely cut off from access to such means of supplementing their incomes. Wage dependence became almost total by the end of the century.<sup>11</sup>

## I

## Stock in the City and in the Family Economy

IN MID-NINETEENTH-CENTURY Montreal, people and animals intermingled in a way unimaginable today. Carters and their horses transported their wares from railways and docks to the factories, warehouses, and shops of the city. Montreal's street railway system was pulled by horse until 1892.<sup>12</sup> Personal carriages took the wealthy of the city to and from work or to visit their friends. Cows grazed in backyards and on street verges. Pigs scrounged in courtyards and alleys, and poultry could be heard and seen throughout the city. Cattle, swine, goats, and cows continued to roam at large on city streets throughout the 1870s and 1880s despite bylaws making it a municipal offence. The removal of dead animals was a source of constant concern both to municipal health authorities and residents quite naturally upset by rotting carcasses in their neighbourhoods. In 1883 the police reported removing nearly 1,000 dead ani-

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keeping, home production, and gardening is based on analysis of all families reporting such practices to the enumerator in those years. Unfortunately, the equivalent schedules for 1881 have been destroyed. Information on families taking in boarders and sharing housing, as well as any basic demographic data is based on a 10 per cent random sample of all households in the two wards from 1861, 1871, and 1881. This data base is complemented by information in the published census and contemporary descriptive material — especially municipal records and reports.

<sup>11</sup> John Cooper has argued that by "the end of the fifties the Montreal workingman had little recourse but his wages," in "The Social Structure of Montreal in the 1850's," *Canadian Historical Association Annual Report*, 1956, 63. My evidence suggests that some subsistence production continued into the 70s and 80s. In fact, as the city spread and outer working-class suburbs developed, workers there were able to have gardens, and at times keep animals. Bruno Ramirez stresses the importance of gardens for a later generation of workers — the Italian immigrants — who, nearer the turn of the century, chose specifically to live in parts of the city where they would have access to land for gardens. Bruno Ramirez and Michael Del Balzo, *The Italians of Montreal: From Sojourning to Settlement, 1920-21* (Montreal 1980).

<sup>12</sup> Jean Claude Marsan, *Montreal in Evolution* (Don Mills 1981), 183.

## 14 LABOUR/LE TRAVAIL

mals from the city streets.<sup>13</sup> In a year of peak effort, health authorities and the police combined removed nearly 4,500 carcasses.<sup>14</sup>

Gradually, from the 1850s on, the presence of both live and dead animals began to offend those who sought a cleaner, more sanitary, and orderly city. Bylaws were passed prohibiting the grazing of animals and the driving of stock through certain streets, enforcing the licensing of dogs and eventually outlawing pigs and controlling cows within the city limits. The slaughtering of animals was controlled, and butchers were forced to slaughter in two abattoirs sanctioned by civic authorities, rather than in their own backyard abattoirs.<sup>15</sup>

The control of animals — an early element in the imposition of order — represented a major step forward, a progressive move in the eyes of sanitary reformers. There is no doubt that many of the measures helped to make the city a cleaner and safer place to live. Yet at the same time, such legislation struck at the traditional practices and survival strategies of urban families. The impact was harder among the families of the working class and especially the poorer fractions of that class. Their need to supplement unsteady wages was greater, and it was their specific practices that came under attack. It was the "poor man's pig," rather than cows, which were more likely to be kept by the bourgeoisie, that were first outlawed.

Before examining the legislation that curtailed the keeping of animals, it is important to ascertain just which families kept what kind of animals prior to their control. As no animals were illegal in Montreal before 1864, the census returns for 1861 give some idea of their distribution among different families and throughout the city. Unfortunately the census acts as a snapshot as far as property is concerned, relating "solely . . . to the amount . . . held at the time for [sic] taking the census."<sup>16</sup> It gives, therefore, little idea of whether families had animals at other times of year, having sold or eaten them at census time. This is particularly problematic as the 1861 census was taken in January, in the depths of winter, while in subsequent years enumeration took place in the spring. Families may well have slaughtered food animals like pigs, perhaps even sold a cow, to avoid the high fodder and shelter costs of the winter months. The figures for 1861 should, therefore, be viewed as minimal, an underestimate of the extent of animal raising as an urban practice.

In that year there were nearly 3,000 horses in the city of Montreal, 2,160 milk cows, 2,644 pigs, and an indeterminable number of poultry of various kinds (see Table 1). Had these animals been evenly spread among the city's families, this would have represented an average of one animal for every second family. In the previous decade the number of pigs, milk cows, and

<sup>13</sup> *Annual Report of the Chief of Police, 1883. Montreal Annual Reports, 1883* (hereafter *MAR*).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Annual Report Upon the Sanitary State of Montreal, MAR, 1887, 11.*

<sup>15</sup> Mayor's Inaugural Address, 1885, 6, *MAR*.

<sup>16</sup> "Manual Containing Instructions to Officers," *Canada, Sessional Papers, no. 64, 1871, p. add.* (hereafter "Instructions to Officers").

horses had all increased by approximately 40 per cent, a rate that was only slightly lower than the city's population growth. Legislation in subsequent decades, to which I shall return shortly, would dramatically change this growth pattern. Because pigs, cows, and sheep were food-producing animals and thus a fairly obvious direct alternative to purchases, the following discussion is limited to families holding them. Horses, which were more important as work animals or as part of a person's trade, are ignored, although they too could clearly at times be used to supplement wages.

TABLE I  
Animals in Montreal, 1861-1891

Work Animals								
	Colts & Fillies	Horses over 3 years	Working Oxen	As % of total				
1851	n/a	2077	—	37				
1861	—	2892		37				
1871	72	3458	34	52				
1881	67	4412	26	66				
1891	118	6633	39	80 <sup>1</sup>				

Food Animals								
Milk Cows	Other Horned Animals	Sheep	Pigs	Hens & Chickens	Turkeys	Geese	Ducks	Other Fowl
1528	—	131	1877	—	—	—	—	—
2160	—	91	2644	—	n/a	—	—	—
1837	178	414	831	—	n/a	—	—	—
1658	95	350	180	—	n/a	—	—	—
1290	78	170	92	8353	74	58	179	925

Source: Censuses of Canada, 1851-1891.

Note: In 1851 and 1861 the published tallies were very carelessly counted. The figures here should be viewed as a rough indication of total numbers.

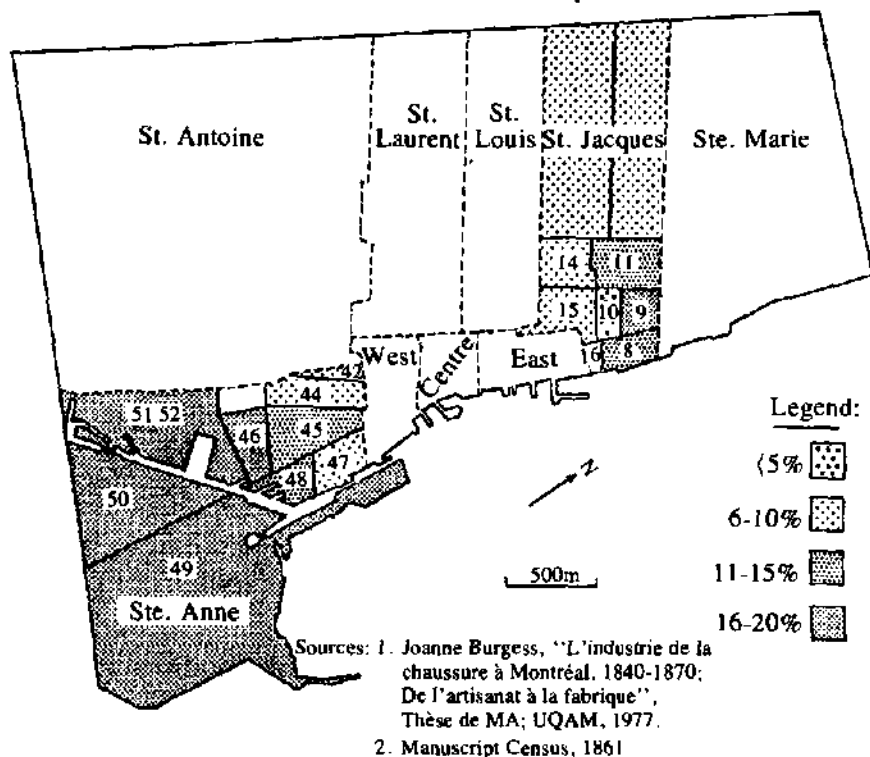
<sup>1</sup> Excluding fowl of all kinds.

Animals were not evenly spread throughout the city, nor among all classes and groups. The proportion of families who kept them varied widely across the city depending on the economic base of the area, the size of lots, the availability of free land, and on the class and ethnic structure of the neighbourhood. In the two wards studied in detail, 12 per cent of St. Jacques families and 16 per cent of those of Ste. Anne kept one or more animals other than horses or poultry. In the smaller census subdistricts of these wards the percentage holding such animals varied from as low as 5 to as high as 20 per cent (see Map 1).

Historians have paid little attention to the importance of animals in the family economy of urban residents.<sup>17</sup> When considered, the keeping of stock

## MAP 1

% of Households Keeping Pigs and Cows by Census Subdistricts,  
1861 — Ste. Anne and St. Jacques wards



<sup>17</sup> Exceptions include, most importantly, Richard L. Bushman, "Family Security in the Transition from Farm to City, 1750-1850," *Journal of Family History*, 6, (Fall 1981) 238-56; and for an earlier period, Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America, 1625-1742* (New York 1964); and Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America, 1743-1776* (London 1971).



has been treated either as a survival of rural practice, or as the resort of those in direst poverty. Harvey Graff, for instance, describes stock keeping as "one strategy with which to confront urbanism and poverty" by "adapting older customs to new places."<sup>18</sup> In Montreal, and I suspect elsewhere, such explanations simplify reality. A substantial minority of both bourgeois and working-class families kept stock. There were, however, differences in the kinds of animals they kept and in the role these animals played in the family economy.

In Ste. Anne and St. Jacques two groups of people predominated among the keepers of pigs and cows, the most commonly held stock. Proprietors and professionals were most likely to keep all kinds of animals with about 21 per cent of them doing so in January 1861 (see Table 2). Semi- and unskilled workers were next, with approximately 17 per cent of them raising stock in Ste. Anne ward in 1861 and 12 per cent in St. Jacques. Such families were the least likely to be able to afford the costs of keeping animals over the winter. It is possible that had the census been taken at another time of year, the proportions of semi- and unskilled families keeping pigs especially may well have been higher.

Pigs and cows clearly offered families different benefits. Small entrepreneurs, especially grocers and traders, kept cows. They were less likely to raise a pig. A few grocers used their cows to produce their own butter and possibly milk for customers. Hotel and innkeepers raised both cows and pigs, using them for food for their clients. Some bakers kept cows to produce the milk they used in bread and biscuit making.

For families of all classes a cow represented a valuable investment, especially when there were young children in need of a steady, reliable, clean supply of milk. Whereas a pig only produced food or cash once slaughtered, a healthy cow could produce a steady supply of milk for over a year after calving.<sup>19</sup> Many of the families keeping cows had young children. Indeed, a Dr. Grenier, who wrote an informative pamphlet of advice to mothers on how to curtail Montreal's appalling infant mortality rate, recommended using milk — always from the same cow or goat — if breastfeeding or finding a wet nurse were impossible.<sup>20</sup> No families in these wards reported keeping goats in 1861, only three did so a decade later, once pigs were largely illegal. Cows were clearly the preferred milk source. Among the poorer professionals and the working class, the wife or mother would have been in charge of caring for the cows. For the more wealthy, milking the cows was servants' work. "Wanted, a

<sup>18</sup> Richard L. Bushman, "Family Security," 247; Harvey Graff, *The Literacy Myth: Literacy and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century City* (New York 1979), 94.

<sup>19</sup> Research needs to be done on how families with cows in the city arranged for access to bulls for calving.

<sup>20</sup> Georges Grenier, *Quelques considérations sur les causes de la mortalité des enfants contenant des conseils aux mères sur les soins à donner aux enfants* (Montreal 1871).

**TABLE 2**  
**Percentages of families keeping cows, pigs, goats or sheep**  
**Ste. Anne and St. Jacques, 1861**

Occupation of Family Head	Estimated No. of Families <sup>2</sup>	%with Animals Excluding Horses	%with Cows goats or sheep, with or without Pigs		%with Pigs only
<b>Ste. Anne</b>					
Professional or Proprietor (excluding butchers and milkmen)	365	23% (84) <sup>1</sup>	18%	(67)	5% (17)
Clerical and Service	352	20% (71)	16%	(55)	5% (16)
Skilled Workers	240	10% (24)	7%	(16)	3% (8)
Semi- and Unskilled	1175	9% (99)	4%	(53)	4% (46)
Widows	1240	17% (209)	9%	(113)	8% (96)
No Occupation and Misc.	280	10% (28)	5%	(14)	5% (14)
	110	10% (11)	6%	(7)	4% (4)
<b>Estimated Overall Percentage<sup>2</sup></b>					
Households	2846	16%	9%		7%
Families	3419	13%	8%		5%
<b>St. Jacques</b>					
Professional or Proprietor (excluding butchers and milkmen)	370	19% (71)	12%	(44)	7% (27)
Clerical and Service	346	14% (48)	9%	(34)	4% (14)
Skilled Workers	180	4% (7)	2%	(4)	2% (3)
Semi- and Unskilled	800	7% (59)	3%	(22)	5% (37)
Widows	670	12% (79)	4%	(29)	7% (50)
No Occupation and Misc.	290	1% (4)	Nil		1% (4)
	100	9% (9)	6%	(6)	3% (3)
<b>Estimated Overall Percentage<sup>3</sup></b>					
Households	1915	12%	5%		6%
Families	3854	6%	3%		3%

<sup>1</sup> Figures in brackets represent the actual number of families found in each category.

<sup>2</sup> The estimated number of families in each group was reached by multiplying the number falling in that group in the ten per cent random sample by ten.

<sup>3</sup> Number of families and households reporting stock in the manuscript census as a percentage of the total numbers of families and households reported in the aggregate published census.

thorough servant," advertised one family living on St. Laurent Street in 1873, "one who can milk a cow; no washing."<sup>21</sup>

Their usefulness made cows the preferred choice of all families. However, access to the capital to purchase a cow and to the greater space necessary to raise one meant that a much greater proportion of proprietors' families than of the working class could afford to own one. Thus, while 16 per cent of the professional and proprietors' families of Ste. Anne owned one or more cows in 1861, only 9 per cent of the semi- and unskilled did (see Table 2). The relative proportions were similar in St. Jacques. That pigs and other stock were used to counteract poverty by the semi- and unskilled is suggested by the fact that the families of skilled workers, who usually could be sure of a higher, if not always a more steady, wage were less likely to keep animals. Twelve and 17 per cent of Ste. Anne and St. Jacques semi- and unskilled families respectively kept some stock, compared to only 9 and 7 per cent of the skilled. Nearly half the pigs, indeed half the stock in these two parts of the city, were kept in families headed by the semi- and unskilled, although they constituted only one third of the family heads.<sup>22</sup> For these families, poultry, pigs, and when they could afford it, a cow, represented not a piece of property, but rather a source of food or cash. Pigs cost virtually nothing to raise and were cheaper to purchase than a cow. Pork formed an important component of both French-Canadian and Irish cooking and diet. Pigs might be bought live at market as a piglet or perhaps obtained from relatives in the country. They might also be stolen fairly easily. In the mid-1870s, after pigs had been outlawed in the city, farmers were constantly reporting having their sheep stolen when they stopped for refreshment on the way to market.<sup>23</sup> While roving, pigs scavenged in the courtyards and roadsides — doing cleaning up that firms contracted by the city seldom did efficiently. Once fattened they could be slaughtered and salted to provide meat for several months — or sold to nearby butchers for cash. A pig could sell for as much as \$12 to \$15 in 1874 at a time when a labourer earned \$1 to \$1.50 a day and women involved in waged labour earned as little as \$2.00 a week. Chickens too probably scrounged, and a few good laying hens could save a family the cost of 24¢ a dozen, or the equivalent of two-thirds of a woman's daily wages in the clothing industry. When hens were first counted by the census takers in 1891, there were over 8,000 of them in the city limits. They were concentrated in Ste. Marie, the poorest of the city's working-class wards.<sup>24</sup>

It thus made good economic sense for the wives of labourers and other

<sup>21</sup> *Montreal Daily Witness*, 26 March 1873.

<sup>22</sup> Such families held 46 per cent of all reported stock, excluding horses.

<sup>23</sup> *Le Courrier de Montréal*, 16 December 1874.

<sup>24</sup> Retail prices are taken from *Le Courrier de Montréal*, 11 November 1874, and Hamelin and Roby, *Histoire Économique du Québec*, Appendix 20; wages are from Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, Select Committee on the Manufacturing Interests of the Dominion, *Report*, Journals, 1874, Appendix 3 (hereafter "Select Committee on the Manufacturing Interests"), 1874.

unskilled workers to raise whatever fowl or animals they could afford in the backyards, courtyards, and alleys around their homes. And raise them they did, especially among the Irish families of Ste. Anne until new laws and lack of space made it extremely difficult. In 1861 one-quarter of the city's pigs, compared to 14.5 per cent of the population, were to be found in that one ward. There, housing and factories were mixed together. Empty spaces between factories, workshops, and houses, larger corner sections, and as yet scarcely populated areas in the western part of the ward offered extra space for both animals and gardens. St. Jacques, in contrast, was emerging as the most densely populated area of the city. In 1861, 3,854 families were housed in 1,915 households. Around 6 per cent of these families and 12 per cent of the households held animals, compared to 13 and 16 per cent respectively in Ste. Anne. In St. Jacques one-quarter of the cows and pigs were held by small producers — milkmen and butchers who raised their animals and sold their wares in the city. This practice was much less common in Ste. Anne.<sup>25</sup> In both wards the keeping of animals was more common in the least populated areas furthest from the centre of the city — in the western sections of Ste. Anne, and the eastern parts of St. Jacques (see Map 1).

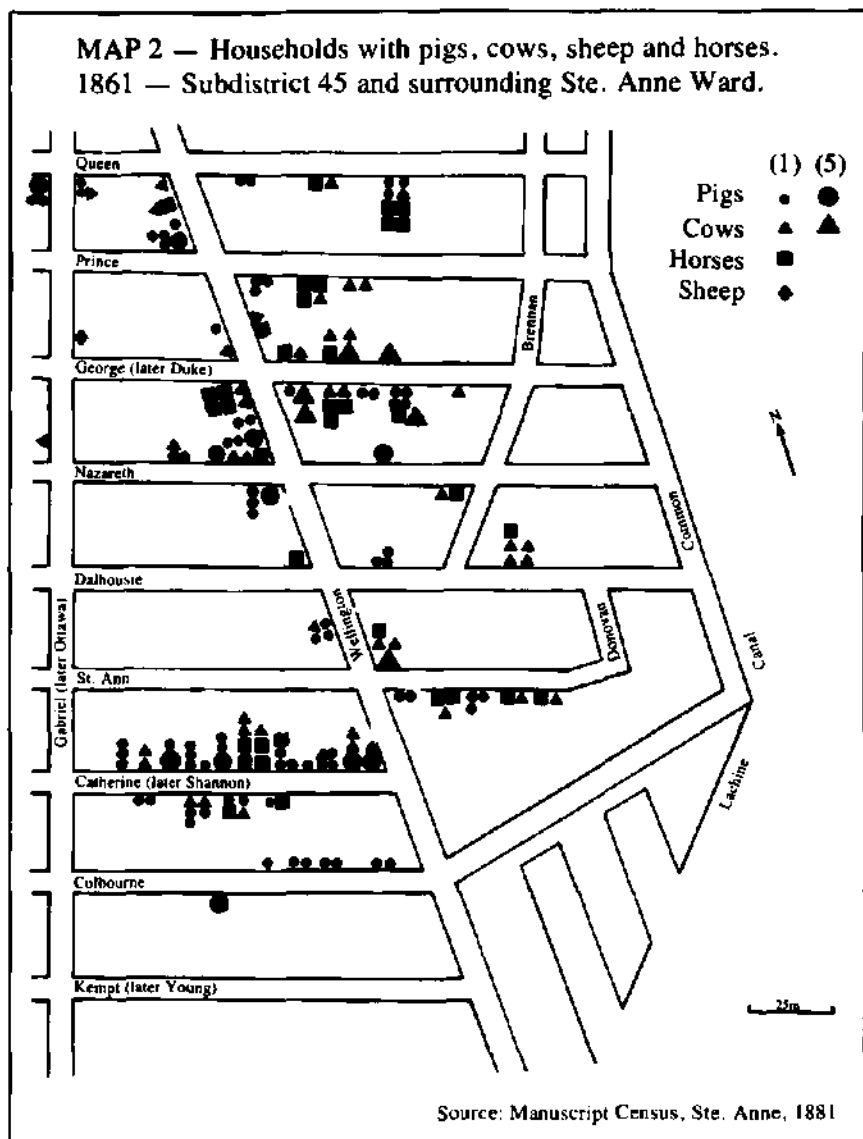
Animal keeping was not limited, however, to families with plenty of space. Even on fairly densely populated streets one finds families living in rear houses and row houses all keeping pigs and cows. A walk along George or Catherine Street in Ste. Anne ward was likely to involve skirting pigs or cows and their droppings. In one small block of the latter street, between Wellington and Ottawa Streets, over twenty families, more than half of them headed by labourers, kept up to nine pigs each (see Map 2). One resident, Elizabeth Martin, the 50-year-old wife of a labourer, reported herself to the census taker as a housewife. Her household duties included mothering four children, housekeeping in their one-storey, frame house and taking care of seven pigs and four cows. A twenty-year-old daughter worked as a servant, and a fifteen-year-old boy as a labourer. Elizabeth kept more animals than most labourer's wives. Most kept no more than three pigs; a minority had a cow as well.<sup>26</sup>

People raised their animals in whatever space they had available. Those with a horse and a stable no doubt used that for other animals as well. Carters who no longer possessed a horse may have sheltered other animals in the remaining stables. Some clearly kept animals inside their houses as it was considered necessary to outlaw this practice in 1875. In the winter months this was the only warm place. A visiting traveller in 1877 remarked with some amusement in his diary that while driving around Montreal in mid-winter he had seen "Two dead pigs trying to climb up the wall of a cottage, frozen of course."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Canada, *Census, 1861, Table XVI. Census, 1871, Table I.*

<sup>26</sup> Mss. *Census, Ste. Anne, 1861, fo. 2076.*

<sup>27</sup> PAC, Henry St. Vincent Ames, "Diary of Travels in North America," MG24 H61, December 1877.



Irish cultural tradition supported the raising of pigs by wives, both in rural and urban areas. The households of pre-famine cottiers and labourers had depended on raising and selling animals and their produce for part of their income. As early as 1780 Arthur Young reported that such households survived by "converting every pig, fowl and even egg into cash."<sup>28</sup> It was the women

<sup>28</sup> Arthur Young, *A Tour in Ireland . . . in 1776, 1777, 1778* (London 1780), Vol. 2, 203, cited in Lynn H. Lees, *Exiles of Erin*, 107.

who spun, made butter, cared for the pigs and poultry, and sold the eggs. In 1835 it was estimated that between 18 and 31 per cent of labourers' family incomes in Munster county came from the sale of eggs, poultry, and pigs.<sup>29</sup>

In the city as in the country, raising fowl or animals was the work of women and children.<sup>30</sup> Children took their animals to graze on the banks of the canal or railway embankment in summer. Some were kept well under control, but stray and lost animals were a constant problem and were often reported in the papers.<sup>31</sup> One particularly sad story was reported of a two-year-old boy in the Pointe St. Charles area who had been attacked by a neighbour's large gander. It knocked him down, pulled at his clothes and "so frightened him that he fell into convulsions, and after lingering a few days in an unconscious condition, died of fright."<sup>32</sup>

Irish and French-Canadian families in Montreal were continuing a practice that derived not simply from a farming background, but from a long tradition of having to supplement low wages. The Irish were over-represented among the keepers of pigs. In Ste. Anne in 1861 they constituted about 50 per cent of the family heads, but nearly 70 per cent of the pig keepers. Among labourers' families, 12 per cent of the Irish kept pigs compared to 7 per cent of French-Canadians. Cultural traditions and class position combined to identify pigs with the Irish. Pig and poultry keeping was much more than a cultural survival, a quaint rural or Irish custom. Although the Irish predominated as keepers of pigs, French-Canadian rural labourers were also used to supplementing waged labour with poultry and pigs, and they continued to do so in urban areas.<sup>33</sup>

Until the late 1860s, the presence of such animals within the city was apparently tolerated by the authorities and the population at large. But, as the city's population increased, as open spaces were filled up between the houses, and as the divisions between workers, the middle classes, and the capitalists became clearer, an assault on animals began.

This attack on the roaming, raising, and slaughtering of animals in the city appears to have coincided with the creation of the Montreal Sanitary Association. In September 1868 they sent a statement to City Council forcibly expressing their opinion that "the keeping of pigs in dense and populated cities is

<sup>29</sup> Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers (Commons), "First Report . . . [on] the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland," Appendix D, 89-90, 108-11, cited in Lynn H. Lees, *Exiles in Erin*, 107.

<sup>30</sup> On women's role as chicken and pig keepers in rural areas of Quebec, see Charles-Henri Gaudrée-Boileau, "Paysan de Saint-Irenée de Charlevoix en 1861 et 1862," in Pierre Savard, ed., *Paysans et Ouvriers Québécois d'autrefois* (Quebec 1968); on Ireland see Lynn H. Lees, *Exiles of Erin*, 107; and for a later period, Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland* (Cambridge, MA, 1948), 49.

<sup>31</sup> *Montreal Post*, 13 May 1886, cited in Suzanne Cross, "The Irish in Montreal," 213.

<sup>32</sup> *Montreal Daily Witness*, 3 June 1873.

<sup>33</sup> Charles-Henri Philippe Gaudrée-Boileau, "Paysan de Saint Irenée . . . en 1861 et 1862," 31-2.

offensive and prejudicial to public health."<sup>34</sup> The Health and Market Committees agreed entirely and suggested that pigs be outlawed except in certain limits on the outskirts of the city. In December, the bylaw incorporating this motion was passed and pigs became illegal in all but the western parts of Ste. Anne, the area north of Ste. Catherine St. and in Ste. Marie in the east (see Map 3).<sup>35</sup> More laws followed. In March 1870 a new bylaw stated that "No horse, cattle, swine, hog, sheep, or goat shall be permitted to run at large at any time in the city, or graze, browse, or feed upon any of the streets, squares, lanes, alleys, or public places of this city."

To recover an animal impounded for breaking this law, owners had to pay 10¢ for a sheep, 25¢ for a "gelding, mare, ox or cow," 50¢ for a hog or swine, and \$1.00 for "each stallion, bull, boar or ram." Pigs were clearly perceived as a worse evil than much larger animals like horses and cows. In March 1874 they became illegal in all areas of the city. A year later the driving of "any live stock or horned cattle" except on specified streets leading to the markets was outlawed, although "milk cows and their calves" were excepted. Finally, in September 1876, it became illegal to keep any "horse, cow, calf, pig, sheep, goat or fowl in a house or tenement."<sup>36</sup> Outside, all but pigs apparently remained acceptable.

Resistance to the initial bylaw against pigs, while not dramatic, certainly occurred and from two rather different quarters. The first to complain were "certain persons" in Ste. Anne ward — the area where one-quarter of the city's pigs were kept. They requested that the limits within which pigs could be kept be extended and that the time at which the bylaw should take effect be deferred. Deferral would at least have given them time to raise their pigs to a suitable size for slaughtering. The matter was referred back to the Health and Market Committees where it seems to have remained.<sup>37</sup>

The second group of petitioners, the pork butchers of the city, were more successful. In June, the *Montreal Daily Witness* reported that "a great many butchers belonging to the markets in the city" had been brought up before the Recorder for keeping pigs. He deferred any decision for a week, during which time council proposed amending the bylaw so it would not apply to pork butchers or interfere with their trade. Attempts by some councillors at least to regulate the slaughtering of pigs by these butchers so as not to cause a "nuisance in the neighbourhood where the work is done and subject" them to sanitary regulation failed. The bylaw appears to have been temporarily amended to exclude the butchers.<sup>38</sup>

Citizens continued to complain without effect. Some called for the annul-

<sup>34</sup> Minutes, 9 October 1868, 2.

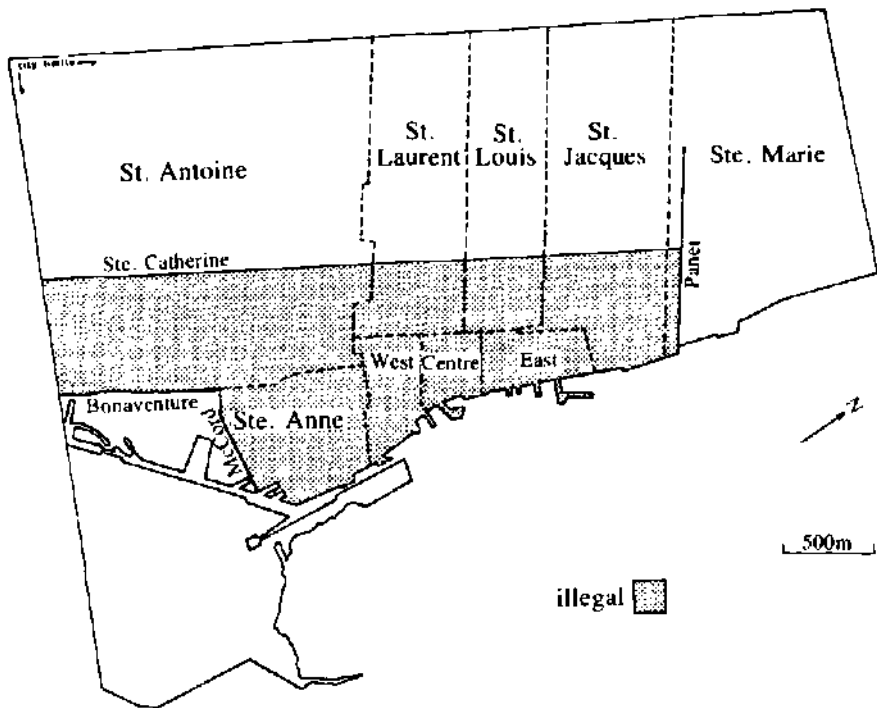
<sup>35</sup> Montreal Minutes, 15 December 1868; Montreal City Bylaws #44.

<sup>36</sup> Montreal City Bylaws, #43, #77, #223, #105.

<sup>37</sup> Montreal Minutes, 25 May 1869, 239.

<sup>38</sup> *Montreal Daily Witness*, 10 June 1869, 2 July 1869; Montreal Minutes, 15 June 1869, 2 July 1869.

MAP 3 — Area where pigs become illegal — Bylaw #44, 1868.



ment or modification of the law; others suggested that citizens be allowed to keep pigs in their yards between October and May each year — the months when the health hazard was lower, and when additional food was most needed by those in the vast number of seasonal Montreal jobs.<sup>39</sup> In the years following the 1868 relegation of pigs to the city's outer areas, civic officials prosecuted those keeping them outside the legal areas, forcing them to pay the 50¢ fine and to sell them.<sup>40</sup> Either people willingly gave up their pigs or, more likely, lack of personnel prevented the city from mounting a wholesale search for evaders. For only 50 offenders were prosecuted in the first year, around 30 the next year, then fewer and fewer in subsequent years.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps the fact that the city's poorly-paid policemen had featured among the swinekeepers in 1861 made these men loath to seek out such law breakers. Many families may simply have sold their pigs, purchased a sheep, goat, more poultry, or if they could afford it, a cow

<sup>39</sup> Montreal Minutes, 1 December 1869.

<sup>40</sup> *Montreal Daily Witness*, 16 June 1869.

<sup>41</sup> Annual Reports of Penal and Civic Prosecutions and Complaints disposed of before the Recorder's Court, *MAR*, 1869-91.



instead. If pigs had constituted a vital part of the family's food or cash supply, some may have moved to one of the areas where they were still legal.

Between 1861 and 1871, as a result of the bylaw, the number of pigs reported to census takers decreased by over two-thirds (see Table 1). This decrease occurred despite the fact that the former census was taken in mid-winter when many families probably slaughtered their animals. The 1871 census, in contrast, was taken in April, just when pigs might well have been purchased to raise over the summer. Yet, by 1871 not a pig remained in the old part of the city, although people there still kept horses and cows. In St. Louis only 40 pigs remained; in St. Laurent ward a meagre twelve. In St. Jacques, where 160 families had kept nearly 500 pigs in 1861, only five families continued to keep them — or at least to report them to the census taker. One carpenter and his wife kept three pigs along with his horse, three sheep, and three cows. From the latter, the wife produced 411 pounds of butter, sufficient to feed her husband and three young children and to sell some for cash.<sup>42</sup> Such families were exceptions. Most of those able to afford the greater outlay appear to have shifted from keeping pigs to cows, as the number of cows doubled in the 1861-71 decade. Still others raised cattle instead, and sold them to local butchers. In one small area of St. Jacques ward, local carters, grocers, shoemakers, and blacksmiths all reported killing a beef cow during 1870-71. This was an area with at least three butchers running small abattoirs. These butchers, each working with one assistant, reported slaughtering nearly 3,000 animals between them over the previous year. Included among these must surely have been the 30 or so cattle, pigs, and sheep that locals reported having "killed or sold for slaughter or export." If their contribution to the butcher's income was minor, the cash from slaughtered cattle would, nevertheless, have provided a significant portion of a family's annual income.<sup>43</sup> In Ste. Anne's ward as in the eastern city, pig raising was pushed into the few outer areas where it was still allowed by the 1868 bylaw. There the number of families reporting any pigs dropped from 256 to 70.

Keeping pigs on the city outskirts, raising cattle for local butchers, even keeping cows, all gradually came under fire as unfit practices within a modern, sanitary, industrial-capitalist city. "Have we a City Government?" one irate citizen complained in a letter to the editor in 1868. He described sidewalks "littered every here and there with the droppings of cows, through which Ladies have to pick their way." Any street with grass borders, he pointed out, was especially liable to the nuisance. "Are the streets paid for by the citizens for their own use, or for the use of cows?" he wanted to know. Cows wandered into people's gardens and plots eating vegetables and flowers. The police, he concluded, should impound every roaming cow.<sup>44</sup> In 1881 the *Post* reported

<sup>42</sup> Mss. Census, St. Jacques, 1871, Subdistrict 5, 23, line 14 (check file).

<sup>43</sup> Mss. Census, St. Jacques, 1871, Subdistrict 9, Schedules 1 and 6.

<sup>44</sup> *Montreal Daily Witness*, 16 September 1868.

that goats were becoming a nuisance. Herds of goats were reported to range around the city. People complained that it was impossible to cultivate a garden without goats devouring all they grew.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately goats were never counted by the census takers, an omission that is difficult to understand. Certainly goats would have been cheaper to raise than cows and their milk was equally good, if not better for some children. Yet neither goat meat nor goat milk appear to have been a traditional component of the diet of the French-Canadians or the Irish. In the eyes of city councillors goats were not a menace. It was the pigs, the animals of the working class, not the cows or goats that were the first to go.

As more and more housing was built in the area south of the Lachine Canal and to the north of the Grand Trunk Railway yards, some local "proprietors and residents" petitioned council to prevent the keeping of pigs in that neighbourhood too. This was a poor area, where many day labourers and widows lived, keeping cows, pigs, and probably poultry. The Health Committee responded by going even further. They suggested it was time that pigs be prohibited throughout the city. Some initial opposition from city councillors stalled the passage of the bylaw built on this recommendation. By March 1874, however, it was ready for consideration and passed, as we have seen, with only one alderman, the representative for Ste. Anne ward, opposing it on the grounds that it was hard "if a poor man was to be debarred from keeping a pig or two." He succeeded only in having the maximum fine for the offence reduced from the proposed \$40 to \$20.<sup>46</sup> From then on no person could legally "rear, keep or feed a pig within the limits of the City of Montreal."<sup>47</sup>

Prosecutions again were not vigorous or dramatic. Over the next eight years, only 50 people were found guilty of keeping pigs. Yet the law was apparently successful. The 1881 census reported that only 180 pigs remained in the city. A decade later the number had halved. Many of these were probably within the walls of the convents and other institutions where self-sufficiency and domestic production continued to exist apparently beyond the reach of the law.

Between 1861 and 1881 the numbers and types of animals kept within the city had changed dramatically (see Table 1). Whereas in 1861 pigs, sheep, and cows, all sources of food, had comprised nearly two-thirds of the animals kept, by 1881 they represented under a third, by 1891 only a fifth. The number of cows decreased slowly and steadily, the number of pigs dramatically to the 92 reported in 1891. Overall, the number of animals apart from pets and poultry decreased and the proportion of work animals to food animals was completely reversed (see Table 1). Within a generation, food production for use within the

<sup>45</sup> *Post*, 13 August 1881.

<sup>46</sup> *Montreal Minutes*, 26 May 1873; *Minutes of the Board of Health*, 30 May 1873; *Montreal Minutes*, 2 July 1873; *Montreal Daily Witness*, 22 September 1874; *Montreal Minutes*, 21 September 1874.

<sup>47</sup> *Montreal City Bylaw #77*.

home and production for sale within the city was severely curtailed. These two decades saw a complex web of regulations erected curtailing the raising, slaughtering, and sale of animals by unlicensed, uninspected, and ordinary citizens.

At a general level the city's role as importer of foodstuffs increased. The division between rural and urban rigidified. Food producers — farmers, milkmen, and butchers — moved to the outer city limits, to other parishes, or joined the proletariat. By the end of the 1880s, the Health Department was euphorically reporting that the number of milkmen resident in the city had diminished and that an increasing number had taken up residence in distant parishes of the island of Montreal. There was, they argued, a "double advantage of economy and healthfulness." By the 1880s the common practice was for milk to be sent into the city every morning to milkmen, who then distributed it to the different families comprising their customers.<sup>48</sup> No longer then did independent milk producers raise their cows and sell the milk in the city. Now one family raised the cows outside the city and the urban milkman had become an intermediary.

Equally important, that proportion of the city's poorer families who had been able to rely on pigs as a source of food or cash had lost one important alternative to paying out cash for their food needs. By 1871 only 4 to 5 per cent of the families in Ste. Anne and St. Jacques ward had any animals apart from horses or fowl, compared to at least 13 per cent in Ste. Anne a decade earlier and 6 per cent in St. Jacques. Furthermore, especially in St. Jacques, the raising of animals had become a bourgeois and petty-bourgeois privilege, with 12 per cent of proprietors' and professionals' families compared to only 3.5 per cent of the unskilled keeping them. Pigs, which had been kept by 7 per cent of semi- and unskilled families had been effectively eliminated (see Table 3). There the decrease in the number of food animals and their concentration in the hands of the more wealthy were particularly noticeable. For the workers, dependence on waged labour would increase. Women who had once kept a pig, chicken, or cow, and thus helped provide for the family's food, would now have to seek new strategies.

## II

### Gardening and Home Production

GARDENING WAS CLEARLY CHEAPER than raising animals. Problems of fodder costs, shelter in winter, slaughtering, and possible disease that faced keepers of stock were not encountered by those raising vegetables in backyard gardens to sell or to eat. Furthermore, the very presence of so many horses, pigs, and cows within the city offered a nearly limitless supply of manure to improve a small garden's yield. With such fertilization Montreal's soils could

<sup>48</sup> Report Upon the Sanitary State, *MAR*, 26.

**TABLE 3**  
**Estimated Percentages of Families Keeping**  
**Cows, Pigs, Goats, or Sheep**  
**1861 and 1871 Compared**

Occupation of Family Head	1861 — % with Animals		1871 — % with Animals		% with any Pigs		Estimated No. of Families <sup>2</sup> 1871
<b>Ste. Anne</b>							
Professional or Proprietor	23%	(84) <sup>1</sup>	9%	(51)	2%	(9)	570
Clerical and Service	10%	(24)	2%	(6)		(0)	280
Skilled Workers	9%	(99)	3%	(44)	1%	(17)	1350
Semi- and Unskilled	17%	(209)	6%	(87)	3%	(39)	1410
Widows	10%	(28)	6%	(12)	2%	(4)	210
No Occupation and Misc.	10%	(11)	4%	(3)	1%	(1)	80
<b>Overall<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>13%</b>		<b>5%</b>				
<b>St. Jacques</b>							
Professional or Proprietor	19%	(71)	12%	(74)	xxx <sup>3</sup>	(1)	600
Clerical and Service	4%	(7)	3%	(10)	0	(0)	380
Skilled Workers	7%	(59)	2%	(33)	xxx <sup>3</sup>	(1)	1500
Semi- and Unskilled	12%	(79)	3.5%	(26)	xxx <sup>3</sup>	(2)	740
Widows	1%	(4)	5%	(7)	0	(0)	140
No Occupation and Misc.	9%	(9)	13%	(9)	1%	(1)	70
<b>Overall<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>6%</b>		<b>4%</b>				

<sup>1</sup> Figures in Brackets represent the actual number of families found in each category.

<sup>2</sup> The estimated number of families in each group was reached by multiplying the number falling in that group in the 10 per cent random sample by ten.

<sup>3</sup> Under 1 per cent.

<sup>4</sup> Number holding animals as a percentage of the actual number of families reported in the published Census.

produce good vegetables and fruits despite the short growing season. Clearly some men and women did raise vegetables and fruits, providing much needed vitamins and avoiding the purchase of at least some foodstuffs. Citizens, as we have seen, complained of roaming goats and cows menacing such gardens with their foraging. How widespread gardening was, and whether it was universal or predominantly a working-class or non-working-class practice is unfortunately hard to determine.

The manuscript census returns appear to offer a reasonable picture of gardening in urban areas, for enumerators in 1871 were explicitly reminded not to forget that the products recorded in this schedule may be, and often are, raised by families not engaged in carrying on farming — say, on patches of land or gardens attached to tenements, even in the middle of large cities. The facts must, therefore, be ascertained in every case, and entered.<sup>49</sup>

Unfortunately, at the same time, enumerators were instructed not to record the products of plots of less than a quarter acre, although a few did. Only a minority of the city lots inhabited by working-class families exceeded this size. Thus, census data and fragments of other evidence offer only a tentative picture of the extent and importance of gardens within the city. The section is, as a result, rather speculative.

Enumerators made tallies of the amounts produced in each subdistrict of the city's nine wards. While specific yields given should be treated with caution, the totals give some indication of what produce was being raised in Montreal and where. Most crop production was reported in St. Antoine, the ward that stretched up the slopes of Mount Royal from St. Catherine Street, and that still included farms and orchards in its boundaries, as well as the wealthier English families of the city. St. Jacques and Ste. Marie wards followed. Their northern sections were still relatively unpopulated in 1871, while the southern subdistricts were overflowing with newcomers to the city. Within these wards gardening was apparently concentrated in those subdistricts where there were undeveloped areas, large lots, and sometimes small farms. Potatoes, carrots, mangles, beets, and turnips were the major vegetables reported. Apples were the predominant fruit, although some families grew pears, plums, and grapes.<sup>50</sup>

The fruits and vegetables reported in St. Jacques ward came from only five of the ten subdistricts. The largest amounts were produced either within the institutions of the area — notably the St. Vincent de Paul Refuge and the Convent of the Sisters of Providence, or by families whose heads listed their occupation as "bourgeois" or farmer. In all, under 30 residents of St. Jacques and even fewer in Ste. Anne, reported having any land at all on which they grew either vegetables or crops.<sup>51</sup> Most of the others were in professional or

<sup>49</sup> "Instructions to Officers," 137.

<sup>50</sup> Tallies for each subdistrict of each ward, *Mss. Census, Montreal, 1871*.

<sup>51</sup> Many of the manuscript schedules on this topic are unfortunately missing for Ste. Anne ward, so this section is particularly speculative.

clerical occupations — lawyers, bank clerks, and merchants reporting a half to one acre on which they grew beets, beans, carrots, or fruit, probably for personal family use. Few working-class families reported such produce. Those that did had only a quarter acre — recorded erroneously by the census taker, but hinting, perhaps, at a more widespread practice. Exceptional was a French-Canadian carpenter's family in St. Jacques who reported raising 60 bushels of oats, 30 bushels of potatoes, and 1,400 bundles of hay on four to five arpents of land. There is no record of their having kept any animals, so the products must have been sold for cash, perhaps to local carters or bourgeois families for their horses. In this family the cash supplemented the wages not only of the father, but of the nineteen-year-old daughter who worked as a seamstress and the sixteen-year-old son, a plasterer. Care of the garden would have been done by the mother and the three younger children.<sup>52</sup> Edwige Allard, the 34-year-old wife of another carpenter kept a one-acre garden from which she produced ten bushels of beans and the same of potatoes, as well as four bushels of other root crops. The garden produce helped feed her six children and 80-year-old father-in-law who lived with them.<sup>53</sup> Joseph Bleau, a mason, and his wife kept a quarter-acre garden which they reported as having produced half a bushel of beans, two of carrots and one of beets — not a very significant proportion of a family's annual food. Yet another woman, a Scottish widow with three children aged eight to eleven, complemented the money she made as a washerwoman with the ten bushels of potatoes, two of beets, and three of carrots that she raised on her one-quarter acre Ste. Anne lot.<sup>54</sup>

The census returns for 1871, by ignoring most gardens of a quarter acre or less, clearly underestimated the amount of back garden production in this period. They also suggest that large gardens, as would be expected, were concentrated not in the hands of those most needing free food, but in the hands of the wealthy who were able to afford the land required. Other factors too would suggest that the working class had less and less access to even small amounts of land on which to garden. For some of the same processes that were eliminating pigs and making other stock less practicable within the city curtailed the possibility of gardening as well. The decreasing size of city lots in working-class areas and the elimination of unbuild space curtailed access to areas for both gardening and animal raising. Historian John Cooper reports that *When the city was rebuilt, after the disastrous fires of 1845 and 1852, tenements or multiple dwellings, replaced the detached houses, and obliterated their gardens. This was also the plan adopted in building the railway workers' houses in Pointe St. Charles. They were constructed in terraces, the fronts set flush with the street line, and having scarcely more space in the rear than was required for privies, and the community well and wash "house."*<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Mss. Census, St. Jacques, 1871, 4, 42, line 5.

<sup>53</sup> Mss. Census, St. Jacques, 1871, 8, 16, line 5.

<sup>54</sup> Mss. Census, St. Jacques, 1871, 9, 56, line 8; Ste. Anne, 1871, 11, 16, line 17.

<sup>55</sup> John Cooper, "The Social Structure of Montreal in the 1850's," *Canadian Histori-*

Prior to the 1860s the houses of Ste. Anne's working class had been built one by one, each on its own lot and separate from its neighbours.<sup>56</sup> As land speculators and developers became increasingly involved, houses were built in rows, often on both the front and the back of the lot. Little light entered the rooms of most of these apartments. The miniscule courtyards would have provided neither the space nor the sun for a vegetable garden. Thus while some working-class families may well have kept very small patches of gardens and produced some vegetables during the hot summer months, probably the shortness of the growing season, the lack of space, and the lack of time meant that most had little alternative to purchasing the majority of whatever vegetables and fruits they ate out of the wages of the family's workers.<sup>57</sup> This conclusion is reinforced by a contemporary visitor to Montreal who commented that never had he "been in a Canadian city where among the working classes there was so little appearance of comfortable residences in the outskirts with small gardens" as in Montreal.<sup>58</sup>

For any who did raise vegetables for cash as opposed to consumption at home, a growing complex of city regulations would make it more and more difficult. Selling fresh provisions outside public markets, selling vegetables off markets without a licence, like keeping pigs, or allowing cattle to graze in the streets, were all illegal by the 1880s.<sup>59</sup> Thus, while reformers would never frown on the working class holding gardens, the growing regulation of exchange, part of the increasing control of capital over all areas of the economy, also minimized ordinary people's access to alternatives to waged labour.

Within the home, women could supplement wages or stretch them either by making things that would otherwise have had to be purchased or by making goods to sell. In families with a cow or goat, cheese and butter could be made. Bread could be baked rather than bought, clothes made, cloth spun. With the exception of the making of women's and girls' clothes, however, such home production for both use and exchange in Montreal was neither widespread, nor a major component of a family's support by 1871.<sup>60</sup> Those families where women produced butter or honey, spun, or wove were the exception, not the rule. Working-class women seldom had access to the land or the capital necessary to produce either butter, wool for spinning, or cloth for weaving. Even such a commodity as bread, traditionally baked in the home, was readily

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*cal Association Annual Report*, 1956, 68.

<sup>56</sup> Suzanne D. Cross, "The Irish in Montreal," 200-1.

<sup>57</sup> Jean-Claude Marsan, *Montreal in Evolution*, 268-9; John Cooper, "The Social Structure of Montreal in the 1850's," *CHAAR*, 1956, 68.

<sup>58</sup> *Montreal Daily Witness*, Letter to the Editor, 4 January 1869.

<sup>59</sup> Annual Reports, Recorder, 1869-1889.

<sup>60</sup> On the movement out of the home of clothes-making see Mercedes Steedman, "Sex and Skill in the Canadian Needle Trades, 1890-1940," unpublished paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association, 1982; Tamara Hareven, *Family Time and Industrial Time*, 204.

available at reasonable prices in commercial bakeries by the 1880s. For instance, the owner of the Montreal Cash Bakery boasted in 1888 that he could sell a four pound loaf four cents cheaper than his more traditional competitors. That year he had eight workers, all "third class hands." He planned to open a new, large, highly-capitalized factory with 100 hands, largely women.<sup>61</sup> Increasingly, women purchased most needed foodstuffs with their husbands' wages. The outlawing of pigs, the elimination of space in inner working-class areas for both gardens and animals and the growing production of goods by capitalist enterprises that were once produced in the home meant that the alternatives to paying out cash for most needed commodities were severely limited. Some space did remain, however, from which extra cash could be squeezed — the actual living space of families — their homes.

### III

#### Boarders, Boarding, and Housesharing

THE TAKING IN OF BOARDERS has received more attention from historians than other non-wage aspects of the family economy. Like stock keeping, boarding has been predominantly viewed as a working-class strategy to ward off poverty. John Benson has recently argued that such strategies can be viewed as aspects of part-time "penny capitalism."<sup>62</sup> Writing at the turn of the century, Margaret Byington described the taking in of lodgers as a deliberate business venture on the part of the family to increase inadequate income from men's earnings.<sup>63</sup> John Modell and Tamara Hareven also describe boarders as one strategy used by American families to solve the problem of the imbalance between income and expenditure.<sup>64</sup> Michael Anderson argues more carefully that in Preston, Lancashire, the poorer occupational groups "may have been rather more likely to take in lodgers."<sup>65</sup> Research that explicitly compares working-class with other families is now beginning to support his caution. Between the 1850s and 1880s, in American and Canadian cities, the taking in of boarders does not appear to have predominated among the semi- and

<sup>61</sup> *Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labour in Canada*, 1889, Evidence of Edward Pole, 597-9. For more detail on the transformation of production in the baking trade, see Ian McKay, "Capital and Labour in the Halifax Baking and Confectionery Industry during the last half of the Nineteenth Century," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 3 (1978), 63-108.

<sup>62</sup> John Benson, *The Penny-Capitalists: A Study of Nineteenth Century Working Class Entrepreneurial Activity* (Dublin 1983).

<sup>63</sup> Margaret Byington, *Homestead: Households of a Mill Town* (Pittsburgh 1974, reprint of 1910 edition), cited in Joan M. Jensen, "Cloth, Butter and Boarders," 20.

<sup>64</sup> John Modell and Tamara Hareven, "Urbanization and the Malleable Household: An Examination of Boarding and Lodging in American Families," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (August 1973), 476.

<sup>65</sup> Michael Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* (Cambridge 1972), 46.



unskilled, or the poorest fraction of the population. In Philadelphia in 1880 Michael Haines found that poorer families did not take in boarders in large numbers.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, in Hamilton, Ontario, Michael Katz and Ian Davey report that between 1851 and 1861, boarders did not live most often with those in need of extra income.<sup>67</sup> In Montreal too, while families of all classes did take in boarders, they were more common in the larger homes of those owning their own enterprises, professionals, and skilled workers, rather than among the poorer workers. The semi- and unskilled were more likely to double up, sharing living space with other whole families, than to take in boarders. The following sections examine boarding and the sharing of space as strategies used by different fractions of classes.

A woman taking in several boarders could bring as much cash into the home as she could working for wages. In 1888, women working as bookbinders, or in clothing or shoemaking factories, could expect a wage of between \$1.50 and \$5.00 a week. Those working at home on clothing or shoes put out by manufacturers made less.<sup>68</sup> Earlier that decade working-class men paid \$3.00 to \$4.00 a week for board.<sup>69</sup> Taking in one or two boarders then, offered a woman a source of income comparable to a wage, a valuable source of cash that was probably paid directly to her. It could be used to complement her husband's irregular or low wages. However, boarders also entailed expenditures. They had at least to have a bed, linen, and blankets. Most probably expected a separate room. And they had to be fed well enough to keep them in the household. A boarder thus represented not only extra work for the woman of the house, but also extra expenditures and space — resources that were lacking in the poorest families. Thus, it is not surprising that it was among the petty-bourgeois and professional families of Ste. Anne and St. Jacques wards that boarders predominated.<sup>70</sup> (see Table 4).

<sup>66</sup> Michael Haines, "Poverty, Economic Stress and the Family in a Late Nineteenth Century American City. Whites in Philadelphia, 1880," in Theodore Hershberg, ed., *Philadelphia. Work, Space, Family and Group Experience in the Nineteenth Century* (New York 1981), 244.

<sup>67</sup> Michael B. Katz and Ian E. Davey, "Youth and Early Industrialization in a Canadian City," in John Demos and Sarane Spence Books, eds., *Turning Points. Historical and Sociological Essays on the Family* (Supplement to the *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 84) 591.

<sup>68</sup> RCRLC, Evidence of Henry Morton, Bookbinder, 247; Z. Lapierre, Shoemanufacturer, 437; Hollis Shorely, Clothing Manufacturer, 285.

<sup>69</sup> Canada, *Sessional Papers* 1882, No. 14, Appendix 3, "Annual Report of the Montreal Immigration Agent."

<sup>70</sup> Boarding, subletting, and the doubling up of families to save rent were all common in Montreal. Distinguishing between them on the Canadian Census returns is something of a problem. Boarders in the figures that follow are unmarried individuals or couples whom census takers enumerated as part of a census family. "A family, as understood for the purpose of the Census, may consist of one person living alone, or of any number of persons living together under one roof and having their food provided together."

**TABLE 4**  
**Class and Boarders<sup>1</sup>**  
**Ste. Anne and St. Jacques, 1861-1881**

	1861			No.
	No Extras	Boarders	Servants	
Professional & Proprietor	44%	40%	16%	70
Clerical & Service	71%	17%	12%	42
Skilled	65%	34%	1%	198
Semi- and Unskilled	78%	22%	nil	192
<b>Total</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>502</b>
	1871			
Professional & Proprietor	70%	19%	11%	135
Clerical & Service	76%	15%	9%	66
Skilled	87%	12%	1%	279
Semi- and Unskilled	86%	13%	1%	214
<b>Total</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>694</b>
	1881			
Professional & Proprietor	66%	18%	16%	128
Clerical & Service	80%	16%	4%	124
Skilled	83%	16%	1%	336
Semi- and Unskilled	88%	11%	1%	276
<b>Total</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>864</b>

<sup>1</sup> This table includes only those families where the head, male or female, listed an occupation.

In 1861 over one-quarter of all families in these two wards shared their residences with people who were neither apprentices, servants, or kinfolk. By 1871 and 1881 the proportion had dropped to 14 per cent. This decrease reflects two major factors. Firstly, there was a shortage of housing in Montreal in 1861. The city had increased its population by 75 per cent over the previous decade compared to 18 per cent in the following one. Housing construction had not kept up. The sheer magnitude of population growth placed pressure on housing.<sup>71</sup> So too did the periodic fires that swept through parts of town in the 1850s destroying hundreds of houses at a time. Housing starts could hardly compensate for the lost dwellings, let alone provide for the in-migrants as well.<sup>72</sup>

The particular demographic characteristics of the city's population development also help explain why more families had boarders in 1861 than in later years. In that year only 41 per cent of females and 40 per cent of men aged fifteen to 40 were married, compared to 46 and 48 per cent a decade later.<sup>73</sup> More single people thus needed housing, and they constituted the bulk of boarders.

To discern the class differences in patterns of family augmentation, the figures for the two wards can be examined combined as there was no significant difference between patterns in the two. In 1861, 40 per cent of professionals' and proprietors' wives took in boarders, 34 per cent of skilled workers' wives did, while only 22 per cent of the semi- and unskilled did. Over the next two decades important shifts occurred in the nature of family augmentation. The percentages of families of all groups keeping boarders dropped dramatically. The greatest decrease occurred among professionals and proprietors, who rapidly divested themselves of extra non-family members other than servants, so that by 1881 only 18 per cent reported having boarders. Among the skilled and unskilled the percentage of families having boarders had dropped in half by 1881 (see Table 4). Despite the overall decrease, the taking in of boarders continued to predominate in non-working-class families. Before examining the more common working-class strategy — house-sharing — some

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Boarders, then, as the last-listed people in each family, probably ate their meals with the family. Relatives were not included as boarders. "Instructions to Officers," *Canada Sessional Papers*, 1871, no. 64, 128. The Canadian Census, like the U.S. one prior to 1880, does not have to identify the relationship of people in the household. I have estimated people's relationships based on the rules set out in Miller (1972). The identification of relatives was verified by crosschecks in the city's parish registers which are especially complete for the Catholic population.

<sup>71</sup> W.J. Patterson, *Report of the Trade and Commerce of the City of Montreal for 1863* (Montreal 1864), 4.

<sup>72</sup> John C. Weaver and Peter De Lottinville, "The Conflagration and the City: Disaster and Progress in British North America during the Nineteenth Century," *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 26 (1980), 418.

<sup>73</sup> Canada Census, 1861-81.

other characteristics of families taking in boarders and of the boarders themselves need to be explored.

Boarders do not emerge as an alternative to other survival strategies. Almost half the families keeping pigs and cows also took in boarders. While families were generally more likely to take in boarders when there were no children old enough to work, the strategies were not mutually exclusive. Boarders were only slightly less common among families with one or two children at work than among those with none at work. Indeed families with three children at work were as likely to have boarders as those with none. Nor did cultural and ethnic background make much difference to whether boarders were taken in or not (see Table 5). The English appear to have been somewhat less likely to rent out rooms than others after 1861, perhaps as they became wealthier. Groups that represented a minority in their neighbourhood appear to have been more likely to take in boarders than others. This was especially true among the French-Canadian families living in Ste. Anne in 1861, when they were just beginning to move into this largely Irish enclave. That year, 38 per cent of French-Canadian families took in one or more boarders, compared to only 19 per cent of the Irish. In St. Jacques, in contrast, the Irish were slightly more likely to have boarders than French-Canadians. After 1861 major ethnic differences became minimal in both wards. Here we see, I suspect, the important role that boarding could play for migrants new to the city. In 1861, 41 per cent of boarders were born outside Quebec, largely in Ireland. By the 1880s, 80 per cent were native-born. The Quebec countryside, rather than Ireland, Scotland, or England, became the major source of both immigrants and boarders.

Families taking in boarders almost always took people of similar origins and culture. In Ste. Anne ward in 1861, 97 per cent of French-Canadian families with boarders had French-Canadian ones; 92 per cent of the Irish had Irish boarders. Only the Scots were less likely to have Scots than people of other origins. The workplace too was probably a place of recruitment. One-quarter of Ste. Anne families with boarders in 1861 took in people with the same occupations as the household head, although there is no way of knowing whether they actually worked together.

Tamara Hareven and John Modell have argued that the "logic of the life cycle" dominated the "economic squeeze" in explaining the phenomenon of lodgers. Michael Katz, in contrast, found that in Hamilton "the presence of boarders and relatives appears to have been largely accidental."<sup>24</sup> In these two Montreal wards a pattern is observable, if not dramatic (see Table 6 and Figure 1). In 1861, when housing was in such short supply, nearly one-third of all households had boarders throughout the life cycle, except for those without children. In 1871 and 1881 a more specific pattern is evident. Around 16 per

<sup>24</sup> John Modell and Tamara Hareven, "Urbanization and the Malleable Household," 476; Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton*, 244.

TABLE 5  
Ethnicity and Boarders

Ste. Anne	1861 <sup>1</sup>		1871		1881	
	% with boarders	Total No. in Sample	% with boarders	Total No. in Sample	% with boarders	Total No. in Sample
Origins						
French Canadian	38%	85	14%	114	13%	134
Irish	19%	162	15%	160	10%	202
English	31%	26	11%	63	7%	55
Others	32%	65	17%	40	7%	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>445</b>
<b>St. Jacques</b>						
French Canadian	29%	185	13%	279	18%	487
Irish	32%	25	18%	17	16%	19
English	33%	15	12%	25	0	11
Others	25%	16	23%	13	23%	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>543</b>
<b>Combined Total</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>988</b>

<sup>1</sup> As people's origins were not determined in the 1861 Census the numbers here refer to those born in the respective countries, and to those born in Lower Canada who responded in French.

cent of young married couples took in boarders. Once a baby arrived, however, mothers appear to have avoided the additional work that boarders represented. As children grew older, but were not yet old enough to work for wages, around 15 per cent again took in boarders. This was the critical stage of the family life cycle, when the ratio between consumers and earners was at its most disadvantageous. Thus we find the proportion rising until some children were old enough to work (stage 4). The pattern diverges in 1871 and 1881. In 1871, a good year when more jobs were available than in either 1861 or 1881, the proportion taking boarders dropped steadily once children reached work age, increasing only after they had all left home (stage 7). In 1881, in contrast, as children began to leave home, they were replaced by boarders in up to 15 per cent of the households of these wards. Only in that year does the Montreal pattern appear to fit the "social equalization" model suggested by Modell and Hareven, in which economically, if not psychologically, boarders were

substituted for departed children in the later stages of the family life cycle.<sup>75</sup>

When a family decided to take in boarders they sought them in a variety of ways. The wealthy advertised in the newspapers of the day. "Furnished Rooms to Let, for Single Gentlemen, in Private Family," read one of fourteen similar advertisements in the *Montreal Daily Witness* of 26 March 1873. "Interested gentlemen" were requested to apply at 28 Union Avenue. More often, and especially among the working class, word of mouth must have constituted the main source of information both for those seeking space and those seeking boarders. Newcomers to the city sought out people from their home counties and villages, whether they came from Ireland or Quebec. If they did not have a space, they would always know someone who did.

The boarders themselves shared certain characteristics, apart from their common origin with the family with whom they lived. The first of these is crucial in understanding why the presence of additional non-family members was not predominant among the poorest families. Less than half the apparent "boarders" reported having jobs at the time the census was taken. Perhaps these household members who were neither kin nor apprentices may not have paid board either. Hence their concentration in the homes of the wealthier.<sup>76</sup> In addition, boarders were overwhelmingly young. Most were between the ages of fifteen and 29. In Ste. Anne in 1861 more were male than female; in St. Jacques the reverse was true. This reflects the different employment opportunities for each sex in each ward. Over the next two decades, women dramatically outnumbered men as boarders. By 1881 three-quarters of the boarders of St. Jacques were women. Young girls hoping to find work or newly-arrived in the city, came to constitute the typical boarder. Seamstresses were always the most likely boarders. They constituted 16 per cent of working boarders in the first two decades. By 1881, they made up nearly 30 per cent of all those listing a job. Some lived in families where they probably helped wives and daughters sewing at home. The other boarders listed a wide variety of occupations. Clerks and construction workers were important in the early period, but less so later.

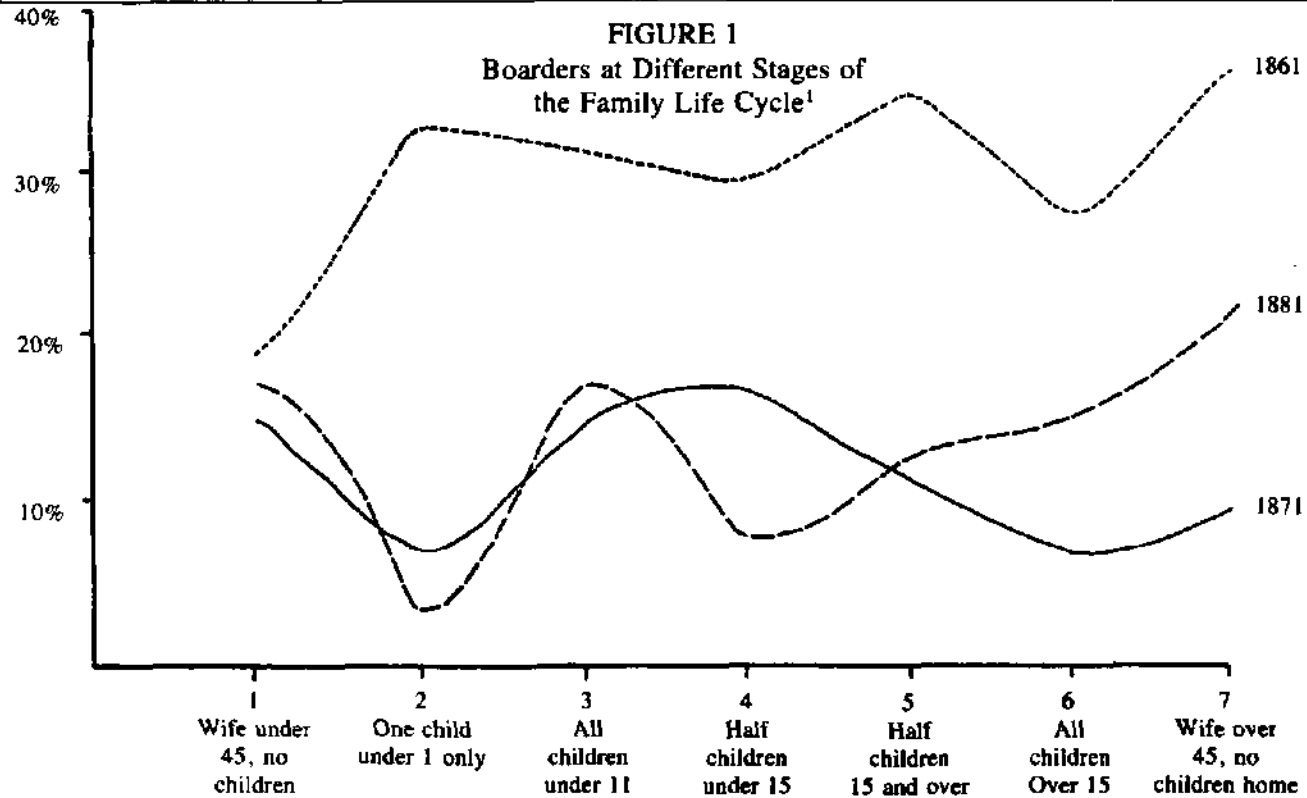
Boarding, as Michael Katz, John Modell, and Tamara Hareven have pointed out, was a temporary period in a young person's life.<sup>77</sup> It also appears to have often been a very temporary arrangement for the family taking in a boarder. It is impossible to tell how long people remained in any one house-

<sup>75</sup> John Modell and Tamara Hareven, "Urbanization and the Malleable Household," 476.

<sup>76</sup> Compare this with Sheva Medjuck's research on Moncton, New Brunswick, where virtually all boarders had a job. Moncton's economy offered a majority of male jobs. In 1851 and 1861 boarders there were over 80 per cent male. Sheva Medjuck, "The Importance of Boarding for the Structure of the Household in the Nineteenth Century: Moncton, New Brunswick and Hamilton, Canada West," *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 25 (1980), 210-11.

<sup>77</sup> Michael Katz, *The People of Hamilton*, 264; John Modell and Tamara Hareven, "Urbanization and the Malleable Household," 474.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Boarders at Different Stages of**  
**the Family Life Cycle<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> Ste. Anne and St. Jacques samples combined.

TABLE 6  
Household Structures at Different Stages of the Family Life Cycle,  
1861-1881<sup>1</sup>

	Simple		Extended		Multiple		Total	%with
	%with		%with		%with		Number	boarders
	No. boarders	No. boarders	No. boarders	No. boarders	No. boarders	No. boarders		
1861								
Wife under 45								
no children	36	11	8	12	14	57	58	19
1 child under 1	15	27	11	36	4	50	30	33
All children								
under 11	118	30	25	12	12	75	155	32
Half children								
under 15	67	25	14	40	8	75	89	30
Half 15 and over	43	23	9	55	5	100	57	35
All over 15	24	21	12	25	5	60	41	27
Wife over 45								
no children	13	31	0	-	3	66	16	37
Totals	316	25%	79	25%	51	65%	446	132 = 26%
1871								
Wife under 45								
no children	31	16	15	26	28	7	74	15
1 child under 1	21	0	7	28	16	6	44	7
All under 11	114	16	26	23	56	11	196	15
Half under 15	106	19	7	0	30	13	143	17
Half 15 and over	41	10	7	14	18	11	66	11
All over 15	32	9	9	11	17	0	58	7
Wife over 45								
no children	14	7	1	0	24	12	39	10
Totals	359	14%	72	19%	189	9%	620	85 = 14%
1881								
Wife under 45								
no children	50	22	8	25	49	10	107	17
Child under 1	14	0	6	0	19	5	39	3
All under 11	154	17	18	11	88	17	260	17
Half under 15	95	9	5	0	41	7	141	8
Half 15 and over	46	15	6		19	10	71	13
All over 15	39	15	12	25	34	12	85	15
Wife over 45								
no children	27	33	10	0	27	11	55	22
Totals	425	16	56	12	277	12	758	108 = 14%

<sup>1</sup> All two-parent families.



hold. Clearly the ability of the boarder to pay, the compatibility of boarder and family, even the adequacy of the food and lodging, were all important factors. A few glimpses of the potential conflicts that could arise can be gleaned from the evidence of a court case, which quite coincidentally offered glimpses of boarder-housewife relations. A Madam Gagnon of Montreal reported subletting a room in her house to a Belgian man and his wife, newly arrived in town. The wife appears to have worked as a prostitute. During her residence she convinced her landlady that she was not only vulgar, but also not trustworthy enough to be believed, even under oath. That particular arrangement lasted only two months. Madam Gagnon's next boarders were more acceptable. She took in a Madam Belserre whose husband had "done nothing the last six months after breaking both legs." Whether she was paid or not is unclear, but at the time of her testimony these boarders had remained with her for seven months.<sup>78</sup>

"Doubling up," subletting rooms to other families, or renting one or two rooms from landlords who had divided up their dwellings all helped reduce one of a family's major and most fixed of costs — the rent. Qualitative evidence of this practice is widespread. Dr. Decrow, a Montreal physician who treated infections and contagious diseases among workers' families, testified in 1888 that "about two" families generally occupied a day labourer's house. These houses had only three or four rooms, so that whole families slept in a single bedroom, sharing cooking facilities.<sup>79</sup> "Doubling up" was, he believed, "getting to be the rule with the poorer classes of people" who would rent a "large house for sanitary reasons, . . . well knowing at the time they took the house that they would have to relet the rest of it" as a result of "the poverty of the family."<sup>80</sup> Five years earlier Montreal's *Daily Star Reporter* had highlighted the overcrowding of families in parts of St. Laurent and St. Jacques wards. In the buildings the reporter visited, families were limited to one room each. In the most depressing case he described two families, a total of fourteen people, shared a single room.<sup>81</sup> Yet another seeker out of poverty and squalid living conditions, the anonymous author of *Montreal by Gaslight*, found similar conditions shortly after the Royal Commission of 1888. He described a four-storey stone building in Ste. Anne ward near the market. It had once been a hotel, but had been transformed into a "low lodging house:"

[W]ithin its four walls and upon its four stories lived at one time no less than twenty-eight families. In the direst of poverty, in abject want, without air, with no appliances for health and decency, in dirt and filth appalling, over one hundred and ten human beings herded like rats in a pit, barely existing from day to day.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> *Montreal Daily Witness*, 28 March 1873.

<sup>79</sup> RCRLC, 606.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 609.

<sup>81</sup> *Montreal Daily Star*, 24 December 1883.

<sup>82</sup> Anon., *Montreal By Gaslight* (Montreal 1889), 17.

Less sensational evidence of crowding and doubling up is available throughout the reports of the Sanitary Inspectors and in scattered complaints from city officials, especially assessors, about their not being informed about "how many families are under one roof," or of subtenanting arrangements.<sup>83</sup>

Such evidence suggests that the sharing of housing took two distinct forms. Some families rented a house, or in a few cases bought one, then sublet space to one or two other families. In other cases landlords, eager to squeeze as much profit as possible out of their properties, subdivided buildings themselves. It was in the latter situation that one seems to find families confined to a single room.

Determining just how widespread or common either of these practices were is difficult. Ideally, the census enumerators' distinctions between family and household should enable us to discover just how many families were doubled up within a single dwelling unit. Mark Choko, in his study of housing in Montreal, concluded that the numbers of lodgings or households enumerated did closely reflect the number of dwelling units and that the discrepancies observable from 1861 to 1881 therefore indicate a fairly important increase in house-sharing.<sup>84</sup> Initially I made a similar assumption.<sup>85</sup> A closer examination of those families that appeared to be sharing housing, however, suggests that the census enumerators were not always very careful in their distinctions. In attempting to match census returns with both city directories and evaluation rolls, it became clear that some houses that were apparently "shared" by families were actually separate tenements, whose residents were independently assessed by the city for water rates and occasionally even given a separate address in the city directory. Without a full scale and highly detailed study tracing the size and layout of every house, it is impossible to determine exactly which families, or what percentage apparently sharing housing on census day, were actually doing so. Nor is it possible to tell what proportion sublet part of their own dwelling as a survival strategy, and what proportion was forced to crowd together in substandard living condition as a result of a landlord's subdivision of space.

The number of families in each "house" does, however, offer some indication of the extent of crowding, if not of the actual sharing of space. A separate house was "to be counted whenever the entrance from the outside is separate, and there is not direct and constant communication in the inside to make it 'one'."<sup>86</sup> Table 7 examines the extent of sharing that would have existed had the census distinction reflected reality. Between 1871 and 1881, the only years when the categories are strictly comparable, workers' families were more

<sup>83</sup> See, for instance, *RCRLC*, Evidence of John W. Grose, Chairman of the Board of Assessors of the City of Montreal, 266; Evidence of Pierre Hubert Morin, Assessor, 552.

<sup>84</sup> Marc H. Choko, *Crises du Logement à Montréal (1860-1939)* (Montréal 1980), 16.

<sup>85</sup> Bettina Bradbury, "The Family Economy and Work," 92-5.

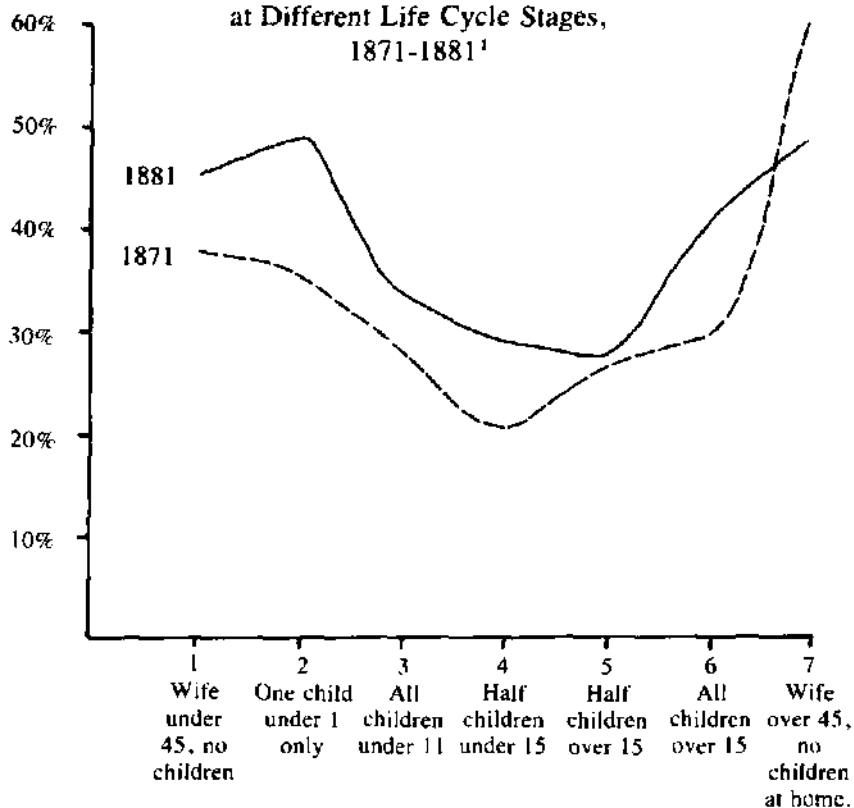
<sup>86</sup> "Instructions to Officers," *Canada Sessional Papers*, no. 64, 1871, 133.

**TABLE 7**  
**Class, Household Structure and Boarders<sup>1</sup>**

	Simple Household			Extended Family			Multiple Families			No.
	No Extras	Boarders	Servants	No Extras	Boarders	Servants	No Extras	Boarders	Servants	
<b>1861</b>										
No occupation	50%	11%	1%	8%	3%	-	17%	8%	1%	64
Professional & proprietor	35%	24%	8%	9%	9%	6%	2%	5%	2%	66
Service & clerical	60%	8%	13%	5%	3%	-	3%	8%	-	38
Skilled	50%	20%	1%	12%	3%	-	3%	11%	-	184
Unskilled	58%	13%	-	17%	4%	-	4%	4%	-	188
<b>1871</b>										
No occupation	39%	5%	-	22%	7%	-	22%	5%	-	41
Professional & proprietor	50%	13%	8%	5%	2%	3%	15%	4%	1%	129
Clerical & service	41%	5%	10%	5%	6%	-	33%	-	-	63
Skilled	44%	8%	-	13%	2%	-	30%	3%	-	271
Unskilled	50%	8%	15%	8%	5%	1%	29%	3%	-	212
<b>1881</b>										
No occupation	38%	13%	1%	7.5%	1%	1%	37%	2.5%	-	119
Professional & proprietor	39%	13%	13%	4%	2%	2%	25%	3%	-	119
Clerical & service	48%	13%	3%	3%	1%	-	28%	3%	1%	117
Skilled	46%	8%	-	3%	1%	-	32%	8%	-	326
Unskilled	45%	6%	-	4%	1%	-	40%	4%	-	265

<sup>1</sup> This table excludes solitaries and those without families, hence the different totals from those in Table 4. Figures for Ste. Anne and St. Jacques are combined. The table reads across, thus of the 64 families where the head reported no occupation in 1861, 50 per cent lived in a simple household and had no extra inmates; 11 per cent had boarders, etc.

FIGURE 2  
Percentage of Families Sharing Housing  
at Different Life Cycle Stages,  
1871-1881<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Ste. Anne and St. Jacques samples combined.

likely to live in what were defined as shared houses than were professionals and proprietors. By 1881 perhaps as many as 40 per cent of semi- and unskilled families, compared to 32 per cent of skilled and 25 per cent of professionals' and proprietors' families were apparently sharing premises with other families. A small percentage shared space and took in boarders.

While the percentage of families sharing housing is probably inflated by the census enumerators' fuzzy distinctions, the pattern is clear enough. Household structure was closely related not only to class position, but also to the family life cycle in a more obvious way than was true of taking in boarders (see Figure 2). Couples were most likely to share housing when newly married, or after the birth of one child. As children grew older, and as family size increased, they were more likely to live alone, despite their increased need for extra income.

House-sharing was not used to compensate for the life cycle squeeze. The strain of sharing cramped quarters appears to have become intolerable for all but the most needy. It was at this stage that families were more likely to take in boarders who could provide some income without extreme overcrowding (see Figure 1). As children left home, women were again likely to share their living space, or to live in small, crowded quarters with both relatives and strangers (see Figure 2).

Perhaps we should not be surprised to learn that it was the overcrowding of houses, largely a result of "doubling up," that came under attack during this period, rather than the taking in of one or two boarders. By the mid-1870s health inspectors, ever watchful for contagious diseases, especially smallpox, were attempting to keep a record of the number of rooms and the number of people in them in every house. They were empowered to evict citizens from overcrowded houses. In practice, examination was limited to the working class. "In the case of the poorer classes of tenements," inspectors were specifically warned to "be careful to note the number of inmates occupying each room and to observe whether there is danger of overcrowding."<sup>87</sup> Once again we see reforms touching on those very strategies used by the poorer members of the working class to avoid total dependence on wages.

Actually, evictions for overcrowding were not frequent. The health department had insufficient money to pay a large staff. In a typical year, 1886, only three overcrowded tenements were reported by the Sanitary Police, and the "necessary number of occupants compelled to search for other lodgings."<sup>88</sup> Important however, was the threat of eviction and the power of the local state, through its Sanitary Police, to enter the houses and rooms of the poor to ascertain whether they were living in a suitable manner. The same municipal government that had outlawed pigs and controlled the sale of vegetables, could now move into yet another arena within which the poor could supplement wages — their homes.

#### IV

#### Conclusion

"CHILDREN AREN'T PIGS YOU KNOW, for they can't pay the rent," went an old Irish ballad.<sup>89</sup> From the 1870s on, working-class families of all origins increased their dependence on waged labour as pig-raising, gardening, and the production of food and goods at home was curtailed. Children of working age became a source of economic security, the major complement to a parent's inadequate and irregular wage. Children could and did pay the rent. Until they were old enough to do so, those with low and irregular wages faced a period of poverty, which some counteracted by clustering together to spread costs. Even

<sup>87</sup> *Report Upon the Sanitary State of Montreal*, 1881, 7; 1886, 8.

<sup>88</sup> *Report Upon the Sanitary State*, 1886, 29.

<sup>89</sup> Cited in Lynn H. Lees, *Exiles or Erin*, 22.

this practice, while not outlawed, came under surveillance as inspectors on the lookout for cases of smallpox and other contagious diseases were empowered to evict excessive numbers from houses.

Keeping animals and gardens was part of the tradition of rural wage-earning families from Ireland and Quebec. Yet it was also an urban tradition. The women who raised pigs and cows in Montreal were not blindly following such traditions. Stock-raising represented a rational and important way of supplementing unsteady wages. Pork formed a major component of the diet of both the Irish and the French-Canadians. Families ceased to keep animals when the law or lack of space prevented them from doing so.

City regulations, surveillance, and urban growth had a very different impact on families in different class positions. The pigs, the working-class animal, were outlawed in this period, not the cow. The inner city areas, where jobs for workers were accessible, became more and more crowded, eliminating garden and animal space. The wealthy, in contrast, could afford homes with sufficient space for gardens, where if they wished, they could raise both vegetables and cows. They also had the space in their homes to take in boarders, if they needed or wanted to do so. Thus extra residents were more prevalent in the families of professional, proprietors, and even skilled workers, while "doubling up" was most common among the semi- and unskilled. While all people were potential victims of smallpox and other infectious diseases, it was the homes of the "poorer classes" that were entered and examined.

As new laws and restructured urban spaces curtailed access to subsistence, the ways in which married working-class women could contribute to the family's survival were narrowed down and altered. Where once she could make or save some money raising animals, making butter, selling eggs or vegetables, now her contribution lay in sharing her living and cooking space with other individuals and families, taking in boarders, or going out to work occasionally for wages herself.

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# REVIEW

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# RELATIONS INDUSTRIELLES INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

## SOMMAIRE — CONTENTS

volume 39, numéro 3, 1984

**Le chômage des jeunes au Québec: aggravation et concentration (1966-1982)**

Pierre FORTIN

*Youth Unemployment in Québec: Increase and Concentration  
(1966-1982)*

**Faculty Collective Bargaining: The Voice of Experience**

Allen PONAK and Mark THOMPSON

*La négociation collective dans les universités: la voie de l'expérience*

**Syndicats et politique au niveau municipal en France**

Stéphane DION

*Unions and Politics in France: The Municipal Level*

**Local Employer and Union Perceptions of Two-Tier Bargaining**

Daniel G. GALLAGHER and Kurt W. WETZEL

*Perceptions des employeurs et des syndiqués de la négociation  
à double palier*

**Rémunération, postes de travail et accidents: une relation interactive**

Lucie LAFLAMME et André ARSENAULT

*Wage Modes and Job Specific Accident Rates:  
An Interactive Relationship*

**Evidence from the Skilled-Unskilled Canadian Wage Index**

D.J. DEVORETZ and Clyde G. REED

*Les différences de salaires au Canada entre les travailleurs qualifiés  
et non qualifiés*

**Fairness and Managerial Rights in Canadian Arbitral Jurisprudence**

E.G. FISHER and L.M. SHERWOOD

*L'équité et les droits de la direction dans la jurisprudence arbitrale*

**Logit Analysis of Employee Turnover in a Remote Community**

R.H. HOLMES and L.T. PINFIELD

*L'analyse logit du roulement de la main-d'œuvre dans une localité isolée*

**Trainee Experiences in Industrial Retraining Programs: A Case Study**

Ronald J. BURKE

## DISCUSSIONS

**La réforme du Code du travail au Québec: une démarche fragmentaire**

Rodrigue BLOUIN

**Décisions rendues par le Conseil canadien des relations du travail**

Luc BEAULIEU

**Changements dans les législations du travail au Canada**

Michel GAUVIN, Geoffrey BRENNAN et Louis LEMIRE

**Recensions — Book Reviews**

**Publications récentes — Recent Publications**

**Livres reçus — Books Received**

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