my knuckles so swollen and bruised I couldn't move them."

In the mother country, shipping young "street Arabs" and other destitute children from city slums to Canadian farms seemed a capital idea. First, it rescued gutter children from a possible future of prostitution and thievery. Second, it saved British taxpayers the cost of looking after them. Third, it got distressing evidence of human misery out of sight. Fourth, it relieved congested labor markets in Britain while, at the same time, it helped people a nearly empty colony with English-speaking workers. And fifth, the kids would benefit by settling in a clean, windswept land of opportunity and Christian character. Perfect. Charitable organizations — set up by such blinkered do-gooders as Maria Rye, Annie MacPherson, John Middlemore and Dr. Thomas Barnardo — led what soon became a fashionable movement.

The charities and Canadian authorities set rules to protect the children, but often, the rules were ignored. The charties claimed they regularly sent inspectors to look the children over; but many of the youngsters never saw an inspector. Among those that did, some were afraid to tell him what they were suffering. The societies also set up homes here. In effect, these were holding tanks for the children, and temporary refuges. Before a society turned a "home child" over to a farmer, it insisted on his showing a clergyman's testimonial to his respectability and regular church hard but, more often than not, the waif from Britain worked harder than the family's children and got less schooling, poorer food and beds, and more fists on the head.

Heather Laskey believes a million Canadians have descended from this strange river of British immigration and that "the development of Canada's agriculture, which helped make the country one of the wealthiest in the world, was founded in no small part on their sweat and tears." She sought and found dozens of them. A few had happy memories. They'd grown up among kind families. Often, however, these men and women who'd been kicked out of their homeland at a tender age remembered their Canadian childhood as a nightmare. From Heather Laskey's research here are a few of their stories.

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Amy Hodgkins (maiden name; Baddeck, N.S.): The first I remember is the boat in Iona, and they met me with the horse and wagon. I was scared to death of the horse's feet. So I turned my back to the horse so I wouldn't have to see him. From then on it was murder . . .

They all knew about her beating but she kicked me from behind, with a pointed shoe, and you know how that will hurt . . .

All I can remember is all the poundings that I got for nothing . . . I had the yard work, the field work . . . She had me kneading bread, standing on a box because I wasn't tall enough to reach the table, all the dishes . . . I can remember one day and I was doing the dishes, and there was a girl from the road down further, and there was a few beans left in the bean crock that I was supposed to wash, and I took them and I ate them, the beans. Now whether I was hungry or not, I don't know, but I ate the beans, but she pounded the daylights out of me right there, for eating the beans, in front of that girl . . .

James Golding (Sonora, N.S.): My brother found out where I was and, after three or four years, he wrote to me. He lived with a family where there were six children of their own. The mother put him out after four years. He was only 13 or 14. Then he found a farmer in Stewiacke, but he was treated terrible. He beat him with whips and said he was only a charity boy.

Clarrie Fensman (not her real name; brought up at a place she remembers as Hard Scrabble, N.B.; lives now in Dartmouth, N.S.): My sister was put in an

'They knew about her beating me, but they wouldn't open their mouths'

CHERYL LEAN

Charles Davenport slept here more than 50 years ago.

Amy Taylor sits on porch of the old farmstead where she worked as a child. CHERYL LEAN

really pound me after they left . . . I can remember one day I was scrubbing the back porch, on my hands and knees, the bare floor, and I don't know what went wrong

understand why he had been taken and not me. After that, I worked like a man, trying to do his work, picking potatoes, pitching hay. Even when I was real young, I'd have to stand on a big box to make the bread and she'd have me spinning yarn. It was always work. They'd shear the sheep and we'd wash the wool and we'd pick it, and then we'd get it carded at the mill. Then we brought it home and spun it. I never knew as a child what it was to play.

My brother got into a place where he was just a little slave. Once he was up on a hay wagon and fell off. They thought he'd fractured his skull. He never got over it. He had terrible headaches all his life. A slave . . .

That is about all those people wanted with the children that came over — the work they could get out of you. I don't think they wanted them as children. I don't know of any that did it for the love of children.

Charles Davenport (Cole Harbour, N.S.): They put us into the quarantine shed in Halifax. It was full of soot from the trains, and everything you touched you got so black, and we was filthy anyway. That was late at night. They gave us a cold box lunch. It was so cold, hard and dry, and fit for nothing but pigs. Seven or eight in the evening a woman in uniform came and told us to come with her and took us to where there were some wooden pallets, boards on the filthy floor. There was a filthy men's toilet we had to use . . .

good bunch . . . Apparently we was supposed to stay there for 24 hours for quarantine . . . I can remember so well. When we got to Windsor, we broke out in horrible weeping spots (impetigo) . . . We had nice skins. English boys had at that time. We was a horrible-looking mess but we got no sympathy. Nothing . . .

They put us into two sleighs, and we went through Windsor across the Falmouth bridge with the bells ringing on the horses and the horses clopping along till we got to Falmouth. Some of the boys were crying with the cold. But I wasn't crying. Yet. We got to this farm (The Daykeyne Street Lads Club) and this man said, "There's your home," and we saw it on the top of the hill through the snow, which was coming down heavy. We was wet as well as cold, and he pulled up to the back door, and we thought we was going into the house.

But not so.

A man named Arthur Smith opened the doors to the barn, and the horses drove right in. And we was given forks and shovels and we had to clear the manure out from behind the cows. Incredible, eh? They just got us working right away. We did eventually get a meal. It was late at night. But after we got through cleaning the cows . . . Our hands were small and soft, and my hands was a mess of blisters. We didn't tell anybody. We had the feeling it would be no use. We went to bed, roughly 12 at night, and at the foot of my bed

brought up at Hampton and Hoyt's Station, N.B.): We thought we were going to have this apartment and we thought we were going to live heavenly, just in luxury, a big dream world . . . I'd get up at 5:30, winter and summer. Start the milking. It was always work, work, work. I was never allowed to go out with the other kids. never allowed to go out and play after school. Because I had chores to do. They weren't kind. Just work, just slave, is all they thought . . . When I was working on that farm at Hoyt's Station, and I'd be down in the cellar on a rainy day when I didn't go to school, when the potatoes had sprouted, I used to cry. I'd be so lonesome. I wanted to go home. This was the second winter I'd been in Canada, and every time I heard the song, "The Old Folks at Home," I'd be sniffing away to myself . . . Just lonesome.

Florrie Wilkes (not her real name; raised in Port Morien, Cape Breton; now lives in the Annapolis Valley): It was a mile each way from neighbors, so they never knew what they were doing to us. The couple had a boy of 19 and one of five. Their daughter had died. They put us in an attic. Talk about rats. You'd hear them going tiptipping up there. I was scared of those things. They were poor people themselves. They just wanted us to work. We'd sit at the same table but we would have different food. They'd eat one lot of food and Willie and me another. Their porridge was good fine oatmeal, but we had it made of cornmeal that the fowl got. They had tea with milk, as much milk as they wanted. Me and Willie had bread and sour cranberries to take to school for lunch. Were they ever sour! And their boy would have something special, like a jar full of cream.

Clarrie Fensman: My sister used to go and wash outside in the shed, stripped to the waist . . . because there was no place she could be private in the house where she was. The man used to come and peep in at her . . . When I was 14 they had a nephew and he came with his wife on a honeymoon. One day the three of us were to go fishing and the wife cried off. I went and we started to cut branches to make rods. He must have been a wicked man, and him just with a fresh wife. He raped me. I went running back to the house and told them about it and I went and laid upstairs on my bed. No one said anything to me about it, and they stayed on another couple days. All they seemed to worry about was: Was I pregnant?

Lizzie Phealin (maiden name; now of Brantford, Ont., brought up in Victoria County, Cape Breton Island): Sometimes I was wishing I wouldn't live.