The Union Bank of Halifax, 1856–1910

by James D. Frost

There was a time when Halifax rivalled Montreal and Toronto as a centre of finance. By 1867, there were five banks based in the city of 25,000 people, as well as a number of insurance companies. The Maritime region was home to twenty-two banks, some with just one branch, and others with dozens. They were closely linked to the traditional economy of wood, wind and sail, but increasingly supported the burgeoning industries which sprouted from every nook and cranny. While they never rivalled the nation-building exploits of their central Canadian brethren, the Maritime banks represented a spirit of self-reliance and independence. The emerging "national economy" and changing economic circumstances would greatly reduce the number of local banks. Hitherto, every major community could boast of its own bank, from the Pictou Bank to the Exchange Bank of Yarmouth and the Farmer's Bank of Rustico, Prince Edward Island. By 1914, the only regional banks which had survived were the Merchants' Bank of Halifax, which renamed itself the Royal Bank of Canada in 1901 and moved to Montreal in 1906, and the Bank of Nova Scotia, which had moved its General Office to Toronto in 1900. Two other holdouts, the Union Bank of Halifax and the Bank of New Brunswick, were snuffed out in 1910 and 1913, respectively. Contrary to the image portrayed by romantic notions of "wooden ships and iron men," or indeed the region's current fetish with idyllic tourist images of pre-industrial fishing villages, the Maritime region was very innovative when it came to creating new forms of finance, and new kinds of financial institutions. True to their inimitable selves, the Stairs family of Halifax led the way by establishing a bank, a trust company, and perhaps their most enduring legacy, a securities firm. They were also pioneers in developing the new legal framework within which these highly complex deals were structured.

In his otherwise excellent study of the Royal Bank, Duncan McDowell takes a strictly determinist view of the Union Bank, referring to it as "sleepy" and "out of touch." Judged by modern day precepts, this may appear to have been the case, but based on our examination of the Bank's available records, it was a much more dynamic institution than McDowell acknowledges. It had a small number of branches system but it never evolved into a Scottish branch banking system in the mould of the Bank of Nova Scotia or, indeed, the Royal Bank of Canada (Merchants' Bank of Halifax).[1] Rather, it was somewhat of a hybrid, functioning more like a merchant bank, private bank or industrial bank. As Sydney Pollard has illustrated, there were many banking models prevalent in the mid-19th century.[2] Which one would hold sway in Canada was not a foregone conclusion until the first two decades of the 20th century.

The Union Bank of Halifax (UBH) was founded in 1856 by William Stairs, John Gibson, John Duffus, Edward Kenny, Benjamin Wier, James Moren and John W. Ritchie, out of a growing frustration with the existing banking situation in Halifax, which was served by the Halifax Banking Company, founded by the privateer Enos Collins, and the Bank of Nova Scotia. William Stairs relinquished his position at the family firm William Stairs, Son and Morrow (WSS&M) to his son William J. Stairs in 1855, so that he could run the UBH on a full-time basis. C.N.S. Strickland, a prominent Royal Banker, described the founder as follows: "it was largely through his efforts that the bank was organized. He was regarded as one of the most honourable and successful merchants in Halifax, and was possessed of considerable means."[3]

The UBH's charter allowed for it to be capitalized at $250,000, which was divided into 10,000 shares of $25.00 each. It was allowed to commence business after $50,000 had been paid in, and a meeting of the shareholders held. The nature of its business is summarized in Clause 17 of the Act of Incorporation, which was in itself a model of simplicity, virtually free of the legalistic jargon one would expect from the 1850s:

> The corporation may conduct the business of banking in all its branches, and may lend money on cash accounts with personal security only, and may generally deal in bills of exchange, promissory notes, gold or bullion, and in other then (sic) the current monies of this province, or in the sale of goods and stock really and truly pledged for money lent and not redeemed—which goods and stock so pledged shall be sold by the corporation at public sale, at any time not less than thirty days after the period for redemption, and if upon such sale of goods or stock, there shall be a surplus after deducting the money lent and interest, together with the expenses of sale, such surplus shall be paid to the proprietors thereof respectively.[4]

Significantly, the bank's total indebtedness was not to exceed "treble the amount of capital stock actually paid in by the stockholders."[5] The legislation required all notes and bills discounted to be signed by the president and countersigned by the cashier (general manager). At the first general meeting on 5 December 1856, it was resolved to pay 4% on all "special deposits." It was also decided that the directors, who functioned as a management committee, would meet in the bank's chambers at 12:30 every day to consider notes and drafts presented for discount. As C.W. Frazee recollected:

> The Cashier was not present at these deliberations but when the meeting ended was called in and the President solemnly slapped one bundle of paper on the table and announced in a loud voice "Done" and then slapped a second lot along side and in an equally loud tone "Not Done." The Cashier then took them in his two hands, stalked out of the room, approached the Discount Clerk and announced in an equally impressive manner "Done" and "Not Done."[6]

A number of precedents were established in subsequent Board meetings. It was decided that "any directors submitting paper to the Board for discount shall retire during the deliberations." It was later agreed that directors must reside in Halifax or its vicinity, and that in case of bankruptcy or insolvency, that director shall cease to be a member of the Board. They also looked askance at directors who had a partner in business who was a director in another bank. At a subsequent meeting it was decided not to accept any loan "renewals" with more than two months to run.[7]

After his death in 1865, William Stairs was replaced as president by James A. Moren, and his son, William J. Stairs, became a director. Progress had been steady during William's tenure as president. The UBH had grown from total assets of $266,000 in 1856 to $1.1 million in 1865. Deposits grew from $42,000 to almost $500,000, and loans increased from $64,000 to over $770,000. Its "paid up capital" stood at $300,000, and the bank was proud to have a reserve fund of $33,000. It had also declared dividends of 6% throughout most of its first ten years, and these had increased to 7% by the time Stairs died. It was a pure Halifax institution, with its lone office in the bank's own "commodious and convenient structure" on the corner of Prince and Hollis Streets, into which it had moved in 1863.[8]

The Board declined an earlier invitation to open an agency outside Halifax in Yarmouth. In 1866, however, it reconsidered and appointed an agent in Sydney to take advantage of the expanding coal industry. Another agency was opened in Annapolis Royal in 1870, the last new branch the UBH would open for almost twenty years.[9] Evidently, the Union Bank preferred to concentrate its activities on the familiar confines of Halifax, unlike its competitors which were beginning to expand aggressively. Reflecting growing concern about the shipping business, even at this early date, the directors instructed their agent in Annapolis to avoid discounts to two shipbuilders/owners in particular, and to generally look the other way when vessels were presented as security. Nevertheless, by the end of 1875, total loans at the Annapolis branch amounted to $125,000.[10] We know little of the Union Bank's lending activities during this period except for two loans of $15,000 in 1871. One was to John Stairs and the other to William Robertson, a future president of the bank, who was starting his own hardware business.[11]

Under Moren, the UBH stagnated. According to C.N.S. Strickland, Moren was "not a forceful personality." Worse, the bank's cashier, W.S. Stirling, was regarded as a conservative banker, but "lacking in aggressiveness." By Strickland's account, however, he was a character, "always well groomed...he invariably appeared at the office in a silk hat, a morning coat, and a rose in his buttonhole." He was referred to by the junior staff as "Little Rosebud."[12] Under his tutelage, the assets of the UBH grew marginally, from $1.2 million in 1866 to $1.4 million in several years, including 1872, 1875, 1876, and 1878. Deposits peaked at $675,000 in 1876, while loans did so in 1879, at $941,000. The UBH did pay a dividend of 10% in 1875, its highest ever. Reflecting this state of affairs, in March 1878, at the UBH Annual Meeting, the shareholders asked the Board to confer with other local banks regarding the possibility of amalgamation. The object of their affections was the People's Bank of Halifax, which had been established in 1864. The UBH's overtures were unsuccessful and the suitors were spurned.[13]

Following on the heels of Stirling's death, and having strengthened its balance sheet, the UBH tried once again in 1882 to effect an amalgamation with another of the five Halifax banks, this time the upstart (and younger) Merchants'Bank of Halifax, which had been founded in 1864. Within a year the Board once again admitted defeat: "it was the opinion of this Board an amalgamation of this bank with any other is not expedient."[14] The next week W.J. Stairs was elected President of the Union Bank of Halifax, and thereafter set in motion a much more aggressive growth strategy. In 1884, probably reflecting the state of the shipping industry, and Stairs' brother John's health, he instructed the new Cashier, H.Y. Clarke to obtain more security on the loan of John Stairs.[15] In 1885, the UBH suffered a defalcation by its cashier, or general manager, in the amount of at least $1,930, but perhaps as much as $30,000.[16]

It was a far cry from that suffered by the Bank of Nova Scotia fifteen years earlier, when it was discovered that its cashier, James Forman, had embezzled $315,000 during the previous 25 years. Nonetheless, it left the UBH with a black mark and showed a symptom of weakness, and may have explained why neither the People's Bank nor the Merchants' had been interested in the merger overtures. Two stalwarts, E.L. Thorne and C.N.S. Strickland, replaced the disgraced Clarke, as cashier and teller, respectively.

The 1880s were tough times for the Union Bank Halifax, as they were for the other Halifax banks, most notably the Merchants' and BNS. The effects of the downturn in the traditional economy, combined with overcapacity in the new National Policy industries, not to mention the Clarke defalcation, had a deleterious effect upon the bank's balance sheet. Assets in 1884 were $1.4 million, while deposits were a little over $550,000, and loans were $763,000. In 1886 these had been reduced to $1.2 million, $386,000 and $514,000 respectively. E.L Thorne, the new cashier, did not reach the exalted heights of Thomas Fyshe, the brilliant and acerbic wit who ran the BNS,[17] but his instructions to his handful of agents were crystal clear:

1. To write up a cash book every day.
2. To fill in the general ledger the total of cash on hand.
3. To charge up at once all bills overdue the day they become so.
4. To be careful to proceed with great caution in regard to new business.
5. To obtain at an early date a statement of the affairs of the firm.[18]

Even though he was by no means the most important shareholder, with less than 1% of the shares, W.J. Stairs began to exert his influence in many ways. In September 1886 he excused himself from the Board meeting while the other members considered the application by Stairs' Dartmouth Ropework Company, for a line of credit in the amount of $150,000. It was unanimously approved and would have amounted to 25% of the Bank's lending portfolio.[19] Similarly, three years later, John F. Stairs, William J.'s son, the family protégé, and one of the most important business leaders of his generation of Maritimers, approached the UBH with reference to it taking over the account of Nova Scotia Steel and Forge Company (NSSFC) of New Glasgow, of which he was a director. After an inspection of the steel works by two of the Bank's directors, they granted NSSFC a credit allowance of $100,000 in total, providing certain conditions were met, including a promise to place all of the company's business with the UBH.[20] This decision was followed a few months later by the opening of a New Glasgow branch. Still trailing the Merchants' Bank of Halifax and the BNS, between 1889 and 1895 the UBH added six new branches, and assets grew from $1.4 million to $2.5 million.[21] Deposits increased commensurately, from $475,000 to over $1.3 million. Loans grew likewise, from $690,000 to almost $1.9 million.

In 1895, the Union Bank was again approached by the newly amalgamated Nova Scotia Steel Company (NSSC), to increase its credit allowance from what was by then $450,000 to $600,000, or a third of its loan portfolio. The funds were to be used to build a new steel melting furnace and develop its ore property at Wabana, on Bell Island, Newfoundland. As collateral, the Bank received $500,000 of the steel company's 6% mortgage bonds.[22] In late November 1896, it was approached by Geoffrey Morrow, one of the partners in William Stairs, Son and Morrow (WSS&M), on behalf of People's Heat and Light Company, for a loan of $200,000. After much discussion, it was decided to grant the loan providing that "all illuminating gas sold will be sold through the Halifax Gas Light Company."

The next year the Board became embroiled in a dispute over the amalgamation of People's Heat and Light and Halifax Gas, until its loan was paid off.[23] The same year, John F. Stairs and Graham Fraser, a New Glasgow entrepreneur who had established Canada's first steel-making enterprise, requested a further $50,000 for NSSC to cover the cost of purchasing iron ore, with the "express understanding it be only a temporary loan to be repaid when the iron was sold."[24]

William J. Stairs retired from the Union Bank of Halifax Board in 1898, at the age of 78. He left an institution with eleven branches and assets of almost $3 million. It had deposits of $1.6 million, and loans of $2.1 million. It had become an aggressive industrial bank, facilitating the Stairs family ambitions while pursuing some of the biggest opportunities in Nova Scotia, as many of its competitors had begun to cast their gaze westward. As the Minute Book recorded:

> ...For the last fifteen years he has been President and his constant attention, good judgement, excellent business ability, foresight and warm personal interest in all its affairs have been invaluable to the Bank; and its present business and good financial standing due to his management.[25]

To mark the occasion, the staff of the Bank sent Stairs a picture of themselves, "to express their heartfelt wish that you and Mrs. Stairs may be long in health and happiness." Recognizing that much had changed since he had taken the helm, and portending the challenges that lay ahead, Stairs was very prescient in his reply: "there is a larger world outside the Union Bank."[26]

George Mitchell was elected to the Board in Stairs' place, William Robertson became president and William Roche, the largest shareholder, was vice president. Another Stairs was not elected to the Board until 1902, but the family continued to exert its influence. The bank's largest accounts continued to be companies owned or managed by the Stairs, including William Stairs, Son and Morrow, Consumers Cordage and Nova Scotia Steel Company.[27]

Probably the biggest deal in the Union Bank's history, indeed the largest deal ever done by a Maritime bank, occurred between May and July 1900, when William J's son John F. Stairs, who was president of Nova Scotia Steel Company, orchestrated the purchase of the coal deposits and mining properties of the General Mining Association. Stairs required £300,000 or $1.5 million to complete the deal. UBH management immediately agreed to lend the money. While they had increased the bank's authorized capital the year before, the UBH realized the request was beyond its own means and therefore approached the Bank of Toronto for $1 million, who itself had to borrow it in New York.

The final itsterms called for the Bank of Toronto to lend the Union Bank of Halifax $1 million for one year at 6% interest, to be paid quarterly. The UBH initially agreed to provide Nova Scotia Steel Co. with $1.5 million at 6% with a commission of 1%, "upon the security of all the property of the [steel company] real and personal."[28] It was finally "resolved to accept in lieu thereof a Bond of the Company not to pledge or hypothecate the personal property of the Nova Scotia Steel Company, or of the mine without the consent in writing of the Union Bank of Halifax."[29]

The UBH's aggressiveness caught the attention of other banks. The Bank of Nova Scotia, which had by this time moved its General Office to Toronto, was briefly interested in lending the $1 million that the Bank of Toronto provided. Shortly after the loan was authorized, the Union Bank was approached by the Toronto-based Bank of Commerce to discuss the possibility of amalgamation. In September, the Bank of Toronto broached the same subject:

> As we have had intimate relations with your bank for a number of years past and have been drawn more closely together recently by reason of some large transactions in which we have assisted you, it has occurred to us that it might be desirable to bring the Banks more closely together, and I therefore write to your Directors whether they would be prepared to consider the question of entering upon a discussion of the terms upon which your bank might amalgamate with ours if a basis satisfactory to both parties could be found.[30]

The president and general manager were authorized to meet and discuss the issue. An arrangement was worked out whereby the Bank of Toronto would purchase the assets of the Union Bank for $175 for each $100 of stock and give the shareholders of the UBH the option of accepting in lieu of the cash, the stock of the Bank of Toronto on the basis of $250 per share. Almost a year after the initial overture was made, the Torontonians modified their offer, reducing the value of their own shares to $240. Flush with the success of the steel company loan, the Union Bank agreed, providing its shares were valued at $185. The Bank of Toronto had second thoughts, "stating that they were not disposed to entertain the proposal."[31]

At March 1901 the bank's balance sheet showed assets of $6,513,395, compared with $4,220,515 the previous year, and loans of $3,141,106 compared with $2,401,210. The authorized capital was increased to $1,000,000 in 1899, but capital paid up was only $800,000. Virtually all of the increase in loans can be attributed to the steel company, as most of the bank's other loans were minuscule. In February 1901, George Stairs, who had just been made a director of Consumers Cordage, which included the Dartmouth Ropeworks, approached the Union Bank with a proposal to bring all of its Halifax business back to the bank, after a period of splitting it with the Bank of Commerce. It had agreed to do so, on the condition that Consumers Cordage make a deposit of $125,000.[32] Throughout the first half of 1901, the bank's most active accounts were those of the Stairs, including an agreement to lend an unspecified amount of money to W.J. Stairs at the unheard of rate of 4.66%, when most other loans were made at 6% or 7%, and occasionally 5%. Most of these loans were probably related to Caribbean utility promotions and Nova Scotia Steel investments.[33]

The steel company was reorganized in June 1901, and became the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company Ltd. Its total capital was to be $5 million. John F. Stairs and Graham Fraser, the company's vice president, met with the UBH Board to ask them to underwrite a significant portion of its 6% 30 year bonds at $90 for every $100 bond. It was subsequently agreed that the Union Bank's loan to the steel company would be paid back out of the first $1.5 million of bonds sold. The UBH originally agreed to underwrite $300,000, which was later increased to $500,000. It then paid off its Bank of Toronto loan. It later took $300,000 in 'Scotia' bonds as an investment.[34]

The next year was pivotal. John F. Stairs and Halifax lawyer Robert E. Harris,[35] one of the pioneers in Canadian corporate law, cobbled together a deal which resulted in the Union Bank taking over the Commercial Bank of Windsor (CBW), with Stairs' new recruit, Max Aitken (later Lord Beaverbrook) acting as the point man.[36] Aitken's exact role is unclear, as the UBH *Minute Books* make absolutely no mention of any of them being involved, nor of a $10,000 payment to Aitken. Aitken's diary alludes to negotiations taking place in Windsor, with C.H. Dimock and Walter Lawson, two of the CBW's directors, but the merger was actually finalized by William Robertson, the Union Bank's General Manager.[37] Robertson became involved as of July 1902. The Union Bank allotted 4,118 shares at the par value of $50, or $205,900 for the smaller institution. To pay for the transaction, it was resolved to increase the Union Bank's capital stock from $1,500,000 to $1,705,900.[38] Most importantly, the merger added seven branches to the Union's roster of twenty-two, and added additional sources of deposits.

While the Commercial Bank of Windsor merger was being finalised, John F. Stairs wrote William Robertson to enquire as to whether the Union Bank would entertain the notion of amalgamation with the Halifax Banking Company, and possibly the Bank of New Brunswick, the Commercial Bank of Windsor and the Bank of Yarmouth. Mindful of the westward expansion of both the Bank of Nova Scotia and Merchants' (by now the Royal Bank of Canada), and the difficulties in obtaining financing for large local enterprises such as Nova Scotia Steel and Coal, Stairs stated his fear that:

> ... the acquisition by the larger banks of the Upper Provinces of our smaller local banks must prove disastrous to the interests of our Provincial manufacturing, industrial and trading concerns, and prejudicial to the general commercial interests of these Maritime Provinces, inasmuch as the control of the amalgamated bank must necessarily in such case be in

> Montreal or Toronto, and the natural result will be to withdraw the bank deposits and capital from these Maritime Provinces to be used in Quebec and Ontario, to the neglect and injury of the business men of these provinces, who should have the use of the capital owned here.[39]

There is no record of Robertson's response, nor does Stairs' letter appear to have been discussed by the Board. For whatever reason, the Union Bank was unmoved, and despite the Stairs' overwhelming influence and importance to the institution, John F. Stairs appears to have been stymied. To correct this situation, perhaps, sometime in 1902 the Stairs family began buying up the shares of the Union Bank. For William J. Stairs' whole tenure as president, he had never owned more than 180 shares of its stock, or 1.8%, and had never been close to being the largest shareholder. At the end of 1902, he owned $74,350 worth of shares, or 8.26%, and unquestionably held the largest portion of the bank's stock.[40] The Stairs and their projects continued to generate much of the bank's lending activity. Among the more interesting loans was one of $10,000 to John F. Stairs, B.F. Pearson and Harry Crowe, relating to a steel shipbuilding project they proposed for Halifax harbour.[41] Nova Scotia Steel borrowed another $200,000, and Pickford and Black, a Halifax shipping agency, took out another $50,000. A related enterprise, the Nova Scotia Shipping Co. Ltd., borrowed $200,000 in October.[42] Not coincidentally, perhaps, George Stairs, John F.'s younger brother, became a director at the end of the year.

It was business as usual, with one notable exception, for most of 1903. In March the capital stock was increased to $3,000,000 by the issue of 25,882 shares at $50. In a deal brokered by John F. Stairs and Max Aitken, the Union Bank agreed to underwrite the reorganization of Alexander Gibson and Co., the giant cotton mill and lumber business in Marysville, New Brunswick. The deal was one of the first instances of the Union Bank pursuing business outside Nova Scotia, but illustrative of its aggressiveness in pouncing on the best prospects in the Maritimes. The UBH agreed to underwrite $300,000 of $1,875,000 of new stock, on the condition that Gibson give UBH his account. Other new loans included a major new advance to Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company, which increased its total indebtedness from $350,000 to $650,000.[43] At the urging of Stairs, Harris, Aitken and B.F. Pearson, the Union Bank opened a branch in Port of Spain, Trinidad, to facilitate their promotion of the Trinidad Electric Railway. In this respect, they were very much following the trail blazed by the Merchants Bank of Halifax in Cuba, and the Bank of Nova Scotia in Jamaica, although somewhat belatedly.[44] The Stairs continued to increase their Union Bank holdings, with 1,674 shares, or almost 7%, worth $83,700.

Following on the heels of the Bank of Commerce purchasing the Halifax Banking Company, and the Bank of Montreal buying up the Exchange Bank of Yarmouth, it must have felt like open season on the Halifax banks. Perhaps sensing that despite the family's influence, and that even their domination of the Union Bank was not going to sway the board, John F. Stairs and Robert E. Harris began to acquire shares in the People's Bank of Halifax, accumulating 8,932 shares, out of 50,000, during 1903–04. In 1903, John F. Stairs tried to pull off a large scale merger involving the Bank of New Brunswick, the People's Bank of Halifax, the People's Bank of New Brunswick, the Merchants Bank of Prince Edward Island and possibly the Metropolitan Bank of Toronto, but seeming to leave out the Union Bank, although this is unlikely. The Alliance Bank of Canada was to be capitalized at $5,000,000, and its directors were to include Stairs, Harvey Graham, who was connected to Nova Scotia Steel and Coal (Scotia) in New Glasgow, Robert E. Harris, Geoffrey Morrow of WSS&M, and George Boak of Halifax. Stairs was hardly out of touch, as Duncan McDowell has suggested.[45] He had decided against moving to Montreal, Canada's financial nexus, in 1897, preferring to focus his talents at home. He knew exactly whatof he spoke:

> I am very strongly in favour of maintaining our own banking institutions instead of allowing them to get into the hands of Western corporations. I would like to see our banks continue the policy which has prevailed here for 40 or 50 years, that of being controlled by local interests. Having them absorbed by Western institutions (i.e. Central Canadians) creates a likelihood of our interests being sacrificed for those of the West.[46]

In 1904, the Union's main preoccupation was Nova Scotia Steel and Coal, and the various promotions initiated by Stairs and Aitken through their Royal Securities Company In July, the General Manager reported that "Scotia" was contemplating the issue of $1.5 million of second mortgage bonds, with which it proposed to pay its loan to the Union Bank. Royal Securities, Stairs' brokerage house, proposed to take the bonds at $85, for which they would require $300,000 from the bank. Subsequently, they agreed to loan "Scotia" principals John F. Stairs, Robert E. Harris, Harvey Graham, Thomas Cantley and C.H. Cahan $117,100 so they could purchase the company's bonds. To assist the company's efforts to promote the bond issue, the Union Bank later agreed to underwrite $100,000 worth.[47] John F. Stairs successfully arranged for the "Scotia" underwriting, but died before he could complete his Alliance Bank scheme. His death was not even noted by the Union Bank's board, which is very surprising given the amount of business he had sent its way. It continued its relationship with "Scotia" through Harris, Aitken and George Stairs.

In early 1905 the Bank of Yarmouth proposed a merger or purchase by the Union Bank. Evidently, the Bank of Yarmouth was hanging on by a thread, and had suspended payment by the time negotiations were concluded, and failed later that year, with a loss to its shareholders of more than $500,000.[48] After some questionable business practices, the People's Bank of Halifax was sold to the Bank of Montreal. It later transpired that the main shareholders, who included cousins of John F. Stairs, had perpetrated a major fraud on Stairs and Harris when they had purchased almost 20% of the People's Bank shares in 1903. Stairs' shares were purchased from his estate in 1905 by Max Aitken, Harris, the Stairs' holding company, Dartmouth Manufacturing Company, and Royal Securities.[49]

According to Aitken, both the President of the People's Bank, J.J. Stewart, and the General Manager, D.R. Clarke, confessed to him that the sale had been negotiated with them having knowledge of loans being made to G.J. Troop and Harry Troop against fictitious vessels. Stairs and Harris "have pulled them out of the hole, and it was hoped in any event that things would improve rather than go back."[50] Especially irksome was the news that Stewart and Clarke told Edward Clouston of the Bank of Montreal before informing Stairs and Harris. As Stairs and Harris had paid a 40% premium for their shares, when news of the fraud leaked out, it had the effect of depressing their value, and the amount eventually paid for the bank's assets by the Bank of Montreal. George Stairs initially balked at the offer of 115%, and very much wished to sue the Troops.[51] Each of those who had bought John F. Stairs' shares stood to lose $11,000, but Aitken and Harris eventually persuaded George Stairs to accept a compromise whereby they would be able to exchange People's Bank stock for Bank of Montreal stock at a rate slightly more advantageous than that offered to other shareholders.[52]

Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company continued to be the Union Bank's main customer, although the board began to tire of its relentless requests for funds. A request for $900,000 was turned down in April 1905, the first time that this had ever occurred, since the Union Bank had become Scotia's banker in the 1880s. A month later it reconsidered, after meeting with "Scotia's" new president, Robert E. Harris. Harris this time requested that the steel company be given a $650,000 overdraft allowance, which was expected to be reduced to $100,000 by the end of the year. In addition, the new loan stipulated that the "Scotia" was not allowed to pay any dividends, nor pledge any collateral security without the Bank's consent. By the end of the year, "Scotia" owed $425,854.[53]

Most of the other business written by the bank involved Stairs-related enterprises. Royal Securities borrowed $50,000 to finance more Latin American investments, and Eastern Trust borrowed $80,000 at 5%, on the security of Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Co. bonds. William Stairs, Son and Morrow consolidated several loans into one note of $85,000 for three months at 5%, secured by a selection of "Scotia" securities. Amazingly, George Stairs registered the lone dissenting vote![54] Four new branches were added in 1905, bringing the total to thirty-five. Assets amounted to $11.3 million, with total deposits of $5.5 million, and total loans of $7.8 million. On 5 February 1906, $50,000 was added to the Reserve Fund, bringing it over $1 million, to $1,020,000. William J. Stairs continued to be the Union Bank's largest shareholder, controlling 1,373 shares. The family's holdings amounted to a further 445 shares, for a total of 1,818, or 6.8%.

In 1906, the Board was saddened by the death of W.J. Stairs, which was acknowledged at the annual meeting in March. To fuel "Scotia's" insatiable appetite for capital, new branches were added in Amherst, Bridgewater, Stellarton, Charlottetown and Lunenburg. These decisions were probably a little wrong-headed as most towns in the Maritimes had long since been blanketed by the Bank of Nova Scotia and the Royal Bank, not to mention the suddenly acquisitive central Canadian banks. The Union Bank would have found more fertile ground for deposits outside the region, as had the BNS and Royal Bank. A branch was opened in Botwood, Newfoundland in connection with a new pulp and paper company being established by John F. Stairs' former colleague in the Swan Hunter shipyard project, Harry J. Crowe.[55] True to form, however, Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Co. came back to have its overdraft allowance raised to $800,000, which was granted with little hesitation.

Another bold move involved the decision to open a branch in San Juan, Puerto Rico. It was related to John F. Stairs' previous Latin American and Caribbean forays, and propelled by the ongoing promotions of Royal Securities Company, whose president was George Stairs, but which was in effect being run by Max Aitken. Shortly after the decision to open in San Juan was taken, Royal Securities asked the Union Bank for a loan of $450,000 for its proposed purchase of both the San Juan Tramway and Electric Light companies. Stairs proposed a *quid pro quo* whereby Royal Securities would be loaned $100,000, in exchange for the Puerto Rico Railways Company transferring its account to the Union Bank.[56] Royal Securities brought it several other deals as well, including a $100,000 loan to C.H. Cahan, $50,000 to R.E. Harris, $29,000 for its promotion of Mexican Heat and Light Company, and $25,000 related to Demerara Electric Company.[57]

In May, the Union Bank called in the loan of D.W. Robb, of Robb Engineering in Amherst, a Royal Securities client. Aitken asked Stairs to "use his considerable influence" to have the bank renew the loan.[58] Royal Securities, itself, maintained a line of credit, for its own purposes, of $100,000.[59] Late the same year, Stairs wrote Aitken on Consumers Cordage letterhead, "I note that you [Royal Securities] have deposited $20,000 with the Union Bank of Halifax. The Union has in the past done fairly well by the Royal Securities, and if we can help them in any way I consider it good policy."[60]

The year 1908 brought the end of the Stairs' direct involvement in the Union Bank of Halifax. In February, "Scotia," through Robert E. Harris, its president, asked for the company's overdraft allowance to be increased from $800,000 to $1 million. When later in the year, Harris asked for another increase to $1,230,000, he was turned down, and told to reduce the company's overdraft to $800,000. Harris persisted, the bank relented, and in an apparent contradiction stated in the Minutes, "but this in no way to be understood as any change in the usual limit of $800,000 formerly fixed."[61] George Stairs died on 1 April 1908, while tending to Royal Securities matters. The Board expressed much regret at his death: "… the Board deeply regret that they will not now have available his sound judgement and good advice in matters pertaining to the interest of the institution."[62] Stairs left an institution with 41 branches, $12.7 million in assets, $6.7 million in deposits and $8.8 million in loans, and profits of $181,400. Through Dartmouth Manufacturing Ltd., the Stairs family was still the dominant shareholder, holding between 2,191 and 2,437 shares, or 7–8%.[63]

Still very confident of its future prospects, a month after Stairs' death, the Union Bank of Halifax opened a commodious new extension to its Halifax premises, and another branch in the city on Gottingen Street. The *Daily Ech*o was positively glowing in its admiration of the new head office:

> The building of the Union Bank was regarded as one of the prettiest in Halifax…The banking room is tiled in a pretty design and the counters which run from the Local Manager's office…are of solid mahogany, with bevelled plate glass and silvered grills. The walls are done in lincrusta walton embossed paper finished in bronze with a lacquered effect. The ceiling is panelled in plaster ground with relief plastic mouldings relieved in tints, and wood trusses stained in a mahogany dull finish. [64]

The paper was particularly impressed with a new innovation, a "ladies banking room":

> The ladies reception area is to the rear of the banking room, quite close to the desk of the teller of the ladies savings bank department. This reception room is finished in a two-third effect. the ceiling and upper portion of the wall being in a rich yellow silk effect with handsome embossed crown top paper divided with a plate rail. The woodwork and floor are in golden oak. This room is being furnished in quartered oak and writing desks will be provided and equipped with stationery for use of ladies desiring it. Adjoining the ladies reception room is the ladies toilet room, which is wainscoted in enamelled tile with the walls above stippled a light tint. Of the four tellers one will give all his attention to the ladies banking department, which is situated as to be entirely separate from other banking business.[65]

Union Bank of Halifax Building, at the corner of Prince and Hollis Streets

Early in 1909 Robert E. Harris came back for another increase in "Scotia's" overdraft allowance, this time to $1,500,000, which would have amounted to 17% of the Bank's lending portfolio. Harris informed the bank's Board that the company had penetrated the submarine ore areas at Wabana, Newfoundland, and found the seam to be nine feet thick. The additional money required would "not be more than a temporary advance as the company was going to make arrangements to pay off the total amount due to the Bank."[66] According to Harris, the funds were not intended as an expenditure on the company's capital account, as the relative margin of security between the amount due the Bank and its liquid assets would be maintained. The new overdraft allowance was authorized after Scotia's board pledged the Union Bank security under Section 88 of the Bank Act, something which had not been done before.[67] In May, Harris returned from the U.K., having made arrangements to refinance Nova Scotia Steel and Coal.

The gist of the deal involved the issue of £1,200,000 5% 50 year 1st mortgage bonds. Along with $1,000,000 of debenture stock, this would net the company $6,206,000, of which it would pay the Union Bank $1 million, redeem $3.5 million in bonds at $110, and retain the balance of $1.3 million in cash. Harris offered, and the Bank accepted, to underwrite $250,000 of the $1 million debenture stock, which was to be offered to existing bondholders. The rest of the £1.2 million was considered a *bona fide* "sale,"which presumably meant that it would be offered on the market.[68] Evidently, the share offering was greeted with some enthusiasm by the market, as E.L. Thorne reported at the next meeting that the Bank of Toronto was going to take $1,000,000 of Scotia's 5% mortgage bonds, and suggested the Union Bank do the same. The Board demurred at the suggestion, but in the end agreed to take $500,000, on condition that the Bank of Toronto take a similar amount, or more.[69]

The deal bogged down, and the Bank of Toronto backed out, leaving the Union Bank to underwrite $1 million of the $3 million which was now going to be offered to the Canadian market. Harris then went to Boston to place the other $3 million. The Union Bank's underwriting agreement allowed for this provision as long as the Bostonians did not offer the same shares in Canada at a price below par for one year.[70] Harris and "Scotia" appeared to renege on their agreement, and only offered the Union Bank $280,000, and had also sold the Bank of Nova Scotia $500,000 worth of bonds at $93, below par value. Harris explained that he had been of the opinion that "Scotia" was allowed to sell additional securities through Halifax stockbroker J.C. Mackintosh, and that the Bank of Nova Scotia had purchased its shares through him. The issue was doubly complicated by the fact that Harris' firm was still the bank's lawyers. It was eventually resolved to their mutual satisfaction, and "it was unanimously voted the Bank carry out their undertaking agreement and the General Manager pay over to the Eastern Trust Company the $780,000 allotted to them under the agreement."[71]

Other accounts included two loans of $190,000 and $300,000 to unidentified clients, and a $45,000 overdraft allowance to Brown Machine Works in New Glasgow, owned by James A. Stairs, John F.'s son. In October 1909, the Union Bank finally decided to open a branch in Montreal, where the Royal Bank had been since 1887, and the Bank of Nova Scotia had been ensconced since 1888. The Union Bank remained focused on the Maritimes, though, and opened two more branches in St. Leonard and Peticodiac, New Brunswick, as well as Meteghan, on the Acadian Shore of Nova Scotia. The branches in Puerto Rico proved to be fertile ground for cultivating new business, and were helped considerably by the activities of Aitken and Royal Securities. A $50,000 loan was made to the Puerto Rico Sugar Company in February 1910, and the Government of Puerto Rico offered the Union Bank the whole amount of a $425,000 bond intended to extend and repair roads on the island. The Bank's manager agreed on the condition that the Government deposit the same amount with the bank on current account. The UBH ended up taking $200,000 of the bond issue.[72]

After no prior discussion, the Board met in July 1910 to consider an offer made by the Royal Bank to take the Union Bank over. For all of its $15.1 million in assets, $10.8 million in deposits, at least $8.7 million in loans as well as 45 branches, the

Royal Bank offered 12,000 fully paid up shares, valued at $100 each, a transaction worth $1,200,000.[73] As William Robertson wrote the Union Bank's shareholders:

> For some time past our directors have been convinced of the absolute necessity of largely increasing the capital of the Bank if it was to continue to do business in competition with the larger banks in Canada.
> The efforts made in the past did not seem to warrant the belief that the necessary capital would be forthcoming. Under the circumstances your Directors, having been approached by the Royal Bank of Canada with a proposition for amalgamation...reached the conclusion that the interests of the shareholders of this bank will be best conserved by amalgamation with the Royal Bank of Canada...[74]

The par value of Union Bank shares was then $50.00, and that of the Royal Bank $100.00. Under the proposed agreement, each five shares in the Union Bank would receive two shares of Royal Bank stock, and cash for every fraction of a share thereafter. The Royal Bank also undertook to increase its dividend from 11% to 12%. Somewhat naively, perhaps, or as a way to placate the Bank's (mostly) Maritime shareholders, Robertson suggested:

> The Royal Bank of Canada, formerly the Merchants Bank of Halifax is now the third largest bank in Canada. It may be still regarded as a Nova Scotia institution, inasmuch as the majority of its stock is still held in Nova Scotia...[75]

The institution which the Stairs family helped establish in 1856 thus disappeared after 54 years. Significantly, the family, which was still the Union Bank's largest shareholder, was not represented at the special meeting when the amalgamation was approved. It had gradually reduced its shareholding after George Stairs died. When the amalgamation was concluded, they owned 1,131 shares, or 3.8% of the Bank's stock, 90% of which was through Dartmouth Manufacturing Co. Ltd. The latter company continued to be a Royal Bank shareholder for many years, and the Royal Bank remained William Stairs, Son and Morrow's banker. The Union Bank's legacy was the people inherited by the Royal, most notably William Robertson, who joined the Royal Bank Board, E.L. Thorne who became Supervisor of Branches in the Maritime provinces, C.N.S. Strickland, who retired at the end of the year, C.W. Frazee, who remained manager of the Halifax branch until 1917, when he became Supervisor of Branches in Vancouver, and C.C. Pineo, who was the UBH's man in Puerto Rico, and its most seasoned international banker when he joined the Royal.

Union Bank of Halifax bankers became legendary in the Royal for their Maritime resourcefulness and stamina,[76] thus continuing a lamentable tradition of Maritimers "going down the road." More importantly, from the Royal Bank's point of view, its "connection in the Maritime provinces and West Indies has been materially strengthened."[77] Of the twenty-two banks that had at one time called the Maritimes home, there was one survivor left in 1910, the Bank of New Brunswick. It too, would succumb to the embraces of the Bank of Nova Scotia in 1913, which had long since left for Toronto.

The Union Bank of Halifax had played a significant role in the industrialization of the Maritimes, mainly in support of the Stairs' aspirations. It was one of the most aggressive, if not the most aggressive, bank in the region, in terms of supporting local industry, but it became somewhat overwhelmed by the insatiable needs of Nova Scotia Steel and Coal. It was slow to change from what was, essentially, a merchant bank or industrial bank, to what had become the prototype for success in Canada, a branch bank. It simply did not have the deposit base to support its need for additional capital. The best sites for branches had already been taken. It also failed to seize the enormous opportunities which both the Bank of Nova Scotia and the Merchants' Bank of Halifax recognized in both the Western Canadian and U.S. mid-West. If it had not tried to drive such a hard bargain with the Bank of Toronto, or if it had supported John F. Stairs' vision of the Alliance Bank of Canada, perhaps the story would have been different.

Endnotes

1. Duncan McDowell, *Quick to the Frontier: Canada's Royal Bank* (Toronto: McCelland and Stewart, 1993).
2. Rondo Cameron et al., *Banking in the Early Stages of Industrialization: A Study in Comparative Economic History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).
3. "Reminiscences of C.N.S. Strickland," UBH Notes, Royal Banks of Canada Archives (RBC).
4. *Statutes of Nova Scotia*, Chapter 74, 1856, "An Act to Incorporate the Union Bank of Halifax."
5. *Ibid*.
6. "Recollections of a Staff Member of the Union Bank of Halifax," by C.W. Frazee, RBC Archives. Frazee was the father of Rowland Frazee, the Royal Bank's Chairman, 1980–86. See Duncan McDowell, *op.cit*.
7. UBH *Minute Books*, RBC Archives, Montreal, 10 March 1857; 3 March 1872; 9 February 1876.
8. UBH *Minute Books*, 13 March 1861.
9. UBH *Minute Books*, 3 November 1856, 12 May 1866. The agency in Sydney was short-lived, closing due to insufficient business in 1872, *Minute Books*, 21 August 1872.
10. UBH *Minute Books*, 28 December 1875.
11. UBH "Notes;" UBH *Minute Books*, 1 February 1871, RBC Archives.
12. C.N.S. Strickland, *op.cit*.
13. UBH, Annual Meeting, 8 March 1878; *Minute Books*, 2 January 1879; 14 February 1879.

14. UBH, *Minute Books*, 12 March 1883.

15. UBH, *Minute Books*, 29 September 1884.

16. UBH *Minute Books*, 5 October 1885.The *Minute Books* mention a figure of $1,930, but RBC Archives "Notes" mention "substantial defalcations." In Strickland's reminiscences it is suggested that the amount may have been as great as $30,000, a serious matter as the reserves of the bank at that time were only $40,000. Clarke's pilfering ways were attributed to his "expensive habits." His father assumed responsibility for the loss. Strickland, *op.cit*.

17. James D. Frost, "Fyshe, Thomas," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. XIV (Toronto, 1998). Fyshe's description of the business cycle was beautifully simple: "Good Times, Bad Times, Bully Times, Bust." He also had a blunt pen when communicating with his agents. One can only surmise what the reaction was when one of his agents received the following telegram: "Business quiet, money abundant, your dog is dead—poisoned."

18. UBH *Minute Books*, 22 March 1886. In 1886 Thomas Fyshe attempted to systematize the BNS' lending practices in a Circular entitled "Special Instructions to Agents in Lending the Bank's Money and Getting it Back Again." BNS Archives. See James Frost, "The 'Nationalization' of the Bank of Nova Scotia, 1880–1910," *Acadiensis*, XII (1982); reprinted in Tom Traves, ed. *Essays in Canadian Business History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984); and *Industrialization and Underdevelopment in the Maritimes, 1880–1930* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1985. The Union Bank of Halifax did not systematize its "Rules and Regulations" until sometime after 1900. RBC Archives, "Rules and Regulations of the Union Bank of Halifax," n.d. This document refers to the "General Manager," a title which was not used until 1900.

19. UBH *Minute Books*, 6 September 1886.

20. UBH *Minute Books*, 28 February 1889.

21. C.N.S. Strickland attributed this decision to William J. Stairs, who wanted to emulate the BNS. Strickland, *op.cit*.

22. UBH *Minute Books* (exact citation no longer available).

23. UBH *Minute Books*, 6 November 1896; 25 March 1897.

24. .UBH *Minute Books*, 4 June 1897.

25. UBH, *Minute Books*, 12 March 1898

26. E.L. Thorne to W.J. Stairs, 16 May 1898; W.J. Stairs to E.L. Thorne, 17 May 1898, MG1, vol. 3277, NSA.

27. In 1898, George Stairs, who was managing Consumer's Cordage in Dartmouth, negotiated an advance of $36,000. The next year he asked the UBH to help pay part of the fixed costs, such as salaries, legal expenses and travel costs, which it agreed to reluctantly. In 1899, Nova Scotia Steel Co. obtained an additional loan of $120,000, on a note signed by Graham Fraser, John F. Stairs, George Stairs, James McGregor, Walter Allison and H.S. Poole. UBH *Minute Books*, 23 March 1898, 12 April 1898, 5 June 1899, 8 June 1899, 19 June 1899, 2 April 1900.There was also some discussion about the interest rate William Stairs, Son &Morrow would be charged, 12 April 1900, 18 April 1900.

28. UBH *Minute Books*, 22 May 1900.

29. *Ibid*., Letter from Thomas Cantley, General Manager, Nova Scotia Steel Company to UBH Board, 22 May 1900.

30. UBH *Minute Books*, 11 September 1900.

31. UBH *Minute Books*, 26 July 1901, 14 August 1901.

32. UBH *Minute Books*, 14 February 1901.

33. UBH *Minute Books*, 9 April 1901, 22 April 1901, 23 April 1901, 24 June 1901; see H.V. Nelles and Christopher Armstrong, *Southern Exposure, Canadian Promoters in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1896–1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988); Gregory P. Marchildon, *Profits and Politics: Beaverbrook and the Gilded Age of Canadian Finance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

34. UBH *Minute Books*, 26 June 1901, 4 July 1901, 30 July 1901, 9 October 1901.

35. See Gregory P. Marchildon and Barry J. Cahill, "Corporate Entrepreneurship in Atlantic Canada: The Stewart Law Firm, 1915–1955" in Carol Wilton, *Inside the Law: Canadian Law in Historical Perspective* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and The Osgoode Society, 1996); Barry J. Cahill, *The Thousandth Man: A Biography of James McGregor Stewart* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and The Osgoode Society, 2000).

36. See Gregory P. Marchildon, *Profits and Politics: Beaverbrook and the Gilded Age of Canadian Finance*; Anne Chisholm and Michael Davie, *Beaverbrook: A Life* (London: Pimlico Publishing, 1992); James D. Frost, "Max Aitken and Maritime Finance," *Acadiensis*, XXX (2001), pp. 131–140.

37. In his memoirs " Early Life," *Atlantic Advocate* (February 1964), Aitken takes credit for the deal. This version of events appears to have been accepted by Anne Chisholm and Michael Davie, *Beaverbrook, A Life*; and Gregory P. Marchildon, *op.cit*. Aitken Diaries, 1902, House of Lords Record Office. See also, R.V. Creighton, "Commercial Bank of Windsor," *Royal Bank Magazine* (October–November 1937), which alludes to a role played by two "lawyers" from Halifax, Max Aitken and Robert E. Harris, p. 7. Aitken studied law, but was not a lawyer. The author may have been referring to H.B. Stairs, a junior who worked for Harris.

38. UBH *Minute Books*, 17 July 1902, 21 July 1902, 5 September 1902, 9 September 1902, 3 November 1902.

39. RBC Archives, John F. Stairs to William Robertson, 14 July 1902.

40. House of Commons, Sessional Papers, 1901; Stairs owned his shares in four blocks: W.J. Stairs, 212, W.J. Stairs trustee, 385, W.J. Stairs in trust 772, William Stairs Son & Morrow, 10.

41. See James D. Frost, "The Aborted British Invasion: The Case of Swan Hunter Shipbuilders, 1899–1914," *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society, 2* (1999), pp. 40–51.

42. UBH *Minute Books*, 3 March 1902, 11 March 1902, 4 April 1902, 15 April 1902, 23 June 1902, 14 August 1902, 10 October 1902. A Special Account was established for John F. Stairs, on the security of 300 shares of NSSC common stock, and 175 common and 675 preferred shares in Acadia Sugar Refining Company.

43. UBH *Minute Books*, 6 March 1903, 6 April 1903, 9 April 1903, 15 April 1903, 4 May 1903, 22 May 1903, 29 July 1903, 22 October 1903.

44. UBH *Minute Books*, 18 February 1903, 28 July 1903. See Nelles and Armstrong, *op.cit*., McDowell, *op.cit*., Joseph Schull and J. Douglas Gibson, *The Scotiabank Story: A History of the Bank of Nova Scotia, 1832–1982* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1982); James Frost, "Principles of Interest: The Bank of Nova Scotia and the Industrialization of the Maritimes, 1880–1910" (MA thesis, Queen's University, 1978).

45. See Duncan McDowell, *op.cit*., pp.133–135.

46. *Monetary Times*, 30 June 1903; See analysis of the "Flow of Funds" through the Bank of Nova Scotia branch system, in "Principles of Interest," *op.cit*.

47. UBH *Minute Books*, 12 July 1904, 15 July 1904, 18 August 1904.

48. UBH *Minute Books*, 10 March 1905; Bank of Nova Scotia Archives, "Canadian Bank Failures."

49. House of Commons, *Sessional Papers*, 1905, lists the following shareholders: Aitken, 1,185, Dartmouth Manufacturing Co., 2,143, Harris, 2,143, RSC, 1,586 shares.

50. Aitken to W.D. Ross, 14 March 1905, Beaverbrook Papers G/1/1, House of Lords Record Office.

51. According to Aitken, George refused to see his cousin Harry Troop, but the family holding company, Dartmouth Manufacturing "will support old Mrs. Troop for the rest of her life." Aitken to Ross, *ibid*.

52. Gregory P. Marchildon, Profits and Politics, *op.cit*. pp. 43–44. See also, W.D. March, Stewart, J.J., *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. XIV, for a different interpretation.

53. UBH *Minute Books*, 10 April 1905, 1 May 1905, 2 May 1905, 29 May 1905, 5 June 1905, 11 December 1905.

54. UBH *Minute Books*, 30 March 1905, 6 April 1905, 8 June 1905, 12 June 1905, 15 June 1905, 28 August 1905, 30 October 1905, 11 January 1906.

55. UBH *Minute Books*, 12 February 1906, 12 March 1906, 14 March 1906, 5 April 1906, 9 April 1906, 19 April 1906. Crowe borrowed $28,000 for his venture.

56. George Stairs to Aitken, 15 January 1907. He wrote a follow up note on 15 March 1907, asking why the account had not yet been moved. It appears Stairs was quite "hands on." George Stairs to Aitken, 15 March 1907, NSA.

57. For a more detailed description of these activities see Nelles and Armstrong, *op.cit*., and Marchildon, *op.cit*. UBH *Minute Books*, 30 April 1906, 31 May 1906, 4 July 1906, 27 July 1906, 15 August 1906, 21 September 1906.

58. Beaverbrook Papers, B.G. Burrill to Aitken, 7 May 1907, NSA.

59. Beaverbrook Papers, Aitken to George Stairs, 15 March 1907, NSA.

60. Beaverbrook Papers, George Stairs to Aitken, 8 November 1907, NSA.

61. UBH *Minute Books*, 13 February 1908, 3 July 1908, 7 July 1908.

62. UBH *Minute Books*, 2 April 1908.

63 UBH Annual Reports; House of Commons, Sessional Papers, 1907–08; Calculations by the author, RBC Archives.

64. *Daily Echo* (Halifax), 30 April 1908; the building was located at the corner of Prince and Hollis, where the present day Bank of Nova Scotia head office is today.

65. *Ibid*.

66. UBH *Minute Books*, 4 January 1909.

67. *Ibid*.

68. UBH *Minute Books*, 17 May 1909.

69. UBH *Minute Books*, 28 May 1909.

70. UBH *Minute Books*, 7 June 1909.

71. UBH *Minute Books*, 19 July 1909, 9 August 1909.

72. UBH *Minute Books*, 26 August 1909, 21 October 1909, 26 October 1909, 23 November 1909, 16 December 1909, 17 February 1910, 4 April 1910, 14 April 1910, 28 April 1910.

73. UBH *Minute Books*, 16 July 1910.

74. UBH *Minute Books*, William Robertson to UBH Shareholders, 26 July 1910.

75. *Ibid*.

76 . Duncan McDowell, *op.cit*. p.158.

77. Note from RBC Minutes: "Amalgamations, Union Bank of Halifax," RBC Archives.

Contributors

Robert Summerby-Murray is a member of the Department of History, the Programme in Canadian Studies and Dean of Arts and Social Sciences at Dalhousie University. His research focuses on environmental histories of coastal marshlands, industrial heritage, historical geographical information systems (H-GIS), and the use of archives as narrative.

Corey Slumkoski is an Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Mount Saint Vincent University. He is the author of *Inventing Atlantic Canada: Regionalism and the Maritime Reaction to Newfoundland's Entry into Canadian Confederation* (2011), along with a number of articles on Atlantic Canada and humanities computing.

David A. Sutherland is an Adjunct Associate Professor (retired) of the Department of History at Dalhousie University. He is a past president of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society and was elected a Fellow of the Society in 2012. His speciality is the history of Halifax but this is his first foray into the field of medical history. The venture would not have been possible without the encouragement of Dr. Allan Marble.

Steven Schwinghamer is an historian at the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. His current projects including work on the built heritage of immigration facilities and on health and migration in the early twentieth century.

Edward M. Langille is professor of French at St. Francis Xavier University. Professor Langille has written extensively on eighteenth century French literature and Acadiana.

James Frost is a marine transportation consultant and author of two published books and several articles on Maritime business and economic history. He is a graduate of McGill, Queen's and Saint Mary's universities and has taught history part-time at Saint Mary's. He lives in Halifax with his wife Jane and son David.