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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

TITLE OF THESIS: THE ALCOHOL PARADOX: CONSUMPTION, REGULATION, AND PUBLIC HOUSES IN THREE MARITIME COLONIES OF NORTHEASTERN BRITISH AMERICA, 1749-1830

TIME/DATE: Friday, September 18th at 4:00pm

PLACE: Room 3107, The Mona Campbell Building, 1459 LeMarchant Street

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Dr. Greg Marquis, Department of History & Politics, University of New Brunswick (External Examiner)  
Dr. John Reid, Department of History, Saint Mary’s University (Reader)  
Dr. Krista Kesselring, Department of History, Dalhousie University (Reader)  
Dr. Jerry Bannister, Department of History, Dalhousie University (Supervisor)

ABSTRACT

Despite the prominent role of alcohol in the culture of Atlantic Canada, we know remarkably little about the rise of rum and other alcoholic beverages prior to the rise of the temperance movement in the nineteenth century. This dissertation explores the consumption and regulation of alcohol in the three Maritime colonies of northeastern British America – Nova Scotia, The Island of St. John (later Prince Edward Island), and New Brunswick – in the contexts of changing patterns of consumption in the eighteenth-century Anglo-Atlantic world and early systems of colonial governance. It examines alcohol from the perspective of colonial authorities and their regulation of public houses, such as taverns, inns, and tippling houses. This thesis argues that alcohol, and rum in particular, presented a paradox to governors, council members and elected representatives because it was both an important source of colonial revenue and a cause of disorder which colonial authorities sought to contain. In all three colonies, the reliance on alcohol-generated revenue through import duties and fees and fines associated with public houses was weighed against the need to curb consumption. This dilemma played out differently in each of the three colonies, and this dissertation investigates questions of governance, fiscality, and morality with respect to alcohol consumption and regulation in each colony from 1749 to 1830. By employing alcohol as a lens through which broader processes can be studied, this dissertation contributes to the scholarship on state formation in pre-Confederation Canada. It offers a new interpretive narrative of the development of the Maritimes from the founding of Halifax to the rise of the temperance movement.