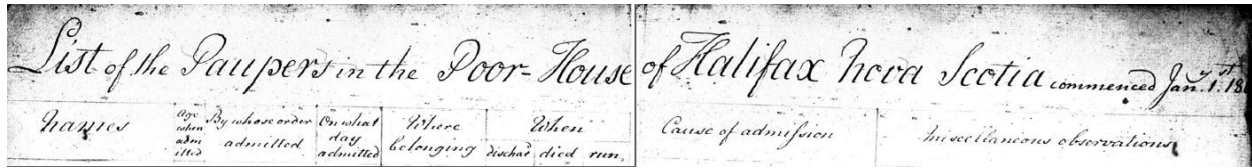


**A Guide to the index of the:
List of Paupers in the Poor House of Halifax, NS 1802-1811**



The Halifax Poor Asylum dates back to 1752 when a building on what is now Spring Garden Road was used as a workhouse to care for the city’s unemployed and criminal. In 1758 the Poor Asylum, also known as the Poor House, was formally established and quickly came to house, in addition to the poor, the aged, orphaned children, mental patients, sailors, and medical patients.

Among other records from the management of the Poor House, Halifax Municipal Archives holds admission registers ([series 102-33A](#)) that are an important source for genealogists, social historians and those interested in the health and social welfare of past-Halifax. A newly-created index to the earliest extant register (1802-1811) is searchable on-line, thanks to many volunteer hours of diligent work by Joanne McCarthy O’Leary.

Working from photocopies of the microfilm of the original volume, McCarthy O’Leary transcribed* each of the 2370 hand-written entries. The index does not include all columns from the original register, so researchers may need to consult the original for the fullest record of each resident’s experience.

Included in Index	Additional information available in original
Name	By whose order admitted (link to family/state connections)
Age when admitted	On what day admitted (or for long-term residents, year first admitted)
Where belonging	When discharged, died or run (exact date)
Cause of admission	Miscellaneous observations

For each year of the register, Poor House staff listed men first, then women, starting with all those resident on January 1 of each year, then chronologically as they were admitted. Children were listed according to their gender, with “see” notes linking them to their mothers. To assist family historians, the index is presented here sorted by surname; however researchers can request a spreadsheet of the raw data from archives@halifax.ca for further analysis.

In the words of transcriber, Joanne McCarthy O’Leary: *The Poor House of Halifax Register, which spans from 1802 to 1811, offers a fascinating glimpse into an early Colonial port community struggling with poverty, crime and disease prior to the War of 1812. It also provides a rare glimpse of individuals from Mi’kmaq and African Nova Scotia communities not normally captured in records of this time period.*

Halifax Municipal Archives is extremely grateful for the hundreds of hours Joanne put into this transcription, and for the care she took in making it an accurate and useful tool for researchers.

The following notes are important to explain Joanne’s process and to inform researchers how to most accurately read the Index. Any questions about the index, please contact archives@halifax.ca or 902-490-4643.

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Notes about the transcription

- Page numbers do not exist on this register. For the purposes of the index, they were artificially assigned, beginning with the even number “2”, as the first page of the Register is on the verso of the front end paper, following the cover.
- Dittos, expressed as quotations or the symbol “do” in the Register have been replaced with the words repeated from above. Dittos were most frequently found in the “On What Day Admitted” and “Where Belonging” columns.
- A column is left blank only when information was **not** recorded in the register.
- Undecipherable handwriting was encased in [brackets] or as [?]. Note that in the list sorted alphabetically by surname, all of the indecipherable names are listed on the first pages.
- In handwriting practices of the time, the long “s” was occasionally used when describing medical conditions. Therefore, the word “helpless” might appear as “helplefs” in the original Register. It was, however, transcribed as “helpless”.

Notes about *Names*:

- Surname spelling variations occur for the same individual, such as “McGhie”, and “McGee.”
- “Mac” is listed as “Mc.”
- First names listed as “Wm” were spelt out as “William”, “Jas” as “James”, etc.
- Male infants are listed in Men’s pages.
- Some women had aliases: “Doyle alias Gabriel”.
- Most surnames were European in origin and easy to translate – others, such as Portuguese surnames were not. Google was not helpful in these matters.
- Even though first and last name are recorded in the register, for indexing purposes, they are reversed. For example, in the Register, a name listed as “Benj Myers” was indexed as “Myers, Benjamin.”
- No apostrophes on surnames were recorded, so O’Hara is listed as OHara.
- Sometimes an individual’s race was recorded next to the name, such as “A black woman” or “Indian”.

Notes about *Age When Admitted*:

- Not every age is recorded.
- Newborns were recorded as just days old, often noted for being born in the Poorhouse.
- Oldest recorded age belonged to Sarah Tow at 96 yrs old.

Notes about *Where Belonging*:

- Many names have this field blank or listed as Transient.
- Some international countries such as England, the United States, West Indies, Spain, Denmark and Barbados are recorded.
- Communities such as ‘Liverpool’ might refer to either Nova Scotia or England.

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- “Do” or ditto was used frequently, however in the index, these communities are spelt out.
- Halifax, Annapolis, and Windsor feature prominently.

Notes about *Cause of Admission*:

- This was the most challenging column to transcribe.
- Rheumatism, ulcered legs, drunkenness, pregnancy, dropsy, or general condition of life such as “aged and infirmed” or “orphan” feature regularly.
- Sometimes, the transcriber had to refer to Google for help with medical conditions, such as the term “Lues Venerea.”
- Some entries referred to an earlier entry. “See no. 55” that refers to the entry in line #55 for that year. To help navigate, the “see no.” was transcribed as “see line”. The cross references are often between mother and child, or to the same person being re-admitted.

Notes about *Miscellaneous Observations*:

- While not included in this index, it’s important for the researcher to consult with the original Register to discover additional comments about parentage, occupation or criminal offence committed. For example, Frederick White Wilson was observed to be “Weak in mind, prov’d to be idle” was thus “set to hard labour – did not like it – discharged at his own request.”
- This column offers much more detail about residents, including ethnicity, family connections, evidence of slavery, bonded servitude or the involvement of a third party, which may have paid for the Poor House medical bills or the transportation of the resident to another location.
- Contact archives@halifax.ca to request copies from the original or to arrange to view the original.

* The index was checked five times for mistakes and typos. Any errors that remain are the responsibility of the transcriber and not the Halifax Municipal Archives.