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Irish Protestant women and diaspora: Orangewomen in Canada, c. 1890–1930

D.A. J. MacPherson

Far away across the ocean
Is the green land of my birth;
There my thoughts are turning ever
To the dearest place on earth.
Are the fields as green, I wonder,
As they were in days of yore
When I played in happy childhood
By the Blue Atlantic shore?¹

Writing in the pages of the Toronto Sentinel, the self-styled ‘voice’ of Orangeism in Canada, Mrs Charles E. Potter from Saskatoon, articulated the complex relationship with Ireland experienced by many Orange men and women in Canada at the beginning of the twentieth century. As the threat of Home Rule loomed large, Potter felt the pull of ‘old Ireland’ as she called for Orange ‘brothers and sisters’ to fight the ‘hateful yoke of Rome’. While Irish politics and identity were clearly important to Potter and the many thousands of women who were members of Canada’s Ladies’ Orange Benevolent Association (LOBA), by the 1920s the ethnic identification of the LOBA had become more complex, reflecting changing migration streams and the political turbulence in Ireland following the establishment of the Free State. During the interwar period, Orangewomen in Canada came from a diverse set of backgrounds, encompassing both recent migrants from Ireland, Scotland, England and elsewhere in the British world with those who were from more long-standing Canadian families. While a Scottish identity and an interest in Canadian politics came to the fore in the LOBA during the 1920s, this chapter argues that an Irish Protestant ethnicity remained central to these women’s sense of identity. These Orangewomen embraced the multiple identities of the LOBA across Canada, reflecting the importance of migration and diaspora to the organisation’s growth.
during the twentieth century. From the foundation of the LOBA in 1891 up
until the 1930s, this chapter focuses in particular on the position of the organi-
sation within the migration process and how this was part of the wider role of
the Orange Order in creating a diasporic identity within the British Empire.3
Although this sense of belonging to a global Orange world did include elements
of Scottish and English identities, Orangewomen in this period appear to have
continued to most closely identify with an Irish Protestantism, fed by the con-
tinuing physical process of migration and return visits to the ‘old country’, but also
by the imaginative connections to Ireland fostered by networks of communica-
tion, most notably through the pages of the Toronto Sentinel.

While the Orange Order in Canada has received renewed attention from
historians in recent years,4 few have examined the experience of women in the
LOBA. In their foundational study of the Orange Order in Canada, Cecil
Houston and William Smyth recognise that women were members of the organi-
sation. Despite commenting on the foundation of the LOBA in the late 1880s
and how ‘the sorority was to become in the twentieth century an extremely
important element of Orangeism’, Houston and Smyth restrict their analysis
of female Canadian Orangeism to a couple of references in their overall study.4
More recently, the work of Eric Kaufmann has been instrumental in establish-
just how numerically significant the LOBA became during the twentieth
century, yet his research does little to explore the activism and ideology of
Canadian Orangewomen.5 This chapter demonstrates not only that tens of
thousands of women participated in the Orange Order, but also that women
played a significant role in the construction of a diasporic Orange identity,
connecting women in Canada with their Orange sisters in Scotland, England,
Ireland and other locations throughout the British world. Equally, while the
Orange Order’s diasporic function and mentality has become the focus of a
number of recent studies of the organisation, this analysis has been done largely
from the perspective of Orangemen in Britain. For example, through institutions
such as the Order’s international Triennial Conference (established in 1865), the
pages of the Belfast Weekly News, and the migration process itself, Orangemen
in northern England developed a ‘diaspora consciousness’ from the mid-nineteenth
century onwards.5 This Orange diaspora stretched across the Atlantic world,
connecting men ‘institutionally, ideologically, and even emotionally, to a
community that spanned the vast ocean’.7

This chapter builds on this debate about the Orange Order and diaspora by
demonstrating that the many women who were members of the LOBA in Canada
also thought diasporically. Moreover, it demonstrates the persistence of an Irish
Protestant ethnic identification far later than historians have allowed. While
Houston and Smyth rightly pin-point the Irish origins of the Orange Order in
Canada during the early part of the nineteenth century, they argue that, largely
due to changing migration patterns, the organisation lost much of its distinctive
ethnic identity, becoming more of a pan-Protestant group. However, this analysis
is based on a narrow definition of identity, rooted in place of birth, which downplays the continued traction that Irish politics and identity had in early-twentieth-century Canadian Orangeism. Furthermore, this chapter demonstrates that Orangewomen in Canada were just as diasporic in their thinking as the men. Members of the LOBA identified with Canada, England and Scotland, but overarching this was a connection to a British Protestant and Imperial world that remained focused on Ireland well into the twentieth century. Drawing on Avtar Brah’s concept of ‘diaspora space’, this chapter considers the imagined space of the Toronto Sentinel. Here, Orangewomen would read about the Irish backgrounds of members of the LOBA, their visits ‘back home’ to Ireland and Scotland and the continuing importance of Irish politics to a sense of Orange identity in Canada. Through the pages of the Orange press, Orangewomen in Canada experienced a networked sense of empire and Irish Protestant diaspora.

This chapter also has important implications for broader studies of women’s ethnic associational culture and their engagement with public life. It demonstrates the diversity of Canadian women’s associational culture, indicating how public life was not just the preserve of women connected to feminist or socialist political organisations. Furthermore, it problematises recent research on women’s participation in migrant associations, which has suggested that women have been largely excluded from formal ethnic organisations. I argue, therefore, that women’s participation in the Orange Order not only demonstrates the diversity of women’s public activism in early-twentieth century Canada, it also indicates how women were active agents in shaping the nature of the Irish Protestant ethnic community, as first, second and subsequent generation migrants. Through their work raising money for child welfare, campaigning politically against Irish Home Rule and for ‘one language, one flag, one nation’ in Canada, Orangewomen in Canada played an important role in the public life of the Orange community and beyond.

**Female Orangeism in Britain and Canada**

Women’s participation in the Orange Order has been little studied by historians. Not long after the foundation of the Orange Order in 1795, however, the very first female lodges had been formed in Dublin. Beyond Ireland, women’s Orangeism was more successful. A number of female lodges were formed in the north-west of England during the mid-nineteenth century and the organisation grew successfully, with Liverpool emerging as a particular stronghold of female Orangeism. Although most historians identify 1909 as the inaugural year for the women’s Order in Scotland, some female lodges were formed there as early as the 1870s. Following their re-organisation in November 1909, women’s lodges spread rapidly across the west central belt of Scotland and by the early 1930s, the female Order in Scotland could boast more members than their male counterparts.
The female Orange Order in Canada, while not matching their Scottish counterparts in terms of numerical superiority over men, grew from its origins in the late 1880s to become an organisation of tens of thousands of women. The first ladies’ Orange association in Canada was formed in December 1888 in Hamilton, Ontario. Mary Tulk, the wife of a wheel moulder and local leading Orangeman, sent letters to the members of Loyal Orange Lodge (LOL) No. 286 in Hamilton, requesting ‘that they have their wives and daughters attend a meeting … for the purposes of organising in the interests of Protestantism’. The meeting was held on 12 December, drawing together ‘a large number of ladies desirous of forming a society of a benevolent character, based on the principles of the Loyal Orange association’, along with many Orangemen, who ‘heartily endorsed’ the scheme. Echoing broader Victorian concern for the welfare of young women in the urban environment, the impetus for the meeting came from the influx of ‘many girls coming into the city from their country homes who had no friends in the city’. This focus on public activism that was deemed appropriate for women, with its emphasis on benevolence and charity, would come to define women’s Orangeism in Canada and provide it with a coherence arguably lacking in the English or Scottish female Order. However, at this first meeting, the women of Hamilton were faced with an immediate problem, raised by the County Master of the Orange Order, who ‘informed the ladies that they could not organise a Ladies’ Orange Lodge until authorised by the Grand Orange Lodge of British America’, advising them to go ahead without ‘Orange’ in their title.

The first meeting of the women’s new organisation, to be called the ‘Ladies’ Protestant Benevolent Association’ was held in Hamilton on 9 January 1889, drawing together over forty local women, including Miss Mary Cullum, who was voted President of the new organisation. Cullum became a leading figure in the nascent women’s Orange movement in Canada, spear-heading efforts to gain recognition from the men’s Grand Lodge, the governing body of the organisation. The Hamilton Ladies’ Protestant Benevolent Association immediately drew up a petition to be sent to that year's Grand Lodge, asking permission to call themselves the ‘Ladies’ Orange Benevolent Association’. Cullum and Turk, emphasising the gendered public role they expected women to play, argued in this petition that women could help the Order uphold the ‘true Protestant religion’, assist members ‘in times of sickness and distress’ and give ‘aid to the orphans of deceased members’. According to Cullum and Turk, women would ensure that ‘Popish doctrines’ would be resisted by educating the children of Canada ‘thoroughly in the Protestant Christian religion’, but their petition was defeated by ‘a large majority’. A year later, a resolution was put to the Grand Lodge meeting in St John, New Brunswick and a committee was appointed to consider the advisability of allowing female Orange lodges in Canada. The committee met the ladies in Hamilton and unanimously recommended that they be allowed to form ‘Lady Orange Lodges’, allowing ‘our Association to perform
a work of benevolence and charity hitherto performed in a very imperfect manner’. In the meantime, women in London, Ontario decided not to wait for the approval of the Canadian men and, instead, became a lodge under a charter from the Ladies’ Loyal Orange Association of the United States, a similar tactic to that adopted by women in Scotland who subverted their own country’s Orange hierarchy by seeking warrants for female lodges through the English Grand Lodge.

Having gained official Orange recognition, the LOBA grew steadily in the first twenty years or so of its existence. In 1892, it was reported at the Grand Lodge meeting of Ontario West that five lodges had been founded, in Hamilton, London and Toronto, attracting a membership of around 200 women. A year later, the LOBA had grown to eleven lodges, and had been granted its own Grand Lodge, a signal achievement given that no other women’s Orange organisation has achieved such official recognition of its independence from the male Order. At a meeting of ‘Mary Princess of Orange’ LOBA No. 6 in Toronto in 1895, Mary Cullum (who was now the first Grand Mistress of the LOBA’s Grand Lodge) could boast that there were over 800 members in lodges ‘from New Brunswick on the east, to British Columbia in the west’. Progress under the leadership of Cullum was, however, slow. In a letter to the Sentinel, Cullum recognised that they had been ‘working slowly and steadily’ since their inception, and it had required considerable effort in the organisation’s early years in gaining official Grand Lodge recognition and in devising the ladies’ Ritual (the set of procedures which governed Orange meetings). By the time Cullum had retired as Grand Mistress in 1912, a total of 110 LOBA lodges had been formed, comprising 1,907 members. Growth in the following two decades was exceptional, reflecting the dynamism of the new Grand Mistress, Mary Tulk, the increase in migration during the 1920s, and the impetus given to Orange organisation by both the First World War and the prolonged crisis over self-government in Ireland. By 1927, the LOBA could boast of 23,665 members across every Province in Canada, comparing favourably to approximately 70,000 Orangemen in the Dominion. However, the heartland and birthplace of the LOBA, Ontario, continued to have the greatest membership, comprising over a third of the total number of lodges (see Table 9.1).

Echoing the findings of Charlotte Wildman in her chapter in this volume on Irish-Catholic women in interwar Liverpool, the work carried out by members of the LOBA was often highly gendered, reflecting the emphasis placed upon Orangewomen’s role in bringing up and educating children as good, patriotic Protestants. Within the private functioning of the Orange Order, rare minute books and reports of lodge proceedings from the Toronto Sentinel tell us much about the everyday activities of the LOBA, who, much like the men offered a strong mutualist benefit function, as well as providing considerable emotional support. The LOBA’s engagement with more public aspects of Orange life was, however, contested, leading to heated debate at the foundation of female lodges.
in Canada about the presence of women at Orange events such as the ‘glorious Twelfth’. Conforming to gender norms in a more obvious way, Orangewomen in Canada were enthusiastic in their philanthropic work. For many LOBA lodges, raising money for charitable causes became their principal goal, reflecting the emphasis placed upon this at the foundation of the organisation and reaching its height in the LOBA’s war work and its care for orphaned children.

**Migration and return visits: creating trans-Atlantic bonds**

In addition to their considerable benevolent work and public activism, the LOBA also played a key role in the migration process, creating important transnational bonds across the Atlantic. The background of many LOBA members indicates the importance of Irish, Scottish and English migration to the women’s Orange Order in Canada. The Irish background of Orangewomen in Canada remained prominent well into the twentieth century, indicating the continued traction of the Irish ‘homeland’ in the Orange world. Moreover, the membership of the LOBA continued to be shaped by migration well into the 1920s, reflecting the heightened levels of immigration to Canada during the interwar period, especially from Scotland. In turn, visits to the ‘old country’, across the Atlantic back to Ireland, Scotland and England had, I will argue, a profound effect on the diasporic identities constructed by Orangewomen in Canada, discussed below. Through the process of migration and return visits, Orangewomen in Canada maintained important physical and imaginative connections back to the ‘Motherland’, creating a ‘diasporic imagination’ not just for those who travelled but also for those who remained in Canada to hear
of these trans-Atlantic adventures at lodge meetings or through the pages of the *Sentinel*.

Whereas the female Orange Order in Scotland and northern England was, like the men, the cultural product of Irish Protestant migration, in Canada, the Irish ethnicity of the organisation was, from a relatively early stage, subsumed within a ‘pan-Protestant’ identification. However, the Irishness of many members of the Orange Order remained important to both male and female lodges in Canada well into the twentieth century. While Houston and Smyth acknowledge the importance of Irish immigration to the establishment and growth of the Orange Order in Canada, they argue that this Irish element declined in importance as the nineteenth century progressed. The growth of the Orange Order in Canada was closely connected to the ‘emergence and consolidation of the Second British Empire’, attracting Scottish and English migrants to its ranks under the organisation’s pan-Protestant British umbrella. Houston and Smyth do, however, recognise that most members were of ‘Irish stock’, without exploring this facet of twentieth-century Canadian Orangeism in any great depth.

The Irish background of a number of members of the LOBA was given prominence by the coverage of Orange affairs in the Toronto *Sentinel*. One of the founders of the LOBA, Mary Cullum, was frequently noted as coming from a good Irish family. Cullum was born in the village of Alma in Wellington County, Ontario. Her father, David Cullum, had come to Canada in 1834, leaving his boyhood home in Co. Longford, Ireland, to settle in Guelph, Ontario and soon after he joined the Orange Order in Canada. Other members of the LOBA had a closer connection to Ireland, having only emigrated recently to Canada. In Ottawa, Sister Dawson, the Worshipful Mistress of LOBA No. 12, had emigrated from Coalisland, Co. Tyrone, sometime in the 1880s. Described as a ‘true-bred Orangewoman’, her Orange credentials were deemed to be first-rate, having escaped from the clutches of a ‘Roman Catholic mob’ who attempted to drown her on a Sunday school outing. Sister Weir had moved to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in 1906, emigrating with her husband and family from Belfast to take up farming as one of the pioneers in the district. Weir was a Past Mistress of the local ‘Maple Leaf’ LOBA who, according to her obituary, did good work for Orange causes, raising money for the orphanage at Indian Head and speaking proudly of her loyalty to the British crown and her Irish Protestant heritage:

With the proud strain of the “Dalrach chiefs of Ulster in her veins,” a liberal education, and a clear foresight, she did much to cement loyalty in Canada to the British Crown. She was ever ready to help a good cause, more especially if it was in support of Protestantism. Veneration for the land of her birth, love for her adopted country, and the welfare of mankind was her motto. A worthy Daughter of Ulster.

Such thoughts demonstrate how the era of dual identifications functioned in the early part of the twentieth century, long predating the current phrase of global-
isation. The ‘Ladysmith’ lodge in Toronto, in particular, attracted a large number of Irish-born migrants, reflecting the city’s status as the Irish-Protestant-dominated ‘Belfast of Canada’. At an entertainment held following a meeting of the ‘Ladysmith’ lodge, a rendition of ‘Where the River Shannon Flows’ was given by one of the members, a Sister Poole, described as ‘a lady Unionist, formerly of Belfast’. A Worshipful Mistress of the ‘Ladysmith’ lodge, Mrs Bruce, had come to Toronto in 1912, together with her daughter Elizabeth. Described by the Sentinel as ‘Born Orange and in Ulster’, Elizabeth, now Mrs Kennedy, had risen through the ranks of the LOBA to become Grand Mistress, the highest office in the organisation.

While the Ladysmith lodge and others appeared to attract many Irish-born migrants, a number of LOBA lodges had members from a Scottish background. One of the founders of the LOBA, Mary Tulk, was born in Ontario, but had an Irish mother and a Scottish father. One of the leading figures in the LOBA in Toronto, Jeanie Gordon, had been born in Glasgow in 1865 and emigrated to London, Ontario with her parents. On moving to Hamilton after her marriage, Jeanie became one of the founder members of the LOBA in the city, before rising to become Grand Mistress of the organisation. During the 1920s, a period of intense emigration from Scotland, a number of recently arrived migrants were noted as having joined LOBA lodges in Canada. In Toronto a new lodge, ‘Lady Wilson’ No. 718, was founded in May 1926 with a Miss M. Miller as Worshipful Mistress. Miller, together with her mother and her sister, had recently arrived from Scotland, where they were members of FLOL No. 10 in St Rollox, Glasgow. A year later, the ‘Canada’ lodge reported having ‘two affiliations of sisters from Scotland’. Clearly, a number of Scottish women became members of the LOBA during this period. Many of these would have been from an Irish background, but the paucity of evidence makes tracing this connection back to Ireland hard to establish. However, it is possible to argue that the LOBA lodges in Canada had a role to play in the migration process, not just as ‘a club at the end of the road’ but also as a means of maintaining what for many of these women was a heartfelt connection back to their Orange roots in the ‘old homeland’ of Ireland or Scotland.

Members of the LOBA in Canada also made visits back to England, Scotland and Ireland, indicating how a diasporic consciousness could also be forged through return visits to the ‘old country’. Recent research has demonstrated that such return visits were by no means unusual, especially during the interwar period, and indicates that at least one of the strategies for maintaining a sense of connection with their ‘homeland’ was to visit Orange lodges in Britain and Ireland. Discussed in further depth below, an English diasporic identity was maintained by a number of Canadian Orangewomen who made return visits to England. In May 1919, the women of the ‘Britannia’ Lodge in Cabri, Saskatchewan, bid a fond farewell to Sister Baldwin, who was leaving Canada ‘on a visit to friends in England’. Other Orangewomen made journeys to the
‘motherland’ to visit women’s Orange lodges. Ethel Easton, for example, travelled to London in the spring of 1924 from her lodge in Winnipeg to visit ‘Lady Carson’s’ women’s lodge in the ‘World’s Metropolis’. In the ‘capital of the Empire’, Easton was welcomed enthusiastically by the London Orangewomen and was granted membership of the Westminster lodge. Easton’s visit was framed by the Sentinel very much in imperial terms, stressing the bonds created by the Orange Order throughout the British Empire by visiting members from across the globe:

The widespread extension of the Orange Order throughout the Empire was further emphasised by the presence of Sister Miss Prangnell, a visitor from LOL No. 2, New Zealand. Her lucid and interesting address on the activities of Orangeism in the Antipodes was listened to with close attention, after which a profitable few minutes were spent in question and answer respecting the work of the Order in England, Canada and New Zealand.

While visits to England were often presented in terms of a return to the Imperial ‘motherland’, visits to Ireland emphasised the Irish Protestant character of the LOBA in Canada. Travelling to Dublin in 1923, Sister Williams from the ‘No Surrender’ lodge in Vancouver was presented with an ‘emblem LOBA pin’ and a letter of introduction, to ‘enable her to visit some of the lady lodges in her “Homeland”’. Sailing back across the Atlantic could also take place in the context of the Orange Order’s Triennial Conference. Established in 1865, this event drew Orangemen and, on occasion, women from across the Orange world to key sites of Orangeism, such as Belfast, Toronto, Glasgow and other locations. The Triennial Council held in London during 1926 attracted a number of senior members of the LOBA (see Figure 9.1). At a meeting of the ‘Daughters of Portadown’ lodge in Toronto, the Grand Mistress, Sister Kennedy, spoke fondly of her visit to the ‘Old Country’ for the Triennial, where she visited lodges in England, Scotland and Ireland and went to the Twelfth July parade in Belfast. Kennedy was accompanied by her successor as Grand Mistress, Mrs Stewart Adrian, from Craik, Saskatchewan, who spoke of her official role in representing the LOBA at the London Triennial. After the Triennial meeting, Adrian joined her ‘Scotch brothers and sisters’ for a parade on 10th July and the Twelfth celebrations in Belfast two days later. The Triennial Council meeting was, then, one of the most visible expressions of the Orange Order’s diasporic nature and it is important to recognise that Canadian women took part during the 1920s and felt connected to their Orange sisters across the globe through such an event.

Orangewomen and diasporic identity

Demonstrating their commitment to the promotion of Orange politics and affairs in public life, members of the LOBA did engage with Irish politics and identity during the first half of the twentieth century. Centring on the Home
Rule crisis of 1912–14 and concern during the 1920s over the future of Protestant-dominated Ulster within a partitioned Ireland, Orangewomen in Canada promoted a strong diasporic Irish Protestant identity through their public, political activism. However, promoting an Irish Protestant ethnicity was only one part of Orangewomen’s ‘diasporic imagination’ and, increasingly, we find members of the LOBA articulating English or Scottish identities through their participation in the Orange Order. In particular, the multiple and shifting sets of identities embraced by the LOBA became more complex during the 1920s, when many Canadian Orangewomen began to celebrate their Scottishness in more obvious and visible ways, reflecting the heightened levels of migration from Scotland.

The crisis in Irish and British politics over the introduction of the third Home Rule Bill in 1912 provided a significant focal point for the expression of the LOBA members’ diasporic Irish Protestant identity, emphasising the enduring, transnational links that bound Orange members across the Atlantic. In Ireland, women mobilised in significant numbers to demonstrate their opposition to Home Rule. The Ulster Women’s Unionist Council had been formed in
January 1911, attracting a mass membership estimated at up to 200,000 women from across all classes in the province.60 While the response of Orangewomen in Scotland to the Ulster crisis was relatively muted, the LOBA were rather more vocal in their support for their Protestant sisters in Ireland.61 Speaking at a meeting of the ‘No Surrender’ lodge in Vancouver, Mary Tulk discussed her recent visit to the ‘Old Land’ of Ireland.62 Tulk had taken part in the Twelfth July celebrations in Belfast, addressing a crowd of ‘eleven thousand good Protestants’.63 Demonstrating her commitment to the anti-Home Rule cause, Tulk had joined the Ulster Women’s Unionist Council, whom she praised for their ‘grim determination … never to accept Home Rule’.64 Other LOBA lodges across Canada echoed Tulk’s commitment to Ulster. To commemorate the signing of the Ulster Covenant on 28 September, the women of ‘Boyne Jubilee’ lodge in Montreal decided to hold an ‘Ulster Day’ church service.65 As the Ulster crisis intensified, a number of lodges used their meetings to pass resolutions against Home Rule and suggest practical ways of helping their Orange sisters in Ireland. In Winnipeg, for example, the women of ‘Rising Star’ LOBA No. 62 declared their support for ‘the male members of the Orange Association in the fight against the ascendancy of the Home Rule party in Ireland’, adding that they were prepared to supply a nurse ‘in the event of a regiment or regiments being sent from Winnipeg to Ireland’.66 At the end of 1913, the Sentinel carried an extensive article by Irene Clare, a member of the LOBA, exhorting Orangewomen to fight for the Protestant cause against the threat of Home Rule and undergo medical training ‘in case her nursing services and ministrations should be needed at home or abroad’.67

When the question of Ulster’s status within Ireland arose again in the early 1920s, Orangewomen in Canada once more demonstrated their commitment to Irish Protestant politics. As the newly founded Free State plunged into Civil War in 1922, Unionists in the equally novel Northern Ireland feared that partition was merely a temporary precursor to being subsumed within a Catholic Irish state.68 In Canada, members of the LOBA raised funds to provide for potential refugees from any conflict that might break out in Northern Ireland. At a meeting of the ‘Britannia’ lodge in Winnipeg, Sister McKee presented a ‘plea for the assistance on behalf of distressed Loyalists in the Emerald Isle’, to which the sisters responded by raising $10.69 A number of other LOBA lodges also raised funds to support their Orange brethren and sisters in Ulster, such as the ‘McCormack’ lodge in Toronto collecting money ‘to add to the fund being sent for the orphans in Ireland’.70 While members of the Beeton LOBA donated $20 to the Ulster Relief Fund, this figure is relatively insignificant compared with the lodge’s raising over $225 for the Orange Orphans Home in Richmond Hill.71 This suggests that, while Irish political issues continued to have traction among many members of the LOBA during the 1920s, their priority lay with benevolent work and fundraising for charitable causes. The relative unimportance of Irish issues among the LOBA echoed the experience of other Orange
associations outside of Ireland, where politics was less red in tooth and claw and less of an everyday issue.  

Identification with an Irish Protestantism was also becoming more problematic, given both the emergence of a firmly Ulster Unionist identity and the growing strength of Scottish identity within the Canadian Orangewomen during the 1920s. The contested nature of an Irish Protestant identity was made clear at a meeting of the ‘Daughters of Portadown’ lodge in 1922 where, during an evening’s entertainment, the Worthy Mistress was praised for making everyone feel at home ‘in her usual Irish (I mean Ulster) style’. As an Ulster identity gained greater prominence, so too did a sense of Scottishness within the LOBA. The ‘Liberty’ LOBA lodge in Winnipeg took the lead in holding Burns’ nights, being the first women’s lodge in Canada to organise an event that symbolised Scottishness for many Scots abroad. Aptly taking place in Scott Memorial Hall, over 300 people sat down for ‘a menu entirely Scottish in which the Haggis played a prominent part’.

This event was, though, far more than simply a straightforward expression of the Scottishness of the LOBA in Winnipeg. After feasting and music, various Orangemen and women delivered ‘anecdotes on the Scotch and Irish’, while one speaker recognised the multi-ethnic nature of their entertainment and the LOBA in Winnipeg: ‘Although this is Burns’ Night, I gather there are a good many Irish present, but we Irish are generous sometimes, and honor the Scotch.’ Other expressions of Scottish identity by the LOBA took on a similarly cultural imprint. At an evening’s ‘whist drive and dance’, the ‘Ulster’ lodge in Vancouver, the Orange sisters were entertained by ‘a selection of Highland dance in costume’ given by one of the ladies. At a meeting of the ‘Ladysmith’ lodge in Toronto, the Scottish entertainment was connected directly to the activities of Orangewomen in Scotland. Inspired by ‘the Highland dancing of the lassie, Miss Marion Smith’, Jeanie Gordon talked at length about the success of the women’s Order in Scotland, where ‘in Glasgow alone there are sixty Orange lodges’.

While Irish and Scottish ethnicities were clearly prominent within the LOBA and informed a strong sense of diasporic identity, some Orangewomen in Canada also articulated an attachment to a sense of Englishness. Some members of the LOBA combined their Orange commitments with involvement in the associational culture of the English diaspora in Canada. In Toronto, for example, Lillian Collins was not only Mistress of the ‘Lady Russell’ LOBA lodge, she was also an active member of the Maids of England and the Daughters of England, two groups dedicated to the maintenance of an English diasporic culture in Canada. Moreover, the ‘Imperial’ LOBA lodge held an ‘English Night’ in March 1927, the members enjoying ‘a programme of a strictly English character’.

For members of the LOBA in Canada, then, their Irish Protestant diasporic consciousness was tempered by both Scottish and English identities. However, the Orange Order gave these women an institutional framework within which
to reconcile their individual, multiple identities. The Orange Order across the
globe articulated a deep commitment to the British Empire that was also entirely
compatible with an Irish or Scottish identity in Canada. The women of the
LOBA certainly identified their Orangeism with the aims of the British Empire,
frequently using the rhetoric of working under an Imperial flag to make sense
of their activities in Canada. In the midst of the First World War (in itself, inter-
preted as an imperial war by many in Canada and elsewhere in the Empire),
Mary Tulk spoke about the women of Princeton, British Columbia, who wrote
to her requesting to set-up an LOBA lodge ‘to rally under the banner of
Orangeism and stand together for our Flag and Empire’. Furthermore, as we have
already seen, at the ‘No Surrender’ LOBA lodge in Vancouver, the women
framed their considerable public activism, on municipal authority committees
and the like, in imperial terms.

By the 1930s, the LOBA in Canada had, then, become a more multi-ethnic
organisation, encompassing a pan-Protestant identity. Canadian Orangewomen,
however, still retained a strong sense of Irish identity, reflecting the Irish
background of many of its members and the continuing importance of
migration, if not at the levels of the nineteenth century. The LOBA maintained
an Irish Protestant identity that was diasporic, engaging in efforts to support their
Orange sisters and brethren during the Home Rule crisis and the debate about
the status of Ulster following partition in 1922. Moreover, return visits to the
Orange ‘homeland’ were vital in creating a sense of ‘diasporic consciousness’, not
just to those who physically travelled but also to Orangewomen who remained
in Canada to hear about these events through the pages of the Sentinel. Orange
jamborees such as the 1926 Triennial Conference in London and Twelfth July
parades in Glasgow and Belfast were at the heart of this Orange diaspora. Here,
the notion of ‘diaspora space’ can help us to understand how these women felt
themselves to be part of an Orange diaspora. While Avtar Brah uses the term to
denote how Britain has become a ‘diaspora space’, bringing together different
migrant and non-migrant populations to create hybrid identities, in this chapter
we can see how an imagined ‘diaspora space’ was created in the pages of the
Toronto Sentinel, linking its readers with their Orange sisters across the globe and
fostering a sense of diasporic connection to the ‘old country’. While a Scottish
identity became increasingly important during the 1920s, reflecting renewed
migration streams from Scotland, Canadian Orangewomen’s diasporic thinking
continued to be shaped by the Irish Protestant background of many LOBA
members. The Orange diaspora, focused on an Irish Protestant identity, retained
its traction in Canadian society well into the twentieth century and, as the LOBA
demonstrate, it had a strong gender dimension, in which women connected with
their Orange sisters ‘back home’ in Ireland and Scotland.
Notes

1 Mrs Charles L. E. Potter, ‘What we have, we hold’, Sentinel, 3 October 1912.
2 The idea of an ‘Orange diaspora’ has been most clearly explored in the work of Don MacRaid. See, for a recent example, The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750–1939 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), especially pp. 209–12.
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domestic public culture and the Toronto Local Council of Women at the turn of the twentieth century’, Gender, Place and Culture, 12 (2005), 29–48.
13 ‘An Ulsterman’s Letter’, Belfast Weekly News (hereafter BWN), 5 January 1933. In 1801 there were at least eight female Orange lodges in Dublin. The warrant for Lodge No. 8 is held at the headquarters of the Orange Order in Ireland, Schomburg House, Belfast.
14 See MacRaidl, The Irish Diaspora in Britain, pp. 106–8. The early success of female Orangeism in northern England was recognised by members of LOBA No. 714, in Creemore, Ontario at a meeting in May 1927. One of the members, Sister Best, had returned from a trip to England, where she had visited the first women’s lodge to be formed in Preston and received a ‘beautiful cup’. See ‘Creemore, Ont., Ladies are highly honoured’, Sentinel, 19 May 1927.
16 E. Kaufmann, Orange Order Membership Data with a Focus on Ireland, Canada and Scotland, 1852–2002 SN: 4916 (Colchester: UK Data Archive, 2002).
18 ‘The Orange Order’, Hamilton Spectator, 14 December 1898.
22 Report of the Most Worshipful Grand Orange Lodge of British America 1890 (Toronto, 1890), p. 33.
24 Mrs Thomas Davidson, ‘The Ladies heaven bless them’, Sentinel, 30 June 1892. For the foundation of female Orange lodges in Scotland under warrants from England, see D. A. J. MacPherson, ‘The emergence of women’s Orange lodges in Scotland:
26 ‘Ladies’ Orange Benevolent Association’, Sentinel, 3 July 1923.
27 ‘Ladies’ Orange Association’, Sentinel, 21 March 1895.
28 ‘Ladies’ Orange Association’, Sentinel, 28 March 1895.
30 ‘Remarkable progress of the Ladies’ Order’, Sentinel, 14 July 1927. Based on membership subscription data for 1929, Eric Kaufmann estimates there were 68,904 active Orangemen in Canada, comprising almost 50 per cent of the world’s entire Orange membership. See Kaufmann, Orange Order Membership Data.
33 MacRaid, Faith, Fraternity and Fighting, pp. 14, 293. For the Irish background of the Orange Order in Scotland, see McFarland, Protestants First, pp. 103–6 and Kaufmann, ‘The Orange Order in Ontario, Newfoundland, Scotland and Northern Ireland’, p. 56. Kaufmann uses census data from 1881 to determine that 72 per cent of Scottish Orange lodge secretaries were Irish-born.
34 Houston and Smyth, The Sash Canada Wore, p. 91.
36 Ibid., p. 175.
38 ‘A successful Ladies’ Lodge’, Sentinel, 10 January 1895.
42 ‘Honors and a birthday’, Sentinel, 8 December 1925.
43 RG31, Census of Canada, 1891, District 72, Hamilton, Ontario.
46 ‘Canada Lodge Ladies paid a visit to Oshawa’, Sentinel, 2 June 1927.
47 MacRaid, Faith, Fraternity and Fighting, p. 148.
48 See the section on ‘homecoming as tourism’ in M. Harper and S. Constantine,
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51 ‘Miss Ethel Easton given reception’, Sentinel, 29 April 1924.

52 ‘Miss Ethel Easton honored in London, Sentinel, 4 March 1924.

53 Ibid.

54 ‘No Surrender, Vancouver’, Sentinel, 3 July 1923.


56 ‘Daughters of Portadown observe 11th Anniversary’, Sentinel, 30 September 1926.


61 For the limited response to the Home Rule crisis by female members of the Orange Order in Scotland, see MacPherson, ‘The emergence of female Orange lodges in Scotland’. Orangewomen in Scotland did, however, give considerable sums of money to the Carson Defence Fund, established to raise funds for the nascent Ulster Volunteer Force.


64 ‘No Surrender Lodge, Vancouver’, Sentinel, 28 November 1912.

65 ‘Boone Jubilee Lodge, No. 26’, Sentinel, 31 July 1913. Over half a million people signed the Ulster Covenant (for men) or the Ulster Declaration (for women). Most of these were in Ulster and, according to the Public Record Office Northern Ireland’s database of signatories, only 56 people signed the document in Canada. See PRONI, ‘The Ulster Covenant’, available at www.proni.gov.uk/index/search_the_archives/ulster_covenant.htm, accessed 19 February 2012. For the limited success of the Ulster Volunteer Force in Canada, see MacRaild, Faith, Fraternity and Fighting, p. 317.

66 ‘LOBA urges a strong public school policy’, Sentinel, 23 October 1913.


69 ‘Britannia Lodge, Winnipeg’, Sentinel, 28 March 1922.

70 ‘McCormack No. 191’, Sentinel, 10 October 1922.

71 ‘Beeton Ladies gave over $225 to orphanage in year’, Sentinel, 15 January 1924.

72 For a discussion of the lesser importance of Irish politics for Orangemen in the north of England, see MacRaild, Faith, Fraternity and Fighting, chapter 7.


‘Honor Scotland’s Immortal Bard’, Sentinel, 4 March 1924. For the importance of Burns’ nights to diasporic Scottish identity, see T. Buelmann, ‘“The image of Scotland which we cherish in our hearts”: Burns anniversary celebrations in colonial Otago’, Immigrants and Minorities, 30 (2012), 79–97.


‘Ladysmith No. 8 Had a Great Night’, Sentinel, 5 October 1920.


‘Imperial LOBA No. 3 hold an English night’, Sentinel, 24 March 1927.


‘Mrs G. O. Akerly, St John, Grand Mistress, LOBA’, Sentinel, 5 August 1915.

‘No Surrender, Vancouver, a Flourishing LOBA Lodge’, Sentinel, 20 April 1926. For the operation of pan-British Protestant identity in the context of nineteenth-century Newfoundland, see W. G. Keough, ‘Contested terrains: ethnic and gendered spaces in the Harbour Grace affair’, Canadian Historical Review, 90 (2009), 53. The LOBA’s belief in and support of the British Empire also enabled them to engage in a number of aspects of Canadian politics, raising the possibility that women’s participation in the Orange Order also fostered a Canadian identity.