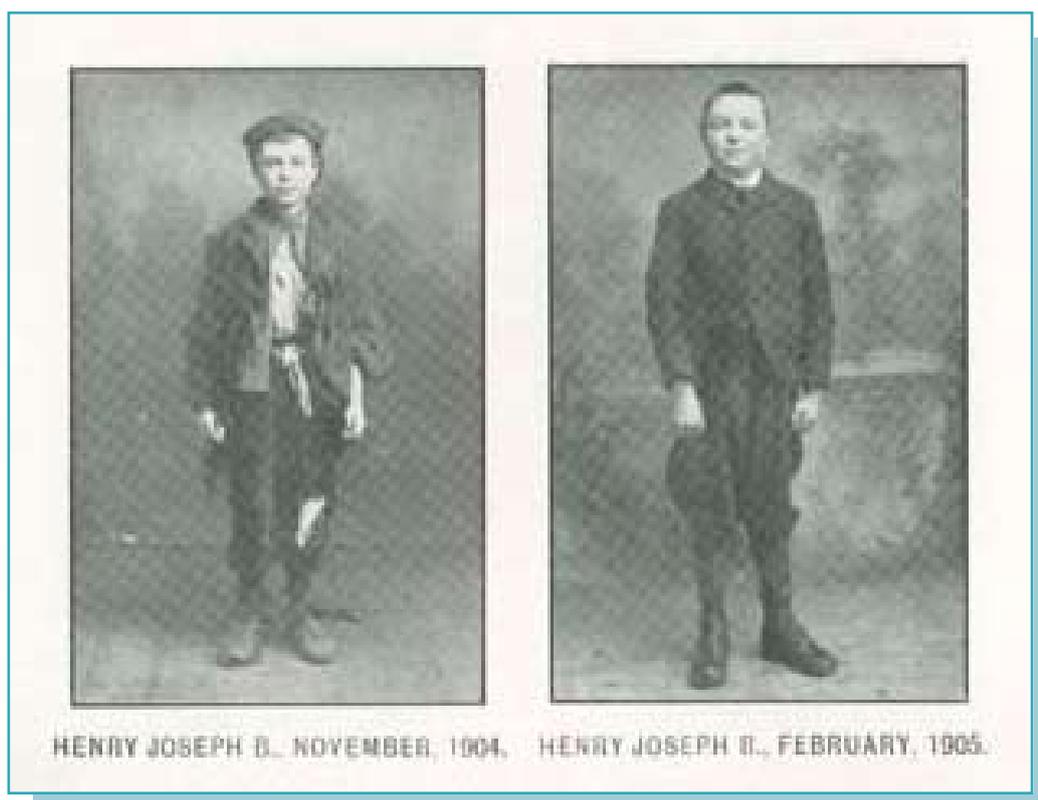


Henry Bate and the Middlemore Homes

The story of Henry Bate and the Middlemore Homes Archive can be used to explore the migration of children from Birmingham to Canada in the 1800's. The information shared here about Henry's life was used by a group of teachers to develop [Using an enquiry process](#) to explore archive materials.



Henry Bate: Reproduced with permission of Birmingham Libraries & Archives

John Middlemore opened the Children's Emigration Homes in 1872. These homes are more commonly known in Birmingham as the 'Middlemore Homes'. They took poor children from the slums of industrial Birmingham and sent them to be placed with families in the rural "wilds" of Canada, and later Australia. Many of these children were not orphans, but had been removed from their families due to poverty, and sometimes because of neglect or cruelty. Often, they never returned to Britain, and although for some it was a healthy new start, for many others it meant a very hard life far away from their homes and families - and some were treated very badly in their new homes.

Henry Bate was taken into the Middlemore Homes in November 1904. His father had died and his mother had remarried. His step-father had been out of work for months, and his mother had to sell most of their furniture to buy food and pay the rent. Henry had earned money by selling nails on the streets, and his mother was taken to court because he played truant from school. He was sent to Canada for a 'new life' by the Middlemore Homes.

The photograph of Henry was printed in the Middlemore Homes Annual Report for 1905, which was produced to give information to people about the work of the homes. The report also listed people who had donated money to the charity.

Reports show 'before and after' photographs of children, descriptions of their home life and backgrounds in Birmingham, accounts of the journey to Canada and reports about their settlement in Canada. Inspectors visited the foster homes in Canada to report about how the children were getting on. Some children were visited regularly, and others not very often. The inspectors wrote small amounts of information about the children, and some reports are simply 'yes' and 'no' answers to standard questions like 'Do they go to school?' It is hard to tell from these reports whether the children were seen, or whether the inspectors were receiving reports from the foster families.

The Middlemore Homes Archive contains files for many of the children who were forced to emigrate. Some files, like Henry's, include letters written by the children back to Middlemore. Other documents include responses from officials, reports from inspectors visiting the children in their new homes, and the application for a child from a Canadian family. Henry's letters back to the Homes span a long period of time, and detail how well he is doing in Canada, owning his own farm and getting married. There is however, a recurring theme in the letters, with Henry asking after his family in Birmingham, desiring to see his mother again and - later - showing an interest in his sister and her family. The official letters that respond to Henry do not appear to be able to help with any family information or contact for him.



Atlas of Canada, 1906. This entry shows the lighthouses and sailing routes for the Atlantic Coast, including the sailing route from Liverpool through which Middlemore Homes children from Birmingham entered Canada.

Reproduced with permission of Birmingham Libraries & Archives.

More information about the Middlemore Homes Archive, and a range of related educational activities is available by following these links:

<http://www.connectinghistories.org.uk/childrenshomes.asp>

<http://www.theplayhouse.org.uk/home-children>

http://www.connectinghistories.org.uk/birminghamstories/faces_and_places.asp

With thanks to Nikki Thorpe and Izzy Mohammed, Birmingham Heritage and Archives.