

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04138-7 - *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967*

Ellen Boucher

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Empire's Children

Between 1869 and 1967, government-funded British charities sent nearly 100,000 underprivileged children to start new lives in the settler empire. This pioneering study tells the story of the rise and fall of child emigration to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Southern Rhodesia. In the mid-Victorian period, the book reveals, the concept of a global British race had a profound impact on the practice of charity work, the evolution of child welfare, and the experiences of poor children. During the twentieth century, however, rising nationalism in the dominions, alongside the emergence of new, psychological theories of child welfare, eroded faith in the “British world” and brought child emigration into question. Combining archival sources with original oral histories, *Empire's Children* not only explores the powerful influence of empire on child-centered social policy, it also uncovers how the lives of ordinary children and families were forever transformed by imperial forces and settler nationalism.

ELLEN BOUCHER is Assistant Professor of History at the Department of History, Amherst College, Massachusetts.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04138-7 - Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of
the British World, 1869–1967

Ellen Boucher

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04138-7 - Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967

Ellen Boucher

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Empire's Children

Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967

Ellen Boucher



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-04138-7 - Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of
the British World, 1869–1967
Ellen Boucher
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press,
New York

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107041387

© Ellen Boucher 2014

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2014

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Boucher, Ellen, 1978–
Empire's children : child emigration, welfare, and the decline of the British
world, 1869–1967 / Ellen Boucher.
pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-04138-7 (hardback)

1. Child welfare—Great Britain—Colonies—History—20th
century. 2. Unaccompanied immigrant children—Great Britain—Colonies—
History—20th century. 3. Great Britain—Colonies—Emigration and
immigration—History—20th century. 4. Group identity—Great
Britain—Colonies—History—20th century. I. Title.

HV751.A6B66 2014

362.709171'24109041—dc23

2013039678

ISBN 978-1-107-04138-7 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of
URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication,
and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,
accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-04138-7 - Empire’s Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of
the British World, 1869–1967
Ellen Boucher
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Contents

<i>List of illustrations and table</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	viii
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xi
Introduction	1
1 Poverty and possibility in the era of Greater Britain	23
2 Developing empire, building children	53
3 Upholding the banner of White Australia	92
4 “Defective” boys and “problem” girls: selection standards in 1930s Australia and Southern Rhodesia	126
5 From imperial child welfare to national childhoods	155
6 Growing up in the twilight of empire	196
Conclusion: the problem of postimperial belonging	237
<i>Appendix</i>	259
<i>Bibliography</i>	262
<i>Index</i>	287

Illustrations and table

Illustrations

2.1	“A scene at the Massage Room adjoining the Hospital at the Boys’ Garden City. Sunlight is a wonderful healer.” Barnardo’s 67th Annual Report, 1932, 28, D.239/A3/1/67, ULSCA. Courtesy of Barnardo’s / The University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives.	<i>page 74</i>
2.2	“The Gateway to Sunshine.” Barnardo’s Appeal Booklet, 1924, D.239/A3/17/15, ULSCA. Courtesy of Barnardo’s / The University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives.	76
2.3	“A group of Farm School boys, beside a group of pines which they themselves planted seven years previously.” CES, “A Fair, Sporting Chance,” Promotional Appeal Booklet, c. 1920, D.296/F1/16, ULSCA. Courtesy of The Fairbridge Society / The University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives.	78
3.1	Map of Old Fairbridgians. Fairbridge Promotional Appeal Booklet, 1934, D.296/D1/1/1, ULSCA. Reprinted in <i>The Times</i> , June 21, 1934. Courtesy of The Fairbridge Society / The University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives.	103
3.2	Kingsley Fairbridge teaching boxing at Pinjarra in the early 1920s. Fairbridge Annual Report, 1930, D.296/D1/1/1, ULSCA. Courtesy of The Fairbridge Society / The University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives.	114
3.3	“The critics view the contest.” Children boxing at Northcote Children’s Farm in Victoria in the late 1930s. Fairbridge Annual Report, 1937, D.296/D1/1/1, ULSCA. Courtesy of The Fairbridge Society / The University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives.	115
3.4	“Thoroughly domesticated.” Fairbridge Annual Report, 1930, D.296/D1/1/1, ULSCA. Courtesy of The Fairbridge Society / The University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives.	116

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-04138-7 - Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of
the British World, 1869–1967
Ellen Boucher
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

List of illustrations and table	vii
6.1 RFMC, “Outline of the Scheme,” Promotional Appeal Booklet, c. 1946, D.296/K2/4/2, ULSCA. Courtesy of The Fairbridge Society / The University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives.	220
6.2 and 6.3 “A happy home is the basis of a happy Fairbridge.” Fairbridge Pinjarra, Annual Report, 1951, D.296/D1/1/2, ULSCA. Courtesy of The Fairbridge Society / The University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives.	227

Table

5.1 Australian child migrant institutions, from largest to smallest, in 1955.	158
--	-----

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04138-7 - *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967*

Ellen Boucher

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

I accumulated many debts in the process of researching and writing this book, and it is my great pleasure to be able to acknowledge here the people and institutions that made this work possible. First and foremost, my sincere thanks to the men and women who graciously shared with me their memories of growing up in child migrant farm schools and institutions. Their rich, perceptive, and candid insights informed every aspect of my thinking, deepening my engagement with the archive in unexpected ways. Although I have not been able to use material from all of their interviews in the text that follows, their influence has shaped every page. I am grateful as well to Peter Gould, Bill Hoyles, Mervyn Humphreys, Dennis Silver, and Pam Wilson for their assistance in making contact with potential interviewees. Vivian Finn's astute comments on early drafts were extremely helpful, and I thank him for many stimulating conversations along the way.

This work began life as my dissertation at Columbia University under the direction of Susan Pedersen, whose advice, encouragement, humor, and support were unfailing throughout the many years of this project. I deeply appreciate her continued mentorship, and owe her more than I will ever be able to repay. Marcia Wright and Lisa Tiersten were wonderful mentors as well; they offered challenging and incisive comments on multiple drafts, and were always generous with their time and guidance. I would also like to thank Frank Mort for encouraging the early development of this project while he was a visiting professor at Columbia, as well as Lynn Lees and Ellen Ross for their thought-provoking suggestions on an earlier version of the manuscript.

I am grateful to the numerous institutions that provided funding for the research and writing of this book, including the Council on Library and Information Resources, the Doris Quinn Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, Columbia University, Furman University, and Amherst College. Numerous archivists and librarians went out of their way to answer my questions and to help me locate sources, particularly Adrian Allan at the University of Liverpool, Jim Andrighetti at the Mitchell

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04138-7 - *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967*

Ellen Boucher

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

ix

Library, and Rachel Rowe at the University of Cambridge. My thanks to Barnardo's, the Fairbridge Society, and the National Children's Home for kindly granting me permission to access their archives. I have not included any specific identification details of child migrants in these records in order to protect their anonymity, and these charities bear no responsibility for this publication.

Many friends and colleagues offered invaluable feedback during the process of writing this book. Monica Black, Victoria Blake, Charlotte Boucher, Brian DeVore, Allison Hurst, Laura Lovett, and Joni Tevis read drafts of the manuscript at critical points in its development, and their comments were immensely helpful in shaping my thinking. Marianne Bessy, Mehmet Dosemeci, Victoria Durrer, Marilyn Lake, Jeffrey Saletnik, Michal Shapira, Penny Sinanaglou, Jennifer Thomson, Andrew Vagg, and Theresa Ventura – alongside many, many others – offered insights, support, and good cheer across numerous continents, for which I am incredibly grateful. The two anonymous readers of the manuscript for Cambridge University Press provided wonderful advice that pushed me to refine or expand my ideas in numerous places. In particular, Reader A helped clarify my thinking about the history of child emigration to Canada, while Reader B encouraged me to delve deeper into the lasting legacies of the programs. My thanks to them both for their critical attention and their excellent comments; any errors that remain in the text are, of course, my responsibility alone. I would also like to thank the members of the Five-College History Faculty Seminar as well as the Valley Victorianists Group for making Amherst such a welcoming and inspiring place to work. I have learned a tremendous amount from my colleagues in the History department at Amherst College, and before that Furman University, and am indebted to them all for their encouragement and assistance. Kate Barton lovingly read the entire manuscript, which is much improved thanks to her sharp editorial eye. I also appreciate the hard work Destiny Casillas contributed to tracking down references and compiling the bibliography. My thanks as well to Michael Watson at Cambridge University Press for making the daunting process of publication so straightforward and stress free.

Finally, throughout the process of writing this book, I have been reminded in countless ways of how fortunate I am to have my family. I could not have completed this project without the unswerving faith in my abilities of my parents, Charlotte and Douglas, and my brother, Johnny. In addition, Brian DeVore has enriched every part of my life since he entered it five years ago. His enthusiasm, unstinting praise, steady encouragement, and quick wit have kept me going through the final stages of this book, and I cannot thank him enough for filling my

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04138-7 - Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967

Ellen Boucher

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x Acknowledgments

days with joy. Esme DeVore joined our family just as this book was heading to press, and brightened the long hours of revisions and copy editing with her loving presence. Finally, I am so grateful for the love and inspiration of one of my greatest champions – my Granny, another Ellen Boucher. This book is dedicated to her.

Portions of Chapters 1, 2, and 4 have been published before, although in significantly altered form, as: “Developing Empire, Building Children: The Ideology of British Child Emigration, 1918–1939,” *Histoires d’enfant, histoires d’enfance (Stories for Children, Histories of Childhood): GRAAT Revue* 36 (June 2007): 261–285; “The Limits of Potential: Race, Welfare, and the Interwar Extension of Child Emigration to Southern Rhodesia,” *Journal of British Studies* 48 (October 2009): 914–934.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-04138-7 - Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of
the British World, 1869–1967
Ellen Boucher
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Abbreviations

ANA	Australian National Archives
CAF	Central African Federation
CCCW	Canadian Council of Child Welfare
CES	Child Emigration Society (later Fairbridge Society)
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office
CUL: RCS	Cambridge University Library, Royal Commonwealth Society
CVOCE	Council of Voluntary Organisations for Child Emigration
EEC	European Economic Community
LGB	Local Government Board
NCH	National Children's Home
NLA	National Library of Australia
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
OSC	Oversea Settlement Committee
OVC	Overseas Visitors Club
RFMC	Rhodesia Fairbridge Memorial College
SAWA: BL	State Archives of Western Australia: Battye Library
SLNSW	State Library of New South Wales, Mitchell Library
TNA: PRO	The National Archives: Public Record Office (United Kingdom)
UDI	Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence, 1965
ULSCA	University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives
WHO	World Health Organization