Children have been deprived of a family for hundreds of years. By taking them off of the street they are given an opportunity to be educated and become part of a community. This connection to the community is discussed in the “Toronto’s Orphans’ Home and Female Aid Society’s Third Annual Report” in 1854. This report is in The Baldwin Collection in the Toronto Public Library as part of the complete set of reports from 1854-1920 written by the women of the institution. The purpose of this report was to give the home structure and to discuss the events within the previous year which ended on June 5th 1854, as well as any changes that should be made. The information of the report seems reliable due to the importance of the document and how it is addressed. The report is brought forward annually to, “. . . appear before the Corporation to render an account of the manner in which they have discharged the trust reposed in them; and before doing so, they would desire humbly to record their grateful acknowledgments to Him ‘from whom all good gifts do come.’”[[1]](#footnote-1) The document’s purpose was presented throughout in a clear manner. The employed women were trusted with the lives of 18 children, and were suspected to be part of the English church since they often gave praise to God throughout the report. The Rules and Regulations of the home held them accountable, and they were expected to report all actions that were taken regarding the society. This speculation is brought forward due to how highly they spoke of the church and its role. The format of this document shows how the authors of the report knew the significance of the home firsthand. This may differ from outside opinions due to many community members being unaware of the homes impact on the society; it may be view in the public’s eye as unorthodox. This analysis focuses on the Third Annual Report’s perspective on the importance of community through connections with children, apprenticeship within the community, and relationships with the public.

Taking children off the street is discussed multiple times in the Rules and Regulations. Since the home is not complete in 1854 there is an inability to take in large groups of children. “. . . and when increased accommodation can be obtained by the completion of the ‘Home’ now in course of erection, this shelter will be proportionably extended.”[[2]](#footnote-2) This allowed the home to take in more children in. Until then, children with no parents were prioritised. This was beneficial to the community because fewer children lived on the street, thus creating a stronger sense of community. The document shows that when brought into the home, children are provided with care and education. In the Rules and Regulations of the document it stated, “a school shall always form part of the establishment and religious instruction of the Church of England shall be included in the daily education of the School.”[[3]](#footnote-3) This education will give orphans newly available opportunities and will help them become more mature members of society.

Apprenticing is beneficial to the families, children, and the community. The document explains how children of the home are given opportunity to learn a trade at the age of twelve unless circumstances are special. Children “. . . may be apprenticed to such worthy Protestant families as give satisfactory evidence to the Managers by the certificates of clergymen that they are proper persons to have charge of orphan children.”[[4]](#footnote-4) As it states in the Rules and Regulations children are not just placed in any home but homes of whom they considered good members of the society, usually of the protestant religion. Children are welcomed into the community by these families, where they are able to help financially. One key point of the regulations on apprenticing was, at the expiration of each year the children are given fifteen shillings to put toward their savings.[[5]](#footnote-5) Being an apprentice gave the orphans financial stability that helped in their future to become a successful working member of society.

The Toronto Orphans Home and Female Aid Society brought people of the community together by creating ties between the home and the public. Good members of society may be considered to become a member of the society through donation and adoption. In 1854, the annual report stated that a clear sense of community was not quite made yet “A difficulty faced by the society’s managers was a lack of knowledge within Toronto of the institution.”[[6]](#footnote-6) “They were shocked by the lack of memberships from people who are always involved in good work and labour of love.”[[7]](#footnote-7) The document, this shows the significance of community members to keep the home running. It also pointed out that there was a large amount of members of the Toronto community that felt the need to help within the community. The Orphan home gave these members of society the opportunity to be a part of something and help this home continue to establish.

The Toronto Orphans’ Home and Female Aid Society clearly discussed in their Third Annual Report the importance of community. Throughout the report the authors wrote about the positive impact the home has on the people of the community. Children were taken off the streets and provided with a home. They were given opportunities to help the community flourish economically. Community members became a part of this society and helped work towards a new and better home. With the efforts from the public and members working in this home, children were given a chance to become mature members of society, thus improving Toronto’s community as a whole, making for a brighter future.

Document Analysis: *The Orphans’ Home and Female Aid Society Toronto; Third Annual Report (1854)*

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1. The Orphans’ Home and Female Aid Society, “Third Annual Report”, (Toronto, Ontario: Henry Rowsell, Printer, King street, 1854), 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Orphans’ Home and Female Aid Society, “Third Annual Report”, (Toronto, Ontario: Henry Rowsell, Printer, King street, 1854), 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid., 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid., 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid., 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid., 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid., 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)