

ETHNO-CULTURAL
TRANSITION AND REGIONAL
IDENTITY IN THE EASTERN
TOWNSHIPS OF QUEBEC

J. I. Little

Canada's Ethnic Groups

Canadian Historical Society

The cover shows Irvine Little, Inverness farmer, repairing a buggy wheel with Elzéar Rousseau in the village of Lower Ireland, today's Saint-Jean de Brébeuf. Elzéar's father purchased the blacksmith shop from Willie McCrea when the latter moved to Alberta as a homesteader in 1913.

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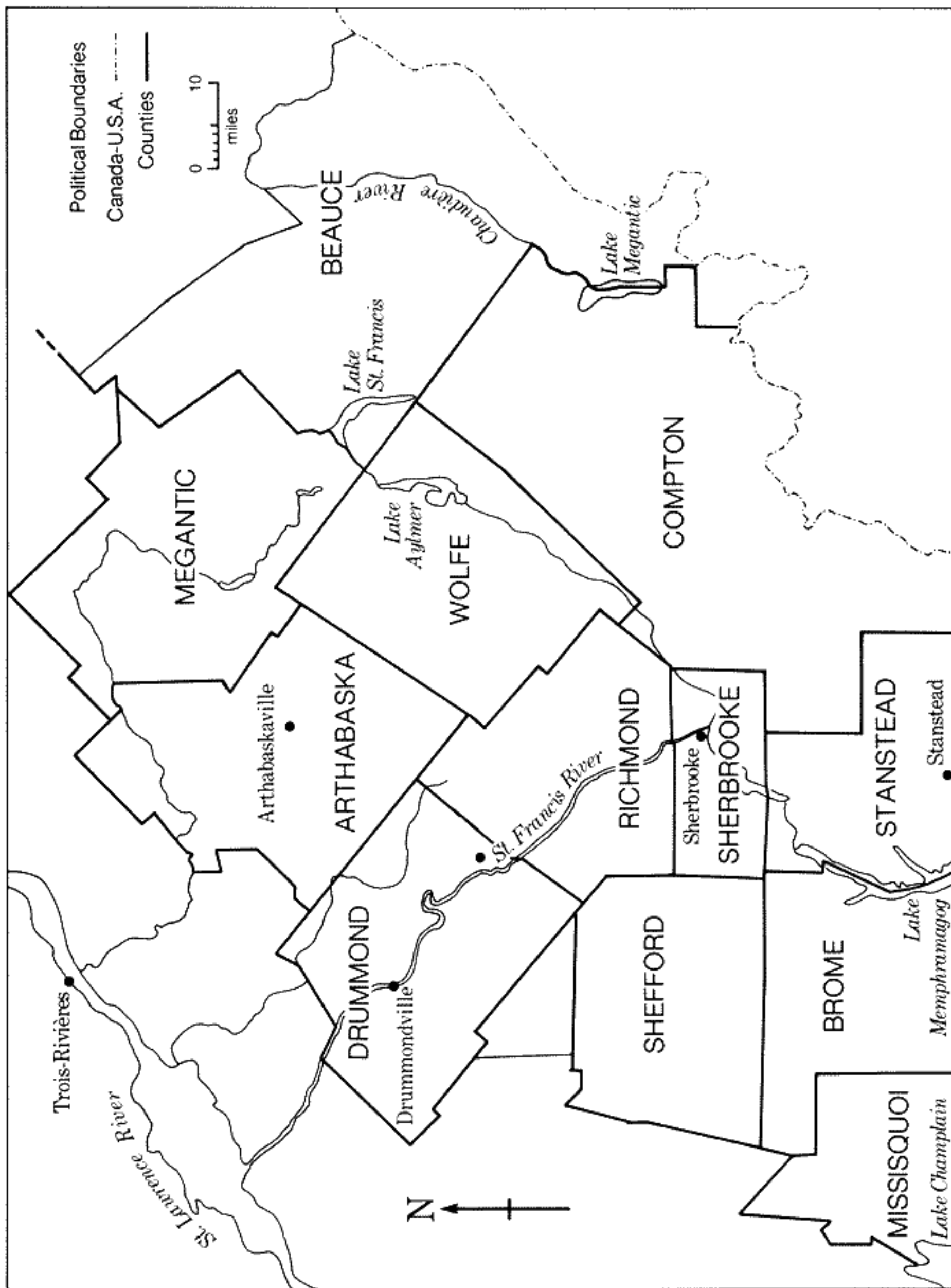
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ETHNO-CULTURAL TRANSITION AND REGIONAL IDENTITY IN THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS OF QUEBEC

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COUNTIES IN THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS: 1853 - 1915

ETHNO-CULTURAL TRANSITION AND REGIONAL IDENTITY IN THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS OF QUEBEC

J.I. Little

Had the counsel of the old Swiss [General Haldimand] been followed, the end to which he looked forward, and which today is being approached, would have been reached long ago, and one important cause of racial animosity might have been avoided.

A.L. Burt, *The Old Province of Quebec*, 1933.

With the above statement, one of Canada's most distinguished historians not only dismissed the English-speaking settlement of the Eastern Townships as an unfortunate mistake, but looked forward to the Anglo-Protestant disappearance from that region as a significant step towards ethno-cultural harmony in this country. If we set aside the obvious questions of whether a historian's role is to judge the past rather than explain it, and whether he has the right to criticize the historical existence of a distinct community, there remains the basic issue concerning the nature of Canada's national identity. For those who do not favour political separatism, the Belgian experience does little to inspire confidence in the model of cultural-linguistic segregation. Admittedly, the English-speaking population of Quebec has been privileged in comparison with its French language counterparts elsewhere in the country, but one should not forget the political and historical link between minority rights in "French" Quebec and "English" Canada. If Ontario's separate schools were recognized by the British North America Act, for example, it was only because of the political necessity to include a constitutional guarantee for the Protestant school system of Quebec.

As for French-English relations in the Eastern Townships itself, the region may never have been a well-spring of mutual toleration and good will, but the fact remains that the population transition which Professor Burt refers to took place with remarkably little friction. During the extended period when the French and English-speaking ratios of several constituencies hung in the balance, compromises were reached which informally institutionalized political co-operation at the local level. Two of our most successful Prime Ministers, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Louis St. Laurent, were products of that milieu. Indeed, most of the "racial animosity" in Quebec has stemmed from the dominant role of Anglo-Protestant capital in the major urban centres, and the English-speaking managerial class within the Eastern Townships itself was largely recruited from elsewhere.

In the final analysis, Professor Burt's observation is more significant as a reflection of outside opinion towards the English Canadians of the Eastern

Townships than for its historical insights. Not only is it ahistorical in its unspoken assumption that the eclipse of the English-speaking community was inevitable, but it ignores the fact that underlying socio-economic forces were more important than political strategies in determining the national background of the region's pioneer settlers. In a cultural sense the Eastern Townships originally became a northern extension of the Vermont — New Hampshire frontier with which it shared the same hilly topography. Because its piedmont zone was separated from the St. Lawrence Lowlands by a long line of virtually unpenetrable swamps, French Canadians began to arrive in significant numbers only during the 1830s and 1840s when the government made concerted efforts to build viable road links into the region. Meanwhile, the British government had actually done the French-Canadian nationalists a favour by treating Eastern Townships crown land essentially as a cheap means of paying off obligations to various individuals, thereby hindering the settlement of the region during a period of heavy American and British immigration to the colonies. The result was that the first struggle for political supremacy in the Eastern Townships was not between two groups with different religions and languages, but between the American pioneers and their descendants on the one hand, and British officialdom both inside and outside the region on the other.

Because the Eastern Townships became the scene of three culturally-distinct waves of immigration and settlement, it represents a fascinating laboratory for the historical study of relations between Canada's three pioneer nationalities, the French, the Americans and the British. Indeed, to speak of three cultural groups is an oversimplification because there were distinct Irish and Highland Scots settlements, and many of the loyalist settlers were of German and Dutch origin. On an ideological and political level, however, the contest for supremacy in the Eastern Townships was quite overtly between the American pioneers, the British elite relying partly on overseas immigration, and the French-Canadian latecomers who would eventually assert their dominance. In no other region of the country did this quintessentially-Canadian drama unfold in such a comprehensive and decisive fashion.

That it was a remarkably non-violent drama perhaps also makes it distinctively Canadian. Certainly mutual suspicion and prejudice did not evaporate upon immigration into the Eastern Townships, and the region's populace long remained remote from and hostile to external institutions of authority. Nevertheless, upon choosing to move to a British colony, American settlers had to a degree forsaken the victorious revolutionary tradition which fuels the aggressive sense of moral purpose south of the border. Furthermore, their somewhat reluctant loyalty (or at least neutrality) during the Rebellion of 1837 was ensured by a fear of transferring political domination from the hated British to the alien French Canadians. Indeed, it was ultimately the minority position of the Anglo-Protestants in the province that sapped their will to resist the French-Canadian population "invasion" of their communities. And if the political and cultural

context of the province as whole is one major explanation for the history of peaceful co-existence in its southernmost region, another determining factor is the geographical context of an open North American frontier. To most English-speaking families of the picturesque but commercially and culturally isolated Eastern Townships the decision to uproot themselves was eased by the promise of a more secure future in the West.

THE AMERICAN SETTLEMENT PHASE

The sole function of the territory bounded by the St. Lawrence, Chaudière, and Yamaska-Richelieu seigneuries during the French Regime was to serve as a hunting and fishing territory for the Abenakis situated at the mouth of the St. Francis and Becancour Rivers. Governor Frontenac's aim in limiting the southward extension of seigneuries was to maintain a buffer zone against attacks from the Iroquois and English colonies. French and Indian raids on the New England frontier passed through the region, and many of Roger's Rangers met their fate here after destroying the Abenakis village at St. François-du-Lac in 1759. The British later granted the Abenakis a reserve in Durham Township, but they appear never to have settled in the region.

The first permanent residents of what would become known as the Eastern Townships were loyalist refugees moving north along the Hudson River — Lake Champlain route into British territory. The upper Richelieu seigneurial grants actually extended into this area, but St. Armand on the eastern side of Missisquoi Bay can safely be considered a part of the Eastern Townships for geographical reasons, as well as because proprietor Thomas Dunn sold or leased its lots without exacting any feudal obligations. After the American Revolution ended, several loyalist officers were attracted to St. Armand by its easy access to the market at the military post of St. John's on the Richelieu. These officers purchased what they believed to be an Abenaki title, and recruited settlers from among the families quartered at posts along the lower Richelieu. Unfortunately for them, General Haldimand refused to condone settlement so close to the border, arguing that the presence of loyalists near their old enemies would inflame British-American relations, and that French Canadians would create a more effective obstacle to incursions of American settlers. Nevertheless, several of the former officers resisted his orders, even when it became clear that most, if not all, of the Indian claim lay on the American side of the border.

Despite his threats to burn their buildings, there was little Haldimand could do except to remove the colonists' names from the provisions list in the fall of 1784. Twenty-eight families are known to have settled East of Missisquoi Bay by the following February. All had fought as loyalists, and nearly all were of Dutch and German origin. The Dutch roots went back to the early 17th-century colony at Albany, while the Germans were descendants of those driven from the Palatine by Louis XIV at the turn of the 18th century. The military loyalists

clearly shared strong cultural bonds, but the Missisquoi Bay colony did acquire a mixed ethnic composition when refugees of Scots, Irish and English descent began to arrive. As early as 1785 a petition of 380 names was submitted for land titles in the area. The Executive Council delayed consideration of this petition until 1788, providing one of its members, Thomas Dunn, sufficient time to purchase the seigneurial title to St. Armand. He was then in a good position to sell land to the settlers, anxious as they were to legalize their status. Even those whose claim was based on the Indian title ultimately had to pay Dunn for their lots.

Under the influence of Chief Justice William Smith, himself a New York loyalist, British authorities eventually became reconciled to American settlement of the southern frontier. One Quebec official declaimed in 1788 that 20-to-30,000 American settlers would move into the region if seigneurial tenure were abolished. A year earlier the resident loyalists had indeed petitioned against "that appendage to Despotism". Finally, in 1792, it appeared that they and their land-hungry southern neighbours would gain almost unlimited access to the vast territory lying East and North of St. Armand, when the governor announced that Americans were forthwith welcome to settle as freeholders the land then being carved into townships of approximately ten miles square. Emphasizing its desire to prevent the growth of land monopolies, such as characterized the former American colonies, the British government declared that the standard grant to any individual would be 200 acres, with a maximum of 1200 acres in exceptional circumstances. It would be impossible, however, to colonize an isolated frontier without some form of collective organization to meet the great expenses involved in running survey lines and establishing the rudimentary economic infrastructure necessary to attract settlers. Recognizing the need to rely upon some form of entrepreneurial speculation, the authorities were forced to adopt the system of corporate proprietors which had originally emerged in New England. Known as the leader and associates system, the procedure was for a "leader" to present a petition signed by a number of "associates" requesting that they be granted a large block of land. The expectation was that each associate would compensate the leader for the expenses incurred by signing over a part of his grant — in the case of the Eastern Townships, 1000 of 1200 acres. The leader in turn would hold the land in trust for the group of capitalists who had financed the venture.

Quebec Councillors soon complained that William Smith was favouring his American friends. Through bureaucratic manoeuvres, such as delaying the appointment of loyalty-oath commissioners in the Missisquoi Bay area, they were able to protract the land granting process until it was brought to a complete halt by Smith's death in 1793. The strategy of the colony's officials became clear the following year when their land committee declared that the township lands, including those already under warrant for survey, were forthwith open to new grant applications. Resorting to the specious argument that the original applicants were mere speculators, and that the time limit on all the original warrants had

expired, the land committee granted many of the townships to new petitioners — mainly to Quebec officials themselves with their merchant allies. Indeed, it was later revealed that the committee's head, Hugh Finlay, had conspired to take over several townships then in the process of being developed by American claimants. When colonial authorities announced that all "unauthorized" settlers must vacate their holdings, Smith's protégé and fellow English-born loyalist, Samuel Gale, warned of civil unrest in the region. Finlay simply replied that American settlers, "with their pernicious principles", should not be allowed to settle in the province. In 1796 Gale became private secretary to the new governor, Robert Prescott, and two years later, on Prescott's recommendation, the Colonial Office authorized grants to the original claimants based on their investment and progress in promoting settlement. Unfortunately for them, the resulting conflict with Council led to the governor's recall in 1799. After three years of lobbying in London on behalf of the original claimants, Gale met with the British government's formal rejection of his petition in 1802. The colonial authorities were nevertheless presumably instructed to adopt a more reasonable policy, since several of the original township leaders finally did receive grants of varying sizes close to the American border.

As investors and residents, these men remained energetic promoters of Eastern Townships development, but the same cannot be said of the official-merchant clique which had acquired the bulk of the region's lands. By 1807, when Prescott's successor retired, close to two million acres had been alienated in Lower Canada, much of it in the Eastern Townships. The auction system was finally introduced in 1809, but this did not prevent the profligate former governor, Robert Shore Milnes, from himself receiving a grant of 48,000 acres in three of the best townships. The wholesale alienation of the region's public lands to absentee proprietors was restrained only by the scattered crown and clergy reserves, two lots in every seven, but these in turn retarded settlement and road construction.

In contrast to Upper Canada, the Eastern Townships was dependent on snow-packed trails to haul its produce to the distant market of Montreal. As late as 1850 transportation costs took 50 per cent of any grain shipped to that city from Compton Township. By necessity the principle exports long remained distilled products such as potash and potato whiskey. In 1815, nonetheless, Surveyor-General Bouchette reported the farms in Compton to be "in a thriving and excellent condition, generally producing crops of wheat of excellent quality, and in quantity far beyond the home consumption". Presumably the settlers had been able to take advantage of the temporary inflation in prices created by the War of 1812, for two-thirds of the British army's supplies reportedly came from nearby Vermont and New York. Future sales would clearly depend greatly upon the internal market created by a steady influx of colonists into the region, an influx which the war appears to have done little to interrupt. Whereas one can estimate from an informal census taken in 1803 that there were about 8000

inhabitants in the Eastern Townships, Bouchette's survey of 1815 suggests approximately 20,000. Unfortunately for the local residents, their region was about to enter a long period of economic stagnation and slow demographic expansion.

The problems began with a series of widespread summer frosts which destroyed much of the harvests between 1816 and 1820. Alden Learned of Eaton Township later remembered that in early June 1816 "the leaves were all killed on the trees, and most of the small birds we could pick up by the dozen after the snow left". In the fall an early frost killed all the new-land wheat, and flour reached the price of \$15 to \$18 per bushel. Learned's parents wanted to move to Ohio from where relatives were sending glorious reports of the country, but they could not find a buyer for their farm at any price. Under these circumstances, many neighbours simply abandoned their homesteads for the West. Eaton's populace became so incapable of supporting its Congregationalist minister that in 1820 he and many of his flock joined the Church of England, with its tempting \$800 annual subsidy. With the surplus population in neighbouring New England turning its attention more and more exclusively westward after the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, the Eastern Townships would find itself increasingly dependent upon British immigration and subject to the influence of British institutions.

THE BRITISH SETTLEMENT PHASE

If reasonable accuracy can be claimed for the population figure of 22,600 recorded for 1825 in the 1831 census, or for Bouchette's estimate of 28,500 in 1827 (see Table 1), the years following 1815 were disastrous ones for the Eastern Townships' development. It had been unable to retain its own natural increase, much less attract significant numbers of immigrants. Although the Legislative Assembly began investigating the potential for French-Canadian colonization in the Eastern Townships as early as 1820, it hesitated to encourage economic development in a region where the chief beneficiaries would be the province's land-holding merchant-official clique, and where additional British settlement would only contribute to the anglicization of the province. In 1818 the Assembly's chief spokesman, Pierre Bédard, asked: "Is it possible that the assembly will not see the absurdity and cowardice of using the funds of the province in having roads made for these Yankees and afterwards in having roads kept in repair for large sums of money?" Finally, in 1829 the Townships began to benefit from the attention of the province's two rival political forces. During the following two years the *parti canadien* MLAs wooed local voters by voting considerable sums for roads and bridges, and the Colonial Office made a concerted effort to direct British emigration into the region by sponsoring a group settlement project for the northeastern townships of Leeds and Inverness. Between June 1829 and August 1830 over 1500 settlers, principally from the northern counties of Ireland, the Isle of Arran, and Yorkshire, were directed to this remote wilderness

area. The experiment was widely held to be a great success, but, rather than repeat it, the British government would eventually sell the region's most accessible remaining crown land, reserves and all, to a London-based company.

Table 1

Population of the Eastern Townships by County: 1825, 1827, 1831

<i>Counties</i>	1825	1827	1831	1844
Missisquoi	6,951	7,766	8,801	10,797
Shefford	2,294	4,467	5,081	10,063
Stanstead	7,088	8,272	10,248	11,913
Mégantic	249	626	2,282	6,745
Drummond	1,325	1,907	3,543	9,159
Sherbrooke	4,703	5,471	7,085	13,391
Totals	22,610	28,509	37,040	62,068

Sources: Joseph Bouchette, *The British Dominions in North America* (1831; reprinted New York, 1968), pp. 350-53; *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada*, XLI (1831-32), Appendix Oo; *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Canada*, V (1846), Appendix D. Higher population figures for 1831 are recorded for most of the Eastern Townships counties in the 1870-71 *Census Reports*, vol. 4. The 1830-31 *Census* mistakenly totals Stanstead's 1825 population as 6088. The above table does not include reported absentees.

Physical obstacles may have constituted the chief impediment to Eastern Townships development, but the region responded dramatically to the much-needed official attention. According to the 1831 census the population had expanded to 37,000 which represented an annual increase of 11 per cent from six years earlier. This pace of development proved to be short-lived, for the population in 1844 was only 62,000 — an annual growth rate of only 5 per cent over a 13-year period of heavy British immigration to North America. From an administrative point of view, the British connection would remain more of an impediment than an asset. Rather than promoting settlement, London basically continued to regard the region's crown lands as a convenient and cost-free reserve to draw upon for compensation of redundant military officers and other claimants to the crown's patronage. Between 1826 and 1839, 641,000 acres in Lower Canada were alienated by free grant directly from London, while the Commissioner of Crown Lands sold about 400,000 acres, mostly in blocks of over 200 acres. Thus even the sales policy was drafted with revenue rather than settlement as its priority.

The same could be said of the massive land sale to the British American Land

Company in 1834. In a single transaction the London-based enterprise acquired all the crown reserves in Sherbrooke, Shefford, and Stanstead Counties (250,000 acres) and the unsurveyed St. Francis Tract between the upper St. Francis River and Lake Megantic (600,000 acres). A similar scheme had fallen through in 1825 due to the opposition of the Governor, but official resistance had since evaporated under the influence of deteriorating relations with the Assembly. By 1835 the company had solidified its monopolistic hold over much of the Eastern Townships by acquiring at auctions another 60,000 acres in clergy reserves as well as some 32,000 acres in privately-held land.

Aside from publishing excerpts of letters from recent British immigrants to the region, the British American Land Company did little to develop the inhabited townships where its scattered reserve lots and private purchases were to be found. The letters themselves clearly suggest that the company was looking for a higher class of immigrant to purchase these valuable properties. In 1836 W.G. Mack of Shipton Township ensured such readers that “you will no where see in this part of the country, gentlemen with their beards a week old, wearing shoes that despise Warren, or sitting down to dinner without their jackets. The reason is obvious, — we are surrounded by people who retain the ideas of propriety with which they have been brought up in the ‘old country’”. The company’s promotional literature invariably mentioned the beauty of the region, as well as the healthfulness of the hilly topography when compared with the low-lying lands of Upper Canada. The Eastern Townships had even escaped the cholera epidemic (testifying, in fact, to the small number of Irish immigrants), while Upper Canada was said to be notorious for its fevers and agues. Another advantage mentioned for the Eastern Townships was the shorter distance to the Montreal and Quebec markets, for much was made of the superior transportation facilities provided by the heavy winter snowfall. Furthermore, stock-raising appealed particularly to gentlemen. One visitor wrote in 1834 that “The fine hill and dale lay of the land, adapts them admirably for grazing farms, which, properly managed, remunerates the farmer well; and with far less labour than any other kind of farming”. Finally, and not least important, was the low cost of well-stocked farms in the Eastern Townships.

Few writers attempted to explain why so many long-time residents were anxious to forsake the superior advantages of the region, aside from the generalization that they were a pioneering people. Mr. Mack opined that the Yankees “are all anxious to sell out, not because they are ill pleased with the country, but because they see a fair chance of making a few dollars — a consideration which far outweighs their love of *home*, a feeling which hardly finds place in a real American breast”. In fact, the letter writers and the company were too quick to dismiss the economic handicaps of the region. Underestimating the need for improved transportation links to Montreal and Quebec, the commissioners dissipated much of the company’s capital on impractical schemes to attract large-scale immigration to the isolated and mountainous St. Francis Tract. The first step was to extend a lengthy road from the village of Sherbrooke

to the mouth of the St. Francis River, where facilities were established for receiving immigrants. The second and complementary step was to link Sherbrooke with a network of roads under construction in the St. Francis Tract, where no expense was spared to erect dams, mills, and even houses for the reception of the immigrants.

All hopes of recuperating capital expenditures from the immediate sale of the former reserve lots was destroyed in 1837 when the outbreak of rebellion brought British immigration to a halt. As for the approximately 400 English and German settlers located in the wilderness, most soon left for greener pastures to the West. Indeed, many of them had been side-tracked to the Eastern Townships in the first place only because they had run out of money for the more expensive passage to Upper Canada or New York. A good idea of the region's poor image as a potential haven for immigrants can be gleaned from a report submitted by the Petworth Emigration Committee's agent in 1836. He claimed to be "most pleased with the romantic picturesque and (in many places) beautiful scenery on the banks of the St. Francis", but even though he favoured the townships "as combining a certain proportion of the useful with the ornamental, to gentlemen already possessed of a moderate independence, I do not consider them of half the agricultural value of the Upper Province...to the poor man". When Alexander T. Galt, son of the Canada Company's founder, toured the St. Francis Tract in the summer of 1840 he found the company roads choked with bushes four feet high, and the three villages deserted by all but a handful of families, with their warehouses, mills, and pearlsh manufacturing facilities all in decay. Unable to meet its payments, the company rescinded over 500,000 acres of the St. Francis Tract in exchange for cancellation of its remaining debt to the crown.

The seeds of one persistent colony had been sown, however, when in 1838 the company had arranged for the transportation of 60 Gaelic-speaking families from Lochbroom and the remote Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. The agent who organized the migration claimed that "they were probably the poorest crowd that ever left the Highlands", but the 223 Lewis crofters who followed them unassisted in 1841 were in a still more impoverished condition. According to the Quebec immigration agent they had "arrived in great distress for want of provisions", having spent all their money in purchasing supplies from the ship's master during the 70-day voyage. Despite the fact that the British American Land Company refused to offer aid, bringing the colony close to starvation the following winter, this contingent too managed to establish itself in the company's much-reduced St. Francis Tract. With the encouragement of Lewis's wealthy new landlord, Sir James Matheson, a third and final contingent of several hundred individuals arrived from the famine-stricken island in 1851. The census taken the following spring records close to 1,000 Scottish-born settlers in the area. They were the last significant group migration to arrive in the Eastern Townships from the British Isles. In becoming the land company's commissioner, the practical-minded young Alexander Galt redirected its attention to the

development of an industrial centre at Sherbrooke.

The British American Land Company would make its strongest cultural-political mark on the region, not by stimulating British immigration, but by solidifying the alliance between Sherbrooke's American merchants and British landowner-liberal professionals against the rural-democratic petit bourgeoisie. While outlying areas such as Stanstead had opposed the introduction of the land monopoly, Sherbrooke had held high hopes that an infusion of capital would elevate the region from its economic isolation. Indeed, the individual chosen to lobby in London in 1833 for the establishment of such a company was Samuel Brooks, an American-born merchant who had been elected by Sherbrooke as a reform candidate. With the land company's investment in the town's mills and factories, as well as its success in directing the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railway through Sherbrooke and away from the village of Stanstead at mid-century, the Sherbrooke élite became a cohesive class, able to impose its political, social, and economic control over most of the Eastern Townships.

Not all the British office-holders were able to share the fruits of this victory, for the central figure in the local family compact, William Bowman Felton, had been sacrificed to appease the American populace. When Felton was dismissed from his post as Commissioner of Crown Lands in 1836, the local tory paper proclaimed that he had been the chief cause of radicalism in the region. Furthermore, Felton's death shortly thereafter conveniently made his valuable Sherbrooke mill sites available for development by the land company. The dominance of Felton's clan had been broken, for one brother resigned his position as district court prothonotary in fear of the Assembly's recriminations, and a brother-in-law was subjected to a damaging if ultimately fruitless inquiry into his conduct as sheriff. (He was also the district's grant voyer, in charge of roads, while a second brother was the local crown lands agent.) Felton's widow and nearly all his numerous progeny left the region shortly after his death.

Resented as the Felton family was, an even more hated figure was the scornfully anti-American district judge, John Fletcher. In 1826 he arrested and fined the editor of Stanstead's *British Colonist*, Silas Dickerson, for publishing comments from a number of readers criticizing his arbitrary conduct on the bench. During the following two years there were four more arrests of Dickerson, with several weeks' imprisonment and fines and bail of more than \$2400, again all imposed by Fletcher. Committees of the Legislative Assembly concluded on four separate occasions that the judge had exceeded his authority, but their recommendations were without effect. In response, Dickerson became increasingly sympathetic to the Patriote cause, arousing particular concern among the local élite in 1834 when his newspaper openly declared its support for the Ninety-Two Resolutions. A group of prominent Sherbrooke citizens subsequently took advantage of the publisher's debts to have his press sold and moved to their town, where they used it to print a new tory paper. Silencing Dickerson did not prevent Stanstead from electing two Patriote supporters a few

months later. Local support for the radical cause began to cool, however, after the Assembly not only scotched a proposal to build a railway through the region, but Louis-Joseph Papineau declared on a visit that the seigneurial system should be extended throughout the province. Lord Gosford's report shrewdly observed in May 1836 that the Stanstead and Missisquoi representatives had not been elected to defend either the "feudal system" and the French language, or to object to the establishment of registry offices essential to recording freehold land transactions, but to oppose a government "which neglects or regards with disfavour" settlers from the United States. Not only was Stanstead's radical candidate defeated in a January 1837 by-election, but the district remained largely quiescent after the rebellion broke out the following fall.

The extent of the British political victory is well-illustrated by the subsequent career of Marcus Child who, as Stanstead's MLA, had signed the Ninety-Two Resolutions. When he returned from self-imposed exile after the rebellion, Child abandoned Stanstead Plain for the new rail town of Coaticook, converted from Methodism to Anglicanism, and took advantage of his role as district school inspector to criticize the "injurious effect" of the democratically-inclined American texts. Despite the best efforts of the conservative elite, however, its imperializing campaign was hindered by the proximity of the American border and the relatively small volume of British immigration to the Eastern Townships. Even though immigrants had disembarked at Quebec by the tens of thousands between 1844 and mid-century, the British-born population of the Eastern Townships had increased by only 3,000 during these years. Furthermore, many of those enumerated in the spring of 1852 were transient Irish labourers living in shanties alongside the construction sites of the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railway. While the ratio of the British-born had remained constant at 22 per cent between 1844 and 1852, it had dropped to 17 per cent by 1861 (see Table 2).

Table 2

English-speaking Population of the Eastern Townships by Country of Origin

	1844	1851	1861
Canada	28,729 (60%)	36,408 (63%)	52,994 (71%)
England & Wales	2,945 (6%)	2,878 (5%)	2,905 (4%)
Scotland	2,235 (5%)	2,950 (5%)	3,142 (4%)
Ireland	5,236 (11%)	7,510 (13%)	6,449 (9%)
United States	8,562 (18%)	8,457 (15%)	8,859 (12%)
Totals	47,707	58,203	74,349

Sources: *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Canada*, V (1846), Appendix D; Canada, *Census Reports*, 1852, 1861.

Some of the Canadian-born were of second or third-generation British descent, but the British population tended to be either concentrated in peripheral and economically marginal areas to the North, or scattered among the American-descended majority in the more densely-populated border townships (see Table 3). Today, various intonations of the Scots-Irish accent can still be heard at the annual Orange Lodge picnic in Leeds Township, and, further South, a yearly Gaelic service is still held for the descendants of the Lewis Scots, but there are very few local residents left to attend these events. In fact the unusual survival of such cultural vestiges is a strong indicator of the social isolation experienced by the two main centres of British immigration. Closer to the American border, where English-speaking migrants from Megantic County are known patronizingly as “down-homers”, the prevailing accent is distinctly Yankee in flavour. Here American customs and loyalties persisted for many years, much to the distaste of the British immigrants.

Table 3
British-Born Population in Eastern Townships Counties, 1844¹

	England & Wales	Scotland	Ireland	Total
Arthabaska	35	11	220	266
Bagot	-	6	-	6
Beauce	15	17	121	153
Brome	180	64	145	389
Compton	831	425	252	1508
Drummond	218	172	735	1125
Megantic	325	471	1275	2071
Missisquoi	329	193	616	1138
Richmond	331	392	656	1379
Shefford	191	278	593	1062
Sherbrooke	243	105	302	650
Stanstead	211	101	261	573
Wolfe	36	-	60	96

¹ Excludes non-township sections of the counties; 1853-1915 county boundaries.

Source: *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Canada*, V (1846), Appendix D.

In 1854 the young English-born Louisa Stacey of Ascot Township wrote: “On 4th July here Independence Day is always celebrated, a flag hoisted, guns fired, and a general jubilee. Today, 24th May and the Queen’s birthday, no one knows about it. Papa often says he wishes he had a Union Jack to hoist on our great days”. A decade earlier, Louisa’s father had already noted a still more dramatic

example of deep-rooted American influence in the region. The Methodist and Baptist churches had cut their American ties as a result of the 1812 War, but many of their members succumbed to the appeal of New York's Millerite revivalists in the early 1840s. George Stacey wrote in 1843:

The 14th April was the day fixed on by them for the end of this world, but it passed in the usual way, and with it I trust will pass this most impious doctrine. It is lamentable to witness with what avidity this pernicious theory of Mr. Miller's, its leader, has been caught up by thousands. To such a pitch has it been carried on in these Townships, that hundreds of families have plunged themselves into difficulties, sold up everything, and are now in such a state that it will scarcely be possible to extricate them from their predicament.

Whether it wished to or not, the middle class itself could not entirely escape American cultural influences. Bishop's College was located in Lennoxville in 1845 to mold "in English tastes and principles, the young men of American origin", but many of the non-Anglican majority continued to send their sons to the colleges of Vermont.

On the political level, the last mass display of pro-American sentiment manifested itself with the annexationist movement of 1849. One thousand signed the petition in Sherbrooke County, and twelve-to-fifteen hundred in Stanstead, encouraging the MLA's of both constituencies to declare themselves in favour of joining the United States. When the government dismissed those justices of the peace and militia officers who had signed the petition, civil unrest became barely manageable. As in Montreal, however, the movement was ultimately initiated and controlled by the conservative bourgeoisie, including the British American Land Company's Commissioner Galt. Annexationist sentiment dissipated with the dramatic opening of the American market for Townships produce in 1850.

THE FRENCH-CANADIAN PHASE

The annexationist movement was not entirely the product of economic hardship. Like their Montreal counterparts, Eastern Townships Anglo-Protestants were also concerned about the political implications of responsible government. At a protest meeting held in Stanstead in 1849, Chairman C.C. Colby declared that "When we contemplate the Ministerial measure for an increase of their representation, their division of counties, their organized plan of colonizing these townships with inhabitants of French origin, and this for the avowed purpose of transferring all legislation in Lower Canada to the French Canadians, to a race of people behind *all* others in enterprize, in agriculture, commerce and the arts, as well as in education, we feel an oppression almost beyond endurance". Up until this point, French Canadians had come to the Townships almost

exclusively as seasonal farm labourers or colonists in the northern peripheral district known as the Bois-Francs. In 1844 about half the 14,580 Francophones enumerated in the Eastern Townships lived in what would become Drummond, Arthabaska and Megantic Counties, often as squatters on lands still held by descendants of the original merchant-official grantees. By 1852 their number in these counties had doubled, but so had their expansion in the rest of the region. From 23 per cent of the total population in 1844, they had jumped to 36 per cent eight years later, even though the colonization movement referred to by Colby was still in its infancy.

That movement had been launched with considerable fanfare upon the birth in 1848 of the *Association pour l'établissement des Canadiens-Français dans les Townships du Bas-Canada*. The movement had been inspired by Sherbrooke's Irish-born missionary-priest, Bernard O'Reilly, who argued that township settlement was the solution to overcrowding in the seigneuries, and that it had to be carefully organized in order to prevent French-Canadian assimilation by the Anglo-Protestant majority. Newspapers in Quebec and Montreal published O'Reilly's accounts of young French-speaking families close to perishing from hunger and cold in the midst of a generally affluent population, and of youths placed in English-speaking families where they learned to substitute the politeness of their fathers for the rude republican manners of their masters. According to O'Reilly, the danger for their very souls was painfully obvious: "Sans écoles où ils puissent s'instruire dans la connaissance de leur langue maternelle, sans églises où ils puissent recueillir même les éléments de l'instruction religieuse, il n'est point étonnant, si en cessant de parler français, une trop grande nombre, hélas! cessent d'être catholiques et canadiens".

Given that, according to an Assembly committee, some 20,000 Lower Canadians had migrated to the United States since 1844, the time was ripe for O'Reilly to convince Montreal's anticlerical *Institut Canadien* to join forces with its ultramontane bishop, Mgr. Bourget, to work for the greater national interest. Once the colonization society had been launched, the governing party, led in Canada East by Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine, had little choice but to throw its support behind the project. Finally, the full collaboration of the governor general, Lord Elgin, was assured when Papineau, recently returned from exile, used the occasion of a mass organizational meeting to dwell upon British crimes against the French-Canadian nation. Elgin was able to acquire the funds needed by the near-bankrupt administration by convincing Britain to donate \$80,000 as compensation for expenses incurred in fighting the typhus epidemic among the immigrants of 1847. Because the Colonial Office had assumed that its grant would be directed towards promoting British colonization, Elgin assured it that the growth of a French-Canadian population in the Eastern Townships would strengthen the imperial connection by acting as a security against annexation to the United States:

An English man, Scotchman or Irishman when he is outwitted by his Yankee neighbour may be tempted to admire his superior sagacity, and to curse the Govt. and constitution of Great Britain for the consequences of his own stupidity or apathy. But it is not so with the Habitans. Contact with those precious specimens of Anglo Saxondom, who are ignorant of his language, despise his intellect, ridicule his customs, and swindle him in every transaction in which he is engaged with them, is by no means provocative of affection in his breast.

Echoing Governor Haldimand of the 1780s, Elgin insisted that the government should “fill up the Frontier country with French — and the lands to the rear with British, who may retain their love of home and its institutions at a distance from American influences”.

The provincial administration decided to build a network of colonization roads into the million-acre tract still remaining at its disposal in what would soon become Wolfe, northern Compton and southern Beauce Counties. Before it could take concrete steps, the Montreal branch of the *Association des Townships* had already drafted a project to colonize the British American Land Company’s more advantageously-located lands in Shefford County. LaFontaine’s strategy to co-opt the association ultimately succeeded, for Father O’Reilly and the *Institut Canadien* allies of the Rouge opposition party became engaged in an unseemly political debate in the province’s press. Prior to the Montreal branch’s acrimonious dissolution, it did manage to establish a permanent French-Canadian colony in Roxton Township, close to the route of the rapidly-advancing St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railway. In 1856 the *Waterloo Advertiser* praised the “air of neatness, comfort and thrift which pervades the settlements, and which — better than a thousand fine-spun theories — establishes the fact that the surplus population of the old counties need not seek the prairies nor the gold-mines to find comfort and competence”.

Unfortunately, a comparable judgement would never be possible for those townships further East which became the site of the government’s own colonization project, co-sponsored by the Quebec branch of the *Association des Townships*. In this elevated, thin-soiled and isolated district, the average snowfall is double that of Sherbrooke, and the growing season is regularly a month shorter than in the Montreal area. Even before the 1848 colonization roads project, Lords Durham and Sydenham had unwittingly opened an artery of French-Canadian penetration into the area by sanctioning construction of the Lambton Road from the Chaudière seigneuries to Lake St. Francis. Their aim had been to establish a British foothold in the uninhabited Megantic Tract, but immigrants had shunned the district. French Canadians arrived instead; between 1844 and 1852 their numbers in the townships of what would soon be southern Beauce increased from 456 to 2782. Regrettably for them, much of the road passed through absentee-held land in Tring Township, with the result that by 1850 it was “in an

almost impassable state”, leaving “thirty families under the deplorable necessity of subsisting on boiled herbs, raspberries and bilberries during a great part of the summer”.

Rather than improving the Lambton Road to the Chaudière, LaFontaine’s project extended it southward to the British American Land Company’s St. Francis Road, and added long arteries westward to the Gosford and Craig Roads as well as eastward to Lake Megantic. The Quebec *Association des Townships*, whose chief role was to finance churches and schools, had little difficulty recruiting settlers, particularly from the South-shore seigneuries of the Quebec and Trois-Rivières districts. Families also arrived from the depression-plagued town of Quebec itself. At one meeting, local politician P.J.O. Chauveau moved that: “le manque actuel de travail et la famine déjà commencé qui menacent d’envahir la société l’hiver prochain, rendent impérieux le besoin de coloniser les townships ou serait envoyé la partie de notre population qui manque de travail”. The French-Canadian population of future Wolfe County alone increased from 65 in 1844 to 1393 in the spring of 1852, by which time inclement weather and isolation from potential assistance had brought many close to starvation.

Given the severe economic limitations of their farms, the population of Wolfe, northern Compton, and southwestern Beauce had little choice but to remain oriented towards agricultural self-sufficiency. In 1871, twenty years after Winslow Township had first been colonized, its domestic cloth production per family was more than double that recorded in American-settled Compton Township, while its average cultivated acreage and number of cattle were only half (see Table 4). Even though Winslow was located in the midst of the timber shanty market of the upper St. Francis watershed, her farms produced much less oats, potatoes, hay, and pork than did those of Compton. The agricultural differences between Winslow’s French-Canadian and Highland Scots populations were relatively minor. The latter farmed on a slightly larger scale, maintained their traditional customs of growing barley and raising sheep, and rejected the French-Canadian practices of smoking home-grown tobacco and including flax in the home manufacture of cloth. To a much greater degree than the Scots, who had immigrated from a treeless island, Winslow’s French Canadians integrated the exploitation of the surrounding forests with their agricultural economy. The Scots produced relatively little maple sugar, and cut even less wood than did the commercially-oriented Compton Township farmers. Most of the very large quantity of square timber recorded for the French Canadians of Winslow was actually claimed by one individual, but he must have hired men from his neighbourhood to help cut it.

This individual must also have been trespassing on company timber limits because the provincial government leased virtually all the crown land in the upper St. Francis watershed to C.S. Clark and Company. The colonists were legally restricted from exploiting the only viable cash crop their district produced,

Table 4

Mean Agricultural and Forest Production Among French- and British-Origin Farmers in Winslow and Compton Townships, 1871

	Families	Improved (acres)	Wheat (bu.)	Barley (bu.)	Oats (bu.)						
1. Winslow Fr.	127	35.8	5.4	16.0	43.0						
2. Winslow Br.	109	40.6	1.3	45.1	61.4						
3. Compton Br.	300	90.3	23.4	6.9	152.5						
	Rye (bu.)	Peas & Beans (bu.)	Buckwheat (bu.)	Corn (bu.)	Potatoes (bu.)						
1.	10.0	4.4	21.6	1.5	95.1						
2.	0.1	0.5	33.1	0.1	136.8						
3.	3.8	7.4	74.4	10.4	278.1						
	Hay (t.)	Flax (lb.)	Tobacco (lb.)	Hops (lb.)	Maple Sugar (lb.)	Horses	Cattle				
1.	7.4	10.0	4.5	-	242.4	1.1	5.1				
2.	12.3	-	-	-	36.4	0.8	7.7				
3.	32.5	0.1	0.1	90.9	574.5	2.9	13.2				
	Sheep	Pigs	Butter (lb.)	Cheese (lb.)	Honey (lb.)	Wool (lb.)	Wool Cloth (yd.)				
1.	5.8	1.9	70.5	-	-	14.2	22.2				
2.	10.9	2.2	112.2	-	-	33.1	36.0				
3.	12.0	2.7	314.9	24.9	15.9	70.3	14.3				
	Linen (yd.)	Cattle Killed or sold	Sheep Killed or Sold	Pigs Killed or sold							
1.	10.5	0.2	0.5	0.7							
2.	-	0.3	0.8	0.5							
3.	0.3	2.1	4.6	1.6							
	Sq. Timber (cu. ft.)	Logs	Firewood (cords)								
1.	14,556.0	58.6	31.5								
2.	-	4.3	19.6								
3.	50.3	26.0	38.8								

Source: 1871 Manuscript Census.

its timber. The census does not reveal how many local inhabitants were at least given winter jobs by the timber monopolist, but many of the Clark Company's employees were outsiders who worked during the summer months in the large

sawmill down-river from Sherbrooke. In 1858 one of many protest petitions complained that the Portland-owned company was cutting timber on the settlers' land claims: "si quelque pauvre malheureux veulent les empêcher de piller leurs bois, ils se moquent d'eux, quand ils ne font pas plus". The petitioners pointed out that the interests of French-Canadian settlers were being sacrificed for the sake of foreign capitalists who sent all the wood out of the country: "Pour un écu que donnent au Gouvernement tous ces étrangers, vous ruinez les townships, et vous feriez les enfants du sol à hair et détester un Gouvernement qui doit les protéger". The Clark Company was able to enforce its monopoly simply by controlling the only major transportation outlet for the district's logs, the upper St. Francis River. When two new rail lines offered alternate shipping facilities during the 1870s, the result was the sudden appearance of local sawmill towns followed closely by the disappearance of Clark and its Brompton-based mill. The railroads therefore stimulated continued population growth on the part of the district's French-Canadian population, but the Scots went into decline in the face of cheaper agricultural imports to the local market.

The French Canadians had passed the 50 per cent mark for the entire region's population during the 1860s, but three quarters of their numbers remained outside the southern and central counties of Missisquoi, Brome, Stanstead, Compton, and Richmond (see Table 5). Although the English-speaking population had actually begun to decline, most of the French-Canadian minority inhabiting the older constituencies were concentrated in pockets which they themselves had colonized, or, to a lesser extent, in the growing industrial centres (see Table 6). As early as 1846 the British American Land Company had had to recruit 40 to 50 French-Canadian girls to operate its new cotton mill in the village of Sherbrooke. In 1871 half the 4400 urban residents of Sherbrooke were of French origin.

Sherbrooke's population grew quickly during the next few years, but the land company refused for another quarter century to subdivide more of its property for residential purposes. The working-class wards became increasingly overcrowded until living conditions deteriorated to the level of the worst slums in Montreal. Whereas the French-Canadian population of rural Winslow Township was remarkably stable by the standards of the time, with 48 per cent of those families enumerated in 1852 still present 30 years later, that of Sherbrooke was very transient, with only 15 per cent of the families remaining in the city between 1883 and 1887. The French Canadians who settled in the older English Protestant townships also tended to be birds of passage. Of 42 French-origin landholders listed in Compton Township in 1852, only 8 were still present a decade later.

It would be many years before French Canadians established roots in the older townships, but a sense of pessimism seemed to pervade the English-speaking communities from a surprisingly early date. The *Stanstead Journal* scoffed in 1849 when the *Avenir* of Montreal predicted that soon the only English Canadians remaining would be businessmen living in the towns: "In twenty years (*think* of that, dear reader) this beautiful country, now mostly owned and inhabited by

Table 5

French-Canadian Population of Counties¹ in the Eastern Townships

	1844	1851	1861
1. Arthabaska	2,408 (77%)	5,183 (83%)	11,251 (86%)
2. Bagot	121 (95%)	352 (83%)	2,249 (83%)
3. Beauce	456 (54%)	2,782 (87%)	6,403 (94%)
4. Brome	454 (7%)	935 (11%)	1,644 (13%)
5. Compton	410 (7%)	841 (11%)	1,686 (17%)
6. Drummond	3,167 (52%)	5,049 (57%)	7,592 (61%)
7. Megantic	2,050 (35%)	5,564 (53%)	9,735 (61%)
8. Missisquoi	1,947 (17%)	3,610 (25%)	4,389 (29%)
9. Richmond	501 (11%)	664 (10%)	1,312 (15%)
10. Shefford	2,239 (35%)	5,884 (53%)	12,034 (68%)
11. Sherbrooke	379 (15%)	933 (19%)	1,419 (24%)
12. Stanstead	383 (4%)	781 (8%)	935 (8%)
13. Wolfe	65 (12%)	1,393 (62%)	5,357 (82%)
Totals	14,580 (23%)	33,971 (36%)	66,006 (47%)

	1871	1881	1891 ²	1901
1.	16,111 (91%)	18,038 (93%)	22,163 (95%)	22,631 (97%)
2.	3,687 (97%)	4,585 (94%)	5,050 (94%)	3,352 (97%)
3.	10,031 (98%)	11,382 (91%)	18,646 (94%)	24,083 (94%)
4.	3,471 (25%)	4,910 (31%)	5,063 (34%)	4,766 (36%)
5.	3,785 (28%)	7,706 (39%)	10,808 (47%)	14,460 (55%)
6.	10,487 (73%)	13,939 (78%)	16,749 (81%)	17,614 (86%)
7.	12,074 (64%)	12,157 (70%)	17,204 (77%)	18,721 (79%)
8.	6,734 (45%)	7,644 (48%)	9,078 (54%)	7,916 (55%)
9.	3,718 (33%)	6,258 (43%)	8,552 (52%)	10,812 (61%)
10.	12,684 (66%)	16,494 (71%)	18,667 (80%)	18,086 (77%)
11.	3,544 (42%)	5,825 (48%)	8,748 (54%)	10,645 (58%)
12.	3,212 (24%)	4,749 (31%)	7,191 (40%)	8,744 (46%)
13.	7,504 (85%)	10,251 (87%)	13,461 (90%)	14,885 (91%)
	97,041 (58%)	123,938 (62%)	161,380 (69%)	176,715 (72%)

1 Excludes non-township sections of the counties; 1853-1915 boundaries.

2 Approximation based on number of Catholics and ratio of French Canadians to Catholics in 1881 and 1901.

Sources: *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Canada*, V (1846), Appendix D; *Canada, Census Reports*, 1851-1901.

Table 6

French-Canadian Urban Population¹ in the Eastern Townships,
1871, 1881, 1901.

	French Canadians	Ratio to Total Urban	Ratio to Total French Canadian
1871	9,417	67%	10%
1881	17,642	62%	14%
1901	42,234	68%	24%

¹ Centres of a minimum of 400 people.

Sources: Canada, *Census Reports*, 1871, 1881, 1901.

Anglo-Saxons, will be covered with the habitants of the banks of the St. Lawrence, as was the devoted land of Egypt with frogs, in the days when the children of Israel 'went a gipsying' in the wilderness". Only seven years later, however, the *Waterloo Advertiser* would lament that: "We entertain no prejudice against our French Canadian fellow subjects but we are attached to the customs, the institutions and the religion of our fathers, and cannot do less than sympathize with those honest Anglo-Saxon settlers who have lived to behold, with sorrow, the evanescent prestige of their supremacy passing away".

The English-speaking population of the region certainly resented the government's colonization strategy, but the majority continued to support the Conservatives in the face of George Brown's constant attacks against the Grand Trunk Railway (originally called St. Lawrence and Atlantic) and Lower Canadian domination in general. Only when the Liberals were briefly in power did the local press give full vent to its anxieties. In 1863 the *Sherbrooke Gazette* charged that government roads were designed to accommodate "a few Canadian settlers on the recommendation of their spiritual advisers", while "places where, for thirty or forty years English and American settlers have had to make their own roads, without any government assistance...are neglected". The *Gazette* still clung to the rather futile hope that, with proper encouragement, British immigrants could to some extent offset the impact of the French-Canadian influx: "We do not ask or claim Lower Canada for the English-speaking resident or emigrant, as might naturally be expected in an English Colony, but we do protest against being set aside from an equal share in any benefits which might arise from the introduction of English emigrants, English capital, of English or American relatives, because we are English and not French Canadian". The conflict between cultural particularism and economic advantage became especially acute with the Confederation issue, which would return English Quebecers to their minority political status at the provincial level. The *Sherbrooke*

Gazette itself rebelled against A.T. Galt after he delivered a highly-publicized pro-Confederation speech to his Sherbrooke constituents in 1864. The Conservative mouthpiece was no longer to be persuaded by Galt's repetition of that time-tested theme, the shared material interests between Lower Canada's French and English-speaking population: "We are inclined to think the honourable gentleman skimmed over the surface of some matters...with his bland smile, and warm expression of regard to our fellow citizens of French Canadian origin". Referring to Galt's assurance that the provincial government would keep the public lands open to all nationalities and creeds, the *Gazette* posed the rhetorical question: "How has it been hitherto? Did our Government, as constituted, take anything like the same pains to introduce Foreign Emigration that they did to promote Colonization of these Townships with French Canadians?" The more tolerant *Waterloo Advertiser* was equally nervous about the future: "We neither pretend nor believe that the French are less liberal than ourselves — but of late years it were idle to deny that the idea of making Lower Canada more thoroughly French has been made to assume almost the form of a religious enthusiasm among the people — and they preach colonization as Peter the Hermit preached of the Crusades. Who shall say that in years to come this growing national and religious enthusiasm will be always measured by justice and toleration?"

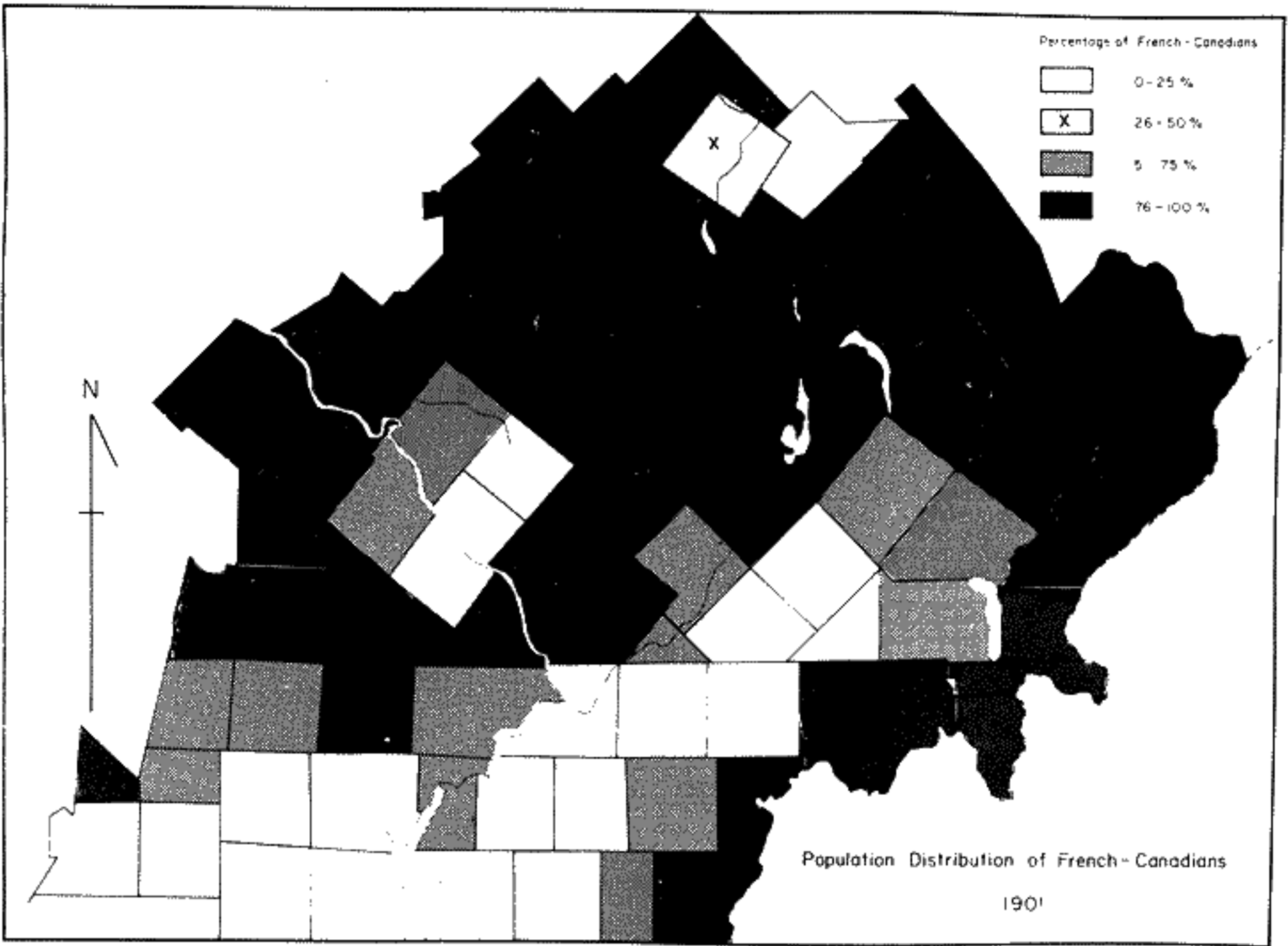
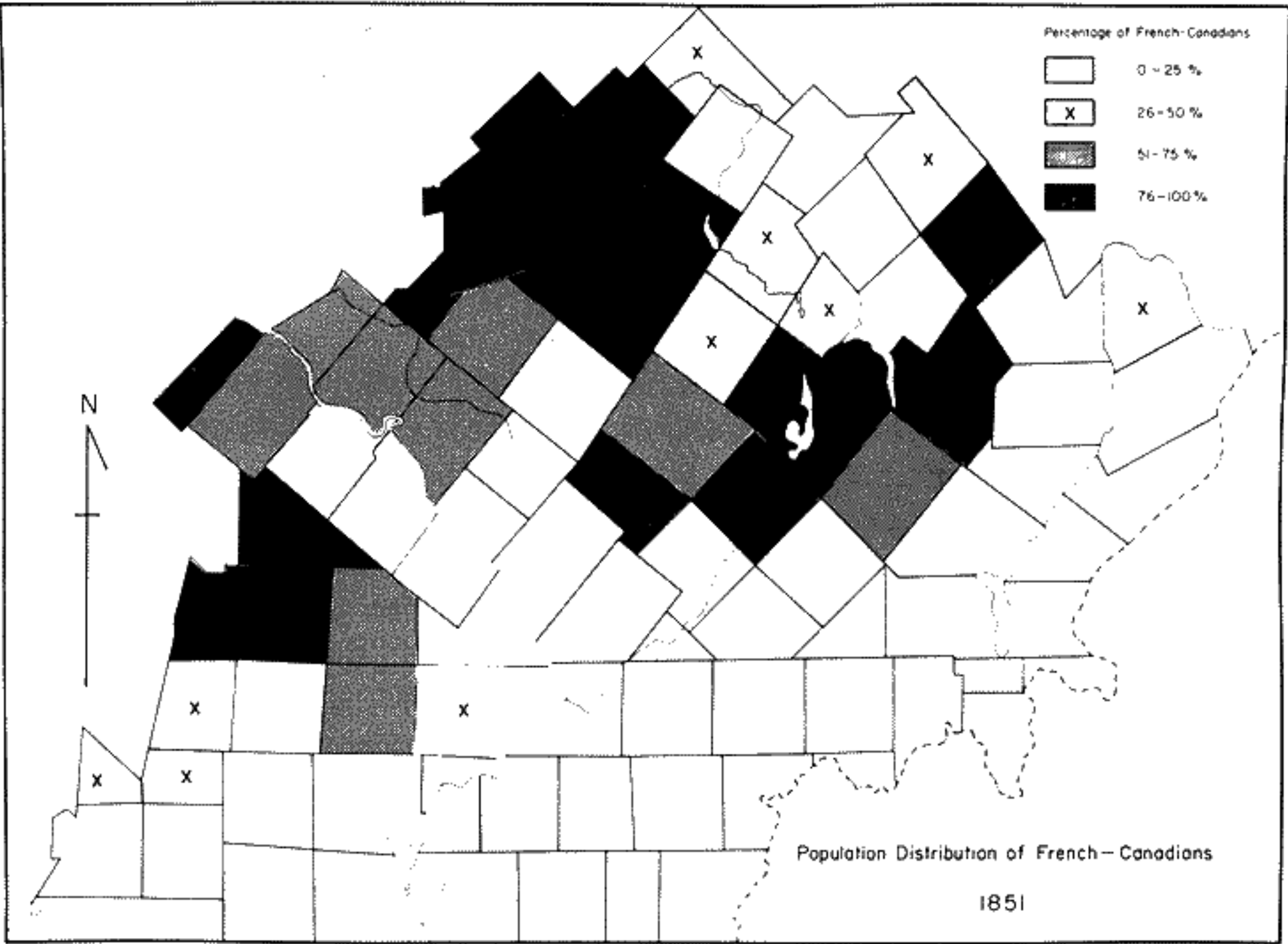
Having mollified their fatalistic constituents somewhat with the promise of educational and electoral boundary guarantees, the region's Conservative deputies dutifully voted for the Quebec Resolutions. As predicted by the press, the creation of a separate provincial status was quickly followed by a resurgence in enthusiasm for colonization projects. Many of them were focussed upon eastern Compton County where the trouble-plagued International Railway was taking advantage of its colonization-line status to inch its way from Lennoxville to Lake Megantic. The Colonization Societies Act, in effect from 1869 to 1875, provided subsidies and land reserves to fifteen parish-based groups operating in the county. The only settlement to take root was Piopolis, sponsored originally for the benefit of Papal Zouaves returning from service against Garibaldi in Rome. Here a potentially-explosive situation developed when not only speculators but several Highland Scots settlers found themselves expropriated to make room for the French-Canadian influx. Angered further by the provincial government's decision in 1875 to establish a French-Canadian repatriation colony in eastern Compton, and to concentrate its railway subsidies on the North shore of the St. Lawrence, local residents joined the Protestant Defence Alliance, a protest movement which had originated from a religious dispute on the Oka Indian Reserve near Montreal. One bellicose correspondent to Montreal's *Daily Witness* declared that "The 'schemers' had better beware, for as sure as they are born, if they rouse the old Gaelic blood in these back settlements, there will be such a 'tempest in a tea-pot' that it will require a stronger power than the Quebec Government to stop it". Violence was averted by the prompt redress of legitimate grievances by the Crown Lands Office, but all the resident Scots abandoned Saint-Zenon de Piopolis (Marston South) when it became a separate

municipality in 1879.

When local tensions flared up again with the famous Megantic Outlaw incident of 1888-89, the impact was felt throughout the province. Resisting arrest for destruction of property on the farm which had been seized from his family and sold by a local creditor to a French Canadian, Donald Morrison shot and killed a deputy in a showdown on the main street of Lake Megantic. Despite the posting of a \$3000 reward, the imposition of martial law, and numerous arrests on conspiracy charges, the local Scots aided the fugitive Morrison to evade the provincial police over a period of ten months. Morrison was finally wounded and captured on a day supposedly set aside for negotiating with the authorities, then given a stiff 18-year sentence on a charge of manslaughter. Premier Mercier angrily rejected any comparison between Morrison and Louis Riel, whose hanging had brought him to power, but Morrison's death in prison nevertheless made him a martyr to the embittered Compton Scots. Within a few decades all but a handful of this community would be scattered across the continent, leaving the Lake Megantic district entirely to the French Canadians.

Although the government-sponsored colonization projects played an important symbolic role, the construction of the Quebec Central and the International Railways was more instrumental in adding to the French-Canadian population expansion on the frontier. During the 1870s and 1880s approximately two-thirds of the increase in French-Canadian numbers took place in the younger north-eastern townships, with the other third concentrated in centrally-located urban centres. The French Canadians had irrevocably asserted their dominance of the region, with 69 per cent of the population by 1891, but their growth rate would decline markedly during the following decade. Because even the most marginally-arable land was under cultivation, there was quite simply nowhere else to expand outside the towns except onto farms made available by English-speaking families leaving the region.

The possibility of a French-Canadian "invasion" in the sociological sense was becoming increasingly imminent, for the English-Canadian population of the older townships was more restless than ever. One visitor noted in 1889 that "The exuberant harvests of our western territory has had a disquieting effect on the old country yeomanry of the Eastern Townships; several, of late years have dreamed of a New Eldorado in the wheat fields of Manitoba — in the ranches of Calgary — even in the sheep walks of British Columbia". Between 1875 and 1889 one former Inverness Township resident had attracted over one hundred of his relatives to the Iowa frontier, while, beginning in the later 1880s, Compton cattlemen would be among the first ranchers in the Alberta foothills. Concern about the number of departing farmers led to yet another campaign to encourage British immigration. Temporarily-appointed Townships immigration agents actually reported an influx of over a thousand people from Britain each year between 1881 and 1885, but most were clearly transients, for in 1891 the British-born ratio of the population remained at the 14 per cent it had been a decade earlier.



In frustration, a few of the more fanatical individuals struck out at the Catholic Church, arguing that if tithes were abolished the clergy would lose interest in promoting the French-Canadian influx. In 1889 a newly-formed anti-Catholic organization known as the Equal Rights Association published a pamphlet written by the most outspoken of these ultra-Protestants, Robert Sellar of the *Huntingdon Gleaner*. It appealed directly to the emotions of its readers:

The tide is creeping upward and remorselessly swallowing everything in its way, but on the placid face of the waters there is not an eddy nor a ripple to indicate the resistless power that is impelling them. Farm by farm dropped into Catholic hands, and the area of lands liable to tax and tithe went on extending. In course of time the Protestants became so few that they found it difficult to maintain schools, and were it not for aid from outside they could not have retained a minister.

Sellar was not mistaken in assuming that the Catholic Church was encouraging French Canadians to purchase Protestant farms. Upon his appointment as the first Bishop of Sherbrooke in 1874, Mgr. Racine had instructed his curés to compile lists on prices and terms of property for sale. These lists were to be distributed among French Canadians outside the region. Sellar's logic was flawed, however, because the Ottawa Valley had also been colonized by French Canadians with the encouragement of their Church, despite the absence of the tithe in Ontario. Sellar was certainly aware of this situation because his pamphlet had been commissioned basically in order to help mobilize the Protestants of that very region against separate schools. No one seriously believed that Quebec would renounce the tithe, and the Ontario-based E.R.A. was simply exploiting the situation of the Protestant minority of Quebec for its own political purposes.

In 1889 Sellar was not describing what had actually taken place so much as what nearly everyone seemed to assume would inevitably transpire in the older communities of the Eastern Townships. Indeed, by 1907, when the Huntington newspaper editor published his book, *The Tragedy of Quebec, The Expulsion of its Protestant Farmers*, the French-Canadian "invasion" had finally begun in earnest. The village of Compton, for example, was transformed from approximately 80 per cent English-speaking in 1896 to 64 per cent French-speaking in 1911, and 86 per cent in 1921. Neighbouring villages would also become more French in character as small industries were established. Once again, Sellar's most responsive audience lay in regions where Protestants were in the majority, such as in Ontario and northern Ireland. Perhaps the farmers of the Eastern Townships were too vulnerable, too fatalistic, or simply too grateful for the eager market they found for their properties to pay much attention to Sellar. A sociologist noted during the early 1950s that because English Protestants had "no single unifying religion to act as a rallying-center for their group, and no

other institution which can bind them together, they feel separated and unable to unite against this powerful force". Rather than leading to confrontation, increasing anxiety about the French-Canadian influx simply served to accelerate the English-Canadian exodus. Thus the transition between two widely-disparate cultures took place with remarkably little friction. No doubt in part because the western frontier was closed before that transition was entirely complete, the English-speaking population's decline ended in 1931, at about 50,000 people. But this population is aging steadily, and, at less than one tenth of the regional total, it has become increasingly concentrated in the Lennoxville-Sherbrooke area where it now struggles to preserve its few remaining educational and cultural institutions.

CONCLUSION

If we live in a nation of limited identities, as has so often been stated, it is imperative that we understand how broader allegiances have been forged in this country. In many respects there has been no more distinctive a region, or sub-region, than the Eastern Townships, yet here loyalties have been fragmented and externally-directed to the point that few agree on where the regional boundaries should be drawn. It is presumably no accident that a region with such a rich educational heritage failed to produce an identifiable literary tradition. As in Upper Canada, the first generations were torn between a cultural identification with the United States, on the one hand, and Great Britain on the other. And, in addition, they were rendered politically impotent by the external struggle between French-Canadian nationalism and British imperialism. During the second half of the 19th century, the English-speaking population was still caught between two antagonistic outside political forces, the ultramontane-oriented Conservatives and the anti-Catholic Liberals. An abortive attempt was made to launch the Eastern Townships Party in 1860, but the majority continued to support the Conservatives for strictly practical reasons — the region had been brought into the economic orbit of Montreal's industrial-capitalist bourgeoisie.

As the equally Conservative French Canadians flooded into the region, agreements were reached at the constituency level whereby the two cultural groups would split the provincial and federal deputyships between them. Not surprisingly, in mixed ridings the Quebec representative was usually French-speaking and his Ottawa counterpart English-speaking. The arrangement endured in Richmond-Wolfe (apart from a five-year period) from 1867 to 1949, in Shefford (with the exception of nine years) from 1867 to 1911, in Sherbrooke from 1891 to 1940, in Missisquoi from 1900 to 1935, and in Compton from 1900 to 1925. Only in the northern constituencies of Megantic and Drummond-Arthabaska, the latter represented by Wilfrid Laurier, was the arrangement reversed. Thus, even though the English and French Canadians of the Eastern Townships tended to vote for the same party, their jurisdictional allegiances were focussed in different directions. The English-speaking population's identifica-

tion with Canada as a country was further strengthened by the exodus of many of its kin and neighbours to the western provinces, while the French-speaking newcomers naturally maintained ties in the old Quebec parishes from which they had originated. Eastern Townships Francophones have not developed the distinctive accents or sense of cultural particularity that can be observed in the Beauce or in the isolated Lac St. Jean parishes. Furthermore, notwithstanding the élite's paranoia about assimilation, linguists have failed to discover more anglicisms in the French language here than elsewhere in the province. Despite the Eastern Townships' increasing economic subordination to an external metropolis, which was hardly unique in the post-1850 era of industrial capitalism, it is likely that a deeper sense of regional identity would have persisted had there not been such a dramatic shift in the ethno-cultural population balance.

Perhaps there is no lesson to be learned on the subject of national unity or French-English harmony from the Eastern Townships experience. It should be recalled, however, that the American and British settlers were originally very resentful of each other as well, and that those communities where the "two solitudes" were thrown together have been characterized by mutual tolerance rather than by intimidation and violence. Today there are even hopeful signs that the remaining Anglophones are more reconciled to their minority status, and that the Francophone nationalists feel less threatened or challenged by the presence of a small English-speaking community in their province. Certainly both groups would benefit from mutual co-operation and increased political activism in the face of fundamental regional problems such as de-industrialization, the encroachment of Christmas tree plantations on the best agricultural land, and acid rain's relentless destruction of the maple syrup industry — not to mention its threat to the ecology and natural beauty of one of Canada's most scenic regions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

No general overview of Eastern Townships history has yet been published, but *De Ktiné à Sherbrooke, Esquisse historique de Sherbrooke: des origines à 1954* (Sherbrooke, 1973) by Mgr. Maurice O'Bready includes a number of useful short studies, including one on the Amerindian era. An up-to-date brief survey of the English-speaking community's history can be found in various sections of Ronald Rudin, *The Forgotten Quebecers: A History of English-speaking Quebec 1759-1980* (Quebec, 1985), translated as *Histoire du Québec anglophone, 1759-1980* (Québec, 1986). Apart from some genealogically-inspired research, the Townships Loyalists have received little attention, especially during the past half century. Crucial sources remain Wilbur H. Siebert, "The American Loyalists in the Eastern Townships of the Province of Quebec", Royal Society of Canada, *Proceedings and Transactions*, 3rd Series, VII, 1913, Section II; and Thomas C. Lampee, "The Missisquoi Loyalists", Vermont Historical Society, *Proceedings* VI, no. 2, 1938. Two very brief but interesting Loyalist biographies are Linda H. Hackett, *Elezeur Fitch, The First Leader of Stanstead Township* (Stanstead, 1941); and Rick J. Ashton, *The Life of Henry Ruiter 1742-1819* ([Chicago], 1974). Jean-Pierre Kesteman's recently-published study on the origins of one township illustrates the need for a serious revision of much of the dated and non-academic local history. See "Les Débuts du Canton d'Ascot et de la Ville de Sherbrooke (1792-1818). Etude Critique" (Département d'histoire, Université de Sherbrooke, 1984). Useful short biographies of several township "leaders" are to be found in the sixth volume of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. See "Samuel Gale", "Charles Kilborn", "Jesse Pennoyer", "Gilbert Hyatt", "John Savage", "Samuel Willard", "Henry Cull", and "Ralph Merry". All but the last three were Loyalists. The best published analyses of the "leader and associates" system are two articles by Gerald F. McGuigan: "La Concession des Terres dans les Cantons de l'Est du Bas-Canada (1763-1809)", *Recherches Sociographiques*, IV, Jan.-Apr. 1963; and "Administration of Land Policy and the Growth of Corporate Economic Organization in Lower Canada, 1791-1809", Canadian Historical Association, *Report*, 1963. Also of value on the land disposal fiasco is Ivanhoë Caron, *La Colonisation de la Province de Québec, Les Cantons de l'Est, 1791-1815* (Québec, 1927).

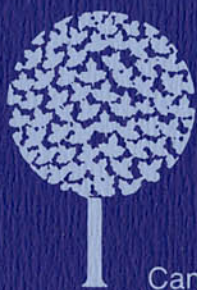
On immigration and settlement in the 1815-37 period, see J.I. Little, "Imperialism and Colonization in Lower Canada: The Role of William Bowman Felton", *Canadian Historical Review*, LXVI, 1985. A first-hand description of the hardships suffered by one gentry immigrant family can be found in Jane Vansittart, ed., *Lifelines, The Stacey Letters 1836-1858* (London, 1976), while J.P. Kesteman analyzes social and economic conditions among the transient, principally Irish labourers on the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad in "Les travailleurs à la construction du chemin de fer dans la région de Sherbrooke (1851-1853)", *Revue d'Histoire de l'Amérique Française*, XXXI, 1978. In lieu of a satisfactory single study of the role of the Eastern Townships in the Rebellions

of 1837-38, see the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, "William Bowman Felton" (vol. VII), "Silas Dickerson" (vol. VIII), and "Marcus Child" (vol. VIII). For valuable insights into the region's transition from an American dominated outpost to a loyal British-oriented community see the first three chapters of Oscar D. Skelton, *The Life and Times of Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt* (1920, reprinted Toronto, 1966), and Charlotte Thibault, *Samuel Brooks: Entrepreneur et Homme Politique de Sherbrooke 1793-1849* (Sherbrooke, 1985).

Two studies focusing on the role of church and state in the initial phases of French-Canadian colonization are J.I. Little's "The Catholic Church and French-Canadian Colonization of the Eastern Townships, 1821-51", *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa / University of Ottawa Quarterly*, LII, 1982; and "Colonization and Municipal Reform in Canada East", *Histoire sociale — Social History*, XIV, 27, 1981. Another source covering some of the same ground is Gilles Parent, *Deux Efforts de Colonisation Française dans les Cantons de l'Est 1848 et 1851* (Sherbrooke, 1980). For a comprehensive analysis of the various British as well as French-Canadian colonization projects in the easternmost section of the region, see J.I. Little, *Nationalism, Capitalism, and Colonization in Nineteenth-Century Quebec: the Upper St. Francis District* (Kingston and Montreal, 1989). Information on the lives of French Canadians outside the colonization zones can be found in J.P. Kesteman's excellent "La condition urbaine sous l'angle de la conjoncture économique: Sherbrooke de 1875 à 1914", *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, XII, 1, 1983, and in J.I. Little, "The Parish and French-Canadian Migrants to Compton County, Quebec, 1851-1891", *Histoire sociale — Social History*, XI, 21, 1978.

Several popular-oriented books have been published on the Donald Morrison affair, but the best study on the historical context is Ronald Rudin, "The Megantic Outlaw and His Times: Ethnic Tensions in Quebec in the 1880s", *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, XVIII, 1, 1966. Valuable insights into the reaction of the local English-speaking population to the French-Canadian influx are also to be found in Rudin's "The Transformation of the Eastern Townships of Richard William Heneker, 1885-1902", *Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue d'études canadiennes*, XIX, 3, 1984. For a more general overview, see J.I. Little, "Watching the Frontier Disappear: English-Speaking Reaction to French-Canadian Colonization in the Eastern Townships, 1844-1890", *Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue d'études canadiennes*, XIV, 4, 1980-81. Sellar's lament has itself been republished with a sympathetic introduction by Robert Hill: *The Tragedy of Quebec, The Expulsion of its Protestant Farmers* (1916, reprinted Toronto, 1974). A useful local study on the transition within one community is Marcel Bellavance, *A Village in Transition: Compton, Quebec, 1880-1920* (Parks Canada, 1982), translated from *Un village en mutation: Compton, Québec, 1880-1920* (Parcs Canada, 1982). A more personalized account focussing on the same village is Dale C. Thomson, "Louis St. Laurent: Eastern Townships boy", *Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue d'études canadiennes*, I, 3, 1966.

For a brief sociological study on the impact of the French-Canadian invasion during the 20th century, see Aileen D. Ross, "French and English Canadian Contacts and Institutional Change", *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, XX, 1954; and for an update see Martin Schulte, "Relations sociales et situation spatiale des francophones et des anglophones dans trois communautés rurales bi-ethniques des Cantons de l'Est du Québec", *Etudes Canadiennes / Canadian Studies*, XXI, 1, 1986. On French-English relations in the industrial centre of Drummondville see the classic sociological study by Everett C. Hughes, *French Canada in Transition* (Chicago, 1943, reprinted 1963). Finally, for a historiographically-oriented survey of the region's cultural history, see Guy Laperrière, "Quelques Avenues en Histoire Culturelle des Cantons de l'Est", *Questions de Culture*, V (1979): 109-30. Those wishing to research still further on the region should consult the same author's excellent *Bibliographie d'Histoire des Cantons de l'Est / History of the Eastern Townships: A Bibliography* (Sherbrooke, 1986).



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